

stone in love
seduction of the orphan past

poetry and photography
by oğuz erdur



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publisher's note

this is a work of poetry and prose. names, characters,
places, and incidents are either the product of the author's
imagination or are used fictitiously.

in a moment there are days...

falling in love tends to render everything else meaningless. captured by the spell of a passionate whirlwind and drifting like a half-dried leaf in autumn, one experiences an existential tremor affected by the enchanting chemistry of desire. it is an exhilarating liberation brought about by self-intoxication, exuberant yet perilous, which sanctions a sober glimpse at how far removed ordinary reality can be from the tragedy of the human condition. one thus achieves a blinding clarity that strips words and things of the thin veneer called meaning, with which we ordinarily coat them.

"of course!" somebody older and wiser will likely warn you, "we've all been there before. but don't be a fool it is infatuation you're talking about, not love. and remember: it always comes to pass." well, maybe it does. may be they do have a point, those well-meaning folks. may be all they are trying is to share the words of their wisdom—the fruits of their failures. but we all are entitled to our own foolishness, are we not? and more importantly, what if it actually is the other way around? what if the frantic energies unleashed by love are not the inner enemy attempting to overthrow the safety of a structured life? what if, on the contrary, they are the repressed within defying an oppressive order, yearning to return and emancipate the human animal by bringing a gift of innocence, which is more an achievement than an original state we

grow out of? what if all that our desires yearn for is a more passionate chance at life, while hanging on to the idea of love like it was the only unwavering compass for a ship lost at turbulent seas? what if, in short, this self-intoxication is but a manifestation of vitality waking up from a deep slumber and shaking us to the core—so that we would gather the courage to refuse being subjugated by what ordinarily passes as life around us? as if to say, “feel me you fool! don’t you go wasting me away! live me; let me live! while you still can anyway...”

if the idea of love is an age-old attempt to transcend the tragic limitations of being human, archaeological ruins are a testimony to the ultimate futility of our self-importance. ancient greeks thought hope is the evil of all evils because it prolongs suffering, to which there ultimately is no cure. it is not our astonishing capacity to endure suffering however, which makes us distinctly human. rather, it is our failure to accept what otherwise is the business-as-usual of mother nature. that is to say, the riddle at the heart of human existence is not suffering itself, but the meaning of it. religion and philosophy seem to agree on this point, though they part ways soon thereafter. both seem to grant however that love is an attempt to cure suffering, which is born out of the very suffering it attempts to cure. it is also a way of suffering, which forces us to recognize that of the others. this is one way in which love makes us more compassionate therefore more human.

the ruins of past lives echo the silent cries of those who have already walked their path to the end. and whatever they might have encountered on their way, the quest for love must have made the journey more meaningful for many a wanderer, if

not necessarily easier. if there is anything that love does make easier, on the other hand, it has to be the idea of dying. by endowing life with a meaning beyond itself, love creates a redeeming detachment, which might even allow us to turn ourselves into a gift worthy of the beloved. this must be the reason why, walking among ruins, i have often found myself thinking about people in the past dying for love. an ultimate human victory over the unconquerable. a transcendent courage to embrace your killer—life itself—with unyielding passion bursting out of your chest, defying the cosmic insignificance of your existence: “no! you cannot kill me! it is the love overflowing my heart, which carries me all the way to my own end. it is i who keep myself ablaze as i search for a hearth, in which to rest my fire. it is i who consume myself as i shine onto darkness and illuminate the path i walk on. so thank you death for chasing me around like you were my own shadow, teaching me the value of life itself. pity the fool, i say, who is afraid of shadows!”

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long before we began to digitize life and feed it to a cyber-universe, many observers reached the same conclusion that photography recreates reality rather than simply capturing it. though it might take a moment of reflection to refute the crude illusion of realism embodied in the countless snapshots taken everyday, we all know a thing or two about how to remake the reality before our eyes by controlling the perspective, the light, the composition, facial expressions, what goes into the frame, what remains outside etcetera, following which we beautify the result with the click of a button or two and post it somewhere for all to see till eternity. except, of course, none does so for more than a few seconds. and as we focus on all but the frantic effort to manipulate reality in order

to capture a piece of it in the most flattering way possible, we often fail to come to terms with the underlying urge to transform the actual into something more desirable. but this failure becomes rather costly, as we get addicted to the fleeting high of the snapshot, which pretty soon turns into an insatiable craving for more of the same. and the more we attempt to capture it, the more reality eludes us, making a mockery of our desperation.

for those who seek to transcend the snapshot of time in which they happen to exist, ruins of the past tell a tragic story of mockery and desperation. ruins are a testimony to how the moment, however long or short it might be, can only be lived but not captured. which, to me, is also the point of poetry. it is a gift of the moment, poetry, which is something quite other than the moment of its conception. an orphan artifact that resists the destruction of time, out of which it was created, albeit temporarily. a strange fruit born out of that which has come to pass, remaining behind as a eulogy. an elusive piece of everyday magic, which we get to see only if we believe it. poetry is defiance. of the tyrannical spell of realism that reality casts upon us. it is a willful failure to tell the story of the forces that conspire in its creation, knowing full well that the attempt is doomed from the beginning. (and should one decide to try it anyway, we have prose for that art of futility.) poetry is a form of seduction that tempts one into recognizing the strangeness of ordinary experiences. an invitation to infuse what otherwise are empty vessels—words—with the scents of the singularly unique life we each get to live. poetry is the lure of oblivion calling our attention to the mysteries of what still is here—before it all turns into dust in the end.

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life without love is nothing, whereas love without passion is a farce. it is only through the enchantment love brings that words and images turn into hymns and eulogies, paying their tribute to the ephemeral glory of the moments, in and out of which they are created. like ordinary rocks turning into monuments that stand tall and proud, staring us right in the eye as they bear witness to the cruel indifference of time, asking:

what about you now? how will you have come to pass? will you have left a trace when it's your turn to feed the flowers? will you have already written your own eulogy? that cosmic moment called your life—will you have turned it into a hymn to leave behind? or... do you happen to be rather too busy for that kind of hackneyed tragedy?