

## I AM BALANCING ON ICE WITH MORE POEMS IN MY HAND

All the servants agreed  
that the omens at my birth were good:  
the domestic cow calved within minutes  
of my arrival, and the caretaker spoke of udders  
with the metaphor of fingers hung from a full Vesak moon.  
The old gardener cried saddhu to the sun  
for turning his roses redder than blood,  
although he couldn't understand  
why their sentinels of thorn  
were longer and sharper this year.  
The maid giggled into the verandah  
with six warm eggs cupped in her hands,  
first offerings  
of the black Leghorn pullets.  
The family astrologer scaled me in Libra,  
promising creative juices  
strong as the currents of the Mahaveli.  
My mother remarked  
that unlike her other children  
I did not kick in the womb,  
but seemed rather to dance  
like a dervish circling fire.  
The fat midwife froze  
when she slapped my buttocks  
and didn't hear the springing scream of lungs,  
but a coherent cheer and cheer  
for her expert manipulations.

Only my father was silent,  
holding the joy and torment of the omens  
in his eyes,  
and having witnessed the first poem,  
silently wondered  
when and where, if ever,  
I would fashion my others.