

New Poems

El Habib Louai

As Long as You Do Not Mind Alienation

You want me to agree
Not to disagree with the shepherd
You want me to agree
& sing the same old song
You always pretend to be in the middle
Of some unfinished projects
that thrive on renewed promises
You say things come once at a time
I feel that I reached
that unavoidable point
both in time and space-you define them for me after all-
where I just want to resort to myself

let us shut the rusty doors on reality
let us close down the day care center
Lower the screens of our souls
as the late August sun fades into
my generational invisibility

Let me be on my own
Tear all the roots that grow
Swollen inside the barren soil
you call it living mechanically
I call it having my own sentimental attic
To renew the marrow in a middle-aged spine
Like a key that was slidden
unwillingly into a rusty lock
I may not fit as time goes by

You put me in this post- like a postage stamp
With thoughts about social determinism
Slowly, you decide on your own
that I am acting strange



slowly outside your range

things have been like this
& can't be subverted
Too late you choose to say
You don't mind alienation
Perhaps, it's a camouflaged benediction
An upgraded Imam is just another old Pope

You advise to sleep soundly
pretend you have nothing to lose
As times goes by
your mind shall rest
as it slowly detaches
from a blistering reality

You want me to agree
Not to disagree with the shepherd
You want me to agree
& sing the same old song
You always pretend to be in the middle
Of some unfinished projects



The End as I Imagine It

They break you into small pieces
they say emphasis must be
on accessibility
not artistic expression
but what about silence
and the thing that follows
the unexpected arrest
numerous elements get lost
easily inside in such a closed setting
as institution, as class, as prison
as a cell within a cell
can you signify in the void?
visions become ephemerae
dreams are beads strewn in space
the guard becomes a prisoner
& nothing matters after that



Taking Time

I kneeled down
Forsaken
Stepped aside
Drifted
Like a leaf
In a stream
Carried away
Then withered
In the shade
of uprooted trees
I quit joking
I quit talking
I quit igniting flames
I am standing
on the edge waiting
for the herd to return
without a shepherd



The Futility of Lordly Assistance

the lord dislocated
his shoulder
in his eagerness
to throw the towel
to the sweating fellas
in the courtyards
of a dismembered nation

Good God!
How do people
get used
to you!
when they return from
their failed quests
for love
for justice
for equality
& a freedom
that trickles in
slow and thin
like blood droplets
on a coffin-lid

there you are
invisible and overbearing
comfortably walking
in your white skin
as a cherry bloom
& you ask me:
“what do I do in the evenings?”
I say: different things,
I sit forsaken
in a clean well-lighted room
& watch the hopes of my people
fade out with the last flame of a desolate candle

Death Certificate For Another Life

After all these years spent in solitary confinement,



The expanse of public gardens offering no relief
In spring their invisible borders imprison me
I am fed up with too much sun,
Bedazzling and causing me to squint
My departing day -
Will be another casual sunny May day
Babies with rosy cheeks will smile on their mothers' backs
When they bend to pick the scorched ears
The ambulant vendor pushes his cart of watermelons past the guards
I will cruise on memory ships to my birthplace
The little Arabian Bustards flying over trenches protecting invisible frontiers
The Barbary Falcon hovering over little countryside chickens
Who refuse to lay their eggs in the wastelands of Middle Atlas
The Desert Wheatear shall greet me at the bus station to nowhere
Who are those waiting near the ramparts for another decade of late tidings?
I shall withdraw in an orderly fashion as if on a routine bird-watching tour
What shall I take with me now after so many decades of dispossession?
Nothing- I shall ask only for their spit of approval on my death certificate!



Political Ballyhoo

What was inscribed
in the books left behind
by protectors of the temple
was a mere attempt
to obliterate the truth
they want you to believe
they are there to protect you
they want you to live on
the crust of political ballyhoo

nation is merciful
only to its traitors
not to its real children
it is another illusion
we were fed with our mother's milk
similar to lies like social contract

nation is a dream
we dream around dawn
it is born of imagination,
fed upon illusion,
& put to death by reality

For ages, my people made peace
with their doubts
& thrashed around in hopes
like rolling stones
they thought suffering
is part of a divine plan
& since nobody came
to heal the sick,
feed the hungry, or
raise the dead!
they have all decided
to commit mass suicide
on a blessed day of Friday
in the plaza of freedom
around sunset

An Unhomely Homeland

Here, public opinion
is



molded privately
in
unconscientious factories
no
need for elections
rather
unnatural selections

I am ready
to give up
this unhomely homeland
for another
molded out of
pistachio ice cream



RECORD ALL THE BLASPHEMIES

For Ashraf Fayadh

They want you to
wear your cleanest robe
do your ablution slowly
trim your moustache attentively
grow your beard patiently
respond to every call readily
& like a stray dog follow a trail
which may not lead anywhere!

I imagine you sitting
inside me alone
I imagine you trembling naked
one eye tired, drooping
the other awake, but lost its focus
your mouth still half-open
from not having barked enough at power
& those who wield it with rosaries

I imagine them all in their turbans and robes
fighting laboriously
to make definite statements about matters
that are still shaping up in the air

In whose God's name do you
evacuate the immigrant tenants?
to which God goes the glory of slitting
another lost Bohemian's throat?
to whose mercy you pray when you
whip another runaway lover?
in whose honor you behead another
Humanistic connoisseur of words?

RECORD ALL THE BLASPHEMIES
IN YOUR YELLOW SECRETARIAN PAGES
HISTORY IS LEAKING
WITH UNRECORDED CONFESSIONS
WITH DENIED TESTIMONIES
WITH MARTYRDOM REPRODUCTION

Where is the rest of all the shame?
Whose guilt is lighter? Whose is heavier?
Who forged the jangling keys at the waist of the jailer?

Whether you kill him



Or choose to spare him
There will always be so many
Who find silence hard to bear
Though there are more who will sell you out



Another Casual Sunday

Things would happen suddenly
under unnatural circumstances
Sometimes in a mellow fall
Nobody would care as they all planned
To commit suicide or
go insane sometime in October
since nobody came to heal the sick,
Feed the hungry, or
even raise the dead!
People realized polite demand
Will not help them get assistance
From whatsoever government, or religious premises
& quietness would not help them escape notice

So, the caserns must be emptied of their supplies
The palaces must be occupied
The national TV headquarters must be seized
The parliament building must be demolished
the museums of godly figures must be blown
Libraries of official history must be incinerated

When it is done, there will be
too many corpses in the streets
nobody would mind some bloodshed
It was better to blow the world
Before it is too late & wash everything down
With three glasses of Bekherovka
& some imported antidepressants before sleep

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El Habib Louai is an Amazigh poet, translator, teacher and musician from Taroudant, Morocco. In connection with his PhD dissertation Louai has published articles and Arabic translations by Beat Poets such as Michael McClure, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Diane di Prima, Anne Waldman, Bob Kaufman, Joanne Kyger, Amiri Baraka and many others.

In 2014, he received a Fulbright grant to research the Beats at Chapel Hill University in North Carolina. His poems, translations and articles have appeared in international literary magazine, journals and reviews: Big Bridge Magazine, Berfrois, Charles River Journal, Militant Thistles, The Fifth Estate, Al Quds Al Arabi, Arrafid, Al Doha, Lumina, The Poet's Haven,



Palestine Chronicle, Ilanot Review, Troubadour 21, Sagarana , Istanbul Literary Review, Radiuslit, Pirene's Fountain, the Tower Journal. He has completed two anthologies of North African and Middle Eastern poetry: Seven Countries published by Arroyo Seco Press and an Anthology of Contemporary Moroccan Poetry published Big Bridge.

He is the representative of 100 Thousand Poets for Change event in Agadir, Morocco. Louai has attended creative writing seminars at Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, Naropa, Boulder. His first collection of poems is called Mrs. Jones Will Now Know: Poems of a Desperate Rebel. He has over fifty new political poems compiled to be included in his second collection.

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