

JAWDAT FAKHREDDINE

thinking that they are temptation or a call.
Houses . . .
I wonder whether it is fear
that brings them together
so they beckon each other
to a spot in wilderness,
so that, when they have gathered,
they may perhaps discover themselves in an enduring peace

Sanaa has an ancient face
and we are the ones who have appealed to it,
staring from a balcony in the sky,
its magic has swept us away,
so we have plunged together into its
in sweeping splendor.

May, 1992

1 The Great Mosque in Sanaa Old City

2 A *muqil* is a gathering of people at sunset to chew qat, the plant referred to above.

LAND

*The mighty warrior cannot remain on the level ground,
nor does escape benefit the lowly.*
(from the mu‘allaqah of Al-Harith ibn Hillizah)

1

Words,
I watched them quickly cross the field
and the space awakened.
Words,
that waft past the frail trees
and are beset by tears.
Words,