Pacifica and Tunisia

A New Journal Grafted on a Sturdy Root

"Poetry is not a gift of language. At the bedside of the suffering we learn at least that much."

It is with those opening editorial words that the first issue of *To Topos: Poetry International* was launched in 1997. That journal was founded by Roger Weaver, an educator and poet who has spent decades in Oregon promoting the talents of writers—from children in grade school to those incarcerated by society. We were privileged to be apprentice-partners in the journey that published eleven issues of the journal over thirteen years. From the outset our pledge was to say that poetry is a difficult struggle of language that mirrors the great effort of the voiceless, the poor, the sulfurized trees to stay alive and maintain their dignity. And from the outset we have wanted this journal's poetry to bear witness to the struggle of indigenous people, to those abandoned in their silence, to those who virtually unaided protect our fragile planet.

With this new incarnation of the journal, *Pacifica: Poetry International*, we continue to give our word to the reader; the pledge is the same. International because many frontiers should be dematerialized, because many flagpoles should return to ancient forests, because the world has become larger, filling more with refugees, with those that cannot be found or placed, who have no words for tomorrow because larger interests rarely pay the steps of so many individual shadows.

So firmly rooted, we resume this quiet action through the words of fellow poets. We are planning future issues on pressing matters of our time where lyricism still appeals. If our inaugural issue is devoted to *Revolutions in Tunisian Poetry*, it is because the emancipatory changes that have occurred in Tunisia since December 2010 are also firmly rooted on the writings of many poets, journalists, artists.

Tunisian Words and Unwritings for Tomorrow

The Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia planted new seeds of hope across the North Africa-Middle East region. Although hope is rarely a political strategy, it is nevertheless a sine qua non for change if accompanied by a cultural disruption committed to democracy. The turning force, the towing undercurrent and the larger success of Tunisia's Revolution was that commitment.

During the Tunisian groundswell in 2011 we invited Karim Hamdy and Laura Rice to serve as guest editors for the new phase of our journal. We knew with confidence that their longstanding contributions as promoters and interpreters of North African cultures in the US would allow us to publish a work of significance. Over the last several years—as the Jasmine plant grew and changed with the seasons—they have gathered, with ardor and patience, a collection of poems (and a number of images) that are the words of Tunisia. Those of the far and recent past, those gathered from the simple elements of its geography, from old stories recounted under doorways in Gabès and Djerba. But also words for tomorrow, the unfurling of things, the fresh recitations of the young, the new voices of insolence, anxiety and controversy spoken aloud at last and without condemnation. It is in many ways through its poetry, its graffiti and its song that Tunisia is a robust model for others to follow.

Joseph Ohmann-Krause and *Eric Wayne Dickey*

…'Tis the Nature of Destiny to Respond

Poems from only three dozen writers in a journal may seem like a modest effort at representing the lyrical genius of an entire country whose poetic output comes in two versions of Arabic (fushā and dialect) and in French. However, the significance of this bilingual selection, in *Pacifica: Poetry International*, is that it emerges in the aftermath of the Arab Spring revolution, a revolution that swept through six Arab countries in 2011, but succeeded only in the country where it started—Tunisia, the theme of this issue. This historical chapter called for a focus on the resilience of the Tunisian people. Thus Abou el-Kacem Chebbi, the national poet (d. 1934), holds the place of honor. His lines of verse, "When one day the people want Life, 'Tis the nature of Destiny to respond" from his *Will of the People* collection, rang out in protests in three historic periods: during French colonial times, as well as during the various protests in the independence era nation-building, and more vociferously during the overthrow of the dictator Ben Ali in 2011. Chebbi's galvanizing words were frequently chanted at Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, in other Arab Spring revolts, and in the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Drawing from a well-known Arab tradition of mu'aradhah (imitation/emulation), Tunisian poets repeatedly attempted to measure their poetry against Chebbi's achievement, by singing the praises of Tunisian resilience. Sghaier Ouled Ahmed (born in Sidi Bouzid, seriously ill in summer of 2015), the bane of Ben Ali, has been an eloquent poetic "holy terror" against authoritarianism. In addition to sarcastically decrying the "stool pigeons" of the police, he is often quoted for the line: "Women of my country are women and a half." Tahar Bekri, in "Salam Gaza," operates a transference of Tunisian resilience against oppression onto the Palestinian quest for self-determination, celebrating the nature of resistance in Gaza, "In spite of cast lead." In this collection also, Adam Fet'hi invokes the trickster Joha in his eloquent holding fast to his last evidence of freedom, "Liberty's Nail": "Steady in

my 'nailhood,' Only proof of my humanity. Not pounded in so I vanish, not yanked out so I disappear." The resilience of Tunisia lies not only in the refusal to submit to oppression, but also in its landscapes—gardens, seas and deserts, the palimpsest of its history, and the fascination of its architectures and traditions: Samia A. Bouattour digs into the historic depth of the Medina in her native city of Sfax to praise the power of tradition, Mohieddine Kraïef, Noureddine Sammoud and Hassan Daoula tap into Tunisia's Sufi legacy, Najet Adouani invokes the spirit of Andalusia and the strength of women artists. Given the limited space, many worthy folk poets were not included, such as Ali Ardhaoui (who focuses on immigrant life in Europe), Belgacem Ben Abdellatif (healing/local knowledge), Ali Chine (Bedouin/Beldi debate) and others. An effort was made to include both well-known voices such as Smadah, Garmadi, and Ghachem and newer contemporary ones— poets from around the country and abroad, both women and men— such as Lamine, Azouz and Ben Khalifa. *Poems for the Millennium (IV): North African Literature* (2013), edited by Joris and Tengour, offers an expanded view of poetry from the region.

The "spark" of the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution came from Sidi Bouzid, native town of Mohamed Bouazizi who was not known for poetry. However, his last message to his mother, in which he "blame[d] this age of treachery," before he self-immolated out of despair, was a true poem of love and resilience at the breaking point, poetically translated by Andrea Assaf. Khaled Oueghlani commands us to "Hold on to the age-old destiny / And go toward your dawn," while Malika Omrani proclaims her resilience by writing "Alone I cross the barrier of fear and death / In order to found my kingdom." The "scent of patriotism / on which the blood of the past is drying" in Mohamed Ali Yousfi's poetry makes him travel "so he can return to live in his solitude." Amel Mousa reminisces about childhood: "I placed full trust in time / Expecting never to outgrow myself."

Tunisia was Carthage when Carthage was one the two "superpowers" on the Mediterranean. A sign of Tunisian resilience is the sphinx-like rebirth of Carthage after it was destroyed in 146 BCE by Rome. Resilience is also at the root of the melding of a multitude of civilizations— Amazigh/native with Roman, Vandal, Arab, Turkish, French, and others— into the national character that prevailed in 2011, literally with bare hands and poetry, over twenty-three years of dictatorship.

Karim Hamdy and Laura Rice

لحن الحياة

إذا الشّعْبُ يَوْمَاً أرَادَ الْحَيَـاة . . .

The Will to Live

When one day the people want Life…

أبو القاسم الشابي

الى طغاة العالم

ألا أيها الظالم المستبد
حبيب الظلام عدو الحياه
سخرت بأنات شعب ضعيف
و كفك مخضوبة من دماه
و سرت تشوه سحر الوجود
و تبذر شوك الاسى في رباه

رويدك لا يخدعنك الربيع
و صحو الفضاء و ضوء الصباح
ففي الافق الرحب هول الظلام
و قصف الرعود و عصف الرياح
حذار فتحت الرماد اللهيب
و من يبذر الشوك يجن الجراح

تأمل هنالك انى حصدت
رؤوس الورى و زهور الأمل
و رويت بالدم قلب التراب
واشربته الدمع حتى ثمل
سيجرفك سيل الدماء
و يأكلك العاصف المشتعل

Abou el-Kacem Chebbi

To the Tyrants of the World

O you, unjust despot
Friend of the shadows, enemy of Life
You laughed while a helpless people groaned
While your hand was still drenched in blood
You went on desecrating the joy of being
And casting thorns of suffering across the world

Careful! Don't be misled by the springtime
By the calm of the skies, the brilliance of the morning
Beyond the wide horizon, fearsome darkness lies in wait
Howling thunder, raging winds
Watch out! Beneath the ashes a fire burns
He who sows brambles, harvests wounds

Behold the lands where you mowed down heads
Where you ripped up flowers of hope
Where you watered the bosom of the earth with blood
And made the soil drunk on victims' tears
The torrent of spilled blood will sweep you away
The flames of the storm will swallow you

محي الدين خريف

رسالة إلى فلاح

من الأكواخ
و من قاع الأساطير التي هرمَستْ
و من دنيا التقاليد
أتيْتُ إليْك
لأغرِسَ في سمائك نجمة الصبح
وأزرعَ في حقولك حبة القمح
فإني يا صديقي
أعرفُ الحُلْم الذي ما زلتَ تنتظرُ
وأعرفُ لهفةَ السّهْلِ
الذي يترقّبُ الأمطارْ
وأعرِفُ رعْشةَ الليلِ الذي في الفجرِ ينْتحِرُ
وكلِّ مواطنِ الأسرار
وأعرِفُ أنّنا كنّا و ما زلْنا
نُفتّشُ عنْ سماء
تحتها بالماء نغْتسِلْ
وعنْ بحْرٍ لهُ مدٌّ
وأرْضٍ ما لها حدٌّ
وشيئٍ إسمهُ العمَلُ
فليْس نهايةُ الأشْياءِ
أنْ يتوقّفَ الجدْوَلْ
ويَنْثُفَ ريشَهُ في عُشِّهِ البُلْبُلْ
و تخْفُتُ ضجّة الأحياء
ولكن نهايتُها بِدايتُها
بِرغْمِ لواحقِ السُّحْبِ الكواذِبِ
وانتِظارِ مواسِمِ الثّمر
ورحلتك الخياليهْ
بِليْل الصمتِ والسهر
لأنّا مِنْ صمودك لَمْ نزَلْ نجْني
ثمارَ النصْر

Mohieddine Khraïef

Letter to a Peasant Farmer

From the huts
And from the depths of the aging legends
And from the world of traditions
I came to you
To plant the morning star in your sky
To sow the grains of wheat in your field
O my friend!
I know the dream you are waiting for
I know the thirst of the plain
Waiting for rain
And I know the shiver of the night as it vanishes into daybreak
And all the places where secrets dwell
I know that we are still
In search of a sky
Beneath which we might purify ourselves
In search of a raging sea
Of a land without borders
And of a thing called 'work'
It is not the end of things
If the stream ceases to flow
If the nightingale plucks out its feathers in the nest
If the tumult of the living dies out
The end of things is their beginning
In spite of the scudding of deceptive clouds
And the wait for the harvest season
And your escape into fanciful dreams
During the long, silent nights
From your steadfast resistance we keep harvesting
The fruits of victory

ونخْترقُ الكوالحَ مِنْ ليالينا
ونشربُ مِنْ ضياء الفجْرْ
ونقْهرُ كلَّ طاغٍ مِنْ أعادينا
فصوتكَ صرْخَةُ التّاريخ
مِنْ جيلٍ إلى جيلْ
عميقٌ مِثْلَ عمْقِ الحُزْن
طويلٌ مِثلما تمتدُّ أضواء القناديل
حبيبٌ مِثلَ همسِ اللحنْ
فَحِين يمُرُّ في سمعي
يكوِّرُ في دمي الأيامْ
ويربطني بِأحبابي
ويحمِلُني إلى بلدي
كطيرِ حمام
ويجمَعُني بأصحابي

And survive our restless nights
And drink the dawn light
And defeat our oppressors Your voice is the cry of History
Over generations
A voice deep as sadness
Vast as the radiance of candlelight
Sweet as the whisper of soft melodies
As it reached my ear
The days chill my blood
And your voice connects me to my loved ones
Transports me to my country
Like a dove
And reunites me with my friends.

نورالدين صمود

الحسن في النفوس

يا جميلا يحب كل جمال
في وجوه و أنفس و فعال
أملأ القلب غبطة و سرورا
بجمال ما ان له من مثال
وافتح العين كي ترى الحسن يبدو
في ضياء و ظلمة و ظلال
فالوجود الجميل عذب المحيا
رائع الحسن عبقري الجمال
فيه تبدو ابتسامة الشمس جذلى
تنشر النور في الربى و الجبال
و ترش الضياء في كل ركن
فتفيض الأكوان بالآمال
و يشيع النور السني و يسري
سريان الدماء في الاوصال
و يظل الشعاع في كل شبر
راقص الخطو لامعاً كاللآل
كل شيء في الكون حلو بديع
غير ان العيون ذات كلال
لا ترى الحسن كلما لاح حسن
فهو للغافلين صعب المنال
و جمال الوجود ليست تراه
غير عين تريد نيل الكمال
تبصر الورد حين يفتر ثغر
كابتسامات رائعات الجمال
و ترى الشوك للورود سلاحا
ينتضى للجناة يوم النزال
يبعد العابثين بالورد ان هم
حاولوا نيل حسنه بابتذال

Noureddine Sammoud

Beauty is in the Soul

Oh Beautiful One loving all beauty
In faces, in souls, and in deeds
Fill our hearts with bliss and happiness
With beauty unlike any other
And open our eyes to see beauty
In light and dark and shadow
Living beauty is sweet of aspect,
Wonderful in grace, with sweetness immanent
In it, the smile of the sun is glad
Spreading light over hills and mountains
Sending rays to every nook
So the universe is filled with hope
And the sublime light flows
Like blood coursing through limbs
And rays dance in every space
Glittering like pearls
All the universe is sweet and amazing
But the eyes tire too fast...
They don't perceive beauty as it strikes
Beauty is unattainable for those who are not awakened
The beauty of existence can be perceived
Only by an eye looking for perfection...
One that sees roses when a mouth beams
With wonderfully sweet smiles
And sees thorns as a weapon of the rose,
Against the culprits, when attacked
Keeps meddlers away
If they try to trample over its beauty

يا جميلاً خلقت كونا جميلا
الهم القلب فهم كنه الجمال
إنما الحسن في النفوس فجمال
عين نفسي، يحل الوجود حيالي

Oh Beautiful One, you created a beautiful universe
Help the heart to know the essence of Beauty!
Beauty is but in the soul, so beautify
My soul, and my existence is sweetened.

سامية عمّار بوعتّور

أنْشُودَةٌ إلى المدينة العتيقة

في المَمَرَّاتِ العَتِيقَةْ
يَعْبَقُ التَّارِيخُ عِطْراً
يَنْشُرُ المَاضِي رَحِيقَهْ...
تَثِبُ الدَّهْشَةُ فِينَا
كُلَّمَا شَعَّتْ حَقِيقَهْ
أَوْ تَهَادَتْ ذِكْرَيَاتٌ
مِنْ صَبَاحَاتِ الخَلِيقَهْ
كَأْسُنَا فَاضَتْ حَنِيناً
فَتَعَالَيْ يَا رَفِيقَهْ
نَنْشُقُ التَّارِيخَ والذِّكْرَى وَ أَحْلَاماً وَرِيقَهْ...
نُوقِظُ الأَطْيَافَ جَذْلَى
نُشْعِلُ الذِّكْرَى طَلِيقَهْ
مِنْ شُقُوقِ السُّورِ، مِنْ ذِي الشُّرُفَاتِ
مِنْ أَرِيجِ العِطْرِ حَوْلَ النَّمْنَمَاتِ
مِنْ هَدِيلِ الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَ المِئْذَنَاتِ
مِنْ بَخُورِ النَّدِّ يَسْرِي، مِنْ عَبِيرِ الوَرْدِ يُغْرِي
مِنْ طُقُوسِ الشَّمْعِ ... بَيْنَ البَسْمَلَاتِ
مِنْ زَوَايَاهَا العَتِيقَهْ...
قَبَسٌ مِنْ رَسْمِ أَجْدَادِي ... وَأَضْواءٌ أَلِيقَهْ
سَطَعَتْ ... مِنْ عُمْقِ أَغْوَارِ السِّنِين
حَيَّةً جَذْلَى أَنِيقَهْ ...
بَابُ دِيوَان مُعَلَّى
وَ مَقَامَاتٍ عَرِيقَهْ ...
كُلُّ أَبْوَابِكِ دَفْقٌ
والرِّبَاطَاتُ حَدِيقَهْ...
جَامِعٌ يَسْرِي سَنَاهُ
في شَرَايِينِ المَدِينَهْ
قَلْبُهَا النَّابِضُ دَوْماً
يَكْرَعُ الصَّادِي مَعِينَهْ
كَمْ مُرِيدٍ يَرْتَجِي فِيهِ الحَقِيقَهْ! ...

Samia Ammar Bouattour

Song for the Ancient Medina

In the ancient passageways
The fragrance of history flows
The past spreads its essence . . .
Wonder astonishes us
Whenever truth shines
Whenever memories meander
From the morns of creation
Our cup of nostalgia overflows
Come with me, dear Sister!
Let's breathe in history, memory and leafy dreams . . .
We awaken the delightful radiance
We kindle memory
From the crevices in walls, from the balconies
From the scent floating around miniatures
From the birds cooing above the minarets
From incense spreading, from the fragrance of roses
From candlelit rituals . . . interspersed with Bismillahs
From the recesses of the ancient medina . . .
A beacon shining from my ancestors . . . elegant lights
Shining . . . from the depths of time
Alive, wondrous, full of grace . . .
The majestic Diwan Gate
And ancient shrines . . .
All your gates invite us to enter
And the Ribats enfold gardens . . .
The lights of the Great Mosque stream
Through the veins of the Medina
Its heart constantly beating
Like a spring of water for the thirsty
So many seekers find truth in it! . . .

* * *

كَمْ دُرُوبٍ كَمْ مَزَارٍ كَمْ زَوَايَا ...
كَمْ تُرَاثٍ يَنْبُضُ التَّارِيخُ فِيهِ،
كُلُّ عَصْرٍ ذُو وَثِيقَهْ ...
أَوْلِيَاء اللهِ فِيهَا
كَالمَنَارَاتِ الأَلِيقَهْ
كَالقَنَادِيلِ ضِيَاءً
كَالنُّجَيْمَاتِ الرَّقِيقَهْ ...
أَيْنَ "نُورِي" أَيْنَ "لَخْمِي"
أَيْنَ "أَصْحَابُ الطَّرِيقَهْ"
ذَاكَ "كَرَّايٌ" سَبَانَا
بِالكَرَامَاتِ العَجِيبَهْ ...
بَيْنَ أَحْضَانِ المَدِينَهْ
يُطْلِقُ العِشْقُ رَنِينَهْ
والصَّبَابَاتُ الحَنِينَهْ
تُشْعِلُ الذِّكْرَى الدَّفِينَهْ
تَلْبَسُ الدُّنْيَا بَهَاءً
حُلَلاً جَذْلَى قَشِيبَهْ
وَشْوَشَاتُ الصُّبْحِ فِيهَا
للمَسَاءاتِ صَدِيقَهْ ...

* * *

So many paths, so many marabouts, so many shrines . . .
So many monuments breathing history
Each period with its manuscript . . .
With God's saints in it
Like elegant minarets
Flaming like candelabra
Like the flickering little stars . . .
Where is "Nouri"? Where is "Lakhmi"?
Where are the "Friends of the Tariqa"?
That one is "Karray" enchanting us
With his wondrous miracles . . .
In the lap of the city
His passionate melodies resonate
The muted feelings
Illuminate buried memories
The land displays its beauty
Wondrous, soft dresses
The whisperings of the morning
Consort with the dusk . . .

* * *

تَحْتَ أَغْصَانِ الدَّوَالِي
بَيْنَ حَبْقَات وَرِيقَهْ
حبذا البرج المعلى
حَبَّذَا الدُّورُ العَتِيقَهْ
حَبَّذَا عِطْرُ الخُزَامى
والفَوَانِيسُ الهُيَامَى
والشَّبَابِيكُ القُدَامَى
حَبَّذَا ذَاكَ المُصَلَّى
هُوَ ذَا الشَّوْقُ تَجَلَّى
بالصَّلَاوَاتِ العَمِيقَهْ ...

* * *

في المَمَرَّاتِ العَتِيقَهْ
يَنْثُرُ النُّورُ عَقِيقَهْ...

* * *

Beneath the trailing vines
Among the leafy basil plants
How wonderful the high tower
How wonderful the ancient houses
How wonderful the scent of lavender
And the loving lamps
And the antique windows
How wonderful that peaceful space of prayer
Here love manifests itself
In deep prayer . . .

* * *

In the ancient passageways
Light spreads, mother-of-pearl …

Salah Garmadi

Nos ancêtres, les Bédouins

ils sont là
nul ne peut les nier
nul slogan effaceur
ils sont la majorité héritée
profondeur lovée en palmes maghrébines
indomptable racine

les Marocains gardent encore la rue tunisienne
les Tunisiens font encore des beignets
aux enfants de Béjaïa
à Constantine un homme du peuple offrit une tête
de mouton et déclara nous sommes un seul peuple

nos enfants de plein air se font siamois
nos femmes jambes nues donneront des princesses
notre adolescence criera
va tout droit mon petit gars toujours droit
nos bouches de pudeur veulent déjà tout dire
et nos Einstein seront majestueux en djellaba

la neige d'Afrique retarde le pied de l'homme
les dos marche-exode d'errants forment la vague
instinct-tumulte
en quête de subsistance
Et Ghardaïa régal des yeux par l'ocre le bleu en terre
Ghardaïa au regard nocturne de chouette tutélaire caresse et
commerce comme Jerba
soeur berbère et adulée
et Roufi a des balcons
image perdue mirage retrouvé au creux
de l'oued palmé

Hassi-Messaoud
dune d'où dégringole l'ami à l'appel d'Allah
rocaille où l'homme s'entête et fait

Salah Garmadi

Our Ancestors, the Bedouins

they are there
there's no denying them
no obliterating with slogans
they are the inherited majority
depth coiled in Maghrebine palm
the invincible root

Moroccans still guard the Tunisian street
Tunisians still make the beignets
for Bejaia's children
in Constantine, a common man offered up a sheep's head
and announced we are one people.

outdoors our children become Siamese twins
our bare-legged women become princesses
our adolescence will cry out
walk straight ahead, my lad, always straight ahead
our modest lips already long to say it all
and our Einsteins will be magnificent in their djellabas

the snows of Africa delay man's footsteps
the backs of wanderers in exodus flow in waves,
tumult-instinct
in quest of subsistence
and Ghardaia delights the eye with its earthy ochre
and shadowy blue Ghardaia, its nocturnal gaze
like a tutelary owl, caresses and trades as does Jerba
flattered Berber sister
and Roufi has its balconies
image lost mirage discovered in the hollow
of the palm-covered wadi

Hassi-Messaoud
dune down which the friend hurtled at the call of God
rock where man persists and acts

où la carcasse de chameau se fait pneu qui brûle
où les dattiers se font derricks
où le pétrole a déjà goût d'avenir

défiguratif l'oeil-pinceau fait vibrer le réel
allusion attirante au fin fond des regards d'où jaillit le troglodyte
appel transparent de l'ornement
mouvance des bustes chargés
alors coeurs et corps vont de l'avant
dans l'air grenu des mille coupoles

ils sont là
nul ne peut les nier

where the carcass of a camel turns into a burning tire
where the palm trees turn into derricks
where the oil already tastes of the future

the disfiguring paintbrush eye makes reality pulsate
irresistible pull of a deep gaze where the troglodyte bursts forth
the transparent call of ornaments
the allure of bosoms adorned
so hearts and bodies move ahead
in the grainy air of a thousand domes

they are there
there's no denying them

Souâd Guellouz

Dans les jardins d'mon père

Dans les jardins d'mon père
Les orangers sont morts
Des étrangers y viennent
Et marchent sur leur corps

Dans les jardins d'mon père
Ne poussent plus les fleurs
Le vent nouveau qui souffle
Les fait trembler de peur

Dans les jardins d'mon père
Il n'est plus d'oliviers
Des mains, des cœurs impies
Les ont déracinés

Dans les jardins d'mon père
Les oiseaux se sont tus
Des étrangers y viennent
Mais moi je n'y vais plus.

Tunis 1988

Souâd Guellouz

In My Father's Gardens

In my father's gardens
The orange trees have died
Strangers come there now
To walk upon the dead

In my father's gardens
Flowers no longer grow
A new wind is blowing
That makes them tremble now.

In my father's gardens
The olive trees are no more
Hearts and hands impure
Have left them all uprooted

In my father's gardens
The birds have gone dumb
Strangers come there now
But I no longer come.

Tunis 1988

منور صمادح

كلمات

عنــدما كنت صغيرا كنت أحبو الكلمات
كنت طفلا ألعب الحرف وألهو الكلمات
كنــت أصـواتا بلا معنى وراء الكلمات
وتخطــيت سنينـــا عثــرتهـــا الكلمات
أركض الأحلام والأوهـام خلـف الكلمات
ووراء الزمــن الهــارب أعــدو الكلمات
كــل مــا أعرفـــه أني ظلمــت الكلمات
وسمعت الناس يصغون لصوت الكلمات
فتكلمــت ولكــن لــم أفـــدها الكلمات
ليس بالهزل ولا بالجهل خوض الكلمات
وتألمــت كثـيـــرا في جــراح الكلمات
وسفحت العمـر دمعا من عيون الكلمات
ولقـــد مــت مرارا في سبيـــل الكلمات
صلبوهـــا ثم جـــاؤوا ورثـــوها الكلمات
فصــدور النــاس قد كانــت قبورالكلمات
يستجيــرون بها منها .. وأيــن الكلمات
بيــع ما فيهم من الحس فماتوا الكلمات
كالدمى الخرساء لا تعرف معنى الكلمات
هي لحـــــن بشـــري رددتـــه الكلمات
نغـــم وقعـــه الإلهـــام يرجو الكلمات
ورؤى سكرى تهادت في رياض الكلمات
هي روح الكــون زخــار بفيــض الكلمات
تتـــراءى حلمــا يقظـــان عبـــر الكلمات
قل لمن همهم في الناس وخـاف الكلمات
إنمـــا أنــت شفـــاه ظمئـــت للكلمات
ونـــداء حــائر في الصوت بــح الكلمات
آدك الصمــت فهلا قلــت بعــض الكلمات
أو تخشى الــناس والحق سجين الكلمات

Mnaouar Smadah

Words

When I was small, I used to love words
I was a child playing with letters, delighted by words
I was sounds, meaningless echoes, pursuing words
I lived through years tripped up by words,
Galloping after dreams and illusions in the wake of words,
Chasing after fleeting moments, herding words
What I know is I was unjust toward words
I heard people listening to the sound of words
So I spoke, but without benefiting words
Neither frivolously nor ignorantly should we deal with words
I felt great pain at the wounding of words
And spent a lifetime shedding tears through the eyes of words
And died multiple deaths in defense of words
They crucified, then turned around and eulogized, words
Men whose chests have been the graves of words
Seek protection in them from them . . . but what of the words?
Their sentient meanings sold out, they died, the words
Became dumb marionettes, ignorant of the meaning of words
The words chanted songs of good omen, intoning the words
A melody engendered by inspiration, looking for words
Drunken visions swaying in the gardens of words
Soul of the universe ornamented by the flow of words
Perceiving waking dreams through words
Tell those who care about humanity yet fear words
You are but a pair of lips thirsting for words
A confused appeal in the halting voice of words
Silence is wearing you down, won't you say a few words
Or are you afraid of people while truth is a prisoner of words

أو تخشى النـــاس والحق رهين الكلمات
حيـــوان أنـت لا تفقــه لـــولا الكلمات
ونبـــات أو جمـــــاد أنـــت لـــولا الكلمات
مـا الذي ترجـوه من دنياك لولا الكلمات
أنـت إنسان لـــدى الناس رسول الكلمات
فتكلـــم وتألـــــم ولتمـــت في الكلمات
وإذا مـــا عشـــت فيــهم فلتكـــن الكلمات
شاهـــــد أنت عليهـــم وعليـــك الكلمات
يهـــدر الشاعر في الناس وتحيا الكلمات
ويموتـــون بلا ذكرى وتبـــــقى الكلمات

Or are you afraid of people while truth is a hostage of words
You are just an animal, but for words
An inanimate object, a plant but for words
What would your earthly life be but for words
You are human, for the people a prophet of words
So speak up, suffer and die in words
And if you lived in them, let the words
Bear witness for you and you bear witness for words
The poet roars unto the people giving life to words
And people die without a trace, but they remain, words.

نجاة العدواني

ولّادتي

أرهقني السّهر،
واستيقظت لاميّة الأحزان

في ذاكرتي . . .
جاءت الشّاعرة
في فمها بقايا
من لهب الصّحراء
تفتّحت في ذاكرتي
أندلس أخرى،
أعدّي مجلسك،

يا ابنة المستكفي،
لأهرق بين جدائلك
سكون غربتي.

هل أنا شاعرة أخرى
تحمل الينابيع
وتدخل الصّحراء؟
هل أصارع جفاف ريقي
حتّى اشتعال كلّ الورد
على وجهي ؟
أم أخفي في الأجنحة السوداء
دمعي،
وأجلس ولاّدة
بين جراحي،
بعد أن ضاع ثوبها الحرير،
ولم تركع؟

Najet Adouani

My Wallada

Insomnia wears me out,
The alphabet of sorrow

Awakens within me . . .
The poetess appears
With embers in her mouth
From the fires of the Sahara
Another Andalusia,
Blooms in my memory
Prepare your literary salon

O Daughter of Moustakfi
So I may pour upon your tresses
The quietness of my exile.

Am I that other poetess
Who carries springs within
And wanders into the desert?
Shall I fight the drying up of my saliva
Until all the roses burn
On my cheeks?
Or hide
My tears under black wings,
Lay my Wallada down
Amidst my wounds,
After her silken gown was lost
Yet she did not bow down?

قرطاجتي ،
يا أندلسا أخرى
ضاعت . . .
أهرقي اللّيل
على صفحة خدّ
معطّر،
امشي مشيتك،)
(....وتيهي
فلن يسهر اللّيلة عندك
شاعر
ها أنا
أحمل ثوبك
إليك،
وقد انطفأ الزّهر
فيه

My Carthage
O my other Andalusia
Lost . . . !
Let night flow
Onto the page of a perfumed
Cheek
(Walk your walk
. . . And wander)
No poet will spend the night
At your place
Here I am,
Bringing your gown to you
In my arms
Although its flowers
Have faded.

Guest Editors' note: Wallada bint al-Mustakfi (d. 1091/2), who wrote poetry and maintained a literary salon, was the daughter of one of the last Umayyad caliphs of Cordoba, murdered in 1025. A common custom in the Muslim world at the time was to wear poetry embroidered on one's garments, declaring pious invocations and political allegiances. Wallada wore hers on her sleeves:

> I am, by God, fit for high positions,
> And am going my way, with pride!
>
> Forsooth, I allow my lover to touch my cheek,
> And bestow my kiss on him who craves it.

[See: Irwin, *Night and Horses and the Desert*, Knopf Doubleday, 2002: 274]

محمد علي يوسفي

صورة الفنان في شبابه

شدَّهُ الولَعُ الطفلُ والكرْكراتُ، تفاصيلُ أرضٍ تجيء إليه، صدى الماء في
قصب النَّهرِ، حُرِّيقةُ السهلِ، شوكُ النباتات، ورْكُ الصغيرة في العشب، قَرْصُ
المعلِّمةِ الأجنبيةِ، خربشةُ الحلم في دفتر الدرس، شكلُ الرذيلة
مختزَلاً في الرسوم، اشتعالُ العشايا إذا ما
يا وازنَ العمرِ الطريِّ مُقْبِلاً
بحُمرةٍ في الوجنتيْن،
كفّةُ الميزان طقّتْ طقَّةً ،
من خفَّة العُمر بإحدى الكفَّتين .

ريشةٌ وبناتٌ: نباتٌ تجيء به اللغةُ المرتجاةُ. ضبابٌ على زَغَب العشب.
فَتْكٌ على كلِّ وجهٍ ليأْلَفَ ثديَ الحياة.
وهاهي ذي صحوةُ العمر تُؤْوي يديه؛ يهمُّ بضغطٍ على جرس الوقت، يقرع
بيت الخواء إلى ألفة الخوفِ. حلمٌ طريٌّ، يُزيح الظلال عن الماء،
في حوض
فاجرةٍ. عضَّةٌ من كلاب الحديقةِ، عينٌ تقسِّمُه صُوَرًا تحت عشِّ اليعاسيب.
يجمعها بقواعدِ خيْبَتِهِ ثم يطلب نسيانها في البعيد، فيبقى له
من شذى الوطنيَّةِ قشٌّ، عليه تيبَّس ماضي الدماء. على سفرٍ كي يعود فيسكنَ عزلتَه:
هوذا،
خارجَ الوقت، داخلَه.
هوذا،
لم يعد: تلك صُورَتُه...

Mohamed Ali Yousfi

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Part 1

The child burst out in belly laughter, details of the world coming at him,
the echo of water flowing through
river reeds, the nettle of the plain, thorns of plants, a little girl's rump
nestled in the grass, a pinch
from the foreign schoolmistress, the drawing of a dream in a
class notebook, the shape of sin
alluded to in sketches, the incandescence of afternoons, if, while
for you who judge the value of the birth of new life
only by the rosiness of cheeks,
the balance scale pan clatters just once
from the lightness of being in one of the pans

Part 2

A paintbrush and girls: a verdant creation expressed in the longed for
language, dew on the tufts of grass.
A sheen on every face to accept the bosom of life
In a conscious coming of age in life's embrace, he attempts to push the
buttons of time, knock on the door of
the house of emptiness welcoming the kinship of fear. A sweet dream,
he removes the shadows from the water,
in the wash basin
of a prostitute. The bite of dogs in the park. An eye, slicing him up into
images under the perch of dragonflies.
He gathers them in the foundations of his despair, then he tries to exile
them far away, and then he's left with a hint
of the scent of patriotism, on which the blood of the past is drying.
Traveling so he can return to live in his solitude:
There he is,
outside time, inside time.
There he is,
he has not returned: that's his image . . .

كوثر خليل

خذاريف

أشترى الطفل خيوطا
وخذاريف وخُفّاً
كان في الطبعِ يُشارِكْ
كلّ أطْفالِ القبيلة
لُعْبة الأرض الأصيلة
والخذاريفُ تدور
وسط أفراح الطفولة

* * *

في الليالي ...كان هذا الطفل
يستلقي وحيداً
ينتقي قفصاً حديداً
بين أقفاصٍ عديدة
يضعُ فيها الطريدة.

* * *

استطاب الطفل ألعاب الفخاخ
تنشُبُ الأنْيابَ في سوقِ الفِراخ
صارت الطيرُ كثيرة
صارت الأقفاص أكثر
صارت الأصوات أرْخم
أصبح الصوتُ جريرة

* * *

Kaouther Khalil

Spinning Tops

The boy would buy string,
A few spinning tops, and sandals.
Mornings, with the rest of the tribe's kids,
He used to play
The traditional game of the land
And the tops kept spinning
Making the children happy

* * *

At night . . .
The child used to lie down alone
He would choose an iron cage
One of many
To put his prey in

* * *

The child enjoyed trapping birds
In the market, the bars entrap the birds
There are lots of birds now
And bird-cages, even more,
The songs are harmonious
And silence, a crime

* * *

صار ذلك الطفلُ جلاداً
بِجسمٍ مسْتعار
فالخذاريف مساجين الخيوط
والعصافير مساجين الحديد

* * *

ذات يومٍ...
أبدع العصفور حيلة
أن يطير الكلُّ بالقفص الرذيلة
ويعودوا لاغتِصابِ الفخّ
منْ جُوعِ "الطفولة"

* * *

بعد برهةٍ
أصبح الأطيارُ أحرار
يعيشون الرياسة
والخذاريف تدور...
تَضْحكُ منْها الخُيوط
في أصابيع الكياسة...

The boy became an executioner
With a borrowed body
Spinning tops are prisoners of string
And birds, prisoners of the iron cage

* * *

Once a songbird invented
A trick
All would fly away with the shameful cage
And return to wrest the bird trap
From the hunger of "childhood"

* * *

After awhile
The birds were free
Living their own lives
And the spinning tops kept whirling . . .
The string would laugh at them,
Played by skilled fingers . . .

Bechir Trabelsi

Des fois . . .

-Des fois, un grain de sable fin
Peut précipiter notre fin.

Des fois, une feuille par terre
Peut nous inciter à nous taire.

Des fois, une vague quelconque
Peut renverser une solide barque.

-Parfois, une goutte d'eau
Peut nous courber le dos.

Parfois, un rayon solaire
Peut sonner notre heure.

Parfois, une seconde furtive
Peut troubler notre vie affective.

-Quelquefois, une rencontre banale
Peut nous rendre pâles.

Quelquefois, un rendez-vous fixé
Et raté peut nous vexer.

Quelquefois, une simple parole
Peut nous inciter à l'envol . . .

Ou nous faire perdre notre rôle.

Bechir Trabelsi

Sometimes . . .

-Sometimes, a grain of fine sand
Can trigger our demise.

Sometimes, a dead leaf on the ground
Can provoke us into silence.

Sometimes, a random wave
Can overturn a sturdy boat.

-Sometimes a drop of water
Can bring our spirit low.

Sometimes, a ray of sun
Can sound our hour.

Sometimes, a furtive moment
Can cloud our affective life.

-At times, a mundane encounter
Can make us blanch.

At times, an expected rendez-vous,
Missed, can upset us.

At times, a simple word
Can provoke us into flight.

Or make us lose our bearings.

آمال موسى

صَغيرةٌ وَاقِفَةٌ على الأطْلالِ

عندما كنتُ صَغيرَة،
كُنتُ أُوَزّعُ فَاكِهَةً على ضُيُوفٍ يأْتُونَ في كلّ يَوْمٍ
وأملأُ فنجانَ عَمّي بِقَطَراتِ الزَّهرِ
وأُقَشِّرُ الجَوزَ.

أقِفُ أمامَ مِرْآتِي
وأتَخيَّلُني سيِّدَةً.
أخْلَعُ عنْ شَعْري رَبْطَتَهُ الوَرْديّة
وأعْبَثُ في غِيابِ أُمّي بِفَسَاتِينِها السّاهرَة.

عِنْدَما كُنْتُ صَغيرَة،
أُنَادي جَمِيعَ الرِّجالِ أَعْمامي
والنِّساءَ خَالاتِي
وكانتْ تُذِيبُني شَمْسُ الحَياءِ
كلَّما دَاعَبَتْ رِيحٌ فُسْتَانِي.

عِنْدَما كُنْتُ صَغيرَة،
كَانوا في كُلِّ يَوْمٍ يُذِيعُون ضَيَاعِي
ثُمَّ يَجِدُونَنِي
في الشُّرْفَةِ أُعَانِقُ وِسادَتى.

عِنْدما كُنْتُ صَغيرَة،
كان جميعُ التَّلاميذِ أساتِذَة
وأنا أَخْدُشُ وَرَقَتِي
يَمُرُّ مُعَلِّمي و يَقُولُ:
"ما سُؤالُكِ يا ابْنَةَ سُقْرَاط؟"

Amel Mousa

Little Girl Facing the Ruins

When I was little
I used to distribute fruit to guests visiting everyday
I would top off my uncle's cup with drops of rosewater
And shell green almonds.

I would stand in front of the mirror
imagining myself a lady
I would remove the pink barrette from my hair
In her absence, dress up in my mother's evening gowns

When I was little
I called all men "Uncle"
And all women "Auntie"
I'd melt in sunbeams of shyness
Whenever a breeze caressed my dress

When I was little
Every day they'd announce I was lost
Then they'd find me
Out on the balcony, hugging my pillow

When I was little,
All the pupils were teachers
As I scrawled on my paper
My teacher would walk by and say:
"What is your question, Oh Daughter of Socrates?"

عِنْدما كُنْتُ صَغيرة،
كُنْتُ أَعْتَقِدُ أنّنا كَيْ نُنْجِبَ أطْفالاً
علَيْنا أنْ نَشْرَبَ جِراراً مِنَ الحَلِيبِ
وظَنَنْتُ،
أنِّي الأخْتُ الصُّغْرى لِأُمِّي وأَبِي.

كُنتُ أخَافُ صَمْتَ الأَحد
وفي الجُمُعَة أسْألُ عمَّا حَلَّ بِمَنْ حَوْلِي

عِنْدما كُنْتُ صَغيرة،
وَثِقْتُ مِنَ الزَّمَنِ كَثِيراً
وانْتَظَرْتُ أنْ أظَلَّ كما كُنْتُ كَبِيرَة!

When I was little
I used to believe that to conceive children
We had to drink pitchers of milk
And I thought
I was the younger sister of my mother and father

I used to fear the silence of Sunday
Fridays, I'd wonder what happened to people around me

When I was little,
I placed full trust in time
Expecting never to outgrow myself!

Cécile Oumhani

Des heures en double

Un peuplier frissonne en moi,
où que je sois, j'entends sa voix
depuis que je suis en exil.
--Nâzim Hikmet (Le peuplier)

Des années tu pensas
au parfum des pétales restés
sur un rebord de fenêtre fermée
au creux d'un lit oublié
dans une chambre
d'ombres et de carrelage
puis ils ne furent plus que mots
et tu les tournais en vain
assoiffée de bribes
portées parfois par le vent

temps d'absence et de miroirs
tu vivais de reflets et d'images
la croisée des chemins
sans remède
doublait à l'infini
chacun de tes pas
le ciel était ton océan
et tu rêvais de voilures
tissées par la nuit
jusqu'à toucher le rivage perdu

les heures avaient leur double
là-bas de l'autre côté
et d'un doigt posé sur ton épaule
elles venaient t'interpeller

Cécile Oumhani

Hours in Duplicate

A poplar shivers in me
wherever I am, I hear its voice
ever since I have been in exile.
--Nâzim Hikmet, (The Poplar)

For years you thought
of the perfume of petals left
on the sill of a closed window
at the bottom of a forgotten bed
in a room
of shadows and floor tiles
then they were only words
and you spun them in vain
thirsting for traces
carried at times through the wind

time of absence and of mirrors
you lived off gleams and images
the crossing of paths
without remedy
duplicated to infinity
each of your steps
the sky was your ocean
and you dreamt of sails
stitched by the night
until it touched the lost shore

the hours had their double
out there on the other side
and with a finger placed on your shoulder
they came to summon you

temps de mots et d'oubli
ravalés dans l'ampleur de la vague
tu marchais en seule quête
de ce qui mènerait
à un maintenant
dont tu ne fus pas

toile de la langue
compagne de ton silence
passeuse éperdue
d'une mer interdite

tu te voulais poisson
au fil d'une onde prodigue
oiseau adonné
à des cimes lointaines
pour rejoindre
ce qui n'avait pas été
lent fil de soie
glissé sur l'étoffe
qui courait entre tes doigts

et tu croyais parfois
entendre
le choc des verres à thé
là-bas de l'autre côté
où les rais du soleil
dansaient dans une pièce vide

Comme les marches se succèdent
interminables
vers la demeure restée inhabitée

time of words and forgetfulness
swallowed in the weight of the wave
you walked searching only
for that which led
to some now
in which you were not

web of language
companion of your silence
frantic boatwoman
across a banned sea

you claimed to be a fish
across a lavish wave
bird devoted
to distant heights
to find again
what had not been
slow thread of silk
gliding on the cloth
that slid across your fingers

and you thought you heard
at times
the clink of tea glasses
out there on the other side
where the sunlight
danced in an empty chamber

So the steps follow
themselves endlessly
toward the home that remained empty

Translated by Joseph Ohmann-Krause

Mustapha Yahia

Souffrance

Gabès mon cher enfant
N'est plus ce qu'elle était.
Blessée dans mes entrailles
Ma chair est charcutée
Vidée de tout mon sang
Pour faire du phosphaté
Produire beaucoup d'acide
Au prix de ma santé.
La soif qui me tenaille
Hiver, printemps, été.
Je hurle mes douleurs,
Mais nul ne m'écoutait.
Ton père si par hasard
Un jour ressusciter,
Ses pleurs seraient de sang
Son âme déchiquetée
De voir ainsi périr
Mon charme et ma beauté.
Dira à mon proposa
Gabès ma regrettée.

Mustapha Yahia

Devastation

Gabès, my dear child,
Is the same no more.
Wounded deep inside my womb
My flesh pierced
My blood drained
To process phosphate
To produce fertilizing acids
Polluting my body, my oasis.
Thirst torments me
Winter, spring, and summer.
I cry out in pain
But no one is listening.
If by chance your late father
Rose from the grave
He'd weep blood tears,
His soul in shreds,
To see how my charm and beauty
Have been ravaged,
And would grieve for me, lamenting
Alas, Gabès, my late belovèd.

خالد الوغلاني

حصاد السفر

أقصرْ عن الترْحالِ
هذا ليلُنا يَمضي ويلْتَحِفُ الرُّؤى فينَا
وهذا وجهُ فاتِنتِي
ألذُّ من المُنى
وأشدُّ وَقعاً من تباريحِ الجَفاءِ
ومنْ خَيالاتِ القَصيدهْ
أقْصِرْ ..
وخُذْ بِيَدِ الزَّمانِ تَودُّداً
ألْهِمهُ ما قد ضاعَ منهُ ومن قصيدِكَ
من رُؤى

أوقِفْ يَدَ العَبَثِ المُسافِرِ في خُطاكَ
وفي مَدائِنِ حُزْنِنَا
وتأَبَّطْ القدرَ القديمَ
وامضِ لفجْرِكَ ربَّما قيَّدتَ في دَمِكَ الجحيمَ
واكتُبْ لكلِّ ممالِكِ الأرْضِ القصيَّةِ
أنْ سَيَمضي ليْلُنا
ونُعيدُ في الصُّبحِ الرُّؤى
رَقراقَةً
تُلقي على القَحْطِ المُعشِّشِ في لَيالِينَا
الغُيومَ.

Khaled Oueghlani

Travel's Harvest

Renounce your travel
This is our fleeting night wrapping itself in our visions
And this is the face of my enchantress
Sweeter than desire
And more devastating than the pain of absence
And more powerful than the metaphors of the poem
Renounce . . .
And befriend and hold the hand of time
Inspire him with those visions lost to him and to your
poetry

Stop the aimless futility of your steps
And in the ancient cities of our sorrow
Hold on to the age-old destiny
And go toward your dawn that you might tame the hellfire in your
blood
And write to all the remote kingdoms of the earth
That our dark night will pass
And we will renew our visions at dawn
Glittering
Sending pregnant clouds over our desiccated, withered
nights.

Mahmoud Triki

Hommage à Abu Nawas: Verse-moi à boire

Verse-moi à boire et dis-moi que c'est du vin
Ne le fais pas à l'abri si tu le peux à grands cris

Quelle nuit terrible, je suis orphelin
La luxure m'agite et m'éprouve le béguin

Mon esprit s'égare . . . ne m'interroge pas
Laisse-moi à ma coupe, elle me servira

Remplis donc mon verre, ô mon compagnon
Je suis un nouveau criant son biberon

L'engoue de senteur s'empare des gobelets
Par des mains des devins . . . qui soient tous sacrés

Epris, de l'amour jamais je n'ai fait pénitence,
Car de l'amour, il n'y a pas d'abstinence

Voilà ma vie, le vin, l'amour et un Dieu béni
Qui absout les hommes qui n'ont pas obéi

Ne me parle ni d'enfer ni de paradis
Ils sont faits de songes et de rêveries

Verse-moi donc à boire . . . à boire, ma dulcinée
Qui est fait d'amour ne peut être blamé

Remplis donc ma coupe, car ce sont ces yeux
Qui en s'endormant réveillent l'amoureux,

Ô mon compagnon, le vin est clarté
Et buveur de soleil craint-il l'obscurité

Mahmoud Triki

Homage to Abu Nawas: Pour Me a Drink

Pour me a drink and tell me it's wine
Don't do it in stealth if you can shout it yourself

What a dark night, orphaned,
I feel lust stir within me, stoking my passions

My thoughts stray . . . oh, don't question why
Just leave me to my cup, I'll make do

Fill up my glass, dear companion
I'm just a newborn longing for a bottle

The enticing scent fills the goblets
By divine hands . . . May they all be blessed

Enthralled, I never repent about love
Because love brooks no abstinence

That is my life, wine, love and a loving God
Who forgives those who disobey

Don't speak to me of heaven and hell
They are but dreams and reveries

Pour me a drink then . . . a drink, my beloved
When overflowing with love, we cannot be blamed

Fill up my cup then, because those are the eyes
Which, sleepy, awake the lover

My dear companion, wine is distilled from clarity
And drinkers of the sun we do not fear darkness

أناقة

الرجل الهادئ الأنيق،
ـ وهو يخرج إلى الشارع صباحا ـ
يبتسم لوجه العانس الحالمة.
يبتسم لوجه طالبةٍ مسرعةٍ
يبتسم لوجه الموظّف الباهتِ.
يبتسم لوجه المدير العابسِ.
يبتسم لوجه العاطل اللاّمبالي.
يبتسم لوجه المتسوّل الباكي.
يبتسم لوجه الدولة.
يبتسم لوجه الله.

(...) مساءً، وهو يلجُ الحانة،
الرجل الهادئ الأنيق يبتسم للنّادل،
يبتسم للكأس الأولى،
يبتسمُ للكأس الثّانية،
مع الكأسِ الثّالثة يفكّر بنوافذَ أخرى،
مع الكأسِ الأخيرة يبدأ في البكاء.
يأتي الجميع ويبتسمون لهُ.
الرجل الهادئ الأنيقُ
الذي بدأ توّاً في البكاء
كان يصرخ : اخْرُجْ من ذاكرتي أيها الذّبابُ!

Khaled Haddaji

Elegance

The amiable, elegant man,
—As he goes out to the street in the morning—
Smiles at the face of the dreaming spinster.
Smiles at the face of the harried coed.
Smiles at the face of the distracted clerk.
Smiles at the face of the morose principal.
Smiles at the face of the resigned unemployed.
Smiles at the face of the weeping beggar.
Smiles at the face of state authority.
Smiles for the sake of God.

(. . .) In the evening, as he enters the bar,
The amiable, elegant man smiles at the waiter
Smiles at the first glass
Smiles at the second glass
With the third glass he thinks about other vistas,
With the last glass he starts to cry.
Everyone comes by and smiles at him.
The amiable, elegant man
Who, now in tears, was screaming:
You, cloud of flies! Get out of my memory!

سفيان رجب

مساء في شارع بورقيبة

الفوانيس باكيةً
يتقاطر منها
رذاذٌ مُضيء
يبلّل أكتافنا
وملامحنا الغجرية
بين وجوه كئيبهْ

بائعات الهوى
يتثائبن فوق الكراسي النحيفةً
يشربْنَ رغبتهنَّ
ويبصقنها
في وجوه الرّجال الغريبهْ

حرسٌ ... حرسٌ ... حرسٌ ...
حرسٌ ... حرسٌ ...
حرسٌ ...
يتناسل في كلّ ركن
ويرقُدُ داخل كلّ حقيبهْ

العصافيرُ مرجومةٌ بالضّجيج
وتمثال العلاّمة
يحرسُ غربتهُ
في شارع بورقيبهْ.

Sofiène Rejeb

An Evening on Avenue Bourguiba

The street lamps are weeping
Dripping
Drizzling light
Wetting our shoulders
And our Gypsy mien
amidst the sad faces

The ladies of the night
Sit yawning on their flimsy chairs
Sipping their desire
And spitting it out
In the faces of strange men

Guards . . . guards . . . guards
Guards . . . guards
Guards . . .
Multiplying in every corner
Secreted in every purse

Flocks of birds take flight in the din
And the statue of the learned Sage
Keeps vigil over his exile
On Avenue Bourguiba

Guest Editors' note: A statue of fourteenth-century scholar, Ibn Khaldûn, known as the "father of sociology," stands at one end of Bourguiba Avenue close to Bab el Bahr (the sea gate), the entry to the Casbah. In the years just before Ben Ali fled, the statue was obscured by a large billboard sporting a smirking portrait of the dictator.

Mohamed al-Sghaier Ouled Ahmed

Aux frères indicateurs

L'indicateur n'a pas maintenant à être dans mon ombre
Et lapider les oiseaux sur ma lèvre
Car je suis le roi de la nuit
Et je n'ai point de secret...
Sauf mon visage
Et mon encre qui coule sur le nombril de la capitale
Et que cela soit :
Je passerai seul la journée
Un sein me troublera soudain
Je saluerai le drapeau !
Un enfant m'interrogera sur les frontières du pays
Je l'interrogerai sur les confins de la langue
Et advienne que pourra
Seulement...
L'indicateur n'a pas maintenant à être dans mon ombre
Et tuer les oiseaux sur ma lèvre
Car je suis le roi de la nuit
J'ai pitié de tous les indicateurs
Et suis dur pour une lèvre froide.

Translated into French from Arabic by Tahar Bekri

Mohamed al-Sghaier Ouled Ahmed

To My Brothers, the Stool-Pigeons

The stool-pigeon has no need now to live in my shadow
And to stone the birds on my lips
Because I am king of the night
And I have no secrets . . .
Except my face
And my ink flowing onto the capital's navel
And so be it:
I will spend the day alone
A breast will suddenly disturb me
I will salute the flag!
A child will interrogate me about borders of the country
I will interrogate the child about the limits of language
Whatever happens, happens
But . . .
The stool-pigeon has no need now to live in my shadow
And kill the birds on my lips
Because I am the king of the night
I feel sorry for all the stool-pigeons
I give a hard time to cold lips.

Tahar Bekri

Salam sur Gaza

Dans les bras de la lumière
Et la beauté du monde

En dépit du plomb durci
A la barbe des sanguinaires

Ces flocons de neige
Pour apaiser la terre

Du feu qui lui brûle les lèvres
Pourquoi aimez-vous tant les cendres

Quand la braise nourrit mon cœur
Tendre dans les cours des rivières

Pourquoi détruisez-vous mon limon
Réduit en poussière

Le soleil vous fait-il peur
De voir votre propre ombre

Paris 30 décembre 2008

Tahar Bekri

Peace Be Upon Gaza

Embraced by the light
And the beauty of the world

In spite of cast lead
Under the noses of the bloodthirsty

These snowflakes
To soothe the earth

Cool the flames that burn her lips
Why do you love ashes so much

When embers warm my soft heart,
In the flow of rivers

Why do you destroy my silt
Reducing it to dust

Does the sunlight make you afraid
To see your own shadow

Paris, December 30, 2008

فتحي النصري

نحن لا نشبه ما كنّا نريدْ

ما الّذي غيَّرنا؟
وزرُ تاريخ الأسى؟
أم جذوة آلت إلى برد مقيم؟
أم تراه القبْوُ أدمنَّاهُ
حتّى صار مرآة لنا؟
صار ماءً
وسماءً.
لكأنّا سمكٌ
آب إلى غيض ضنينْ،
أو نجوم نافقاتٌ
روحها الخافق خابٍ
منذ آلاف السّنين.

كم تغيّرنا!
ألم تَعْلُ لنا فيما مضى أسطورةٌ؟
الوردةُ، التنّينُ، أسوارٌ وقصرُ،
دُونه سبعُ أراضٍ وبحارٍ
دونها مُلْكٌ و أمرٌ.
أوّلُ السّورة إخوان الصّفاء،
رايةٌ، وْعْدٌ، مواعيدٌ، وسرٌّ.

إرَمٌ،
كنزنا المحجوبُ في الصحراء،
إكسيرٌ وسيمياءٌ وسحرُ.
نحن لا نشبه ما كنّا نريدْ
وإذا ما هجَسَ الشّوقُ لنا شيْئاً،
ورُمنا فسحةً خارج القبْوِ،
تناهيْنا إلى قبْوٍ جديدْ.
هكذا يلتبس الخارجُ بالدّاخل
والداخلُ بالخارج،
والأقْباء بالرّحْب المديدْ.

Fethi Nasri

We Don't Resemble What We Wanted to Be

What changed us?
The burden of the history of sorrow?
Or an ember which became eternal cold?
Or is it the dark cavern we were addicted to
Until it became a mirror of ourselves?
It became the water
And the sky
As if we were fish
Returning to hidden shallows
Or shooting stars
Their flickering souls extinguished
Thousands of years ago

How much we changed!
Did a myth not arise about us?
The rose, the hydra, the walls and castle,
Defended by seven earths and seven oceans
Defended by kingly authority
The beginning of the Sura,
The Brethren of Purity,
A banner, an oath, conclaves and secrets.

Iram,
Our treasure hidden in the desert,
Elixirs, symbols and magic.
We don't resemble what we wanted to be
And if longing had whispered to us
And we had come out of the cavern
We would have ended up in another cavern.
Thus outside merges with inside
And interior with exterior
And dark caverns with open space.

Guest Editors' notes: 1. Authorized by the poet, the translation of this poem is excerpted from the longer poem, "The Storm." 2. In the *Quran*, Iram was said to be a city adorned with lofty buildings where the people of Ad lived. They had turned away from Allah and led wicked lives. They did not heed the prophet Hud's warnings and were punished with a sandstorm erasing all traces of Iram. Many believe the mythic city once existed.

آدم فتحي

مسمار الحرية

قَبْلَ أنْ يَقْتَحِمَها السُّمُّ بِقليلٍ، نَظَرَتْ أُمِّي الأرضَ في اتِّجاهي، هَمَسَتْ بحُرْقَة: أُمْنِيَتي الأخيرةُ أَنْ أَحْتَفِظَ مِنْ حُرِّيَتي بِهذا المِسْمار

مُنْذئِذٍ أنا في المكان، أَمُوتُ على جرعاتٍ ومِنْ كلِّ جانِب، كثيرُونَ يَمْشُونَ على أحْلامِي بِأَحْذِيَتِهِم النِّظَامِيَّة، هاتِفينَ: هذا وطنُك.

أَسْمَعُ آلَةَ الهُتافِ أتَلَفَّتُ كالطَّرِيدةِ. ليْس منْ مُواطِنِينَ هنا ليس مِنْ وطَنٍ بَعْد.
إنْ نحنُ إلاَّ مَسامِيرُ للحُرِّيّةِ، مَشْدُودَةٌ إلى نجمةٍ خَفيَّةٍ، في الطَّرَفِ الآخَرِ من الجِدار.

آلَةٌ لِكُلِّ لاشَيءٍ في هذا اللَّامكان. آلَةٌ لِكُلِّ لاَفِعْلٍ حتَّى لِافْتِراسِ الأحلام.

أَمَّا أنا فَمَشْدُودٌ إلى نجمَتِي الخَفِيَّة. ثابِتٌ على مِسْمَارِيَّتي، شَرْطِ إنْسانِيَّتي الوَحِيدِ. لا أُدَقُّ فَأَخْفَى
لا أُقْتَلَعُ فَأَغِيب.

ليس لِأَنِّي بَطَلٌ بل لِأَنِّي مِسمارٌ. مَحْضُ مِسمارٍ مَشْدُودٍ إلى وَطَنِهِ

كنجمة خَفِيَّةٌ في الطَّرَفِ الخَفِيِّ من الجِدار. وأَعْرِفُ، النّجمةُ قَدْ تَكُونُ انْطَفَأَتْ مِنْ سِنِينَ. هذا الضَّوْءُ قَدْ لا يكُونُ سِوى نَعْيِها المُتَأَخِّرِ. لكِنِّي

لَنْ أسَلِّمَ بِمَوْتِ نَجمتي، حتّى لو ظَلَلْتُ مِسْماراً مَشْدُوداً إلى هذا الجِدارِ، أَحْتَرِقُ طويلاً طويلاً في ضَوْءِ احْتِضارِها الطّويل.

Adam Fethi

Liberty's Nail

Shortly before poison ravaged her, my mother-earth looked my way, she whispered in distress: My last wish is to save what is left of my liberty. I wish to keep at least this nail.

Since then I remain in place, I die in gasps and from all sides, many are those who walk with their regulation boots on my dreams, proclaiming: This is your country!

I hear the loudspeaker and turn like prey. There are no citizens here, there is no country yet.
We are but nails of liberty, attached to a hidden star on the other side of the wall.

There's an apparatus for every nothing in this non-place, an apparatus for every empty act until even dreams are devoured.

But I am attached to my hidden star. Steady in my "nailhood," only proof of my humanity. Not pounded in so I vanish, not yanked out so I disappear.

Not because I am a hero, but because I am a nail.
Just a nail attached to his country.

A hidden star on the hidden side of the wall.
And I know, the star may have gone out years ago. This light may be just the belated news of its demise. But I will not

accept that my star is dead, although I remain just a nail attached to this wall, burning a long, long time in the light of its slow agony.

Guest Editors' note: This poem alludes to the mythical jokester Joha of popular folktales, and to "Joha's Nail." Joha was also known as Nasreddine Khodja in Persian and Turkish regions. Joha sold a house at a discount with the proviso that he could keep one nail on one of its walls. Later he kept 'visiting' his nail and hanging rotten carcasses from it until the new owner was fed up and sold it back to him for a small fraction of the value.

Moncef Ghachem

Plate-forme

ne point dire avant
mais être de bond
avec l'horizon

ne point dire fumée
mais ensemencer l'inerte
et l'inanimé
de feu

se réveiller dans l'amandier
de mai
écrire d'une main d'épi
épanoui
aux vivants partout

voir le champ dans le paysan
le coquelicot dans la femme
le soleil dans l'hirondelle
et l'enfant dans l'étoile

écouter la mer
dans le collier du vent

offrir la lumière de son visage
à l'obscur pas d'un passant

fortifier les mots
de sa liberté première

dire
à l'amour
présent

Moncef Ghachem

Manifesto

never say forward
rather spring forth
with the horizon

never say smoke
rather sow the dormant
and the inanimate
with fire

wake with the almond tree
of May
write with tufted hand
blossoming
for the living everywhere

see the field in the peasant
the poppy in the woman
the sun in the swallow
the child in the star

hear the sea
in the necklace of the wind

offer the illumination of his face
to the obscure footstep of a passerby

buttress the words
by his innate liberty

say
to love
I'm already here

. . . فلا بُدَّ أنْ يَسْتَجِيبَ القَـدَر

وَلا بُـدَّ لِلَّيْلِ أنْ يَنْجَلِــي
وَلا بُدَّ للقَيْدِ أَنْ يَـنْكَسِـر

…'Tis the nature of Destiny to respond

Of night to now dissipate
Of chains to be undone.

جمال الصليعي

قصيدة: "الرديف أم الثائرين"

الرديف . . .
هذه الرديف
أرض أقفرت عشبا
لكنها أخصبت بالعز منتصبا
هذه الرديف أم الثائرين
أتت تعلم الغافلين المجد و الغضب
من قبل أن يعرف الثوار مسلكهم
خط الرجال هنا دربا لهم خضبا
السابقون الى الثورات
مسكنهم حر المناجم
حيث الصخر قد كتب
لاشيء فوق هدير الشعب منفجرا
بركان غيظ رمى النيران و اللهب
فاخلع نعالك هذه الأرض طاهرة
جرى عليها دم الأحرار و انسكب
مر النار
مر النار تكتب
تفاصيل اغفلها النائمون
و انت تراقص قد اللهيب على حشرجات السبات
و أنجز قليلا من الموت تحتاجه كي تفيق الحياة
قليل قليل من الزيت فوق اذا الشعب يكفي
لتأتي اذا الشعب رافلة مزدهاة
يواعدك الجوع بين الرغيف البعيد
و بين مواعيد عرقوبها خلبي اللغاة
ولست فقيرا لا لا لست فقيرا
ولكن نواقير مصرك أعطت عناقيدها للجباة
ونحن الذين استخضنا بشاعرنا اذ أراد الحياة
وجاء البغاة فقالوا له نرى خيركم في الممات

Jamel Al-Sli`i

Redeyef: Mother of Rebels

Redeyef . . .
This is Redeyef
A land without grass
But lush with dignity, standing tall,
This is Redeyef, the mother of rebels
She came to teach dignity and anger to the unenlightened
Before the rebels found their way
Here men blazed a clear path
The pioneers of revolutions
The heat of the mine is their home
Where the rocks have written
Nothing rises above the people, roaring, exploding
A volcano of anger, spitting out tongues of fire
Walk barefoot, this land is pure
The blood of freedom ran through it, dripping
Tell the fire
Tell the fire to write
The particulars ignored by those who are asleep
As you dance with the silhouette of fire, on the sounds of sleep
Mimic a minor version of death, so life may awaken
A little, a little oil poured over "If the People . . ." is enough
So that "If the People . . ." comes parading, joyous
Hunger waylays you before the unattainable loaf
And between the moments of unspoken portents
You are not poor, no you are not poor
But the bugles of your land gave away the fruits to the tax man
We are the ones who responded to our poet as he chose Life
And the oppressors came and said your best will die

لنا الأرض قالوا و خيراتها من عليها
و شطئانها الساحرات
و نمنحكم قفة الفقر و الجهل
و الحزب و الصحف الكاذبات
مر النار تكتب
فقد كذبت هذه النخب المشتراة
تريك أناقتها في النهار
و في الليل تأوي
الى فرش الممـ..... المومیات
لها عسل الوهم في قطران الطلاة
مر النار تكتب
مر النار تكتب فان لنا من رصيد الدماء
كفايتنا دائما للنجاة
لنا فائض من كرامة شعب أبي
و لكن طيبتنا مدخل للطغاة
و في آخر الصبر مقبرة للطغاة
مر النار تكتب
مر النار تكتب فأمك حاضرة للشهادة
كانت اعدت بنيها لكل الدروب و كل الجهات
مر النار تكتب
تفاصيل..... يجهلها الساسة العابرون
و أهل الخراج و وفد الجباة
مر النار تكتب
اذا الشعب يوما أراد الحياة
فلابد ان تستجيب الحياة
ولابد ان يسقط الظالمون الطغاة

The land is ours, they said, and its riches
And its enchanting beaches
We'll offer you a basket of poverty and ignorance,
And the party, and the lying media
Tell the fire to write
These corrupt elites are lying
They show you their elegance by day
And by night they go back
To the beds of the wh . . . whores
With their honey of illusion mixed into the naphtha
Tell the fire to write
Tell the fire to write, indeed enough of our blood has spilled
Enough to save us
We have a surplus of dignity in our steadfast people
But our humanity is exploited by tyrants
At the end of our patience is the tomb of the tyrants
Tell the fire to write
Tell the fire to write your mother is ready for martyrdom
She prepared her children for all paths
Tell the fire to write
The particulars . . . unknown to fleeting politicians
And to the revenue office and tax squads
Tell the fire to write
If the people one day the people want Life
Life has no choice but to respond
And the oppressive tyrants shall fall

Samia Lamine

Prière citoyenne

Le vent de ton souffle, tous les matins,
Un chant doux, parfumé d'un air marin,
De jasmin, de menthe et de thym
Un encens exaltant sacré et divin.

La rosée de ton regard effleure tes palmiers
Une potion couleur de la paille de tes près
Du vert olive de tes éternelles oliveraies
Fête miellée au blanc de tes fleurs d'oranger.

Mère! La sueur glacée de tes mineurs
Un abri protecteur contre l'aridité du désert
Une voile voguant vers l'avenir prospère
Un muguet vivace aura de tes honneurs.

Mère! Bois ton café tant qu'il est chaud
La diseuse annonce des jours nouveaux
Hume l'odeur des roses de la belle saison
Elixir de vie durant les nuits d'aquilon!

Mère! Ouïe les enfants du bassin que tu mates
Mine de dinars pour les jours de disette
Crains que le jaune du phosphate
Ne devienne rouge sur les asphaltes!

Mère! Bois ton café avant qu'il ne refroidisse
Avant que la rage de nos flammes ne t'envahisse!

Samia Lamine

Citizen's Prayer

Your whisper, each morning, on the breeze
Is a sweet song, a perfumed air from the seas
Of jasmine, mint and thyme,
A heady incense sacred and divine.

Your gaze caresses the palms with its dew
Straw-colored on your fields, a magic potion
In age-old orchards, of olive green hue
On orange flowers, a honey-white celebration

Mother! Your miners are covered with icy sweat,
A blessed shelter from the desert's heat
A sail navigating toward a prosperous future
A Lily-of-the-Valley living tribute to your nature.

Mother! Drink your coffee while it's hot
The oracle proclaims the new era sought
Breathe in the aroma of summer's rose
Life's elixir on nights when Aquilon blows.

Mother! Hear the mine's children you suppress
Mine of dinars for times of duress
Beware lest the yellow of phosphate
Become blood red on the asphalt.

Mother! Drink your coffee before it cools
Before our flames of rage burn out of control.

محمد بوعزيزي

مسافر يا أمي، سامحيني، ما يفيد ملام، ضايع في طريق ماهو بإيديا، سامحيني إن كان عصيت كلام لأمي، لومي على الزمان ما تلومي عليّ، رايح من غير رجوع يزي ما بكيت و ما سالت من عيني دموع، ما عاد يفيد ملام على زمان غدّار في بلاد الناس، أنا عييت و مشى من بالي كل اللي راح، مسافر و نسأل زعمة السفر باش ينسّي

Andrea Assaf

Traveling

"I'm traveling, Mom.
Don't blame me.
I'm lost on a road
I have not chosen.
Forgive me
if I ever disobeyed you.
Blame these days,
don't blame me.
I'm leaving . . .
no return.
I've had enough
crying . . .
no tears come . . .
my eyes . . .
Blame this age
of treachery
in this estranged land.
I'm tired . . .
putting everything behind.
I'm traveling.
I'm wondering
if the travel will help
me forget."

--Mohamed Bouazizi, 12 /17 /10

This is an English-language interpretation of Mohamed Bouazizi's suicide note to his mother, posted on his Facebook page. Tarek al-Tayyib Mohamed ibn Bouazizi, a 26-year-old Tunisian fruit vender who quit high school to work and support his mother and sisters, set himself on fire on December 17, 2010, after his wares had been repeatedly confiscated by the police. It was a fire that sparked the revolution now spreading through the Arab world. His last note was pure poetry, his final act of pure protest. I pulled from rough translations on the internet, and edited and reformatted to highlight the poetry of Bouazizi's message.

--Andrea Assaf

شكري بلعيد

لا تطردوني

لا تطردوني
أنا الوقت في وقتكم مذبحهْ
أنا وجع أو نشيد قديم
أنا لعنة قادمهْ
سوف أحمي تفاصيلكم
واحداً واحداً
من الريح والغثيان
ولكن إلى جهة هائمهْ
لا تطردوني
من وقتكم، من عمركم و من حلمكم
فلي في الخريف الأخير
صلاة أقول بها
موجة الرّوح ثمّ أرتّب بعض الكلام
الحرام
إذن لاحقوا قمري
واسجنوا صرختي
ثم هاتوا دليل النبوة في وحيكم
أنا واحد و نبيّ
على جثّتي مرّت
الأمم القديمة والمدام
أنا وجعٌ للمراثي
ولاامرأة ضيّعت حلميَ في الزحام
سأرسمها ثانية
نهدها وطن لحريقي
فمها بحر لغريقي
عينها قاتلهْ
آه! يا أمة حاقدة

Chokri Belaid

Do Not Shun Me

Do not shun me
I am time in the time of your massacre
I am agony or an ancient song
I am the curse foretold
I will protect you all
One by one
From wind and nauseating seas
But do not banish me to a trackless wilderness
Do not shun me
From your time, from your life and from your dream
Because in the final autumn I have
A prayer I say
To the upwelling of my soul putting together
Forbidden words
So, pursue my moon
And imprison my cries
Then bring proof of prophecy in your revelation
I am unique and a prophet
Over my corpse passed
Ancient nations and rivers of wine
I am the agony in elegies
And no woman misplaced my dream in the melee
I will draw her again
Her breast is a country for my fire
Her mouth is a sea for my drowning
Her eye is a killer
Hear me! Oh, resentful country

في الزنزانة: سجين و محقق و جلاد

الجلاد: منعنا عنه الكلام
والشراب والطعام
المحقق: ينام
ويغط
ابن الحرام؟!!
ايقظوه
واصعقوه.
الجلاد: ايقظناه
وصعقناه
المحقق: على شفتيه ابتسام
وفي جوفه كلام
ابن اللئام...
علقوه من معصميه
الجلاد: علقناه
المحقق: لكأن الوضع
له استقام
يتأرجح في استسلام
على شفتيه شبح ابتسام
علقوه من الأقدام
الجلاد: علقناه
المحقق: كشر عن الأنياب
مثل الذئاب
ابن الكلاب.
هات الكُلاب
لاجعلن الاعترافات
تسري من جوفه في انسياب
الجلاد: لقد لفظ الأنفاس
من الصعقة الاولى
ابن الناس
المحقق: عديم حس
وإحساس.

Meriam Bouzidi

In the Cell

The Executioner: We deprived him of speech
And of food and drink
The Investigator: He is asleep
Snoring
The bastard!!
Wake him up
Give him a jolt
The Executioner: We woke him up
We gave him a jolt
The Investigator: There's a smile on his lips
There's speech inside him
Son of ingrates . . .
Hang him up by his wrists
The Executioner: We hung him up
The Investigator: It's as if the situation
Suits him fine
Dangling freely there
With a ghost of a smile on his lips
Hang him up by his ankles
The Executioner: We hung him up
The Investigator: He is showing his teeth
Like a wolf
Son of a bitch
Hand me the pliers
I'll make the confessions flow freely from
inside him
The Executioner: He has expired
From the first jolt
The poor guy
The Investigator: Senseless
Devoid of feelings.

منصف الوهايبي

تمرين على كتابة يوم الجمعة 14 جانفي 2011

لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ هنا
هذه الجُمعة
رفيفُ العصافير في فجرِ تونس خضراء
أجراسُها القُزحية
أشجارها إذْ تُغنّي
لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ
رنينُ الهواتفِ في كُلِّ يدْ
ورنينُ المعاولِ في كلِّ يدْ

لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ هنا هذه الجُمُعَهْ
عويلُ النساءِ على جارنا وَهْوَ
في بيتِهِ يحْتَضِرْ
هذِهِ الجُمُعَهْ
ضحكات البناتِ الجَميلاتِ يهْرَعْنَ
تحتَ الرَّذاذِ إلى المدرسهْ

ليَكِفَّ المطرْ
هذه الجُمُعَهْ
وليُعَلِّقْ هنالك أجراسَ بلّورِهِ
في الهواءِ وفي الغَيْمِ وليَنْتَظِرْ

دقَّةَ السّاعةِ الخامِسهْ
ولَهُ بعْدَ ذلك أنْ ينهمرْ
وليُؤَجِّلْ إذنْ جارُنا مَوْتَهُ
قليلاً إلى الساعةِ الخامسهْ
لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ هنا
هذه الجُمُعَهْ
تِلْكمُ السّيِّدهْ

Moncef Ouhaibi

Writing Exercise – Friday, January 14, 2011

Let all things fall silent here
On this Friday:
The tweeting of birds at dawn in Tunisia the Green
Her rainbow-colored bells
Her trees singing.
Let all things fall silent
The ringing of phones in every hand
And the ringing of pickaxes in every hand

Let all things fall silent here, on this Friday:
The women's wailing about our neighbor
who lies dying at home
On this Friday
The laughter of young girls running to school
under misty rain

Let the rain stop falling
On this Friday
Let it hang its bells of crystal
In the air, in the cloud, let it wait

The five o'clock bell
Then, let it pour down
Let our neighbor delay his death a little
until five o'clock
Let all things fall silent here
On this Friday
That woman

إذْ تُنادِي على طِفْلِها مرَّةً
وعلى كَلْبِها مرَّةً
لِتَكُنْ مِثْلَهُ
وهْوَ ينصبُ أذنَيْهِ
مِنْ رِيبةٍ
ويَصرُّهما
هوَ يحدسُ ما ليسَ نحدسُ نحن الرعاةْ

لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ هنا
هذه الجُمُعَهْ
هسيسُ قوارير هِمْ
ورنينُ كؤوسِهم
في المزار
قلْ لهمْ: أيها العابرون رصيفَ النهارْ
إلى حانةٍ تفْتحُ الجُمُعهْ
قليلاً من الصمْتِ
- لا بأس -
وانتَظِروا دقَّةَ الساعةِ الخامسهْ

لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ هنا
هذه الجُمُعَهْ
أغاني الرُّعاهْ
أذانُ الصلاةْ
قلْ لهمْ: لا تُصلُّوا

Calling her son sometimes
Sometimes her dog
Let her be like the dog
His ears pricking up,
Alert,
Swiveling forward
Sensing things that we, the shepherds, never sense

Let all things fall silent here
On this Friday
The clinking of their glasses
The whispering of their bottles
In al-Mazar restaurant
Tell them, oh you, crossing the terrace of the day
Toward a bar open on Friday
A little silence
—All is well—
Wait now for the five o'clock bell

Let all things be silent
On this Friday
The shepherds' songs
The call to prayer
Tell them: do not pray

ولا تقرؤوا الفاتِحهْ
هذه الجُمُعَهْ
وقِفوا مثلما يقِفُ التونسيّونَ
والتونسيّاتُ
في هذه الجُمُعَهْ
رتّلوا: الحمْدُ للشَّعبِ سيِّدنا أجمعينْ

رتّلوا: الحمدُ للشَّمسِ وهْوَ يُكوِّرها في يَديْهِ
رتّلوا صامِتينْ
رتّلوا: الحمْدُ للأرضِ
وهْوَ يدورُ بها
ويُدوِّرُها في يَدَيْهْ

لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ هنا
هذه الجُمُعَهْ
التلاميذُ حتّى وهُمْ ينشِدون
إذا الشعبُ يوماً أراد الحياةْ
فلا بدَّ أنْ يستجيبَ القدرْ
قلْ لهمْ
لا تحيّوا العلمْ
هذه الجُمُعَهْ
ثمْ صوْتٌ يجيءْ
ثمْ صوْتٌ يُضيءْ
لِيعلِّمنا
ويُعلِّم فينا القلمْ

Do not recite the Fatiha
On this Friday
Stand up like all Tunisians, men
And women,
On this Friday
Chant: Praise to the people master of us all

Chant: Praise to the sun the people knead in their hands
Chant silently
Chant: Praise to the earth
That the people encircle
And turn it in their hands

Let all things fall silent here
On this Friday
The students even if they are singing:
"When one day the People want Life,
Tis the nature of Destiny to respond"
Tell them
Do not salute the flag
On this Friday
There is a voice that comes
A voice that illuminates
In order to teach us
And to teach the pen within us

قليلاً من الصمْتِ
أيتُها الريحُ
أيّتها النّوءُ

أيّتها الزوبعةْ
قليلاً من الصمْتِ
أيّتها العرباتُ القطاراتُ
إذْ تترحّلُ منذ الصباحْ
لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ
هنا و هناكْ
هذه الجُمُعَةْ
القوافلُ منْ إبلٍ وكلابْ
وهْيَ تقْطعُ صحراءَ دوز
القواربُ في المتوسِّطِ
غاديةٌ رائحةْ
وهْيَ تنشُرُ أشْرعةً وشباكْ
المناراتُ وهْيَ تُضيءُ لها
وسطَ جبْسِ الضبابْ

لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ هنا
هذه الجُمُعَةْ
قراصنةُ البحْرِ
خبطُ المجاذيفِ
في ماءِهِ
جَزْرُهُ عنْد خاصِرةِ الساحِلِ التُّونسيّ

A little silence!
You, Wind
You, Rain

You, Storm
A little silence
You, railroad cars
On the move since morning
Let all things fall silent
Here and There
This Friday:
The caravans of camels and dogs
Crossing the Sahara by Douz
The boats, coming and going
Across the Mediterranean
Hoisting sails and casting nets
The lighthouses that shine
Through the chalky white fog

Let all things fall silent here
This Friday
The pirates of the sea
The thumping of oars
In the water
The ebb-tide at the waist of the Tunisian coast

قليلاً من الصمْتِ
يا إخْوتي
يا رفاقي الذين أحبُّ
لِيصْمُتْ إذنْ كلُّ شيئٍ هنا
هذه الجُمُعَهْ
ألا تسْمعونْ؟

بلى فاسمعوا
دقّتِ الخامسهْ
فلنكنْ كلُّنا أذناً صاغيهْ
كلُّ شيءٍ هنا صامتٌ... فاسمعوا
الطاغيهْ ...هوَ ذا وقعُ أقدامِهِ
وهْوَ يرحلُ... أوْ وهْوَ يهْرُبْ
أوْ وهْوَ يمضي إلى حيثُ يمضي
سريعاً ... بطيئاً ... سريعاً
بطيئاً ... بطيئاً
ليرقُدَ في جثةٍ خاويهْ

A little silence
My brothers
My beloved comrades
Let all things fall silent here
This Friday
Don't you hear?

But listen well
The five o'clock bell is ringing
Let us be all ears
Everything here is silent . . . Listen!
The Tyrant . . . the sound of his boots
Fleeing . . . leaving . . . or fleeing
Or going wherever
Quickly . . . slowly . . . quickly
Slowly . . . slowly
Let him sleep, a hollow corpse

أحمد بن خليفة

قبل اليوم

قبل اليوم كنا اذا أشرقت العيون ترى رسوم الظلوم تعلو الجدر
و قبل اليوم سمعنا نشيد الوطن
ارداه صوت النفاق و من ذا غدر
كنا اذا مررنا جوار الجنود نحني الجبين والقلب يبكي العمر
اخرج من بيتك والتفت وراءك
فالرقيب بالعين عن كل حر سهر
وكل جار يكتب بالغدر تقرير جاره
فما تدري نفس بأي سجن تمر
مر على المقاهي ملءا بأهلها
ثلاث وعشرين عام على نفس الكراسي تصر
أرقب الصبية على الباب تبكي
و ما من مجيب
يوم علم حرمت اذ بالحجاب تبر
ليس الذنب قلما بالبيت ينسى
بل الباب لغير الساترات ممر
عن اليمين جلست في الستين يدها
على خدها تشكو الانتظار لمن عبر
لي خمس و السادس مفقود يتيم
وعاطل تخرج وطالبان
و زواج الاخيرة منه لا مفر
كل ذاك و عتبات البيت تشهد
ثمانون دينارا منذ اعوام بالذل هنا تنتظر
لكن ابتسامتها على المحيى رثاء
لمن جاوز عجزها فقرا و دينا أمر
قبل اليوم يطلبك الموظف كرها
ألفا من الاوراق او حتى حجرا من القمر
او علّه يمد العين قبل اليد
و اللسان بكل الوقاحة خمسون دينارا

Ahmed Ben Khalifa

Before Today

Before today, eyes saw portraits of the tyrant on walls
Before today, we heard the national anthem
Sung by hypocrites and traitors
Heavy-hearted we bowed our heads passing by soldiers
Upon leaving your house, look back
Because spies are watching free men
Neighbor reporting on neighbor
Until not one soul knows what jail it is living in
Walk by all the coffee shops, full of patrons
Twenty-three years, sitting on the same chairs, chattering
Watch the youth, at the doors, their cries
Unheard, expelled from school
Denied learning because of a scarf
Their sin is not a forgotten pencil
The doors are open only for uncovered heads
To the right, a woman of sixty, her hand
On her cheek, laments her unvarying luck
To passersby I have five, the sixth is missing, orphan,
Jobless graduate; two in school,
The youngest girl to be married
All that, and the doorsill of my home is my witness
For years, eighty dinars was all that awaited us in shame,
But her smile is a eulogy for those who
Walk by recommending reliance on God
Before today, the clerk asked you, blatantly, for
A thousand documents, and a moon rock
Or, perhaps, he extended a look before a hand, and
The tongue, without shame, asked for fifty [dinars]

لأسهّل لك ما عسر
فتبا للمرتشين وتبا
للعابثين و تبا لكل خنوع
ما ضاق ذرعا وما انفجر
فاسد هنا امام الباب و سارق هناك على الكرسي
مرتش وراء المكتب والكل سواء
نفاقا صفقوا لصورة الرئيس
فوق رؤوسهم
اذ عن فسادهم غضوا النظر
و يا شريف القوم ما لك تجزع
فالزنزانة بيت من بكل الفاسدين كفر
قبل اليوم يولد الرضيع فيهم
غنيا مالكا للبيوت والقصور له مقر
و الرضيع منا ما حق له الحليب
فلأبنائهم كل الحلوى و لابنائنا رؤوس الجزر
قبل اليوم حكم القضاة مسجون
والاحرار فيهم نبذوا كما جربى البقر
كل الفساد ذاك و الرئيس ما خبروه
مسكين بل غالطوه كذا أمر
في خطاب الظلم قالها بالحزم كل الحزم
أن الحر في تونس شر
و ان العجوز يبكي شر
و ان الصغير حجارة يرمي شر
و ان الكاتب اذا عبر شر
وان الفقير يلعن فقره شر
حتى الغني ما رضى قسمة جهده مع الطغاة شر
بل كل الشعب كل الشعب على الشعب خطر
اما اهله و زوج الفساد ليلى هم الحماة
هم الحماة هم الخير هم المطر

So I make all difficulties go away
Curse the bribe takers, curse the
Abusers, curse all the boot-lickers who
Are not fed up, witless
A corrupt one here at the door, a thief there on the chair
A bribe-takers behind the desk, all the same
Clapping in hypocrisy at the President's
Picture above their heads, as long as
Their sins of corruption are ignored
People of honor, do not fear, the jail cells
Are the home of those who say no
Before today, their newborn came into the world
Rich, owning houses, castles are his abode
No milk for ours
All the sweet things for theirs, carrot butts for ours
Before today, judges were made captive, those free,
Like scabrous cows, shunned
All that misery, but the "President," poor innocent,
Uninformed, wool over the eyes the claim was
Forceful speech, full of arrogance
The free in Tunisia are evil
The old who cry are evil
The young rock-throwers are evil
The daring writers are evil
The luck-cursing poor are evil
The rich, too, not sharing with sharks, are evil
Worse yet, the people, all, are a danger to themselves
But his own, the avaricious Leila, spouse of corruption,
Are the defenders, the defenders, the good, the rain

كما ناشدوك و لم يستحوا شعبهم نفاقا
و تخوينا للاجئين
و من بقوة الجند هجر
يا بلدي لك الدعاء من كل العباد ليلة الخميس
دعاء الصابرين هز الحجر
دعوة الحق نساها كل جبار بيد الملاك
يحملها وقت السحر
ما ردها الله و ان بعد حين
أجابها للشعب يوم استجاب القدر
كذا الشعر في وطني دعاء الساجدين
تونس ليلك ينجلي
و قيدك ينكسر
هبوا رجالا نساء بوجه الرصاص ألفا بعد ألف
تجمعوا مد البصر
حبسوا أنفاس القوم أمام الشاشات كل العيون ترقب
متى الجبار يندحر
هرب الظلوم
و من كل صوب ترى طفلا أمام شرطي عجوزا وراء جندي قنّاص على السطح يرقب ثم يقتل و صوت عقر
ارحل عن و جودنا ارحل عن بلدنا
مللناك رئيسا بل
كنت سارقا مللنا ذا الوجه العكر
هرب الظلوم يا شعبي و ما هرب
فالله ما أهمل دعوة مظلوم بكى تحت الشجر
لعمري ما أهداك هروبا بل ذاك طريق وعر
من قرطاج تسلكها الى الحرمين مأواها
و الكل يدعو عليك متى مأواك سقر
الى العجوز على عتبات البيت
الى المسجون الى المعذب

Those pledging undying support, no shame, hypocrites
While accusing the refugees,
Those forcibly exiled
O my country! Prayers are to You on a Thursday night
A prayer from the people patiently laboring
The call for justice, carried by angels
At dawn, is ignored by tyrants,
But not by God, in time it
Will be answered by the people and their destiny
This is what poetry says
Tunisian prayers say "darkness will end
And chains will break"
Men, women, all, in the thousands, facing bullets,
As far as the eye can see
Others holding their breath, all eyes watching, waiting
For the tyrant's fall
The tyrant fled
Everywhere, a child faces a cop, the old help a soldier,
A sniper on the roof, aims, kills, voices shrieking
Get out of our existence, out of our country
Fed up, fed up with you as president
No, a thief. Banish the evil face
O my people! The tyrant is gone, but no escape
God hears the oppressed crying under trees
No, He did not grant you flight, your road will be harsh
From Carthage, fleeing to Mecca
But we are hoping you land in Hell
The old sitting on doorsteps
The prisoner, the torture victim, all the victims

الى من به الظلوم مكر
الى الباكيات يوم الدراسة منعا بالحجاب تأملوا
الى العاطلين عن المقاهي سنين العمر
هرب الظلوم كما السابقين
لكن عبرة للحاكمين فهل من معتبر
أن الشعب سيدكم وانتم عبيد
و من جالد الناس كمن يسقي الشجر
يسقيها ظلما فتعلو شدادا
فلا يقوى الصعود ظلوم اذا الغصن كبر
الى الداعين في اليوم خمسا بلادي عبر
من كان منكم للهاربين عبدا
فالهاربون هنا ماضي الخبر
و من كان لله عبدا و للشعب جندا
فذا يوم العز قد حظر
فشمّر عن الاذرع الصادقات
كبّر بها أن صعّد حديدا و مدّ الحجر
قد ولى عهد الجالسين
و الحرية تونسية كما قالها كل البشر
كان التاريخ يكتب عمرنا ذلا
و اليوم نكتب التاريخ فوق السطر
أنا لا نرضى بغير العز خبزا
ومن خالف العز منا فذاك مكر
ومكر الغبي كمن يرتجي حياة على الارض حين قبر
عاشت تونس حرة عاش الشعب سيدا
اليوم تبدأ هنا الحكاية
نرويها للصغير عند الكبر

Of the tyrant's oppression
From schoolgirls, banned for a scarf, weeping, confused
To the jobless rotting for years, in coffee shops
The tyrant has fled, as tyrants do
A lesson, will the rulers learn?
The people are your masters, you the servants
Oppress the people, you water plants
Pour injustice on them and they grow stronger limbs,
You can't climb.
To those who pray five times, my country is a lesson
Those servile to the tyrant in flight, should know
Tyrants are gone, history
Those who served God, soldiered for the people,
The day of dignity has arrived
Roll up the sleeves of those honest arms
Pray, build with rock and steel
The time of laziness is gone, Humanity is witnessing,
Liberty is Tunisian
Before today, history engraved our humiliation
Today we write our own history
Nothing but dignity as our bread
Dignity is not for deceivers
Hoping for life on this earth, after the grave
Tunisia lives, the People are free
Today the story begins
When we are old, we'll tell it to the young

Abderrazak Ben Hamida

Aurore étoilée

Revoici le temps des fleurs
Bien-aimée
La sève de ta jeunesse
Arrose l'aurore étoilée

Printemps précoce cet hiver
Les hirondelles par milliers
Nichées sur l'horloge du 14 janvier
Chantent l'hymne de la liberté

Sur la Promenade des tunisiens
Les fleuristes médusés
Tressent le jasmin de février
Blancheur tatouée de rouge sanguin

Joyeuse Saint-Valentin
Ma terre

14 février 2011

Abderrezek Ben Hamida

Dawn-Sky

Again flowered fields
My love
The dawn stars
Are given the sap of your youth

Early spring this winter
Thousands of swallows
Nested on the January 14 clock
Singing the chant of freedom

On the Tunisian Promenade
The spellbound florists
Stitch February jasmine
White tattooed with blood red

Happy Valentine
My earth

February 14, 2011

Translated by Joseph Ohmann Krause

Amina Azouz

Il Lamento du Bardo

Un coeur en ruine
Un pays en ruine
Les barbares de l'intime
Bougent de toute part

Que reste-t-il à détruire ?

Recroquevillés, aveugles
Adossés aux mythes
Attendant notre balle

Attachés au mât avec Ulysse
Sourdes, apprenant le sens de la douleur
Les sirènes se nourrissant de nos orbites
Pour chanter la musique des rafales

Attachés au mât d'un radeau qui coule
Dans nos cœurs dépecés
Chaque jour, à l'infini

Nous sommes Prométhée
Sans savoir divin
Sans faute et sans destin

Adossés aux mythes
Car ce ne sont que des mythes
Adossés à l'erreur séculaire qu'il nous faut expier

Nous avons perdu le texte de cette tragédie
Et adoré son palimpseste

L'horreur est créative
Elle tisse des chemins fabuleux
Dans les plis des âmes
sans âmes et sans histoire

Amina Azouz

Il Lamento of the Bardo Museum

A heart in ruins
In ruins the land
The barbarians in our bosom
Everywhere on the move

What is left to destroy?

Cowering, blind
Leaning on myths
Awaiting our bullet

Tied to the mast with Ulysses
Deaf muses, sounding the depths of pain
The Sirens feed on our sunken eyes
To blast us with their stormy song

Tied to the mast of a raft engulfed
In our flayed hearts
Each day, an eternity

We are Prometheus
Lacking divine wisdom
Without error or destiny

Leaning on myths
For they are but myths
Backed by old sins we must atone

We lost the script of this tragedy
And worshipped its palimpsest

Creative horror
Weaves fabulous pathways
In the depths of souls
Without soul or history

Le désert est là
Ourlé dans les mots
D'un dieu qui ne veut pas mourir
Et qui continue à tuer
à la tête de son armée de désert

Le désert grossit comme une rumeur
D'engloutissement
Adossés au mât avec Ulysse
Sourds, apprenant la maïeutique du sable
qui a absorbé notre sang
Pétrifié nos corps
Figé nos orbites dans le cri
De la méduse

Des statues dans lesquelles
Bat un cœur en silence
Et qui pourtant espère
Pour des siècles et des siècles
En attendant la destruction
Du cœur en ruine
Du pays en ruine

Mais qu'y-a-t-il à détruire ?

Tunis le 18 Mars 2015

The desert is there
Hemmed into the words
Of a god who refuses to die
And continues to kill
At the head of his desert legions

The desert swells with the roar
Of foundering
Leaning against the mast with Ulysses
Deaf, learning the maieutics of the sand
Which has soaked up our blood
Petrified our bodies
Frozen our sunken eyes at the cry
Of the Medusa

Statues within which
A heart beats silently
Hoping nevertheless
For centuries upon centuries
Awaiting the destruction
Of the heart in ruins
Of the land in ruins

But what is there to destroy?

Tunis, March 18, 2015

مليكة العمراني

شرّدني الطّين ذات تفّاحة

من هنا تبدأ
من ليل الهزيمة يسري في دواخلنا
من لون الورد بالجرح
كيف أكتب و الحنظل يسري كالرعد
بصوتي

كنت أصحو على مطر ينزف في
الوريد و يقتلني
كان طعم الصبار يسكن لغتي
و كنت اللغة المنسية من زمن
الطوفان
ربّي ألهمني الصبر إذا ما غزا الشيب
مفرقي
وشارفت على تلّة الأربعين
وأهلي جمّعوا أحزانهم في جرار
التّمر ورحلوا

كنت أعزف لحنا بدويّا يسّاقط من
صدر إمرأة
ضيّعت على حافة العمر موّالها
أنا يا آدم شرّدني الطّين ذات تفاحة
وكان دمي يتوزّع بين القبائل نائحا
أنا يا آدم ضيّعت ذاكرتي في عمق
الصحراء
و وحدي على حافة الموت أجمّع
ما ضاع منّي و ما انكسر
وحدي أعبر حاجز الخوف و الموت

كي أؤسس مملكتي
سأمحو إذن ذاكرة النّسيان و أصنع
أسطورتي

Malika Omrani

Clay Caused My Fall at the Time of the Apple

We start from here
from the night of defeat spreading inside us
from the rose-colored wound
How can I write when bitter colocynth flows like thunder
in my voice

I used to wake up to the sound of rain hemorrhaging
at the jugular, killing me
The taste of hardy aloe lives in my language
and I was the forgotten language from the time
of the flood
God led me to patience as my hair turned gray
as I crested the hill of forty
My family gathered their sorrows
in date amphorae
and moved on

I was playing a Bedouin tune falling
from the throat of a woman
who lost her melody at the edge of life
O Adam! Clay caused my fall at the time of the apple
and my blood, weeping, was spread among the tribes
O Adam! I lost my memory in the depths
of the desert
Alone at the edge of death, I gather
what was lost and what was broken in me
Alone I cross the barrier of fear and death

In order to found my kingdom
I will erase the memory of forgetfulness and I will build
myths

حسن دولة

نبوءة عاشق

إذا متّ عشقــا فــلا تــدفنــوني
وصلّوا عليّـا صـلاة الغـرام
وقــولوا جميـعــا بأنــّي رســول
إلى كلّ صبّ بأرض السلام
ونـادوا المحبّين كي يأخذوا مــن
دمائي قليلا وبعض العظام
وهاتوا الجميلات يرقصن حولي
بكل اقتدار... فيحيا حطامي
أنـــا للمــحــبيـــن أغــنــيـة
بها سوف ينسون كل الـملام
ويحيــون في لحظــة من ضيـاء
ويحيون في ساعة من هيام
وقـولـوا لـمـن بالهــوى اكــتووا
تعالوا جميعا وزوروا مقامي
فـــفـــي لـفتــة من رفــاتي لـكــم
ســـلام عـظـــيم وأي سلام
وفـــي هـوسة من هدوئي يكون
لــكم كــل خير بطعم الوئـام
أنــا عاشق من زمــان الـبدايــا
ت قد عشت حبي بغيرانثلام
وآمــنت أنـــي بـقـلبـــي الـمحـب
سأحيـــا طويـلا بكـل احترام
وآمــنـت أن الأمـــانـــي ســراب
ستمضي سريعا كبعض الغمام
وآمـــنت أنــي إذا مـت عــشقـا
طفـا فوق قبري هديل الحمام
وصـلّـت علـيّ نجــوم السمــاء
وغنّت ورائي طـيور اليمـام
محـب أنــا رغم زيف الوجـود

Hassan Daoula

Lover's Prophecy

Should I die of love, do not bury me
Rather pray for me the Prayer of Love
And say, all of you, that I am a prophet
For all lovers in the Land of Peace
Tell the lovers to take
My blood and my bones
Bring beautiful women to dance around me
Entrancingly . . . so my remains come alive
I am the Song of Lovers
With it, lovers will forget blame
And live in a moment of light
And live in a moment of passion
Tell those who were stung by love:
Come, all of you, visit my shrine
Because you'll feel a great peace
In the company of my remains
In the whisper of my tranquility
You'll feel the beauty of harmony
I am a lover from the beginning of time
I am unrelenting love
I believed with my loving heart
I would live long, in dignity,
I believed that yearning was a mirage
That would vanish like clouds
And I believed that if I died of longing
The song of doves would ring my tomb
And the stars in the sky would pray for me
And turtledoves would sing behind me
I am a lover in spite of the dishonesty of existence

ولي في الهوى رؤية من منامي
بـأن الهــوى رحـلة من عـذاب
عـذاب جميــل كهمس الكلام
وأؤمـن أن الهــوى أغــنيـــات
تغنى بها القــلب مثل الحمام
وألقـــي جميـع السخافات خلفي
ولا ارتضـي غير حبي مرامي
أنــا يــا رفـاقي لكــم قــد أتيـت
بدستـور عشــق عليّ المقام
أنـــا مـن إلـــه السمـــا جئتـــكم
لأمحو من الأرض كل الظلام
نبـــيّ المـحبـــين قــد جئـــتكم
كتـــابـــي فؤاد صـــفيّ الـــغرام

I have an image of my love in my dreams
That love is a tortured quest,
Sweet torture like whispered words
I believe that love is a song
Hummed by the heart
And I leave absurdity in my wake
And I set my sights on my love
My comrades! I swear I
Brought you the Charter of Love
I came to you from the God of the Universe
To erase all darkness from Earth
A Prophet of Love, I came to you
My heart is a book of pure love.

Najet Adouani, born in Gabès in 1956, worked as a journalist for opposition newspapers. Before the January 14, 2011 Revolution, she suffered censorship and blacklisting; after the revolution she and her family were harassed with death threats. She went into exile in Germany in 2012 and is a writer-in-exile for German-PEN. She is the author of six Arabic poetry books and a collection of short stories. In 2010, she won the Feminine Poetry Prize.

Andrea Assaf is a writer, performer, director & cultural organizer. Founding Artistic Director of Art2Action Inc., former Artistic Director of New WORLD Theater (2004-09), and Program Associate for Animating Democracy (2001-04). Recent awards include: FY11 NPN Creation Fund Commission, 2010 Princess Grace Award in Theater, 2007 Hedgebrook residency, 2004 Cultural Contact grant. She has authored a number of full-length theater works as well as publishing poetry.

Jamel Al-Sli'i, born in 1955 in the Saharan town of Douz in Southern Tunisia. He wrote a lot more than the four collections he published, and he is famous for his forceful delivery with a strong articulate voice. His poetry is appreciated by readers and viewers around the Arab world.

Amina Azouz, born in Tunis in 1983, is the author of two collections of poetry, *Rancoeur d'automne* (2002) and *Le Radeau de la colère* (Berg, 2014). Her poetry has also appeared in the *Bulletin of the Association Internationale de Critique Littéraire*. With a doctorate from the Sorbonne –Paris IV, she currently teaches French and Comparative Literature at the University of Kef, Tunisia. She has also been artistic director for several festivals, such as the "Doc in Tunis" about documentary films. As a playwright, she collaborated in the creation of *Bourguiba, la dernière prison*.

Tahar Bekri, born in Gabès in 1951, is the author of numerous books of poetry and essays written in both Arabic and French. Bekri lived in political exile in France following his arrests in Tunisia during his student years for activism in the struggle for a more just and democratic governance (1976-1989). A specialist of Maghrebi literature, he teaches at University of Paris X-Nanterre. A complete list of his works can be found at http://tahar.bekri.free.fr/

Chokri Belaid (1964 - 2013) was a lawyer and leftist opposition politician. He was assassinated outside his Tunis home in February 2013. His death sparked a political crisis in Tunisia, causing large protests and leading to the reshuffling of the government. Belaid was born in Djebel Jelloud, a poor neighborhood in the south of Tunis. He studied law in Iraq and in France.

After the 2011 revolution, he was elected as secretary-general and official spokesman of the National Democratic Movement (Watad), a newly formed party. He was a vocal critic of the ruling Islamist Ennahdha party.

Abderrazak Ben Hamida, born in Gabès, Tunisia. Ben Hamida writes poetry in Arabic and French. He teaches English at UAE University.

Ahmed Ben Khalifa, is a graduate of the Tunisian Ecole Normale Supérieure, and trained as a conflict resolution professional. He resides near Dresden and works on refugees' resettlement in Germany. Ben Khalifa publishes his poetry mostly online in audio performance.

Samia Ammar Bouattour, born in Sfax in 1950, writes essays and poetry. Since her first book in 1997, she has published several more collections. She is a long-term member of the Tunisian Writers Union.

Mohamed Bouazizi (1984 – 2011) was born in Sidi Bouzid. His death by self-immolation set off the series of events that led to the January 14, 2011 Revolution. See Andrea Assaf's poem, "Traveling," included in this volume, based on his last Facebook post.

Meriam Bouzidi, a Radio and TV journalist, has published, in addition to her collection of poetry, several essays on politics and society in the Arab region. She lived in exile during Ben Ali's dictatorship in Tunisia.

Abou el Kacem Chebbi (1909 – 1934), born in Tozeur, was the son of a judge and obtained his law diploma from Zitouna University in 1930. He is Tunisia's national poet. The opening lines of his poem, "Will to Life" were widely chanted during the January 14, 2011 Revolution and spread across the uprisings of the Arab Spring capturing the widely shared aspiration for freedom.

Hassan Daoula, born in Gafsa in 1972, is a poet, theater director, and member of the Tunisian Writers' Union. He has published several collections of poetry.

Adam Fethi, [real name Fet'hi al-Qassimi] born in 1957 in Kebili, southern Tunisia, taught Arabic in High School in Tunis until he was removed during the last years of Bourguiba and forced to resign during the early years of Ben Ali. A poet and translator he has published a dozen books including several poetry collections. He is known for the engaged song lyrics he wrote in 1980s for the musical group *Gabes Group for Musical Research* and in the 1990s, for lyrics written for the late Sheikh Imam of Egypt and for the Tunisian artist Lotfi Bouchnaq.

Salah Garmadi (1933-1982), born in Tunis, attended Sadiki College and then studied Arabic and English in Paris. A specialist in comparative linguistics, he published in both Arabic and French and was a founding member of the Centre d'études, de recherche et d'éducation socialiste (CERES) as well as co-founder of the journal *Attajdid*. He also translated Maghrebi literary works from French into Arabic. His poem "Nos ancêtres, les Bedouins" serves as a corrective to the colonial French curriculum teaching Tunisians about their "ancestors, the Gauls."

Moncef Ghachem, born in 1947 in Mahdia, son of a fisherman, draws his themes of political resistance and poetic resilience from the Mediterranean world of his childhood. Author of numerous collections of poetry and fiction, he was awarded the Albert Camus prize in 1994 for his collection *L'Épervier, nouvelles de Mahdia* and in 2006 was recognized by the Léopold Sédar Senghor award receiving special mention for the entirety of his literary work.

Souâd Guellouz was born in 1937 in the coastal city of Metline in northern Tunisia. In addition to the recent poetry collection *Comme un arc en ciel*, she is the author of several novels including *La Vie simple* (1958/ published in 1975), *Les jardins du nord* (1982) winner of the France-Mediterranée prize, and *Myriam ou le rendez-vous de Beyrouth*, winner of the Comar d'Or and the Zoubeida B'chir prizes. In 2000, Guellouz was recognized by the Les femmes qui ont marqué le siècle [Women who had a major impact on the century] for her novels in French.

Khaled Haddaji, born in 1978 in Kairouan, is a cultural programming professional and writer, and a member of the new wave of poets. He published many poems and essays in the Tunisian media. Haddaji received several literary prizes, including Beit Al-Hikma Prize.

Karim Hamdy, born in Gabès, Tunisia, is a former director of the American Overseas Research Center in Tunis (CEMAT) and current instructor at Oregon State University. He was trained as a civil and environmental engineer and as a linguist. His research interests are in Cross-Cultural Communication, in North African Cultures and Politics, in Environment & Development, as well as in Arab and Muslim minority issues in the US. He translates literature from Arabic and French into English.

Kaouther Khalil, a poet and literary critic, teaches Arabic language and literature at the university in Le Kef, Northwest Tunisia. She has published three collections of poetry.

Mohieddine Khraïef (1932-2011), born in Nefta, was a graduate of Zitouna University and worked as both a teacher and literary expert at the Tunisian Ministry of Culture. He produced literary, cultural and religious programing for radio, was known for his Sufi influenced mystical poetry, and was recognized by numerous awards for his contributions.

Samia Lamine, professor of French in Sousse, is an active, politically-independent blogger whose poetry collection, *Dabka jusqu'à l'aube*, (Arabesque 2013), is centered on the Tunisian Revolution, as it developed before and after Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation on December 17, 2011. It records the emotional pulse of the times as events unfolded.

Amel Moussa, born in Tripoli in 1971, moved to Tunis as a child. Her book of poetry, *Untha al-Ma'* (Female of Water), 1996, was prefaced by Mahmoud Messadi, and in 1998, she published *Khajal al-Ya'kout* (The Emerald's Bashfulness). Her work has been translated in English, French, Italian, Czech and Turkish. She was awarded the Lerici Pea Italian poetry prize in 2014. She teaches media studies and has won awards for her cultural journalism.

Fethi Nasri, is a poet and literary critic. He teaches Arabic literature at the University of Tunis. He published several poetry collections and works of literary criticism.

Malika Omrani, born in 1975 in Tunis, studied Arabic Language & Literature at University of Tunis-Manouba. Her recent collection is *Al-Asmā'* (The Names). She also wrote short stories and newspaper essays, and literary criticism. She publishes in Tunisian and Arab media since the mid-1990s. Active in Tunisian literary clubs, such as Club Tahar Haddad. She received several awards in youth literature category.

Khaled Oueghlani, university professor and Director of the National Translation Center, has published numerous books of essays and poetry. He writes poetry both in Fusha (MSA) and in dialect. Oueghlani has received a number of literary awards at the national and international levels. He has also produced literary art shows of the Carthage festival and published books of children literature.

Moncef Ouhaibi, born 1949 in Hajeb el Ayoun / Kairouan, is Professor of Arabic language and literature at the University of Kairouan and the University of Sousse. He has published seven books of poetry in Arabic, winning the Abou el-Kacem Chebbi award in 1999 for his collection, *Mitavizika wardat al Raml* (Metaphysics of the Sand Rose). His first novel, *Adam's Mistress*, written in Arabic, was awarded the Tunisian prize, Comar

d'or. His writing includes scenarios for short documentaries and works of fiction, and in 2011 he became interim director of Radio Monastir. His activism with the political party La Voie démocratique et sociale or Al Massar has resulted in death threats.

Mohamed al-Sghaier Ouled Ahmed, born in Sidi Bouzid in 1955. An inveterate critic of both the dictatorial regime of Ben Ali and of the post-revolutionary Islamist party, he refused a national award recognizing his work in 1992. His poetry gives voice to the dissident spirit of disenchantment, revolt and freedom of his generation. His long mission to found a national House of Poetry came to fruition in 1993.

Cécile Oumhani, born in Belgium in 1952, is a poet and novelist who came to Tunisia as an adult and is widely published by presses there. She has authored numerous poetry collections, most recently *La nudité des pierres* (Alain Gorius/Al Manar en 2013), *Passeurs de rives* (éditions La Tête à l'Envers en 2015), *Marcher loin sous les nuages* (éditions APIC à Alger en 2015). She has published several novels including *Le café d'Yllka* (European literary prize, the ADELF 2009) et *L'atelier des Strésor* (Special Mention by the Franco-Indian prize, Gitanjali 2012) from the Tunisian publisher, Elyzad. Tunisie, *Carnets d'incertitude*, prose poems linked to the Tunisian Revolution, came out in 2013. Oumhani is a member of the editorial board for *Siècle 21* and contributes to other journals such as *Europe, Thauma*.

Sofiène Rejeb, born in 1979, is the author of several collections of poetry as well as a co-authored book on the democratic transition in Tunisia (2012).

Laura Rice is professor emerita of comparative literature at Oregon State University. Her publications focusing on North Africa include work on gender, literacy, postcolonial literature. She has authored *Of Irony and Empire: Islam, the West, and the Transcultural Invention of Africa* (2007) and co-translated (with Karim Hamdy) *Century of Locusts* and *My Men* by Malika Mokeddem, and *Departures: Selected Writings of Isabelle Eberhardt*, followed by critical essays.

Noureddine Sammoud, born in Kelibia in 1932, is the author of numerous poetry collections and other literary works, such as children's literature and songs. His Complete Poetic Works were published in 2006. Sammoud has received the highest literary prizes in Tunisia. Writing in Arabic, he has experimented widely with form over 40 years.

Mnaouar Smadah (1931-1998). Writer, journalist, musician and composer, Smadah, in his poetry of the 1950s, called for armed resistance against

French occupation of Tunisia, and for freedom for all colonized countries. He participated in the 5th Arab Writers conference in Baghdad where he spoke on the intellectual invasion from which Arab writers suffered. Smadah became a bitter critic of the social and political crises Tunisia was undergoing in 1967, a perspective for which he was frequently called to order. Smadah was briefly institutionalized for psychiatric stress in 1969, when he wrote the poem "Words." Smadah was recognized formally and awarded the national prize for arts and letters following the 1987 coup. An annotated version of his Complete Poems provided by his brother, Abderrahim Samdah, was jointly edited by the Maison Tunisianne de l'edition and Beit al-Hikma in 1995.

Bechir Trabelsi, born in Tunisia, teaches French as a foreign language at the Bourguiba School (IBLV). He writes poetry and essays.

Mahmoud Triki, born in Sousse, Tunisia, is a retired government administrator and poet and educator. He published several collections of Arabic poetry. One collection of his poems has been translated into French by the literary critic Hedi Khélil

Mustapha Yahia, born in Gabès, Tunisia, is a writer and poet. He is a veteran of the 'evacuation war' against the French in Bizerta, Tunisia (1961-62), and former immigrant worker in France. He writes and recites poetry in French and Arabic.

Mohamed Ali Yousfi, born in 1950 in Beja, is the author of several poetry collections and a number of novels. He has translated, into Arabic, more than 25 literary works by well-known writers such as Paz, Garcia Marquez, Asturias and Carpentier, and critical essays by Horkheimer, Lukacs, Bataille and Cioran, and film scenarios. He is also well-known as a songwriter for Arab artists. After a twenty-year exile, he has returned to Tunisia.

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