

SUFFERING

*Night closed the doors on the city,
the sound of footsteps ceased.
The keys fell from our hands
and we held the hem of darkness.
Where is this blind run taking us —
backwards or forwards?
The step died under our feet,
the bridle made our teeth fall out.
Of what use were the tears in our eyes?
And what use are words anymore?
Oh firefly of deep sleep, you're too heavy for us.
The night is worth a hundred years.
We catch any disease that comes along.
Dreams aren't cures.
We suffered and with sorrow we sang.
Since when do idols have pity?
The boat threw us overboard and sailed far away.
How far from the shores of peace?
This bitterness avails us, reminds us —
are you going to forget us in the light of day?

That's it. Go my heart, go. That's it.
Who still thinks about us?
Thoughts of us have become forbidden...*

THIRST

*Before night gathered its blankets and birds decorated their feathers
with the color of morning/
I was standing on my feet
washing my face with the regard of my mother's eyes
and wearing the day, a pure weather.
On a string of dreams I planted a footstep... sun on my shoulders.
The road was longer than my imagined exile.
I traversed two of its generations in the time allotted for me.
I waited for what my soul tasted of the fire's heat.
The sea waves having washed my feet of fatigue.
From time to time memories splattered me, making me forget myself.
When I felt thirsty a door opened in my chest.
I threw my palms between two laughing waves.
The water swallowed me in a single gulp.
The thirst of the sea was more powerful than my own!*

From Mesnaoui, Driss, 1-wauw, Rabat, Morocco, 1995.

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