



loose electricity

a set of poems by yasser musa

july 2009

14 days after New Orleans went under 2005

Today Roberts went before the senate
Pitching baseball anecdotes aspiring for the supreme job
While George stayed PR focused
standing firm on a flat bed truck
in mold stench New Orleans.
CNN had run out of epic night ending music and pensive phrases
Arron Brown now considered America's #1 electronic asshole
keeps biting his air conditioned lips
with flat panel monitors
beaming black
9th ward citizens in slow motion strobe,
At night I look for Decatur Street and the Bookstar sign
Look for transvestites, cigarette billboards,

For Trombone Shorty

But helicopters and cracked open roofs are all
Billions of bills passing Washington's guilt ridden rhythm
14 days, soup, superdome, sunshine...

A series of short poems

1

Birds, fishermen, dead conch
Share the morning sun
Soft dirty waves
A garbage city
Frozen clouds

2

I turn off the light
Bolano's poems evaporate
His dogs
Walk North Front Street
On the final leg of their
Belize City tour

3

The same light
Crashes into my coffee
When white milk hits black
Sugar makes me happy

4

Everything is familiar
At the Rodway Inn
I know the sky, curtains, and soap
Will reflect an easy spirit soon

5

Zenaida you are our new Queen
Dean should print your face on our currency
He should forget that he just got married
Worry instead about the colors
Of your hair
The uneven paint
on your jagged fingernails.

6

Li Chee restaurant burned
Archie Lee without a license

Lee Mark Chang wants to put wireless internet in Freetown
Eric Chang is our Jackie Kennedy

7

In the quiet evening
In his home town
murdered on Mangal Street
His mother,
“Just a little glimpse on the bed
while they were rushing him to the surgery room.
Just a little glimpse and I ran behind them
but they didn’t let me see.”

Artichoke and Ice

Wulai, Taiwan, May 2008

A bustling tourist eatery in Wulai
Aboriginal sky, steep mountains
I grabbed an ice cold artichoke drink
A blonde woman sitting under a red umbrella fixed to the can
Condensed droplets drip from the brand
I washed down dried micro-fish with shrimp.

@ chopstix

Houston, December 2008

I order Singapore chicken in a Chinese restaurant
Bruce Springstein sings, “Radio Nowhere”
Gray Montrose corner West Alabama early afternoon
A slim elderly Chinese woman gathers dishes
Her hair net tight
A white woman with long hair stumbles in
I amaze at her mosaic decorated car
Orders chow mein,
“that’s exactly what it costs to buy a grande latte from Starbucks.”

Calcutta to dJakarta

For JD and Barack

November 2, 2008

Even at 61 your English has not improved
you learned some English reading Newsweek in Paris, around 1961
on your way to the Himalayas
where some Nepal & Tibetan traders

spoke a few words of it.
Then a flood of words in
Calcutta and messy Djakarta

Around this time young Barack was with his

Kansas anthropologist mother
And Indonesian step-father

You imagined them taking walks to the
National Park in front of the National Palace
occupied by dictator Suharto-
A park punctuated by a very tall marble monument to Independence
a golden flame beacon
you remember the thick uncut grass and prostitutes
a young Djakartian cyclist unaware of a do not cross sign
knocked down then
brutally beaten

20 feet from your eyes

taken inside
sayonara to bike.
Does Barack remember the huge hotel, the Indonesia?
Or the Djakarta?

built during Suharto's days
hosting early summits of the Non-Aligned Movement
founded along Mariscal Tito and the duo of Mao & Chou en Lai?
NAM a movement important for Belize to obtain our
Independence...

You keep telling me that in Obama the only black or
African component he has is Michele & in laws
Last week as you boarded the plane from Spain

bound to Mexico,
you grasped a good newspaper with an interview
given by Andrew Young who stated,
the only non white component that Obama
has is his hair.
He is whiter than McCain, a hell of a statement.
He said at last, I will vote for him
because he is smarter than the other guy.
Race is all over,
Race us never over.
Race again.

Dancing by myself on a rusted nail

Just off the Halouver Creek
Listening to Red River Shore
Reading Lin Yutang
Strange light
Boats tied tight
Cruise ships shinning bright

Encounter #3

For 11 years

We've been going to the Jaiya Thai restaurant
Each time you order the fish
Each time with coke
And each time after eating
We walk outside into the Manhattan night
Toward Lexington
Digesting yellow taxis, crowded sidewalks,
the underground vibrating below our feet

Encounter #1 for Evan X Hyde

I sat in your office in January, 2008
Noticing your shaved head and white hair
I felt the energy of history
You still spoke about Phillip Goldson in the early 1970's
Like it was yesterday
My mother was pregnant about to give birth to me
When my father and Assad got you acquitted
She ran off some of the early Amandala with Fire editions
You
"stuck in a moment you can't get out off,"

I've been reading your articles for 20 years trying to find
a decent melody
I couldn't help but admire the books lying on your floor
an old desktop sandwiched between novels and non-fiction
the lighting in the room was dim like Charles Bukowski's kitchen

For Eliot

You crossed grey Manhattan in a black suburban
On your way to your televised resignation,
You paid US\$4300 for a few hours with Kristen
"flanked by his loyal wife Silda,
who stayed by his side despite everything." (BBC News New York, march 13, 2008)

In Grand Praire at the Nokia

For Pamela and Leonard Cohen
By Yasser Musa (April 3, 2009)
On a cold Dallas morning we drove our rented Ford focus

Out to Grand Praire up the Beltline just to scout the spot where

Leonard will sing like a bird on a wire
For weeks I told friends and family of my fantasy
seeing the old Jewish poet and his undefended heart
dreamed of us at a Denny's stalking
Drinking endless cups of coffee
Waiting for
"Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin"
On the cold Dallas morning I considered
Lee Harvey at the book depository
Coldplay opening for Cohen

Kayne West singing freestyle Pinocchio Story

Michele holding the Queen
Barack laughing with Lula
How do you summon a fury?
That crisp evening
we walked up to the Noika Theatre
You laughed at my nervousness
Upper class Americans with their elegant wine glasses

The march to seat MM 21 and 22
At post-modern church
Where is my camera?

How can I get an autograph?
Lights, beer, cheese, sound, voice

There he was
Skipping on
Decorated in grey
The man with the golden voice
Three girls

A man on an organ
What are the chances?
Sitting next to the love of your life
staring with eyes wide shut
Making home
Behind the smoke of all distinctions

Federico

November 2, 2008

Did you go to MOMA?

Did you see any of Miro's anti-paintings?
Did you see Manhattan from Brooklyn?
The book is a taxi cab

Taxi cab a movie ticket

Movie ticket a designer dress
I finally read Poet In New York
Borrowed from Hardie St. Martin's collection
Returned from Barcelona to Belize City
Back to his St. John's College
Federico
Small hours of the night.

In the Cactus Garden

Just beneath the cactus garden
People gather to buy fish
Fishermen with their burnt umber skin
Barefooted businessmen washing their clothes
Across the bow
At night Pinks Alley men deliver whores in white dories
And beneath the hull they go
Under the moon sometimes
They eat fry chicken and sing
The Sarteneja boys live free on the Halouver Creek
Just beneath the cactus garden.

Origami

For Mishek

February 17, 2009
On a cool Saturday morning
As I poured artificial sugar into my Kenyan coffee
I see you on the internet
At an origami site
Your hands twisting and turning paper
Your eyes stuck on the small screen
Instructions need patience
Your time is calm
As caffeine calculates the temperature of my blood
It must be awesome to fold
Dinosaurs
Planes
Plants
Space ships
Using Japanese ideas
For an 11 year old
Origami is prayer

Pretty fingers

For Mya

17 february 2009
your hand writing is beautiful
I watch
how pretty little fingers make words
with pencil

elegant gestures into shapes
the birth of typography
letters leading into words into spaces into lines
when you reach the end of a line

at the brink of the page's abyss
you lift up gently
spin the wooden instrument
rest
then go again
the next line like a new day
a sun rising as each strike glides
across the heavy horizontal horizon
your eyes focused, lips bitten, head only
slightly tilted
your handwriting is beautiful.

Tea, a kettle and a floral table cloth

For Valzhyna Mort
I have not read a single word of your new book
Factory of Tears,
Your Belarus eyes seem so penchant
I think of the way you grasp a poem page
Of all the absurd things
Eating salmon or rice and beans
Listening to the sky
Sipping green tea
Wanting the three minute brew to end in one
Flowers missing from your blouse
Speak, speak Valzhyna
Speak those words you wrote.

The Halouver Creek Poem

Part 1

Start 29 December 2008

At 3:04pm
This morning it rained
Lightly
Your bed still
Teasing ripples
The smell of fish and garbage
Ships parked
Smacks stacked

A poorly lit courthouse
A few fishermen
One taking his morning shit
Another brushing his teeth from a coffee can.
Do you think of your history often?
The many years you passed massive mahogany
Tied to chains
A floating floor extracted by black men
How many fossils do you keep in the safety of your spine?

In the thick mud

Each time a speed boat packed with happy tourists pass
I imagine the legacy of your waves unravel
Today I lie next to you in a third story hammock
I rock to an I-pod reading Hunter, Ernesto, and Walt
I sip tea from Taiwan
Sometimes my freckled daughter Mya interrupts
Asking questions about necklaces and bracelets
Halouever
The sun melts your darkness around 5:45am
The blinking lights in the distance

A signal that forces buses to line up
Waiting for the tomorrow horizon.

Two days to go

november 2, 2008

Barack
Your daddy sleeps in a Kenyan grave
Your daughters
Malia and Natasha never knew him
You flew to Hawaii to be with your grandmother
Madelyn Dunham
As Joe the Plumber shot bullets into the atomic sky
On Tuesday we will watch MSNBC
To see
If the corn fields of Iowa burn your name
Change is a metaphor for love
Belief a tiled gravestone in Kogelo

POST- electricity poems

Borrowed Phrases

From the Curricular Organization
(St. John's College, 1964-1965)

Botany

Detailed study of selected plants

Chordate biology

Structural, physiological,

and ecological relationship of various types of chordates

History of England

Most emphasis placed from 1485-1714

Geography of Western Europe

British Isles in detail

Advanced Latin composition

Pro Roscio Amerino by Cicero

and Agricola by Tacitus

College Algebra

Indices, logarithms, surds,

arithmetical and geometric progressions,

permutations and combinations,

binomial theorem, simultaneous equations,

remainder theorem

Child Psychology

Physical development from time of conception;

first days after birth; impulse of play;

self assertion, anger and aggression;

basic affections and attitudes toward parents,

innate and acquired fears,

development of sex interests,

motivation and environmental influences,

social development, intelligence development

Flatonia

In Flatonia I ate an Angus burger

From McDonalds

The blazing Texas sky

Slipping strange shadows across the interstate 10

Many men doing their shovel ready jobs

The recession hardly noticeable unless you

Peep over across the overpass

Look yonder to Joel's Bar-B-Que

A wooden shack could never compete

With the golden arch
Zinc vs sheetrock
Screen door vs glass