

Poems

Omar Sabbagh

A Teetering Place

Where do I go, driven by this erring beast
Each time, with fathomless feet, my eyes
Somehow closed, and somehow neat –
Where do I go after the true and licit feast?

There is shrieking once more, and from
The balcony I hear the base spirits roar
About this place, a teetering place
By which I dye a dyer's dye, and am

Filled with a drop of good and surreptitious
Grace. A mere dreg or pellet can be the sum
Of that flowing water we then become, fast, slow,
The speed of a stranger's wonderland

Always-already unknown... Where do I
Go, riven by a hounding pack of hounds
In a hirsute bacchanal, while this turning Sat-
urn's sound
Stays, but as a muffled sound? I don't know

Where I go, by this music somehow found
Inside of me. I pressure the dark below
The surface and find this slow, calm ore
Come to adorn the vehicle of something more.

Good Advice

If it's peace you want, the man said,
Be a bough, be a leaf, find their runes and read
In green breaths their green relief. If it's peace
You seek in some final hall of columned grace,

Learn the better and learn the more
Mediocre mores and, face to face
With a simple heart, with a simple mind,
Shear away, much like they do, the simple sin
Of a silken man, of a silken man being svelte
In a plain world planed by what
Only the cloth wants. And the man never

Spoke his name, and the man was like a river
Running through me for many days
After this. He seemed wise,
Building things, forming things from the inside
To the inside. And it was like
He'd no need of any place, and not a need
For any name, nor a name to suit the face

Of a man I saw only once in my life,
And it was a meeting that set the tone
Of all my cleverness from then on.

The Crows For Mohamad Sabbagh Dubai

Are these crows or kids, just wandering around
After dark? I've grown used to the sight
Of dozens of crows, schools of black-bodied
birds

Soaring or swooping in black formations
And so much so, I hardly notice them anymore.

But now as I notice them, the gawky sounds
Of the dark in the dark voice of the night,
I wonder awhile, searching my hoard of words
For what I'd like to say to them. They might
listen,

And perhaps I'm placed to offer them a door,

Offer them more than their own dark heights?
Are these crows or kids? It's hard to tell: I can't
Quite make them out, not enough to be sure.
And yet, here in the desert, gripped by this
desert chill,

The darkness, the darkness I've known of old

Grows touched a touch, stony, stale. I've heard
The beating heart in their darkling call, decades
And more, and know it to be what it is: a small
helplessness –

Just that. I look back from the window, by the
desk,

And see a picture of my father. His placid smile

Seeks for nothing there: he seems complete
In this picture, quieted, calm, wrapped in total
peace.

And so, when I turn my mind again, turn
And pleat my thoughts around the question:
I realize I've nothing to answer for here.

There aren't quite words for the rotten wish
Of these shrieking birds, busied by the rot in-
side

Of them. And I was a sky and host for these
Years before they entered the earth. I was
their height

Back then, as I am now their height and once
again.