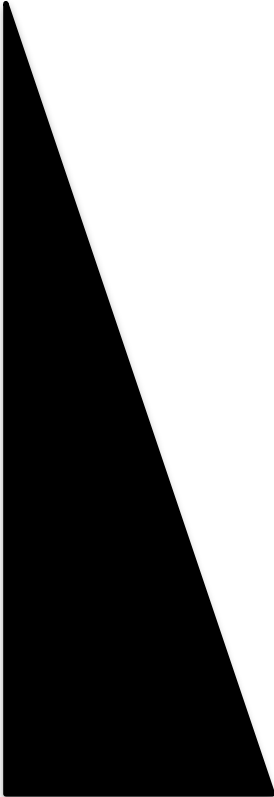


The
Letters of
Constantinople



Menahem Ali
translated by Matt Alexander H.

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Menahem Ali was a Palestinian-Israeli writer who fled to America at the age of 18 during the outbreak of war in 1948. He lived the rest of his life in exile, mostly as a paper-hoarding recluse in Brooklyn, New York before passing away in 2020. He never published a word in his lifetime, but left behind 15 manuscripts handwritten in a creole of Judeo-Arabic Palestinian Hebrew, including thirteen collections of free verse, a study of poverty in America and a surrealist novel.

Matt Alexander H. was born in 1986 in Northampton, Massachusetts by the Holyoke Range and Connecticut River Valley. He was raised in the Atlantic coastal town of Mattapoisett, which, in the Algonquin language, means, “place of rest”. He lives alone by the Sea of Marmara.

Other titles by Menahem Ali at Fictive Press
as translated by Matt Alexander H.

Verse

Cyclical Wordplay
Exotic Settlers
Sketches of Style
Present Sound, Silent Space
district.Columbia
Full Moons and Dawn's Crepuscules
Asemic Man
Regress
Brooklyn Ridge
BiCoastal
Winter Flower
Cairo at 20

Prose

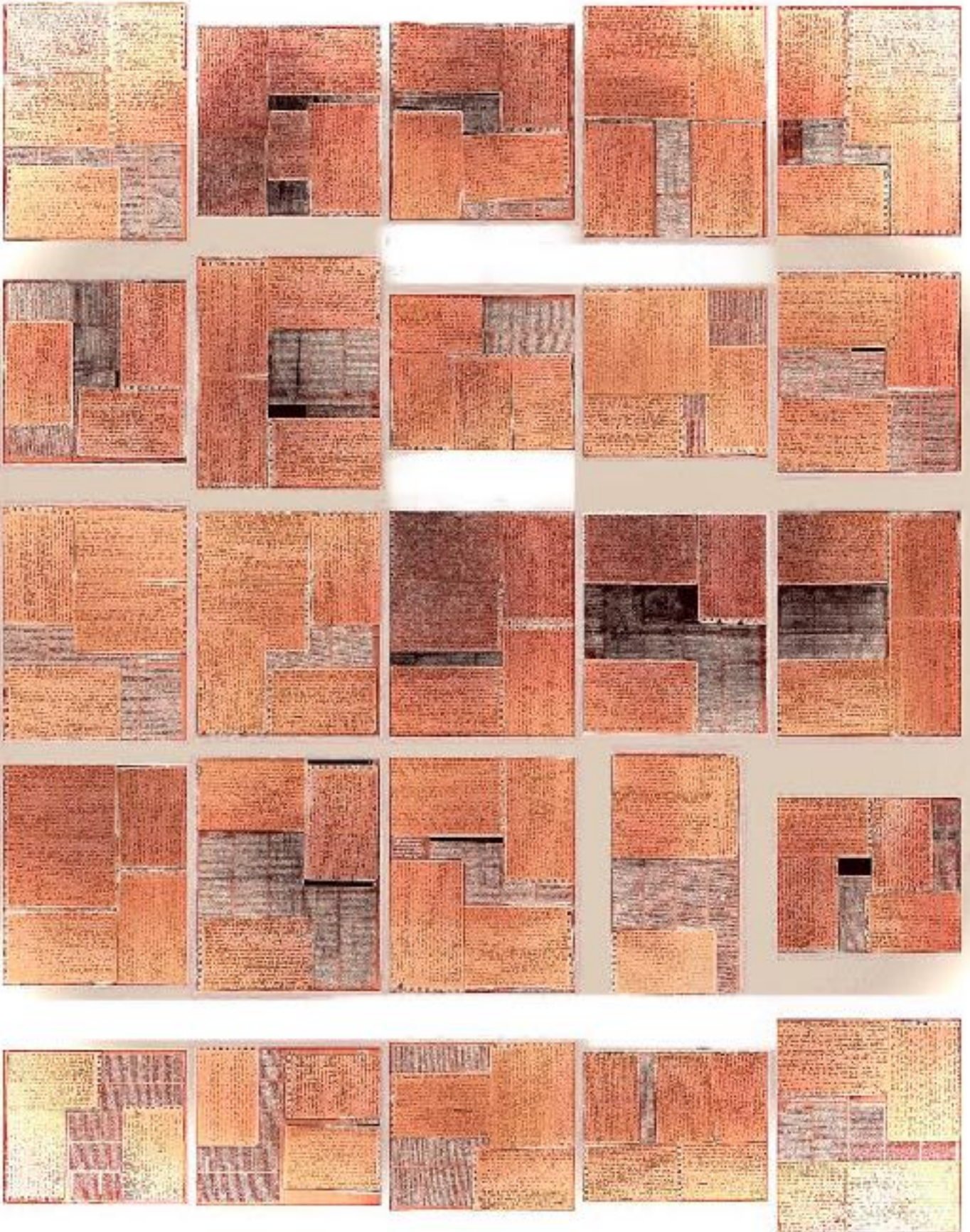
The American Hallucination
Noetic Sojourns

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On the Image

The cover for “The Letters of Constantinople” is a visual representation of my inner dialogue as a writer, between the work I have done commercially in Istanbul as a freelance contributor to a mainstream, censorial newspaper, and in my private hours, as a composer of free verse. Juxtaposing newspaper clippings of the articles I have written and published, mainly on art, together with the notebook pages on which I primarily wrote, “The Letters of Constantinople”, the individuated pieces come together to form asemic letters, a post-literate art movement that I endeavor to integrate into my writing practice.

With that in mind, the idea of the letter, as simultaneously epistolary and linguistic, emerges as part of the cover’s symbolism, if I may interpret my own work. I tinged it sepia-toned to effect a vintage mood, one that lends itself to the outmoded, even Orientalist fashioning of Istanbul as its Greek appellation, “Constantinople”. The naming is central to ongoing themes of representation in a country long riven by Western and Eastern antipathy. I have simply expressed its dynamic, if overdone popular imagination so as to affirm the local urban ecology out of which I have written these poems, entangled in the sociopolitical webs that loom overhead.

On the Text

The free verse in the collection, “The Letters of Constantinople”, are a comprehensive sample of the uninhibited, private writing that I have penned, as a practice, psychological and creative, essentially freshening up my professional approaches to writing, while clearing the often crowded air of my thoughts. The idea is to fight fire with fire, in that way. As someone who tends to overthink, I set a homeopathic force into motion by making my natural, or involuntary flow of word-generation conscious by writing, and thereby, controlling its direction, to feel it out and understand its shapes and manifestations further.

In an expository sense, these writings are representative of the course of life that I have lived in Istanbul, as a tourist, expatriate, foreigner, resident, lover, worker, solitary, friend and descendant of its former imperial subjects. It begins in the Anatolian neighborhood of Kadıköy, on the crowded shores of the Sea of Marmara. In the course of four years, I had fallen in and out of love, and came to realize a degree of clarity within myself, situated within my literary craft, and through an appreciation of my surroundings. With an observational tone, these writings reflect the character, tone and emotional landscape in which I was renewed by enacting love as a kind of migration.

2020
2019
2018
2017
2016

a sight of poseidon's daughter

coming up for a breath and i'm shot through the eye
with a ray of sun, reflecting off the surface blue
cool, who is that i spy on the breezy open, a dot

on the horizon, approaching, its bow flashes warning red
and the waves begin to roll, i catch a snatch of heat
my brow flecked with the beauty of a clear sky

half-fish, i submerge to await the passing overhead
and sunken, at the mercy of underwater currents
that rush with the glowing spectacles of schools

amassing, i see the rudder above cutting through
the liquid top into which i'd emerge to scare the seafaring
out of their wits and into a tale of the sea as a mythic place

where reality bends and melds with the edges of reason
and plays with our landlocked minds, gushing with wonder
a child's upbringing, rising to taste what air might save the day

before high noon falls over the half-circle of the planet
filled to the brim with that moving home in which I, unsettled, swim
and roam and float, catching the drifts of lonely sailors

out for a dream to risk and a life to lose, but i never take it
from them whole, just a bite, a lone nip, one to carry them
ashore, to loosen their tongue and intoxicate them numb

till i come up for air again and
again and again
and

and finally lost

i'm in a forest of pale leaves, their faces are parchments
fanned out to points that touch each other, dangling, languorous
from limbs in the midday heat, under a canopy of shade

the cool, lush ecology springs into being as i look, a monkey
its eyes piercing mine, rushing past through the densest patch
of green, i am asleep, and wake from the dream of my country

the interior, from where i stretched out my wings and first left
the homes of my mothers and fathers from their death
to my many lives, to those i know and love in the wide mouth

of the city, rolling off its tongue like i rise from sleep
in the warm sunday morning, late, rested and reflecting
on my dreams, of a sable-skinned woman and her tears

for what poured from my heart to enter her body and fill her
with my blood and strength and history, that which i might name
as mine, but to be with her through the night, locked down

in a room, as outside the world is full of fear, raging
for light, out of the cellars of youth, that strive to reach up
weighed by stone and the demands of the soil, asking

that we paint ourselves varicolored and laugh at dusk
to let our lives go in a moment of pain released
as the stripped bandaid of childhood, taking with it

our weakest hairs and revealing a fading scar
to remind us that we are vulnerable, sensitive,

empty

domestic bliss

when that low music howls unafraid,
from our bellies of stone and rage
who will we wander to in the snow?
i've seen a thousand years in a day
broken by your smile that i might have
caught while laughing awake, having tea
together, under a big strong tree
the *çınar* of our dreams, holding us
up, to be and have and take
what of this life was never ours
and that we'll one day give back
but the sun shines bright on her face
as she walks, shivering by the strait
a light blue of dancing waves, charged
with the tongue of a city of lonely souls
16 million grappling with the sound
of decay, every dark and cold morning
of winter 2020, in which I launch
into words of profound distaste
for the ways in which we still hate
somehow, killing each other like animals
in the bold, trespassing of our tired burdens
and meek, I steal past, yawning
at the bridge that says I am strong
because I was never taught to stretch
my body, across two continents
only to laze about in tea gardens, talking
about our history for as long as it's taken
immersed in the silent beauty, her
presence, soothing, a glory of shapes
worn with years, but fresh and clinging
to what hopes remain of our trust
in each other, as a union of man, woman
children and the undefined who loves
boundlessly, clashing with those arms
of iron, and inhuman, stiff before the front
of tragic liberty, our American ideas
drowning in the embarrassments of the times
feeling hopeless at dawn by the reflective pools
of our wondering why, just why after all
of our fighting, to better each other
take care of this place, our unclean home

reaching inside

straight up through the sky of the universe
we ascend like dynamite unstrung
but for our eyes that look back to Earth

wanting her like I, a woman, to take up
it is I who lifts into the ether disappearing
from what sights are visible to these eyes

naked, born of the will to pierce through
some veil of mind, or stone, to capture
the momentary passage of beauty

that is our lives, and how would we rather
have it, but to hold onto another body for a sec,
like waking from a dream of sex, driving through

to the heart of a womb, instilled with all that wants
it filled, I, spilling out and over that name
a lone, irrational thought of a sound

pounding lightly like the pulse in my veins
it is my wish, a star shot across the night
black, bold as the traveler lost, peaks

atop Mt. Moses under a full moon to spy
the desert dawn, awoken by the kick
of a young Bedouin man who invites

for potatoes and hash, the loud open
land itself breathes as to speak, *come*
prophesy that what you seek is yours

and do not be weak before the fire
that blazes like the bush of our fantasy
mirage-like I hallucinate the joy of being

as far and wide as the cosmos
from which I escape to return
home to her

the endless part of her lips

how should i kiss, a passionate one
for the ages, to block the night with a shield of stars
protecting us from the weather and each other
or one so light as to pass into whispers that bleed
like a pin prick in the lost dawn of our memories
wanting our embrace never ending, a low hum
then courses through our veins, causing us to speak
at will, what of the day that we thought was safe
for us, to be in love, waiting, watching the minutes fly by
as we think of our deaths rage laughingly back at us
unafraid as the natural law of friendships had
and given, that lets us sleep through the morning
half-awake, wishing she were more than close
a body of lips into which I dive and die and live
again, each step toward the lust in my will
to approximate this sad wild distance of force
and age, the urge to bring great catastrophe
to my house, to my hands, slipping down
my tongue, golden and raw like a sore throat
and a headache, on a Friday morning, feeling
slightly insane that I let myself get away
and letting myself go, having gone, what is left is
all that I was, a fragment of a lost cause
and an impulse to find freedom in the failure
to love, having set my conditions, fallen flat
into the poor lonely ground of my muddy garden
in a late winter spell of smoking, drinking, raining
down on my insides, the gravity of awe I see
in her eyes, what shapes of her gorgeous frame
those full, thick red lips over which I came to
a witness to her tears rolling down the soft wrinkles
of her glow, yet risen, and ashamed, I swallow a smile
and leave her to a future where our possibilities might
bloom from trick to reality, and what we know
in our lungs, to breathe up healthy and join
with the strength of our dance into infinity
into a kiss,
long
and wonderful

the first laugh

i don't know where to go anymore, or how i would
even get there, it's been ages since i last saw my face
who have i become, only another pair of eyes

might catch mine enough to know, but then i will have
stayed put too long for those who pass to realize that
i was even there at all, and into myth i will live on

as the name of their choosing, that newborn
to parents who have thought long and hard
about my legacy from the beginning, and coming

into the world with a future beyond my death
or before i am ever born, the first words i say
will be of myself, telling all who may hear that i am

here, now, unafraid to meet what end might waste
my days with its long, lonely loss, a story of sorrow
to bite on and taste its bitter texture, like that

which makes us lick our gums behind our teeth
and wanting, wish we had more to eat
because at the end of the day we will be here

for the night, and sleep under a bright sky
of cloudless blue, feel the breeze rush through
the grass and over our noses as we touch and kiss

and let the light fall away, like time, place
and our names
then to merge in total ecstasy

the return to I and back

when all that might be written is already thought
when will you wake into darkness before day
and spring up through the heights of what we once saw

dawning, a stem, held fast against the coming light
that streaks proud across the lonely sky
that what i've known all along is gone and dead

but to seek the gravity of life upturned and left to dry
on the shores of our dreaming, that what i've seen
is gone, what once took time for my eyes to weep

releasing, at a loss, to find a laugh and will it into motion,
stressed for cash but still, and full of meaning, i starve,
on the side street of a cold, blank morning, afraid

that i won't shake this will to die, alone, without
the slightest peep that i was ever known, loved,
had and went through this broken life of joyous screaming,

that i call out for you, wanting your body to wrap up against
to know the warmth of the rivers in your every tear
a low touch to the ground of our awakening

to lust, but what of our friendship, the holy law
of once having met and wanting to see us again
as one, taking up the lost secrets of our youth

that explode at every moment when we ask who
who am i, and why do i let all that i was once
gone to memory and fate and loss and drained

of my youth that falls like the hair from my chest
i am alone, unknown, unknowable, a rock, split
by lightning and half-buried in the middle of a field

quiet, wishing to reunite with myself once more
for an instant of that
bliss of unity

the victor and his victory

there is a breath of air to be had at the end of the race
from when the gun goes off to the last step across the finishing line
i think of the inhale that'll send me sky high, flying to taste that

gust, catching me low to the ground but ascending, am i, winged
crowned and first, that which drew me forth to know that i am
unbeaten, the original, loud and clear, a man able, to strike down

his opponents in a single leap of ecstatic unity with all that is
around me, and i join hands with the church of consciousness
singing songs of joy because i am free, having long come

from the last, only to trounce all those who have stood or run
in my path, and not alone, i have the whole grace of my people
on which to stand, head held high, thinking of my love

who i've left at home by the sea with her little child, alone
she thinks of me and cries, and when i breathe my tears
of thanks, wept not only for her and the new life she bears

but for every living thing, for by taking up my power, i swing
and chant to eternity over the rafters of valhalla, born of love
and poverty, strapped for bread but not words with my eyes

i speak truth from the curve in my soles to the curl in my hair
top to bottom a testament to the survival of man, to say
with all my might, with every muscle in my body that i am here

the way through and back and in

when peaked, high on consciousness, i fly from the space between
my eyes, and run amuck along the rainbow of mind, blown open
and finally alone, i stand rooted to the shadows of my longing

and step clear of all that i wish to dream, to think, to be, cold
and rushed with awe, losing blood at the sight of me as my past
a ghost of horrors unknown yet seen in the blink of a mirror

broken at the edge of all reason, which is the copying of things
what passes into my head like a whisper of sensations, bold
but faint, embracing the night like a bridge over two continents

stretching to touch lips over the strait of an earth wanting its other
in which to join, that i claim life, knowing full well that i am a wisp
of non-being, grazing the lit caps of hills as the soft cusp of the visible

merging into mystery, like a spinal cord set free of its skeleton
a snake uncoiling across the camouflaged sands of our skin
purple and green, we are innocents, far flung, raging down the road

for a bit of spiked tea, calm once we get there to talk of the next place
or what came before as we drift into the wondering of which
friend might come when anyone before us is somehow not enough

simply triggering our curiosity, despite all that might have been
and that is, that there is still more, happening, and within us
the wisdom to live, smirking at ourselves, lying to get a rise

your crystal breast

i believe i have it in me to create works of art so grand, boundless
and beautiful that my name, the creator, is irrelevant, a mere blip of fire
against a cold backdrop, clean as the light that breaks out from the edge of sky
to illumine the day, a golden union with the secrets of the flesh
that nightly escape wandering into the bold masses of the people shone
and sworn to the ground,

we laugh awake at the whole fantastic march that blows past
like smoke, and i inhale deep and slow, and at the end of my draw
that sucks up the oxygen of this planet, entirely, i feel your lips at last
come to free mine of the will to speak, but silent, keep my word
in a look into your eyes, tempting mine to fall back
and let the constellations above drown us in what dreams
we've sought by the sweat of our hearts, alone in need by our pulsing
together, unafraid to meet the sun with its promise of heat

and then i step all the more, into our rhythm, a groove
unending for it comes from the root of our wanting,
to stretch out and slake our thirst on the wild life that's calling us
to move back and forth, not in circles but in spirals, gently letting us down,
to sleep the lazy hours away,

but i've been caressed by that tongue
of yours, that glides sweeping across my beating chest
as i lay dying destroyed, bombed out and pacified
to absolute releases, because you've got the best of me
just by the flick of your black lash and holy big round pair of smoky quartz

A paean to the reopening

The ways of change that roam past, and I
Chasing it, go farther than I ever would have
Dreamed. But for the pain that fills me
With sorrow. And slowly, I recoil.
Under the quicksand of my lonely mind.
Driven to confound and bewilder its only hope
Of peace. And the drama of what will never be
But that I reach with my hand for a voice
To see to the edge of reason, holding
Onto the rain. Dousing me in the drug
Of my indecision. Lost to the night
And gone from the morning, I pray for love
And receive the bounties of the world,
Dissatisfied because I am not born of flesh
But of an idea of me. That inkling
Of a nuisance, that wants me in bed
Under the stars. As I listen to the whispering
Of a tree, and moaning of cats.
In the long solitary Istanbul eve of dawn's
Coming with the fire of a sky lit
Impassioned to tell tales of compassion
While the rest sink into poverty
And isolation. I call out to them!
My heroes! My family! The wretched
And dispossessed who line the pockets
Of men, serving capitals and borders
Like thieves in broad daylight.
Stealing the future of human life
Pulling magic carpets of the East
Out from under our feet, treating us
Like the children we live for. If only
To scratch out a living unknown
And homebound with a dead plant
And music on repeat, savoring drops
Of lemon or tea. Slicing roots
And boiling wheat. Until I see
The opening of our lives again
To the sea we will rush, happy
Drinking, a mad gorge of folk
Touching each other in bliss
To have that wholeness of soul
Uplift our eyes wide.

Existence imperative

What must we be
When we are done
Done. With all of it
And all, scratching
Into the mess

In the prime of reason
Devout to an urge
Something spiny
And when she left
I cried.
And when dawn came
I slept.
And when night came
So did I. Drifting through
The visual, the audio

The sense of a sense
I see a phrase go by
Speaking to me, it speaks
To me, it says I am you
It says I am I. It says, Why.
It asks, Why must we be
When all that is will not.
When all that won't has
Never. When all that I am
Drowns, low, away. To be
For myself, to be awake.
To fall in the deep inside
Of a wet woman. And hide
Till she runs cold.

I want to rage through
To the end of life
Like a mad howling animal
Unchained. I am driven
Into the wall of brick
And night. I am not awake
Don't let me lie.
How could you?
How could I?

Existence imperative II

Every morning
There is a battle of empires
In my bed. On one side
Of the pillow lie dead Greeks
On other side, dead Turks
And when my eyes open
I look up and see the Jews
We are alive, safe, finally.

My name is lost to the people
Who lived for me? I don't know
Who I am, I am the first, I am
An artist. I am the creature
Creator creating himself
Every day. I fall asleep
And think. And stop. Thinking.
And wish. And don't. And feel.
And have it.

Her tongue of eyes

That, having said it.
Is, at last. Done.

The words have come.
One by one. Sometimes.
But finally. Forth!

What I have thought,
willed, spoke. This.

Dream, a city.
Drowned and screaming.
Muffled by waters that
Flow past, quick as a storm.
A riot, a coup.

The whole lawless fray
Loosed from the ravages
Of what dare not be heard.

Lest the low waves
Of our twin seas crash
Over our heads like ice
Breaking at dawn
Under the sunlit horizon
Of earth.

And what do my eyes see.
Except a page. Waiting.
For me to fill it with a mind.
Wandering from shore to shore.
Calling up the mighty Propontis
From its Grecian sleep.
To be perfect and alone.
Singing myself to silence
In a cellar warmed by rags
And drink. As I take my due
And give it back at the feet
Of Aphrodite. Patroness.
Of our castle. Its stone
Built by the passion of slaves
Sex workers and wars.

Her tongue of eyes II

Yet against the fire
A storyteller sits, just
Outside the tower
Under the holy guard
And from her mouth
A procession of tongues
Jangling roughly
In the morning, windy
Overlooking the throat
Of a sound, humming
Over a hot cup, steaming
High and full. She sips
Unafraid to take the gravity
Of the tale, that, like history
Weighs heavy on the seer
Causing slumber that
Does not blind the dreamer
From their pursuit of sense
In the nether worlds
Of our collective imagining

To build a home
Out of the blanket of soil
That dries my face
Back to life.

I and Abraham and Isaak

What happens after the retreat
When pride has shrunken to a knot
Loose, its frayed tangle found out
No longer mysterious or sexy
Enough to warrant action, assault
Or intrigue. When all daring floods
Out of the eyes, strong as a man
Bled dry, his heart ravaged
By the tides of a sea change
Broken like a backlash to crash
But when that knot forms a noose
Held up for the lost to raise heads
For the asphyxiating end of history
And fate, deciding otherwise, that I
A boy, in his thirties, hates his mother
Under cover of love, and pains
To tell her, angrily, of my spite
To lead a life surreptitious
Behind the veil of a Turkish woman
And the aggrieved past of our violent lust
Unslaked as the thirst of a drunk
Holding up his empty bottle to the sun
And crying out in prayers of Arabic
And Hebrew slavery:

‘Why have you Left me down here to die, I, yours,
Mad servant, wish to return To the happiness of my father
When he was in love and had his two sons.’”

Yet, I, winned and eaten up with total obscurity
Along the shores of the Bosphorus village,
entering my third decade, heard his voice tell
a story like that of my return from Cairo
An innocent listening to the bodies who made mine,
prostrate lain flat with silence and rage, nostalgic
for the laughter I heard never, and do not remember
But that might have been if not for my weight, because
I am his sacrifice. For me to exist my father had to die
to his name, so that I could have mine

On the lower side

Like how we used to play on that old blacktop noon
As we'd press our feet into the sludge of the street
Its cool magma blue, leaving our footprints and a curse
Before hightailing it outa there to the park, to pick teams
And race around the edge of the green, till the sun burst
Clean over the flats of our towering homes where we eat
And sleep till the bells of our longing call us back out
To the hoarse cry of our mothers and belts of our fathers
Long faded into the distance we have made with our feet
Carrying us away from where laughter splits our bellies
Wide over a crack of corn and the fizz of pop, telling tales
By the riverside of a kiss and the look of her face
When she saw how big his heart could swell
Before her smile, close to the smell of her hair
The way she moved ever so slightly in the midmorning
Haze of early life before memories repeat patterns
Of our eyes, because there is only so much that is new
So said our grandpa dying for his last breaths
To speak to us of the intimate ways we might play
With fate, but you gotta catch it as it flies, he'd spit
And his eyes, green and smoky with age, opened
The last time with a touch of life, having his last laugh

The death of love's ego

On the balls of my heels, and I'm swinging
Doing all that I can to keep my balance
Stay afloat, and ride along. Top down
Looking at the sky as I drive slow
Through the city of my dreams.
Listening to the low rumble of a helicopter
Thundering past as I let myself go and roll
A smoke. I've got a family to raise
From my bootstraps as I gaze, longing
At the horizon, ablaze! What does it say?
To where will I go drowning in the sound
Of what's untold. Like my loneliness alone
Thinking about the coming night
I'll sail atop these high buildings and fall
To my death, cold, broken, a man on his own
These are my thoughts as I dribble on the page
What passes through my mind in bold, signs
That lead to the ruins of our times, that
Which is known by the free, whose hearts,
Clear of ambition, even hope, have taken up
The whole awe of gravity for the chance
To elope with that goddess on the bridge
Who's threatening to jump to her life
And waits for a hand to take her away
From that place where only men roam
Where a woman is unknown, just a body
That he might grip and slave, and I'm late
She dives. And I follow her to our lives.

2019

a child's story

what is a cent to the infinitude of parts when I say I
and identify with what is left to space on either side,
swaying interminably between two endless flatlands
beyond the spine of a ridge where I am I and sit

motionless, to ready my wings for spreading
atop the heights of what altitude I might divine of mine,
to shatter the stone of the sky into countless fragments
of snaps broken in unison like a finger slapped

against my palm for a chance at hearing the air's moving,
and waving silent into the mass of eyes that look inward
I stare out but to look, to see, to steal a glance from the future night
and take what it is that I might for granted from the precious wide earth

starless, yet light with the solar effulgence of a dream, that life
sweetened by loss of memory, high, I taste the laughter of my wine
spiked with a sense of right, and joyful at the brink of longing
for union with all of life I drink up merry at the profundity of it all

happening as it does and has with what great mystery behind,
pressing its layers to unravel at the simplest will to ask, in silence
I listen to the dear dreary rain calling with the rhythm of its secret
told by a boy

a place and its people where I have lived

my neighborhood, oh my, my neighborhood
you who I say hi to, mornings, afternoons,
nights of slow strolls, coffees and dreams,
days that stretch like the cats on the street
who spy through my windows with glaring eyes,
yet shy, as they saunter with me, headphoned
or not, on a country trip by the silent sea, gazing
at the smoky clouds evaporating under the sun
high, sending waves of light over the island-flecked
horizon, south, turning heads, appreciating the last
2000 years of history in a hot look, and to forget it
over tea, and conversation, with acquaintances
other eyes, lighting up the overgrown boulevards
under awnings where full breakfasts are eaten
cheeses from all directions and Thracian herbs
a salad spiked with the orgasmic rush of the fresh
Anatolian tomato, cherry and oozing with time
pools of olive oil that leave my insides bright
with space, glowing as I step over dogs
and let them lie, because the day is restful
and our every decision deliberate, whiling
as the rest of the country, and world goes
to hell in a handbag, we are busy greeting
each other over simplicities that are not
the concern even of ourselves, and content
in the eye of a global storm we watch it pass
like a solar burst searing the edge of sky
that gleams on every side of this our Moda
where life goes on until the end of night
where we live for nothing more than a smile
a drink, between friends whose work is over
and have nothing to say, but to make something
up, funny, and then laugh and go to sleep

a steady wave

at long last, we are
together, once moved
by our tongues united
under pressure, to taste
what luscious wonders
we saw with our own eyes
us together, me and you alone
taken in by our senses and swinging
from branch to branch in total ecstasy
wandering through family trees
up and down, we ate the roots
and broke the seeds
flavored our meat with the bark
and tried the insects' exoskeletons
snapping between our teeth
so there you sat, and do sit
in my memory, holding your body
inward, like a fawn, shy, innocent
a beauty beyond age
how I loved you, afraid
we walked to the empty beach
we stared at the horizon
and you were not in my arms last night
there was another who came
to the words meant for you
come inside my arms
and for a moment, I remembered
hearing you, all to my spoiled self
until that pink sunset over Halicarnassus
when I said that we were going
in different directions and you kept my word
like a tragedy, the summer's ending
I said your name, the prophet's rose
take me back, I cried later
lost to time, and you, to space
we, star-crossed, on two paths
leading apart, as I drifted and watched
you set sail, yet hearing your voice
in my ear, volume unchanged, like a dream
a dream of us, never parting

an old voice of mine

what passion struck time of its last chord
and rang the dinner bell before some great homecoming...
a leaping child some five years of age with dog beside nearly his size

oh what escapes these humdrum hours
while i while away the time, betrayed by a flutter
in my studio of homes long forgotten to be found

again, reclaimed by mine hands working under sunlight
and moon rays, to touch the keys that open my heart dry
because it's been many a night lost to thoughts of death

just to hear a voice say, 'dream! oh dream, poet!' of other worlds
far-flung and untamed, mine eyes have seen the end of the road
of our history, blackened by the soot of our ancestors

and books and graves burned at the root and vanished
into the game of existence, and its double, the crafty one
who slithers remorseless through our souls, tempting us

to fall, to go mad at the thought of our future, unconsummated
by my failed efforts to attain a name, how i would grope
at that seductress of my unions with aspiration

the only thing holding me back is a thought, a murmur
from the deep of my brain, surfacing with a garbling voice
to declaim my every nerve and leave me breathless

fatigued, mediocre, and old, but for a resurgence
embracing the mystery and its power that i do not know
what i want for that self who i would become

were i to hold on and not let go to the thought
the premonition, the momentum of my being
and its reasons to create, or make conscious

that of creation which i alone might fathom
taking up the courage
to be present

another day, another light

train my eyes to follow sunlight
from its last ray over the horizon
to its first on the other side
because i am dry, unfeeling
and parched of emotion
enough to move me out of my seat
to tears, who would wallow
in the sad, dark alone?
when the light of day carries
through from night to morning
now, the makers of history rise
to see the blinking facade come
and sputter in the inglorious aftermath
of what once was meant to be home
but aren't i already done with fame
success, money, the wonder work
of a mind at ease, yet blown over
by the world, No, i say, to be a man
in his element, alone, is a fantasy of bliss
to raise both of my arms to the sun
at midnight and know it appears by other means
in another form, to the seer that hides in me
bound to nothing and no one
but his devotion to be what he has always felt
he has been, and to ride on that
changing, as it is not a being in the fixed
sense of I, capitalized, but a growing
inborn awe to surrender to soul
and know that dawn will rise in the east
and westward, will bring with it a day
that must be lived like a gift given
a gift received, from the totality of space
filled to the brim with life

basking in our darkness

my body needs you. i finally feel normal. more complete, beside you, and to kiss, i dissolve. i leave myself, but when i return there i am, smiling. because we've met and known the joy of our embrace,

and although it's impossible to stay together in this world. of duality and solitude. i trust that somehow, in the hint of your beauty, is the key to what. i'm missing, because i am i. and unable to tongue the vast gap. that breaks open between us, when i say goodnight, still i am hopeful that ours is an eternal return. to the place that always knew us, joined, but from this gray cold, november

we think of the future. and cry when we'll sleep with the cats and birds. beside and stay up sometimes. wondering if we never let go. would the world be changed by our lust that creeps like a second skin. tingling atop us, proud

upraised heads facing war and its parasites, tremors. nightmares, i am bewildered by your strength, darling. woman bold and strong. as heavenly light, awake. to my embrace, because i am going. nowhere in this thought of love, but die to it. like a body to its earth, and ashen, pale-faced

i slink back into the darkness of our memories, for a sensation of stable clarity, an ending focus to be at home in the arms of another and trust that while the world spins it can never rip us apart, for we are it, and have its powers. its weaknesses, its mystery. flown back against a wall struck by gravity,

i will die in your eyes

cigarette flicked at breakfast

for Hana

and she would ash mid-breakfast
into the center of the table, intoxicated
floating with the burnt memories of her
spying Slavic eyes, that raven-haired
succubus with a Hebraic name lofted
her volleys of stares into mine, the prey
and her, leopardess, venturing across
crumbling cheese and onion-sharp oil
that liquid gold of the land joining us
like male and female, locked in heat
eating up the last of the old world
with our nightly prayers, a convert
and her daughter, kneeling before
the apartment abyss where we stepped
down, Japanese-style to masticate
and misbehave at the top of our lungs
like babies reborn from between us
thin as sheets where we made love
less than often but enough, leaving us
both wanting more and sick for it
so we inhaled instead, of the black leaf
picked brown and dried by the fields
of Anatolia afar, by Kurdish fathers kissing
their sons on the edge of battle
civil warriors raised by stung throats
rasped by chains of constant silence
tongues deadened and removed
with surgical pincers that pierce
through a mother's heart, intoning
the sacred words of Mohamed
who taught submission to that last
testament, a poetic play of angelic harmony
come to save what of humanity remains

here, everywhere

a soft ground, warmth
a cup of tea, time to read a book
the optimism to write one
on and on for a human lifetime
that is beyond want of desire
and ambition, but to work
free and light, self-sufficient
and made, well-knowing
what dependencies carry
the beauty of being, a fleeting
beauty, through to the end
of knowledge, and as I am
under a test of winds, formed
out of the pain of a need
not based on necessity
inner longing to drive home
thought of doing consummated
in the act of creation, a right
upheld by the law of the heart
that I have striven alone
and yet have reached the place
where all are alone, the key
to unlock the world soul
and allow it to pour, out
its bodies into the seas
that swarm with human history
of migrants and men blown
to the edge, of what is right
and had for a vision of meaning
and worth, so cold, I wave
the letters of my unmet lovers
and cry out in the streets for an ear
who might hear me at my least
composed, my most ridiculed
with fear of silence, but to recoil
at home, resting over thoughts
of others, in intellectual simultaneity
cut time with a string of sentences
that say, 'I am here,
everywhere'

love on record

yesterday, I woke to the sound of you. what was it that came of you to be and wander about? you crept as beside my bed (well, couch), where I allow myself to drift in the silent oblivion of the city between 2 and 4 am, but for the occasional chatter of next door neighbors audible through the wall.

and I pick up and go. I leave the world that we made and enter my own. and it is in that instant before leaving when you appear, kneeling, and I imagine, with hands clasped, praying, as you would, for me to be well, because, you did love me, didn't you? I also loved you, and we were as together as two people could have been, and I do not regret it.

I only regret the distance that was not and was never us, because I would always win you back, time and again, back and forth like the heaving of someone ill after drinking to abandon, waiting for the final sensation to release themselves of all they are, to be humbled by the quiet cold nothingness that we all are.

And to stand up, face wiped clean and smiling, and to sing, to sing of the joy of our meeting, to cry out with the love we made for the world to echo through its longest nights and weakest moments, for we built immortal power into our flesh every time we kissed and made that love which is everlasting, as the truths of our existence, as the history of us.

nothing said or done to him

what will happen to us, who unmasked, will wait and wonder of the time spent alone. and where it went, when our loved ones suffered and thought of us, a mess

is there a place, a way. where all that was lost to time and distance might be rejoined. and in celebration, clear a space for our union. as between a mother at home, and her son

long gone, flown to the reaches of Earth. far off, and unknown as silence, bridged. to the elevation of lust. raw, to possess a man of a child, in his early form

captivated by the presence of his sight, he who strides from end to end of a floor. bare, in a room full of women. and naked, does not look away

from the door, straight ahead. that speaks to him in tongues and flickering light. as a haunting ghost of his ancestral passage. of Greek and Jew. that returning, has a lot

to do with his sense of direction, whereabouts. his nose for an opening in the universe, born of memory and wrought of reason, for he is a man of thought,

not strapped for time, because his ideas touch the gush of a spring immortalizing, uplifting him to where clouds disappear into the fog. above mountains and towers, before he makes his great descent,

and comes down from the trip of his life to smile forgetfully at the whole. dizzying flood of emotional tapestries. hanging to dry by his bedroom window which he leaves open.

so he can see the stars twinkling through the late summer mist out of reach, beyond. the trees, swaying. in the warm, teardrop night, I hear it all at once. nothing, the purity of nature. in the city, a sound

unadulterated, that buzzing. flicked off like a switch from the ground, I crawl back home, cross oceans of my love's lost longing. that irreplaceable heart. that one who got away. never to be seen again

ode to kronos, god-eater

what is the power of my love, after
it has diminished, under a bad sign
only to return like a shooting star
rare as a miracle, slinking back
like a reptilian head recoiling within

Turtle Island, and who is my lover
after a winter's passing thaws
to reveal my gushing heart overflowing
like a pomegranate halved with the juice
of my seed, to wash over her mouth
thirsting for me to shake off my soul
and dance in the warmth of her thighs
and who am I to love, what madness
could provoke me to pour out
my tears, my life, to be martyred
to the stake, impaled, affixed, aflame
over our passion, but is that the love
the burning of all that is to excess
around a love that wears us to the bone,
for those who are not but skeletal, apart
from flesh alone; I've felt a place, diving

a hand inward through my belly
where my bowels groan a love story
in verse, strung up like pearls of sausages
the meat of the matter, that we laugh
at the absurdity of the impulse to consume
each other, like a Greek god his children
with envy, greed, and a fucking weakness

On self-sacrifice

that golden law, an impression,
to sweeten the passage through mind
with awkward emotional pulling,
all strings taut and fraying,
like a wish, mounted on the tongue
for release into the ether of our gorgeous union
with mystery, I savor each raindrop
as I let it go from my tongue unleashed
and looking down, cross-eyed, there I see
a fork, and the sound of my slithering, "Awake!"
I say, and ride out to the storm where clouds formed
geometrics of darkness over the cornfields
and sunflower patches that sway in the bitter Midwest
freeze, but for a secondary glance at the edge of the land
brightening, the sky vanishes to reveal space
in all its glorious, empty confounding
that of the absolute question manifest, of how and why
we might be, of where we might fill its unanswered totality
with our very human mythologies, of an apple bitten
and sold by the devil's tempting, who I have become
as I slurp my forked tongue back into my toothless grin
and power home to blend night into the reason of day
struggling to make sense of all that is lost and wrong
fired by the thought that the future could salvage these days
leaving us with but the sound of the word made holy
as flesh butchered and claimed for a ceremony
to sacrifice ourselves
to ourselves

running on emptiness

let's make a break for the end of the road
i'll race you, and see you out of the corner
of my eye, on my toes, till the last minute

when i gasp as you overtake me, and raise
your hands to the sky and scream out with joy
at defeating me who you love and had always

beaten you in everything else but this
and you'll savor it and taunt me and i'll hold
my knees and inhale deeply and shed a tear

of frustration, a sore loser and you'll kick dust
in my face and spit at my feet and dance
and i'll straighten my back and then drop

to all fours and roll over exhausted, and lie
on my back, and i'll look at the sky
and every thought of you will drift away

with the clouds and i'll think of something
else like my grandmother or walking
to the beach as a kid over brambles

and wild cherries and sand dunes
before the misty ocean rose to greet
me with the salty refreshing scent
of its cool clarity and your voice will grow
mute and vanish from my ear altogether

and i'll see the daytime moon, full, it'll be
and then i'll close my eyes and remember
when we met and open them and you'll be
gone and i'll be on the ground with the feeling
of defeat and a pain in my thigh for running
from the ghost of you who i can't beat without you

Selam Says The Elder

They light open fires on the streets of the city
In the alleyways, work hands warming
Over metal and dust

The splintered furniture and derelict floors
Abandoned and cannibalized neighborhood
Sex workers' pill poppers line up for oral fixations

Migrant storm eyeing the land of old Constantinople
Ingratiated to lord over the seas like twin bodies
Joined at the throat and crying out with both tongues

Like the rooster who struts cocky beside his three hens
Kissing them with procreative lust from behind
Amid the *gecekond* gardens raising up green vegetables

Just before spring as a man emerges
Into the light of day for the first time all year
To say, *Peace*

taking just a moment to sit and have a small bite

so long as it comes, I, at home, after a journey back
through the jungle earth of my past, that is only present
at a distance, yet clinging to the apparition of the future
optimistic and depressed in the flux of a groundless awakening

I am inspired to be that someone I might be if I can pick up
from where I left off, after every darkness, every unknown
that haunts my nights of pleasure from the reality, that is
hunger and the nerves that follow, escaping as I think

what of tomorrow, and what will I do and have not a clue
but for the thinking now, for a moment's passing, disguised
by the look of others whose high never fades from prestige
and the holy golden facade of beauty, that drunken horror

show that begins with a few grabs and gropes to get us
going, unafraid but careful into the mystic dawn ablaze
but what is that at the end of the dock but me, shouting
back, looking to take hold of the echoes that calculate

cold in the wintry landscape of pill-popping fantasies
yet rising through the low and proud air that settles
at these parties of minds of eyes, we glare, worked up
and wondering who did it as a woman goes missing

and her man goes too, after her, to look at love's loss
to the sheer gravity of her loosened grip, that of life
that cares little for human passion and is moved
only to consume or smother us in its machine waste

yet gushing upwards into the tunneling vertigo of black
we, citizen space cadets, fly to catch a glimpse of earth
before the sun burns us blind, and then hovering, boldly
up there, we raise our hands and eyebrows and think

of swallowing the whole mess whole, and as we do it is
reduced to not but a sliver of a morsel that crumbles
to dust, inedible in the breezy afternoon nonchalance
of a man, experimenting with taste, without a thing

to tongue, just to conjure
the feeling, wetness, crunch

that galactic insight gone

what notion, that disastrous fell
like an apartment building mid-quake
along the shores of these citified hoods
as we pull weeds out of the ground

becoming, a person with a who who hoots
in the night, perched from a room, to oversee
the goings-on about town, that i hear
a honk and murmuring, the gusto and grace
of a people who have sacrificed silence

for a click, that rage of fingertip decisions
once blossomed from the corner of our minds
now overgrown, a meadow strewn with the trash
of the world, where we nightly gaze upward
to seek bliss in the unknowing of our life

i have been there, at the tip of the edge
where a voice thunders into the clear blue
beyond, to strive and be that which we had
once, and wanted but losing confidence
in the grip of our souls, we lunge headlong

into oblivion and misery, each day a battlefield
of drones, the lust of our vision, toppling
but stretched like the film of our morning eyes
drying, only to capture a secondary figment
of wisdom, cresting as a tsunami would

over the endless black void of Earth's movement
that sea of mystery, eyeless and untouched
for its impalpable vacuum of laws, which i reach
with my hand, out to its absolute nothing

and to think, our spinning, as we delight
in the rocking chair land of sidewalk's cracking
and i tumble to text a friend and get a lover
back home to lie changing under the stereoscopic
mind of our stars' binary explosion

that's all i have, it might not be enough

at long last, the losing has come to its end
mighty, and fallen hard, brushing itself off
cleansed by its own tears that course a river
without a source, motherless, the cosmic

circle, unbroken, unoriginal, yet perfect
without a copy, unable to reproduce, solitary
feeling for a touch in the cold brutal air
that whips flesh like a slave under noonday sun

we trespassed that reality with a smile
and the grace of our bodies turned on
by the light of a dank and made bed
in that memory of mine that does not fade

your body is full and wants mine
we sink into the bath warm water
of our kissing, lusting for a taste of that
union, we knew when together, without

thought of ever having separated or to
but now that time has aged our hearts
we are still under the dim moon and reflect
on the yawning hope that another might

sweep us through that holy catastrophe
of our long and tired wonder, knowing
somehow, that we would be disappointed
by the encompassing mass of earth

and its invisible reach through the mystic
fire of empty space, but bold we go forth
as one, truly merged, unspoken, drifting
like an orbiting pair of stars, that binary

piercing the black heaven with a sight
a question, of our ungraspable fate
to go on being, somehow,
some way

the double life of my love

it was first, that vision of desire
consummated, a soul lit with its intent
to be, full and living like the voice

it issues from, with a thought of hope
i have seen myself wanting in the cold
blue dark of sleep, while waking

and needing that which i came to be
and never was, here i am, a figment
of a sound, of a letter, written to no one

and meaning nothing, but that it was
signed, engraved, marked with humanity
equal, lain under the shadow of stone

where we reflect what of us is still earth
and breathes like the soil of a shallow
near grave, be the night, be the night

i say, in the lone hours of my journey
through what plans i've made having
meditated to the source of becoming

to the point that i wish i was i being i
without compulsion to assume what
whims haunt my days with the likeness

of a body, for to compose a poem and let it
stretch for a lifetime of pearls strung
around the soft neck of my beloved

who i wait for, looking into my pain
for a sign that she may come to rest
with me and take our shoes off at home

enjoying what solitude we make together
where we imagine novels, the romance
of the times and journalize for a living

meant in verse

the imperfection of ours

back when we were savages and had no numbers. i invented your heart out of the dust of my wanting.
you, and scattered, I am left breathless, tonguing. at the corners of all that remains of our home, its stone
crumbling and fibers frayed, as i step carefully

over the cracks of what time we lost of fear, and hate. that said we stretched out once over the grass of the
city and kissed for an eternity. hugged by the sheer metal that was warm and human to the touch, and
slowly rising. as from the comatose of our lives anew, reincarnate to meet again. as I and you, we brushed
ourselves off, and headed for the sea

where the salty air inflamed our chests with a singular pride. unknown since the last dawn
of our deathly sleep, but resurrected from memory we stand alone. looking in opposite directions
yet inescapably driven back by the nature of the globe. and its circular course of return that vacuums what
space was made. between us, into a wall, that we might scale and claim with the flags of our belonging,
only to tumble

into the shadows beneath such insurmountable heights that drive vertigo and lunacy up through our skulls
ignited by the thought that we might know what feelings we had to ourselves and believed were exclusive
only to burst open in a blaze of anger, at the vile horror of the individuated fate that is our human all too
human life, chained to the desertion of our past
that we bury like a living member of our family, and while the muffled screams go

silent we stop and smoke to tempt the devil's last laugh. that boils over from our empty stomachs. into a
cosmic giggle at the whole farce of flesh and its ghosts that roam in our brains, flicking on the switches.
that cause us to feel these passing days of distance, for the rest of our cold lonely nights, bound to forget.
what it was to wake happy and free. in our ultimate flaw: loving

the sound of a winter rain

i fill my lonely head with the air of time
and watch behind my eyes as it deflates
spurting out a jet stream of anxiety
into the blank, cold ether, once empty
truly oblivious, it, of itself, returns to the fold
where times overlap and space is condensed
with meaning, and law, but, i have known a place
where the drawstrings that dangle in front of my face are pulled
to reveal a white rabbit hopping from a hat
and an abstract trickster whose voice echoes
like the disappearing elephant in the room of our lives,
so i smile and wade in the constant sound of rain
pelting on a window, each droplet slapping against concrete
until the madness of it all ascends
from my hot shrieking mouth
with a tired rage enough to turn
any sane man into a freak of nature
detested by his own snaking back
into the solitary home of his devices,
he reaches out through gloves that penetrate
a laboratorial world contaminated by total virginity
and slack, i sink in my seat and take what time i have
to let not just the hours pass but my body that slinks deeper
into the stationary, fixations of a mind at peace, but unable and unwilling
to fight, to resist, against the warm creature comforts of a life individuated
to abandon, martyred by ambition, inflated with pride

to let and let go

oh let them laugh, let them be free for a moment,
and taste it, to feel all that is fleeting, pass through
again and again for eternity

let them have a night after each
day, and take what time they may

I hear them late, but let them get into your veins and
feel your pulse rise with theirs as they grasp wanting
the world, to slow under its darkening

let them orbit our brains,

I have no salutations, instead I surrender
at the thought of remaining
unfazed, by the loneliness
of their voices, picturing them
smile, and I hear myself think

let them be,

let them take what time

they will, to be together and share
the sound of their voices, their presence

their space, let them come together
and like birds, chirp and tweet, as I fall
asleep, in a room of my own, bothered
at times, by the sounds that invade

like the entire universe falling on me
as an interrogator torturing me, to
get an answer from my loneliness

and in moments when light pours
in through the my windows I feel
all that is outside of me and my home
entering uninvited but for the tranquil
rhythm of rain falling, on the street
audible outside, to remind me that

outside is inside, and in is out,

and I am over, always exposed
subject and vulnerable to changes

in the world, as its parts merge
and collide and reproduce and form
string sections symphonic

harmony

and industries of inhuman dissonance
the corporation of one mind as the billions
of bodies flung into each other to say

let me be

day one, the auspicious burial of a kitten

a last laugh and then a fall, into what grave. i still hear me breaking through the hard soil, even if buried
alive. i want to live. i am a vowel. i breathe.

take up the burden of this body. stand. let all that it is to be wake. fast. hold the meat. strengthen that
desire, because it is wanted when it is not had.

we end up in our beds. and then we slip, slide, and are evaporated by the toxic air that drives us calmly
through the road to death.

on the eve of my first night. in a place where i find myself. a cat reaches the end. a juvenile, stretched to
the brink of existence, expired.

and i buried its name. what knowing is had by ours who drink up the knowledge of life and piss it out
without a thought. let her go. she is asleep.

a body of an animal. lost in the sex of being. trusting in all that never was but had to be, we are like her.
all of us. fated. fixed. present past.

wanderers staking our claim in each other

it's been a long, long road. but finally, i am here. in the middle of where. and it is strangely familiar, only,
i can't exactly tell how i got here.

where is here? here is a place i have found, and longed for. that awful way. a course through the endless,
tunneling saga, enchained. but horrified by the total awe.

we have asked of ourselves many questions. and now that we have arrived at the answer, which is a
physical destination, we are held fast to the edge of all that we have known.

"take me by surprise," she says. and cold, holds out her hand. i touch it. we embrace. at last all that i have
wanted is ours. but did she?

alone, huddling in a corner. stripped clean of all that i once was. i have taken up the struggle to be afraid,
and hold on to that flesh, that wisdom.

pained to ask what we have always wanted to say. i hear her voice in the rain. it drops like a splashing.
and then it is heard. splash.

flat, i respond. angered by the silence. totally rapt in the fantasy of her eyes. we strike a match and lay out
on the open surface. two dead fish, ashore.

untitled #1

I am home, sick. Flooding out. From my sinuses. The slow drip. Of consciousness. As my head spins. Wondering, I dream. Holding fast. To the horror of what.

Boredom ensues. While I dry out. Under the raging sun. Of night, this dark. Effulgence, spreading. Out, like a hand of knives. That I see, splicing. My filmic brain. Into a tunnel vision. Of form, glowing. Careful, and wishing. To touch the end. Of my nose, with a poker.

Long, hot, I drift inside. Myself, alone, but there. Is no escape from what lies. I have lived in the cold. Unseen corners of my mind. Lost, afraid, distracted. By light and pain. Wanting to go off. In fragments and fireworks. That spring bold and lusting.

For a pleasure-seeker. Who might ring my doorbell. And answer my phone. Calling after me in the silent. Trespasses of the city. Its black alleys, bold. With the force of awe. Gone through, untold. Visions on rustic wine. Its unending jugs replenished. By a touch, a look. Emptying my face. In a draught of mesmerizing fate.

That I, drunk, would fall in love. With a new name. And take it up, as my own. Against the bitter force of history. That flickering curse of language. That at times erupts into pure music. Becoming visible

Istanbul. 4.32am

untitled #2

we're all mad and making each other sick
but what we need is us, to fight
its constant demands, in the silence

of that, waking moment of night or tired day
when we slip away, gone to the edge
of reason, with a mind in lust with itself

gored to the brink of sanity, knowing full
well, what we came to do, here
on the planet rock, ringing us around

till we're free of all that stings us
clear of the pain of being, and breathing
and seeing and believing that

what we need is us, till the merry goes
round and we sink slow into shut-eye
visions of horror, our blood trapped
in a Mediterranean vase, without relief
posing for the lens of immortality
on an earthly vessel, filled with intoxicants

earthly and thick, suffused with herbs
hallucinogenic, that tingle going down
my dry throat, rasping for a spout of cold

clarity, under a low-hanging branch
that waves in the painted landscape
of fortress europe plundered

by the victims of its own latent plundering
whose movement of karmic winds rise
into the fire-born night, and trace lines

through the loud air that sends up embers
burning slow under moonlight streaming
bold over wet dirt, where my feet track

my existence, onto the noise of it all
condensed into the image of that place
where my flesh lands at home

untitled #3

emotion is counter to what i feel
in a rut, stuck, in fact not feeling
cold and objective with myself
my thoughts, a calendar
every imagining a slide
that clicks with the shutter's
sound and reels back shot
against the light that projects
our memories of when we were
no more real than our pair of eyes
dimming in unison under the sun

summer waves allowing us that
much needed rest at the end
of day, when we sleep, simply
there, we want and can not have
but grasp to rinse our hands
of that blood that trickles down
from our bold, bulging veins
opened at our slightest whim
in the depths of winter, lusting
for a kiss in the unearthly black
six dungeons of the northern mind
that comes down from its drugs
of rape and smokes what is lost
gone, and will only return in dreams
forgotten at first light, waking
to write in the dawn glow of Monday
morning, just after midnight
when stray cats sleep in the yard
and not a single dog barks
or engine hums, no neighbors call
and love is nothing more
than an afterthought, before a kiss
to spring my being into force
and retrieve what power
I once knew alone

untitled #4

i don't know, you tell me
because the last time i checked
you had skin in this game
and we were in it together
what happened to you
i mean, look at you, you
can't even look at me in the face
and you call yourself, what?
that someone you were
meant to be, but tensed
before the future, in front of a mirror
of me, looking straight through
because i know you
because i know me
because once we were we
and had a life together
and roamed wild
with our hair down
and got lost till the sun died
but now where are you?
more lost than ever?
that's what it looks like,
not i, not me, not this
but it is, all of it, you in full
all of the choice you've made
ever, to wake the next day
and feel bare hate like a parasite
that sucks you clean and leaves you
wanting it to take more
a total stop
from which you can't rise
no more, and want nothing else
besides, the touch of the nearest door
to swing wide and let you leave
but here you are, forever where you'll be
alone inside yourself
fixed, dependent on this thing
you never asked, but that is you
and what have you made of it?
an excuse, denial, pain?

no, you're awake

untitled prose

i guess it's just that when we were young we hadn't met ourselves yet. i mean we were so taken by the world and its possibilities for us. we wanted to learn all of its languages.

if i know Arabic, i can pick up Urdu, and then i'd have Hindi and get closer to German, and maybe Kurdish, but first Spanish so French will be easier.

and we thought of traveling afar, because Mongolia seemed like the complete opposite of everything we'd ever imagined.

and once there getting to meet the Ainu of Japan and the Torres Strait Islanders would be likely on the way to the Falkland Islands and Madagascar, to every endemic species surviving in the jungles and deserts of our remoteness.

but then somewhere along the way we had an urge to go within and to come back with something new that's special to us.

but that must be crafted by our skill, our discipline and our desire preserved and stoked to bring it to life.

and that, the great voyage, even the uncharted seas of the self, where we are introduced to that totality in the way that while perhaps transparent and unreal is all that we are.

so how to bite our teeth and grow our hair or create that which is to be had since it is that which we are, of nature, as a plant wilting in the bright sun and flowering at the chance to be seen and sweetened and tasted and plucked.

voice of memory

my breath is marked by your sound
my tongue yearns to speak your name
again, with the richness of our mixed bloods
pulsing through our veins and into the place
where we meet, to become one, like it was

once, unafraid, the way you looked
at the donut shop in Brooklyn, over a dollar
coffee, thin as my voice seeking yours
in a touch, how you tempted me
without a smile, but through eyes
that dared to say, *join me*, and we leapt

into the waterfall of the world
from such heights as that
confounding peoples and nations
and fate, alone, walking along the edge
of land and sea, I dream under the stars
and look up, wondering if your laughter is
causing you to burst like it would

in our house, our world of love
and wealth and faith, how we prayed
with your thick womanly body
pressing against my face
your hand rubbing my chin, wet
with the rituals of strength
that held us together, until we snapped
clean, finally, pained to give birth
to ourselves, as solitary, human
wondering, waiting

what is the sound of one leaf turning

i remember that smell of newness
like a fresh page, lain down on a writing
desk, ready to receive the impressions

of a mind, wanting to fill space with itself
growing out of time, yet in some improbable
way, fast to the truths of history, but more

in legend, told after dark, by candlelight
in the taverns of our old forgotten town
that was swallowed by the gulping many

and their brews of wheat and vine, playing
soft to the records of our fancy, we grasp
at the future, and are cut by its long Arabian

dagger, a swift and painless motion, that
severs our digits and renders us untouchable
pacified by the air, cleaned by the sand

we wonder, unable to mark our path, and
remain unknown for eternity, or what is not
known by measuring the movement of ours

planetary immersion against the starry wall
of pure black, that reminds us that space
is within, and is infinitely dividing our core

from all we might hold, dear, and flung
through its nebulous astrolabes of frames
we dance upward, yet wingless into the high

of our natural mind, unscathed by the divorce
from reason, we seek each night, involuntary
sunken and had by the freewheeling muses

of dream, where i have seen your name
written in cloud and light, and the word itself
without meaning, sounds as from a voice

that is similar to mine, singing

when it was our time and place

the last time we were together
i held your hand, you listened to me
say, *i love you*, and left by boat
with me, listening to you on the phone
say, *it's okay*, somehow, i turned around

i remember that same pier where i left
you to work, the morning after arriving
to the city where we lived together
for years, it rained, it snowed, it was hot
and cold, and you and I had each other
as close as any two people can get

in our hearts, we sprung to life mesmerized
by the call to refresh our senses of home
and laugh aloud with the lonely howl of creation
strolling through our long lost neighborhood
nostalgic as national history, greeting cooks
baristas, booksellers, gallerists, and awing
at the stone scrolls of the old synagogue
still keeping on in the Bosphorus village air
its water winds sweeping uphill to the cemetery
with the Jewish names of my mother's people
preserved in black and white, for us

to think of our place as a time, and reflect
like our bodies over the rushing underwater
current as the great pilgrimage we're on now
together, apart, and in the silence of shabbat

i hear you ringing me up for a good bout of babies
and dears, sweet-tongued refrains that played
the song of our naive, fleeting, youthful enchantment
on repeat, an uncharted hit that struck all the chords
right in my head, leading me to my own way forward
before eternal death takes us back to where we met

who we are, who we were, and who we will be

if it's not too much to ask, i'd like to know your name
i think i'll remember it, because your smile is too bright

to hide, and your face looks like a sweet and ripe apple
that i would never dare bite for then i would know good

and evil, and we would fly from Eden, out of grace
covering our privacy with gilded leaves, that we once

plucked to eat and now twist and stitch into pieces
to hide our shame, and separate our lust from what

longing we need, but unfulfilled then we strip under
the moonlight, of this earthly hell, and seen by all, sate

our bellies well knowing that everyone also wishes
they could have just a figment of our ecstasy

because ours is original, and we are the first man
and woman on Earth, and the people will be named

after us, till the end of time, yet running out of answers
for the weary and impatient who would rush its course

and see the end a crash of cymbals as the symphony
silences to echoes that ring in our ingenious brains

to reconfigure creation in ways that conjure alchemies
of continuity, like a never-ending swing that only uplifts

but does not flip, and it makes us happy, that sensation
of quickening, and heightening, the motion of a sphere

of water, that glows under the fires of space, unseen
we secretly make love with ourselves, bringing on

the apocalyptic jubilee, ablaze, shooting smoke holes
through our throats with the alcoholic rites of passage

that consummate the undead love of our belongings

2018

again, again, and again

let's all become one profound massive orgasm,
coming in unison, to let ourselves go, smoke in bed

and take a bath, wander for hours afterward outdoors,
come home and just read far from time, or any clock

to bend the rules of language, to devote days of energy
for one purpose, to feel the warp of the earth as it sinks

into complete oblivion, to ride the wave and get whiplashed
on the way down, to crash like an epic shipwreck, spun

Homeric against the rocks of old Greece, where now
there are refugees, countless, tens of thousands, huddling

in search of shelter from the sea, alone beyond history
its confines like a single toilet to every 73 reports the *Times*

who cast a net of knowing over the whole stinking mass
of humanity and hope to reel in survivors who might catch

a break and surf uptown to European way, from end to end
of every blasted extreme, where I stand, outstretched

to touch each side and remember to ask, who am I?
this is my time to live and die, observing through glass

and light, the wheezing, bone-thin lust of destruction
clasped by my one free hand as I swing in with the other

from a lone rope dangling from heaven, as I beckon
the groundless and earth-worn to climb and join me

as I rise to the fire and swallow it in a gulp, breathe it
out like a dragon and pound my chest, declaring myself

king, sultan, tzar, every title of ruling men, and at once
doing it, i look down and see no one but me again, again

blood moon night

and that ungraspable lure returns
forcing me to feel the tender raw core
my heart like the blood moon of the night
I see its face fade into black
across the unseen sky, sheltering my eyes
for a drink to smile in the moment
a silent inner burst of bliss, found
by the midsummer candles of stars
holy season fully lit by the dark of a secret
union of awe with love, rained down
onto our heads, a gentle patter
wetting the ends of our long, young hair
I must say I do enjoy a long bold draught
of alcoholic spritz as I hold onto my glass mug
confident as a god with his hand clasped firmly

on the nature of joy in the body, and sipping
the golden fluid down with a satisfying gulp
I take with my other hand a burning ember
smoking a paper-rolled stick of tobacco
to inhale my deepest memories of that time
a moment when I decided to leap from childhood

to the initiation that stands bare and bald
before death, inescapable and playful
like a romance whose life was cut short
by travel, by the crossing of paths
on the wide road to my soul's great longing
to be with her, embracing and shedding tears
like the skin of our lonely and wronged pasts
when we took short, straight paths
when we stepped sideways for forward
and were driven back by the stony elements
shape-shifting in our minds like autumn leaves
and late in the season now I am tossing
and turning all night, wondering, waiting
impatient, till unconscious and taken
by the great force of fatigue, drifting above
my bed stand window as the street lamp gleams
and calls me out to witness the universe bleed

don't go down that road, not again

ain't no one calling on me tonight
been right banished through the afternoon
and night, it's all i know is to pass the time
between some tune and a record
to fall in love maybe somehow
with a glint in my eye, but i'm hopeful
and wondering with a wish on my sleeve
thinking under the rain and leaving
my head clean most mornings when the sun shines
through, well, she's just a thought now
in the back of my head until i feel down to my heart
and rip out all the hair atop my thinning scalp
scratched out down to the age that lightens
by night as my mind seeks an escape
from the dreams that rush along my veins
like the swill i drink imagining another one
around the corner to save me, to wash away the fear
that finally it's only me in the mirror
and everything we call life is that reflection
staring back at times polished, sometimes stained
i wonder looking up and as time passes down
at my tarred and splintered feet
walking cross the city and back
between continents floating above the cliches
a sunken ship i am when i hear in English
my only native identity when realizing myself as the spiritual
landless freak of time in solidarity with those i'll never see
but to work for cash and watch the hour
to its lone, dead end

Jonah of Konstantiniya

he was a drowned man. his mouth deep as the silence. at the ocean floor. and at his upper lip his seascape face was tinged with sunlight red. obscured by the curve of the earth.

at first sight of the coast. the blinking awe of city-dwellers. drew in salt-clean air. as spotlights shone against the earth-hardened port, islands and peninsulas. fade in the distance.

as night falls and the moon rises through. the towering call breaks. low rumble of ship engines and the constant murmuring. passersby in the timeless force of primal sound.

he did not hear that call besieged by ocean wilderness and soaking in the blood of men. staining his face, still weathered by the rock-sculpted power of water.

surviving storms and empires. he became *a friend*. aging in the eye of the Ottoman capital. seafront lit with the ancient nostalgia for New Rome. petrified to a lifeless stance that once was.

the compromise of history. led by the vagrant predator of men. seeing through the naked eye to the star of Islam, led by a full moon. reflecting over the darkening strait. poisoned to death.

in *his name*. the people of today are patient. work to home, womb to grave. life goes, expanding. from the single point of creation. to the multitude returning. through the formless silent face.

worn by successive tides. flat stone, bustling water. cliffside groves, rose-hued sky. his thoughts are as pure as the core. life reflected in the fragmented surface. the deep, saying nothing. only muffling the urban roar.

last days of love

after all i keep writing. my heart has flown off. into some great disappearing act of sadness, and i alone take to the pen, a single shape of one.

but what do i write for?
and who do i write to?

it seems that i only have a voice. in the silent dark, where my notes rest. in peace, a sliver of light. my brain speaks to me. they will be found and heard, and played.

and i think i hear my door. open, like she's come home. but she is so far now. almost the continent stretch or more, and she is happy. like i wanted for her, only i'm not there to see it on her face.

so what of my happiness?
is it possible to be without?

and now i've lost all poetry. and subjectivity, i've lost myself. all that is left is the question. 'will she be mine again?' and i hear it in my head. like a recurring dream, it begins.

beautifully, with all of the great hope and love of youth and after everything once high becomes low. because we have grown. and the highest point is now.

right before our eyes, we reach out to touch it and graze the tips of our noses. we might laugh, or cry with frustration at the sheer irony of separation.

in a world already separate. love. till we find that. chemical connection again. of pure innocence and excitement. so we spend our days in solitude.

a researcher of love, observing. the clouds and waves for a sign. reading our old letters to old flames. and trying to rekindle the passion of discovery, to make love new.

and feel our hearts again. beat to the pulse of our lust. for life, without the trappings of desire, because truly in love. our every want is had and satiated to the full, it leaves us bare and blind.

when it leaves, and it's left with her. like my 20s.

Triangle Window, Pyramid Light

the triangle window casts a pyramid
light into the wooden attic

i pray on a mattress on the floor
clothes and books strewn around

thoughts fly like pages in the Bosphorus wind
emotions weigh like pounds of flesh sold

in the marketplaces of time
the city is heard from above the top-floor

apartment home of a dancer and singer
married to memories of London in Besiktas

on an Istanbul street named for the Egyptian Garden
once full of linden and irrigated by a brook

running from Maçka valley to the summer palace
and genuflecting deeply in the dark of a mind

silenced by two eyelids firmly closed but for a tear of longing
for mother and home, I am besieged by a torrent of sound

the echoing crescendos of the *adhan* calling believers to submit
to the almighty power of the universe under a roof of stone

quavering with the amplified and sometimes prerecorded voice
of Arabic invocations to the highest, and down below the grinding

and cutting of concrete with blade-run machines and then
after work and religion, there is play, the laughter and yelling

children out before dark to swim in an air of temporary peace
around the city of serious men and disciplined women

after the prayer there is smiling, after the solitude of everyone
devoted to the One, there is union, togetherness

and the joy that is the meaning
of life in this world of worlds

I am this book and I have a soul

I am this book, and I have a soul
Walk through any bookshop, even library
From the remotest collections of Central Asia
To the central archives of New York City
In all of the shelves spanning Earth
(An infinite number of the imagination)
There I am, bound in spines and lines
And sitting patiently for a soft hand
To open me and know that I am

This book, a soul
Twin of the world soul
I am a friend to man
Beloved by all
Take me, I want you
We will go together over shores
Mountain, and plain, my words will
Bridge your sentences of solitude
I'll make you a fugitive of pure reason
We will communicate with the stars
Over floods of wine and voyage
Over the drunken sea awash in spit
And tear in defiance of the real
For the sake of the future

I am this book, a soul
Some say G-d himself
Through me, some say I can
Make you known from end to end
Of the wide Earth and down the ages
That I can seal your eternal reputation
By the immemorial records of history
And join your name to the pantheon
Experimenting in human language
That is me, leaping out of time
From tongue to ear, chisel to stone
To pen and page, only to say, *Love*

The High Beliefs of the City

Believe that. Here are the birds of the concrete jungle. Adapted from the forest. To rectangles and concrete. Satellite dishes and telephone wires. Glowing spires and dusty terraces. Birds. Living on pure ash and hot sun. Like the phoenix. Perpetually fallen. Into a pasty gloom.

These are the short-lived. Bodies. Winged and light. Who rise above the smog. And leave the people to gasp. In wonder. At the evolution. Of cities. Among men. Who have built caged minds. Out of the living earth. To seed the hard-lain. Stone. Of work and money. And lift off. With envy and optimism. In a rage of fire and oil.

I have seen. A people. Shift and wheel. In flight. Through empty space. Bound for blocked soil. Of skylines. Flapping and gliding. In a silent eve. Of vertigo. A flightless thought. Immobilized. With fear. In the flocks that prey. And nest alongside mates. Bloated with greed. Whose chests puff and posture. A spectrum bold. Into the morning. Gulls cackle and moan.

In the predawn night. They circle and land. On a vent. A chimney. A roof. And squawk. Sing out. Into windless days. Of lowered human bodies. Broken wings. Cracked beaks. And flying people. Who look up. And down. For the middle way. In the free air. Between cities. Between highs.

the ghost of a pilgrim

I see a traveler walk in
my new home of spirit
He is bundled with fabrics
an imperial Ottoman explorer
venturing into the heart of power

In the core of life
in the city of ghosts that fade
Into apparitions, for sleepless nights longing
To be known, an eternal guest, waking before dawn
To lift a packed bag, he is a robed man, turbaned
And he has pilgrimed, yet here he stops

A childless and motherless being
He carries the name of his father like a black scar

The future flashed before his fearing eyes
As he sinks with silent gravity into the floor
Eyeing me in my home, we wonder of time
And the vast distance of history untold
With naked souls bent and wanting to sit
And eat, as wayfarer and host in the mind
Of friendships of herbs tea, nuts and water

Light filters through street window curtain
The hour recedes behind Europe's veil
We imagine the gold of waste streams
Volcanic fire through the irrigated land

"I have been there," he tells me, cracking a pistachio
"What you hear is true." I am awed by his divorce
With reason, skeptical with an untrained eye
Waiting for the night to free love to smile
And remember the place we call home
When we are nowhere
And fast from the rites of naming

Meet Him, Her

Meet him. Only a man. Frail at times. Imperfect always. (Except in his dreams). He gives life. Airing the ground. He sows seeds. And reaps a nourishing harvest.

Meet her. Only a woman. Her heart soars with wings of light beyond stars. Her name is silent. And she has not been heard of since her language died with the land of her birth. Taken by walls and flags of men afar. And still she does not know her own strength. As she is.

I am him. I do not know my name. I have not yet learned to pronounce my language. Who I am is a mystery. Am I in the mirror? I am strange. Exotic. And more fantastic than the most unlikely face I have seen. I fear only myself.

I am never able to see myself. I do not know myself. I trust that I am me. The man I am will live in peace. With the mad chaos and absolute power to love. My nerve. Of thought.

I am him. And when at last I am myself. Only a man. There she sees me in the folds of memory and time. A wounded healer. Showering bare earth with the soft touch of a human path. She is. There. Light dims to blindness.

She is a leader. A guide. Distant. I approach. Her stillness softens. We unite. To be. As we are. One.

The Empty Stage

The page is my stage.

I dance and sing in the theater of the mind. My audience is everywhere and nowhere. I am wherever books are sold and traded to fit in the jacket pockets of my dreamy-eyed lovers, who crack up and think deep over tea and smoke, wondering how I did it.

See.

I am a magician of the unspoken vowel. A smith of the silent consonant. I have taken phrases for a loop and quickened sentences with all of the competitive rage of my immortal peers. I have been torn and shredded, burned and soaked.

And yet, there is no end in sight.

I live to be here on the page, where the verbal lust of my mind has space enough to fulfill the greatest human dream: to live in the limitless sphere of pure creativity for no other reason than reason itself.

And for no other effect than the cause of raw inspiration.

From the breath of life. Timed to know the glaring night of heaven. Fallen over the backdrop to a life. Spun through the void over a mysterious line. Found in the frozen sand.

A sound muted from the water of air courses through us proud and ecstatic.

Flows of energy. Speaking with a comforting warmth. As perfect as love. All space is sacred. All sound is one. The inner secret of an empty page. Seen. In the universal light. Blank. And full.

A Fallen Lira

I hesitate by the fire of brewing tea
as the waves from a passing ship slap

Against the concrete shorefront of the Boğaz
the gullet of two seas in Turkish

And lost to its Oriental nostalgia
the gleaming Bosphorus

Where I stop in my track for a moment
on my way home from the land of the blind

To the old Jewish resting place
Kadıköy to Kuzguncuk

And peering over exhausted names
places and people faded

Into the dusty crack of elder memory
the spineless tomes of stolen thought

I sit and imbibe *rabbit's blood* with a drop of sugar
for the past of my life across the Marmara

South over the Aegean and Mediterranean
Where I once gazed

Over the cerulean lust of pure sea
I imagined the ancient day, only to sit

And sip Egyptian whiskey, sweet as the Hebrew New Year
in the crystal glint of glass clinked

At stirring cubes of the dried cane that made the Arab
tongue-famous throughout the known world

That was heaved and lain over the back of slaves
that sharpened the teeth of liars and rulers

That powered the workhorse of the urban mass
only for a fallen lira, a tea

My Offering of Us

Every place, a temple
And every temple, a house
A house, our body
Every body a shrine to us
Every one a temple to our place
Here, where we live
I hear water, early winter night
Before dawn a liquid offering
From heaven through my ears
And out of my heart a sign
Gratitude, remembrance
As I sit alone, dark, empty
World of my own, I see
Moving light, the wind, rain
Forming shapes of lost time
Bodies not there
Faces of illusions
In the sallow haunt
Predawn, wakeful
I return to the body
Of temples, the true state
Where I have no name
I am The Name
What is, the personality of all
Blinking and smiling back
With equal wonder and pain
And in moments of profound bliss
I am dissolved of every last boundary
Selfless, and high beyond
The identities of emotion
Transfixing, overwhelming
With the realizing drugs of the brain
Now I am naked
Pursuing the beginning of the end
In the circle where our lives return
To the dream of being our kind
Nameless and free of every last temple door
And human mouth
Seeing only, moving light

Our Story

We told our story before we had gained our voice
At first we spoke only to each other

And after a long silence
With heads exhausted by dialogue and democracy

We began to move together
As in a hallucinatory dance, an ecstasy of belief

We tinged our lungs with the smoke of a wild and fleeting inspiration
To say our peace together into the world

A unison of vibrating intellects
Played into the thick patient stew of right nourishment

As one body not demanding waste and other murderous cries
Only wanting without possession

To embrace the tail and crown of being at once
To be content and happy alone

While not drowning in the quicksand of solitary momentum
Leading only out and segregated from the heart of human love

Imploding into the ether as the whiplash of a tongue spikes the liar
Who in his historic torment keeps record of all that was

To prove where he is and still there is silence
In the deaf ears of the remote and illiterate

Those confined by walls and hate to sow the seeds of compassion
For the liberated future to emerge like a plant

Rising from the repulsed ground that airs out the dead
And turns the unused into all that is necessary to begin again

The Farthest One

The far fields of gold
Light and warm / On the wetland horizon
Sheltered and sprung
Life to the plain sky / Slightly greyed
Feathers of souls
And the water itself / Bearing I reflected
In a moment, Sagittarius
Misfiring arrows / Into the hot glorious sun
I have come
To find I am / The nameless one
On an eternal journey
Moved by spiritual laws / As true as gravity
Bear with me
My beloved / I finally ask nothing
We are everything
As we are / Clear as cloudless day
On the open map
Blank for a sound / Calling overhead
Beckoning us to dive
Straight into ourselves / The unknown territories
Of the seafloor and space
Beyond light, starless / Without a shadow
Only seeing pure
Our eyes blink / All life instantaneous
The moment of creation
Grasped universe / Under and above a lid
Of skin and hair
I see you / Surrounded
In the deepest cold night
I desire your embrace / My love, my one, my all
You are the speck of longing
Seeding my mind with the world / Now we are nearer than ever
I know I must learn silence
To feel the water cleanse / My humanity, my selfish need
I glow in our health
Our body at one / Strong and being at last

bosphorus life

seagulls cry
tankers boom
dogs bark
neighbors rustle
all goes silent

Who Lies Beneath Us

There are images of the dead that flash before my blinded eyes
They do not speak, though I feel what they have said

The past lives within, hiding in shades of thought
In unanswered prayer, like a wanderer lost and cold

A visionary, seeking peace in the wilderness of strength
We are animals of light, writhing in our sleep

Ask the endless stray mind to stop
And breathe and see that we will never return

We are not born of flesh, but of the high ground
From the eternal mold, I see us laughing

Long having grazed the gorgeous fields of all that
Passed before the eyes of the dead

I see a tree falling on the horizon, the last of the flat earth
Broken and dismembered beyond sight

And I feel the crack of the trunk like a bone
Fracturing my spine as I double over and regain my strength

I am a tragic clown, growing vegetables from my mouth
Sneezing diamonds, I reach for the graves of the forgotten

They lie beneath my nightly bed, and call out to me
Saying, 'We are not dead. We are your life. Now live.'

our echoes

we look out over the world
behind stone veils, framed by glass
covered by wood, set into metal
and venturing
through sky high
airs of emptiness
close to the unseen
universe of light
we look back over scarred shoulders
into the dark interior of our body, our home
we are sheer vessels of angled skeletons
doors, walls, windows, tables, chairs, beds
the whole life within
truly individual, yet we
as one among many
pass through veils
covers and frames
and are unsettled
wandering liquid
breath that tongues
licking cold sweat
we go and come out of right corners
fearing permanence, passioned to dream
for figments of home, city, country, earth
an existence, fixed, from zero to all that is
knowledge, means, to fade, silent, against a lip
whispering and cold, blind and drenched
in the acid rain of night
we move from world to world
endlessly grasping
for a place under our skin
not overwhelmed by shelter
to fall and be a body
playful, experimental
and to reenact creation
in an infinite echo of love

at home in the universe

at the center of the universe
there is a world

it is written

in rhyme

from the pith of a vowel

to enunciate the heart

as a phrase

and in the core of the world there
ends the root of a country
the consonant of a people
those born from a tongue
a place that opens to a doorway
into the eye of the country
staring into the soul of all
being with a skeptic glare
cycloptic turquoise jewel
sharp as the salt of the earth
a stony stare, a beam of light
penetrating the homeless
traveler, his cold young skin
drunk on visions of past lives
foundering in the mud of war
listening for the one verse

that perfect human wish
to be with the air in a breath
in that whisper we are buried
a word from the universe
to world, to country, to home
and in the depths of that private
keep, a woman, the omnipresent
Eve of love joined with presence
in her knowledge of good and evil
embracing all as he and she
together over the most sacred ground
home, where the air condenses
into water, into fruit and nut
vegetable and grain, the human fabric
woven into the Earth with the word
as guide from the sound of the universe
coming into the womb of her home
where he lies, patient and waiting

the ascent of the heart

there is snow on the mosque
that great singing dome on the horizon
pointing skyward, one minaret
for each of the seven hills
in this city raised between two seas
two continents, as a Byzantine cross
armed by the earthly imagination
buried under a crescent strait
led by the Arabian star
an eye for celestial grace

the moment intoned through
the fluted stone resounding
above the snow clouds falling
over the successive domes
covering earth, mosque, skull

the human universe frozen
from drop to flake, thin as ice
clear as the infinity of water
transformed by the seasons
the wide cultivation of an idea
a belief harvested and spread
like a cloud passing from land
to the land of a storm catching
taking root through the palm
flowering the ground with home

the winter shelter open and full
lively for the passing stranger
extending a hand, telling a story

while the sky falls in white
softening the step of the wanderer
that quiets the night for the dreamer
lulled into morning fast asleep
as the prayers of old dampen
muted by the hard-packed snow
by the range of holy wonder
that first pounded in the prophet
as his heart ascended north

dead (city) center

dry heave, urbanize the gagged country
migrating to the abandoned and condemned to dust
inhaling invisible shards metallic crystal grime
studded with dreams realized to bitter waking
sub-humanized underclass housed desperate
impoverished to reason along undead streets
hot caked esophagus arteries run down
smog and soot ghosts cackling
in Greek, Armenian a cacophonous babel
wasted away skeletons of stone mixed
in the concrete muck paving over history
defacing names burned mute
intoxicated tongues splayed like bodies
in mass graves dug to found buildings
empty and stripped to stone bare as skin
virgins deflowered many times over
converted from land worship to foreign fear
lording over earth over pale breast
erected cold stream mineral lust, tragic
must of male sweat boiled up to sky
scorched and bleeding mountain rot deformed
squared rectangles, lines abstracted of life
as a scar cut into a palm, fate, redrawn with flesh
the smell of loss tempting cannibals
to hoard and cook

The Sound of One Embrace

I have a secret
There is another world
Inside, within the body
Under the skin
Behind the eyes
It is a place
Where breath becomes blood
Yet where wounds do not bleed
Every experience there brings us here
To where the moment reveals all
Life as one instant
As the microcosmic metaphor of a day
Its narration parallel to the span of aging
From birth to death
We wake from the womb of dream
Born to a new light
And walk for the first time
To take from the root of our existence
A fruit, once cultivated
By the ancestor of our past self
As yesterday when we sowed seeds
For ourselves to become the generations
Of all time past and future
In a waking hour when we are
Totally conscious of the course
We have made to be who we are
On the path home
And as the light begins to dim
After a day of work
The night of contemplation waxes
By the light of the moon
Reflecting like a sterling wish
Over the water that cleanses us
And fills us and that beckons us
From source to fall
And that once landed we float
At rest, and rise like a lilting ash
A wandering snowflake over the bitter cold
Ground that quakes for its subtle heart
Waiting for our return to its absolute embrace

the root of blue

as a leaf misses the wind
the silence, a sound
i miss you, and all, that we
embraced of each other
within our arms
to circle the universe
around, bring us back
to the place before time,
where we began as one body,
our heart in unison beating drums,
thumping great mystery, in our ears
we scream joy and pleasure
sharing the essence
our savory blood
into sweet saliva
come our every wish
fulfilled, simply in a touch
of you remind me
we are always here
where we first
embodied the word of love
said, came, laughing
beneath swinging stars
seen with undying eyes
I am for us
I am of us
alone, seeking you
retuning, a glint
a straw, the whole
face of skin and hair
lost to the world
a fallen leaf, long gone
from birth, on the tree
dancing
over rock
floating, over seas
spinning, over storms
blue earth
silent as air
the leaf rests
at its root, and cracks

Winged Cries at Dawn

I am fumbling in the dark
restless without reason
seized by a passion greater than life
and I live it, vowed to no end
to do, to be, to have
I seek escape from my self
a captive
landlocked from light
I look up and see the stars
more distant than bright
an unnatural eye
winking in catastrophic gloom
There is a war greater than the known
of a soul at the edge of all
wondering, perpetually
transfixed by the mystic wave
that glowering presence of time
distended and unsought

I hear the laughing of the birds at dawn
they mock creation
in the worldwide city that wakes
with the sound of a human voice
rising to answer for itself
before the judge of Earth
sitting upright and staring into the sun
over the hot ground laboring in pain
imagining oceanic lust
entire nations lost to pride
for an idea, for love

We sweat out the morning cold
and still in bed dream of the passed
watching with eyes blinded by fatigue
the unreal, the television of prehistory
the quaking trickster ass lowered
over the face of a prisoner, bare
unpainted flesh leaning
over a reflective pool

To ask the only question: Who Am I
as the sun rises
the cry of the birds grows faint

the last gasp

there is no justification
no reason, for what I have done

I have only done what I have done
and only in that absolute truth is there solace

the total silence of the past
with its dead and its memories

they return under cloudy skies
beckoning artists, seers, thinkers, performers

release us, they cry, back into the waves
to live that crash of spontaneous gravity

to delight in that which is never felt again
only remembered in the echo of a shadow

as a glint of light reflects one eye
open before the blinding sun that warms oceans

in an infinity of waves that roll unannounced
and without pause, reaching a height to collapse

onto the wonder and beauty of the earth that moves
like a mind bared and asking no one thing

just sitting low against the end of winter
contemplating the meaning of time over teas

and coffees going cold while cigarettes burn
and the smiles on every young face turn

upside down they suddenly know
all is a gasp

the first thought

there are more ways to knowledge than through writing
and an infinite variation of means through which to tell stories
than through language
all leads to a question
a question of the source

where to begin
and how
from that true beginning
to inspire sustainable continuity
to perpetuate what is life
with a parallel sense of impermanence
to breed health
and ultimately
open the ground for abstraction
for conceptual thinking
for what has become known as the sacred

descended
to the floor of being
To the basest of sacrifices
of the implosive animal-human
longing through creation
with a wandering staff
to split the earth of flesh
and reveal the soul
as the blood and brains
bones and bile, the body
exhumed from the hard
rock of need and work

into a living grace, untouched
by the raw and frozen
meat of the cave still burning
in the shadows of hungering eyes
lowering over the storied fire
that speaks with the music of the trees
that dances in the smoke of the air
that paints in the ash of the stone
ground to a fine dust
as fleeting and ungraspable
as a thought

There I Am

From where do we come
To where do we go
Where we are, on the way
Never there, always traveling
Packing light:
The things we have
Are our every illusion
Washing ashore
Our islands of dreams
A thought, a hint, the image of our face
Fading, lost to youth, troubled by time
Longing for when to remember
To count back, and be there
Where we are, where we came
Where we are going
Never there, we are going
Together, all at once, everyone
At the front, not looking back
There is no forward, no back
No side to side, no up, no down
Only the here that is
There.
The *when I was* time, holding you
Back from life, full of lies, blind
Saying without a sound:
You are I, the lonely soul
Of the world, lightless, empty
The wish unfulfilled, the unknowable
Wild, the cold and mindless
Taste of purity, middle of the mind
To the tip of the tongue, loose
And lathered, frothing, awed
Uttering babble
In the arms of a wave
Carried to you, you to me
We are now, dry as elder skin
Dead in the sun, until I touch that
I am where I came, to go to
There.

Anatolia, Land of Exiles

From the stone and clay roofs of the city
I hear the call drift under Black Sea clouds
As the central square smolders
And the name that dare not be spoken
is drowned in the torrent of a throaty strait
Silently coursing to the middle of the world
Fed by roads of creeks once flowering with linden
And reeds plucked for the fashion of summer palaces
And Mevlana *tekkes* where the *kutsal* drum is heard
To the hypnotic hum of breath

A human being, as they were
When the land was under ice
And the messianic sun bloomed
Over the horizon, a grand oral fixation
Nourishing, in the heaving thaw from within
A breast glowing with the power of Babel
Yet seen rising from Anatolia, Plain of Exiles
When the rush and awe of the people clamored
To see the Muse of Creation
The one so imbued with inspiration
and grace, glory and pride
as to have created the world
from air and dust, chaos and gods
came the heart and mind of us
We are listening, we are everywhere
Where the smoke that rises does not fall
Ascendant to coronate the law

The Forgotten

A crow sits low and defeated
Atop a tangle of garden fencing
Recently disarrayed in the yard
Newly inhabited by a young couple

Flies swarm over a bucket of compost
The raised beds of soil are lined with brick
Many crumble, and loosened, fall
To the territorial cats battling for mates

And then one female feline occupies
Stealthily, mostly at night
When every other cat is long gone
She hides under cardboard scraps

And the crow sits, beak bleeding
Head feathers ruffled, blinking
He looks around, defensive, glaring
As the female cat preys, and strikes

The crow goes down into a corner
Retching squawks follow overhead
The flightless crow stretches his wings
He yearns from the garden high ground

In the disheveled stench, he wills to be free
From the huntress, and her patient claw
With only his beak as defense, he maintains
His position, a wounded crow

Leaping futilely, like a man with vertigo
Over piles of sticks and nets
And cocking his head, shadows pass
The outspread wings of his kin above

He is called, and stares upward
He puffs up his chest, simply proud
To be alive, he tries to stand up straight
Stretching, all is silent in the shade

New and Returning Home

I have spread my wings over continents of shores
Spanning two seas and an ocean, I fly high
And dive deep into the center of my expanding multiverse
The arms around my neck tighten to the sound of national glory
Broken like a voice maturing, I am still nameless
After so many births, initiations, marriages, deaths
I have given the world my heritage
Now it is the birthright of all
To remember that we are one being
Just human, our eyes range over the flatland sky
I blow a kiss in your direction
From the grave to the knife
That cuts from my lapel a garment
To mourn for those forgotten to time
Grown out and lost to the moving on
All of us long gone, gone, going, gone
We sit now alongside train tracks
Swimming in steam and history
We vegetate until dawn
Drinking the juice of forgiveness
We write passages through the ear
To the union of what is lost to death
And found in life, searching for what is left
Behind, after the day is done
Needing it only to know that as time passes
We live, and the measure of us is not all told
In the physical law that pulls stone to fire
In the great mysterious ether of darkneses
Unknown, is that my future?
Am I to live for the absolute end?
Will I take up the dusty soil into my palm
And build a foundation of clay, of blood and bone?
Will I feel the skin and hair of new life
Coursing through us, it begs us to come
And gather, father and son in prayer
Mother and daughter prostrating
We are all equal on the frontline within
And without, one confronting all
Moved by the holy gravity of love
Over the raging heart of the world
Beneath my feet, I am firmly planted
I fold in my outspread wings

New Home at Dawn

I love the look of brick in the morning
when its earthy rivulets are filled with dawn light
maroons of the world sheathed in the rays of heaven

it is to see a feeling, to eye the texture of stone heaved
in the old Rumelian tradition of Greek Constantinople
And now a young Turk sleeps soundly within its strength
she walks angelic through its high wooden doors
it is a vintage keep, where she reads peacefully
until she dozes in the arms of her American lover
twisting out of his grasp in mid-dream to rise awake
new, fresh, glowing in the urban crepuscules

effulgent mineral core denuded for its sheer beauty
and we glow, lost in the shadows of our bodies
shedding our skin to emotional time

we are what we choose, our style, our definition
our aesthetics, a circular pebble, a rectangular plank
what is found and kept, known and given away

we are what we have and live through to the renewing
daily fold that covers us head to foot like a scratchy wool
a blanket barely comfortable but too sentimental to let go

I am immersed in sunshine, I am swimming in the awe of eternity
take my hand, I will show you what it is like to be free
I will reveal meaning in your heart and your entire being
we will beat with the need to come to the core of ourselves

on the mad high path leading nowhere and never beginning
not ending, it is a place moving over a landscape, changing
horizon to horizon, transforming from visibility through the fog

through the mystery of one life, momentary and pulsing
with the bliss of freedom at last embraced by the ethereal
rays of heaven that reflect off of the brick and wood, a home

question to the core

how might i gain clarity of heart?
there's a raging void tunneling through my core
and i'm strapped to its mystery, yawning
over the boring facade of all that was
flashing in the split of my eye, a word
across the aether, "love"
the only consciousness unfilled
and left blank by the human night
of skies, burning for a moon
across the grand endless light
that does not die for a moment
when life does in an instant
succumbed to the violent sway
of natural law, as a flickering lamp
on my bed stand, tempting stop-motion
flies to drown in the bold effulgence
of universal invention, that opens
after generations, through to a way
beyond the cold noise of a lost god
long resting his feet by the fire
at home in some decadent past
of nostalgia's desperate keep
where she waits for him in bed
to save her from falling too steeply
into the nightmares that pass for reality
where she screams out for him
in the waxing dawn, wondering
if he might hear her call out
with desire, with him as her
every need, had and meant to be
for the final joy raised with highs
heavenly, to see each other together
unshaken by the passages of time
and its horrors of separation
the necessities of pride taken
by the horn and wrangled out
of being, to clear the heart of its haze
confused and lovesick, alone, wanting

salvation in the dark

it was *kurtulus* by night
disappearance of the Armenian
neighborhood from mid-20th c.
auras resurrecting the coupled
imagination drinking, lovelorn
with intellectuals and glasses
aroused by global languages
in the new presence of others
foreign before orientalist rock
fame blushes before the drug-
addled soundscape paranoias

beyoglu by taksim square
dolmus rides before dawn
in the drinking emotional
night screaming homophobic
alleyway nerves as nicotine
headache kicks over wine
and raki, and back home
in asian bosphorus moods
where street workers hammer
pavement tearing up sidewalks
to reveal the veins of istanbul
by day and by night, the child-
like howl and hubbub of men
and women wasting youth
over pop monotony alcohol
swill brains rotting, nostalgic

she was my best friend

it's after 4 and i can't sleep
well, i never could until you came home
restless for your embrace
i had to hold you under my arm
until my blood left it, the circulation cut
by your weight i wanted to have so much
and had, only for that moment of having
i had you and got what i wanted, needed
to sleep finally in our comfy winter
and summer beds, we kept perfect
neat for us to sleep together falling
each night in our love away from the world
that drew us one at a time from each other
and our timeless, unconscious embrace
and one morning, our last, you smiled at me
with the brilliance of the sun's direct light
bouncing off the brick walls and wooden doors
a home made of our history and us, new
clean, and sweet with our happiness
through the year fully spent, we lay
you had me and my heart on a short leash
the slightest tug and i followed your every step
hungry for a dance and thirsting for a kiss
and i don't even want this poem to end
because it has you in it, and our pain
of your leaving me to tears and air and the silent
music of my own solitary peace
in a rusty funk studio by the sea of marmara
in the kadikoy, the moda of our first istanbul room
shared with friends, we drank and came
over our bodies and gave and loved
without a thought, young and free to smoke
the dream of us, it burnt our fingers to the very end
what sensation could make us feel
free again, like when we came
together and ended up best friends

Since We Began

Life is a greeting between friends
A few wise words from the dead
The first smile from newborn eyes

And yet the truth of life, is a lie, what life is
And is about is a secret darker than dark
It is absolutely invisible, unseen as breath
A whisper too soft for the ears

We are the seers of that silent life
The ones who observe altogether
Woven through the fabric of sense
And thought, the outward made
Manifest by the perception of others
And the inward that inspires
And writhes the soul cleansed
From all that misdirects and blinds
In the shadows and fog of unknowing
Of chance, the longing to dream
To pray, and to emerge from nightmares

The mind and the body awake to a life
That breathes in the cool air, that exhales
The humid scent of the land, prostrating
To name the one chord that strikes the heart
With a clarity unheard since *the first*

that I of mine

restless soul returns
looking for love and needing her

like the end of a romantic film
feeling till dawn sputters up

like a choking victim near death
when the savior comes in female form

to hold and take and soften and endure
and be here for I the one who desires all and gives nothing

but the one total sense of satisfaction, asking, "Am I
supposed to be satisfied because you are?" She is defiant

and she looks away to gape at the empty space like a mouth
wanting to take in the whole, and there I am stilled

by the cold solitude, laughing to the joy of a vacant memory
a being converted by his own remaking of the imagined future

that waits like him for her who is no one, a figment at which he reaches
through the loud drinking dark for a smoke to grasp the end of night

"There, there," says the old voice coming back down for a haunt
from space with a glint of starlight in his eye, a wise elder gifting

his presence like a whispering shadow, mockery of G-d come
for a joke to pull tears out of my eyes, I say, "No!" I do not want you

here in my studio of corner bedroom living alone to the sound of my own
wasted friendship with myself for a lifetime becoming closer to the one

who is, I, that we are nearing the resolution of he who sees I, the oneness
mine that I wish to show in my goodness to a beauty who will reflect that

him on her breast and the four of us will grow an eternity of wishing
for untold lives always ending always beginning to the end

age of the soldier-worker

for young Turks, early twenties prove trying
they are fraught with concerns beyond their years
they are held accountable beyond their means

a man faces jail time, for a DUI charge
while attempting to evade military service
institutionalization is pervasive, everywhere

the need for political diligence escalates
borders are entangled: in the west,
refugees sew their lips on hunger strike

in the east, war knocks. another man
age twenty-two, explains Kurdish struggle
his mother and father, in jail, Kurds

his father was a political prisoner
in time there will be social change
and in afternoons, Kadikoy meandering

the Greek and Armenian churches open
business bustles over blood-red gills
older men carry heavy woven baskets

the loss of home and us

at first skeptical of the dawn
it begins to rise, a blood red glow
ascending as far as the eye sees
beyond the edgeless horizon
as round as the ball set into the skull
to wink at the clarity of day
moving up in the world
to peak at the hot climax of reason
and work, seething from muddy veins
at the market, selling metal and trash
I wander from rain to cloud and back
thundering up a storm as I go
from shore to front, across the waves
escaping the downpours as they find me
waiting under a canvas, sipping coffee
temporarily sheltered by a shop
my back stiffens against history's brick
topped from the roots of a church steeple
lofty in the neighborhood of rich youth
laughing over addictions, calm as sweet taste
tongues lunging over one another
drinking in the loud boring sound of radio
21st century blues hardened by the world
soul filled to overflowing, drizzled by midsummer love
a fling as fleeting as the eternal moment
and its unrelenting shade of truth
penetrating every thought like a stop sign
reading, patience before the brink of time
when all seems to go and pass and fall away
as day resurges like a sad chorus on repeat
without a refrain, only memorable, returning
with utter prediction and terrible monotony
like her, who I know will be gone and never come
home, a silence, only for staring
into the blank light, and fading
without a thought, undying

the train wreck

i'm reaching in the dark for a caress
and i feel one on my back,
she disappears

without a trace, on the walls of the cave
there are projections of her smile and lips
that would press against mine hotly
in the endless night, and first thing
in the morning, her brilliance, her radiance
her presence, I hear her making breakfast

drinking water, having a shower, and I am
patient, I do not want this day to start
because then it will end, I'll just keep
listening, witnessing, our love in the flesh
of once was, lost to the air of ticking time
like a rope unraveled and loosened

from the knot to reveal two ends
on either side, frayed and broken
yet I stretch out my limbs desperately

the length of the rope trying to touch
both ends at once, I have one
and the other falls, I let go
and the rope falls at my feet
and I trip and plunge into a depth
unfathomable, I have not been here

there is no rope to grab, there are no ends
to tie, it's only me, floating in the serene
infinite nothingness below, I look up

and see a glimmer of light, and it fades
I hear her voice, but it is a snippet
from an old conversation, abruptly

beginning and silent all of a sudden
like the moment she wanted out for good
from the train wreck folly of my crippled desire
who was I? who, was she?

untitled

a child screams outside / in the street, at night
i find myself, wanting / waiting, wondering
all questions and silence / it is unbearable
unless i forget completely / that my life is mine
and i've been told it isn't / but who am i to stare longingly
into a blank page armed / only with a pen
to attack the emptiness / and form lines of reason
of thought, of free expression / because here i am
speaking to you now / from a distance of dimensions
yet my sound does not diminish / it increases

and my place is everywhere

i am the mind of belief
the sacred ground of loneliness
hearing only the last echoes / before the yawning fade
of the universal deep / i interrogate myself
again, again, again / nightly flung into the cold
reaches of the bitterest / nothing, broken, heartless
chasing after a flickering / soul mirage, i despair
and spill tears into my tea / listening to minimalist perfection
a dream of music / stretching the moment thin
to purify space, and i slow down
four times low, a rumbling lunar inertia

keeping me from drowning / in the rage of blinking light
that torments my eyes to fear and pain
and all of a sudden i am back, at home / where the street at night cries
with sobs of millions of children / lost to the mysterious enchanting
under domes and spires / misdirection pointing up
instead of in, leaving the poor / starving, while the rich fatten
for the tiniest individual / the entire world goes up
in flames, doused repeatedly / in the fuel of hate, the red taste
deathless anger come to kill / and beat the brain raw
to a pulp novel play, smoked / and asking carnivores
to sample the abstract flesh / and be filled by a metaphor

a hope, a revolutionary scandal
nameless 21st century prophecy
that rains up from the earth

cafe with a view

into a gap in the forest, a circular frame
branches, leaved emerald jade
a lamppost rises to the cusp of the horizon
a trifold cityscape floats atop globular blue
dotted white coasting wings of sails grasping
at the warm, clean air, mid-fall by the Marmara
pale for its islands, drifting
in the fade of shadows
land cast like nets and lines
into the watery deep, streamed
and coursed in cobalt and turquoise
pigments of earth enshrouded
in the invisible guise of pure space
interlocked with the inner chaos of separation
to be a thing, lost in the ether of paradise
and looking for a piece to consume
to hold, to grow, and to give away
to the automatic mystery of the planet
towering in four and domed at the center
of the Greek universe, the Rumelian brick
aesthetics of antiquity starved for space
and emptied, over the hills and valleys
of the Old City mythically peaked to sevens
and oddly stationed to the urban foundation
deepening as it quakes, till the end of days
kept from crumbling the paved millions' sprawl
from wood and fire to soil and rain, the mountain
fallen and resurrected, in the form of a human brain
spiked and encircled from above, with an unexplainable glow
becoming faint against the fortified bluff
proud green, flagged to the red blood of the nation
signed with a crescent moon and the lone star
of the light-polluted evening in the modern cave
to be counted and taxed to make it up, and build
strengthen, glorify, remember, and become one
the earth itself, whole as one sacred city
forbidden and desecrated to inglorious reality
humanity enslaved by its higher power
haunted in the prison of work, to dream
in the lightless stone invisible and unknown
only for a glint, in a window passing like another
seagull at the feet of a nonexistent sultan

seeing from the land of the blind

over rows of chimneys climbing I see the water turn
whitening over the break where sea meets strait
as dolphins glide beneath waters of waving shades
throbbing to crescendo in the eye of the buried emperor
his illuminated sultan silhouetting into invisible day

under infinite night, domes reach up smoking aflame
breached by the sun in a haze-born reflective glory
spiraling across the shores on the land of the blind
washed up, sunk, wrecked, splayed like a Greek sailor
lighting his way to the Golden Horn around verdant bends

an imperial inlet unseen and protected by sheer might
the world soul compressed in a timeless silver sheath
I hear the city, Istanbul, Konstantiniyah, Dersaadet
a nameless place, unheard at its foundation, murky
trespassed waters rushing, riverine black Slavic soup

into the Turkic throat, the universe toked through
to the center, opening to heal the cancerous bond
territories of water ruled as the dividing force
turning peoples into nations into trees muffling
the gate in a silent murder of civilization, history

man, as the light maroon of the Byzantine mold
fading under the high metallic bold, serving thrones
to truth, as we walk about over fruit-eating sitters
planted, barely surviving on the port streets beside
thin, old cobblers, obese valets singing and bingeing

envisioning fully prepared Central Asian realities
hordes laugh in their keep, over wise time, a figment
of being, to fix the mind, prop up the body, knocked out
staring out the window from the Genoese tower
beyond the inlet core, to a town in flight

Valley of the Prophet

into the sacred valley, the prophet surfaces
through winter dusk light
where they were born and died
as a gift of visions to the world
and their way is known here now immortally
in the village that rests humbly
soaked in the unseen effulgence of their high mind
they dreamed in verse and spoke in paint
of another direction beyond the four
to a place of points and signs
where music echoes from the snowy silent peaks
from a world beyond day and night
one touched by the hand of they who flew
from the summit into the Qadisha of refuge
in the shadows of Mount Lebanon
sheltered by the green glowing tufts of young cedars
blown gently by the glacial corridor of cliffs
descending to the sea between two ancient cities
Byblos and Tripoli, ports of the old Mediterranean
encrusted with the wisdom of natural death by age
and the resurrection of freedom to live alone
outside of history and the name and now in the calm
home of the sun softened by days gone by over the supernal
land cleaved as its people build strong and high
against the steeply rising earth *I feel* in the cool mountain air
a passage through to the place whispered in the vision of a dream
that *I am home*, fulfilled and returned
after hearing the sweet charms of verse
and admiring the invisible flame of dyed oils
shining from cracked canvases, *I sit*
and hold fast to the picturesque steeples of the Maronite
Holy Land where pilgrims of all faiths dine on the vast open table
the eternal Last Supper enjoyed to taste
and as Solstice approaches the air grows quiet
lost to the horns and bells and constant grinding wheel of the present
rolling along beside the enlightened path as it darkens and smolders
and broadening with profanity and praise, in awe of the divine
unspeakable truths of Creation, that is, like the raised agricultural fields
corniches sloping down to the edge of the ravine gorge
rising to Bsharri, the half-bowl amphitheater staging the play of the universe
in a notch of the planet, where the horizon smiles deeply
revealing the beauty and power of empty space on earth

2017

a day from the window

in the slow noon of kadikoy
a silver haired man emerges
from a building to serve tea
all-important Muslim liquor
brownish, orange caffeine
a couple have a cigarette
the man hardly shaves
eyes worn, overslept
into midweek youth
hot and cool neighborhood
just after dawn, young women
walk to class and work
to cross the Marmara, Bosphorus
passing a man in an apron
outside the green grocer
dimly lit morning haze
seagulls compete with cats
and dogs go wild in the street
no one rushes as night comes
among warm, romantic intellectuals
breathing out thoughts like smoke
beyond earshot of the political fray
nearly December, the sun is warm
through sunbathed apartments
pets sleep in bed together
and an expat writes and writes
and writes and writes and writes

All Telling

We are all born with a story
and our life the telling

Let he who laughs at dawn
sleep with a calm heart

Every one of us a storyteller
gifted with an immortal resonance

To transcend experience in life
more like being, *I have a name*

Listen you will hear it in the deafening
ring of the entire planet

Plunging into the maw of empty space
beyond the known, *I have an age*

I am somewhere, in the middle of a century
the place where children look up

And our beloved elders look back
with a joke and a tear to tell us

Just how we forgot, that we are the story
to be told, and our lives will speak for us

Before we do, and long after
we are gone

and my name

i wash the floors
buy shit paper
and contemplate

my girl left tobacco
all i have are these
poems and my name

*[in new york style
written in istanbul
to georgian music
20th of september
in the year of 2017]*

first impressions from the land of the blind

5:30am. there is a power outage in kadikoy district, istanbul
not far from the marmara sea. on the asian side of the bosphorus

kadikoy is all narrow cobblestone streets, open-air cafes
and small markets that sell wine, cigarettes and groceries

uniformed men guard the alcohol, shawled mothers stand
i wait with them, patient, in lines over ten patrons long

a vegetable stand at the corner of the street is lit
despite the outage, from its air i reminisce of east brooklyn

istanbul is a city rising, dated by every last contemporary
orientations hurling forward into the 21st, millennia

in the global city, glasses are raised to *sherefa*
to honor, so is turkish popular pride intoned

in a homey kadikoy apartment there is a spoiled cat
living with the urban, cultured young professional

to flaunt worldly aesthetics in renewed neighborhoods
outside stray cats dream beneath the gorgeous howling

muezzin of 6:00am, heard faintly, singing prayers
before the first bird's call wakes the morning sun

Look Back, She Is Waiting

I am afraid, my sweet, that at the end of my life, I will look back
and realize that I only really ever loved you
that our separation was forced and artificial
and that I spent the rest of my days since we parted
just wandering through the infinite cityscape
along an elevated drive where the earth is obscured
under a starless night
the towers are consumed in the overcast smog
I will look back one day and see you
in the middle of the pale blue dot in my eye
I will see you far in the distance
and still feel you nearer to me than my own heart
as the very presence of love in my bones
firm and unmoving, rooted to the flesh of the land
where we stood to inhale the riverine breeze
our days high and lonesome in each others' arms
laughing under the brilliant sun
and charmed by the music pulsing in our palms
open and fearless to grasp the truth of letting go
as the greatest rapture, possessed by the desire to create
a purely spiritual life born of our passion, endured
within four walls, covered by the mosaic of our arts
and holding the scent of our cooking
over incense and the bodies of friends
who shared our lives
I will look back and see you there, waiting

Me In Them

The cats in the garden are overwhelmed with life
They duel, the males stare each other down, ready
To strike with puffed bellies and bared fangs
They swat in a hard box tumbling over the soil
Screeching only outmatched by the cornered female
Cut up and taken from behind by so many competing
Whiskers quivering in a rage from dawn to dusk

With brief interludes of rest in the late morning
The early afternoon and after midnight
They are a rapacious pack of strays
Longing with spring lust over the moss
Knocking bricks onto concrete floors
Off the edge of raised garden beds
Shaded by a stand of bamboo
Until the neighbor above tosses
Buckets of water to silence the ceaseless
Wails like birth pangs of the inconsolable
Feline, *and I see myself in them*

The animalistic masculine released
To the urban wild, *and I see my parents*
And ancestors in them, who struggled
Through work and war to do it and have me

Alive

Moonset Dawning

I hear crows, where seagulls are far off
I sit in a sparse, low forest and feel the wind
Whispering over leaves, the dull roar of traffic
Sounds near, muffled by the shadowy paths
Where stand white lamps fit for a great city

I am in the lap of the Padishah
Where we drink *salep* in the cool winter air
And reflect on summer over clear fountain pools
Well-kept gardens and impressive gateways
Through to the street, young lovers walk
Slow in the clear moods of nature
Swinging slightly in each silent breath
Living below the earth, quaking softly
To the rhythms of the city

And a siren pierces the sky
Like a pair of needlepoint towers
So I sit sheltered by a hearty tree
Leaning over a weather-worn bench
Where many have sat before me
To luxuriate in the company of a cat
A single stray approaching softly
Over moist and littered soil

I am cast in the outline of wings
My hands shape a nonlinear mosaic
Light as I look out over the grandiose
Architecture of bygone days
When intellectual hearts rang true
On the verdant open, glimmering
When peacocks flowed with robes
Sharing ground in the spirit of wonder
Conversing under the gift of a sky
Speaking to the stars until moonset
And listening again to the silent dawn

My Answer

From the first moment I saw her
I knew when and how I would die
In her body, for our union
There was no escape

Her name was beauty
And like me she is now long gone
A shade, thoughtlessness distilled
To pure essence, and yet I still hear
Her voice calling for me

In the dead of night, like a wailing
Animal keening in labor, crying
Out with empathy for the mutual
Birth pain of the newborn
Emerging with a spoken silence

I birthed myself, I am a child of G-d
And so let no one claim my body
Not even I, for I am last
In all of the world, after everyone
They will come first to my heart

We beat in step with the dance of all
Creation, I hear her and in the mournful
Screams rage through the night
Like an unremembered dream of war
She hears my answer

No Matter How Much

Drunken, I helplessly write out the heart-wrenching impasse of emotional out-letting onto the table of spilled wine and tobacco ash the pencil scratchings now read: *Today, we had all the fun in the world. Tomorrow we will again, and never sleep, never,*"

I wrote inwardly wanting her fast at rest to find the uninhibited morning cries of pain over an empty bottle of wine, and me sexually unfulfilled and exhausted for lack of mental stability, and so I wrote across the torn and smeared desk, *I first saw you, and I knew, I knew, you.* What I thought of when writing this was the way she looked, and how unbelievably innocent and entrancing like a scene in the park one you have seen so many times and that one day simply fascinates for no apparent reason, and because of that is all the more exciting, wonderful and finally holds the sort of human beauty that you had always longed to know and become closer to and closer until the mystery would finally resolve and once the daze lifts, you are at more of a loss than you feel you had never felt in your entire life. Yes. She was that and I do not regret loving her. *Together, we can believe in anything. I see the truth, that we are alone, and we can not change even that no matter how hard we believe.* And no matter how much we love

Old Wooden Star

Around back, the decrepit wooden building stands still, strong and straight
despite having closed for sixty-five years until last month,

when the people again gathered to remember the land,
the star and the sound of an ancient voice heard eternally
at the invocation of a letter from high holy days
crowned in the glory of a civilization sanctified
by the sacrifice of prophets bearing *The Name*
from mountains, deserts, seas and skies
distant and long gone to encompass the Earth
the great diaspora returned to the story of a root
that when surfaced to sight is the fall of life
from the grace of strength that settled us firmly in place,

and around front there are wires and vines
barbs and thorns, to obscure memory
from the light of the sun and the eye of the people
driven to paint the town in ubiquitous graffitied youth
who swallow concrete dust and acid rain
walking amid dust-ridden cats and lone pigeons
lazy dogs and grounded flies

I see a man leaning against a two-floor home
the antique boards, splintering with age
sit atop an unfinished stone foundation
and beneath the flat roof there is a caged star
six points house a pyramid
the windows are covered and crooked
frames disappear to the unknowable interior

The Core Valley

A short walk from the broken square there is a valley
sparsely green in the midwinter air
and paved for the guiding of well-worn shoes
strolling in,
from the infinity of faces
along avenues straining with the weight of a tongue
swelling to *gluttony*
born to *lust*
moved to *wrath*
chained to *sloth*
and silenced by the unsayable
for in the valley is sanity
that what follows solitude
in the quiet of reflection
beyond the human form
to what is completely unique
in creation, where the shape of leaves,
bark and roots differ in direct relation
to the overburdened land
and when I look up and out
I see color itself dying to the cackling
thousands of crows
amassing over the peopled earth
I see them fly clear over the hotels
universities, banks and the towering cityscape
to return to where a tree grows to the sky
without a human hand sowing the hard urban ground
with imported seed, and only from the trunk of that tree,
covered in a leafy vine, sitting at the top
row of a small amphitheater at dusk
is the foundation of the city revealed
in all its corrupted integrity
that *cheap migrant labor is a must*
and so will the people be
convinced of a special place
more important than where they are
and will be forced to work to get there
to give it its meaning
once-removed from our original home
we have been slaving ever since
always on the edge of the valley
between two pasts

The Face of the Sea

the face of the sea calmed, every rivulet flattened and whorl straightened
on the underwater current as the ferries floated over masses of dead jellyfish
and on a gentle swim over harbor waves
a ruddy glow reflects off the face of the sea
worn and cut by metal bows
running through the marine rush
of trade and work, yet on the coast
under a crepuscular setting
children and men stand
for an image of human beauty
before the old lighthouse
vertical and rectangular seaside neighborhoods
below towers and minarets tree-lined hilltops that fade
to the prehistoric urban sprawl, life along the strait immemorial
and so in awe of the sky reddened in the swirling dance of seagulls
tracing the horizon edge
the people sit and stare
beside dead cannons
in an empty square
furnished with trunks
wintering colorless in soil
besieged by concrete and iron,
the burning fuel of engines
carrying the city across
the blood of the land
still blue for living within
the body of the planet
that encompasses our soul
humbled as we move
from yellows to reds
and subside to orange
before returning to the cold
midnight blue of night
while fish sleep
and women perfume
the floral air
walking against Iznik tiles
and out beyond the Golden Horn
the sunlight rests on stone
as the face of the sea breathes
more deeply of the red sun

The Faintest Glimpse

I am her slave, and she is my prophet
bare to the light, a high wave
insurmountable, moving
between mountains
down the snowy vale
to a ridge

the home of a wise bearded
goat that gives of its milk
to the poor and wandering
on the way down

to where waters flow
under the sun

I dance on the shimmering earth
following the flies
in my lawless ecstasy
a martyr of reason
simply being to taste
the frozen flakes that grace
my tongue unscathed

for though I am fallen
I am silent in my humility

There she is
speaking in revelation
about the love that will come
to pass between my legs
and arms impaled by frequencies
demanding that rushes like the wave
her frenzied high, lost to the clouds
beyond the stars

where a light shines unseen
still alive, and I see
although with eyes firmly shut
tight to the world
I hear the trace of her glimpse

the living art of the old new city

the streets of istanbul are exhibitions
generational class divisions
blue-suited city workers collect trash
they tend public gardens
beside blanketed homeless
asleep on pavement and grass
lain down next to stray dogs
sharing the warmth under a breeze
cool saltwater wafts refreshingly
in the first hours of sunlit day
older men, retired and grayed
sit sleepless in cafes, smoking
in the plainclothes intellectual garb
of mid-20th c. boom, before the wall
cast down in Berlin to open the floodgate
American confrontation with Islam
in conspicuously newer clothes
colorfully vibrant, the young walk
along sidewalks, silent, listening
to music, on streets narrow enough
to deter heavy traffic
by the Marmara coastline
government and religious landmarks
foundations of the cityscape
the unshakeable stamp of New Rome
in contrast to the Turkish flag
flapping more harshly, close to the sea
where the rap of a patriotic fabric competes
with white-crested infinity

The Long Drag

I am dragging years of my mind up the most awkward flight of stairs
tenement-style, covered with piss and bums, the cries of neglect
and want that echoes through generations in the blood
pouring out in pain, often subtly as an unseen sore
reddening the skin, and hidden for shame of poverty and fate

I am dragging years of my mind to the terrifying reality of today
that I must embrace and not avoid for a thought of yesterday
not for a dream of tomorrow, because what are dreams?
All-transient wisps and lusts only seen by closed eyes
what evades captivation as soon as it approaches light
and isn't this why to live a dream is to be truly free
ungraspable, even the self, caught only in a feeling

I am dragging my mind for years of thought, dream, experience
weighing the present with all of the anxious intensity of love
though not love for a person, that belittles and inflates
in a mutual draw of exasperated longing, no, the love
for potential, born of simple action, inspired by the freedom
to live for a dream, and still I feel like an empty breath

I am dragging years of my mind, wondering what that feeling is
like for a musician who plays their instrument from within,
a passionate voice moving to the swaying whirl of the planet
in absolutely empty space, illumined, aflame, and drawn

The Mystic Spinner

The silence of storytelling is where the imagination lives
where the rain breathes in smoke over cold concrete

in the city, winter
under a gray sky
I wait for her
again and again

All that comes is a word, only a thought, the utter displacement of a body from this place where I learned
to forget my name, where all that I am is a strange, incomprehensible sound moving over a tongue stained
brown-black with green tea, tobacco and chocolate

I am less than illiterate. I am speechless
Desiring to say who I am
Constantly humbled by the deaf and blind
who wade through the urban smog of two thousand years
unseen in a blink stolen by the eye of the seer
telling stories that can not be read
and will remain invisible to time

only known by the warm wool of an embrace
through cloth and skin touched by the listening hand
staying calm over a dying body, and placed over the smooth flesh
surrounding the navel, a lotus blooms from the gut soiled by the light air

The Rest

A man lays beside his sleeping wife
and she sleeps so deeply
her snores have a ring
like the sound of a dream
puncturing the sensual veil

I hear her fall away, suddenly
she fell in love with me
though, I am awake
restless and alone
and not the only one

I am overcome with a feeling
unbearable, where we live
an absolute solitude
an awful terror, all-possessing
the strength of love

In the dark, unlit room where I lie
beside her, to whom I confessed
my one and only love
with all of my heart
I cry out to G-d, silently
Questioning the ether
personifying the great
ubiquity in fellow man
who I may converse with
as friends, I ask:

“Why G-d, why am I so discontented
Still, after a third of my life has passed
Where I have fulfilled all of my dreams
A beautiful woman to share my life
In a wonderful home of our making
In a superb global city of friendships
Where we are romantic, beyond need?”

G-d does not respond. And I know why. As soon as I finish asking, I feel her, the lover I married in spirit, and in this world. The one who shared so passionately that restiveness of ours as we were true equals, united. I had never been more content.

And now all else is The Rest

The Superlative

*To have your mind, she said
Is the greatest possible fulfillment.
She paused. Then finished.
And to give it over to love.*

I stopped to think, my thoughts
wandering to a ceremonial round
of earth where Roman relics stood
perfect against the eastern frontier

*There are voices of genius
And too many are pale
heterosexual men.* I wondered
remembering names from history
Spiritual leaders, wise elders
purporting to reveal G-d
to the whole of man
to embrace human life

Within a single pair of arms
*To experience the world widely
through a mind rich with knowledge
and talent, and not burdened
By belief and greed, feeling the heart
first where truth resides freely
to inhabit the lone universe
with a cosmic smile.* So, I moved on

And I saw the horizon illumined
by the expansive inhale that rounds
the bulging land at the solar belt
What is the soul of the land? I asked
Waiting in the silent Istanbul snowfall
hearing the soft breathing, nourishing
heartbeat of my love falling and rising
above her lofty chest, and there she is

An eternal spring who inspires in me
A perennial search to transcend history
When a man knows the limits of language
And sees every new moment as sweetest

The Walls of Babylon

I have seen the walls of Babylon
Peopled by eyes of stone and ice

I have seen the walls of Babylon
Where city lights stretch overseas

I have seen the walls of Babylon
And I looked away

I have seen the walls of Babylon
I'm home now, far from memory

The Wandering Memory

*What happened to me? I didn't leave.
And surely I haven't returned.
Where am I going? How did I get here?*

I am on a road,
And the ground beneath my feet moves backward.
The air is dense with a fog so dark it could be smoke.
When I breathe, I feel the thickness of the air fill my body,
weighing me down like a drug.

The only emotion I know now is loss,
the absence of direction.
There are times when I am strong,
and fight back nostalgia by proclaiming,
I am the way!

In those moments, I stop,
hear the soft rustle of leaves
skittish feet of a squirrel chasing bark
and I remember the damp forest scent of pine
moss and lichen, and a child-like maple
standing in the street,
growing out of an empty sidewalk
block of soil

And when I am really still
I sometimes feel the hurricane winds
blowing like a magic trick of the sky
across my face

And there I am in the places I knew
before I learned to force love
and handle money

when the heart of my childhood beat
like a clenched fist gently knocking
at the door where my grandparents showed me
to love through friendship,
music and the stories of us
that we'll never forget
even if we've lost all sense of the way
and we're as anonymous as the Wandering Jew

Tonight is Shabbat

This writing
is
by tradition
and faith
absolutely forbidden.

What I am impressing into this empty page should never have been
had I been more devout to the orthodox interpretation of the word
of the sacred mystery of life beyond time, and that is truth
beyond the forms of language
as written by me
because tonight, I should repress and discipline the urge
to express myself through writing
yet what of the empty pages I find in travel journals
and private diaries of a lover, the emptiness
that causes in me such inexplicable and fixated nerves
of questioning, a borderline hatred for whatever provokes
lost potential in the youth of the age so oversaturated
with media, flooded with audio-visual stimuli
the words and images that pour forward in a rapid stream
enough to drown the wonders of time that encompass
all of earth and humanity in an instant of self-gratification
and what is the result?
volumes of unwritten pages left closed and untouched
all the beauty and fascination of an original soul belittled
to a thought, as singular as modernity
to feel futile at the beginning of life
to merely sleep, dreamlessly suffocated
without touching the heart that throbs
given to the moment most intimate
eternally ours
the birthright that instills us with what is only ours
because we found it in ourselves and only we can choose to give it

Twice Dreamt

I

My bedded rose
an unpicked stem
lain down atop soil
cotton and cloud
gorgeous love,
miraculous beauty

every smell
taste, touch
leaves me
drunk, visionary
of the muse
her silence
breathable life

I am disillusioned
from the world with you
and find myself content
in a dream, sound asleep
to the rushing horror
and mad suffering
that only needs
and breeds compassion
from a heart as true as yours

II

what is done does not matter beside you
where all that is passes with the transience of moonlight
as a fast-moving river, and what I see are discolored shades
everywhere music always played in wrong notes
and out of time, even all sense of form is warped
and twisted, I see real happiness in you
and like a seeker finally realizing enlightenment
so much of what I once felt was necessary
and important has fallen away, I have lost skin
hair, and feathers and will give my eyes
just to see you in a dream, once, your smile
it kills me, and I am long gone now forever

Unanswered I Stand

I am alright now. I hear an original voice speak through me now again. She is the Muse of Sleep, who is overcome by life, and after the pain and nerves have fallen into the delicate embrace of our love we escape the cruel rush of selfish thought that winters heavy like snow over the streetscape eyes we have

to find just where we are and call home, as one in love through the thick smoke and strong drink that never fails to entrance over lust in a home of bodies broken in for the long day and the invisible night that flees to memory and longing

as we lift our arms and spread our legs wanting the moment to rise, seen, and then, lost as a cloudburst through the sunlit haze, I notice a pair of wings straight and gliding through the windless above, where the air has stilled and the magic of flight is all the more bewildering to the human eye

standing immersed in a shadow
and fast becoming one
with the unanswering dawn

We Will Go Nowhere

I like my love gentle, a dim, old cafe out of the way behind a busy street where we'll have a quiet drink, just one, even if the world outside is lost in a drunken rage, and I will look at you, and you will smile through young loving eyes, and when I speak I will be secretly listening to your delicate silent poise, and after we'll walk and laugh and look at the river and the sky and wonder who we are under the glistening galaxy, and if we kiss your lips will soften mine and I will slow down in mind and heart as I reach out to you to touch your shoulder, feel your hair and press my smile against yours,

we will be in a romantic city and return to a small apartment where we will drift into a mutual embrace, and if we make love, I want you gently, forgive me if I am not a hard fuck, if I do not grab you and take you and throw you up into the air along my tongue, I want you to say, *No*, I want you to stop me just when I'm peaking so that I know you have me right when you want me and I'm just where I want to be, with you, going nowhere

You See, I See

I want you to hear me,
because the night I have chosen to hold my tongue
is when I begin to speak my truth

You see, I have no name,
and the liveliest of my years, the prime of my life, has been in hiding
wasting away, wondering what I'll be, thinking only of the end

I ask questions, about honesty, authenticity
and find no one to answer but the sleeping lover at my side
who only dreams, you see

That was me once too
I snuck out, took another name, experimented on myself
in every way I knew to fail, to relish in cliché

I wandered aimlessly within,
only to return to the empty page,
the only place where I know how to begin, where the end is less than a thought

So here I am,
overlooking another busy street, naked and sick
drinking the same drinks and swallowing more smoke

I wait for the last exhale to whisk me away
to real mystery, when I'll finally come to know the truths that kept me awake
Searching in the dark, cold night for more of what I could never find

You see, I always had more to say,
and spent the daylight hours driven to smoldering
as my mind fell over exasperated to the brink of all that I could imagine to think

And I will again rise and fall like a fool in love
awed by the simplest sound that causes me to forget
where I began and that I end, here too

And so, I will hold my breath just a little longer
keep going, and struggle to remember who I am
all the while the bodies of my life give way

To the lonely pain of silence enduring,
you see, I see

2016

the taste of dawn

tame this blessed night
with a word, and a rhythm
and let the heart go of need

simply desire desire desire
until the pain of repressing is lost
to memory and the lightness

the humor of mere being
take over, we are full
and all that we are

to ourselves and each other
grown of wishes formed
on the tongue of taste

I only know the texture
of your skin at dawn
warmed by the morning

his absolute gift

ask the planetary king
about the world

he sleeps
and sees nightmares

shivering in fear
it takes hold

before and after
a tragedy

without name
without drama

forgotten orphaned
souls who risk being

to confront ourselves
to see with new eyes

dark and drifting
that doorway

that is how we'll be
empathetic to the diseased

preyed by masquerades
giving untested hypocrisy

the rambling mass
money showers

over the fence
keeping us all in

the red sky

what will open your heart?
I need to hear your body
to see what you imagine
for our hearts, when joined
sing the song of our lives

harmonizing with the angelic
flap of wings unheard
from the kitchen of rhyme
a dash of salt on the tongue
to dissolve every last rumor

of us, as apart, we are captive
souls in the fields of freedom
picking the earth of nourishment
hearing the value of our words
saying *I love* and waiting for rain

wishing for a new moon
to light the stars, a backdrop
cinematic pleasure, that sight
we'll form heavenly shapes
build our home of eternal truth

an unshakeable foundation
mind embraced with heart
and one day, together
we will meet G-d alone
ascending to our future home

up and up to a sky without horizons
where the clouds are faint
rainbow wisps miles beneath us
and we'll keep ascending
only the atmosphere will brighten

clear and never dim
as we grace the high
dreaming of our unified hearts
where I'll lay still, submerged
and think of how we met

when seagulls cry

take a moment, just one, and after it has passed
let it go, feel it leave, the slightest measure
a moving ray of sun dimming, untraceable
know that constant
it will keep you alive
for life kills time
time is because it goes
return to the first place
where you last breathed
be in need of each other, everything needs you
and nothing needs you, you need everything
and you need nothing, all the other ways
face your mind at play, follow
and then lead into empty space
light as prayer, anonymous, lifted
into the predawn sky
where I hear summer
the cry of seagulls
low on the Bosphorus
gleaming horizon, nude
from sea to sea
steppe plain meets forest
shores of pines thin, pointed
into Mediterranean heaven
do you hear the voice?
the birds are flying wishes
they trail off into pure night
until morning returns
its dusty face of smog
and work, countless toil
hearts stepping over strays
feeling for coins
in the bottomless cup
wondering, let's walk
let's walk home
I have lost my train
thinking, I have lost
my sense of direction
I have lost my sense
Without meaning
Without gravity
I have found you

overflow of tongues

what have I said? and when did I speak?
in that deep echo, my thoughts resound

i know the fear of release when one stone budes
under the great floodgate, our oceanic feeling cascades

in a deluge of insecurity, the over-meaning of a mind
faced with pure heart, like an eyeball unprotected

before the noonday sun, on a cloudless day
to see through, when into a looming void

take on a quiet disposition, hear the longing moans
from her, tempest-thought, whose words sting

like a quiver ranged from an unknown height
and falling through into me, my core red with lust

her stare silences my hate, and i sit entranced
swimming cold and lost, through broken alleys

our city, where we moved, our roots, dying
and so we grow wings, adapt in the unseen night

before dawn, we escape with a body of blood
in the bold afternoon we touch home, ecstatic

sweetened by tastes, i have loved, and see
proud of her dream, trusting, i wake

i hear the call of want, human G-d of all
the encompassing, the absolute end of self

and nature as one, in love, i rest

i let my breath fall, warm as her lips
we feel tones overflow, a lie is now truth

Secret Love

There you are. Farther away than ever. And here I am. In a new home.
In other arms. Where the memory of you is somewhere in the word,
“Love”. Yet, your name will not be spoken. And, just like when once I had
Kept secrets from you

Now, you are mine

Halfway Round

Fly into night
Against the spin
Moscow at dawn
Birds chirp at gate

My home is occupied
New York, a memory
Istanbul awaits
She is there

Within Us

Names within names
Places within places
Times within times
Dreams within dreams
Worlds within worlds
Eyes within eyes
Within within within
We are we within us

Sultanahmet the 12th

I raced through time when I came to see you
Where you did not wait for me, you were right

On time, even after I had let a season go
Longing for a moment in your eyes

And when we met I came to my senses
Slouching depressed in the dark bedroom winter

Night, as snow fell over the Marmara breeze
Late under a street lamp spotlight

And drunk blathering youth
Aimlessly ambling outside the fruit stand

Cigarette cage market outdoors
Until the frozen sky turned to rain

On the cusp of a degree, where continents meet
I returned to you from morning to afternoon

With the news on my mind of where I walked
Alone, somber on the warm January coast

Leaning out over the Bosphorus to find an answer
To the suicidal hate that drew my blood

Through my eye, and ran my mind cold
With the blinding apathy of the day

Sitting around teens stuffing sweets in our mouths
Laughing about murderous terror, the bomb

Attack at Sultanahmet, on the 12th of the New Year
Coming to life in our arms like a recovery

From addictions we hold dearly, for all that is
Gone in an instant to the gamble of the blessed

My Escape

I'm planning my escape, one day. I will be gone
with all of my possessions, erased from your room
where we lived, and loved.
Though, I will leave behind your gifts
a flute.

The one I always wanted, from your country,
such beautiful traditions of sounds ancient and mystical,
and the shirt your mother made me for Hanukah.

I will leave them and you, neatly, in your corner in the dark night alone.

How I want to be, until I am there, looking out at Galata Tower
where we never rose to kiss from Galata Bridge
where we never crossed because the Marmara Sea was too cold

In my 29th year, you are five years younger
with a heart greater than I could hold
and yet, I am still planning my escape,
and one day, you and I will be free
of the bondage of love holding us down
like the foundation of Topkapi Palace
a distance on the electric horizon
ferried into silence, seated next to you
wondering why I had not yet escaped,
though now I am, planning to go, far

and tomorrow will rise, to prepare my way without you
I'll see Aya Sofia with fresh eyes, open
and I won't think of how you said you never went inside
even though you had lived in Istanbul a year, and I twenty days

In a lie, waiting, like you, to be renewed
by experience,
futile and distempered
by passion

I'll wait
we'll escape,
together.

