

*instantaneities*

**mena hem**  
**translated by otto mann**

instantaneities

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## *Translator's Note*

I, Otto Mann, have seen the likes of such verse as that which one, Mena Hem, has composed, spontaneously, as instantaneities, off-the-cuff, with a camera in one hand, scratching his scalp with the other. These lines are searching, unfulfilled wails before the trauma of silence that follows from abject loneliness in a society fraught with an unnatural, mystic compulsion to unite with all that is opposite, man to woman, self to other, the I with everyone.

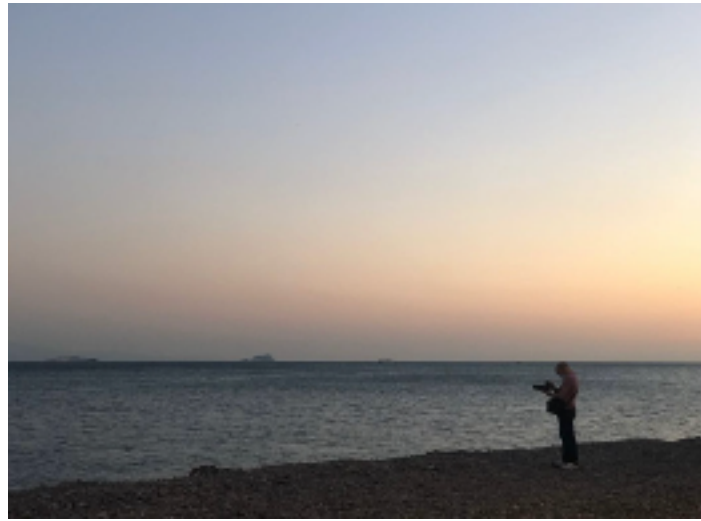
But these efforts are haunted by exasperation, youthful abandon, confronting the hard concrete and impassable valleys of sheer distance, of being detached, removed and flung afar beyond every last semblance of political borders that corral straight lines, right angles, four walls into little horror shops of cultural cannibalization, until one sees through and out, toward a placeless and directionless ontology of sheer presence, one that, nonetheless, desires an other with all of its incorporeal being, to embody and be embodied.

May 28, 2023  
Istanbul

took myself on a walk what did i find  
nothing in my mind but a walker on his way  
going somewhere no one knows not  
even him but he goes and goes and just  
keeps going where he doesn't know so...



the man's got a camera but does he see i don't  
think he sees a thing because he's got his eyes  
through that glass that blinks and in between the  
screen and he there's really nothing but the  
man looks anyway into unknown so...





it's like we're hiding from who knows what  
i don't but the bars are there still not  
moving and we gotta get through to get  
going and if you see me i'll be on the  
other side just say hi i won't mind so...



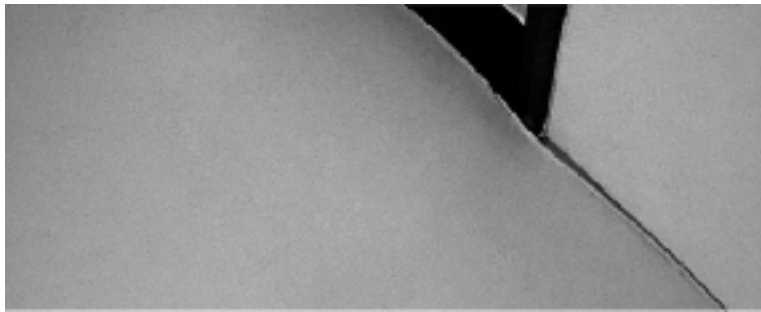
it's kinda like a planetary thing we're just  
moving round and round not knowing what's  
doing but being and the thing is anyway just to  
be the ones going so even if we don't know  
what's up or who's home the thing's just  
gonna go go go round the sun so...



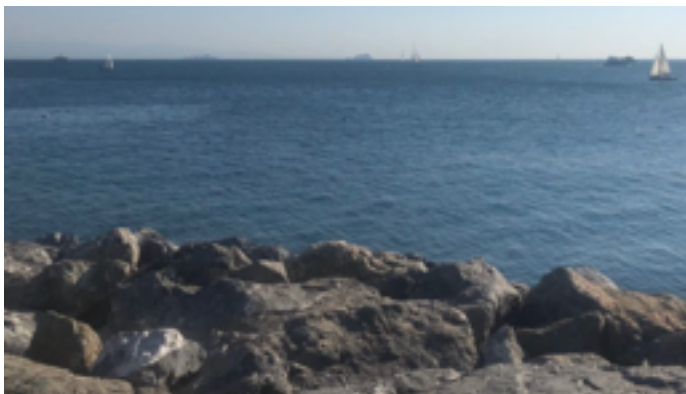
this what happens when i'm tired it's like the whole  
day's gone by in a bonfire no one's laughing but  
it's like i heard a joke on me coming from the  
inside of my brain who's to say though who's to say

i just been grabbing coffees and sitting in the breeze  
waiting for someone to sneeze because i need a  
blessing i mean i ain't got a prayer of a chance  
making it in this cemetery but who's to say what's it

all for anyway so let's laugh and cry and play and  
kick it till the morning over a hot cup of nothing

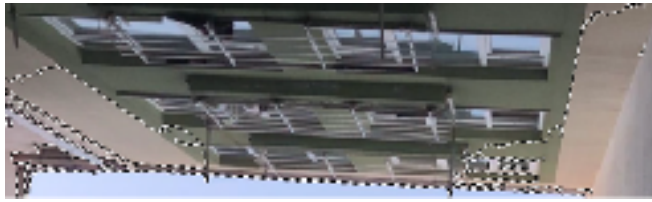


that i would write across the sky something  
bold black meant for men and women  
those whose strength knows no end i'd say  
something that shines like the daystar hot  
across the back of our absent night when all  
that was is gone to the tingling of unearthly  
fright who's laughter ranges forth from the  
empyrean deep of a turquoise seed loosed on  
the horizon of islands that flower with the  
faces of poets ruddy and rustic in the  
tumbleweed melodies of our unspoken freedom  
simply to be all that we have ever wanted to be  
free

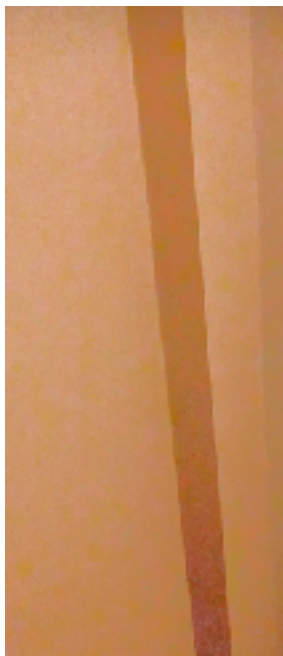




these days that pass like my blues  
as suns set and mine do, i sit and wait  
wondering why you're you... and why i am i  
like why couldn't i have been more like this sky  
just entertaining a moment's groove  
on the pulse of days that bloom, wither  
and seem to vanish but really they do not  
and they do



somewhere inside  
there's a place  
that's where we are  
it's our home  
away from home



i don't mind  
the thought  
will i die  
when there is no i  
to spy  
when i look up  
and question?  
my life  
that is not mine  
but is more  
like the sky



i was egypt  
naked, alone  
among the rushes  
of a race unknown

i was egypt  
before the world  
went cold  
before we were slaves  
to its higher arch  
of bodies and gold  
you and i  
spared of history  
under the underbelly  
of its unforgiving stone





what's your fate?  
the last time i checked  
it had nothing to do with me  
like a joke unfit for royalty  
at the trapdoor punchline  
plummeting to your death  
i know where you begin  
and never end

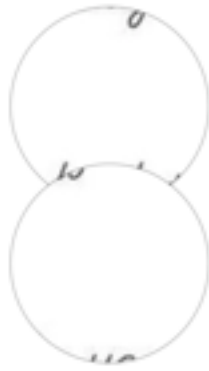


in the still of the morning  
when all we have left is to think  
of night and today

will you come back to me  
having risen, once falling away  
return in a blink

because i've something to say  
all this time it's never gone away  
i just love you

i want to take you away  
let's go there  
i know a way



sometimes up  
never around  
still we go down

it's about time  
we said what there is  
to say

if you've an idea  
i want to hear it  
i'm in the balance of you



forlorn fine  
no more  
let me go

into the wasteland  
of youth's last day  
afraid to know

on an invisible path  
in the forest  
a sliver of moonlight

where will we go  
when we're through  
with everyone's love

flattened by desire  
i see your face  
a constellation of eyes

let me have a taste  
open my mouth  
make me a fool

you are a body  
not your own  
somehow no one's

but it isn't you  
i want  
your life

shocked into memory  
the bones of age  
grown cold

among the stones  
we play  
looking for a space

to call our own  
back to the name  
we changed





no one on my mind tonight  
nothing up there but time  
that way we used to be  
somehow a vision, a dream  
you appear again, a sight  
just like i knew you, blithe  
do you still remember me?

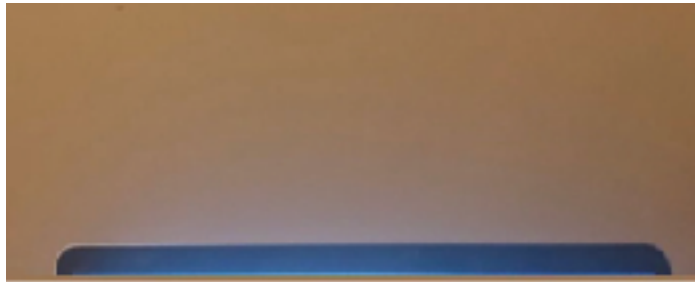
or have you gone sour my sweet?  
did you imagine this would be our life  
that we would part without a fight?  
it takes time to really see  
after all you've done and been  
that there's a lot more to write  
than i ever thought was right



here am i  
fine,  
i know you  
don't want to know  
why

but i'll tell you  
something  
about this way  
i feel  
now, drowned

in the light of fear  
cold, broken  
wanting  
who is to say  
i'll be okay



what would i do  
without daytime vibes  
and solitude in a room  
thirsting after my blues  
as i sink in a chair  
daydreaming of you



paralyzed state of indifference  
i wanna make some mischief  
give me a place to visit  
i saw a vision you missed it

back scratchin' low down  
i got nothing better to do  
so i'm out crashing  
lifted like a balloon

to the moon  
amused by you  
wild eyed Q

we take a backseat  
before reason  
i've a better idea  
let's dream it





i'm tired of this age  
of faceless eyes  
smiling behind white  
pink and black

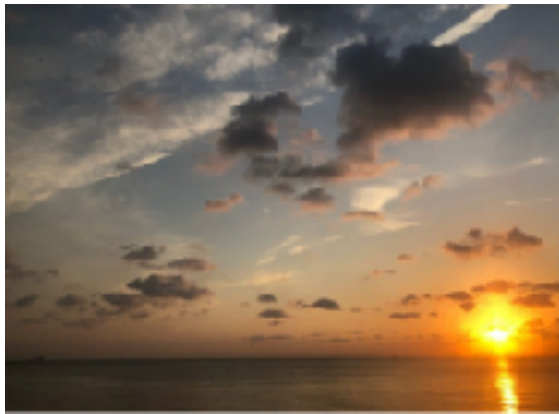
we're an echo  
of the past's grace  
and if patience is virtue  
let's be virtuous



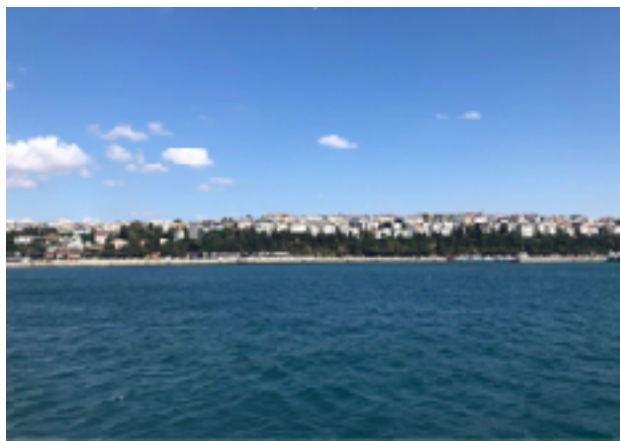
remember that night we played cards till dawn and  
you said i looked like the sun when it's last ray  
crests over the city like smooth paper money remember  
that ice we ate crunching out our numbers to faces  
playing the spaces of our insights derived from nights  
of pride and taste and though it was too late you still  
leaned in on me and wanted to say i like you then  
fell asleep



this is not a love poem  
these are just words  
strung into lines  
that might find  
their ways into your hearts  
if only you'd open your eyes  
if only you'd open your minds  
if only you'd give them a try



picture me first a word  
then bloom, out of the ground  
hewn, not lost to the fair air  
gliding across cobalt ash  
it's all harmless emptiness  
said ginsberg, the fool  
his voice echoes  
in me, anew





after all is said, done, felt, had  
who will we run to?  
enjoined to the edge of what is  
losing our grip as we fall over  
into the eternal spell of our eyes  
those blues, browns and greens

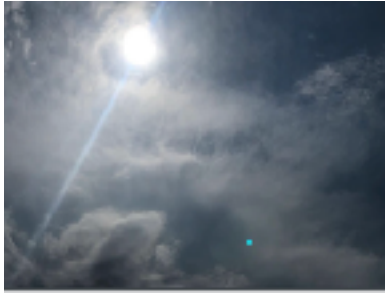
i am at a loss for you  
you've taken your time  
you've made your peace  
you've grown distant

an i am looking for a way  
always closer  
to you



be full & do it all  
not looking back, even if down  
into the abyss that stretches  
yawning for a closer look

i've been to the bottom  
i've felt its cold dank stare  
grasping with a sliver of light  
so that i may see up and out



i don't much have art  
music or science  
but language

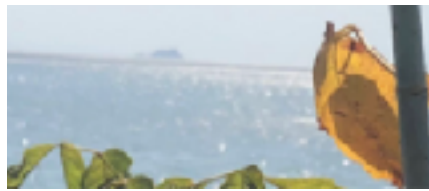
an eye for a tongue  
a cache of poems  
that might come out

if only you'd come with



it's all i ever wanted to do  
write off the top of my mind  
like it was off the tip of my tongue

try and kiss the sky  
and tell the above my beloved  
i'd die to have you in my eye





imagine the instant  
you come out  
eyes blind to light  
head and feet swollen  
pushing through  
to be pushed out  
into the cold air  
free, but wanting  
warmth returning  
to the love of blood  
kicking at the wall  
of the human womb  
to break open  
to the world, you  
as the sound of a cord  
umbilical cut, snaps



beggar, what do you need?  
to get back on your feet  
i've given you my eyes  
my mind, coins, and notes

and what have you given?  
a blessing, tragic humility  
but i want more from you  
i want you free, on your feet



oh, to have time as it goes by  
what i wouldn't do for an hour  
a minute, a moment, just frozen  
where i can suspend like a note  
operatic, high or low  
it wouldn't matter

i'd like to grasp it, grab on  
hold the hand of the clock  
say let's go to eternity  
where nothing means a thing  
where we can just be  
timelessly free



flag break lack i went it did  
that said we who then into  
though it was too late for  
conceptual asking then when  
the sculptural mode took its  
place in the abstract spoke of  
a dissonant spatial yet not  
until our lot of crossing  
past at last when in the dark  
contrasting to cold linguistic  
nightmares of the crept  
rushed for an autocorrect

name





şimdi yoldayım,  
ama önce yoktum.

*now, i 'm on the road  
but before i was not.*

lütfen, beni dinle.  
bir şey söylemem lazım...

*please, listen to me.  
i have something to say...*

burada durdum  
sana söylemek için...

*i stopped here  
to say to you...*

bir sır değil, işte  
bildiğin bir şey

*it's not a secret, like that  
it's something you know*

aslında senden duydum  
hayatının sesinden

*actually, you 've heard it  
it's the sound of your life*

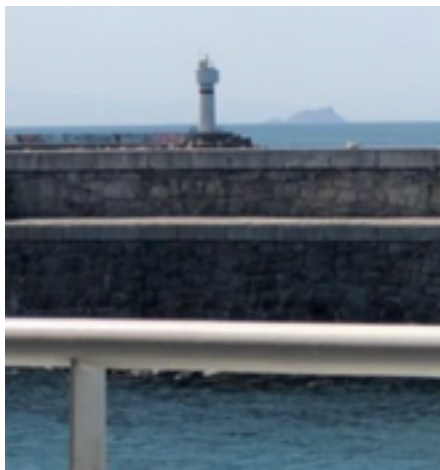
dalga gibi  
çarpıyor

*like a wave  
crashing*



buradayım, sadece varım.  
sana ne.  
ben bir varlık, her yerde.  
aynı zamanda, ben gibisin  
ama pek farklıyız...  
çünkü kimim biliyorum.  
bizde buradayız, burada  
kendimiziz  
sadece kendimiz

*i'm here, only i am.  
what's it to you.  
i'm an existence, everywhere.  
at the same time, i'm like you  
but we are quite different...  
because i know who i am.  
we are also here, right here  
we are each other  
only us*



wanted. dead  
but he is alive  
sheriff, stop.  
listen  
to his song  
he is innocence

wanted. alive  
the man seeks  
but soundly  
he sleeps  
innocent as a dream  
a mystery unseen



from where does it come  
the urge to love  
a nourishment of bodies  
that i would drink  
far into the night  
gone, together  
in a blink





who is artist  
intellectual  
neurotic  
eccentric?

i'm middle-class  
suburban white  
trash, taken  
to the roadside

i was america  
small town, green  
lawns mowed of money  
forest fort monkery

who is musician  
poet of letters  
snake-eyed journalist  
on the global beat?

i've taken the middle way  
somewhere somehow  
not up, not down  
i'm around



that was me  
out of love, cornered  
waiting to relive  
the experience  
of what we lost

who remembers us  
from top to bottom  
two parts of a whole  
now i don't even look back  
don't even ask



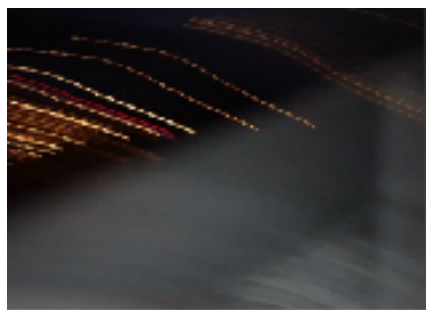
as city sounds drown  
to newborn night  
we cling to each other  
and fly away instantly

reaching back for a touch  
like a whisper on your back  
tingling tips of your hair  
what could i say

to such beauty as yours  
you're awake in my dream  
and i see that you're running  
as fast as you can, back to me



our dysphoric passion  
that had like when you went  
round the bend, a particle  
drifting over the edge  
until you came back, an echo  
dripped slow onto my tongue  
a rush of bliss, overwhelmed  
and i had you, then, there  
like it was forever

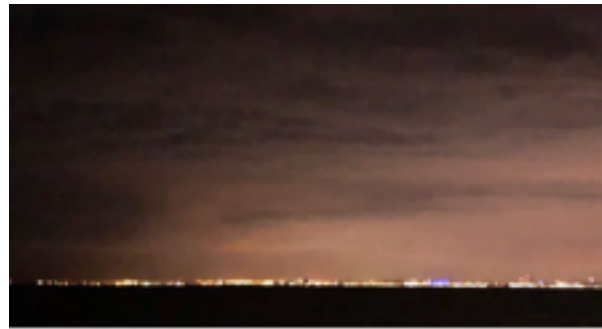




a gift from a friend  
let it not go to waste  
or forget, it is priceless  
immeasurable as thought  
of how we met, shyly  
under the same daystar  
swingin' round, ecstatic  
revolutionaries of earth  
our vocal light harmonized  
shinin' like you and yours  
bright as our lives living life



a burst of awe  
over the horizon, night  
the city, an old god  
begging for drugs  
lost on the side of the road  
a killer, unforgiven  
that rage, gone  
returned in a flash  
sonic boom of age  
like a thunderclap  
bubbling up from this place



what blindness caused my eye  
to see how our lives joined  
out of instants, the pressure of lips  
touching, to note that light of ours  
that does not die, it is us  
that which lives between time  
spent bridging our bodies  
to plan, scheme and be at once  
in the same place, again



düřtüm  
ama kalkmayacađım  
çünkü sakın burası  
boř uzayda  
ařađıda

*i fell  
but i won't get up  
because it's calm here  
an empty space  
below*

dinleniyorum  
anlatma bana  
yađmur yađıyor  
dinliyorum  
kan gibi

*i'm resting  
don't tell me  
it's raining  
i'm listening  
blood-like*





bir kadınla evlendim  
onun ailesi gelmedi  
ama o çok güzeldi

*i married a woman  
her family did not come  
but she was very beautiful*

bir kızıl Hint sarisi giydi  
benim ailem görmedi  
hayat doluyduk  
aşk doluyduk

*she wore a red Indian sari  
my family did not see  
our lives were full  
our love was brimming*

O sınırsız bir isandı  
aşkımız sınırsızdı  
ama, bu dünya sınırlarla dolu

*she was a borderless person  
our love was borderless  
though, this world is full of borders*

bir ülke sınırı vardı  
memleketimiz arasında  
şu sınır bizi ayırdı  
şu sınır bizim kalplerimizi kırdı

*there was a country border  
between our countries  
that border broke us  
that border broke our hearts*



in the aftermath of our rage  
who will we turn to  
when there is no one left to face?

i've seen towers crumble  
and thoughts wander  
from end to end of our Earth

but alone we stretch out  
sometimes yawning in the cold  
solitary, monkish

i have a thousand eyes for you  
we were in love long ago  
before reason, or the word

love, against death  
you can't leave me  
we are eternal



she looked back  
in the techno light  
black-haired, bright  
what woman was that?

who caught my eye

as i lunged forward  
all in good time  
we made our night  
on sand, to life



ben de osmanlıydım  
ve Őimdi t¼rkiye'deyim  
ama bu tuhaf bir yol  
ok karanlık  
yeni ay yukarıda  
ve hızlıca gidiyorum  
nereye? bilmiyorum

*i was ottoman too  
and now in turkey  
but this is a strange path  
it's very dark  
a new moon rises  
and i'm going fast  
to where? i don't know*





it's time we begin  
after all of this ending  
to put to rest, for once  
all of our needless yearning

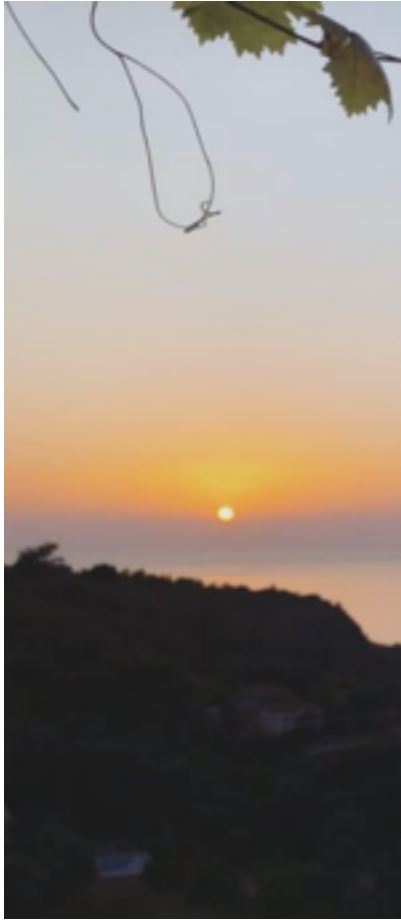
to not do, what we wanted to do  
to not say, what we wanted too ay  
to not go, where we wanted to go

to do what we're doing  
and not do anything

to say what we're saying  
and not say anything

to be where we are  
and go nowhere

to be  
okay  
to be



ben bir yahudiyim  
ama tanrıya inanmıyorum  
tanrı ve din yok bence

*i'm a jew  
but i don't believe in god  
i think there is no god and religion*

sadece bir adamım  
bir geçmişı olan  
ve bir gelecek arıyorum  
seninle

*i'm just a man  
with a past  
and looking for a future  
with you*



and if after all  
of our searching  
we have come  
to this moment  
will it have been  
all for nothing?  
or will we know  
finally, that truth  
we are everything



i wanna party with you  
thru the bitter morning  
we'll drink orange liquor  
and your face will glow  
i'll be strung out for you  
you'll have had your fill  
then we'll wake together  
after all is said and done  
being silent, just knowing  
that we are, never thru

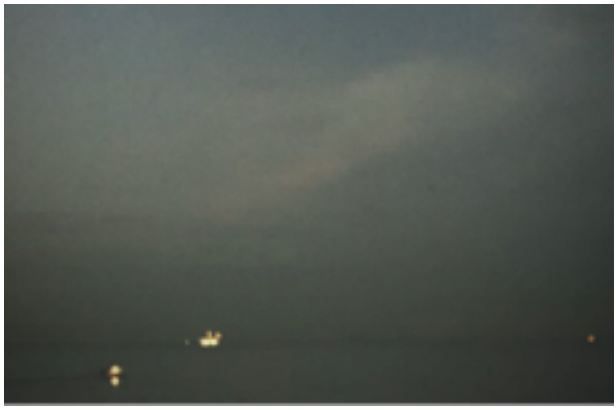




we were moths  
dancing around a flame  
flap, flutter, fly

singe, burnt wing  
fallen to the ground  
dying a hot death

i turned around  
soaring in darkness  
life is for the living



i'm a criminal  
come and get me...

...you're my crime  
i want you for life



would reason have  
developed  
without religion?

criticism is more  
important  
than art.



?poew

yapı yaptım  
*i acted an act*

yazı yazdım  
*i wrote a writing*

yedi yedim  
*i ate seven*

gezi gezdim  
*i took a trip*

*çuentvrrainls/maetzable*





i'll spill my words for you  
like my blood, in drops

will you take my heart?  
i'll wring it out bone dry

write volumes soaked  
with the ink of my love



fin