

## Kashmir: the wait is, and is not.

*In this poem, Kashmir is the conflicted space of a perpetually deferred yearning. The homeland is an absent presence; confronting it is always-already im/possible. The nauseating viscosity of blood and memory have thickened the nostalgia for an imaginary past. Yet, with every sigh of be/longing, the iron stranglehold of the present rusts a little, someday it may wear away and lead to a future of hope.*

*The words 'Noon' and 'Zoon' in the poem are from the Kashmiri language; noon means salt, and zoon means the moon.*

I.

You stand at the imaginary gate  
Of future time, eyes pegged on stillness  
As that of wind-abandoned trees, or the desert of a blue sky.

The journey to a homeland must come  
Yet you defer it, defer it again.

Staring at the clockhands of daily endeavour  
Slippery, your glance touches the mountains  
Brown-blue, green-gray, cloud-embroidered.

This is the *noon* of your day  
Salt of that place, a bloody home.

Far from sea, far from peace, far from me.

II.

Roots grow out from your feet  
And the road is not in sight.

III.

You stand at the imaginary gate  
Of future time, hands holding the head  
As if it were a rounded stone, or a grenade about to burst

The journey to a homeland must come  
Yet you defer it, defer it again

Grasping at the frames of locked desires  
Keyless, your fingers fumble across maps  
Orange-green, red-yellow, overlapping lines

This is the *zoon* of your night  
Moon of that place, a bloody home.

Far from sea, far from peace, far from me.

IV.

Still and heavy,  
The iron gate of future time  
Will rust one day  
With your breath alone.