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Ghazal: The Dark Times

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Tell us that line again, the thing about the dark times…
"When the dark times come, we will sing about the dark times."

They'll always be wrong about peace when they're wrong about justice…
Were you wrong, were you right, insisting about the dark times?

The traditional fears, the habitual tropes of exclusion
Like ominous menhirs, close into their ring about the dark times.

Naysayers in sequins or tweeds, libertine or ascetic
Find a sensual frisson in what they'd call bling about the dark times.

Some of the young can project themselves into a Marshall Plan future
Where they laugh and link arms, reminiscing about the dark times.

From every spot-lit glitz tower with armed guards around it
Some huckster pronounces his fiats, self-sacralized king, about the dark times.

In a tent, in a queue, near barbed wire, in a shipping container,
Please remember *ya akhy*, we too know something about the dark times.

Sindbad's roc, or Ganymede's eagle, some bird of rapacious ill omen
From bleak skies descends, and wraps an enveloping wing about the dark times.

You come home from your meeting, your clinic, make coffee and look in the mirror
And ask yourself once more what you did to bring about the dark times.

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About the author

Marilyn Hacker is the author of eighteen books of poems, most recently *Calligraphies* (Norton, 2023), two collaborative books, and twenty-two translations of French and francophone poets including Vénus Khoury-Ghata and Claire Malroux. *Water to Water*, a collaboration with Deema Shehabi, was published in December by Interlink Press; *Transitions*, (new and selected sonnets) will be published in April by Milkweed Editions.