

**OMAR BERRADA**

**ALL THE BIRDS  
(FOR SARAH)**

## 1.

So many tombs  
in the life of the self  
Protect and save  
Project and stave  
off the time when  
evening loosens  
the guilt of her locks  
Stanford, Clotsky  
what's with the Ts  
the terrible Ts  
the vertical bars  
of a wooden crib  
a linear chain  
of authorities  
family, religion  
sacred transmission  
the past speaks  
in silence  
Identify, then multiply

*Half of me comes from here, half from everywhere*

## 2.

Night paints a shadow  
into your heart  
a word hides a word hides a word  
                  hides a silence put  
          your hand here I'll  
put my hand there  
something marvelous  
is bound to happen  
larger than life  
lines unhinge  
the signs no  
harm intended  
Heretical healing  
devotional treason  
Humble humble reader  
your gracious likeness I shall seek

*Something heavenly has wounded the soul*

### 3.

In the Odyssey  
is a crow that speaks  
fluent Greek  
Let us rename all  
the birds my love  
a dictionary of silent screams  
and the world will fly  
to our hearts' beating

*The poem, the dream: our very lives*

**4.**

Musiq, musiq  
A button pressed  
another turned:  
she sways in circles  
Velvet goldmine  
Celtic dreamlands  
it is we who fall  
asleep to a film  
soundtrack

*A sheep by any other name...*

## 5.

Long fingers holding  
fast metal needle  
black fabric fainting  
from a sowing machine  
logic of production logic  
of collapse a plummet  
into darkness  
while in the courtyard  
a plum tree grows  
Technicolor puppets  
Is that all  
that heaven allows?  
They know nothing  
of gravity so says Kleist  
they know nothing  
but gravity:  
take the stick out  
puppet falls flat

*Her experience of scale is always paradoxical*

**6.**

You talk in your sleep  
arms raised high above  
your breath  
a dance of hands  
in silent air

*Voices of the psyche racing through the flesh*

## 7.

The museums there are empty  
shells so said the scholar  
from Syracuse lovely  
outside ruins inside  
Preserve and educate  
is what we ask of you  
engage and transform  
Instead you lie quietly  
out of date in  
dejection unworthy  
of thy name break  
our hearts we  
who believe  
and remember  
*even the past*  
*needs to breathe*

*Home is an intimate stranger*

## 8.

Words erect  
a barrier  
at the core of intimacy  
a tremor breaks the surface  
with a life of its own  
Some mornings are hard  
and these are healthy  
horizontal yearnings  
now standing to shower  
heads not our own  
feel the pull of  
gravity within us  
We want to live  
like trees  
It is snowing  
inside your body  
and tamaas in your tongue  
has a secret meaning

*Can we share solitude without loneliness*

**9.**

The cold  
from the small of  
your back  
my hand  
away  
will blow

*If we go to Texas we will come back naked*