

INFERNO OF MANHATTAN

Bashir Goth

The following poem is my way of recapturing the gravity of that ominous day, which has not only derailed the trajectory of human history but has also caused unprecedented rift between world civilizations, thus bringing closer Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* by a day or two. It is my way of making sense of the senseless and somehow reaching out for the victims of the attack.

INFERNO OF MANHATTAN

Kamikaze thunderbolts
monumental flames,
Smoke,
Stench of sizzling human flesh,
Dead, comatose, living,
Whole bodies, part bodies,
Flying charred paper cuts
Inferno of Manhattan
Howling
Death, death, death
Silence at ground zero.
Hordes of ghostly human beings
Limping away
From the hellfire of Hades
Silhouettes of weary
Heroic firefighters
Bleary eyed

Drenched in hot rancid sweat
Heavily coughing
Sooty acrid phlegm

Hugs of shock
Of disbelief,
Lost of virginity
Of childhood,
O' Lord !
Why do they hate us?

On September eleven
America wakes up
To its naïve nakedness.

Astounded prophets of doom
Baffled scribes, pundits rummage
Through ancient scrolls;
Old wounds, new wrongs,
History's dust,
Ashes of foregone battles
Why do they hate us?

Parchment after parchment
They fumble for ominous answer
*"Demonic medieval rage
Pent up anger
Mounted grievances;
Over age-old oligarchies
Tyrannies, oppression
In far away lands
Boomerang revenge
In reverse;
Over illusions
Over lost gardens in Andalusia
Over tribes
Embroided in biblical lands"*

Balderdash!

"Satanic murderers"

They conclude

"Evil incarnated

Emblazoned with

Outward poetic license

Obscene rendering

Of the Almighty's oracle

Wicked martyrs

Laughing to their graves

Hastening

To reserved paradise

Carrying dowry in pails

Of the infidel's blood

To the waiting bosoms

Of six dozens

Of doe-eyed maidens"

Up from their scrolls;

On came the airwaves,

The ululation

The sardonic delight

Of the Sarecean salute!

Rivers of denial, fatwas,

Bereft of denouncements

Of outright condemnation,

Sheer divine ecstasy

Of schadenfreude,

Flow in various shades

From the shifting palaces

From the shimmering sands

Of Shehrazade's abode

"This is war"

Erupts the American soul

"America should win"

Hands reach for hands

Hearts reach for hearts

One nation, one land

Under God, indivisible

Tremor, Tremor, Tremor
American anger on the move
Heaven is painted red
Either with David or with Goliath
Even the Great Almighty
should make up his mind.

Bashir Goth, Sept. 12, 2002.