

KHALED MATTAWA

Now That We Have Tasted Hope

Now that we have come out of hiding,
Why would we live again in the tombs we'd made of our souls?

And the sundered bodies that we've reassembled
With prayers and consolations,
What would their torn parts be, other than flesh?

Now that we have tasted hope
And dressed each other's wounds with the legends of our oneness,
Would we not prefer to close our mouths forever
On the wine that swilled inside them?

Having dreamed the same dream,
Having found the water behind a thousand mirages,
Why would we hide from the sun again
Or fear the night sky after we've reached the ends of darkness,
Live in death again after all the life our dead have given us?

Listen to me Zow'ya, Beida, Ajdabya, Tobruk, Nalut,
Listen to me Derna, Musrata, Trables, Benghazi, Zintan,
Listen to me houses, alleys, courtyards, and streets that throng my veins,
Some day soon, in your freed light, in the shade of your proud trees,
Your excavated heroes will return to their thrones in your martyrs' squares,
Lovers will hold each other's hands.

I need not look far to imagine the nerves dying,
Rejecting the life that blood sends them.
I need not look deep into my past to seek a thousand hopeless vistas,
But now that I have tasted hope
I have fallen into the embrace of my own rugged innocence.

How long were my ancient days?
I no longer care to count.
I no longer care to measure.
How bitter was the bread of bitterness?
I no longer care to recall.

Now that we have tasted the hope, this hard-earned crust,
We would sooner die than seek any other taste to life,
Any other way of being human.