

Even the Rain

by Agha Shahid Ali

What will suffice for a true-love knot? Even the rain?
But he has bought grief's lottery, bought even the rain.

"our glosses / wanting in this world" "Can you remember?"
Anyone! "when we thought / the poets taught" even the rain?

After we died--*That was it!*--God left us in the dark.
And as we forgot the dark, we forgot even the rain.

Drought was over. Where was I? Drinks were on the house.
For mixers, my love, you'd poured--what?--even the rain.

Of this pear-shaped orange's perfumed twist, I will say:
Extract Vermouth from the bergamot, even the rain.

How did the Enemy love you--with earth? air? and fire?
He held just one thing back till he got even: the rain.

This is God's site for a new house of executions?
You swear by the Bible, Despot, even the rain?

After the bones--those flowers--this was found in the urn:
The lost river, ashes from the ghat, even the rain.

What was I to prophesy if not the end of the world?
A salt pillar for the lonely lot, even the rain.

How the air raged, desperate, streaming the earth with flames--
to help burn down my house, Fire sought even the rain.

He would raze the mountains, he would level the waves,
he would, to smooth his epic plot, even the rain.

New York belongs at daybreak to only me, just me--
to make this claim Memory's brought even the rain.

They've found the knife that killed you, but whose prints are these?
No one has such small hands, Shahid, not even the rain.

Ghazal of the Better-Unbegun

by Heather McHugh

A book is a suicide postponed.
--Cioran

Too volatile, am I? too voluble? too much a word-person?
I blame the soup: I'm a primordially
stirred person.

Two pronouns and a vehicle was Icarus with wings.
The apparatus of his selves made an ab-
surd person.

The sound I make is sympathy's: sad dogs are tied afar.
But howling I become an ever more un-
heard person.

I need a hundred more of you to make a likelihood.
The mirror's not convincing-- that at-best in-
ferred person.

As time's revealing gets revolting, I start looking out.
Look in and what you see is one unholy
blurred person.

The only cure for birth one doesn't love to contemplate.
Better to be an unsung song, an unoc-
curred person.

McHugh, you'll be the death of me -- each self and second studied!
Addressing you like this, I'm halfway to the
third person.

The Ghazal of What Hurt

by Peter Cole

Pain froze you, for years—and fear—leaving scars.
But now, as though miraculously, it seems, here you are

walking easily across the ground, and into town
as though you were floating on air, which in part you are,

or riding a wave of what feels like the world's good will—
though helped along by something foreign and older than you are

and yet much younger too, inside you, and so palpable
an X-ray, you're sure, would show it, within the body you are,

not all that far beneath the skin, and even in
some bones. Making you wonder: Are you what you are—

with all that isn't actually you having flowed
through and settled in you, and made you what you are?

The pain was never replaced, nor was it quite erased.
It's memory now—so you know just how lucky you are.

You didn't always. Were you then? And where's the fear?
Inside your words, like an engine? The car you are?!

Face it, friend, you most exist when you're driven
away, or on—by forms and forces greater than you are.

Ghazal: In Silence

by Mimi Khalvati

Let them be, the battles you fought, in silence.
Bury your shame, the worst you thought, in silence.

At last my Beloved has haggled with death.
'One more day' was the pearl she bought in silence.

At night she heard the blacksmith hammering chains,
at dawn the saw, the fretwork wrought in silence.

'The only wrong I've done is to live too long,'
my Beloved's eyes tell the court in silence.

She's as young as the month of Ordibehesht,
month of my birth, spring's mid-leap caught in silence.

My Beloved, under the shade of a palm,
was the girl, the mother I sought in silence.

Loneliness is innumerate. Days slip by,
suns rise that daylight moons distort in silence.

The bell on her wrist was silent, her fingers
ice cold as the julep she brought in silence.

'*Mimijune! Mimijune!*' My Beloved's voice
climbs three steep notes for tears to thwart in silence.

Three syllables of equal weight, equal stress,
dropped in a well, keep falling short in silence.