

## JOHN PECK

*Pigment Chemistry*, 2008  
Oil on Wood Panel, 9 x 12 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

## MARILYN HACKER

### Ghazal

Their roots untwined, the verbs unwind in Arabic.  
The poem scrolls down with its rhyme defined in Arabic.

One little vowel, the doer is the done-by:  
Betrayals can be more refined in Arabic.

Here are a dozen words I could read yesterday—  
If my mind goes blank, have I lost my mind in Arabic?

Have I illusions of recovered youth,  
My eyes unblurred and my cheeks unlined in Arabic?

A velvet shadow on a declaration,  
A metaphor that was left behind in Arabic.

Write in the language spoken by the neighbors—  
Linguistics of the double bind in Arabic.

What did the olive tree say to the bulldozer?  
An exercise I was assigned in Arabic.

The Syrian lady from Cairo described rare books  
In Achrafieh, as we dined, in Arabic.

The little exile opens a thirdhand reader  
Whose politics are unaligned in Arabic.

I wrote a page. The title was in French,  
The text in English. It was signed in Arabic.

**Marilyn Hacker** is the author of thirteen books of poems, including *A Stranger's Mirror* (Norton, 2015) *Names* (Norton, 2010), and *Desesperanto* (Norton, 2003), an essay collection, *Unauthorized Voices* (Michigan, 2010), and thirteen collections of translations of French and Francophone poets including Emmanuel Moses, Marie Etienne, Vénus Khoury-Ghata, Habib Tengour and Rachida Madani. *DiaspoRenga*, a collaborative sequence written with the Palestinian-American poet Deema Shehabi, was published by Holland Park Press in 2014. This poem is partly an homage to Agha Shahid Ali, who used the same *radif* or stanza-ending phrase in his renowned ghazal, "In Arabic."