

**VISUAL  
ARTS** >

AIMÉ  
MPANÉ

MARC  
CHAMAILLARD

ADGER  
COWANS

CECILIA  
PAREDES

# BLACK RENAISSANCE NOIR

VOLUME 11 ISSUE 1 - SPRING 2011

**SPECIAL  
SECTION** \*  
**ISHMAEL  
REED**

**NON-FICTION  
PROSE**

GREG  
TATE

JULIO  
MARZÁN

DR. LAWRENCE P.  
JACKSON

ROGAIA  
ABUSHARAF

**POETRY**

JANICE  
HARRINGTON

TIM  
SEIBLES

SHERI D.  
WILSON

K. CURTIS  
LYLE

NURDURAN  
DUMAN

M.L.  
LIEBLER

// **INTERVIEWS**

DAVID  
MURRAY

NURDURAN  
DUMAN

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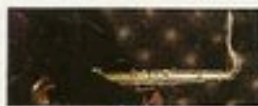
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# Victor Hernández Cruz interviews **Nurduran Duman**

**VHC:** Is there a lively, regular poetry scene in Istanbul?

**ND:** There is a very lively poetry scene in Istanbul and also in other cities in Turkey. In Istanbul alone, you can visit poetry venues day and night, every day of the week. There are always panels, readings, commemorations, festivals, symposiums and book signings. These can take place at any number of universities, cultural centers, bookstores and publishing houses. Many bars and nightclubs also host poets and musicians alike. I am often invited to events in various other cities. Just recently I was invited to speak about my book in Ankara, the capital in the center of Anatolia, where I was treated to a very productive conversation with a large audience. The poet's life here is both dynamic and fast-paced. We have a wide range of poetry publications, some of which have been around for quite some time. I enjoy contributing regularly to a number of them. Because of such a productive print culture for poets, new writers have a strong platform, and also new poetic movements find fertile ground in this plethora of publications. Having many poetry magazines makes our poetry life more dynamic. We discuss a wide variety of poetic issues and themes, new poets develop all the time and occasionally new poetry movements begin in these magazines. The poets enjoy stepping into polemics by writing in these magazines and I believe that polemics are very useful for finding new ways of thinking about problems in poetry and problems in general. Recently, internet groups have absorbed polemics too.

“The sea has a language. I hear it, I listen to it. It speaks to me. It sings, laughs, shouts and swears at me. Sometimes it quarrels with me and at other times it hugs and kisses me.”

**VHC:** Is there a tangible international presence in Turkey, and is there much transfusion of influences from the outside?

**ND:** There is certainly an international presence and we particularly enjoy poetry by a variety of international writers. Many artists are frequently invited to a flurry of events and their work is constantly being translated into print. In fact, an entire event may focus on the literature of a specific country. On the other hand, Turkish poetry builds upon its own long-established traditions and maintains a distinctly Turkish persona. In order to exchange influence, we rely heavily on translation.

**VHC:** You are an ocean engineer and a naval architect. What do these disciplines entail and how do they enter your creative work?

**ND:** Ocean engineers provide technical support for the work of oceanographers while naval architects are marine engineers who build ships. Poetry is a kind of creative work that includes both imagination and design. Completeness and rhythm are very important for the poet. I think being an engineer and having to conceive of a design from start to finish gives me a sense of completeness in my approach to art. My studies in mathematics help me catch that rhythm.

Being a student of the sea also informs my poetry. The sea has a language. I hear it, I listen to it. It speaks to me. It sings, laughs, shouts and swears at me. Sometimes it quarrels with me and at other times it hugs and kisses me. The sea has a literature and the sea is a literature in and of itself. I've been writing a poem called "Sea Language and Literature" for a long time, and I will continue writing it.



Nurduran Duman

**VHC:** Orhan Pamuk has a wonderful book called *Istanbul, Memories and the City*. Were the Turks happy with his Nobel selection?

**ND:** Of course his readers were happy. There were also mixed feelings however. Some people were pleased about the exposure that his work would bring to Turkish literature in general; others were more ambivalent, assuming that the award was more political than artistic.

**VHC:** Your poetry has a strong personal and imaginative voice.

**ND:** I like pushing personal, imaginative boundaries in my poetry. Turkish is a very rich language with lots of poetic possibilities in its grammar. It's also an agglutinative language. I like to use Anatolian cultural experiences right next to universal experiences.

**VHC:** Is Turkish poetry free of nationalist and ideological projections?

**ND:** Turkish Poetry has no problem with ideological projections. Especially in the 1980s, poetry was quite ideological. These days, our poetry projects the personal voice more, which is the case for most poetry around the world.

**VHC:** How do you relate to the poetry of Rumi?

**ND:** As an artist, thinker and historical figure, Rumi is very important to our culture, especially his expression of faith. I like his poems, but I relish the beliefs behind them even more. We have a poet like Rumi in our canon — Yunus Emre. They touch on similar subject matters, but employ very different styles in their articulations. Both have been deeply influential on my work and I pay homage to them in my poetry. For instance in "A City's Steps" I declare:

*"from the sea that can never be passed  
the dolphin flowed into my path  
was it a fish  
the poet's  
or the first man I loved..."*

"dolphin translates as 'yunus' in Turkish.  
for Yunus Emre.

**VHC:** Was your family Muslim and religious. Is there a dress code for women in Turkey?

**ND:** My family is Muslim. I can say that we live our religion like Rumi. We respect everybody's beliefs. We love the creature because of the creator. This is a phrase of Yunus Emre. When the Republic was established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his friends, the first and main rule of the Republic was: "Peace In The Country, Peace In The World". We're a secular country. There is no dress code for women; women and men are equal in every area. I have to add that both my writer friends and I get very surprised when we hear these kinds of questions.

**VHC:** You also write prose. What themes do you cover? Are they essays, narratives, stories or novels?

**ND:** I published my first prose book, *Exchanging Glances with Istanbul*, in October 2010. It has elements of fantasy, so I am still not sure how to categorize it. Although I will certainly write more prose in the future, my first responsibility is poetry. Therefore I generally aim to contribute to the craft of poetry itself — not only through my own poetry, but by writing critical essays about poetry. I'm also a translator of poetry. I believe that literature translation means 'peace'. Translation has the ability to take down walls of prejudice because people get to know each other. Knowing leads to understanding. Understanding leads to empathy. Empathy, in turn, makes it very difficult to hurt another. I believe, therefore, that the translation of literature should be taken seriously and implemented on a national level if we are in fact serious about achieving peace internationally. ■

By  
NURDURAN  
DUMAN

**The Lily-Necked Girl**

*Translated by Tom Pow*

it was the kiss, was the voice, was the lips  
it was the word on the palm  
of the lily-necked girl: fallen  
helplessly in love

when the woman blew the word away  
it was the tongue, was the cheek, the neck  
the woman walked to the water  
towards the voice of the lily

it was the way, was the mother, the father  
it was the eye, the particle of dust in the eye  
it was that special pose  
captured from a willowy poem  
the salt sucked from its cheeks

it was the right-angled  
shadow stuck in the sand  
the water flowing downwards, upwards the fire  
her face was the sky, the girl was yellow

it was the moment, one was too many,  
the other too short

it was making love, being loved  
being loving: what was to follow  
was wave upon wave

was the stream, the stream's depths, the sea.

**Picture**

*Translated by Tom Pow*

inside me: an empty frame  
inside the frame  
fractured waters  
a time-locked lake

a colourless end

a white swan's wing  
soft as smoke in my face  
my face blacked out  
in photographs

there is nothing white in the word "love"

this sadness this world of ash  
flames spread from its brush  
I didn't burn

but I died

### SOP

*Translated by Gökçenur Ç.*

For all you may say my love  
I committed all the murders.  
There were seven stars over the town,  
streets were showing off their legs,  
balconies were naked.  
there lays the scar of courage on my cheek,  
I left my shadow under children's feet,  
the scar on my left side is a sneak.

night had already been dived  
into the town's womb.  
there were seven red stars in the sky.  
poverty: leggy slave,  
kidnapped my voice.  
I couldn't catch  
outskirts aborted  
before my eyes.

I committed all the murders,  
here is my gun, here are my hands,  
my finger prints, my blood test.  
I kept silent,  
here are my recordings.

### Inverse Sun

*Translated by Gökçenur Ç.*

head for the inverse sun  
make sure you have a young flesh beside you  
in the morning who came out on the wrong side

let the town! the silver winged angel  
sleep with false dreams  
let your smile sleep too

head for the inverse sun,  
be moon and sympathize,  
salt the darkness, crumble your mind

angel! sexless slave,  
her goodness is a black spot  
on her dress

head for the inverse sun  
from west to west, submerge  
the water into the knee high water

slave! hungry in her territorial waters,  
the pole of the world which you clarify  
is like a finger now pricking into your eye

By  
NURDURAN  
DUMAN

### Half Circle Life

*Translated by Tom Pow*

I swapped my life  
for one that was cursed  
to find that lost verse

I built walls of salt  
in the two roomy eyes of my soul

I excavated to no effect;  
I built castles of beaten gold.  
I carried death in my right eye –  
my life sprawled over the face of the earth.

I drank magic waters; I swam in them too –  
that explains my troubled mind.

So that I might write that verse,  
I settled my scores with a hopeless love.  
there were times I turned ugly at midnight  
I made love spewing hateful words.

I wove lovers and friends from cotton yarn  
whenever I broke off a thread  
I too was broken

whomever I touched has been wounded  
yet sitting in this half life  
I passed through the inner seas of love.

### Weeds

*Translated by Gökçenur Ç.*

tides are not reconized on your face  
streets heading to your eyes  
are overrun with weeds

hapiness is a golden thistle  
in the bed  
in the night's wells

dreams drop on you  
darkness cracks: pain  
gives birth to itself

the child in your soul  
makes red hot sandcastles,  
Adam's spine aches

No tides on your recognized face

**Sea Language and Literature**

*Translated by Neslihan Akar*

good news! the sun has come back rose watchers  
hurray! for so many years by now  
I had no ill-willed leaf fall on my garden  
dream I had, I washed the nights in my sleep  
I burned, its mast was made of a dark blue line  
decayed, its sail cloths were patchy  
now, all rivers to the sea!  
blood, tips of nerves every one  
kidney stones all to the sea!  
I saw faces looking at the sea  
their keys were between two eyebrows  
their path passed through two forests  
towards my heart. My heart don't ever keep silent  
this flutter, this love!  
Hey, the one whose way of loving I love  
Come on, to the sea.

**Sea Language and Literature 6**

**Quiver**

*Translated by Neslihan Akar*

I am a seashell listen to me  
what I sing is brook mouths, isthmuses  
I woke up deep sands, undercurrent liquids  
let me rest at the bay's hillock

my shadow is moss, its green vein is cut  
I kiss and blow cloud to the pain in the stone  
pew black water bags ugh sluices  
let your ear hear to get well: your inner voice's  
oppressed

with roses, r's, rejoices  
I have sewed a new world atlas  
never mind if its two rivers are missing

spread me. read. then spear me.xx