

## The beginning

after Safia Elhillo

(i)

i was created from earth in a garden small man with brooding eyes.  
the bible tells me that before my fortune was a bag of grief; sacred things that command  
the feet of stagnant men. once, at night, i saw an angel in my dream & he told me to  
beware of god. i replied in the language of loneliness: first, a dialect that hovers quietly  
across my lips then a conversation of silence.

(ii)

my father told me to cast a shadow of my body against a collapsing wall.  
once, along a forest walk, it rained heavily  
& a boy mistook light for a painting on the floor. no amount of grief  
can make a man doubt *the nothingness that comes with the wind.*

(iii)

i fall from gloom into emptiness & i know nothing except a scarlet wound that digs deep &  
deep & deep into a new world  
of familiar faces.  
i reach for a home beneath a burning plant.  
night is crafted in the image of a broken bird.

(iv)

i find myself drowning in a temple full of salt water. every sigh is a story  
told from the end of a testament. i breath my name into the beginning  
& i still see god searching for a home between trees.