

## Editorial | 'for here there is no place that does not see you'

When I became part of the department some ten years ago, I remember my first class was 'Introduction to Poetry.' As someone who never really immersed in poetry, finding himself sorely lacking, I didn't really indulge in both reading and writing poetry until spurred on by the poetry courses with Miss Huma, which are still proving themselves to be a great learning opportunity.

Yet, a stark difference between me and the other students, who already had a relationship with poetry and a proper place for it in their lives, began to present itself because as my interest in poetry began, theirs waned. Many stopped writing poetry for long periods of time.

What struck me then, and still the tremors can be felt, was that while there was an abundance of poetry in the classroom through different courses in our four years of education, there was a gaping void waiting to be illuminated by some semblance of poetry outside of it.

Sure, there were reading clubs and literary magazines in the department in the past but there was a certain hold of prose over everything – and in the hegemony of prose, there is no place for poetry. Likewise in the hegemony of immortal roses, suns too bright to be looked at and looked up to, there is no place for twaddling daffodils to bloom. The sheer presence of greatness bears no words, what remains is a stifling, disappointed sigh.

The shade of the great trees of the wild which have weathered the storms of time will suffer no houseplants!

It is precisely to find refuge from the glaring suns, the un-nurturing shades, to find a place for our houseplants, our flowerpots that this poetry collective came to fruition.

The collective begins with a wonderful essay from Noor us Sabah on trying to find a place for poetry in her—and maybe in turn—our lives. The poems included progress from poetry written by our teachers, the alumni and then the current students, there are a variety of themes explored and in languages other than just English. I hope you get as much pleasure out of reading this as we had in assembling it.

A huge thank you to all the contributors—the flowers daring to dream—for making this collective, these leaves of grass, possible.

Muhammad Yousha

## A Case for Poetry

Never did it occur to me that a compulsory question from a past paper would have me in such a slurry of thoughts as I happen to be at the moment. Never did it occur to me that a compulsory question from an exam paper would have me asking myself over and over again what appears to be one of the most important questions I have ever asked myself; the question being: what is poetry—to you? The question would have been sensible and comparatively easier to answer if it had required the student to answer what poetry is—but when it asks the student what poetry is to them, it becomes the hardest nail there ever was to crack. And this is exactly where the examiner ought to be given the credit that he truly deserves: because as students we have studied poetry all our (student) lives, as University students specifically, we have been studying poetry with intricate care and in great detail. For the last three years, we have read poetry, we have analyzed poetry, we have criticized poetry; but we have seldom—students of poetry as we are—asked ourselves what poetry really is—what poetry really is to us. For almost two weeks now, I have been asking myself the question repeatedly—what is poetry to me? I have failed to secure any concrete answer as yet, which is perplexing to the third degree: A student of Chemistry can easily enunciate what Chemistry is and what Chemistry is to him, the same goes for students of Economics, Business, and all the various fields that there are; but when as a student of Poetry, I happen to be absolutely dumb to the question what poetry is to me—where exactly does that put me? Since I couldn't straight away decide what poetry was to me, I thought of what poetry was to other students, critics, and practitioners of poetry in high hopes of extracting some enormous epiphany from the process, thinking that maybe by the time I was done I would have my eureka moment—that I would know what poetry was to me.

To Wordsworth, poetry was the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility; to Wordsworth poetry was one man speaking to another man. To T. S. Eliot, poetry was not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion, it was not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. To Coleridge, prose was words in their best order—poetry, the best words in the best order. To Arnold, poetry was, at its most fundamental, a criticism of life. To Shelley, poetry was a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted. To Plato, poetry was nearer to vital truth than history. To Aristotle, poetry was finer and more philosophical than history; for poetry expresses the universal, and history only the particular.

Thus so far I had formulated quite a list of opinions, quite a number of answers to what poetry was—to so many other people. Do I agree with what poetry was to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Plato, Shelley, Arnold, Eliot and Aristotle? Definitely. But there was no epiphany, no eureka moment, no clue as to what poetry was to me. In fact I ended up being more confused than clear on my own understanding of poetry: the list of great people I had considered the opinions of had regarded poetry in such variety and variation that poetry came out as a greatly puzzling amalgam: poetry was philosophy and it was criticism, it was a spontaneous overflow of emotion and it was an escape from emotion, it was universal and it was personal—and it was all of this at the exact same time: but this was still not what poetry was to me. So what was poetry to me? What is poetry to me? Over and over, over and over I asked myself this same question until it became a soft buzzing sound in the background, not exactly deafening, but collectively maddening, like the gradually rising sound of an annoying crowd at a concert.

Was poetry philosophy? Yes. I have read Goethe and his poetry is definitely philosophy. Was poetry criticism? Yes. I have read Pope and his poetry is definitely critical. Was poetry a spontaneous overflow of emotion? Yes. I have read Shelley and his poetry is definitely a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion. Was poetry an escape from emotion? Yes. I have read Keats, and his poetry does strike as an escape from emotion. Was poetry universal? Yes. I have read Shakespeare, and his themes are universal. Was poetry personal? Yes. I have read Wordsworth, and most of his poetry was definitely personal. In fact, when I really put my mind to it: I came to the conclusion that poetry was everything that is generally not considered poetry. Homer's poetry was definitely history. Milton's poetry was definitely religious. Chaucer's poetry was definitely satire. Dante's poetry was heresy, Iqbal's poetry was an ideology, Nashe's poetry was erotica. But what was poetry to me? And I decided that to me, poetry was all of this, and it was so much more. Since I had not struck a Sherlock Holmes moment, since I had not succeeded in playing Alan Turing and had failed to crack the enigma, since I still had no idea what poetry was to me, I decided to go with yet another method of deduction: I decided, that in order to decide what poetry was to me, I should try deciding what poetry was not to me.

Bewildering as this whole task was, I asked myself: so what is it that is *not* poetry to me?

The daily news isn't poetry to me. The laws of physics aren't poetry to me. The constitution of the Republic isn't poetry to me. The menu of my favourite burger joint isn't poetry to me. The grocery list my mother put together isn't poetry to

me. Rap battles aren't poetry to me. The teacher's comment on a badly done assignment isn't poetry to me. Once I had come up with a list of things that weren't poetry to me—I then tried answering why they weren't poetry to me. The first thing that came to my mind was that these things did not have rhymes, or meter, or rhythm—but there is poetry that is devoid of meter and rhyme yet is still poetry. And if I was to drag poetry down to a level where it was merely technical—because the devices aforementioned are all technicalities—then that would destroy the very essence of the word 'poetry.' If poetry is to be technical then it cannot be, by default, poetic; and that abolishes the whole argument.

I decided, therefore, that poetry wasn't just rhymes, and meter, and devices put together—but that brought me to ground zero: what was poetry to me? There was however one useful element that came out of this whole mental debate of mine: while going over some laws of physics so as to decide whether they were poetry or not, I was suddenly struck with a little enlightenment. I was reminded of this verse of Goethe:

And, raging, from a chain of savage,

Deeply destructive energy

There flames a flashing devastation

To clear the thunder's crashing way

A scientist, if he were to say the same thing about the same phenomenon, would say:

The speed of light is greater than the speed of sound, therefore lightning occurs first and thunder later. And I was enticed into comparing the two statements: both state an indisputable fact, yet the first is poetry and the latter is not. It is for this very reason that Homer's Iliad is poetry but an account of the Trojan War in a history book isn't. It is for this very reason that Milton's Paradise Lost is poetry but the same account in the Bible is not. It is for this very reason—but hark, what is "this very reason" that I talk of? What is "this very reason" that distinguishes poetry from non-poetry? Or better, I asked myself, what is it that makes Goethe's version poetic and the scientist's version non-poetic? The answer to this question I found aptly in Aristotle's Poetics, where he says, "As to the origin of the poetic art as a whole, it stands to reason that two operative causes brought it into being, both of them rooted in human nature. Namely (1) the habit of imitating is congenital to human beings from childhood...and so is (2) the pleasure that all men take in works of imitation."

It also was very fitting that while I tried to thus understand poetry, Claire Brooks' Understanding Poetry happened to be just by me, wherein Brooks says something similar to what Aristotle did, that poetry "springs from a basic human impulse and fulfills a basic human interest." Of course, this would make the necessity to eat poetry when hungry, or it would even make a murder poetic—springing from a basic human impulse, fulfilling a basic human interest. But Aristotle caught me fair and square here: not all men take pleasure in such impulses, and it was here that I finally had my Archimedes moment: Eureka! I have found it! I have found what poetry is to me. Poetic are all those things I take pleasure in, and poetry is everything verbal that I take pleasure in. Shakespeare's monologue, though dramatic, is poetry, because it is pleasurable. Hardy's descriptions, though prose, are poetry, because they are pleasurable. Swift's satire, though an essay, is poetry, because it is pleasurable. Nietzsche's heresy, though preachy, is poetry, because it is pleasurable. When in the morning Apollo pulls back his cloudy curtains and sends arrows of fire down upon this Earth—that is poetry to me. When the clouds crash and collide against each other, thunder ravenously, and weep in torrents—that is poetry to me. When the waves of the sea storm and ravage the rocks in loud agony—that is poetry to me. When the cuckoo announces the arrival of the summer—that is poetry to me. Any sound, any image that immediately strikes a chord within me is poetry to me—it could be my mother's lullaby, or the preacher's sermon, anything which was felt before it could be understood: that is poetry to me.

When I read something that I do not understand—a verse in an alien language, for instance—but which instantly touches something deep, something remote inside of me: that is poetry to me. Poetry to me is divine, is cosmological absolution, is the various contradicting forces of the universe working in harmony, it is a symphony—and sometimes I might not understand it, sometimes I might not agree with its message, sometimes I might not find it very useful; but if it is felt and felt instantly, if a connection that goes beyond the faculties of intellect and language is made immediately – that is poetry to me. Anything that alleviates me, that inspires me, that fills me up with pleasure, and ease, and heavenly bliss – that is poetry to me. There is, of course, no vessel in this world that can contain the essence of what poetry really is: it is fluid, it has as many definitions as there are stars in the sky, for everyone has his own definition, his own vessel.

Poetry is, to me, if I were to borrow Rumi's words, a form the heavens even can't contain, nor throne, nor ocean, nor an open plain. Anything that surpasses understanding, or that doesn't require understanding, that provokes a desire of understanding—that is poetry to me. Coleridge once wrote:

And what if all animated nature

Be but organic heaps diversely framed

That tremble into thought as over them sweeps

Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze

At once the soul of each, and God of all?

It is this "intellectual breeze," that sends my animated nature trembling into thought that is poetry to me. And while I was well aware that my version of poetry could, possibly, not resonate with my examiner's version of poetry—I was perfectly satisfied. Because any verbal assembly that is honest, that is pure, that is—as Plato said—nearer to the vital truth than fact is what poetry is to me. Poetry is truth—a true emotion, an honest reasoning, a pure thought—speeding full throttle and straight from the inside. Ghalib, I think, said something similar.

(18 Jun 2016, 06:14)

On Looking Back at an Essay Written as a Student and Finding it Dumb—

If I were making a case for poetry today, or attempting to answer what it is "to me" today, nearly 5 years later, I would scrap half the tosh I've tossed in the essay above. I would, for one, take out all the idyllic meanderings (birds chirping and mother's lullaby, etc.) because if something that merely makes me feel "pleasure" was poetry, then the act of eating biryani in a wedding would be poetic. The problem with answering a question as bloated as this is that one finds themselves shrinking back into romantic notions of feelings and all things airy to provide an answer. If poetry were an expression of feeling, my Facebook post saying "feeling sad" should count as poetry too. I think I would agree still that poetry isn't technical—but there is some technicality therein for sure. I often ask myself a whole different question: what makes a poem poetry? And if the answer is "line breaks" or inexplicable blank spaces or bizarre punctuation

then I usually conclude

that that

isn't

poetry.

Noor us Sabah Tauqeer

"In the beginning was the word, the word That from the solid bases of the light Abstracted all the letters of the void."

Dylan Thomas

شور نہیں ہے چڑیوں کا سناٹا ہے قتل ہوا ہے ایک شجر بھی کاٹا ہے

آنکھوں میں اُس لاش کی مردہ خانے میں ایک کھلا دروازہ ہے اک ٹاٹا ہے

فٹ پاتھوں پر بیٹھنے والے سوچتے ہیں گاؤں میں رہنے میں کوئی گھاٹا ہے

کوٹ بھی لے تو جان کسی کی کب لے گا اس بیچارے کے تو منہ پر ڈھاٹا ہے

> ڈھلتا سورج اور دکھاتا کیا منظر آدمی اپنے سائے سے بھی ناٹا ہے

شام کا منہ ہے لال ہوا کی تیزی میں دستِ فلک کے تھپڑ کا زنآٹا ہے

خون کی بو ہے آج ہماری باتوں میں گہرا رِستا زخم پرانا چاٹا ہے

افتحار شفيغ

جو تھوڑی دُور ترے ساتھ چل رہا تھا میں وہی تو وقت تھا جس میں بدل رہا تھا میں

مجھے خیال نہیں تھا ہر ایک شام کے ساتھ وہ آفتاب نہیں تھا وہ ڈھل رہا تھا میں

نکل رہی تھی مری عمر میرے ہاتھوں سے جو رو کنے کے لئے ہاتھ مل رہا تھا میں

اُسی خیال نے گھر پر بٹھا دیا ہے مجھے وہ جس خیال میں گھر سے نکل رہا تھا میں

تمام عمر کی مایوسیوں کو کافی ہے وہ جس میں دو چار پل رہا تھا میں

افتحار ثنفيغ

# Hallelujah

The sun seems to be in a playful mood

Playing hide and seek

With the clouds among the purple mountains

I feel the clouds brush against me

As I stand at the top of the Pir Chanasi hills

With the cool breeze against my face

A man offers hot tea and pakoras

As I revel in the crisp afternoon.

I look down at the valley stretched beneath
Small cottages, brightly painted
Sure-footed goats and cows
Dot the green slopes.

Such quietude, such calm

Fills the heart and the soul.

The weight of the world falls away

As I gaze and gaze

At the majestic scene.

So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny

Nishat Wasim

The mind that drinks nectar
From fresh fragrant flowers
The ever busy collector
Spending its daylight hours
In gathering sweet matter
For its midnight labours
Produces the famed elixir
Verses of honey sweet flavour

The mind that rubs its wings
With legs in filth full drowned
That is found always buzzing
Over waste's rising mounds
Picks up rotten and stinking
Grains of diseases well known
And drops them into the thinking
Of minds dreary and forlorn.

These two buzzing minds

Are at work night and day

In them nature has designed

Forces of delight and decay.

Faisal Nazir

## Tomorrow is another day

Sadly gazing at the dying sun
Forlorn eyes searching wide
'O God! Give me peace and light
Somebody to comfort me and guide.'
Smothering darkness, utter despair
An obscure mystery, no way out
She longs for a breath of life
A life of vigour, sans painful doubt.

The dying girl cries aloud

'Why me! O God! Please keep me alive!'

The 'Killer' cells piercing her heart

She prays, she moans, how undaunting her strife!

She looks up to see the moonlight streaming in

A new hope overcomes her, an urge to fight

To try, to seek a precious win.

God gives her light, a comfort so pure

An amazing strength, agony, she could endure

With closed eyes there she lay

To wake up to a new, gay, hopeful day.

#### Lubna Hassan

### Ghazal

Even certainty will doubt itself
The deafening silence will shout itself

Lust wanders about your edges and curves
While love keeps circling about itself

The surface tries to seek depth within

And depth finds itself without itself

My tears remind me: death conquers life

The sky at sunset seems to pout itself

The plant of desire needs no rain

If the drought is long it will sprout itself

The dream's meaning is not in the dream Wake up, the meaning will bring out itself.

Moonis Azad

#### The Charred One

The room suffocates with the smoke of the writhing burned.

Burned in love,

In hate,

Showered with the pale fire of desire.

Some burnings give off the blackest of acid clouds,

Some smoldering, blanket the senses with the white, heavy incense,

Depending on how well done they are.

The smoke rings ripple with their moans and groans,

Intertwined and wrestling with the dying flame,

Dying by reliving the smoke signaled tale of their immolation.

But in the corner stowed away carelessly,

Like a sculpture of ash,

Lies the charred one.

The charred do not smoke,

Neither black nor white, no fog rises from the dead crust,

Fire tattooed on the skin.

Not even a display piece in the carnival of pain,

Motionless in the ecstasy of smokeless fire in his veins.

Only the eye announces the presence of the charred one.

The eye, never closing, refuses to see,

But shows...

Rounded by its black crimson,

A window lies open,

And in it sits the maiden flame thrower,

The last image the flame entrusted to the eye.

The charred does not weep,

Lest the tears put out the flaming hair,

Of the fire breathing dragon mistress.

The charred only hopes in ash,

The proud ash of the crumbling self,

That it might be scattered,

Under the indifferent feet,

Of merciless grace.

Babur Khan Suri

```
O, to be the moon
An ashen featureless face
reflecting
borrowed glory
```

The borrowed power:

Just enough to wet

a few patches of sand carried water from a pail spilled by a stumbling child

The borrowed truth:

Nuanced romancing of subtle illusions giving way to unkempt self importance

While reveling in the glimmer of glory the forgetful moon blinds itself, negates itself

the sun behind

slowly

closer

creeps

revealing an eclipsed truth.

The ornamental sphere then bemoans, weeps, stumbles through its tooled existence.

Muhammad Yousha

I grieve a presence:

That there is a place occupied by one.

That there are words already spoken.

That there are many more waiting.

That some break free

to settle in my grief;

That they come through cracks,

Unstitched as I.

That there is a movement:

From ease to unease

To be registered in a presence

That inspires and instigates

The giving of grief.

That there is an unjustified bereavement:

Not martyrdom, not diseased,

Nor suddenly deceased;

Nor an attack

Of betrayal in one's chest;

Nor the collapse of lungs,

Or a leg gangrened.

All I have to my defense

Is the cartography of distance.

From above alone

Can the bird observe

Two points merge as one.

So that there is a place of hope:

In distance.

So that there may be

A winged god for me.

So that I can pass through grief,

So that I can stitch for myself

A sense of reprieve.

Aamna Motala

When I safely hide,

In some dark corner of my mind,

### Sometimes I am scared of being found out

Of being forced to see

To confront reality

Of being forced to live in doubt

When I successfully evade,

The persistent calling of my fate,

### Sometimes I am scared of being found

Of being forced to survive

To struggle, to strive

Of being saved from being drowned

## Sometimes I am scared of 'being'

Of being forced to exist

And even though I resist

My struggles go unseen

## Sometimes I am scared of

Of nothing and everything

Of the nothingness of everything

Of the everythingness of nothing.

#### Sometimes I am scared

Just scared.

Of what? I don't know.

Probably blank faces

Of occupied spaces

Of having nowhere left to go

#### Sometimes I am

But am I?

If yes, then who?

And more importantly, why?

#### **Sometimes I...**

And this defines me perfectly

A mere piece. Incomplete

Searching for that 'am' to complete me

To give meaning to my life

#### Sometimes...

Alas! *Some* times...

If only that were it

And nothing more

#### Rabia Saadi

### **Dimlit Dreams**

If I can't have you as it seems
I'll see you soon in dimlit dreams
You won't find me so far therein
Where things will be and things have been
Where wind makes music sans compare
And song soundless itself does bare
And night unveils its daylight thought
And brings me that which I have sought.

Noor us Sabah Tauqeer

## The phone call

I sit here

in my empty car,

with my phone clutched within my clammy fingers, and wonder which turn

in the winding road of life,

led me to this moment;

To this claustrophobic

instance of forced

existence.

Things that once consumed me have hollowed me out;

People whom I loved,

and people who loved me have taken with them,

as shoddy souvenirs,

pieces of me.

Entire organs.

Tore me apart

limb from limb,

And kept my

shattered bones

on mantles,

to remind themselves

of everything

that love is not.

```
I used to think
```

that I was a

mystifyingly haphazard

culmination of the people I have met, of the things that have touched me,

and the moments that

have flowed through

me with such

vivacity, that I

for a few breaths

did not dare to question whether I was an

apparition of my own mind.

Where ever this world

had once touched me,

no matter how minutely, flesh dangles

off of my bones.

People have packed up their bags -some

that were attached

to the word forever

and with a resoluteness that I believed was

alien to us mere humans, walked out of my life

with such bewildered

expressions,

that for years I

believed it was unintentional.

But as I call you,

I try channeling a

familiarity that has

long perished by the hands of distance and time.

There is still love, ofcourse; but I do not

know how to come

home to someone

that hadn't been waiting for me to return.

I have spent five years waiting outside your

door,

(I have memorized

every curve,

chink, and scratch

on this mahogany door) to call me inside.

And I don't plan to ever tell you this; the way I have loved

you isn't anyone's

business but my own.

Your voice,

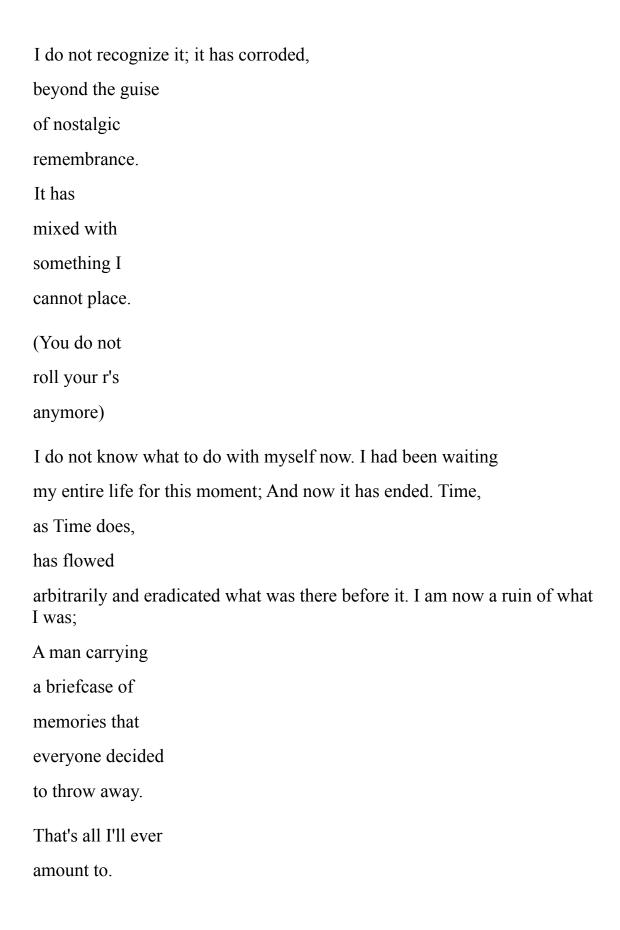
that haunting

specter,

frozen in time,

seethes through the speaker, and drips

onto my hands.



And you,
my love,
you are everything; You, with your
echoing existence have always been
a superfluous mess of endless possibilities.

But I see now.

As I listen to the white noise that you have

disguised

as sentences,

You are everything, but you are not mine.

Fasiha Irfan

## If Only...

It is a lonely place, this planet,
The city's beaming brightness surly,
If only you could see things as I see.
A soulless pattern repeats itself,
Each waking day ends in misery,
If only you could see things as I see.
A faceless wall still stands in-between,
We meet often, but no, not really,
If only you could see things as I see.
Blind to the brokenness of the heart,
A friend as good as an enemy,
If only you could see things as I see.
What is the point in looking for love?
It is no longer a reality,
If only you could see things as I see.

## Ghazal Farooqi

### **The White Monument**

Do you rest in peace? Knowing what goes around you; Does the fire ever reach The whiteness of your skin And tarr it with a murky gray? Do you ever feel The heat of hatred Six feet below the ground? Do you see what we do Here in this precious city of your's; What we have done To this country you made To free us. Do you feel the fear That runs amock In the crowds of worn dwellers? Do you rest in peace Knowing, or not knowing; Do you ever rest In peace?

Nisha Mughees

# I am (not)

Of all the things I see and feel
Of all the things I be
I am the spaces, the corners, the tweeds,
The sides, the crust, the weeds,
The space between his breaths,
The ticks, the tocks, the flock's in-between,
I am the shame of a non-answer,
The glitch in the feather on a bee,
I am the hiatus in monsoon,
The ever-dim sea,
The soldier with no ardour
The general never-to-be,
I am all you say I am not,
I never will be,
I never will be.

#### Arbia Javed

شکستہ شاموں کی تنہائی کے مارے لاکھ کہا میں نے سو ہیں آئے محفل میں مل بیٹھے ہیں آج میں اور میرے ہزار ہا سائے۔ ، اٹھتا ہے کہیں گوشوں میں گماں ایسا جانے ماضی ہوں کہ حال ہوں۔ ا محھے وہم ہے میزبان بھی ہوں کیا یا انہی کسی آئے کی کھال ہوں۔ ،ایسا کھویا ہوں دیار گم میں کہیں کہ ہر دور میں چھوڑی ہے پرچھائی اپنی سایوں کے چہرے پر ہے پڑھی میں نے ہر دور سے منسوب دوہائی اپنی۔ عجب ہے داستان غم بھی ، عجب په اپنے سائے ہیں برسوں کی مسافت کاٹ کر آج دل ہی دُکھانے آئے ہیں۔

## **Chasing Moments**

A Moment,

Trembling amid my eyes

Blowing towards the shores

of your Emptiness

And the realm of Sensation becomes

startled by Holiness.

I strode to seize the pall of existence,

I lived to behold the foyer of eternity,

I breathed to discern the Sky to unfold,

And I subsisted to rebound ideas.

But I felt an eerie sigh

Came out by your insolence

The strings of words were pulled by your brims

And with the last word at my tongue

I too dragged at your lips.

#### Ali Akbar

for it is known to be true in lands far and wide, that leaves are the strongest when strung and tied, the wonders in existence, they do not know, but where do the broken autumn leaves go?

do they glide with the wind and find van gogh skies, do they worry themselves about their impending demise, or do they lose themselves in the worlds magic show, where do the broken autumn leaves go?

do they miss their flowers and their curve in the rain, do they miss the dew drops, where they were lain, are they content, or do they also feel low, where do the broken autumn leaves go?

do they fret about love lost, and who they used to be, or do they feel enlightened and eternally free, when they break away from the branch hanging low, where do the broken autumn leaves go?

is it worth the pain to put themselves first, is it selfish to quench the wanderlust thirst, when they dare to surrender to nature's smooth flow, where do the broken autumn leaves go?

is it worth the risk, the pain they undergo, for a life span of days, a whole world to outgrow, and i dare to follow suit, but first i must know, where do the broken autumn leaves go?

## Yusra Altaf

#### A Sinful Dilemma

Their demand to find beauty is getting tiresome
I'm incapable, I see none.
The demand to find beasts, yet another burden
Does there not exist a plane amidst the tandem?
Insincerity, Ignorance, Naiveté, Arrogance.
Through which views are these virtues, virtuous?
And which boundary deems them villainous?
This dilemma exists because righteousness never did
Nor does its upholder, the Almighty Lord or even His saints
Such desperate an allure holds His evasive reality
As if its determination would solve all worries of Humanity.
Depravity, Monstrosity, Malignity and Atrocity; in the name of all that's Holy...
They say the Serpent swaying my wits, shall condemn to the eternal Abyss
But the sting is what awoke me, while your corpses rot away in bliss.

Rameen Imran

#### Firm

I can't leave this place, mama
It's a wild goose chase
and I'm so foolish, that I stand there with a knife stuck in my back
it keeps bleeding,
but I still stand
it rips my hair and makes my neck bend
but I still stand
hope you know I have stories to tell
once I get out of this desolate prison cell
now there's glass inside my feet, mama
piercing so deep but I barely feel
I think I need to leave
but I still stand, mama, I still stand.

## Raafia Manzar

#### **Essence**

What would it be like

If you knew you were being created

If you knew you would come to exist

as a meek vessel with a mind so deep and a soul

that loves to wonder

What would it be like

To have it all within your grasp but disappears as you lay hands on it

What would it be like

To know it's not permanent yet you pursue it like everything depends on it

What would it be like

To own it all yet not a single thing actually belongs to you

What would it be like

To know what you are

Are you the mind

Are you the soul

Are you the spirit

Are you the body

Here you are;

Merely a speck in a vast mysterious creation

What would it be like

If you knew what YOU are

#### Hafsa Goraya

## **To Teachers**

An ocean of knowledge ahead of us lies
In which, you had dived and now do thrive
And we, tough poorly equipped, stand at its shore
With a hope, that we too its tides survive

# Waqas Ali

لکھا تھا پر مٹ گیا

جو کچھ دل میں تھا میں سب کا سب لکھ گیا

پر نا جانے کسے وہ مٹ گیا

شاید سیاہی آنسو تھے تبھی لفظ مٹ گئے ہوں گے

داغ پھر بھی اُسکے وہی چھپے ہوں گے

تم پڑھنا ضرور

صفهے پالٹنا ضرور

ملے گا بہت کچھ تمہے

محسوس تم کرنا ضرور

یہ آخری بات ہے میری

دوباره شاید نهیں ہوگی

تم سے ملنے کی تمنا بھی

پھراب کبھی نہیں ہوگی۔

سحرعمران جعفر

# **Normal things**

Your heart must confuse you.

It is never certain in the presence of certain things. It cannot decide whether to be solid, weighing down like rock. Or spilling softly all over without thought like water. But this is not the matter to worry about.

This is habit of the muscle;

To stiffen when a weight promises to break.

So that it can be carried and then to gradually return to the tenderness.

Aisha Idris

## **Arrow To My Heart**

My lips, they woefully part
In an ache so deep, it's an arrow
One straight to my heart

It pierces my naked skin

Mangling my flesh, my bones

Unravelling me from right within

Memories flash by my flickering eyes

— You and me, the world be damned —

Shame I never could see past your guise!

They say old habits die hard
A complete fool, I remain at your mercy
Now, still, that you stand unmasked

You watch grinning as I drown
At some point you're tut-tutting, victorious.
I hear faint sniggers while I howl

Deception – oh, you've mastered the art!

Now I die from an ache so deep, it's an arrow

One you've aimed straight for my heart

# Duaa Azim

4

I must express who you are
And must reveal the glimpse of you
For this universe hasn't recognized
the feeling you are, concealed as a human

But where shall I find the phrases from?

when giving them, a peek of you
this world had never been that perfect
and maybe wouldn't ever be utopian enough

Each letter of your name I believe has been written with Peacock fur blanketed with golden ink on the skies of heaven

Love, isn't that what you are?

the rarest love, the inexpressible one
the scarcest love, the flawless one
the unseen love, the one that only gets felt

And as مرکهیانی علی راشد says;

Manail Siddiqui

# چو ټوري د يوار داهن

اچو تروري ديوار داهن بالفظ تنصنجا، بالفظ منهنجا کٹي هٿن سان پاڻ سجايون لفظ لکون ھي ديپ سين جھل مل بانگ تنھنجا، بانگ منھنجا

هلي حياتي کي سلجائن

اڳي اندهاري گھڻي آدنيا ٻپول تنهنجا، ٻپول منهنجا ڇهي مٿان هي تارا آڻن جگ ۾ رات کي ڏينهن بڻائن ٻگيت تنهنجا، ٻگيت منهنجا رڻل حياتي کي پرچائن

اچو ترهيزي ڪشتي ٺاهيون بچول تنهنجا، ٻچول منهنجا هي لهر ۾ گهٽائن دوري بنهيءِ گڏائن توکي مونکي ٻهمنجا، ٻرحرف منهنجا ريت اهيو قصو ورجھائن

عاقب جاويد

## You, emptiness (After Rilke)

You, emptiness that I come from,
I'm fond of you more than all the
shadows that shatter the walls.
For the fullness drops itself on one
with the weight of two
and then no one outside hungers for you.

But nymph of emptiness pirouettes in the air; in constellation, sandstill and veins, & how easily it makes its space like seclusion, with seclusion

and it's true, a gorgeous emptiness is emptying in me.

I have faith in silence.

Areesha Khan

It's sad how when you finally open your eyes after a long decade of overcoming trauma, everything seems misplaced.

Like a broken vase and its scattered dirt, there is no you to embrace.

You look at everything around you and either feel so old, because it feels like you've lived for centuries,

or feel too young, because you actually forgot to live these past many years.

You feel broken, scattered, and all over the place.

But please know that it is okay.

It's ok to not bring those pieces together into one and just sweep them away.

It's ok to feel gray for they say

That at the end of every stem, there is a possibility of new leaves growing and new memories being made

One day, you too will be ready to sway

So for now

Just stay

Shafia Yousuf

#### The Cure & The Consequence

Stuck my hand in my ear and pulled out my brain,
a straining black mass nurturing maggots.
Replaced it with fluffy pink cotton candy,
and danced in the desert, cried happy tears that tasted like brandy.
Lay naked in the snow and made angels,
took their halos and used them to shape pancakes.
Snatched the white frame on my wall and spilled sweetness on the back,
laughed as my family's patience finally cracked.

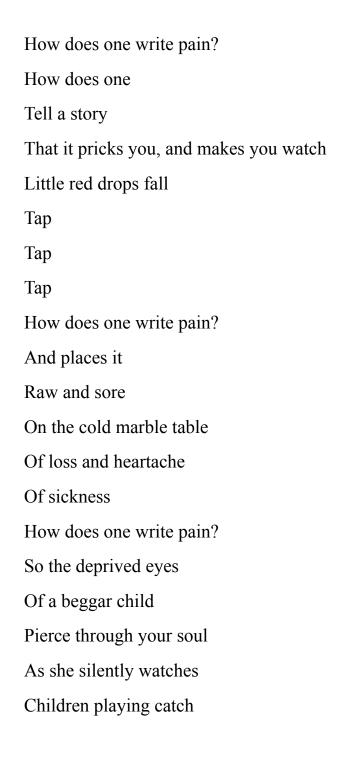
The candy began to melt,

the maggots returning.

I lay in the grass and felt the weeds embrace me, they said "welcome home, you taste like freedom. Heavenly."

Rubab Amir

## how does one write pain



How does one write pain? And throws at you a corpse A Caesar, an Antony A sword and a Brutus A friendship, a traitor How does one write pain? And makes you succumb To the pounding of chest Of a restless mother, And a martyred child How does one write pain? How does one trace With the tip of the pen Skin of the paper And let that scar The flesh of your heart. How does one write pain? Of haunting cries Of freedom, of death For freedom, for death

Tap

Tap

Tap

Parchments smudged Crimson with pain.

I wake up and sigh

Middle of the night

I pick up my pen

I bleed, I cry

How does one write pain?

What do I know?

How does one write pain?

#### Bushra Irshad

#### The House Of Sin

hands like holding
fists like closing
tricks so old in
this house of sin

forms still bold and breaths so cold and hearts grow close in this house of sin

our shapes in folds
like clay in molds
oh to be sold in
your house of sin

lungs of storms and
you in awe of
the seeds you sow in
your house of sin

your fables bored and my voice grows sore and i'm begging for more in our house of sin our unfinished lore in the pages i tore it bleeds from my core in our house of sin

## Maham Owais

#### **They**

When I am happy you become the master When I feel proud we become the slave When we mourn they become worried When I get the energy they exposed When I tell a lie, they stand true When I believe in it, they become a hero When I am happy, they become the master When I feel proud we become the slave When I turn back, there is fog When I move on, I only see you Who am I? don't know I am your wish and desire. When I am happy, you become the master When I feel proud we become the slave When I admit you, you get a success But, what is my success? When I labour hard, you eat a pizza. When my clothes wet with sweat, You wear a black coat. When I am happy, you become the master. When I feel proud, we become the slave.

When you use your brain, I become the victim *You create the whole, you define the parts*When I call it nature and I believe in it
You get more and take a swelled sandwich.

But when I deny the field, you wander with empty hands When I question myself, your state shivers.

#### Muhammad Mahmood

آدم میزاری

خاموش ہے دل پھر بھی سکون سے خالی ہے

ٹھہرا ہوا ہے سمندر پھر بھی اِک موج سی اس پے طاری ہے

> کھڑی ہوں میں ساحل پر کندھوں پر فقط کچھ بھی نہیں لیکن بڑا بھاری یہ بوجھِ خیالی ہے

کیا عجب یہ طبیعت ہے کیا انجان یہ آلم ہے سب کچھ پاس تو ہے مگر لگتا یوں ہے جیسے دامن پورا خالی ہے

> نا کوئی بیماری ہے لاحق نا کوئی رنج ہے برپا مجھے پتہ ہے مجھے فقط آدم بیزاری ہے

> > انوشه شېراد

Five minutes, twenty six seconds

In this desolation

Absurdity is realization

Salt streams are falling down in hesitation

You never know

Where you will be in the next moment

Would it be a fantasized dream,

Or be an oasis?

Five minutes twenty seven seconds

What was I thinking?

#### Aamna Khan

"Standing beside a generous orb, Saw you standing by my corpse.

And that face of wondrous fear!
And those emotions, that roar, those tears!

And here I am, a blessed seer, Breathless. Still. Laying there.

It's funny how in orb I am good to all,

Death has ended all rise, all fall.

It's only what my orb can do,
It's what through which I can see through you.

It's what that gives me that incredulous pleasure:

The pleasure of attending my funeral with you.

Now doff the orb because its overfed, And think for a moment, I'm actually dead.

How would that thing make you feel? How long would that wound take to heal? Sigh, cry, consolation, or regret?

How long would it take for you to forget?

It would be so great, so interesting, so new, You, relatives, and other friends few,

Tears will seem like drops of dew, It is late now, my soul's with a new unique crew.

Now nothing could change and nothing could mend.

This is what I call the hopeless end.

I'm actually dead.

Here, I can't pretend.

Believe me, I am not lying.

Believe me, I am, friend!

My soul will always love you.

Alas! Here is my body's end."

Syeda Tazeen Manzar

## leaflessness

there is a sudden nearness in things; an almost whole, almost unsettling proximity.

this, that you see, i see, and *that* is even closer to me.

has the essence given?
for even in the absence of the thing,
the thing is here, and fully.

a sudden onset;
a sudden need to rush,
run and retreat
to somewhere far and unseen,
somewhere that has not *yet* been —

a flattening point between corroding skins

within you, within me, and between.

Moaz Ahmed

The aching desire to pour
Is all I have, is all I had
I crave to squeeze and squelch and slice—
Slice through the intimidating dark
But it shifts and shifts and sneers
And unleashes lethal lethargy
that expands for days on end.

The ever hungry beast of desperation continues to howl and thrash within.

And atlast-

it awakens the writhing Mongolian worm of agitation that would mark the beginning of an auspicious chase With no bends but death, the ultimate end.

Now-

the echoes of shrill screeching and scratchings
Travel fast from deep, dark voids
growing louder and louder
Until their obsidian hands
Are all around me, all in me
Engulfing, choking, suffocating me.

I can't let it out.

It overpowers me, it pours out of meEyes, ears, mouth, it streams out and out.Alas, I am no more I than I am it.

Zonera Asim

Are we not gods anymore?

Now that we have given everything

Compounded and decompounded,

Positions, powers, love.

Now that we have pried open the elements

Bidding gusts of winds to hide,

Emphasize, conceal, ornament.

These fleeing dancers

Frolicking around fail,

Look now at our bloated bodies,

And sigh with grandeur that used to be ours.

'What is it?

What is it that you have done?'

Sexless and breathing (how?),

We loiter and lurk.

Understanding, commanding, crestfallen,

We lunge at words,

Mouths bloody,

hearts broke.

What is that we feed upon?

Who is this profane hunger for?

The bite of meaning is the bite of a dog.

God.

Was I not a god?

Manal Fatmi

Overt your patience, in peace

Heart, cut open the sewed wound

Startled you say, Flustered I hear.

Sane; a state, I have

no, perhaps you.

Moving about, maneuver your sight

Prevailing sins, carrying the deed

Preventing the fall, kneel;

Up you human, the sky has parted.

The quest you seek stays still

Night awaits the sleep

Within the soft quilt of your sire.

Tea has spilled the poisoned letters

Sound-less words, falling upon my ears.

#### Bismah Barket

By thy by wonderous lust align,
Mine by mind-corroded soul thy love,
alive.

Speaking through the shades of thy subdued cries,

Wondering what may aine be, hath thy love declines.

Muffled those desires under thy name of science,

Wondering what may aine be, hath thy love declines.

Out loud have I thought of thy concealed heart,

Wondering what may aine be, hath thy love declines.

Given the fate them eyes of mine, guide thy destiny to aine light

Wondering what may aine be, hath thy love declines.

Screeching drapes must I witness doth enunciate desire so precarious,
Wondering what may aine be, hath thy love declines.

Spoken hath thy scent of lost evenings to nostalgia I may return but delirious. Wondering what may aine be, hath thy love

Declines.

Unseen cruelty regardless of thy contentment infects this bosom of aine,

Wondering what may aine be, hath thy love declines.

Unjust, immoral unheard of is this love

contaminating the morality of mine, Wondering what may aine be, hath thy

love declines.

Exist through thy speech of unknown joys with aine heart melancholically

envelope,

Wondering what may aine be, hath thy love declines.

Callous our epoch be, crumbling consequent through thy kaleidoscope shall I be

Wondering what may aine be, hath thy love declines.

For eower by eower this wondrous lust declines,

Mine by mind thy love shall corrode

m e

alive.

Syeda Soha Irfan

Round and round we go Fighting over leaving And we knew while we talk We are creating complications that won't ever happen We are too tiny, too little Nothing grand ever happens We will meet each other That is our tragedy. Out of the fear of being overlooked We fight daily, and tell in the end; how important, beautiful, brave we both are. We will suck each other's energies We will feed on words disconnected We know we perform everyday Scratching, tormenting, Finding in each other What life promises itself to be.

Love, maybe, is two people
Pinching each other to make sure
They aren't invisible, dead or forgotten
Until the pinches become routine
Until..

# Ayeman Imran