

And We Have a Land

And we have a land without borders, like our idea
Of the unknown, narrow and wide. A land . . .
When we walk in its map it becomes narrow with us,
And takes us to an ashen tunnel, so we shout
In its labyrinth: and we still love you, our love
Is a hereditary illness. A land . . .
When it banishes us to the unknown . . . it grows. And
The willows and adjectives grow. And its grass grows
And its blue mountains. The lake widens
In the soul's north. Wheat rises in the soul's
South. The lemon fruit gleams like a lantern
In the emigrant's night. Geography glistens
As a holy book. And the chain of hills
Becomes an ascension place to higher . . . to higher.
"If I were a bird I would have burned my wings," someone says
To his exiled self . . . then autumn's scent becomes
The image of what I love. The light rain leaks
Into the heart's drought, and the imagination opens up
To its sources, and becomes place, the only
Real one. And everything from faraway
Returns as a primitive countryside, as if earth
Were still preparing itself to meet Adam, descending
To the ground floor from his paradise. Then I say:
That's our land over there pregnant with us . . . so when was it
That we were born? Did Adam get married twice? Or will we
Be born a second time
To forget sin?

Translated from the Arabic by Fady Joudah