

Journal Entry No. 53

When left in the cup,
 Turkish coffee grounds
 dry like soil:
 zig-zag of desert
 indicates stress within,
 marks worry.

Five bodies hang
 from a crane. They turn
 in the breeze like chimes
 on a front porch. Heads
 elsewhere.

Recite words
 you do not understand.
 The same song wakes you

daily. Ministry raids come
 on Wednesdays. They know
 more than what's said.

Sand overwhelms the city
 like sea waves, smudging
 sky with wet towels,
 orange-soaked and heavy.

Do not mention
 _____ or
 _____.

A fifteen-year-old writes
 a sonnet for the king.
 She counts syllables,
 decides on half-rhymes.

On the beach, two crabs
 dig and carry, attempt

shelter. When the tide rolls
inland, proof
is washed away.

Greet the angel on your right.
Peace to the angel on your left.
All deeds are recorded,
noble and unjust alike.

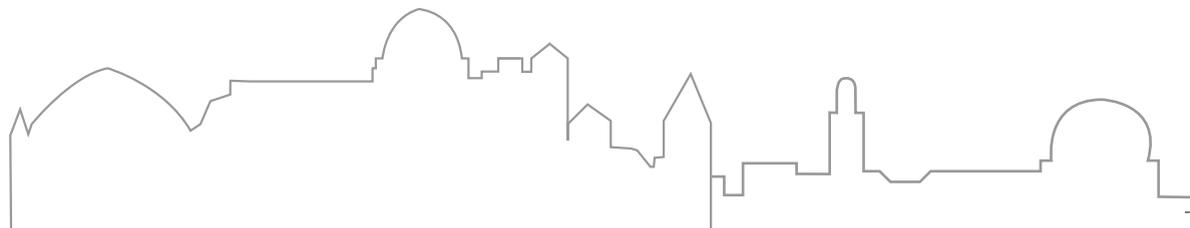
T-shirts and bed sheets
hung on the line
smell of heat and sun.
Nine women meet under

the hush of Saturday mornings.
They are writers. One dances
a poem: music seen
but not heard. The road

to the Old City market
runs along Execution Square,
today without charge and hollow.

Check the locks three
times each night. Balance
a bottle on the door knob.

Coffee—it too
burns the tongue.



Theme

after Charles Wright

Orange is for debate: the energy
of earth, argument of desert.
The prickly pear, their orange,

determination of prisoners,
sunlight against stone. The orange
of hunger, of fragrance, orange

of high risk. That orange, the orange
of marches, enduring orange
of desire. The borrowed tongues,

sweet potato orange, the night orange
of eruption. The vitamin orange,
and the orange rally against removal.

The orange of fresh juice, compliment
to cobalt, orange of visible spectrum.
The orange of street lamps, the blood,

the bloom. The orange of ire, orange
of exhaustion, the orange beneath
burning. Cautionary orange, its tender

existence between red and yellow:
a hint of orange humanity—the bitter,
the sweet, the hurt.



It Is September and You Have Run Out of Water

No rain since winter. The well
has run dry.

Kneel down on the tiles. Reach forward
to dip from the small bucket, deep
enough to lay your palms flat.

Rest your fingers inside
water warm from today's sun,
and see your foreign hands

stretch, wet the cloth, rub
across your body, wipe away
the day's dust and sweat.

Scrub in silence, duck behind
the curtain. Scrub. Rinse.
Some water remains.

You will need it later.

The Voice of Peace

We are lost, somewhere between
the exit for Highway 1 and who knows where.

We have entered again the territories,
far north in an unfamiliar area. Lost,

but—all roads must lead to Jerusalem.
From there, we can disappear.

A lone signal breaks the radio and song, but
instead of the Emergency Broadcast System, we hear

*This is the Voice of Peace, transmitting from somewhere
in the Mediterranean. It is my hope that you, wherever you are
right now, will take a moment, a moment to pray
for all who have perished in this region.*

We are on the wrong road at the wrong hour,
and the checkpoint that we must cross is

the wrong one.

Between settlement and settlement,
we are commanded to pull over, to move

from the lane of passage to that of interrogation.
Now come the soldiers, the dogs, the guns.

We hide everything of home, slipping
all proof between the Bible's leaves.

*This is the Voice of Peace. Get out of your vehicle.
Why are you here? With whom do you live?*



Refugee Camp

Cinder clouds billow
street-side. UN trash bins
offer up sun-soaked meat,

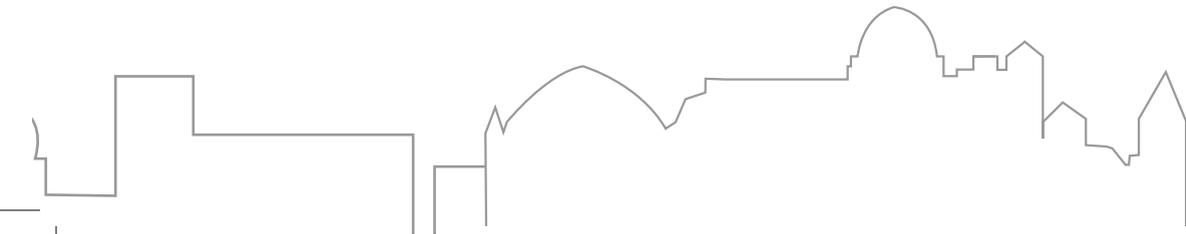
tissue, tomatoes. Rubbish
covers the scatter of rocks.
Frescoes curtain concrete

homes and stores. One woman,
Kalashnikov in hand, fishnet
of black and white across her

shoulders. Beside her, the poet
himself stares unblinking. Nearly

thirteen thousand live here
today:

 tea poured in a glass
far too small.



A Death in the Old City

Like desert waters, the winding
lanes of windswept cobbles carry
merchants along these pathways,

where marketplace overflows the sidewalk
with grape leaves for *waraq dawali*, sage
and mint for tea, sweet peppers, onions,

almonds. Elderly couples in from the village
sell their harvest. Groups of three or four
men debate outside clothing shop doors.

Musk of summer heat circles
the dust as Turkish coffee simmers.
It is midday, and there you are

among the crowds, a young woman,
silent, invisible,

your husband behind you.
No one notices
the knife that stirs in his hand.

Women

We sit in an upstairs room
where the air conditioner wheezes

a lackluster attempt
at cool. It barely rustles our seven

floor-length cloaks of black
hanging near the closed door.

Arabic coffee steams. Our thimble-like cups
half-full—golden-yellow, stirred

saffron, perfume of cloves. Cardamom
making thick

the heat-damp air
that Septembers us by the sea.

When Stones Blush

Under a clear sky,
taxis and merchants
have not yet opened their doors,
and the only voice
is Fairuz
between the slits of windows,
her song-shiver into morning.
It is early still:

The road is empty,
save for the two of us

and a boy
leaving his house.

He lifts his face
from beneath
a ball cap of red

and shifts a machine gun
from one hand to another.

We near him. The boy
says nothing, eyeing us
as he crosses the road,
metal easy in his grip.

