

for my sisters who entered the Nile with open eyes

In October 2024, activists from El Gezira state in Sudan reported that 130 women and girls committed suicide to escape rape by the RSF militia. The UAE backed RSF militia notoriously uses militarized rape and gang rape as a weapon of war in Sudan's counter-revolutionary war. In two years, the war has claimed tens of thousands of lives, displaced 11 million people, exposed 24 million to starvation, and left 14 million children without access to education. Given the dire humanitarian crisis, precise figures of those who experienced sexual violence, and those who entered the Nile, cannot be confirmed.

clouds gather

beneath my ribs

a flock a mass a sit-in

of primordial seeds

ready to split

& drench

the earth

my heart is

a carved

hillside in

the kingdom

of ancient lutes

a river of doves

trills as my sisters

leap into the Nile

on the new moon's eve

dew bejewels the patient

weeds with its trillion

g l i s t e n i n g e y e s

the Nile – having swallowed

& sunk so many daughters

at the dead-end of choice

the impossible verdict

to become

autonomous

sediment

&  
u n f n e c e d  
s  
t i p  
s r i  
to  
sever  
life || body  
my sisters  
enter the  
Nile and  
journey  
onwards  
blushing  
thesky  
on route  
to the  
beyond  
beyond  
some  
one's  
child  
alive in  
the breach  
by foot  
by field  
by rain  
by air  
by sky  
she  
flees  
the  
men

only  
to be  
found  
in the  
verandah  
overlooking  
humanity  
her heart  
a small  
bird  
a timeless sky  
she scans the  
expansion  
for a sign of respite  
a parcel of land  
a branch to rest on  
but the world  
is landless  
is water  
&  
sky  
with  
nowhere  
left to go  
not even a  
wink of shade  
for a sister  
who weighs with  
an ancient scale  
death against rape  
+/- spoiled harvests  
+/- cholera  
+/- thirst  
+/- war  
who was  
the first

to plot  
to enter  
the Nile  
limbs tied  
to bricks  
stones  
logs  
to weigh  
the body  
down  
*sister*  
*is*  
*the*  
*river*  
*cold?*  
who  
was  
the  
first  
to  
stay  
to  
go  
to ebb  
to flow  
sipping  
river?  
*sister*  
who  
will  
you  
let go  
to enter  
the Nile  
with open  
eyes to swallow  
the unknown

to exhume  
the world  
beyond  
the world  
of man  
who is  
lost  
adrift be  
wildered  
& covered  
in sky?  
having  
swallowed  
too much life  
the Earth is melancholic  
for the time before nations  
*beforekingdoms, beforesongs*—when  
I hear you joined the brides of the Nile  
the Mermaids of Kush as anchor in  
the river of light in Africa's open artery  
it is as if we are one waterlogged body  
in your absence I slip & fall & dent  
the world's nadir—this opaque  
open field opens only  
for those who  
scoured  
the  
end  
of  
b  
e  
i  
n  
g  
to  
will  
myself

back to  
l i f e  
i become  
a cicada  
i crawl  
like a  
horse  
gutt  
ed  
by  
l  
i  
g  
h  
t  
n  
i  
n  
g  
i  
climb  
into the  
trees &  
c r o o n  
y o u r  
names  
*s i s t e r*  
*come*  
*back*  
*to*  
*me*  
come  
watch  
how  
the  
sky

st  
utt  
ers  
as  
the  
m  
o  
o  
n  
's  
fur  
gets  
caught  
in twigs  
come let us  
adorn the soil  
with our faces  
and taste  
the dust  
sister  
have  
you ever  
wondered if  
*s i s t e r s*  
*a r e p o e m s*  
strewn along  
the shore  
of the world  
& glazed  
with a sheath  
of dancing  
cells?  
cells like  
stars do  
not live long  
their dance is mortal  
whereas the wind is

e t e r n a l l y  
f o r m l e s s  
u n l i k e t h e  
d e r v i s h  
& t h e m a r t y r  
l i g h t d o e s n o t g r o w  
w e a r y o f c e a s e l e s s v o y a g e  
w h e r e a s w a r r e t u r n s  
r e p e a t s i t s e l f  
c l o a k e d i n  
f e a t h e r s  
s i p p i n g  
t e a  
w a r  
c h a r s  
t h e  
t r a n  
s i e  
e n t  
w o r l d  
b u t l o v e  
a f t e r d e a t h  
b e g i n s a l i f e  
o f i t s o w n  
h a b i t i  
w h o a b s o l v e s  
t h e t u n e  
o f o u r  
d e s p a i r ?  
w h o m d o e s  
t h e s h a p e o f  
o u r s u f f e r i n g  
h o l d ? w i l l  
a n y o n e  
r e m e m b e r  
t o r e m e m b e r  
t h e l i g h t

in the seat  
of your soul  
galloped like  
the meteors  
who leapt from  
their first homes?  
are the stars like us  
born of love?  
born of violation?  
born of shattered  
c h i l d h o o d  
life arrives  
miniscule  
tender  
a heart  
beat  
eru  
pts  
w e  
blink  
& we  
flicker  
w e  
l i v e  
a little  
before  
vanishing  
s i s t e r  
can the story  
of our species be  
transcribed into  
an alphabet of  
twinkling  
lights?  
the rocks  
the moths  
the tyrants

each with  
an undercoat  
of synapses  
this interior sky  
of expiring substance  
habibiti is it true  
everything is forgotten  
only to be repeated again?  
is it true humanity  
departs the echo  
chamber of  
blood only  
to forget  
when  
we are  
where  
we are  
who is  
asleep  
& who  
if anyone  
is awake  
as the cold  
night unfurls &  
the hibiscus flowers  
beside a dreaming  
child anchored  
to nothing  
without  
know  
ledge  
of death  
where  
does  
the  
spirit  
go?