

Art Class

The teacher told us,
Draw something admirable.

So I sketched my mother
holding me against her waist
my legs, a tightly wrapped corset
in the house I was born in.

The hallway was a dark yellow,
the banister leading the staircase,
was a light Nubian blue.
I drew her head then erased it
drew it again then again.
The result was the same
her image looked like
Harriet Tubman without the wrinkles
in a headwrap keeping her coarse hair out of view
she says,
It became worse with every birth.

The joke goes:
*we raised you as our own,
we found you in the souq, no
someone left you by the mosque's entrance, no
definitely in the souq where they sell fermented fish.*

After my father proposed to my mother
she asked him,
But I'm not as pretty as the other girls
he said,
*I'm not going to marry a girl
because she looks European.*