

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?'

جندي يحلم بالزنابق البيضاء

يحلم بالزنابق البيضاء
بغصن زيتون
بصدرها المورق في المساء
يحلم – قال لي – بطائرٍ
بزهرة ليمون
ولم يفلسف حلمه، لم يفهم الأشياء
إلا كما يحسها .. يشمها
يفهم – قال لي – إنَّ الوطن
أن أحسني قهوة أمي
أن أعود في المساء
سألته: والأرض؟
قال: لا أعرفها
ولا أحسَّ أنها جلدي ونبضي
مثلما يقال في القصائد
وفجأة رأيتها
كما أرى الحانوت .. والشارع .. والجرائد
سألته: تحبها
أجاب: حبي نزهة قصيرة
أو كأس خمر .. أو مغامرة
من أجلها تموت؟

'Certainly not.

كلاً

The only bonds that tie me to the land

وكل ما يربطني بالأرض من أواصر

Are a fiery article, a lecture –

مقالة نارِيّة .. محاضرة

They taught me to be in love with love of it,

قد علّموني أن أحبّ حبّها

But I have not felt its heart is mine,

ولم أحسّ أنّ قلبي قلبها،

Have not breathed in the scent of grass, of
roots, of boughs.'

ولم أشمّ العشب، والجذور، والغصون

وكيف كان حبّها

'And what was its love like?

يلسع كالشموس .. كالحنين؟

Did it sting like suns, like craving?'

أجابني مواجهاً:

He turned to me and answered:

وسيلاتي للحب بندقية

'For me love's instrument is a gun

وعودة الأعياد من خرائب قديمة

And the revival of festivals from ancient wastes

وصمت تمثالٍ قديم

And the silence of an old statue

ضائع الزمان والهوية!

Whose age and identity are lost.'

حدّثني عن لحظة الوداع

He talked to me of the moment of farewell,

وكيف كانت أمّه

Of how his mother wept in silence as they led
him off

تبكي بصمتٍ عندما ساقوه

To some place at the front.

إلى مكانٍ ما من الجبهة

His mother's anguished voice

وكان صوت أمّه الملتاع

Was carving out a new longing under his skin:

يحفر تحت جلده أمنيّةً جديدة:

O that doves might grow up in the Ministry of
Defence,

لو يكبر الحمام في وزارة الدفاع

O that they might!

لو يكبر الحمام

He smoked, then said to me,

دَخَنَ، ثم قال لي ..

As though fleeing from a morass of blood:

كأنه يهرب من مستنقع الدماء

'I dreamt of white lilies,

حلمت بالزنايق البيضاء

Of an olive branch'

بغصن زيتون

Of a bird embracing the morning

بطائرٍ يعانق الصباح

On the bough of a lemon tree.'

فوق غصن ليمون

'And what did you see?'

وما رأيت؟

'I saw what I had made:

رأيت ما صنعت

A red boxthorn

عوسجة حمراء

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

فجرتها في الرمل .. في الصدور .. في البطون

وكم قتلت؟

'And how many did you kill?'

يصعب أن أعدّهم

'It is difficult to count them,

لكنني نلت وساماً واحداً

But I got one medal.'

سألته، معذباً نفسي، إذن

Torturing myself, I asked him:

صف لي قتيلاً واحداً.

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

أصلح من جلسته، وداعب الجريدة المطوية

He sat up straight, toyed with the folded newspaper,

And said to me, as though reciting a song:

وقال لي كأنه يسمعني أغنيةً:

'Like a tent he collapsed on the stones,

كخيمة هوى على الحصى

Clasping to him the shattered stars.

وعانق الكواكب المحطمة

A crown of blood marked his high forehead.

كان على جبينه الواسع تاجٌ من دم

His chest was bare of medals –

وصدره بدون أوسمة

He was no fighter.

لأنه لم يحسن القتال

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

يبدو أنه مزارعٌ أو عاملٌ أو بائعٌ جوال

Like a tent he collapsed upon the stones and died,

كخيمةٍ هوى على الحصى .. ومات

كانت ذراعاه

His arms stretched out,

ممدودتين مثل جدولين يابسين

Like two dry streams,

وعندما قنشت في جيوبه

And when I searched his pockets for his name,

عن اسمه وجدت صورتين

I found two photographs:

واحدةً .. لزوجته

One of his wife,

واحدةً .. لطفلته

One of his young daughter.'

سألته: حزنت؟

I asked him: 'Did you grieve?'

أجابني مقاطعاً يا صاحبي محمود

Interrupting, he answered: 'Mahmoud, my friend,

Grief is a white bird

الحزن طيرٌ أبيض

That does not come near the battlefields.

لا يقرب الميدان. والجنود

Soldiers sin when they grieve.

يرتكبون الإثم حين يحزنون

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

كنت هناك آلةٌ تنفث ناراً وردى

وتجعل الفضاء طيراً أسوداً

Turning space into a black bird.'

Later

حدّثني عن حبه الأول،

He spoke to me of his first love,

فيما بعد

Of distant streets,

عن شوارع بعيدة،

Of his reactions to the war,

وعن ردود الفعل بعد الحرب

Of press and radio heroism,

عن بطولة المذيع والجريدة

And when he had hidden his cough in his
handkerchief,

وعندما خبأ في منديله سعلته

سألته: أنلتقي

I asked: 'Will we be meeting?'

أجاب: في مدينة بعيدة

He answered: 'In some city far away.'

حين ملأت كأسه الرابع

When I'd filled his glass for the fourth time

قلت مازحاً .. ترحل و .. الوطن؟

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

'Let me be, 'he said.

أجاب: دعني ..

'I am dreaming of white lilies,

إنني أحلم بالزنايق البيضاء

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

بشارع مغردٍ ومنزلٍ مضاء

I want a good heart not a loaded rifle.

أريد قلباً طيباً، لا حشو بندقية

I want a sunlit day, not the mad,

أريد يوماً مشمساً، لا لحظة انتصار

Fascist moment of conquest.

مجنونة .. فاشية

I want a smiling child meeting the day with
laughter,

أريد طفلاً باسماً يضحك للنهار،

Not a piece of the war machine.

لا قطعة في الآلة الحربية

I came to live sunrise

جئت لأحيا مطلع الشمس

Not sunsets.'

لا مغربها

He bade me farewell, for he was searching for
white lilies,

ودعني، لأنه .. يبحث عن زنايق بيضاء

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

عن طائرٍ يستقبل الصباح

فوق غصن زيتون

لأنه لا يفهم الأشياء

إلا كما يحسّها .. يشمّها

يفهم – قال لي – أن الوطن

أن أحتسي قهوة أمي ..

أن أعود، آمناً

مع المساء

A Soldier Dreams of White Tulips

He dreams of white tulips, an olive branch,
her breasts in evening blossom.

He dreams of a bird, he tells me, of lemon
flowers.

He does not intellectualize about his dream.

He understands things as he senses and
smells them.

Homeland for him, he tells me, *is to drink
my mother's coffee, to return at nightfall.*

And the land? *I don't know the land*, he
said.

*I don't feel it in my flesh and blood, as they
say in the poems.*

Suddenly I saw the land as one sees a
grocery, a street, newspapers.

I asked him, but don't you love the land?
*My love is a picnic, he said, a glass of wine,
a love affair.*

-Would you die for the land?

-No!

*All my attachment to the land is no more
than a story or a fiery speech!*

*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.

بساليم 2

في الأيام الحاضرة

أجد نفسي يابساً

كالشجر الطالع من الكتب

والريح مسألة عابرة

أحارب .. أو لا أحارب؟

ليس هذا هو السؤال

المهم أن تكون حنجرتي قوية.

أعمل .. أو لا أعمل؟

ليس هذا هو السؤال

المهم أن أرتاح ثمانية أيام في الأسبوع

حسب توقيت فلسطين.

أيها الوطن المتكرر في الأغاني والمذابح،

دلّني على مصدر الموت

أهو الخنجر .. أم الاكذوبة؟

لكي أذكر أنّ لي سقفاً مفقوداً

ينبغي أن أجلس في العراء.

ولكيلا أنسى نسيم بلادي النقي

ينبغي أن أتنفس السّل

ولكي أذكر الغزال السابح في البياض

ينبغي أن أكون معتقلاً بالذكريات

In order not to forget my mountains are high

ولكيلا أنسى أن جبالي عالية

I should comb the storm from my brow.

ينبغي أن أسرح العاصفة من جبيني

In order to retain ownership over my distant sky

ولكي أحافظ على ملكية سمائي البعيدة
يجب ألا أملك حتى جلدي.

I must not own even my very skin.

O homeland repeated in massacres and songs,

أيها الوطن المتكرر في المذابح والأغاني

Why do I smuggle you from airport to airport

لماذا أهرّبك من مطارٍ إلى مطار

Like opium,

كالأفيون ..

White ink

والحبر الأبيض ..

And a transmitter?

وجهاز الارسال؟!

I want to draw your form,

أريد أن أرسم شكلك.

You who are scattered through files and surprises.

أيها المبعثر في الملفات والمفاجآت

أريد أن أرسم شكلك

I want to draw your form,

أيها المتطاير على شظايا القذائف وأجنحة العصفير

You who are strewn over shrapnel and birds' wings.

أريد أن أرسم شكلك

I want to draw your form,

فتخطف السماء يدي.

But the sky snatches at my hand.

أريد أن أرسم شكلك

I want to draw your form,

أيها المحاصر بين الريح والخنجر

You who are beleaguered between wind and dagger,

I want to draw your form

أريد أن أرسم شكلك

In order to find my form in you,

كي أجد شكلي فيك

And so I am accused of being abstract, of
forging

فأتهم بالتجريد وتزوير الوثائق
والصّور الشمسيّة

Documents and photos

You who are beleaguered between dagger
and wind

أيها المحاصر بين الخنجر و الريح.

O homeland repeated in songs and
massacres

ويا أيها الوطن المتكرر في الأغاني والمذابح

How are you changed into a dream and
steal wonderment

كيف تتحول إلى حلمٍ وتسرق الدهشة

So that you leave me like a stone?

لتتركني حجراً.

Perhaps you are more beautiful in the
process of becoming a dream,

لعلك أجمل في صيرورتك حلماً

Perhaps you are more beautiful.

لعلك أجمل!

In the history of the Arabs there remains

لم يبقى في تاريخ العرب

No name for me to borrow

اسمٌ أستعيره

With which to slip through your secret
windows.

لأتسلل به إلى نوافذك السريّة.

كلّ الأسماء السريّة محتجزة

All the cover names have been booked

في مكاتب التجنيد المكيفة الهواء

In the air-conditioned recruiting offices,

So will you accept my name –

فهل تقبل اسمي –

My only cover name –

اسمي السري الوحيد –

Mahmoud Darwish?

محمود درويش؟

As for my original name,

أما اسمي الأصلي

It has been torn from my flesh

فقد انتزعتة عن لحمي

By police whips and the pines of Carmel.

سياط الشرطة وصنوبر الكرمل

O homeland repeated in massacres and
songs,

يا أيها الوطن المتكرر في المذابح الأغاني

Show me the way to the source of death:

دَلّني على مصدر الموت

Is it the dagger

أهو الخنجر

Or the lie?

أم الأكذوبة؟!

Translated by: Denys Johnson-Davies

Pslam 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

أبد الصَّبَّار

-Where are you taking me, father?

إلى أين تأخذني يا أبي؟

- Where the wind takes us, my so

إلى جهة الريح يا ولدي ...

... As the two were leaving the plain where

... وهما يخرجان من السهل وحيث

Bonaparte's soldiers surveyed

أقام جنود بوناپرت تلاً لرصد

The shadows on the old wall of Acre –

الظلال على سور عكا القديم –

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

يقول أب لابنه: لا تخف. لا

Don't be afraid of the drone of bullets! Stay

لا تخف من أزيز الرصاص! التصق

close to the ground so you'll survive!

بالتراب لتتجو! سننجو ونعلو على

We'll survive and climb

A mountain in the north and return when

جبل في الشمال، ونرجع حين

The soldiers return to their distant families

يعود الجنود الى أهلهم في البعيد

- Who will live in the house after us, father?

ومن يسكن البيت من بعدنا يا أبي؟

- It will remain as it is, as it has always been,
my son!

سيبقى على حاله مثلما كان

يا ولدي!

He felt for his key the way he would feel for

تحسس مفتاحه مثلما يتحسس

His limbs and was reassured. He said

أعضائه، واطمأن. وقال له

As they climbed through a fence of thorns:

وهما يعبران سياجاً من الشوك:

Remember, my son, here the British
crucified

يا ابني تذكر! هنا صلب الإنجليز

Your father on the thorns of a cactus for
two nights

أباك على شوك 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

ولم يعترف أبداً. سوف تكبر يا

ابني، وتروي لمن يرثون بنادقهم

سيرة الدّم فوق الحديد ...

- لماذا تركت الحصان وحيداً؟

- لكي يؤنس البيت، يا ولدي،

فالببوت تموت إذا غاب سگانها ...

تفتح الأبدية أبوابها، من بعيد،

لسيّارة الليل. تعوي ذئب

البراري على قمرٍ خائف. ويقول

أبُ لابنه: كن قوياً كجدك!

واصعد معي تلة السنديان الأخيرة

يا ابني، تذكر: هنا وقع الإنكشاري

عن بغلة الحرب، فاصمد معي

لنعود

- متى يا أبي؟

- غداً. ربّما بعد يومين يا ابني!

وكان غدٌ طائش يمضغ الريح

خلفهما في ليالي الشتاء الطويلة

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 ...

وكان جنود يهوشع بن نون يبنون
قلعتهم من حجارة بيتهما. وهما

يلهثان على درب ((قانا)): هنا

مرّ سيّدنا ذات يوم. هنا
جعل الماء خمرأ. وقال كلامأ
كثيرأ عن الحب، يا ابني تذكّر
غداً. وتذكّر قلاعأ صليبية

قضمتها حشائش نيسان بعد
رحيل الجنود

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 whirl 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:

تعاليم حورية

فكرت يوماً بالرحيل، فحطتُ حسونٌ على يدها ونام.

وكان يكفي أن أداعب غصن دالية على عجل ...
لتدرك أن كأس نبيذي امتلأت.

ويكفي أن أنام مبكراً لترى منامي واضحاً،
فتطيل ليلتها لتحرسه ...

ويكفي أن تجيء رسالةً مني لتعرف أن عنواني تغير،
فوق قارعة السجون، وأن
أيامي تحوم حولها ... وحيالها

أمي تعدّ أصابعي العشرين عن بعد.

تمشطني بخصلة شعرها الذهبي.

تبحث في ثيابي الداخلية عن نساءٍ أجنبيات،

وترفو جوربي المقطوع.

لم أكبر على يدها كما شئنا:

أنا وهي، افترقنا عند منحدر الرخام .. ولوّحت سحبٌ لنا،
ولماعزٍ يرث المكان.

وأنشأ المنفى لنا لغتين:

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.

دارجةً ... ليفهمها الحمام ويحفظ الذكرى،
وفصحى ... كي أفسر للظلال ظلالها!

ما زلت حياً في خصمك.
لم تقولي ما تقول الأم للولد المريض.

مرضت من قمر النحاس على خيام البدو.

هل تتذكرين طريق هجرتنا إلى لبنان،

حيث نسيتني ونسيت كيس الخبز [كان الخبز قمحياً].

ولم أصرخ لئلا أوقظ الحراس.
حطّنتي على كتفك رائحة الندى.

يا طيبةً فقدت هناك كناسها وغزالها ...

لا وقت حولك للكلام العاطفي.

عجنت بالحبق الظهرية كلها.

وخبزت للسماق عرف الديك.

أعرف ما يخرب قلبك المثقوب بالطاووس،

منذ طرت ثانيةً من الفردوس.

عالمنا تغير كلّهُ فتغيرت أصواتنا.
حتّى التحية بيننا وقعت كزر الثوب فوق الرمل،
لم تسمع صدًى.

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

قولي: صباح الخير!

قولي أي شيء لي لتمنحني الحياة دلالها.

هي أخت هاجر.

أختها من أمها.

تبكي مع النايات موتى لم يموتوا.

لا مقابر حول خيمتها لتعرف كيف تتفتح السماء،

ولا ترى الصحراء خلف أصابعي لترى حديقته على
وجه السراب،

فيركض الزمن القديم

بها الى عبثٍ ضروري:

أبوها طار مثل الشركسي على حصان العرس.

أما أمها فلقد أعدت،

دون أن تبكي، لزوجة زوجها حناءها،

وتفحصت خلخالها ...

لا نلتقي إلا وداعاً عند مفترق الحديث.

تقول لي مثلاً: تزوج أية امرأة من

الغرباء، أجمل من بنات الحي.

لكن لا تصدق أية امرأة سواي.

ولا تصدق 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.

لا تحن الى مواعيد الندى.

كن واقعياً كالسماء.

ولا تحن إلى عباءة جدك السوداء،

أو رشوات جدتك الكثيرة،

وانطلق كالمهر في الدنيا. وكن من أنت حيث تكون.

واحمل عبء قلبك وحدك...

وارجع إذا اتسعت بلادك للبلاد وغيرت أحوالها ...

أمي تضيء نجوم كنعان الأخيرة،

حول مرآتي،

وترمي، في قصيدتي الأخيرة، شالها!

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

Low sky

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 حبٌ يسير على قدميه الحريريتين
سعيداً بغربته في الشوارع،
حبٌ فقيرٌ يببله مطرٌ عابرٌ
فيفيض على العابرين:
هداياي أكبر مني
كلوا حنطتي
واشربوا خمرتي
فسمائي على كتفي وأرضي لكم ...
هل شممت دم الياسمين المشاع
وفكرت بي
وانتظرت معي طائراً أخضر الذيل
لا اسم له؟
هنالك حبٌ فقيرٌ يحدق في النهر
مستسلماً للتداعي: إلى أين تركض
يا فرس الماء؟
عما قليل سيمتصك البحر
فامش الهويني إلى موتك الإختياري
يا فرس الماء!
هل كنت لي ضفتين
وكان المكان كما ينبغي أن يكون
خفيفاً خفيفاً على ذكرياتك؟
أي الأغاني تحبين
أي الأغاني؟ أتلك التي
تتحدث عن عطش الحب،
أم عن زمانٍ مضى؟
هنالك حبٌ فقيرٌ، ومن طرفٍ 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?

هادئ هادئ لا يكسر
بلور أيامك الننتقة
ولا يوقد النار في قمر بارد
في سريرك،
لا تشعرين به حين تبكين من هاجس،
ربما بدلاً منه،
لا تعرفين بماذا تحسین حين تضمین
نفسك بين ذراعيك!
أي الليالي تريدين، أي الليالي
وما لون تلك العيون التي تحلمين
بها عندما تحلمين؟
هنالك حب فقير، ومن طرفين
يقلل من عدد اليائسين
ويرفع عرش الحمام على الجانبين.
عليك إذا أن تقودي بنفسك
هذا الربيع السريع إلى من تحبين
أي زمان تريدين، أي زمان
لأصبح شاعره، هكذا هكذا: كلما
مضت امرأة في المساء إلى سريرها
وجدت شاعراً سائراً في هواجسها.
كلما غاص في نفسه شاعرٌ
وجد امرأة تتعري أمام قصيدته ...
أي منفى تريدين؟

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 ...

هل تذهبين معي، أم تسيرين وحدك
في اسمك منفي
بلألائه؟
هنالك حبٌ يمر بنا،
دون أن ننتبه،
فلا هو يدري ولا نحن ندري
لماذا تشردنا وردةً في جدارٍ قديم
وتبكي فتاةً على موقف الباص،
تقضم تفاحةً ثم تبكي وتضحك:
(لا شيء، لا شيء أكثر
من نحلةٍ عبرت في دمي ...
هنالك حبٌ فقيرٌ، يطيل
التأمل في العابرين، ويختار
أصغرهم قمراً: في حاجةٍ
لسماء أقل ارتفاعاً،
فكن صاحبي تتسع
لأنانية اثنين لا يعرفان
لمن يهديان زهورهما ...
ربما كان يقصدني، ربما
كان يقصدنا دون أن ننتبه
هنالك حبٌ ...

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.

هي لا تحبك أنت

هي لا تحبك أنت

يعجبها مجازك

أنت شاعرها

وهذا كل ما في الأمر

يعجبها اندفاع النهر في الايقاع

كن نهراً لتعجبها!

ويعجبها جماع البرق والأصوات

قافية ...

تسيل لعاب نهديها

على حرف

فكن ألفاً ... لتعجبها!

ويعجبها ارتفاع الشيء

من شيء إلى ضوء

و من ضوء إلى جرسٍ

ومن جرسٍ إلى حس

فكن احدى عواطفها ... لتعجبها

ويعجبها صراع مسانها مع صدرها:

[عذبتني يا حب

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

يا نهراً يصب مجونه الوحشي
خارج غرفتي ...
يا حب! إن لم تدمني شبقاً
قتلتك]

كن ملاكاً، لا ليعجبها مجازك

بل لتقتلك انتقاماً من أنوثتها

ومن شرك المجاز ... لعلها

صارت تحبك أنت مذ أدخلتها

في اللازورد، وصرت أنت سواك

في أعلى أعاليها هناك ...

هناك صار الأمر ملتبساً

على الأبراج

بين الحوت والعذراء ...

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 قمرٍ تعلّقه أنات على حديقتهَا

كمرآة لعشّاقٍ بلا أملٍ

وتمضي في براري نفسها امرأتين لا تتصالحان:

هنالك امرأةٌ تعيد الماء للينبوع

وامرأةٌ تقود النار في الغابات

أمّا الخيل فلترقص طويلاً فوق هاويتين.

لا موت هناك ولا حياة

وقصيدتي زبد اللهاث وصرخة الحيوان

عند صعوده العالى

وعند هبوطه العاري: أنات

أنا أريدكما معاً

حبّاً وحرّاً يا أنات

فالى جهنّم بي .. أحبّك يا أنات

وأنات تقتل نفسها

في نفسها

ولنفسها

وتعيد تكوين المسافة كي تمرّ 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

أمام صورتها البعيدة فوق أرض الرافدين

وفوق سوريا. وتآمر الجهات

بصولجان اللازورد وخاتم العذراء: لا

تتأخري في العالم السفلس.

عودي من هناك الى الطبيعة والطبائع يا أنات!

جفت مياه البئر بعدك

جفت الأغوار والأنهار جفت بعد موتك. والدموع

تبخرت من جرة الفخار وانكسر الهواء من الجفاف

كقطعة الخشب

انكسرنا كالسياج على غيابك جفت الرغبات فينا

والصلاة تكلست.

لا شيء يحيا بعد موتك

والحياة تموت كالكلمات بين مسافرين الى الجحيم

فيا أنات

لا تمكثي في العالم السفلي أكثر!

ربما هبطت آلهات جديدات علينا من غيابك

وامتثلنا للسراب

وربما وجد الرعاة الماكرون آلهة

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.

قرب الهباء وصدقته الكائنات

فلترجعي، ولترجعي أرض الحقيقة والكناية

أرض كنعان البداية

أرض نهديك المشاع

وأرض فخذيك المشاع

لكي تعود المعجزات إلى أريحا،

عند باب المعبد المهجور ... لا

موت هناك ولا حياة

فوضى على باب القيامة

لا غد يأتي. ولا ماضٍ يجيء مودعاً.

لا ذكريات

تطير من أنحاء بابل فوق نخلتنا، ولا

حلمٌ يسامرنا لنسكن نجمةً

هي زرّ ثوبك يا أنات

وأنا تخلق نفسها من نفسها ولنفسها

وتطير خلف مراكب الاغريق

في اسمٍ آخر

امرأتين لن تتصالحا أبداً

As for the horses,

وأما الخيل

Let them prance forever

فلترقص طويلاً فوق هاويتين. لا موت هناك ولا حياة

over two bottomless pits

where there is neither life nor death.

لا أنا أحيا هنالك،

Where I neither live nor die.

أو أموت

Where there is neither Anat

ولا أنات

Nor Anat.

ولا أنات !.

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

رباعيات

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!

أرى ما أريد من الحقل ... إني أرى

جدائل قمح تمشطها الريح، أغمض عيني:

هذا السراب يؤدي إلى النهوند

وهذا السكون يؤدي إلى اللازورد

أرى ما أريد من البحر ... إني أرى

هبوب النوارس عند الغروب فأغمض عيني :

هذا الضياع يؤدي إلى أندلس

وهذا الشراع صلاة الحمام علي ...

أرى ما أريد من الليل ... إني أرى

نهايات هذا الممر الطويل على باب إحدى المدن

سأرمي مفكرتي في مقاهي الرصيف، سأجلس هذا الغياب

على مقعدٍ فوق إحدى السفن

أرى ما أريد من الروح: وجه الحجر

وقد حُكَّه البرق، خضراء يا أرض ... خضراء يا أرض

روحي

Wasn't I that child playing

أما كنت طفلاً على حافة البئر يلعب؟

near the lip of the well,

Still playing?

ما زلت ألعب ... هذا المدى ساحتي، والحجارة ريحي

All space is my courtyard

all the stones are my winds.

أرى ما أريد من السلم ... اني أرى

I've seen all I want to see of peace:

غزلاً وعشياً، وجدول ماء ... فأغمض عيني:

a deer, a pasture and a stream.

I close my eyes:

هذا الغزال ينام على ساعدي

The deer is asleep in my arms

وصياده نائم، قرب أولاده في مكان قصي

His hunter is asleep in a faraway place

I've seen all I want to see of war:

أرى ما أريد من الحرب ... إني أرى

Our forefathers squeezed

from a green stone.

سواعد أجدادنا تعصر النبع في حجر أخضرأ

Our fathers inherited the water

but they do not give it to us.

وأبائنا يرثون المياه ولا يورثون، فأغمض عيني:

I close my eyes:

What is left to the land

I make with my own hands.

إن البلاد التي بين كفي من صننع كفي

I've seen all I want to see of prison:

أرى ما أريد من السجن: أيام زهره

days of a flower

مضت من هنا كي تدلّ غربيين في

That guided two strangers from here

على مقعدٍ في الحديقة، أغمض عيني:

To a garden seat.

I close my eyes:

ما أوسع الأرض! ما أجمل الأرض من ثقب إبرة

You are so vast, O land,

so wondrous seen through a needle's eye!

أرى ما أريد من البرق ... إنّي أرى

I've seen all I want to see of lightning:

حقولاً تفتت أغلالها بالنبات، مرحى!

Profusion of vegetation rent by weeds.

Hail to the almond's song, flowing white

لأغنية اللوز بيضاء تهبط فوق دخان القرى

as village smoke, as flocks of doves

حماماً ... حماماً نقاسمه قوت أطفالنا

sharing our children's food!

أرى ما أريد من الحب ... إنّي أرى

I've seen all I want to see of love:

خيولاً ترقص سهلاً، وخمسين غيتارةٍ تتنهد

Horses dancing on trampled plains,

fifty guitars sighing.

Swarms of bees sucking blackberries,

وسرباً من النحل يمتص توت البراري، فأغمض عيني

I close my eyes

To see our shadows

حتى أرى ظلّنا خلف هذا المكان المشرد

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 علٍ شاهقٍ، ونرى دمنا على

أيدينا ... لنذكر أننا لسنا ملائكة ... كما كنا نظن؟

وهل كان علينا أيضاً أن نكشف عن عوراتنا أمام الملأ،
كي لا تبقى حقيقتنا عذراء؟

كم كذبنا حين قلنا: نحن استثناء! أن تصدق نفسك أسوأ من

أن تكذب على غيرك

أن نكون ودودين مع من يكرهوننا، وقساةً مع من يحبوننا

- تلك هي دونية المتعالي، وغطرسة الوضيع!

أيها الماضي! لا تغيرنا... كلما ابتعدنا عنك!

أيها المستقبل: لا تسألنا من أنتم؟ وماذا تريدون مني؟ فنحن
أيضاً لانعرف.

أيها الحاضر! تحملنا قليلاً، فلسنا سوى عابري سبيلٍ ثقلاء
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.

أن نكسرهما كلما أعجبنا الصورة!

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

تقتع وتشجع، وقتل أمه .. لأنها هي ما تيسر له من

الطرائد .. ولأن جندياً أوقفته وكشفت له

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

عن نهديها قائلةً: هل لأمك، مثلهما؟

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

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

لولا الحياء والظلام، لزرت غزة، دون أن أعرف الطريق
إلى بيت أبي سفيان الجديد، ولا

اسم النبي الجديد!

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

ولولا أن محمداً هو خاتم الأنبياء، لصار لكل عصابة نبي،

ولكل صحابي ميليشيا!

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

أعجبنا حزيران في ذكراه الأربعين: ان لم نجد من يهزمننا

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

ثانيةً هزمننا أنفسنا بأيدينا لئلا ننسى!

So that we don't forget.

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

مهما نظرت في عيني .. فلن تجد نظرتي هناك. خطفتها

فضيحة!

There. I snatched it away in shame.

My heart does not belong to me, nor to
anyone else. Its declares its independence

قلبي ليس لي ... ولا لأحدٍ. لقد استقلّ عني،

From me before it turned into a stone.

دون أن يصبح حجراً.

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?

هل يعرف من يهتف على جثة ضحيته – أخيه:
"الله أكبر" أنه كافرٌ إذ يرى الله على صورته
هو: أصغر من كائنٍ بشري سوي التكوين؟

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.

أخفى السجين، الطامح إلى وراثة السجن، ابتسامة النصر
عن الكاميرا. لكنّه لم يفلح في كبح
السعادة السائلة من عينيه.
ربما لأن النص المتعجل كان أقوى من الممثل.

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

ما حاجتنا للنرجس ما دمنا فلسطينيين.

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

وما دمنا لا نعرف الفرق بين الجامع والجامعة، لأنهما من

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

جذرٍ لغويٍّ واحدٍ، فما حاجتنا

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

للدولة ... ما دامت هي والايام الى مصيرٍ واحد؟

Big notice on a nightclub door: We welcome Palestinians returning

لافتةً كبيرةً على باب نادٍ ليلي: نرحب بالفلسطينيين

From battle. Entry free. Wine undrinkable.

العائدين من المعركة. الدخول مجاناً! وخمرتنا .. لا
تسكر!

I cannot defend my right as a shoeshine in the street, because my customers have the

لا أستطيع الدفاع عن حقّي في العمل، ماسح أحذية على
الأرصفة. لأن من حق زبائني أن يعتبروني لص أحذية.

Right to think I am a shoe thief – this is what a university professor told me.

هكذا قال لي أستاذ جامعة!

'I and the stranger against my cousin. I and my cousin against my brother. I and my shaykh against me.'

أنا والغريب على ابن عمي. وأنا وابن عمي على أخي. وأنا وشيخي عليّ". هذا هو الدرس

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

الأول في التربية الوطنية الجديدة، في أقبية الظلام.

Who enters paradise first? The man killed by an enemy bullet or the

من يدخل الجنة أولاً؟ من مات برصاص العدو، أم من

Man killed by a bullet from his brother's gun? Some religious scholars say:

مات برصاص الأخ؟! بعض الفقهاء يقول: ربُّ عدوِّك

'Your enemy could be your mother's son.'

ولدتة أمك.

Religious scholars were perplexed over the identity of those lying in

لا يغيضني الأصوليين، فهم مؤمنون على طريقتهم الخاصة. ولكن، يغيضني أنصارهم!

Adjacent graves: were they martyrs for freedom, or victims fighting

العلمانيون، وأنصارهم الملحدون الذين لا يؤمنون إلا بدين

One another in the futile drama being enacted? They were unable to decide, but agreed on one thing: God knows best.

وحيد: صورهم في التلفزيون!

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.'

سألني: هل يدافع حارسٌ جائعٌ عن دارٍ سافر صاحبها، لقضاء إجازة الصيف في الريفيرا

الفرنسية أو الإيطالية.. لافرق؟!

قلت: لا يدافع!

He asked me: 'Does I + I = two? I said: 'You and you are less than one.'

وسالني: هل أنا + أنا = اثنين؟

قلت: أنت وأنت أقلّ من واحد!

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*.

لا أخجل من هويتي، فهي ما زالت قيد التأليف.

ولكني أخجل من بعض ما جاء في مقّمة ابن خلدون.

From now on you are somebody else.

أنت، منذ الآن، غيرك!

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

لوصف زهر اللوز

لوصف زهر اللوز، لا موسوعة الأزهار

تسعفني، ولا القاموس يسعفني ...

سيخطفني الكلام الى أحابيل البلاغة
والبلاغة تجرح المعنى وتمدح جرحه،

كمذكرٍ يملئ على الأنتى مشاعرها

فكيف يشع زهر اللوز في لغتي أنا

وأنا الصدى؟

وهو الشفيف كضحكةٍ مائيةٍ نبتت

على الأغصان من خفر الندى ...

وهو الخفيف كجملةٍ بيضاء موسيقية ...

وهو الضعيف كلمح خاطرةٍ

تطلّ على أصابعنا

ونكتبها سدىً

وهو الكثيف كبيت شعر لا يدون

بالحروف

لوصف زهر اللوز تلزمني زياراتٌ إلى

اللاوعي ترشدني إلى أسماء عاطفةٍ

Hanging on trees.

معلقة على الأشجار. ما اسمه؟

What is its name?

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

ما اسم هذا الشيء في شعرية اللآ شيء؟

I must break out of gravity and words,

يلزمني اختراق الجاذبية والكلام،

In order to feel their lightness when they
turn

لكي أحسّ بخفة الكلمات حين تصير

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

طيفاً هامساً فأكونها وتكونني

A white translucence.

شفافاً بيضاء

Neither *homeland* nor *exile* are words,

لا وطنٌ ولا منفى هي الكلمات،

But passions of whiteness in a

description of the almond blossom.

بل ولع البياض بوصف زهر اللوز

Neither snow nor cotton.

لا ثلجٌ ولا قطن، فما هو في

One wonders how it rises above things and
names.

تعالیه على الأشياء والأسماء.

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:

لو نجح المؤلف في كتابة مقطعٍ

في وصف زهر اللوز، لانحسر الضباب

عن التلال وقال شعبٌ كاملٌ:

هذا هو

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

هذا كلام نشيدنا الوطني!

Translated by: Mohammad Shaheen