



*ABED ISMAEL*

## THREE POEMS

### THE DAMASCENE BIRD

With extreme calm  
put the knife on the neck,  
and – calmly –

evade the glow  
and cut it –

Cut out the pure unconsciousness  
hovering like light over the shroud

and call upon the butterfly  
flying with ease over the golden branch.

Put the blade between your teeth  
like a long song of long sadness.

and call upon Love  
to return to the flute . . .

No time for flying now  
night stumbles on the slope  
the crazy star's inside its vase –  
your agony is the glass of obedience.

Fly higher  
over the Damascene whiteness,

for you are not a blacksmith of wilderness

to ask you to make a mountain for us  
upon which a weeping sky could fall

Spread a meadow here  
through which the dead may pass  
in their blue carriages  
and flying shrouds

Replace a forest with a poem  
and a river with deep weeping  
so that we may pass across  
to the other side.

You are no more than  
a genie of snow  
with two wings of snow  
and a mind of snow  
flying over deep, long darkness.

## A SCHOOL HOBBY

The boy – who killed his father –  
is still running

As he runs  
fields, clouds and nights run with him

shadows run with him  
and the house he left behind

The river is running,  
as is his note-book  
and his exam.

The boy is running  
and memory runs with him  
The midnight mirror,  
the birds flying in his sleep  
things and names also run.

in his fancy a blade shines  
the cry itself shines  
the sun emerges from the cry  
and blood is running . . .

At his footsteps shines a blade  
in his fingers which grasp the wind  
a blade is running . . .

a blade endlessly running in his blood.

## AGAINST ROMANTICISM

I, who am I?  
I am the one who flew with the wind  
to its final destination – the illusion.

I am the one who kept the friendship of valleys  
and walked with mudslides.

I am ten windows, firmly closed  
against the blowing wind.

A crack in the bone I am  
a thing formulated from nothing  
a melancholia taking the shape of writing.

I am a sharp angle  
falling from the shelf

murmurs sewn with mother's needle

I am the lock's memory  
shimmering in deep night  
I am the lock's shimmering.

I am an horizon fleeing a canvas  
of blue, darkness and green.

I am a spirit hovering over the grave,  
a forgotten bouquet,  
a hand waving --.

I am five minutes – lost –  
taken away from the appointment  
a water-mill by the wall  
a whisper frozen in a glass.

I am a visible monologue  
heard in silence

a wilderness,  
rocks and beasts I am  
The sky in a blind man's eye,

scattered feathers and a prey  
a race between feathers and the wind

I am flying feathers.

Translated by the author from his poetry collection  
Saat Raml [An Hour in the Sand],  
Dar al-Kunoz al-Adabiya, Beirut, 2003.