Rizwan Akhtar

The Porcelain
(In memory of Faiz Ahmad Faiz)*

A city was once abundant in candles, then darkness became a language. all lineage, all expressions were tightened unknown maladies surfaced on alveolar and dental ridges.

From the darkness emerged ghazals carefully sifted, transplanted and grew across the continent like an ivy— in the exiled incubator with my oxygenated English and a souvenir worn for diplomatic huff, I see you. From where I will bring the pitcher-maker's whirl and an uncensored lurk— you inserted putty on the right chinks, had a porcelain brimmed with strange potions, a hand familiar with similes and Persian fluff quilting the cradling cities in poems.

Your poems have cloned in the rugged and even places where language is a mutilated wick.

*Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911-84) is the renowned Urdu poet from Pakistan, and was the recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize.
The Crow*

(Death was the midwife that delivered the Crow. Rand Brandes)

Walking in the lazy drizzle
I saw the carcass of a crow
pouched in a tuft of grass
legs uplifted
a cargo turned upside down.
An ovalish totem
bobbed into a ripped rugby ball
and stiffened into a taxidermist’s fancy,
while the beak had gone still,
a question mark
asking me to move on.

I threw a glance around, complicit
in this causality—
the world should have been a museum
for such fossils lying unattended
on the road.

Wet with shimmering English rain
that crow was not black enough,
not like ours back home.
It had other feathers too,
but not like the one
we have in the droning hot afternoons
of Lahore
where sun bakes the birds
in its eternal oven—
so I rubbed my eyes
like the wipers working on the wind screen
and hurried on.