

The Pashto Poems

—For Zarmina Shehadi, poet

To the Pashtun women
who press the sounds in their chests
to dark cement

we offer marsh grass seedling

*May God make you into a riverbank flower
So I may smell you when I gather water.*

To the poets whose fingers tent
over stillborn tulips in the desert,
flame with machine gun rip in alleyways

we lift hands of plum bloom

To those who pen the twisted road
the house imploded in the small screen,
a scarlet cacophony

we lend the storm petrel egg

*Separation, you set fire
in the heart and home of every love.*

In the birthplace of pomegranates
your empty chador a dark simoom
swirls on the riverbank

forgive us our fragile attention

Half a world away your lines break
on our ears. But the words you sing
belong to no one.

*I call. You're stone.
One day you'll look and find me gone.*

Kim Hamilton

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