

We Who Were Our Own

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i. memory
was like the empty field
was like the desert
dying

ii. love,
that love
the world—
only I had believed.
one yours?
one but the one you?
So what.

I'd believed.
other than love.
me I went
again and again.
still:
other this world
other love.
love again.

iii. this life
your love
then eternity
Now

what Love left
you left

our time
of forgetting

my memory of love
my love
forgot
once again

iv. Someone! No, no one—
longing for,
erase
all memory.

No one, now no one.

v. waiting
is in search.

It passes
a thousand times

the wise fail
there is no lover

what
has come this time
when it saw nothing

vi. forgotten
memories
abandoned

one by one by one

abandoned
waiting
time elapse
longing
my memory
may forget

vii. An era has passed,

and Time is still stranded,
wait a little.

viii. We've freed ourselves, made Time irrelevant.

ix. speak of love
of return
of sheen
the moon

x. the moon stood
still
like a sheet.
stars fell from the moon's hands.
Some sank. Some rose to the surface,
That agony of separation.

Nothing in this world is asleep.

xi. We were
our final triumph
we did reach
and returned dying
lit up by
Love
by grace
still
only the heart felt
only it knew
only to itself
death
returned
carrying letters
to announce
that it will surely come

xii. arrange the
possible
in a corner

now softened.

a body
holds itself together
by the defeats and triumphs of the heart.

Nothing in this world is without.

xiii. In the festival of memory
you extinguished

I remember you

xiv. erasing itself by wiping out
the distance
the horizon to mist.
that mist.
in doubt.
cover of darkness
I may find you.

xv. pour
into the waiting
unlock
the promised

let her pass through
let at least for once
let it be
open it
it holds all

the one

its afterlife
still
waiting
in
nothing

nothing

xvi. We Who Were
words
kept clinging:
a witness of desire
of the distances of the world
our own
we who were

xvii. ruins
crumble
cracked
lost marks
smeared
worn

Time
to tear
to break
wake up.

xviii. the eye
is endless,
I see yesterday on the far, far horizon:

love again
I'll never see.

xix. they who
have left
no longer to be found

you left
departed
to find

Nothing's left
no possibility

and no way
no room
no margins
lost

Nowhere anymore
no one
what
who
they all have vanished

xx. it has come:
all perhaps some.

here: this may also

xxi. whatever may or may not be
who erases
who

xxii. nothing remains ahead.
the garden has ceased
and no one's left

nothing left to give.

xxiii. things were as they should be:
Now everything is your absence

the world—
Stay.
The world may become again.

xxiv. Be Near Me
You who me, you whom I
be near me
Remain near me
one
the other

Be near me
Be here
when nothing holds
be near me
be near me

xxv. softly,
softly.

softly.
softly.
softly.
softly.
softly.

xxvi. There's no sign of anywhere.
I've searched everywhere.
No sign of the edge

The ground has disappeared without leaving a trace
no no no no one

Unheard
No one had the time to listen, no one the desire
no witness
no trace.

xxvii. When you look
When you think
When you wait
When you look

you see no one.
No one.

xxviii. Black Out
I will complete the texts.

xxix. everything

at that exact moment
could be saved

remember nothing should be with no touch.

xxx. somewhere far off
was memory

it wasn't enough
it didn't wish to stay.

xxxi. How can I embellish
what's left
isn't enough
not enough to fill
the ages

xxxii. dust, piling up for years
now so clear

Everything at once was tangled
every image
crying out in longing.

Let there be a flood.

xxxiii. when this world permits
time to return.

xxxiv. a sweet, sweet message
to someone, to anyone,
of absolutely nothing

xxxv. You're doing it for nothing.

xxxvi. so relentless
those words after all else.

xxxvii. the abyss

still lost in the memory
of vanished page after page.

xxxviii. no word is found
no word for

xxxix. She
she she she
Yes.

xxxx. There's no
anywhere,
there's no
anywhere, not
not
not
Nowhere is there
And there's no anywhere.

there's no anywhere.
there's no anywhere.
longing for anywhere.

xxxxi. the field
is left
with margins

xxxii. we launched life
we would soon happen.

as you will,
as much as you want
still the same.
what
how
when we appear
we believed each word
we remembered any end, so many

as much as you will,
still the same.

we should heal these wounds.

Nothing's left.

Emptiness is made up of the same invisible atoms as is concrete. Our dreams and our waking life are equally filled with happenings. The world, comprised always of a dialectic, insists on a third argument, an extra eye. This is to say, everything is all things, as they are and as they are not. It is in our instinct to never cease exploration, to find possibilities even at the end. Writers, starkly conscious of both the breadth and banality of the lexicon, have always sought new methods, made new manifestos, for finding the infinitude of possibilities within the finite system of language, gnawing at our negative capabilities in order to excavate from oblivion a kind of extra-sensory knowing. To leave behind, without words, what we know to be true but which we cannot classify.

An erasure is one of these renewals. In a society of appropriation, an erasure utilises an existing text and makes it disappear in measures. What is left behind does not simply refer to what was; it comes to assume an identity of its own. It speaks about absence, about loss. Yet, it is held together by the attractive force between itself and its prior existence. The words are, we might say, held together by love. The process of making an erasure poem is one of gruelling repetition, repositioning, obverse censorship. Still, it does not attempt to simply be an analytic alienation of meaning, rather, a synthetic tendency in which feeling and sentiment are not denied in the irony of the process.

Erasing Faiz's *Rebel's Silhouette* (1991) was a laborious task that felt violent, anxious, tranquil, existential, transformational, and radical in turn. Making the choice of what to and not to erase spanned from arbitrary to justified, instinctual to cerebral. There is a self-reflexivity to the new poems left behind: they comment on the act of erasure. There is an emphasis on memory fading, much like the words on the page. There is an emphasis on pronouns in order to reflect on subjecthood and the blurring of boundaries between the poet, I; the eraser, me; the lover, you; and the reader, you. Importantly, in the poems that are left over, there is an emphasis on the discontinuity of time. Time is palimpsestic, accumulated, multiple, spiralling. The voice is at first hubristic, then hopes for healing. Healing as a collective, political renewal but also healing the text that has been torn apart. Each poem performs its own constraint produced via an artificial formula borne from the content of the poem. Using the metaphor of the prison, through whose bars Faiz looked out upon the moon and longed for his lovers, the poems find freedom within their linguistic restrictions. These poems are residues, renewals, simultaneous with the original poems. Faiz wrote these at the same time as they were erased by me. The erasures may have preceded the originals. There is no longer a distinction, or it is not useful to make a distinction, between the truth and the trace.

Language is made up of signs only; we must believe that it is free of its signifiers even as they

are inherent. Everything is an act of editing, finding the word in the whole, leaving behind a hole. Denying mutability means we are forcing the world to function as fallacy. An absence is the presence of itself. Darkness illuminated. This is self-conscious elision, an act of aesthetic violence that might reflect a larger, political act of violence. It is an act of rebellion; it is an act of parodying posterity. (It is simultaneously an act of reverence.) It questions author-ity, it offers that the reader—the subject—in her interpretation, might be the sovereign. What survives is not only a remnant, but a self-contained—albeit without an arc—story. The act of erasure loves the pen that can forget and still make memory mean.