

Bird

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When the bird hits the aircraft sideways
the sun itself slants away from your life.
You veer off, spin, plunge, the earth is dark
beneath you, darker than shadow, except
that you have very little time to notice
different shades of ground fog, and the land cut up
in strips of beige and tobacco brown and green.

But this swirling overpowering noise
that has filled the sky and overwhelmed
the four and more directions, left the bird dazed.
It didn't know where to fly, earthwards
or to the archaic welkin (birds are even older,
more archaic than the word "welkin")
and it did not exactly have elbow room,
for it got sucked into the engine.
Neither bird nor I know whether the blades
cut it up, or that inferno-firing heat
torched it in a flash.

A bird-hit can be bad for the bird too.

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Mother

Your spine goes creaking now
across the bow of your body.
Your skin preserves the past
 in its creases
 like mummy-wrap.

Your eyes don't sputter
with the same fires
 as they discharge
the arrows of your love.

Your memories flounder
amongst your sons now.
You confuse the one who
wet his bed
with the one who
 bit through your breasts
 and made them septic.

When my children ask you
things about your childhood
your smile becomes remote and enigmatic.

Once in six months now
you press them to your body
to remind us that love
was the only written word
in the scripture of your hands.

I think something shrivelled
 within you, Mother,
 the day you broke your bangles
 and shook the lion-dust
 of my father from your brow.

of tumults

there's a lot of mirroring going on:
the dialectic of reflections within me
and the tramcar street,
between noise there and the shadow-scurry
in the fir-lined fire lanes within me,
and willow-shadowed mirage streaks
 that look like streams
 within me.

in this mirror-flashed
exchange of reflections
a lot of defacing goes on –
a jaw-line rubbed out
a cheekbone sandpapered
face-dissolve, figure-fadeout.
“is this cinema?” this shout
does it rip through one of my tattered dreams
or is it a growl from this strange outer world of mine?
(everyone has his own outer world, don't forget).

there's a lot of echoing going on
between me and the overhead-metro street
between my inner turmoil
and the delhi jungle where bastards
lean on the horn as they run a red light,
lean on a horn so loud, it sounds
like a dinosaur buggered against his will.

echo and image get terribly mixed
I find that love echoes aloofness
humility results in arrogance
from the other side;
the desire for proximity
gets lost in a maze of distances
the salt efflorescence within that isolates me
is a replica of the salt wastes without.
is the wilderness in the outer world the mask?
and the wilderness within, the face?

the double desolations of loving and living

face each other
 like lovers across a river.
let rivers subside
let lovers meet.

(17 September 2008)

Ceasefire

Will the ceasefire hold?
What if the trigger-finger
gets an involuntary twitch?
What if the trigger itself
is afflicted by a spasm?

The ceasefire is an abstract moment
between the last fusillade
of shells that peppered the evening sky
and the next shot that shatters tomorrow's dawn.

Loveless in Gaza
at mill with Hamas.

Siege

The landscape may not be shell-pocked
but women are shell-shocked
and men and the children.

A siege is laid not just to keep you walled in,
news and the world and air-waves out
but to keep hungers stomach-walled
the belly empty as a dried well.
Gaza, you are mediaeval.

(2010)

Lorca

Dawn will come as it always has,
 escorted with pearls,
the earth-chalice
 spiked with frost.
Sandwiched between your rivers
“one lament and the other blood,”
the land will flame like a tongue
 of fiery green
threading the Sierras.
The bullring will pulse with blood;
the red dust will still whirl
 and eddy across the road;
evenings will be as they were before –
light-rose or mauve-shadow
or smeared with iodine,
and chalked with the flight of cranes.
Nightscapes will still be the same:
bars of flamenco carried by the wind
goatherds round a fire
and sheepdogs barking
at the rustle of dry oak leaves.
Only you will not be there.