

## **From Behind the Front Desk of the Hotel Lobby**

Five stars adorning the hotel lobby  
make for a pretty decoration  
but a poor invitation to the peoples  
roaming the streets for home.  
Fat old men saunter through the entrance  
without even an eyeshake for the man  
who spends his hours dancing with the door.

And those old men sauntering in the hotel:  
Their iridescent shining heads,  
glimmering like fish scales  
are slithering through a sea of words,  
talking the walk while we mock their squawk.  
Their words run together  
like an endless stream of muddy schmuck  
dribbling off shingles  
and staining old hotel curtains.

All these shining heads  
have nowhere to go and nothing better to do  
than slur words in front of faces  
crinkled with polite disinterest.  
We spend our days envying their detachment:  
we too could saunter and scream and slither  
and throw around words as if they weighed nothing

but rent is due tomorrow,  
the fandango with the doors has not ended,  
and our wallets are empty.  
We clench our teeth and wearily await another day.

## **Aftermath**

They're breathing out whispers,  
desperate  
like a breath of some panting dog:  
slick viscous drool  
painting pictures of exhaustion  
across the linoleum floor.

They are children whispering secrets  
so laden with hope  
that their tiny lips cannot understand  
the magnitude of their flighty passengers.

What are those secrets  
squirming about such volatile little breaths?  
And where have their minuscule bodies  
learned such ancient exhaustion?

They are still swollen with youth,  
but growing faster than we can  
paint the creases of our own lives.

They're breathing out whispers:  
listen and perhaps you'll hear  
the secret,  
the architecture of laughter,  
the sticky hope  
in the midst of a changing world.

## **Autumnal Church**

Today is the sort of windy Sunday  
where words warm empty souls  
gathered round pulpits.  
I listen for a break  
in the crevices  
of wrinkled skin dipped in wine,  
the rolling gusts of air  
sweeping hair and blood together,  
sanctimoniously mistaken.  
Everything blows together  
(and I do too)  
in between the shutters  
of this dusty old building  
and there are no pauses  
no stops  
no breaths  
no turning back,  
not here where words carry weight,  
where even our food is bigger  
than our ever-growing bellies.

## **Ulcerative Pooritis**

The toilet won't flush again  
and my nose was once meant for life.  
Shit is overflowing and this man  
who is a lawyer and a doctor and a father of a tiny boy  
cradles somebody else's digested innards in his tired hands,  
pours water over his body so as not to erupt.

Our noses were once sacrosanct,  
fed us nutrients encased in red blood cells  
flowing like water like air through cells constructing  
even ideas.

But she hasn't slept in weeks  
and now she works even in her dreams,  
balances the world on her slender pinky finger  
and hopes her intestines can carry eight more hours.

They'll dispose of the grotesque in sanitary bins  
with lids cemented shut;  
but the toilet still isn't flushing  
and the scent cannot be contained.

## **Toubab in Senegal**

And with the sky  
drops the whole world -  
the taximen in search  
of their mosques,  
the stragglers and clickers  
beating their thick words,  
and of course the frantic waves  
running to the ocean in flight of the trash.

Everything falls out of place  
to the rhythm of a song  
I cannot quite hear.  
All the motion  
                  motion  
coalesces in a barefoot dance  
centered around Touba oil and ataaya.

The dance is guided by a crash rhythm  
of swerving drivers  
and hungry talibe  
and even though  
God it hurts to be alive  
this dance with the falling  
of the world, sky, language,  
is okay.  
We live these days.