

Lahore Evenings

By Rizwan Akhtar

Only there, the evenings could have sounds
and when I stared back adjusting my hood
an old tree stooping over me in the Jinnah Bagh
at a blessing distance; a vendor slinked past.

On the Charing Cross I saw the colonial structures
oddly brushed by the five o'clock faces
So I let my cycle waddle on the pavement
and invented, in their noise, an obscurity.

In a t-shaped alley, a beggar threw his patience
I sneaked through a gap in the broken wall
at the edge of a small bush, lonely and evoked.
The brown silence scraped my knuckles.

I knew it was irritating. The way decrepit houses
drew subtle shadows from dusty light, the bush
let out its foul smell on my nostrils
I gulped the spit of my grown tongue.

Too smart, said a skeletal woman with a trunk
of her arm poking with sticks of her fingers,
clueless, and coiled in stares; a primitive snort
in her grating gutturals.

And I paddled all the way home, saw children
scattered in a strange harmony over the city
the time hissed from the November twilight,
yip, yip, yip.