

# *Martín Espada*

## GHAZAL FOR OPEN HANDS

*in memory of Agha Shahid Ali  
December 10, 2001  
Northampton, Massachusetts*

The imam stands above your grave to pray with open hands,  
cupping your spirit like grain in the palms of these open hands.

Poet of Kashmir, the graveyard lathers my shoes with mud  
as the imam calls to Islam's God and lifts his open hands.

Ghazal-maker, your pine box sinks into a cumulus of snow,  
red earth thumping on the coffin, dropped from open hands.

There are some today who murmur of the cancer in your brain  
but do not know the words for speaking to Allah with open hands.

We listen to Islamic prayers at the cemetery, as we pay for bombs  
to blossom into graves in places where they pray with open hands.

Far from here, the bombs we bless are tumbling down in loaves  
of steel to tear away the fingers from their hungry open hands.

Shahid, your grave multiplies wild as cancer cells across Afghani earth,  
countless prayers reverberating in the well of the throat, in open hands.

I cannot scrape off the mud choking my shoes or blink away the vision  
of reaching into the hole for you, my hands open to your open hands.