

a Letter from the Gulf

Dearest,

Sitting in cafes and museums of Europe, Amsterdam to be precise, places where you have not been, nor where the dark and the green that is in you, in the delicate lines of your face, the curves of your eyes are ever reflected, I carry you in the lines of my palms.

Except perhaps in their Tropen, colonial museum, where you lie fragmented, in pieces, in the objects which they have torn apart from their history, like limbs from the body and put on display. There, my sweet, in clay, wood, beads, pieces of bamboo, your humble body is offered to my sight as artifacts. I cannot touch you — this is Europe, you are a museum piece, a million miles of distance by air, a fantasy framed in airline posters and shatterproof fibreglass which preserves the death of our everyday lives to create their civilization.

And, now, there is spring in Europe. The sweetness of the purple crocus, the white of the hyacinth, the blue of the iris melt you with their sun. Trees whisper their green secrets and in the official museum of the city they display their prizes, horrors, visions of war and peace, in an exhibit of photojournalism. For decades Europe nurses its sores. When they heal they are photographically provoked to bleed, to let some pus of memory ooze out. Europe remembers its nazi past. In slow rhythm strikes chest, forehead, forces tears, grimaces.

But behind this collage of guilt, memories, predations of the past, Tropens, British Museums, Nazis later — sends bombs, cameras and transforms a war into light shows and video games, your body arab, indian, black, vietnamese, chilean, panamanian, nameless, dark— splinters, cracks into thousand pieces, thrown up into the sky by jets of oil. Every pore of your body visible to the radar eye of the dark. The wind of peace blowing from the operation desert storm whistles through your singed skin. A hundred thousand sorties without blood!

Dearest, the soles of your singed feet, your child's body charred, a charcoal graffiti of history, your old man's unruly tears and swollen veins in the hands, your young woman's defiant curse, your old woman's hands raised to Allah who has fled the sky of starwars and taken refuge with the mesopotamian gods.

Ya All, ya Hassan, ya Hussein. Karbala in flames a second time. A horse runs wild with hooves of fire through the bombed streets, and the good King Haroun al Rashid, once upon a time in Baghdad in a child's book, flees with Duldul into an ocean of loss. A cry rips apart the television screen will no one stop this American war machine? My sweet, say nothing to them, nothing has stopped their march of civilization, while their blind hearts whisper tales of our savagery and their strategic adjustments. Let us hold each other by the hand and walk together through our myriad lives.

In this terror of a golden spring, where the clay jar holding the ashes of our ancestors, the gentle hand of time reaching out to be held is smashed, crushed, thrown into the grime of betrayals, wars, cynicism, let us, my love, go together into that cave, where others await us in the dark with a secret sign, where darkness holds the key to dawn, where conspiracy sings in the wind the courage to create again a new world — where your body, smile, sweet reserve, breaking the glass of the Tropen will be re-membered in all the shapes of our good earth.

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Himani Banerji

