

## Mahmoud Darwish

Here, on the hillsides, facing the sunset and the cannon of time  
 Near the gardens with broken shadows  
 We do what prisoners do  
 What the jobless do  
 We cultivate hope

\* \* \*

A country preparing for dawn. We become less intelligent  
 For we glimpse the hour of victory:  
 There is no night in our night lit up by bombardments  
 Our enemies keep watch and our enemies light the lights for us  
 In the obscurity of our caves

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Here, there is no 'I'  
 Here, Adam remembers the dust of his natal clay

\* \* \*

On the brink of death, he says:  
 I can no longer lose my way  
 Free I am close to my freedom. My future is in my hands  
 Soon I will penetrate my own life,  
 I will be born free, without parents,  
 And for my name I'll choose letters of azure

*The opening lines of 'A State of Siege',  
 written in Ramallah, January 2002,  
 translated by Marilyn Hacker  
 from the French version of Saloua Ben Abda & Hassan Chami.*