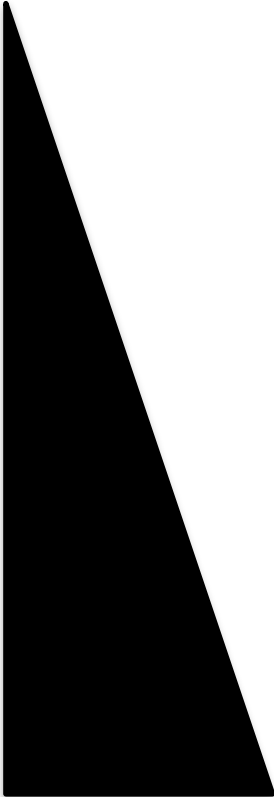


The  
Letters of  
Constantinople



Menahem Ali  
translated by Matt Alexander H.

The  
Letters of  
Constantinople

Menahem Ali  
translated by Matt Alexander H.



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

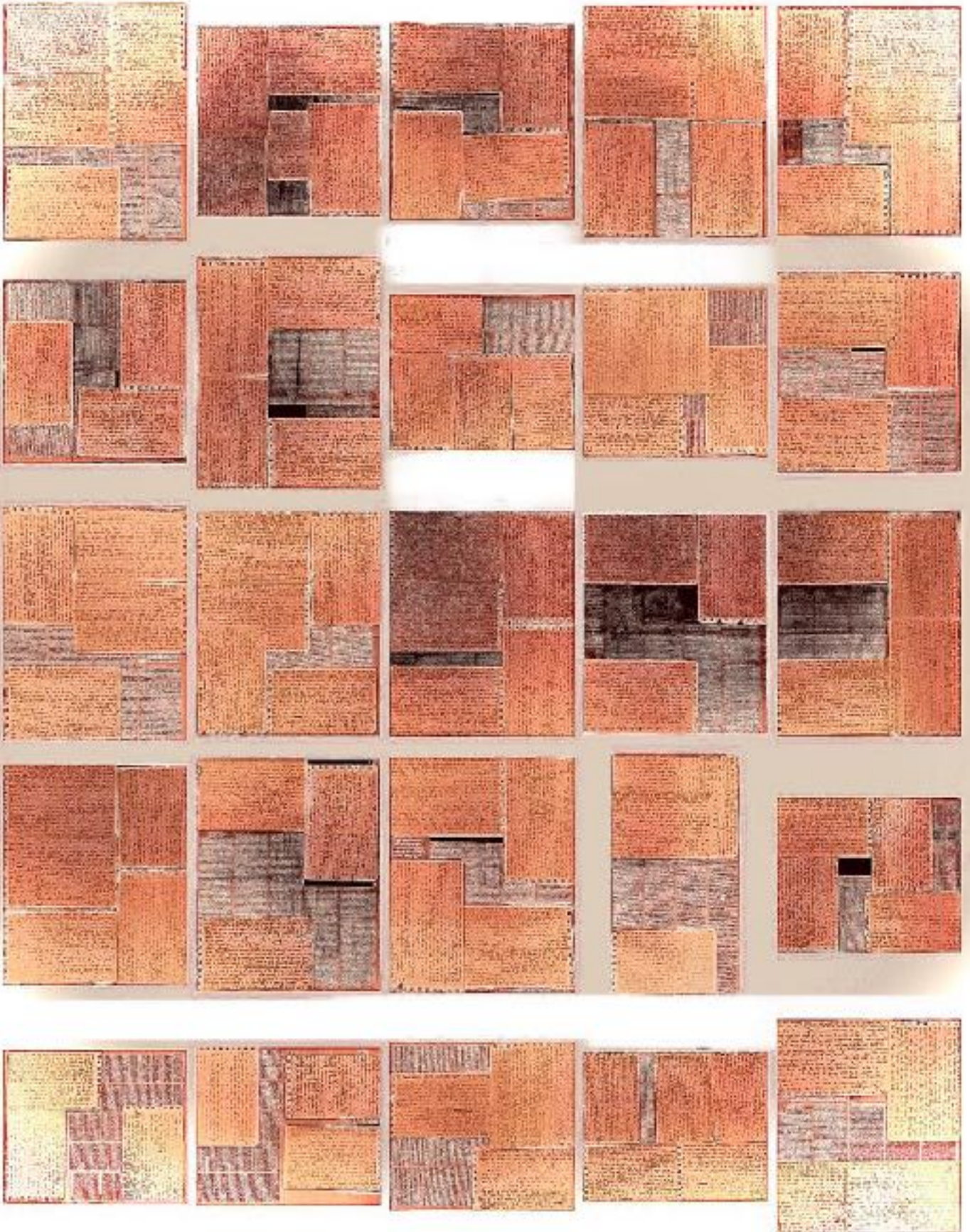
The American Hallucination  
Arson in the Scriptorium

Copyright © 2020, 2021 by Matt Alexander H.

Fictive Press

[www.fictivemag.com/press](http://www.fictivemag.com/press)

Logo design by Serra Şensoy



## 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 12<sup>th</sup>

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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.



