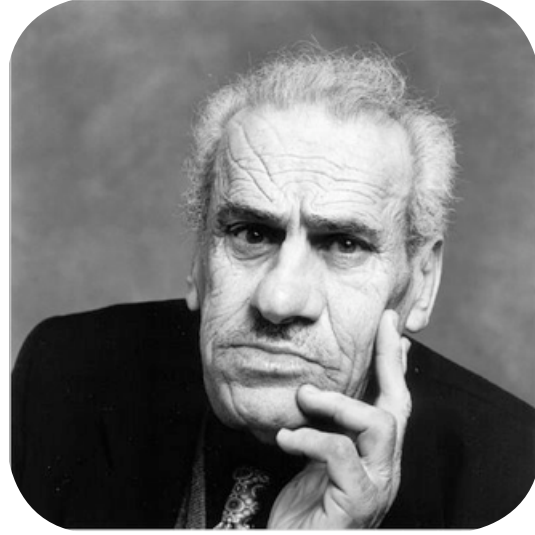


Taha Muhammad Ali
Palestine (born 1931)



أَيْنَ؟
الشُّعْرُ يَكْمُنُ
فِي مَكَانٍ مَا
خَلْفَ لَيْلِ الْكَلِمَاتِ
خَلْفَ غُيُومِ السَّمْعِ
عَبْرَ عَتَمَةِ الْبَصْرِ
وَرَاءَ غَسَقِ الْمَوْسِقَى
مَا بَطَّنَ مِنْهَا
وَمَا ظَهَرَ.
أَمَا أَيْنَ مَكْمَنُهُ؟
فَمِنْ أَيْنَ لِي
أَنْ أَدْرِي أَيْنَ
وَأَنَا لَا أَكَادُ أَعْرِفُ -
فِي عِزِّ نَهَارِي -
مَكْمَنَ قَلَمِي أَيْنَ!

Taha Muhammad Ali was left without a home when his village was destroyed in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. For over fifty years, he has supported his family by selling souvenirs from his shop near the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. He has published four books of poetry in Arabic and a volume of short stories.

Our one Arabic speaker read the poem out loud for us, and then translated it straight up. We told everyone else only the meaning of the first word — Poetry — and they wrote their own poems from that theme.

Where?

Poetry exists somewhere
Behind the night of words
Behind the clouds of sound
Behind the darkness of sight
Behind the dawn of music

...
Where is its location?

...
I don't even know
in day time
where my pencil
is!

—Translated by Abdul Tawil, 5th grade