

ETEL ADNAN

AT TWO IN THE AFTERNOON

TRANSLATED BY SARAH RIGGS

the sun came out in the night
to take a turn and divinity traversed
the bedroom. the windows open
themselves

writing comes from a dialogue
with time: it is the fabrication
of a mirror in which thought
vanishes and no longer recognizes
itself

in Palermo the men are as
decked out as the horses; or
else they have the shining violence of
flowers

it's more bearable to think of
death than of love

Greek thought has turned around
things the way it has turned
around the islands

when men will no longer have
power over women, over whom
will they have it?

all Sicily is painted
by hand from vine
planting

excruciating pain that a teapot
transmutes in inutterable happiness

the Barbary fig trees ripen
on brilliant mornings, with firm flesh,
with certain steps

limits everywhere; how to reconcile
soul and body, what to do between
two white sheets?

She said, standing in the middle of her ranch:
how black it is,
eternity!

on the other side of the street separated
from the garden's splendor, Issa sits
with a black coffee and speaking of the mother whose
brain starts to invent aberration

me I am sent back to the swamps
in my hesitation's obscurity

the curtain falls on a mass grave. the Babylonian
gods no longer birth just
cadavers

philosophy is a not-knowing:
thought gives pleasure through
measuring its borders

the body is a sacred place
because it bursts with life and lasts
briefly

time recalls to me cemetaries
in which the mountains are swallowed up,
enveloped in their mist

the cock sings the dog barks
the cat climbs a tree

in between clouds and
the moon ideas
drift . . .

and then the boats keep returning
to port, corn goddesses
protecting them

Shakespeare's testament was
placed in my hand on a bit
of yellow paper, a night
in London, when I was stricken
with hunger

over there there's nothing besides the rising
paths, a naked horse, clumps
of grass, wind

a permanent eclipse is predicted.
it seems far in the past, but
close in thought

the spider waited a long time though
the fly eventually came

and heat, what can we say of it?
talk to him about cold, too late! about the
river? this one is dry. love?
it has the most obvious
shape

the season passes a rapid hand
through the trees; don't believe
the wind is absent-minded,
that sleep is guaranteed

you say that the trains rolled too fast
but your madness unleashed over
my body. was it nothing?

time is untranslatable
your voice in my veins
poisonous plants growing

the roses were watered by
our desires' black storms

the loved one won't go to the Night
Palace where women and wine
are waiting

so as not to accelerate the illness
we pretended not
to love ourselves, knowing anyhow
the days would not come back