

مقاعد الأمل دائماً محجوزة
The seats of hope are
always reserved

NAJWAN DARWISH

वाक
रविर

The Raza
Biennale of
Asian Poetry
2019

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The seats of hope are
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CREDITS

Concept: Ashok Vajpeyi

Compiled and Edited by: Shruthi Issac

Translation in English: Kareem James Abu-Zeid

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قدساً

ا

وقفنا على الجبل
لنرفع لله الأضحية
وحين رأينا أيدينا ترتفع فارغةً
عرفنا أننا أضحياتك

*

اتركي الغاني يقطر بين يدي قرينه الغاني
أيتها الباقية
ما شأنك بهذا الصبح المرتبك من الزائلين؟

*

أيدينا ترتفع فارغةً
نحن أضحياتك

Jerusalem

I

We stood on the Mount
to raise a sacrifice for you
and when we saw our hands rise
empty
we knew
that we were your sacrifice

Let the mortals fall
in the hands of their fellow mortals
You alone always remain
This confused pilgrimage
of those who are impermanent—
what concern is it of yours?

Our hands rise, empty
We are your sacrifice

II

When I leave you I turn to stone
and when I come back I turn to stone

I name you Medusa
I name you the older sister of Sodom and
Gomorrah
you the baptismal basin that burned Rome

The murdered hum their poems on the hills
and the rebels reproach the tellers of their
stories
while I leave the sea behind and come back
to you, come back
by this small river that flows in your despair

I hear the reciters of the Quran and the
shrouders of corpses
I hear the dust of the condolers
I am not yet thirty, but you buried me, time
and again
and each time, for your sake
I emerge from the earth
So let those who sing your praises go to hell
those who sell souvenirs of your pain
all those who are standing with me, now, in
the picture

I name you Medusa
I name you the older sister of Sodom
and Gomorrah
you the baptismal basin that still
burns

When I leave you I turn to stone
When I come back I turn to stone

اشكر الهند

اشكر الهند

انها جعلت من اشجارها
وسمومها ورجالها
شذا الدفتر الصغير

حيث بالكلمات تجتمع أهلاك من قبور ومناف
من عن يمين الرب وعن شماله
ومن سعيره أيضاً

حيث يقولون للجسيم: هل من مزيد؟

اشكر الهند

وارفع شذا الدفتر.

Thank India

Thank India:

From her trees

and the labor of her women and

men she made this small notebook

whose words call your people back

from their graves and places of exile,

from the right hand of the Lord and

the left—

and from His hellfire too,

where they've been asking the flames:

Is there more to come?

Thank India

and lift up this notebook.

Nothing More to Loose

Lay your head on my chest and listen
to the layers of ruins
behind the madrasah of Saladin
hear the houses sliced open
in the village of Lifta
hear the wrecked mill, the lessons and reading
on the mosque's ground floor
hear the balcony lights
go out for the very last time
on the heights of WadiSalib
hear the crowds drag their feet
and hear them returning
hear the bodies as they're thrown, listen
to their breathing on the bed
of the Sea of Galilee
listen like a fish
in a lake guarded by an angel
hear the tales of the villagers, embroidered
likekaffiyehs in the poems
hear the singers growing old
hear their ageless voices
hear the women of Nazareth
as they cross the meadow
hear the camel driver
who never stops tormenting me
Hear it
and let us, together, remember
then let us, together, forget
all that we have heard

Lay your head on my chest:
I'm listening to the dirt
I'm listening to the grass
as it splits through my skin...

We lost our heads in love
and have nothing more to lose

We Never Stop

I have no country to return to
and no country to be banished from:
a tree whose roots
are a running river:
it dies if it stops,
it dies if it doesn't.

On the cheeks and arms of death
I spent the best of my days,
and the land I lost each day
I gained each day anew.
The people had a single country,
but mine multiplied in loss,
renewed itself in absence.
Its roots, like mine, are water:
if it stops it withers,
if it stops it dies.
Both of us are running
with a river of sunbeams,
a river of gold dust
that rises from ancient wounds,
and we never stop.
We keep on,
never thinking to pause
so our two paths can meet.

I have no country to be banished from,
no country to return to:
I'll die if I stop,
I'll die if I keep going.

Identity Card

Despite—as my friends joke—the Kurds being famous for their severity, I was gentler than a summer breeze as I embraced my brothers in the four corners of the world.

And I was the Armenian who did not believe the tears beneath the eyelids of history's snow

that covers both the murdered and the murderers.

Is it so much, after all that has happened, to drop my poetry in the mud?

In every case I was a Syrian from Bethlehem raising the words of my Armenian brother, and a Turk from Konya entering the gate of Damascus.

And a little while ago I arrived in Bayadir Wadi al-Sir and was welcomed by the breeze, the breeze that alone knew the meaning of a man coming from the Caucasus Mountains, his only companions his dignity and the bones of his ancestors.

And when my heart first tread on Algerian soil, I did not doubt for a moment that I was an Amazigh.

Everywhere I went they thought I was an Iraqi, and they were not wrong in this.

And often I considered myself an Egyptian living and dying time and again by the Nile with my African forebears.

But above anything I was an Aramaean. It is no wonder that my uncles were Byzantines, and that I was a Hijazi child cuddled by Umar and Sophronius when Jerusalem was opened.

There is no place that resisted its invaders except that I was one of its people; there is no free man to whom I am not bound in kinship, and there is no single tree or cloud to which

I am not indebted. And my scorn for Zionists will not prevent me from saying that I was a Jew expelled from Andalusia, and that I still weave meaning from the light of that setting sun.

In my house there is a window that opens onto Greece, an icon that points to Russia, a sweet scent forever drifting from Hijaz, and a mirror: No sooner do I stand before it than I see myself immersed in springtime in the gardens of Shiraz, and Isfahan, and Bukhara.

And by anything less than this, one is not an Arab.

How Many?

How many bedrooms do I need
to get a bit of sleep?
How many chairs
to sit myself down?
How many roads
to walk back to you,
my distant country?
This time I've gone
and I'm not coming back.
Your job, now, is to slip out,
lovesick and afraid,
and come in search of me.

I Don't Claim

I

I don't claim to have any enemies
other than myself,
my demanding
melancholic
self
that sleeps on the bed of its misery,
always ready to shed its blood
over the smallest of trifles—
leaving nothing
for my enemies to do.

I don't claim to have any enemies
other than myself.

II

I don't claim to have any friends
other than myself,
and I'm not denying anything
since the people I'm offering my spot to
are also myself,
which I'm splitting into many selves
and losing one by one,
just as man loses himself:
I don't claim to have any friends.

III

I don't claim to have a companion
other than this roaming imagination:
When it walks on the earth, you call it a dream,
and when it walks on its head, you call it delusion.

I don't claim to have any companions
but him—my dream, my delusion,
my sweet death every night.

IV

I don't claim to have a family
beyond those I lost in wars,
the ones I lost to exile
in the gardens of paradise
and in hell.

I don't claim to have any family
but them,
the ones with mislaid graves
and well-known places of exile,
the ones murdered on the coasts
and waiting at the borders.

I don't claim to have any family
but my own.

V

I don't claim to have a country.
My country is an Andalus of poems and water
that I lost
and am still losing—
in loss
it becomes my country.

I don't claim to have any country
other than loss.

"Reserved"

I once tried to sit
on one of the vacant seats of hope
but the word "reserved"
was squatting there like a hyena

(I did not sit down, no one sat down)

The seats of hope are always reserved

Phobia

I'll be banished from the city
before night falls: they'll claim
I neglected to pay for the air
I'll be banished from the city
before the advent of evening: they'll claim
I paid no rent for the sun
nor any fees for the clouds
I'll be banished from the city
before the sun rises: they'll say
I gave night grief
and failed to lift my praises to the stars
I'll be banished from the city
before I've even left the womb
because all I did for seven months
was write poems and wait to be
I'll be banished from being
because I'm partial to the void
I'll be banished from the void
for my suspect ties to being
I'll be banished from both being and the void
because I was born of becoming

I'll be banished

A Country Called Song

I lived in a country called Song:
Countless singing women made me
a citizen,
and musicians from the four corners
composed cities for me with mornings and nights,
and I roamed through my country
like a man roams through the world.

My country is a song,
and as soon as it ends, I go back
to being a refugee.





Najwan Darwish is a renowned Palestinian poet who was born in Jerusalem in 1978 and he is considered one of the foremost Arabic-language poets of his generation. His work has been translated into over 20 languages and his 2014 book *Nothing More to Lose* was listed by US National Public Radio as one of the best books of the year.

Among other prominent positions, Darwish has been the Chief Editor of the Cultural Section of *Al Araby Al Jadeed* pan-arab newspaper since its establishment in 2014 in London, and he serves as the literary advisor to the Palestine Festival of Literature.

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रज़ा फ़ाउण्डेशन | THE RAZA FOUNDATION

The Raza Foundation is an arts and culture organization established in 2001 by the master of Indian modern art Late Shri Sayed Haider Raza, who sets an example where fame and glory are not lonesome attainments but things to be liberally shared with the broader creative community.

The Foundation has been instrumental in creating spaces for various art and culture programs, publications and fellowships to the younger talent and also carrying a deeper research into the work of the masters. The Foundation has also been providing a financial assistance for a large number of institutions, individuals and projects relating to culture, visual arts, music, dance, theatre, ideas, architecture, photography and for the publication of many important books including *The Art Critic: writings of Richard Bartholomew*, Kumar Shahani's *'the shock of desire and other essays*, *Smriti Vismriti: Shankho Chaudhury, Kaljayee Kumar Gandharva*, *The Spirit of Indian Paintings*, *Finding My Way: Venkat Singh Shyam*, *Sonata of Solitude: Vasudev Santu Gaitonde* etc.

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