



Sultana Raza

*Ceci n'est pas un poeme<sup>1</sup>*

As infinitives split into infinity,  
Nouns refusons to be precisely named,  
Gagging in throats of frogs, can't be understood.  
Why have verbs become immobile like flowing marble sculptures,  
Or gerunds frozen like rabbits in the headlights of now?  
Adjectives take an eternity to descend,  
As adverbs spiral off like dandelion seeds into thin air.  
Wondering what, or who to enhance/qualify,  
They have failed me magnificently.

If only conditionals wouldn't bounce between  
The degrees of their temperature.  
Why have particles all scattered like pollen amongst flowers?  
The Present is too Perfect to last continuously.  
Comparatives have become as elusive  
As the pot of gold at the end of the alphabetic rainbow.  
Though vowels are yodeling,  
Their echoes have become too mixed up to grasp, and  
Consonants are constantly contriving to stay out of touch.  
Superlatives roll away most superbly  
Like snowballs downhill, out of reach.

Why are figures of speech shifting like sand dunes?  
Metaphors mock me like mockingbirds.  
Melting like snowflakes are similes at my touch,

While staying as clear as mud on the ground.  
Metonymy has deserted me, can't be scribbled on,  
While synecdoche refuses to be penned down.  
Why are euphemism, and litotes elbowing for shelf space?

If only idioms didn't tend to beat around the bush.  
Why are hyperboles acting like  
I've got a million years to compose these verses?  
If only allusions wouldn't have become too illusive to hold on to.  
Has irony sunk too deep to be visible?  
Has it descended to mine for iron ore?  
Oxymorons are as solid as air, too intangible to really pin down.

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'This is not a poem

-The End-

## Ceci n'est pas une nouvelle<sup>2</sup>

Will the Future Continuous be forever curling out of range?  
Will the Future Perfect have retreated to an invisible isle?  
Will I have been searching for the Future Perfect Continuous  
for years at the turn of this decade?  
Has my negative capability disappeared in the forest of my mind?  
Will the context remain wooden, hiding amongst trees?

Spillengs are behaving like socks at jumble sales.  
Storylines flow away, down sinuous rivers,  
To merge in the collective unconscious.  
One setting is eclipsed by another due to confusion,  
Created by millions of buzzing bees.

Shady characters have run away with my plot devices,  
While the good ones are too immersed in meditation to be disturbed.  
The lively ones can't hear anything  
Above the noise of the parties they're enjoying,  
While the introverts have shut the world out,  
Including me: their would be creator.

Swinging from cloud to cloud, mirth disperses it's laughter,  
Mocking my attempts at being funny,  
While side characters are swallowed by unseasonal mists.

As the tip of my iceberg spouts off confessionals,  
They flake off like volcanic ash.

As words dance off, helter-skelter,  
I'm still waiting for a story to c\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

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<sup>2</sup>This is not a short story

-The End-

## Labyrinth Chess

Threading the needle,  
(formerly owned by Cleo)  
the street market  
burroughed through to  
the greenishly wharfish park,  
hyding just one waterless loo,  
with canaries blowing the whistle on  
bellhops and grave lads, who go broke  
playing with chance,  
while fake oxen graze by the ford,  
shedding strands of real hay,  
as in a corner, guilds speak of  
shepherding or rolling the globe  
to fair Arcadia in May.

*Ne compton pas trop sur notre* horse,  
opined the bishop archly to the king.  
bank not on your 'high' side,  
never let your guard down,  
or debt could bloom and bury commoners in  
shards of marble.

They should hedge their bets, but pad not too closely  
between the green witch, and  
the knight living in white halls.

Trying to bridge the gap between east and west ends,  
ministers down Porto, slyly eyeing belles  
dreaming of building towering bridges  
for cumbersomely dressed  
regents who tend to visit abbeys  
fleetingly, as they need to bond with bakers,

for bread on the cheap side is as full of ham as  
dear brick sandwiches,  
before hammering out deals with smiths  
for new suits to don for the coronation.

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Note: this poem was inspired by London's tube-map.

-The End-

## Eclipsed Milli Seconds

Why the sudden hush as I turn the echoing corner into a vast hall?  
Had the last visitors just disappeared down the far-away stairs?  
Peopled with venerable marble,  
carved into eyebrows, ear, chins, broken off noses.  
Chipped shoulders, armless maidens, flexing muscles,  
The entire space seemed to hold its collective breath.

As I wander amongst dreamy vases,  
I spin around quickly,  
But I miss seeing the young priestess adjust her veil,  
Or Aphrodite stroke her hair,  
Or the Nereid twitch her tail,  
Or Athena raise her head by a few millimetres.

They looked like a forest of marbled bust, statues, columns,  
With the last rays of the sleepy sun  
burnishing them a rusted orange  
Just for a few minutes, before being swallowed up  
By smog-filled clouds.  
As they go misty in the deepening twilight,  
I hear a far-off murmur, a restless rustling,  
Like winds blowing though  
The invisible leaves of myth, branches of history.

Wait a minute! Did Cassandra's statue  
Just shiver with foreboding?  
Was she still in mourning, even though the Trojan war  
Had ended ingloriously a few millennia ago,  
Through a tricky ploy?

Would Hecuba be soothed to know that  
Now no one has trusted Greeks bearing gifts  
For a few millennia now?

Was that spidery crack already there?  
There, where Achilles's heel rested on that urn?  
Wasn't that growing ever to slightly?

Or were my eyes playing tricks on me,  
As these ancient effigies were swaying for milli seconds  
Through tunnels of time.

My foot-steps echo in the vast, empty corridors,  
As I take advantage of the shortage of ushers,  
Or guards, or whatever they were called.  
If no one was around to badger me, why rush away?

Did Pliny the Elder blink for a micro-second?  
Was that a fleeting wink by Marcus Antonius?  
Did that Claudius cough because I blocked his view?  
Or did Artemis's hound shift ever so slightly?

The twilight deepened,  
With rhythmic rain pattering down on the glass roof.  
Perhaps the staff were busy sorting out the sudden power cut.

Did the Etruscan man on the sarcophagus  
Pull his eternally smiling wife just that bit closer?

Was that the wind sighing down time's tunnel,  
Or was that Erato's harp warming up?  
Did a window groan upstairs, or did Calliope's quill  
Make the tiniest of scratches on her marbled bloc?  
Did that 'crunch' come from my shoe scraping the slippery floor,  
Or Urania's fingers squeezing her marbled globe?

I wonder if there's an eclipse of some strange planets  
Going on in another part of the galaxy?

Did that longing sigh escape from Narcissus,  
As he glimpsed his own beauteous face  
In the washed out window right opposite him?

But Antinous remained silent, looking down,  
Keeping the mystery of why he drowned in the Nile  
Folded away firmly in his far-seeing eyes.

I'm still waiting for him to smile ever so slightly,  
Or to look up, just for a micro-second.

-The End-

### *Fusion Lunatique*<sup>3</sup>

Bubbling steamlessly with  
elation, at being picked by a chef with a  
world famous temper, slivers of  
almonds, and coconut, gingerly  
roasted with nostalgic  
*élan*, rejoice by partying with  
oats in a goji berried sauce.

Fried with patience, orient dough yields  
gilded stars crisp with  
altruistic aspirations of  
nutmeg to be  
ground disdainfully with  
asafoetida, black onion seeds,  
caramelized cardamom, which  
lead to an  
over-abundance of flavors; yet  
nuggets of wisdom abscond  
eternally from chef's curried attempts,

while guests search in vain  
for partnering with tasteful drinks.

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<sup>3</sup>Moody Fusion

-The End-



## Succulent Capitalism

Concocting complicated confections,  
culinary cognoscenti  
succeed in confusing  
vacuous clients,  
susceptible to grazing with celebrities, and  
centrifuged connoisseurs,  
with complex configurations,  
carried by classy *garçons*<sup>4</sup>  
in crystalline crockery,  
enough to cough up crazy cash, or  
quantum *cheques*  
for ludicrously acclamatory amounts,  
while congratulating the chef  
on his concise conception of  
*cassoulet au confit du canard enchaîné*<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>Waiters

<sup>5</sup>Cassoulet containing the confit of 'chained' ducks. *Le Canard Enchaîné* is also a well-known French satirical weekly newspaper.

-The End-

## Unpalatable

Garnished with too little patience,  
the bubbling blob of self-importance  
was not altruistically  
aromatic enough  
to the inquiring mind  
to consume it entirely  
without any queasy qualms  
of unquantifiable disgust.

-The End-

## Overpowering Fragrance

Crossing swords,  
chillies, green with red  
evaporate in a centrifuged swirl,  
obliged to join forces,  
conspiring to conquer former colonizers  
with tropical dreams,  
*pimenté* by sunny promises.

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‘spiced up

-The End-

*Chère stagiaires*<sup>7</sup>,

I advise against combining devilled and Russian eggs,  
or bewildered, they will scramble away.  
if prudent, keep *lait russ*<sup>8</sup> away from English breakfast.  
avoid Dim Sum just before maths exam.  
don't ham, up your lines, or brandish frankfurters  
while auditioning in haughty Hamburg.

Try not to consume grapes after *sauerkraut*,  
specially if trying to out-fox a vixen,  
or you may end up lustfully eyeing  
glazed doughnuts for illicit tricks.

If sold out, opt out of *crème brulant à l'impatience*<sup>9</sup>;  
instead try *Soufflé Légère du Raisin*<sup>10</sup>  
to up your patience levels,  
so that you can become tolerant of glutinous rice;  
which isn't necessary to consume  
while sticking happily to friends,  
or too many banana fritters  
may send your time skittering crazily away.

Stick to *Glühwein*<sup>11</sup> with a Burger de Luxe,  
if you suffer the side effects of grumpiness,  
after a crusty *Gromperkichelcher*<sup>12</sup> in Hasselt.  
A cosy cottage in Penzance  
might be the best place to consume  
pannacotta with Cornish cream tea.  
Life may not be as cool as cucumber, or peachily parfait,  
but it's not worth *Fugue à l'Autruche*<sup>13</sup> neither.  
Cordialement, Mimosa Sage

PS I'll put you all out of your agony  
By announcing that the calculation  
Of the algorithms of algae growth  
In cold aquariums is annulled from course.

Btw, Question 12 was about *purée de panais*<sup>14</sup> in the  
*Ecole Culinaire de Pune*<sup>15</sup> Final Exam, not *pani puri*<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>Dear Interns

<sup>9</sup>Cream burning with impatience

<sup>11</sup>Warm (Luxemburgish) wine

<sup>13</sup>Name of a modern dish: 'running away like  
an ostrich'

<sup>15</sup>Culinary School of Pune, India

<sup>8</sup>Coffee made with milk

<sup>10</sup>Light soufflé made of raisins

<sup>12</sup>Luxemburgish potato cakes

<sup>14</sup>Puree of parsnip

<sup>16</sup>An Indian snack

*Concassé des Concepts Cousue*<sup>17</sup>

Irridating *l'épanouissement*<sup>18</sup> of the  
Funky sort  
Mixed with  
Ondulatingly thoughtful  
*Cornichon au vapeur, cuit a la folie*<sup>19</sup>  
Estranged from its *humeur moutardique*<sup>20</sup>;  
Dates crushed with *canard confuse*<sup>21</sup>,  
Gain in whispering  
amplitude.

Nevertheless, a sliver of  
Gateaux layered with  
*Abricots sautée*<sup>22</sup>, garnished with  
Wafers of *cajou*<sup>23</sup>,  
Iced with rose petals  
Literally, and  
Laterally, can  
Become, with a pinch of prudence,  
Eligible for  
*La piece de resistance*<sup>24</sup>, if not  
Overdone; retaining its  
subtly reminiscent flavor of  
Textured *fiançailles matinale*<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Concassé of Stitched Concepts

<sup>18</sup> Fulfillment

<sup>19</sup> Steamed gerkins done too much or to madness ( a new kind of fancy nonsensical dish)

<sup>20</sup> Mustard-like (or sour/bitter) mood

<sup>21</sup> Confused duck

<sup>22</sup> Sauteed apricots

<sup>23</sup>Cashewnuts

<sup>24</sup>The main dish

<sup>25</sup>Morning engagement

-The End-