



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.