

## Crossroads

SHIRIN SABRI

*Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.*

*The Book of Ruth, 1:7*

They have walked past a swaying  
fig, huddled olive trees, past  
straggling vines, all the stony  
fields of Moab, and at last

draw near to the river's edge,  
and a parting of the ways.  
They pause and talk, three women  
in the dappled light that plays

beneath sparse wind shaken leaves.  
The mother speaks, and overhead  
a falcon turns in the clouded sky.  
One stands, wavers; with her tears shed

retreats. The falcon watches  
her shawled figure dwindle, quiver  
in the dusty haze, then fade from view  
on the long road back. The river

deeps swirl green, the banks are steep,  
a branch snaps, wind blown;  
the other two wade arm in arm  
athwart the stream, to unsought renown.

Held like them, in the falcon's gaze  
long ages later, a young man  
chooses a road, crosses a stream  
before the plains of Mázindarán—  
some of his friends balk, turn back. The rest  
bleed their lives out into clay  
and revive the earth—they die blest;  
the last falls like Ruth in rapture

on a joyous wedding day