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

ULUS NEWSPAPER OCCUPATION

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

c according to beckett
the biggest opportunity has already been missed

c according to the union
this was not planned

c according to memories
people believe in unattainable beauty

c according to the revolutionaries
every revolutionary action was legitimate

c according to my grandma
I should let all these things go

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

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

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

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

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

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

c according to their worst fears
it would all end badly

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

1 “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 mehmets were in fine fettle
next to him stood osman who had many osmans
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
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 -
all troubles
without postponing to a big revolution

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*

***