


# The Butterfly's Burden

POEMS BY

*Mahmoud Darwish*

Translated from the Arabic by Fady Joudah

 Copper Canyon Press

Copyright 2007 by Mahmoud Darwish

Translation and preface copyright 2007 by Fady Joudah

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

Cover art: Mohammed J. Abusall, *Identity*, 2000. Ink print, 20 x 20 cm.

Copper Canyon Press is in residence at Fort Worden State Park in Port Townsend, Washington, under the auspices of Centrum Foundation. Centrum is a gathering place for artists and creative thinkers from around the world, students of all ages and backgrounds, and audiences seeking extraordinary cultural enrichment.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Darwish, Mahmoud.

[Poems. English. Selections]

The butterfly's burden: poems / by Mahmoud Darwish; translated from the Arabic by Fady Joudah.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-10: 1-55659-241-8

ISBN-13: 978-1-55659-241-6 (pbk.: alk. paper)

I. Joudah, Fady, 1971- II. Title.

PJ7820.A7A212 2006

892.71'6 —dc22

98765432

2006000464

COPPER CANYON PRESS

Post Office Box 271

Port Townsend, Washington 98368

[www.coppercanyonpress.org](http://www.coppercanyonpress.org)

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Beloit Poetry Journal*: "Sonnet v," "Cadence Chooses Me"

*Denver Quarterly*: "Another Day Will Come"

*Dragonfire*: "Your Night Is of Lilac"

*Drunken Boat*: "Sonnet III," "I Waited for No One," "The Damascene Collar of the Dove," "This Is Forgetfulness"

*Iowa Review*: "Sonnet I," "Set Down, Here, and Now," "I Didn't Apologize to the Well," "And We Have a Land"

*The Kenyon Review*: "On a Day like Today," "In Jerusalem," "Don't Write History as Poetry"

*Literary Imagination*: "Don't Apologize for What You've Done," "They Didn't Ask: What's After Death"

*The Manhattan Review*: "I Have the Wisdom of One Condemned to Death," "Dream, What Is It?" "Now When You Awaken, Remember," "Nothing Pleases Me," "He's Calm, and I Am Too," "What Will Remain?" "The Kurd Has Only the Wind"

*Michigan Quarterly Review*: "Describing Clouds," "Not as a Foreign Tourist Does"

*Mississippi Review*: "We Walk on the Bridge," "No Banner in the Wind," "They Don't Look Behind Them," "Murdered and Unknown," "The Coastal Road"

*New American Writing*: "Thanks to Tunis," "I Have a Seat in the Abandoned Theater," "In Syria," "In Egypt," "Like a Mysterious Incident"

*Perihelion*: "Two Stranger Birds in Our Feathers," "Sonnet VI"

*Poetry*: "To Our Land," "In Her Absence I Created Her Image," "If I Were Another"

*Prairie Schooner*: "Wedding Song," "She's Alone in the Evening," "While Waiting"

*Seneca Review*: "In My Mother's House," "Wednesday, Friday, Saturday"

*Washington Square Review*: "Low Sky," "And I, Even if I Were the Last," "A Noun Sentence"

*Words Without Borders*: "Housework," "Jameel Bouthaina and I"

I would like to thank Sam Hamill, Michael Wieggers, and the family of Copper Canyon for their vision and hospitality; Eleanor Wilner and Deema Shehabi for their support and love; Hana el-Sahly for supplying me with books all these years; Bouthaina Dabaja; my father, my first teacher of language, and my reference; Khaled Mattawa and all the editors of the journals in which the above poems appeared, for their generosity and insightful remarks.

## Contents

xi *Translator's Preface*

### *The Stranger's Bed* 1998

- 5 We Were Missing a Present  
11 Sonnet I  
13 Low Sky  
19 We Walk on the Bridge  
23 Your Night Is of Lilac  
25 Sonnet II  
27 The Stranger Stumbles upon Himself in the Stranger  
29 A Cloud from Sodom  
31 A Doe's Young Twins  
33 Sonnet III  
35 Take My Horse and Slaughter It ...  
37 The Stranger's Land / the Serene Land  
41 Inanna's Milk  
45 Sonnet IV  
47 No More and No Less  
51 Wedding Song  
55 Housework  
59 Sonnet v  
61 Two Stranger Birds in Our Feathers  
65 I Waited for No One  
69 Drought  
73 Sonnet VI  
75 The Subsistence of Birds

- 79 Maybe, Because Winter Is Late  
 89 Who Am I, Without Exile?  
 93 Jameel Bouthaina and I  
 97 A Mask ... for Majnoon Laila  
 101 A Lesson from Kama Sutra  
 105 The Damascene Collar of the Dove

*A State of Siege* 2002

- 121 "Here, by the downslope of hills, facing the sunset"

*Don't Apologize for What You've Done* 2003

I. IN THE LUST OF CADENCE

- 179 Cadence Chooses Me  
 181 I Have the Wisdom of One Condemned to Death  
 183 Another Day Will Come  
 185 And I, Even if I Were the Last  
 187 In My Mother's House  
 189 Don't Apologize for What You've Done  
 191 On a Day like Today  
 193 Set Down, Here, and Now  
 195 If You Return Alone  
 197 I Didn't Apologize to the Well  
 199 No Banner in the Wind  
 201 The Horse Fell Off the Poem  
 203 To Our Land  
 205 And We Have a Land  
 207 Nothing but Light  
 209 The Beloved Hemorrhaged Anemones

211	In Jerusalem
213	In Her Absence I Created Her Image
215	Wednesday, Friday, Saturday
217	Two Olive Trees
221	They Don't Look Behind Them
223	They Didn't Ask: What's After Death
225	Murdered and Unknown
227	The Cypress Broke
229	A Man and a Fawn Are in the Garden
233	This Is Forgetfulness
235	You'll Be Forgotten, As If You Never Were
239	As for Me, I Say to My Name
241	Dream, What Is It?
243	Now, When You Awaken, Remember
245	The Shadow
247	Nothing Pleases Me
249	He's Calm, and I Am Too
251	Describing Clouds
255	A Noun Sentence
257	Say What You Want
259	Don't Write History as Poetry
261	What Will Remain?
263	I Don't Know Your Name
265	She's Alone in the Evening
269	While Waiting
271	If I Were Another
273	Thanks to Tunis
275	I Have a Seat in the Abandoned Theater
277	In Syria

- 279 In Egypt  
 281 I Recall al-Sayyab
- II. THE COASTAL ROAD
- 285 "A road that leads to Egypt and Syria"
- III. NOT AS A FOREIGN TOURIST DOES
- 291 "I walked on what remains of the heart"
- IV. A POETRY STANZA / THE SOUTHERNER'S HOUSE
- 299 "Standing together beneath a window"
- V. LIKE A MYSTERIOUS INCIDENT
- 307 "In Pablo Neruda's home, on the Pacific"
- VI. THE KURD HAS ONLY THE WIND
- 315 "The Kurd remembers, when I visit him, his tomorrow"
- 321 *Notes*  
 327 *About the Author*  
 327 *About the Translator*

# Mahmoud Darwish

## *The Butterfly's Burden* Translated by Fady Joudah

Three recent Darwish books translated and presented in their entirety in one bilingual volume.

"Mahmoud Darwish is one of the two or three most admired, and widely read, poets from the Arab world... While unequivocally anchored in the present, his poems draw on the traditions of Al-Andalus, the near-mythical site of flowering Arab, European, and Sephardic Jewish art and science—as much in Darwish's re-creation and renewal of Arabic prosody and inweaving of legend as in his fraternal openness to and exchange with poets like Ritsos and Neruda. In the brilliant, bilingual poet Fady Joudah, Darwish has found a translator capable of rendering in English his unflinching, questing, and above all loving poems."—Marilyn Hacker

"Poetry in translation offers a passport to places we might never visit, borders we might never cross. Ancient empires, such as Rome's and China's, invited foreign poetries and prophets to their capitals because they valued poetry as expression of 'what is on the mind intently.' In eighth-century China there were Hindu temples, Nestorian Christian churches, synagogues, and mosques. With this collection, Mahmoud Darwish, the internationally celebrated Palestinian poet, stamps our American passports in 'paradigms of... Jahili poetry,' the border gate goes up, and another world is opened to us."—John Balaban

"Fady Joudah, a Palestinian-American doctor, has produced an admirable translation of Darwish's evocative, highly metaphorical lyricism and has supplied an extremely useful introduction and notes... Everywhere in Darwish's verse one finds the elegiacs of dispossession and exile, the unappeasable longing for the lost homeland and a continual meditation on the nature of the bifurcated self and the Other."—Steve Kowitz, *The San Diego Union Tribune*

"Darwish is to be read with urgency, in the night, when nothing else moves but his lines."—*The Village Voice*



COPPER CANYON PRESS

Cover art: *Identity*, Mohammed J. Abusall

Cover design: Valerie Brewster

POETRY / \$20.00

ISBN-13: 978-1-55659-241-6

ISBN-10: 1-55659-241-8



9 781556 592416