

Partaw NADERI
POEMS

The translation of Mr. Naderi's original poems was commissioned the Poetry Translation Centre at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

<http://www.poetrytranslation.soas.ac.uk/>

We gratefully acknowledge the right to reproduce them here.

*

The Mirror

I have spent a lifetime in the mirrors of exile
busy absorbing my reflection
Listen —
I come from the unending conflicts of wisdom
I have grasped the meaning of nothingness

Kabul
1989

Lucky Men

When your star is unseen in this desolate sky,
your despair itself becomes a star.

My twin, the steadfast sun, and I
both grasp its far-flung brilliance.

* * * *

In a land where water is locked up
in the very depths of desiccated rocks,
the trees are ashamed of their wizened fruits.

The honest orchard is laid waste —
such a bloodied carpet
is spread before the future.

* * * *

Yesterday, leaning on my cane,
I returned from the trees' cremation.

Today, I search the ashes
for my lost, homeless phoenix.

Perhaps it was you who shadowed me,
perhaps it was only my shadow.

Even though the lucky men in my land
lack stars in the heavens, lack shadows on the earth

they welcome any stars
that grace their devastated sky.

O, my friend, my only friend,
turn your anguish into constellations!

Peshawar City
November, 2002

Star Rise

I am the twin of light
I know the history of the sun

Stars
rise from the blisters on my hands

Relative

I know the language of the mirror —

its perplexities and mine
spring from one race

our roots can be traced
to the ancient tribe of truth

Kabul
February, 1994

The Bloody Epitaph

This palm tree has no hope of spring
 This palm tree blossoms
 with a hundred wounds
 — the daily wounds of a thousand tragedies
 — the nightly wounds of a thousand calamities
 This palm tree is a bloody epitaph
 at the crossroads of the century

*

Here, by the river,
 — a river of blood and tears —
 the roots of this palm tree
 are congealed with disaster
 are knotted with the blind roots of time

*

Here, the sky
 unwinds its bloody cloth
 from barren red clouds
 to shroud the shattered lid of a coffin
 — a broken mirror of rain
 This palm tree has no hope of spring

*

This palm tree has no hope of spring
 This palm tree is starred
 with a hundred bruises
 from the whip of the north wind
 My palm!
 My only tree!
 My spring!
 Many years have passed
 since the bird of blossoms
 flew away from your desiccated branches

Butterflies abandon you
 My heart is broken

Kabul
 November, 1989

Earth

The earth opens her warm arms
to embrace me
The earth is my mother
She understands the sorrow
of my wandering

My wandering
is an old crow
that conquers
the very top of an aspen
a thousand times a day

Perhaps life is a crow
that each dawn
dips its blackened beak
in the holy well of the sun

Perhaps life is a crow
that takes flight with Satan's wings

Perhaps life is Satan himself
awakening a wicked man to murder

Perhaps life is the grief-stricken earth
who has opened up her bloodied arms to me

And here I give thanks
on the brink of 'victory'

Peshawar City
July, 2002

I Still Have Time

It's well past midnight
I should get up to pray
The mirrors of my honesty
have long been filmed with dust

I should get up
I still have time
My hands can yet discern
a jug of water from a jug of wine

as time's wheeled chariot
hurtles down the slope of my life

Perhaps tomorrow
the poisonous arrows aimed at me
will hunt down my eyes
two speckled birds startled into flight

Perhaps tomorrow
my children
will grow old
awaiting my return

Peshawar City
August, 2000

Desolation

In the lines on your palms
they have written the fate of the sun

Arise,
lift up your hand —

the long night is stifling me

Kabul
June, 1994

My Voice

I come from a distant land
with a foreign knapsack on my back
with a silenced song on my lips

As I travelled down the river of my life
I saw my voice
(like Jonah)
swallowed by a whale

And my very life lived in my voice

Kabul
December, 1989

Beauty

Your voice is like a girl
from the farthest green village

whose tall and graceful frame
is known to the pine trees on the mountains

Your voice is like a girl
who, at dusk,

will bathe in the clear springs of heaven
beneath the parasol of the moon

who, at dawn,
bears home a jar of pure light

who will drink sip by sip
from the river of the sun

Your voice is like a girl
from the farthest green village

who wears an anklet
forged from the songs of a brook

who wears an earring
spun from the whispering rain

who wears a necklace
woven from the silk of a waterfall

all of which grace the garden of the sun
with their many-coloured blossoms of love —

and you
are as beautiful as your voice

On a Colourful Morning

I kissed her —
her whole body shivered
Like a branch of almond blossom in the wind
Like the moon, like a star
trembling on the water
I kissed her —
her whole body shivered
Her cheeks showed one colour
her gaze revealed another
And the sun rose from her tender heart
And the thousand-and-one nights of waiting
ended
And on a colourful morning
I shared a bed
with the meaning of love

July 2002,
Peshawar City

Translated from the Dari by Sarah Maguire and Yama Yari

Original poems © Partaw Naderi

Translations © Sarah Maguire and Yama Yari
