A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies

He dreams of white lilies,

Of an olive branch,

Of her breast at bloom in evening.

He dreams, he told me, of a bird,

Of lemon blossom,

And doesn’t seek to analyse his dream,

Understanding things only as he feels and smells them.

He understands, he told me, that home

‘Is to drink my mother’s coffee,

To return of an evening.’

I asked him: ‘And the land?’

He said: ‘I know it not.

I don’t feel that it is – as poems express it –

My very skin and heartbeat.

I noticed it suddenly

As I do the shop, the street, newspaper.’

I asked him: ‘Do you love it?’

He answered: ‘My love is a short outing,

A glass of wine, an affair.’

‘Would you die for it?’
‘Certainly not.
The only bonds that tie me to the land
Are a fiery article, a lecture –
They taught me to be in love with love of it,
But I have not felt its heart is mine,
Have not breathed in the scent of grass, of roots, of boughs.’
‘And what was its love like?
Did it sting like suns, like craving?’
He turned to me and answered:
‘For me love’s instrument is a gun
And the revival of festivals from ancient wastes
And the silence of an old statue
Whose age and identity are lost.’
He talked to me of the moment of farewell,
Of how his mother wept in silence as they led him off
To some place at the front.
His mother’s anguished voice
Was carving out a new longing under his skin:
O that doves might grow up in the Ministry of Defence,
O that they might!
He smoked, then said to me,

As though fleeing from a morass of blood:

'I dreamt of white lilies,

Of an olive branch'

Of a bird embracing the morning

On the bough of a lemon tree.'

'And what did you see?'

'I saw what I had made:

A red boxthorn

I had exploded in the sand, in breasts, in bellies.'

'And how many did you kill?'

'It is difficult to count them,

But I got one medal.'

Torturing myself, I asked him:

'Tell me about one of the ones you killed.'

He sat up straight, toyed with the folded newspaper,

And said to me, as though reciting a song:

'Like a tent he collapsed on the stones,

Clasping to him the shattered stars.

A crown of blood marked his high forehead.
His chest was bare of medals –

He was no fighter.

It seems he was a farmer, a labourer, a pedlar.

Like a tent he collapsed upon the stones and died,

His arms stretched out,

Like two dry streams,

And when I searched his pockets for his name,

I found two photographs:

One of his wife,

One of his young daughter.’

I asked him: ‘Did you grieve?’

Interrupting, he answered: ‘Mahmoud, my friend,

Grief is a white bird

That does not come near the battlefields.

Soldiers sin when they grieve.

Over there I was a machine, spitting out fire and death,

Turning space into a black bird.’

Later

He spoke to me of his first love,
Of distant streets,

Of his reactions to the war,

Of press and radio heroism,

And when he had hidden his cough in his handkerchief,

I asked: 'Will we be meeting?'

He answered: 'In some city far away.'

When I'd filled his glass for the fourth time

I said in joke: You’re going away – what of the homeland?

‘Let me be, ‘he said.

‘I am dreaming of white lilies,

Of a street that is singing, of a house that is lit.

I want a good heart not a loaded rifle.

I want a sunlit day, not the mad,

Fascist moment of conquest.

I want a smiling child meeting the day with laughter,

Not a piece of the war machine.

I came to live sunrise

Not sunsets.’

He bade me farewell, for he was searching for white lilies,
For a bird that meets the morning
On an olive branch,
Because he understands things
Only as he feels and smells them.
He understands, he told me, that
‘Home is sipping my mother’s coffee,
And coming back safe of an evening.’

Translated by: Denys Johnson-Davies
A Soldier Dreams of White Tulips

They taught me to love it, but I never felt it in my heart.

I never knew its roots and branches, or the scent of its grass.

-And what about its love? Did it burn like suns and desires?

He looked straight at me and said: I love it with my gun.

And by unearthing feasts in the garbage of the past

and a deaf-mute idol whose age and meaning are unknown.

He told me about the moment of departure, how his mother

silently wept when they led him to the front,

how her anguished voice gave birth to a knew hope in his flesh

that doves might flock through the Ministry of War.

He drew on his cigarette. He said as if fleeing from a swamp of blood,
I dreamt of white tulips, an olive branch, a bird embracing the dawn on a lemon branch.

-And what did you see?
-I saw what I did: a blood-red boxthorn.

I blasted them in the sand ... in their chests... in their bellies.

-How many did you kill?
-It’s impossible to tell. I only got one medal.

Pained, I asked him to tell me about one of the dead.

He shifted in his seat, fiddled with the folded newspaper,
then said, as if breaking into song:

He collapsed like a tent on stones, embracing shattered planets.

His high forehead was crowned with blood.

His chest was empty of medals.

He was not a well-trained fighter, but seemed instead to be a peasant, a worker, or a peddler.

Like a tent he collapsed and died, his arms stretched out like dry creek-beds.

When I searched his pockets for a name, I found two photographs, one of his wife, the other of his daughter.

Did you feel sad? I asked.

Cutting me off, he said, Mahmoud, my friend,

sadness is a white bird that does not come near a battlefield.

Soldiers commit a sin when they feel sad.

I was there like a machine spitting hellfire and death,

turning space into a black bird.

He told me about his first love, and later, about distant streets,
about reactions to the war in the heroic radio and the press.

As he did a cough in his handkerchief I asked him:

Shall we meet again?

Yes, but in a city far away.
When I filled his fourth glass, I asked jokingly:

Are you off? What about the homeland?

Give me a break, he replied.

I dreamt of white tulips, streets of song, a house of light.

I need a kind heart, not a bullet.

I need a bright day, not a mad, fascist moment of triumph.

I need a child to cherish a day of laughter, not a weapon of war.

I came to live for rising suns, not to witness their setting.

He said goodbye and went looking for white tulips,

a bird welcoming the dawn on an olive branch.

He understands things only as he sense and smells them.

Homeland for him, he said, is to drink my mother’s coffee, to return, safely, at nightfall.

Translated by: Munir Akash and Carolyn Forche
Psalm 2

Nowadays
I find myself dry
As a tree growing out of books,
And the wind is a passing matter.
To fight or not to fight?
That is not the question.
The important thing is for my throat to be strong
To work or not to work?
That is not the question.
The important thing is for me to rest eight days a week
According to Palestine Mean Time
O homeland repeated in songs and massacres,
Show me the way to the source of death:
Is it the dagger or the lie?
In order to remember I had a roof that’s lost
I should sit out in the open.
In order not to forget my country’s pure air
I should breathe in consumption.
In order to remember the gazelle swimming in whiteness
I must be interned with memories.
In order not to forget my mountains are high
I should comb the storm from my brow.
In order to retain ownership over my distant sky
I must not own even my very skin.

O homeland repeated in massacres and songs,

Why do I smuggle you from airport to airport
Like opium,
White ink
And a transmitter?
I want to draw your form,
You who are scattered through files and surprises.
I want to draw your form,
You who are strewn over shrapnel and birds’ wings.
I want to draw your form,
But the sky snatches at my hand.
I want to draw your form,
You who are beleaguered between wind and dagger,
I want to draw your form
In order to find my form in you,
And so I am accused of being abstract, of forging
Documents and photos
You who are beleaguered between dagger and wind
O homeland repeated in songs and massacres
How are you changed into a dream and steal wonderment
So that you leave me like a stone?
Perhaps you are more beautiful in the process of becoming a dream,
Perhaps you are more beautiful.
In the history of the Arabs there remains
No name for me to borrow
With which to slip through your secret windows.
All the cover names have been booked
In the air-conditioned recruiting offices,
So will you accept my name –
My only cover name –
Mahmoud Darwish?
As for my original name,
It has been torn from my flesh
By police whips and the pines of Carmel.
O homeland repeated in massacres and songs,
Show me the way to the source of death:

Is it the dagger

Or the lie?

Translated by: Denys Johnson-Davies
Psalm 2

Nowadays
I find myself dry
Like a tree in a book
And the wind, a passing matter.
To fight or not to fight?
That is not the question;
What’s important is for my throat to be strong.
To work or not to work?
That is not the question;
What is important is for me to rest eight days a week
According to Palestinian Standard Time.
Homeland reiterated in songs and massacres,
Show me the source of death;
Is it the dagger... or the lie?
To remember I have a lost roof
I must sit out in the nude
To remember my country’s pure air
I must inhale tubercular air
To remember the gazelle swimming in whiteness
I must be a prisoner of memories

To remember that my mountains are high
I must comb the storm from my brow
And to safeguard ownership of my distant sky
I must own not even my own skin.
Homeland reiterated in massacres and songs,
Why do I smuggle you from airport to airport
Like opium
Like invisible ink
Or a transmitter?
I want to draw your form.
You who are scattered in files and surprises
I want to draw your form,
You who fly on shrapnel and wings of birds
I want to draw your form
But the sky steals my hand
I want to draw your form,
You who are beleaguered between wind and dagger
I want to draw your form
To find my shape in you
Instead I’m accused of being abstract,
Of forging documents and photographs
You, who are beleaguered between dagger and wind.

Homeland recreated in songs and massacres,

How you changed to a dream and steal suddenness

And leave me petrified.

Maybe you’re more beautiful as a dream

May be you’re more beautiful!

No name remains in Arab history

For me to borrow,

To climb with to your secret windows.

All the cover names are confiscated

In the air-conditioned recruiting offices

Will you accept my name –

My only cover name –

Mahmoud Darwish?

As for my original name

It’s been stripped off my flesh

By the whips of the Police and the pine cones of Carmel

Homeland repeated in massacres and songs,

Show me the provenience of death

Is it the dagger

Or the lie?!

Translated by: Ben Bennani
The Eternity of Cactus

- Where are you taking me, father?
- Where the wind takes us, my son...
... As the two were leaving the plain where Bonaparte’s soldiers surveyed

The shadows on the old wall of Acre –

A father said to his son: Don’t be afraid.

Don’t be afraid of the drone of bullets! Stay close to the ground so you’ll survive!

We’ll survive and climb

A mountain in the north and return when

The soldiers return to their distant families

- Who will live in the house after us, father?
- It will remain as it is, as it has always been, my son!

He felt for his key the way he would feel for His limbs and was reassured. He said

As they climbed through a fence of thorns:

Remember, my son, here the British crucified

Your father on the thorns of a cactus for two nights

أبد الصبارة

إلى أين تأخذني يا أبي؟
إلى جهة الريح يا ولدي...
وهما يغادران من السهل وحيث أقام جنود بونابرت تلًا لرصد الظلال على سور عكا القديم –
يقول أبي لابنه: لا تخف لا تخف من أزيز الرصاص! التصق بالتراب لتنجو! سننحو ونعلو على
جبل في الشمال ونرجع حين يعود الجنود إلى أهلهم في البعيد.
ومن يسكن البيت من بعدها يا أبي؟
سبقى على حاله مثلما كان يا ولدي!
تحسس مفتاحه مثلما يتحسس أعضاءه، وطمأن والله
وهما يعبران سباعًا من الشوكة:
يا ابني تذكري! هنا صلب الإنجليز
أباك على شوكة صبارة ليلتين.
And he didn’t confess. You will grow up,
My son, and tell those who inherit their
Guns the story of the blood upon the
iron ...

- Why did you leave the horse alone?
- To keep the house company, my son
Houses die when their inhabitants are gone
Eternity opens its gate from a distance
To the traffic of night. The wolves of the
wilderness

Howl at a frightened moon.

And a father says to his son: Be strong like
your grandfather!

Climb with me the last hill of oaks,
My son, and remember: Here the janissary
fell from the mule of war. So be steadfast
with me and we’ll return

-When, father?

-Tomorrow. Perhaps in two days, my son!
A reckless tomorrow chewed at the wind
Behind them through the long nights of
winter
The soldiers of Yehoshua ben Nun built

Their citadel from the stones of their

House. Out of breath

On the path to Qana: Here

Jesus passed one day. Here

He turned water into wine and said

Many things about love. My son,

Remember tomorrow. Remember

crusader citadels

Gnawed at by April weeds after

The soldiers’ departure ...

Translated by: Jeffrey Sacks
The Everlasting Indian Fig

Where are you taking me, father?
Where the wind blows, son.

While leaving the plains where Bonaparte’s soldiers
Erected a hill to watch the shadows on ancient Acre’s wall,
A father says to his son: Do not be afraid.
Do not be afraid of the whir of bullets.
Hold fast to the ground.
You will be saved and we will climb a mountain in the north and come back when the soldiers return to their families in distant lands.

- And who will live in the house after us, O my father?
- It will remain as it is.

He felt for his keys as he would his limbs, and his mind was at rest.
And he said while crossing a fence of thorns: O my son, remember! Here on the thorn of an Indian fig, the English crucified your father for two nights
But he never confessed. You will grow up, my son, and tell those who inherited their rifles the legacy of our blood on their iron.
- Why have you left the horse alone?
- To keep the house company, O my son,

For houses perish if their inhabitants go away.
Eternity opens its doors from afar to travellers at night.
Wolves in the wilderness howl at a frightened moon, and a father says to his son: Be strong like your grandfather!
Climb the last hill of oaks with me.
Remember, son: here the last inkishari fell from his war mule –
So remain defiant until our return.

- When will that be, O my father?
- Tomorrow. Perhaps in two days.

It was a heedless tomorrow that chewed on the wind behind them on the long winter nights.
Joshua’s soldiers built their fortress with the stones of their houses.
Breathless on the road to Cana: here our Lord passed one day.
Here he transformed water into wine.
Here he said many things about love.
O my son, remember tomorrow. And remember the fortresses of the crusades eaten by April’s grasses after the soldiers left.

Translated by: Amira El-Zein
Hooriyya’s Teaching
One day I thought of leaving
A goldfinch perched on her hand and went
to sleep.
All I had to do was fiddle with a vine branch
And she knew right away my wine glass
was full.
If I fall asleep early
She sees my dream
And stays up to guard it.
One letter from is enough
For her to know my address in prison
Has changed, that my days hover around
her, that my days hover in front of her.
My mother counts my twenty fingers from
afar.
She combs my hair with one of her golden
curls.
She looks for foreign women in my
underwear.
She mends my socks.
In spite of our wishes
I did not grow up at her hands.
She and I parted company at the marble
slope.
Clouds waved goodbye to us
And to the goats that inherited the land.
Exile established two separate languages
for us:
Slang for doves to understand and keep memory fresh, and a classic so I can interpret shadows to their shadows.

I am still alive in your midst.

You did not tell me what a mother tells a sick boy.

I am sick because of the copper moon above the Bedouin’s tents.

Do you remember our migration route to Lebanon?

Where you forgot me in a sack of bread (it was wheat bread)

I kept quiet so as not to wake the guards.

The scent of morning dew lifted me onto your shoulders.

O you, gazelle that lost both house and mate.

There is no time for sentimental talk around you.

You kneaded the whole afternoon with basil.

You baked the rooster’s comb for sumac.

I know what breaks your heart pierced by a peacock.

Since the day you were expelled from Paradise a second time

Our whole world changed,

Even the greeting between us fell

Echoless, like a button falling on sand.
Say Good Morning!

Say anything,
So that life may grant me its sweet delight.

She is Hagar’s half-sister.

She cries with the flutes
For the dead who do not die.

No cemeteries surround her tent
For her to know how heaven opens.

She does not see the desert behind my fingers to view her garden on the face of a mirage,
So that times gone by urge her to requisite joy:

Her father took off like a Circassian on a wedding horse,
Her mother prepared the henna
For her husband’s wife
And inspected her anklet
Without shedding a tear.

We meet to bid farewell at the crossroads of speech.
For example, she tells me:
Marry any woman from among the foreigners
Even more beautiful than girls from the neighbourhood,
But never trust any woman other than me,
And don’t always trust your memories.
Don’t become incandescent in order to

قولً: صباح الخير!
قولً أيّ شيء لي لمنحنني الحياة دلالها.
هي أخت هاجر.
اختها من أمها.
تبي مع النايت موتى لم يموتوا.
لا مقابر حول خيمتها لتعرف كيف تفتح السماء.
ولا ترى الصحراء خلاف أصابعي لترى حديقتها على وجه السراب.
أبوها طار مثل الشرمس على حصان العرس.
أما أمّها فلقد أعدت.
 دون أن تبكي لزوجه زوجها حنّاءها.
وتفرّحت خلالها ...
لا لنلتقٌ إلا وداعاً عند مفترق الحديث.
تقول لي مثلًا: تزوج أيّة امرأة من الغرباء، أجمل من بنات الحي.
لكن لا تصدّق أيّة امرأة سواي.
ولا تصدّق ذكرياتك دائماً.
لا تحترق لتضيء أمك، تلك مهنتها الجميلة.
Light up your mother. That’s her task.
Don’t long for sweet dates of dew.
Be as realistic as the sky.
Don’t hanker for your grandfather’s black cloak
Or your grandmother’s bribes.
Take off like a colt into the world
And be who you are wherever you are.
Shoulder the burden of your heart
And then come back if your country is really big enough to be a country.
My mother illuminates Canaan’s last stars
Around my mirror
And throws her shawl across my last poem.

Translated by: Sinan Antoon
Huriyya’s Teachings

One day I thought about leaving. A goldfinch landed on her hand and slept. It was enough to quickly run my hand over the bars of a trellis . . . for her to realize that my glass of wine was full. It was enough to go to sleep early for her to see my dream clearly, to lengthen her night so she could watch over it . . . It was enough for one of my letters to arrive to know that my address had changed, at the prison grounds, and that my days hover over her . . . and before her. My mother counts my fingers and toes from a distance. She combs me with a braid of her golden hair. She searches in my underwear for foreign women, and amends my torn socks. She didn’t watch me grow up as we both wanted: she and I. We were separated at the slope of marble . . . and clouds waved to us and to a goat that inherits the place. Exile establishes for us two languages: A spoken one . . . so the pigeons will grasp it and preserve the memory, and a classical one . . . so I can explain to the shadows their shadows!

I am still alive in your ocean. You didn’t tell me what a mother tells her sick son. I fell ill from the copper moon on the Bedouin’s tent. Do you remember the road of our exile to Lebanon, where you forgot me and the bag of bread? [It was wheat bread.] I didn’t scream so I wouldn’t wake the guards. The scent of dew set me on your shoulders. Oh gazelle who lost there its shelter and its mate . . .

No time, around you, for sentimental talk. You blended the whole afternoon with basil. You baked, in sumac, the crest of the rooster. I know what devastates your heart, pierced by the peacock, since you were expelled from Eden a second time.

Our whole world has changed. Our voices have changed. Even our greetings to each other fall without an echo, like a button from a dress, on the sand. Say: Good morning! Say anything at all to me, so that life will treat me tenderly.

She’s Hagar’s sister. Her sister through her mother. With flutes she mourns the dead who haven’t died. There are no graves around her tent to know how the sky will open. She doesn’t see the desert behind my fingers so she’ll see her garden on the face of the mirage. Ancient time runs with her to an ineluctable futility: Her father flew, like a Circassian, on the wedding’s
horse. And her mother prepared, without crying, the henna for her husband’s wife, and made sure her anklet was in place . . . We only meet parting at the crossroads of speech. She says to me, for example: marry any foreign woman, prettier than a local, but don’t trust any woman but me. And don’t always trust your memories. Don’t burn up in order to light up your mother. That’s her beautiful calling. Don’t long for appointments with the dew. Be realistic, like the sky. And drop the nostalgia for your grandfather’s black cloak and for your grandmother’s endless bribes. Burst, like a colt, into the world. Be yourself wherever you are. Carry only the burden of your heart . . . And return when your country opens onto countries, and changes its state . . . My mother lights up the last stars of Canaan around my mirror and throws her shawl into my last poem!

Translated by: Jeffrey Sacks
There’s a love walking on two silken feet
Happy with its estrangement in the streets,
A love small and poor made wet by a
passing rain
That it overflows onto passers-by:
My gifts are larger than I am
Eat my wheat
And drink my wine
My sky is on my shoulders and my earth is
yours . . .
Did you smell the jasmine’s radiant blood
and think of me
Then wait with me for a green-tailed bird
That has no name?
There’s a poor love starting at the river
In surrender to summoning: Where do you
run seahorse?
Soon the sea will suck you in
So walk leisurely to your chosen death,
O seahorse!
Were you as two embankments for me
And was the place as it should be
Light-footed on your memories?
What songs do you love
What songs? The ones
That speak about love’s thirst,
Or about a time that has passed?
There’s a poor love, one-sided

سماء منخفضة
هنالك حب حي دبت على قدميه الحبرينتين
سعداً تجره في الشوارع.
حبٌ فقيرٌ يقبل مطرٌ عابرٌ

فيفيض على العابرین:
هداياً أكبر مثّي
كلوا حنتكى
واشربوا خمرتى
ضماني على كففي وأرضي لكم...

هل شممت دم الاسمن المشاعر
وقررت بي

انتظرت معي طنًأ أخضر الذيل
لا اسم له؟
هناك حبٌ فقيرٌ يدقّ في النهر
مستسناً للتداعي: إلى أي تركض
يا فرس الماء؟
عما قليل سيصشك البحر
فامش الهوائي إلى موطئ الإختيار
يا فرس الماء!

هل كنت لي ضفتين
وكان المكان كما ينبغي أن يكون
خفيفاً خفيفاً على ذكرياتك؟
أي الأغاني تحبين
أي الأغاني التي تتحدث عن عطش الحب؟
أم عن زمان مضى؟
هنالك حبٌ فقيرٌ ومن طرف واحد
And quiet serene it doesn’t break
Your select day’s crystal
And doesn’t light a fire in a cold moon
In your bed,
You don’t sense it when you cry from an apprehension,
Which might replace it,
You don’t know what to feel when you embrace
Yourself between your arms!
Which nights do you want, which nights
And what colour are those eyes that you dream
With when you dream?
There is a poor love, and two-sided
It diminishes the number of those in despair
And lifts the pigeons’ throne on both sides.
You must, then, by yourself lead
This swift spring to the one you love.
Which time do you want, which time
That I may become its poet, just like that:
Whenever
A woman goes to her secret in the evening
She finds a poet walking in her thoughts.
Whenever a poet dives into himself
He finds a woman undressing before his poem . . .
Which exile do you want?
Will you come with me, or walk alone
In your name as an exile that adorns exile
With its glitter?
There is a love passing through us,
Without us noticing
And neither it knows nor do we know
Why a rose in an ancient wall makes us fugitives
And why a girl at the bus stop cries,
Bites an apple then laughs and cries:
Nothing, nothing more
Than a bee passing through my blood ...
There’s a poor love, it contemplates
At length the passers-by, and chooses
The youngest moon among them: You are in need
Of a lower sky,
Be my friend and the sky will expand
For the selfishness of two who do not know
To whom they should give their flowers ...
Maybe it meant me, maybe
It meant us and we didn’t notice
There is a love ...

Translated by: Fady Joudah
She Does Not Love You

She does not love you.
Your metaphors thrill her.
You are her poet.
But that's all there is to it.
She is thrilled by the river,
Plunging in rhythm.
So become a river to thrill her!
She is thrilled by the union
Of lightning and sound
In your rhyme ...
Her breasts drip
On a letter.
So become the first letter of the alphabet
To excite her!
She is excited by the elevation of things,
From anything to light,
From a light to ringing,
From ringing to feeling.
So become one of her emotions to excite her.
She is excited by the struggle
Of her night with her breasts.
(Love, you have tormented me.

[Love, you have tormented me.]
O river pouring its ferocious sensuality
Outside my room.
O Love! If you do not bless me with lust,
I will kill you.)
Be an angel,
Not to impress her with your metaphor,
But so that she may kill you
To avenge her femininity
And escape the snare of metaphor.
Perhaps she has come to love you
Since you raised her to the sky,
And you became another person,
Occupying the highest throne in her sky.
And there, matters became confused
Among the stars, between Pisces and Virgo

Translated by: Mohammad Shaheen
The Phases of Anat

Poetry is our ladder to the moon
Anat suspends on her garden
Like a mirror for hopeless lovers
As she wends her way into deserts of the soul:
two women never to be reconciled,
One bringing water to fountains,
The other driving fire to forests.
As for horses, let them
prance forever over the two bottomless pits
Where there is neither life nor death,
While my poem is Anat,
death-foam at the mouth,
animal’s cry
In its shrill ascent
And its deep-throated fadeout.
Anat, I want you both together
In love and war
And I find myself in Hell,
for I love you.
Anat kills herself within herself
Then recreates that distance inside herself
so that before her image far away

أطوار أنات
الشعر سلمنا إلى قمر نعلّقه أنات على حديثتها
كمرأة لعشق بلا أمل
وتمضي في براري نفسها امرأتين لا تتصالحان:
هناك امرأة تعود الماء للينبوع
وامرأة تقود النار في الغابات
أما الخيل فلتفرق طويلا فوق هاويتين.
لا موت هناك ولا حياة
وقصيدتي زبد اللهاث وصرخة الحيوان
عند صعوده العالي
وعند هبوطه العاري: أنات
أنا أريدكما معاً
حبًا وحرباً يا أنات
فالي جهنم بي.. أحبك يا أنات
وأنات تقتل نفسها
في نفسها
ولنفسها
وتعيد تكوين المسافة كي تمر الكائنات
all creatures pass,
Over Mesopotamia and Syria,
and all regions obey
Sceptre of lapis and Virgin’s ring.
O Anat, why remain in the underworld?
Come back to nature!
Come back to us!
Wells dried up when you left us,
Streams and rivers ran dry when you died,
Tears evaporated from clay jars,
air cracked like wooden embers
from dryness,
And we broke down over your absence
like fences rotting away.
Our desires have dried up
And our prayers turned to bone.
All is lifeless after your death,
For life died out like the conversations of
people on their way to Hell.
O don’t stay in the underworld, Anat!
Have new goddesses appeared in your absence,
And we unknowingly accepted the mirage?
Have wily shepherds found a goddess
Afloat in the dusty air
and the priestesses accepted her?
Come back, and bring
the land of truth and connotation,
The first land of Canaan,
Land of your public breasts and thighs,
So that miracles return to Jericho,
Return to the deserted temple door
Where there is neither life nor death,
Where there is only chaos under
doomsday’s arch,
Where no future arrives and no past returns
to bid us farewell,
Where no Babylonian memories
Sail over our palm trees,
Where no dream keeps us company
for us to dwell in a star
That is only one of the many
Buttons on your tunic,
O Anat!
Anat creates herself from herself and for
herself
And flies after Greek ships
Under an assumed name,
Two women never to be reconciled.
As for the horses,
Let them prance forever
over two bottomless pits
where there is neither life nor death.
Where I neither live nor die.
Where there is neither Anat
Nor Anat.

Translated by: Husain Haddawi
The Phases of Anat

Poetry is our ladder to a moon hung by Anat
Over her gardens, a mirror for hopeless lovers. She walks through the wilds of her self two unreconciled women:
One returns water to the source
The other brings fire to the forests
As for the horses
Let them dance for a long while over the two abysses
There’s neither death there . . . nor life.
My poem is the foam of a gasp and the cry of an animal
On its high ascent
On its bare descent: Anat!
I want you both, together, love and war. Oh Anat
to hell with me . . . I love you, Anat!
Anat kills herself
In herself
For herself
And she recreates distance so creatures can pass
Before her distant image over Mesopotamia
and over Syria. North, south, east and west obey
with an azure staff and the virgin’s ring:
Don’t be late in the underworld. Return
to nature and to human nature, oh Anat!
The well water, after you, has dried up. The basins and rivers and rivers dried up after your death. Tears evaporated from the clay jar. Air cracked from the dryness like a piece of wood. We broke like a fence over your absence. Our desires dried up in us. Our prayers calcified. Nothing lives after your death. Life dies like words between two travellers to hell
Oh Anat
don’t linger any longer in the underworld! Perhaps new goddesses will descend upon us in your absence and we’ll be ruled by a mirage. Perhaps cunning shepherds will find a goddess near nothingness. The priestesses believe her
You’ll return. You’ll return the land of truth and allegory,
The land of Canaan – the beginning

The land that opens between your communal breasts

And between your communal thighs, so that the miracles will return to Jericho

At the gate of the abandoned temple . . .
there’s neither life nor death

Chaos at resurrection’s gate. There’s no tomorrow coming. There’s no past coming to bid farewell

No memories

Flying from Babylon over our palm tree, nor a dream to accompany us as we grow old, so we’ll inhabit a star

The star is a button on your dress, oh Anat

Anat creates herself of herself for herself

She flies behind the vessels of the Greeks

Under another name

Two women never to be reconciled . . .

As for the horses

They’ll dance for a long while over the two abysses. There’s

Neither death there, nor life

There I’m neither alive nor dead

Nor is Anat

Nor is Anat

Translated by: Jeffrey Sacks
Ruba’iyat

I’ve seen all I want to see of the field:
Tresses of wheat combed by the wind.
I close my eyes:
This mirage leads to the music of Nahawand
This silence leads to a blue twilight.
I’ve seen all I want to see of the sea:
Gulls flying through sunset.
I close my eyes:
This loss leads to Andalusia
This sail is doves’ prayers
pouring down on me.
I’ve seen all I want to see of night:
A long trip’s end
hanging around a city gate.
I will leave my diaries behind
In sidewalk cafes
I will give this nowhere
My seat on one of the ships.
I’ve seen all I want to see of the soul:
face of stone etched by lightning.
You’re so green, my land!
So green, O my soul’s land!

رباعيّات

أرى ما أريد من الحقل ... إنّي أرى
جداول فمٍ تمشطها الريح. أغمض عيني:

هذا السراب يؤدي إلى النيهوند
وهذا السكون يؤدي إلى اللازورد
أرى ما أريد من البحر ... إنّي أرى

هروب النوارس عند الغروب فأغمض عيني:

هذا الضياع يؤدي إلى أندلس
وهذا الشراع صلاة الحمام علي ...

أرى ماريد من الليل ... إنّي أرى

نهائيات هذا الممر الطويل على باب إحدى المدن
سأرّمي مفكرتي في مفاهي الرصيف، سأجلس هذا الغياب

على مقعد فوق إحدى السفن

أرى ما أريد من الروح: وجه الحجر
وقد حُكّمه البرق، خضراً يا أرض ... خضراء يا أرض

روحی
Wasn’t I that child playing near the lip of the well, Still playing?
All space is my courtyard all the stones are my winds.
I’ve seen all I want to see of peace: a deer, a pasture and a stream.
I close my eyes:
The deer is asleep in my arms
His hunter is asleep in a faraway place
I’ve seen all I want to see of war: Our forefathers squeezed from a green stone.
Our fathers inherited the water but they do not give it to us.
I close my eyes:
What is left to the land I make with my own hands.
I’ve seen all I want to see of prison:
days of a flower
That guided two strangers from here
to a garden seat.
I close my eyes:
You are so vast, O land,
so wondrous seen through a needle’s eye!
I’ve seen all I want to see of lightning:
Profusion of vegetation rent by weeds.
Hail to the almond’s song, flowing white
as village smoke, as flocks of doves
sharing our children’s food!
I’ve seen all I want to see of love:
Horses dancing on trampled plains,
fifty guitars sighing.
Swarms of bees sucking blackberries,
I close my eyes
To see our shadows
behind this relentless place.

Translated by: Noel Abdulahad
Rubaiyat

I see what I want of the field . . . I see
Braids of wheat combed by the wind, and I close my eyes:
This mirage leads to a nahawand
And this serenity to lapis
I see what I want of the sea . . . I see
The rise of seagulls at sunset, and I close my eyes:
This loss leads to an Andalus
And this sail is the pigeons’ prayer for me . .
I see what I want of the night . . . I see
The end of this long corridor by some city’s gates.
I’ll toss my notebook on the sidewalk of cafes, and seat this absence
On a chair aboard one of the ships
I see what I want of the soul: the face of stone
As lightning scratches it. Green is the land . .
Green, the land of my soul.

Wasn’t I a child once playing by the edge of the well?
I am still playing . . . this vastness is my meadow, and the stones my wind
I see what I want of peace . . . I see
A gazelle, grass, and a rivulet . . . I close my eyes:
This gazelle sleeps on my arms
And its hunter sleeps near the gazelle’s children in a distant place
I see what I want of war . . . I see
Our ancestors’ limbs squeeze the springs green in a stone,
And our fathers inherit the water but bequeath nothing. So I close my eyes:
The country within my hands is of my hands
I see what I want of prison: a flower’s days
Passed through here to guide two strangers within me
To a bench in the garden, then I close my eyes:
Spacious is the land, beautiful through a needle’s eye
I see what I want of lightning . . . I see

The vegetation of the fields crumble the shackles, O joy!

Joy for the white almond song descending on the smoke of villages

Like doves . . . What we feed our children we share with the doves

I see what I want of love . . . I see

Horses making the meadow dance, fifty guitars sighing, and a swarm

Of bees suckling the wild berries, and I close my eyes

Until we see our shadow behind this dispossessed place.

Translated by: Fady Joudah
From now on you are somebody Else

Did we have to fall from a great height, and see our own blood on our Hands, to realise that we are not angels, as we used to believe?

Did we have to expose ourselves in public so our reality could lose its virginity?

How we lied when we said: ‘We are exception!’

Believing yourself is worse than lying to someone else.

To be kind to those who hate us and cruel to those who love us

Is the absence of the arrogant, and the self-importance of the dishonourable.

Oh past! Don’t change us as we move away from you.

Oh future! Don’t ask us who we are and what we want from you, for we don’t know either.

Oh present! Be a little patient with us, for we are only passers-by with heavy shadows.

Identity is what we bequeath, not what we inherit, what we invent, not what we

أنت منذ الآن غيرك هل كان علينا أن نسقط من علو شاهق ونرى دمنا على أيدينا ... لندرك أننا لستا ملانكة ... كيف كنا نظن؟

وهل كان علينا أيضا أن نكشف عن عوراتنا أمام الملاك كي لا تبقى حقيقتنا عذرا؟ كم كتبنا حين قلنا: نحن استثناء! أن تصدق نفسك أسوأ من أن تكتب على غيرك أن نكون ودودين مع من يكرهونا وفساء مع من يحبونا.

هذا هي دونية المعاناة، غطرسة الوضع! أيها الماضي! لا تغيرنا... كلما ابتعدنا عنك!

كما المستقبلي: لاتسألوا من نحن؟ وماذا تريدون مني؟ فنحن أيضاً لا نعرف.

أيها الحاضر! تحملنا قليلاً، فلسنا سوى عابري سبيل تقلاء الظل!

الهوية هي: ما نورث لا ما نرث، ما نخترع لا ما نتذكر.

الهوية هي فساد المرأة التي يجب
Remember. Identity is the distorted image in the mirror that we must break the minute we grow fond of it.

He put on a mask and felt bold and brave, and he killed his mother because it was her fault he was easy prey, and because a female soldier

Stopped him and exposed her breasts to him, saying: ‘Has your mother

Got ones like these, you son of a whore?’

If Muhammad were not the Seal of the Prophets then every gang would

Have a prophet, and all the companions of the prophet would have militias.

We like remembering June on its fortieth anniversary. If we don’t find

Somebody to defeat us again we’ll defeat ourselves with our own hands

So that we don’t forget.

However much you look into my eyes you won’t find my expression

There. I snatched it away in shame.

My heart does not belong to me, nor to anyone else. Its declares its independence
From me before it turned into a stone.

Does the man who shouts ‘God is great’ over the body of his victim-brother know he is an unbeliever, since he sees God in his own image: smaller than a fully-formed human being?

The prisoner, eager to partake the legacy of prison, hid the smile of victory from the camera but did not succeed in suppressing the happiness flowing from his eyes. 

Perhaps because the hastily prepared text was more powerful than the actor.

What do we need the narcissus for, since we are Palestinians?

As we do don’t know the difference between a mosque and a university, 

Because they are both from the same root in Arabic, why do we need

The state, since states pass just as surely as time?

Big notice on a nightclub door: We welcome Palestinians returning

From battle. Entry free. Wine undrinkable.

I cannot defend my right as a shoeshine in the street, because my customers have the
Right to think I am a shoe thief – this is what a university professor told me.

‘I and the stranger against my cousin. I and my cousin against my brother. I and my shaykh against me.’

This is the first lesson on the new national curriculum, in vaults of darkness.

Who enters paradise first? The man killed by an enemy bullet or the Man killed by a bullet from his brother’s gun? Some religious scholars say:

‘Your enemy could be your mother’s son.’

Religious scholars were perplexed over the identity of those lying in Adjacent graves: were they martyrs for freedom, or victims fighting One another in the futile drama being enacted? They were unable to decide, but agreed on one thing: God knows best.

The killer is also killed.

He asked me: ‘Should a hungry watchman defend a house whose owner has gone on holiday to the French or Italian Riviera – never mind which?’ I said: ‘He shouldn’t.’
He asked me: ‘Does I + I = two? I said: ‘You and you are less than one.’

I am not embarrassed about my identity because it is still in the process of being invented, but I am embarrassed about some of what Ibn Khaldun says in his *Muqaddima*.

From now on you are somebody else.

**Translated by: Catherine Cobham**
To Describe an Almond Blossom

To describe an almond blossom no encyclopaedia of flowers
Is any help to me, no dictionary.

Words carry me off to snares of rhetoric
that wound the sense, and praise the
wound they've made.

Like a man telling a woman her own feeling.
How can the almond blossom shine in my
own language,

When I am but an echo?

It is translucent, like liquid laughter that has
sprouted
On boughs out of the shy dew . . .

Light as a white musical phrase . . .

Weak as the glance of a thought that peeks
out from the fingers
As in vain we write it . . .

Dense as a line of verse not arranged
alphabetically.

To describe an almond blossom, I need to
make visits to the unconscious,
which guides me to affectionate names
Hanging on trees. 

What is its name? 

What is the name of this thing in the poetics of nothing? 

I must break out of gravity and words, 

In order to feel their lightness when they turn 

Into whispering ghosts, and I make them as they make me, 

A white translucence. 

Neither homeland nor exile are words, 

But passions of whiteness in a description of the almond blossom. 

Neither snow nor cotton. 

One wonders how it rises above things and names. 

If a writer were to compose a successful piece describing an almond blossom, the fog would rise from the hills, and people, all the people, would say: 

This is it. These are the words of our national anthem. 

Translated by: Mohammad Shaheen