

IAN DUHIG

The Rûm District

It was there for the taking:
the Emperor's soldiery drunken; its golden birds
flown; mosaics dropping from walls;
iconoclastic barbarians at the gate
already calling this world Rûm.

Rûm gave its name to Romania.
Romanian wannabe, I holiday at Bucharest's
Grand Hotel Abyss to watch television –
that very word a cocktail,
Greek and Latin, like Rûm itself.

But the hotel set's picture seems made
of tesserae rather than pixels,
and its only channel National Geographic
commending whatever is begotten,
born and torn to pieces.

I plunder the mini-bar, then under the influence
of Xavier de Maistre
embark on a little room travel of my own,
sailing the New Jerusalem of my rented cube
from Revelation through the night of Rûm.

I dream of the poet Rûm calls Rumi,
who tells me the Arabic word for house
names an Arabic poem's unit,
then I wake up in this stanza,
my head spinning like a dervish.

Stanza meaning room, I ring room service
for the hair of the dog, ordering this
rûm cocktail which arrives with an orange slice,
an ice cube, melting like this poem,
and I put it on the tab.