

Snow Is the Poem Without Flags

for Orhan Pamuk

What is whiter than stars yet darker
than cloud-sifted moonlight, softer
than the breast that nurtures a child?

Only snow answers this call to mystery
and pleasure – the white snow of a winter's
morning that dreams itself gone.

And what is its name, this creature
of cold light and desire, where is the center
of its knowledge and longing? Clearly, its address

is history and the heart its blue-white body,
but who can tame it and raise it up from silence?
who can instruct its paws to brush like lamplight

against her face? Only the white breath of the wind
– the wind that moans in Arabic and Turkish in Hindi
and Hebrew and English in the cold mouth

that prays in a thousand tongues and knows
no mother or father that cries like a child
who thirsts for the breast only the wind

brushing the face of the snow that was born
anonymous the wind in the snow's
white hair And where can we find this snow,

immersed as we are in summer in the heat
of war with a hot sun blazing and the whine
of rockets and bombs that fly like blown flakes

of darkness everything on fire with a great
and unquenchable thirst? Only the wind can speak
and name its country.