

PAULINE KALDAS

Bird Lessons

“You will find it in the soup”
the bowl with steam turning to clouds
into shapes My friends cringe as they fish
with their spoon net
but no petals of flesh are caught
only pilaf noodles that narrow on each end
“We call them bird’s tongue because of the shape
you will find them in the soup”
Their eyes look down
they had expected something exotic
and would have preferred pink flesh

but it is I who cringe
we are not savages I am blind
by pink tongues flapping in my broth

pink tongues flapping in my broth they paddle to stay alive
propel from one side to the other what if they jump and flap a
slap across my face? tongues would never do that I put them in
boiling broth expand them to their greatest potential they are
noodles and I am obsessed with their name why should pasta
tamer than alphabets have such a vicious name the bird left
with gaping hoarse beak put up your fists you phrase maker
we have letters to settle I grew up with my grandmother

putting them in my vegetable soup my mother in chicken
soup and I in clear broth how dare you give a name with
color shall giants cut my tongue to flavor their soup and do
men who turn cannibal eat the round soft point you touch to
the tip of your nose? what kind of tongue do the dead have
thin flat or with zigzag cuts like my last lover? how to treat
these noodles in my broth will they grow to giants *lesan el*
asfour lesan tongue *el* of *asfour* bird a tiny bird forced to put in
my soup explain to dinner guests what is in their bowls or
when I send a stranger to shop no other translation and I am
blind with birds flapping in my broth.