

Efe DUYAN

**POEMS**

**RUSSTYLOVE**

I call you honeyovsky  
didn't we learn to love from Russian novels

the first night you slept beside me  
is in my mind, written in cuneiform script  
no, no, as a cave painting

at the start I let you wait a while  
forgive me for that

for some time now I've hidden your name  
you don't know why

the scarf you were knitting was left half finished  
let it be, until next winter  
so that your loneliness is only partial, also

that green apple you gave to me one morning  
let it be a secret password between us

and let your eyebrows grow  
the pretentiousness scares me,  
just as it does with architecture and poetry

your legs are full of childhood wounds  
we make love at a canter  
we love each other,  
patient as your growing hair

but I still confuse  
the long nicknames in Russian novels

JUNE POEMS <sup>1</sup>**ULUS NEWSPAPER OCCUPATION**

brecht would ask  
what is the difference between  
he who desires without understanding  
and he who understands but keeps quiet

according to beckett  
the biggest opportunity has already been missed

according to the union  
this was not planned

according to memories  
people believe in unattainable beauty

according to the revolutionaries  
every revolutionary action was legitimate

according to my grandma  
I should let all these things go

what I really want to know is  
whether the reporters and typesetters  
were in conflict with the occupiers at first?

according to the typesetters  
they inspired the tragic end of a book  
which was destined to be confiscated

according to the reporters  
this was a news flash that had to be censored

according to a table  
it was strange to be talked down to

according to the printing plate  
it was almost comfortable to be barricaded in

a grey bearded giant  
was serving tea in the middle of all this

according to their worst fears  
it would all end badly

according to their feelings  
they were already locked in an ever-contracting conga line

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<sup>1</sup> "June Poems" is based on true events during the revolutionary days in Turkey in 1970

if we go back to brecht  
he would say it all depends on the occupier  
before lighting his cigar

## THE WORKER WHO COMES ACROSS HIS SON THAT THE MILITARY BARRICADE

my throat has dried  
but it doesn't seem to become quiet

my throat is calloused  
for carrying placards in silver trays

my throat is a scary rope-walker  
it doesn't know that it is possible to stand on the rope  
only by marching forward  
in front of the barricade of soldiers

my throat is scared out of its wits  
while the soldier's helmets  
are waving by our wind

my throat is blind  
isn't it my own son  
hidden in a uniform  
indicating me with his rifle

my throat is racing with my legs  
blusters like children gang  
while leaping up over the barricade

with my throat spread wide  
I hug my son

my throat is knotted  
keeps the joy to itself

my throat is slitted  
the blood of five other  
leaking asunder

**MEHMET AND OSMAN FROM THE CEVIZLI CIGARETTE FACTORY**

mehmet grew another hectic mehmet  
when he became a father

mehmet already owned another shy mehmet  
when he got married

he also contracted a skeptical mehmet  
urged by necessity

all the mehmet's were in fine fettle  
next to him stood osman who had many osman's  
that mehmet didn't know

was there a self-sacrificing mehmet?  
– mehmet wasn't sure –  
but when a gun was pointed at his group of friends  
he didn't hesitate

secret osman of osman with his police ID in his pocket  
held the hand of a tobacco worker for the first time  
– the dead mehmet of mehmet –

with sorrow for his widow's loss of her mehmet  
the stubborn mehmet walked up to taksim square  
he tore up his last regrets  
when osman submitted his letter of resignation

it was beautiful to be obstinate in the face of death  
even after having died

**HOW THE FOUR WORKERS WERE RELEASED FROM EYÜP POLICE STATION**

lock up, clattering, dirty yellow light.

how would you describe those inside?

- a) as waiting in the cell keeping their shirts clean
- b) as primping their hair with regretful hands
- c) as knowing everything would be easier if they gave up their beliefs
- d) all of the above

for ten thousand years, for many decades, until yesterday.

if we believe the history books, they:

- a) avoid eye contact with each other
- b) turn sneak or rat when frightened
- c) inspire legendary heroes even if afraid

outside the police station, impatient whispers.

the crowd was looking very different: why?

- a) a most unusual festival was underway
- a) a story was circulating that the king's ass has been kicked
- a) someone mentioned the cowardly lion of oz
- a) because fingers clicked before the dance began

what happened next?

- a) handcuffs were unlocked with a little-known catchphrase
- b) a new name had been sewn into their still pristine shirts
- c) or, as actually happened, they scattered into the poisoned streets of Istanbul

*Translated from the Turkish by Richard Gywn*

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**ME AND MY TOY LIGHTNING FLASHES**

D'you think it didn't happen, my dear friend?  
I've told small lies and fibs, of course I have.  
They're like loose change here in my pockets  
And of course I've told much bigger ones as well.

In the city of great dreams and great lies, let's get this clear,  
Everyone's Istanbul belongs to them alone.  
Mine belongs to several women  
-no names, of course-  
Full of all they have thrown out of other towns  
Everybody's days belong to them, dear friend  
Just as everybody goes and lives their death themselves:

And the pavements of Surdibi are  
The eyes of a homeless man gazing into mine  
You, like a god with his nose in air, pathetic and disguised -  
Be sure to take a good look at the world!

Look at his Istanbul,  
But you can't touch it, just look  
Like low-down angels; new observations  
Write new verdicts in the margin in books of dreams  
The Istanbul inside his overcoat – forbid that for a start–  
A few banknotes hidden in a shoe – give that away.  
He's heard of Aya Sophia – now talk about its architectural features –

But you and your toy lightning flashes -  
All you can do is pass on to history what you've seen, all you can do  
Is be dead scared of what you've seen, face the tree and count to ninety-nine

Look, there's nothing at all in common between that guy and hope  
But he loves this city more than anyone, smile  
At the sun that will hit your face a moment later and  
Maybe it'll smile back at you.

But you don't even know, do you? That  
There's a cloud covering the sun.  
Now who's going to be sorry for whom?

*Translated from the Turkish by Georgina Özer, edited by Raman Mundair*

**THE STRUCTURE OF THE EYE**

my eyes  
bestow names  
on the stains on your skin  
like ancient astronomers  
attent to all they might resemble

and bow down in respect  
before every change of colour  
in your limbs

with their lashes  
they suck the sweat off your back  
and try to stuff it into a bottle  
to add it to the whites of their own

then dive down  
into yours  
and swim through  
the beams of light  
seeping in  
to your cornea

and record what you have seen  
to reflect it all  
on a screen up on the wall

and go  
to kiss you  
there on your  
blind spot

**AN ANT SCURRY**

the end of the world is nigh  
and this too bright sou'wester  
beats off our faces, triggering migraine

at times our dreams do come true  
leaving long lines on the shinebone  
a thick blue pus melts the stitches and drips  
as from within a cat scratches, who wants you  
to open the window

like some effervescent tablet  
I toss all my thoughts on revolution  
into water before I go to bed  
I really love, for some reason, The Theses on Feuerbach  
then later I stuff the dreams I want to recall  
into a water bottle

I am watching an ant scurry  
in frenzy, taking notes  
for the long speech  
I plan to make  
when the end of the world arrives  
like a hawk  
whose heart has just stopped  
yet drifts awhile on the air

**BETWEEN YOU AND ME**

the leaves of the elfdock  
we planted that when boiled  
and drunk produce temporary blindness  
are sprouting

between you and me  
two olive trees poised to kill each other  
from under the quilt  
they wind their roots about each other

between you and me  
the distance of a breath  
closing in great uproar

between you and me  
the stench of iodine mingled in cement dust  
drags us by the hands

between you and me  
the laziness of a Sunday  
putting all the other days in tune

between you and me  
glasses of ouzo growing white on ice  
as we satisfy ourselves that  
life is short indeed

between you and me  
our very own time  
falls laughing now and then to the ground

between you and me  
without word of warning  
like some untimely song  
silence begins

conveys nothing of the picture only the heart beat  
and wakes us both as morning breaks

the emptiness between you and me  
is quickly learning of everything  
there is between you and me...

*Translated from the Turkish by Neil P.Doherty*

**TO EACH OTHER**

with sailor's knots indeed, which can easily be untied  
if pulled from the right point  
like leaping germs, maybe

sometimes on an out-of-tune piano  
allegro ma non troppo  
sometimes at full speed from the edge of a cliff  
to the bottom

with colorful laundry lines  
without moving away from our neighborhood  
like moving continents  
by small steps at a time

with the top button of a primary school uniform  
look, for how long—  
like two molting snakes:  
each season, again

curiously in the dark  
of a deep ocean  
but also from habit  
like morning coffee

extremely tight thanks to the Japanese Glue  
dropped onto your finger  
or like the ease  
of a Sunday morning

with the aluminum foil on special days  
that the flower-seller is using  
with a serum pipe  
for an emergency

along with the modest movement  
of the hydrogen and oxygen atoms  
while being amazed at the possibility of life  
on a recently discovered planet

with the equal arms  
of a scale  
without thinking  
that we don't even want balance of any kind

with the horns of the animals,  
which cannot be tamed  
in the sleep of the cicadas  
that won't keep quiet

like the squirrel's scent  
in the nose of a fox

like the fox's steps  
in the ear of a squirrel

mixing the fear that a bomb  
could explode any minute  
with the worry that there might not be  
enough milk for the coffee

like a gravestone  
and someone washing that gravestone carefully  
no matter what happens

who knows, maybe because we watched a revolution  
turning into a counter-revolution together

saving our belief  
not to die of thirst

with the fear of  
attaching

with the voice of  
my skin rubbing against your skin

drying the lactic acid piling up on our patience  
in the sun

with the puppet strings  
that we hold ourselves

to each other  
you and me

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (2016)****IF ONLY**

If only we could -  
the heaven and hell  
we carry with us like a swiss army knife

If only we could -  
our malicious nature,  
which we likened to compassion thanks to  
dictums and special effects

If only we could -  
the idleness  
surrounding pretty ideas  
by suppressing them into the detergent water

If only we could -  
our good will  
with a steel pliers

If only we could -  
the uneasiness  
of the lone nights  
like the ones with someone

If only we could -  
the disasters  
caused by being madly in love  
in the framework of the logic

If only we could-  
the ruined walls of pagan temples,  
which we run across while we  
were making love

If only we could -  
our childhood  
like a cheap gift with a  
broken edge

If only we could -  
the destruction  
caused by if onlys while consoling us,  
with concrete examples

If only we could -  
all lives  
at the same moment

If only we could -

DUYAN  
all troubles  
without postponing to a big revolution

IWP 2019

If only we could -  
experiencing all deaths  
one by one and personally

If only we could -  
the senselessness itself  
with a razor blade

If only we could

*Translated from the Turkish by Tara Skurtu*

**SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE REVOLUTIONS**

revolutions too  
like grand plans  
can't be plotted in great detail

like punctual trains  
offer peace  
and never look back once set off

like suicide  
on every occasion  
forge a connection between us that I can't name

like close friends  
are also useful in covering our own defects

like babies screaming in joy  
never tire

like me  
they - in truth - don't like crowds

like all of us  
it is a lie that they wish the best for everyone

like all gods  
they are sure they are capable of creating the world in a few days

like the relationships  
you suddenly find yourself a slave to

like women  
you can only suppose you understand them

like a lover  
they can only let you down

like a platonic love  
they are beautiful after all

*Translated from the Turkish by James Vella*

**ONE POEM STANDS (2012)****CALL CENTER**

hello  
for the day you met school friends for the first time  
please dial your lucky number  
for the times you ran tirelessly around the playground  
press all the numbers at random  
for the steamed-up windows of greasy spoons  
dial the year of the last family summer holiday

everybody has times they're ashamed of  
do not tell the numbers you pick for these to anyone  
for the tea and poğaça breakfasts you had on the university lawn  
put the receiver down and go out onto the balcony  
if you wish to complain about time flying furiously past  
please press down hard on the button  
if you realise that you don't remember your granddad exactly as he was  
look in the mirror

for the smell of dusty books in second-hand bookstores  
say the third letter of an illiterate labourer's name  
for your neighbourhood tailor who was found dead in rags  
please hold

for that unpredictable moment  
that you touched the neck of a woman in your sleep,  
dial the same number over and over again  
after the beep

the day after the break-up  
write in your notebook one hundred times  
'I am never going to fall in love again'

beep

*Translated from the Turkish by Bill Herbert*

FROM *SWAP (2006)*

**LOOKING AT YOU**

Upturning the turtle, little girl runs away  
For the first time, turtle sees sky

*Translated from the Turkish by Raman Mundair*

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