

## 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.