Kashmir: the wait is, and is not.

In this poem, Kashmir is the conflicted space of a perpetually deferred yearning. The homeland is an absent presence; confronting it is always-already im/possible. The nauseating viscosity of blood and memory have thickened the nostalgia for an imaginary past. Yet, with every sigh of be/longing, the iron stranglehold of the present rusts a little, someday it may wear away and lead to a future of hope.

The words ‘Noon’ and ‘Zoon’ in the poem are from the Kashmiri language; noon means salt, and zoon means the moon.

I.

You stand at the imaginary gate
Of future time, eyes pegged on stillness
As that of wind-abandoned trees, or the desert of a blue sky.

The journey to a homeland must come
Yet you defer it, defer it again.

Staring at the clockhands of daily endeavour
Slippery, your glance touches the mountains
Brown-blue, green-gray, cloud-embroidered.

This is the noon of your day
Salt of that place, a bloody home.

Far from sea, far from peace, far from me.

II.

Roots grow out from your feet
And the road is not in sight.

III.

You stand at the imaginary gate
Of future time, hands holding the head
As if it were a rounded stone, or a grenade about to burst

The journey to a homeland must come
Yet you defer it, defer it again

Grasping at the frames of locked desires
Keyless, your fingers fumble across maps
Orange-green, red-yellow, overlapping lines
This is the *zoon* of your night
Moon of that place, a bloody home.

Far from sea, far from peace, far from me.

IV.

Still and heavy,
The iron gate of future time
Will rust one day
With your breath alone.