ars poetica without resurrection

Asmaa Jama

the poem is the liquid cemetery, i dive into, searching mouth holding the english words, for loss, lost,

if the language has also atrophied, if the child began writing in ink, to reach them, who is to tell them, swapping the vials of the embalming fluid, with ink, it will not revive them.

let it be the mosque - man at the centre of it, white cap on his head, crochet facing mecca, let it be the mosque

saying prophet move angel yell : read, and so we did, do, have always done.

after they crossed the liquid strait, they cut off the ghost flesh your parents - cut their losses, their old language sank

decomposed, what you are able to resuscitate - will not outlive you, will not outlast your home, your own brother, misses most of the syllables

you can make only ten perfect sounds, the old poets, whittle astral images, in a hundred,

are they speaking in whistles ? asks your great-uncle-now also dead. the language of birds, english so hollow it is the language

of birds, i want to bury the feathers and the evidence of them, what my tongue knows; how to commit a massacre, how to build a burial pit, how to burn the record after, build a monument after

they had to move, taking, not stone, but tongue, figurative and wet,

a wetter world

my people descend into and i go look for them,

- what is a gilless fish?

- guileless

what if, i can't swim ? speak ? sing?

no longer remember?

the child writes reams around the cadavers and calls it a prayer forgets it, mosque, the twelve hours every weekend, even the sun grew weak, what we were busy with

prayer-soaked and still too illiterate -

they said the book will empty itself one day, remember it all, any way you can

burnt archive, barely contained, battered body, my father had a crop full of hair once and pushed us on a swing, my grandmother, owned a shop that took two buses to get to

what is the writing then ?

my weakness, my crib sheet, my memory stain, blacked palm, evidence i can't hold it in it

spills my eyes wet with the words, i try

transcribe for each of my dead, i know they won't yield to any.

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