



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
Advancing Knowledge, Driving Change



---

“Exile Is So Strong Within Me, I May Bring It to the Land” A Landmark 1996 Interview  
with Mahmoud Darwish

Author(s): Helit Yeshurun

Source: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Autumn 2012), pp. 46-70

Published by: University of California Press on behalf of the Institute for Palestine  
Studies

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jps.2012.xlii.1.46>

Accessed: 24-06-2016 23:01 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*University of California Press, Institute for Palestine Studies* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Palestine Studies*



## “EXILE IS SO STRONG WITHIN ME, I MAY BRING IT TO THE LAND”

### A LANDMARK 1996 INTERVIEW WITH MAHMOUD DARWISH

CONDUCTED BY HELIT YESHURUN

*Mahmoud Darwish—“national poet of Palestine,” “voice of the Palestinian people,” cultural icon for millions of Arabs—died four years ago this summer, on 9 August 2008, at the age of 67 following heart surgery. As befitted a man whose poetry readings filled sports stadiums and whose poems set to music became anthems across the Arab world, he was given the equivalent of a state funeral in Ramallah, his last abode, with a eulogy by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and three days of official mourning.*

*A political as well as a cultural figure, Darwish was among the principal drafters of the 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence. His poetry, especially during the first period of his career, memorializes the Palestinian experience from 1948 onward, not only the broad sweep of it, but also specific events such as Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the Tal Za’ar and Sabra and Shatila massacres, the first intifada, and so on. Under Israeli siege and bombardment in 1982, he wrote an autobiographical memoir of his ten-year exile in Beirut titled Memory for Forgetfulness, frequently referred to in the interview that follows.*

*Darwish’s poetry was always a mix of the political/collective and the personal/individual. But while it was the first that predominated through the 1980s, his poetry thereafter became increasingly personal. His 1995 collection Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?—also referred to in this interview—is seen by many as a turning point, the first of his some thirty books of poetry (translated into more than twenty languages) to be almost exclusively personal. The increasing emphasis on the personal could reflect, at least partly, a certain political disengagement after the 1993 signing of the Oslo agreement. It was then that he resigned from the PLO Executive Committee to protest its unequal terms, though it is worth noting that he never repudiated either the PLO or the agreement itself. But whether political/collective or personal/individual, all Darwish’s poetry embodies at multiple levels the themes of identity and exile, reflecting not only his personal itinerary (which took him from Galilee to Moscow, Cairo,*

---

HELIT YESHURUN was the founder of the Israeli cultural review *Hadarim*, which she edited from 1981 to 2004.

*Beirut, Tunis, Paris, Amman, and Ramallah) but also—and especially—a state of mind.*

*These themes are explored in depth in a long interview conducted in Hebrew by the Israeli poet and literary critic Helit Yeshurun. The interview took place on 7 February 1996 in Amman, Jordan, where Darwish was awaiting Israeli permission to take up residence in Ramallah. The interview was first published in the spring 1996 issue of the Israeli cultural journal Hadarim (founded and edited by Yeshurun). It was almost immediately translated into French by Simone Bitton, and published in the autumn 1996 issue of JPS's sister publication, Revue d'études Palestiniennes. It was also published in a volume of Darwish's interviews titled *La Palestine comme métaphore* (1998), edited and translated by Elias Sanbar and Simone Bitton.*

*Darwish, whose rock-star status never flagged, was interviewed hundreds of times. What makes this interview worth publishing sixteen years after it was recorded and four years after his death is not simply its length (the current excerpts constitute only half of the original), but the peculiar interaction between Darwish and his interviewer, a fellow poet intimately familiar with his work who is also an Israeli Zionist (however liberal). The amity, commonalities, shared interests, and connections combined with often-conflicting worldviews imbued the interview with the bracing tension of friendly adversaries; the probing questions pushed Darwish to formulate his thoughts or explain himself on various issues that would perhaps be taken for granted and therefore not be broached or explored by an Arab interviewer. The interview also delves at greater length than elsewhere into Darwish's relationship to the Hebrew language as well as his attitudes toward Israel and Israelis. Such exchanges, revelatory of the richness and complexity of the man, also bring home the humanism, breadth of vision, and inclusiveness that were always hallmarks of his outlook and poetry.*

*The interview in its entirety was translated from Hebrew into English for the first time by Adam Yale Stern, currently pursuing a Ph.D. in the study of religion at Harvard University, as a part of a larger project. The end notes are also his. The Journal of Palestine Studies is grateful to him for allowing us to publish these long selections from his translation.*

*. . . After thirteen years in Paris you have moved to Amman. From one exile to another?*

I moved from one place to another. The historic developments in the region were what prompted me. I didn't come here to participate in the events, but [because of] my conscience; it wasn't easy for it to be so far from the new dynamic. I can't say I'm moving from one exile to another, because my exile hints at two aspects.<sup>1</sup> Today, exile is [also] psychological, internal. In the Arab world I feel more at home.

... *In Memory For Forgetfulness, you write: "I became a poet who searches for the child that was in him, the child that he left somewhere and forgot. The poet grew up but he does not allow the forgotten child to grow."*<sup>2</sup>

... In my situation, there are no essential differences between the story of my childhood and the story of my homeland. The rupture that occurred in my personal life also befell my homeland. Childhood was taken from me at the same time as my home. There is a parallelism and a unity in the tragic aspect of the matter. In 1948, when this great rupture of ours took place, I jumped from the bed of childhood onto the path of exile. I was six. My entire world turned upside down and childhood froze in place, it didn't go with me. The question is whether it's possible to restore the childhood that was taken by restoring the land that was taken, and that's a poetic quest that gives rhythm to the poem itself. Finding the child Mahmoud Darwish who once was is possible only in the poem. Not in life.

...

*In an interview with Mashārif<sup>3</sup> you say: "When I was cut off from my family and living in Haifa, I discovered that I was the spoiled son because I was absent, and not because I was the best."*

Yes. I left home at a young age. I had this complex about not being supported and loved at home. I am the second son and my mother was always hitting me for no reason. She accused me of being the one responsible for all of the bad things that were happening at home or around us. Only in prison, in 1956 (because of the strikes against the occupation of Gaza and the attack on Egypt), when my mother came and kissed me and brought me coffee and fruit—only then did I discover that she loved me and that my first impression was mistaken. It was a profound joy for me, like a light inside me. It was worth paying the price [of prison] to feel her love. I wrote a poem there, "I Long For My Mother's Bread."<sup>4</sup> People interpreted this confessional poem—this poem through which I wanted to atone for my feelings of guilt toward my mother for thinking she hated me—as a poem of national longing. I didn't expect that millions would sing it—thanks to Marcel Khalifé—and would think that my mother was the homeland. It was a letter of reconciliation from a child to his mother.

...

*You have spoken and written about a man who appears at night, sings and disappears. Who was this man?*

Do you recall the label "infiltrators"? I think the story of the infiltrators has yet to be written. A Palestinian author still needs to write this story. At the time of the establishment of the state, when they did a census, we

were refugees in Lebanon. When we returned two years later, we entered as infiltrators. We arrived in Dayr al-Asad. Every time the police came, we hid. Whenever the superintendent would come to the school, the teachers would hide me because I wasn't legal. And you can imagine what an impact that can have on a seven-year-old boy. The kind of psychological complexes and animosity that exist between a regime and childhood. From that time in Dayr al-Asad, I remember one man, who had a beautiful voice, who would come at night to the neighbors' house at the edge of the village, playing the *rabab* and singing his story: How he had left his house and how he had crossed the border and how he had returned, recounting the night and the moon, a heart-wrenching nostalgia. My unconscious absorbed his playing. I sensed how the words conveyed the reality. I learned that art comes from simple things. I wanted to imitate this man.

*It recalls Scheherazade, who tells her story at night in order to be saved.*

True. I remember that when we were still in our original village [al-Birwal], guests would come every night to visit my grandfather, drink tea and coffee, and perform this ritual. Someone would read from a book and sing. This is a part of Arab cultural tradition.

It's a refuge from the day and from the suffering. The police come during the day. When you speak of the suffering, you feel that you have within yourself the power to create. Just as God created the world, man can create poetry.

...

*Have any of your poems not been written from the state of exile? Is not the state of exile a realistic parallel to the state of a poet—every poet in the world—between homeland and exile?*

It is possible to describe everything that I've written as the poetry of an exile. I was born an exile. Exile is a very broad concept and very relative. There is exile in society, exile in family, exile in love, exile within yourself. All poetry is an expression of exile or otherness. And when it parallels experience in reality, then it is a concentrated, compressed exile. I find it in every word that I search for in my dictionary. I am not complaining. Despite everything, exile has contributed greatly to the development of my writing. It allowed me to manage a journey between cultures, between peoples, between cities, between colors.

*Exile refined your poetry, enriched it. It supplied the transformation that was so lacking in the poetry that you wrote before you left the land.*

That's true, but allow me to revise some notions. Previously, I believed that poetry was a form of combat, but today I don't think that it has an immediate task. Its influence is very slow, cumulative. What helped me to refine the tone was distance. Distance permitted me to observe myself, to observe the occupation, the landscape, the prison. It added a measure of sanctity and became a religion of beauty without obligations. The disappearance in distance is liberation. The less one knows you, the more you know yourself. It's also a matter of maturity. I read more, I listened to European poetry. I learned forgiveness. Because in the end we are all exiles. The occupier and myself—both of us suffer from exile. He is an exile in me and I am the victim of his exile. All of us on this beautiful planet Earth, we are all neighbors, we are all exiles, we are all walking in the same human fate, and what unites us is the need to tell the story of this exile.

*Isn't that an idealization of distance? Isn't there a cost to exile?*

There is a personal cost of longing in exile. A feeling of marginality. But the compensation comes with the creation of a world parallel to reality. And this is also what distance does. Geographical distance also creates the timeframe of the poem, which doesn't have to respond immediately.

...

*The relationship between the "earth" and "poetry" sustains all your poetry. What is this relationship?*

The earth is my first mother. From there I was born and it is to there that I will return. The whole circle of human life is in it. It is our actual sky. An inverted sky, one could say. We rise upward, after that we descend and sleep. Perhaps it is there that we will encounter God. By way of the earth. Since the earth was taken from me and I was exiled from it, it has turned into the source and address of my spirit and my dreams. These circumstances are outside the place that the earth occupies in my work. The symbol of the homeland. It is all the longing and the dreams of return. But it's impossible to see only a place in it; it's also the earth of the world, and that is also foundational in my poetry. It's a synthesis. It's both the source of poetry and the material of poetry and language. Sometimes it isn't possible to differentiate between language and earth. It is the physical existence of the poem.

*I want to ask about your cycle of poems, Eleven Stars over the Last Moments of Andalusia. What is Andalus for Arabic poetry? What is it for you? "Was Andalus here or there? On the land . . . or perhaps only in poetry?"<sup>5</sup>*

. . . In the Arabic tradition, Andalus is the collective lament for the lost paradise. It is a dramatic attraction to the past. It's similar to the *jabiliyya*, pre-Islamic poetry, where one weeps over the place, over the home that is gone. That is the tradition: The poem must begin with a lament over the stones and tents that are gone. This is the poetry of nomads, who passed from place to place. The poet advances and finds stones: Layla was here, Lubna was here.<sup>6</sup> The beloved no longer remains. After that [the poet] moves on to describe the horse or the camel, and from there to metaphysical questions. Andalus was the lost place. Later, Palestine became Andalus. The popular poetry written about Palestine in the 1950s and 1960s formulated the comparison: We lost Palestine just as we lost Andalus. That's not my view. I have always said: Andalus may return. I wrote "Eleven Planets" to commemorate the five-hundredth anniversary of the expulsion from Spain and Columbus's arrival in America. You know he arrived there by accident. My poems were the call of an Arab poet within this great historical development. My view is not that Andalus is mine and my view is not that Palestine is the lost Andalus. I attempted to create a dialogue among the exiles on earth and I claimed no right to Andalus. But I understand the pain and tears of the Arab who has lived in a place for seven hundred years, who has no other place, who has no other meeting-place, and who is removed from it. My gaze wasn't colonial. I searched for the otherness of men everywhere. Thus Andalus could be here or there, in any place. For me Andalus was a meeting place of all strangers in the project of constructing human culture.

It isn't just that a coexistence of Jews and Muslims prevailed, but also that their fate was the same. They left together. The government of Spain asked for forgiveness from the Israelis; they didn't ask for it from the Arabs. That is the balance of power that has no relation to what is human. Andalus for me is the realization of the dream of the poem. A humanistic and cultural golden age.

*Don't you think you took this path because you were in the state of exile? Now that love of the homeland manifests itself in everyday problems, will it be necessary to take the path back, to reality? Are you concerned?*

There is no poetic connection. There is a political connection. For poetry the current atmosphere is preferable. We have magical solutions for every problem, such as having a state. That is how we think politically. From a literary perspective this is a mistake. When the Palestinians have a state, the literary challenge will be even greater. . . . Many Palestinian authors rely on the lack of a state. But a state is not a topic for literature. Neither is a homeland. When you have a homeland and speak about it with patriotic fervor, it's ludicrous. Thus a large portion of Palestinian literature will find itself stuck in the mud, or in crisis. The dreams will be realized,

and then what? I won't face a crisis like that. I have already gotten past this. I built my homeland, I even established a state, in my language. If there are no humanistic spaces in poetry that touch on the human, the text dies. That doesn't mean that we have to write about global issues. Literature comes from the everyday, but is it defined by the borders of the homeland? What is a homeland? It's a place that gives people the opportunity to grow. But not to make a flag from. In "Cease-fire with the Mongols" I say that I'm going to make socks from the flag. I'm not going to dedicate my life to a flag. Jean Genet said that a homeland is a stupid idea, except for those who still don't have one. Goytisolo, the Spanish poet, answered him: "And when they have a homeland?" Genet said: "Let them throw it out the window."

*More and more, I sense in your poetry over the last decade a proximity to the Jewish perspective—one that developed over hundreds of years of exile—with respect to the text's relationship to reality, to an abstract "place" as opposed to a physical place. In Memory for Forgetfulness you write: "In Lebanon we saw nothing but a language that makes the instinct for existence flow within us."<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere in the same book: "Palestine changes from a homeland to a symbol that is not intended to be realized."<sup>8</sup> I know that the comparison between the Jewish fate and the Palestinian fate bothers you, because it hints at a kind of "contest" over who is the greater victim.*

First of all, this comparison doesn't bother me as long as we are speaking from a place of literary concern. In this domain, nationalism doesn't exist. I think that this neurosis about whether or not one should accept the comparison will be resolved along with peace. The Jew won't be ashamed to find the Arab element within him, and the Arab won't be ashamed to acknowledge that he is also composed of Jewish elements. Especially when speaking about "Eretz Israel" in Hebrew and "Palestine" in Arabic. I am a son of all the cultures that have passed through the land—the Greek, the Roman, the Persian, the Jewish, the Ottoman. A presence that exists at the very core of my language. Every powerful culture passed through and left something. I am the son of all these fathers, but I belong to one mother. Does that mean that my mother is a prostitute? My mother is this earth; she received all of them. She was both a witness and a victim. I am also the son of the Jewish culture that was in Palestine. That's why I don't recoil from the comparison.

But because of the political tension—which says that if Israel is here the Palestinians must be absent, and that if the Palestinians are here then Israel must be absent—we haven't accepted the fact that we are the products of similar conditions and have competed with each other over who is the greater victim. I have already seen many Zionists lose their cool when



we remind them of a *shoah* that has occurred to another people. Like Elie Wiesel, who wrote: “Why do they say that what is happening in Bosnia is a *shoah*?” As if there were a Jewish monopoly. Whenever I’ve been invited to participate in a festival or on a television program, always, for the sake of balance, they’ve also requested an Israeli author. . . . Why must I be defined through my connection, positive or negative, to Israelis? That is politics. You turn our literary work into politics. That is what I have objected to. However, is there a commonality between my journey and the Jewish journey? I think so. From the perspective of human fate there are many crossings. That’s good and bad. I’m afraid that it may create a ghetto. That we will come to enjoy the ghetto.

*Is a state a ghetto?*

One must quickly forget this magical solution, and act as if the state were something very natural. Once, you exalted your state and entered a ghetto. Now you’re trying to escape from it. There’s a difference between the two points of view, the political and the intellectual. You created our exile, we didn’t create your exile.

*It was a historical necessity.*

I want to remind you of a sensitive point. I’m not so sure that the most recent generations of Jews remember that they’re living in exile, be they in Europe or America. Does the concept of “homeland” live with you through all the generations? Do all Jews bear such longing? Yet every Palestinian remembers that he had a homeland and that he was exiled from it. Not every Jew remembers this, because two thousand years have passed. The Palestinian—for him, the homeland is not a memory, not some intellectual matter. Every Palestinian is a witness to the rupture.

*The Jews were in a long exile. What are you trying to say?*

That the Palestinian is going through the concrete thing. That your exile is similar to all the exiles of all nations.

*In your article “The Identity of Absence” you attack the attempt to compare Jews to Palestinians. You refuse to see a historical double in us.<sup>9</sup>*

I was speaking then of the condition in the occupied territories. And it is necessary to distinguish between occupier and occupied.

*In Memory for Forgetfulness you write: “It’s our duty to know for what we long. Is it for the land? . . . Or for the image of our longing for the land within the land?”<sup>10</sup> Is it longing for the thing itself or for its reflection?*

The broad meanings of homeland, revolution, and patriotism are composed of fragile elements. Homeland is a broad concept, but when we go to the homeland we're searching for a specific tree, a specific stone, a window. These components are very intimate, and are neither a flag nor an anthem. I long for the little things.

Your question, about the thing or its reflection, readies my heart for disappointment. But, in order even to get to this question, do I have the right to be there?!

*Are you worried about losing the dream?*

That is a living myth in my poetry. There is always the fear of breaking the dream. In my last book I said: "I have one dream: to find a dream." A dream is a piece of the sky found in everyone. We can't be boundlessly realistic or pragmatic. We are in need of the sky. To strike a balance between what is true and what is imaginary. The dream is the province of poetry.

*In the same book you write: "My life is the shame of my poetry and my poetry is the shame of my life."<sup>11</sup>*

What does that mean? Did I say that? The translation is mistaken. I used the word *fadiḥai*. *Fadiḥa* in Arabic is not simply shame, but disclosure. *Fadiḥa* is the opposite of secrecy, of concealment. *Fadiḥa* is revelation. "*Faḍaḥtu sirri*" —I revealed my secret. Poetry cannot conceal the truth within me. Poetry is the scandalous revelation of my secret.

*And concerning Beirut you write: "Is it a city or a mask? Exile or a poem?"<sup>12</sup> Has Beirut become a metaphor for poetry?*

For a very short time. We didn't know Lebanon. We lived inside a ghetto that we built for ourselves in Beirut. Every one of us wondered what Beirut is. The Lebanese also don't know it. The true Lebanese lives in the mountains. Beirut is like Manhattan, a mixed city. We saw only ourselves in Beirut. Every street there is a city unto itself. Especially during the war. I used it in order to emphasize the contradictions of the phenomenon. Beirut was a phenomenon. I'm not totally satisfied with my writing from that period. The war had already started in 1975. I had arrived there two years earlier. I wrote "A Poem for Beirut." The Lebanese weren't satisfied with it. They said: "This isn't your city." They said I was a foreigner. I felt transitory there. Anyone with a sixth sense felt that the Palestinian entity in Beirut wouldn't last long. Nationalist sensitivities began to arise between the Lebanese [on the one hand] and the Palestinians and the Syrians [on the other]. Our presence there was uncomfortable for them.

They couldn't bear the burden of the Palestinian question. I can understand them.

It's a chapter in my life. Beirut wasn't a poem. It was a mask.

. . .

*For some time now you have been thought of as the national poet of the Palestinians and have won their admiration. Doesn't this status threaten your development as a poet? Don't you feel as though you're a prisoner within it?*

It depends on what is meant by "national." If a national poet is a representative, I don't represent anyone. I'm not responsible for the way my texts are read. But the collective voice exists within my individual voice, whether I want it to or not. When I speak about a sad winter's evening in Paris, for better or worse every Palestinian thinks that I'm representing him. There is nothing I can do about that. But if what is meant is that the national poet is the one who expresses the spirit of the people, I accept that, that is beautiful. Every poet in the world dreams that his voice will also be the voice of others. Regrettably, the critics gave me that label so that they could say that I'm a poet of a community, and so they could attempt to push the text into the political arena. But politics in our lives does not consist of political parties, it is one of the names for fate. I stand in the middle, on the border between the public voice and the personal voice. But really it doesn't matter to me. Perhaps because I do possess this kind of popularity, I can indulge myself and say that I don't want it. And if they were to forget me—then I would want it. It's important for me to feel free. The very fact that there are expectations for a poem of mine disturbs me, but I don't surrender to it. They say that every love poem of mine is about the land. That "Rita" in *Eleven Planets* is Palestine. "Rita" is an erotic poem, but no one believes me.

*Who is Rita?*

Rita is a pseudonym, but it alludes to a particular woman. The name carries within it a strong desire as well as power and weakness and distance.

*Nevertheless, in the poem "Rita's Long Winter" you write: "There is no land for two bodies in one body, and there is no exile for an exile in these small rooms . . . in vain we sing between two abysses."<sup>13</sup> Rita is the one speaking in this verse; it sounds like a political saying.*

Why not a humanistic or tragic saying? If I were to tell you that she is a Jewish woman, would it still sound political? Perhaps this is an

expression of a conflict, when national difference prevents the body from making love or continuing a love story. Rita in my poems is a Jewish woman. Is that a secret? A secret that I am revealing?

...

*You have made a significant transition in your life: from Rakah<sup>14</sup> to the PLO. In other words: from a Marxist-Communist worldview to a national movement. Do you feel at home within a world that is exclusively national?*

I have no problem with the transition, because the PLO is a varied structure from an ideological perspective. There are many currents within it. This transition hasn't been about a change in ideas, but rather about a change of instruments for action.

*In 1970, you traveled with the Communist Youth Delegation, deserted and went to Egypt, a journey after which you didn't return to the land. Do you have moments of regret about this step?*

Now, perhaps yes. But from the perspective of my poetic development, I don't regret it. Today, I wouldn't have chosen to run away. I would have remained with the people and with the land. Perhaps it's human weakness that moves me to this kind of regret, that I'm more sensitive, less foolish, and less of a dreamer.

...

*As a young man, were you angry at your father and the men of his generation for letting the land fall from their grasp?*

Yes. Today I understand them, that they couldn't do anything. This anger was cured in other poems.

*Did you see in the intifada, which by and large was carried out by Palestinian youth, a compensation for your childhood?*

I felt something completely different. I felt that the intifada was the simple, correct, and truthful answer that returned the issue to the land itself, returned the content to its frame. It liberated the Palestinian people from the complacency that the PLO permitted them. Even the Palestinians in Gaza felt that they had a political capital, which was Beirut, from which they could receive assistance and support. They worked in Israel and enjoyed prosperity. Their conscience was clear, because there was someone in Beirut working for the Palestinian cause. And Arik Sharon, who had once destroyed Gaza, was now saving it and the

West Bank by throwing the PLO into the sea. Then the people began to feel that they could rely only on themselves, and in the end that is what saved the PLO. In the intifada, I saw a backlash against laziness and reliance upon the leadership. A backlash against a long slumber. When the people took matters into their own hands, it began as a children's game, with a simple and symbolic weapon, and when they saw it on television—the first time television did anything positive—it urged them on and it became a way of life. In the end, the intifada damaged Palestinian society. It became a job.

. . .

*"Whoever writes his story will inherit the earth of the story,"<sup>15</sup> you wrote in your last book, Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?*

Correct. The powerful write history. The first one to write acquires the place or the vision of what is written; it is he who leaves his seal on the consciousness of the reader. It's in his power to change not only the future of the other, but also his past.

The Palestinian myth needs to be constructed in the Palestinian consciousness. A written Palestine. The other wrote it as his "beginning," which is never called into doubt. How will I be able to write over this writing? Our history has been suspended. Our past, as it were, is the property of the other, and it is up to us to return to it and connect with it. The single path that I see is a back and forth between the legendary and the everyday.

*And is it writing that grants control over the world?*

Yes. Why do you and the entire world think that your true homeland is the Land of Israel? Because the Bible wrote the story of humanity. This writing is what sustains your story. Who gave you the right to claim that this is your homeland? The Bible. What the Canaanites wrote is lost.

*You deploy many Christian symbols in your poems. A crucified Jesus appears as the personification of Palestine. . . . In "My Beloved Arose from her Slumber," the cross teaches the poet "the language of nails."<sup>16</sup> What is the source of your affinity for Christianity?*

The symbol in my work is not fixed, not final. It's flexible. The meaning changes according to the demands of the poem. As a good Palestinian, all religions are found within me. I am a man who has inherited the earth, the landscape, culture, and history. I'm very happy to be a son of this place, about which legends have been written. I live in a paradise

of symbols. So, I speak as a Christian without hesitation, and without hesitation I use Jewish mythology and heritage. But Christ has an added dimension: suffering. And he is an inhabitant of Palestine. So for me he's a good model for how to endure and forgive. How to publish books of love and toleration toward others. And what is more important in poetry: He died and he rose again. Every year he dies and he rises again. Our whole life is an alternation between life and death. Every time you die in a poem, you are born anew. Christ is a natural symbol: He is Palestinian from the perspective of time and place, and universal from the spiritual perspective.

*And Jewish from the perspective of origin.*

That doesn't bother me. Wars between religions are political. If we were fighting about the color of the sky, we'd be engaging in a poetic battle. Christians don't judge me for my friendship toward Christ, because the battle between church and state is over. When I use Muslim symbols I am more careful, very careful. Official Islam is very dogmatic. There are no free relations with the prophets in Islam. Everything that is written is decisive; they don't distinguish between religion and culture, and don't accept a cultural approach to religion. Christians are more flexible. So I am freer in my relations with Christianity.

*Nevertheless, what draws you to Christianity?*

The suffering. I prefer the word suffering. Christ is more poetic, because he was and was not. He was born of the spirit. He has a mother but no father. He is closer to mythology than the rest of the prophets and also more human. He loved wine. I love wine. In my childhood we didn't see any difference between a Christian and a Muslim. My grandfather's best friend was the village priest. I love Easter, the procession to the church. Like a meeting of lovers.

*And the status of the victim?*

Yes, a victim, and he will triumph. According to Islam he wasn't murdered. A third man was. My people is a victim; Christ—one of the sons of this land—returned to life. All of these shadows beguile the poem.

*In Memory for Forgetfulness you say: "I didn't rejoice over the demonstrations in Tel Aviv, which rob us of every role. They play the role of the murderer as well as the role of the victim. . . . The victor is afraid to lose his identity: the identity of the victim. . . they shouted in our place, they cried in our place."<sup>17</sup> What is the root of your anger over those Israelis who protested at the time of the war in Lebanon? . . .*

I was speaking about the Arabic world at the time of the siege, which took place during the World Cup. The Arab street was consumed by soccer. Thousands poured into the streets to challenge the umpire. Who was the aggressor then? The Israelis. Who came out to protest? The Israelis. . . . The entire game, the whole story played out on Israeli terrain. And where am I in all this? I am off stage. I'm just an object for death. I was engaging in a harsh critique of Arab society, but that didn't solve the problem for me. . . . The Arabs found satisfaction in photographs of the Israeli protests, as if they [the Israelis] were speaking in their name. In the Arab world everything was dead. This book isn't an analysis of the political situation. It's a panoramic book on the role of the victim and the role of the victimizer. I was concerned that these protests, while good and positive, would take the camera to Israeli terrain and we would remain in the shadows. . . . I wanted to say that there was no place for the victim to protest, because there was already someone speaking in his name. All the good came from there. The evil that was there—the good erases it. I wasn't interested in drawing a positive picture of Israel. I was so offended that I didn't want to see any light coming from that side.

*These Israelis disturbed your stereotype of them.*

I don't have a stereotype of Israel. It disturbed me to release it from its moral quandary . . .

*In the poem "A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies," which you wrote in 1967, the soldier is asked if he will die for the sake of the homeland. And he answers: "No, No. . . . They taught me to love her love/but I never felt her heart to be my heart. . . . My instrument of love is a rifle."<sup>18</sup> The same soldier wants to live in peace for the sake of his small son, and as far as he is concerned the homeland is nothing more than "drinking my mother's coffee"—in contrast to the Arab, who "smells its grass, its branches, and its roots." Aren't you minimizing the connection between the Israelis and this land?*

I understand what's hidden behind the question. I'm not evading the answer, but I want to remind you that I was severely criticized for this poem by Arab artists, because it goes against their stereotypical view of Israelis. The subject here is a soldier I knew. We sat together one night and he told me the story of his life. He hated the State and the Ministry of Defense—something unacceptable at the time in the wake of the 1967 war. The poem was a response to a stereotype. In the Israeli soldier, who was supposed to be a tank, I saw flesh and blood. That was seen [by the Arabs] as a great betrayal. The story is true. This soldier left the country after the war.

There is a feeling in Israeli society of rootlessness. It's a new society. Not all Israelis were born in Israel. In 1967, the State was only twenty years old. It is impossible to create a society with roots and cultural references in one or two generations. That's why learning love for the land had to come through Israeli education. There were no Jewish farmers in Russia. That's a new patriotic profession that was created in Israel. That's why the kibbutz came into being. I'm not criticizing here. There was no real physical connection between the Jewish psyche and the earth in Eretz Israel. The Zionist movement worked hard to convince Jews to cling to the soil, and is still trying. So what are you claiming? I am claiming that this was the first Arabic poem to give the Israeli voice a platform.

*And what does this voice say? That for him this homeland is "drinking his mother's coffee."*

This voice says that he is human, that he is a human being, not a rifle. That his relationship to the homeland is a search for security, drinking coffee in the morning in silence. Today, that is my Palestinian dream.

*That sounds new to me.*

Right. Where do I minimize the relationship of the Jew to the land? That is not the central point of the poem, which is rather that the soldier was a human being. You can't stand in my place and see the image of that soldier as pictured in the mind of my reader. I'm not trying to draw a prettier picture, but I was very touched by this young man, who went through the horrors of war and hoped to hear the cooing of doves from the roof of the Ministry of Defense. I don't want to lie to you and say that it disturbs me when someone speaks against the state. I welcome it. I didn't have any love for the State of Israel. And I still don't. And I think that you all need to listen to me well: You can't ask a Palestinian to love the State of Israel.

*I was speaking about the relationship to the land. I wasn't speaking about the state.*

For the Palestinian this is not Eretz Israel. This is Palestine. A foreign body is a foreign body. Today it's rare to find a Palestinian who speaks the truth. We are in a process for peace, everyone has to change his account of his history, but don't get upset when every Palestinian is convinced that Palestine belongs to him. Now he accepts that he has a partner. That is tremendous progress. Don't take this lightly. And don't be alarmed if you find out that he thinks that Palestine is his. For what country is his? He was born there. He doesn't know any other country. You are the foreigners in his eyes. How many years ago did you arrive?



You—at *one time* you were there, and he can't count how many years *he* has *already* been there. And it's not even certain whether or not you were those [people]. Are you the descendants of King Solomon? True peace is a dialogue between two accounts. You claim that this land has always been yours, as if history didn't continue while you weren't there, as if there was no one there, and as if the land had only one function—to wait for you. Don't force your account on me and I won't force mine on you. We must recognize that everyone has the right to tell his own story. And history will laugh at both of us. It doesn't have time for Jews and Arabs. Many peoples have passed through. It's good that [history] is cynical.

*This soldier says: "My instrument of love is the rifle."*

That's the soldier's profession. Without the rifle the Israeli state wouldn't exist today. If one values true confessions—this should be said. But coming from an Arab it doesn't sound good.

*And what are your instruments of love? There's also great violence in your love: "And this land is a guillotine whose blade I love." Hasn't hate harmed you?*

No. My instrument of love is poetry. When I see the shadow of hate in my poem, I change it. One must never write from a feeling of hate. It is against literature. The verse you quoted is the pinnacle of love: Even if this land is a guillotine, I love it.

*In Memory for Forgetfulness you say: "We have no choice but to maintain the present condition of our lives: the weapon. To take the weapon away from us is to take away our means of existence"<sup>19</sup>—are you prepared to accept this sentence that, in the past, was spoken by many Israelis?*

In a specific period, yes. I could understand it. Because history doesn't act in an elegant and just way. The balance between power and justice always leans toward the side of power. And power creates justice. That's history. When we are witnesses to a historical turning point, we suffer. When we are the inheritors of a historical situation, we justify. That's the difference. The Arab presence in Spain wasn't legal according to the standards of justice, but history worked out that way. Now I'm witness to a dialogue between presence and absence. And as a living witness who has just emerged from the previous historical situation, I cannot accept the inequality that I see. If I were only a *reader* of history, I would accept it. Our tragedy is that we are all witnesses to a historical turning point, a new order in history and geography. That's why everyone is making his own claims. We have arrived at a new chapter, which is called the peace process. Unfortunately, it's more about the process than about the

content. It is a pragmatic, sometimes despicable, American expression. It's vulgar. This process leads to a shared and divided reading of the shared and controversial history of this place. And we have one place. Regrettably. Or happily. I don't know how to write poems about this period. The whole conflict arose over the same place. You love this place, and express your love for the same plants, the same grass, as if you were me. As if you were speaking in my name. And that is the power of literature. Hebrew and Arabic poetry intersect in the writing about the landscape. A number of Israeli poets express my relationship to the landscape in poems that I could have signed myself. I won't mention names. Wars between poets are harsher than wars between dancers. I'm not engaging in rivalry when I write about the same place or the same plant. But it is our fate to dwell in and inhabit the same metaphor. And that is new.

*Set aside the metaphor.*

Very well. Also in reality. With the same nostalgia. When speaking about returning to the land, you don't know who's a Jew and who's an Arab. You rose up, were victorious through the power of the rifle, and—you won't believe when I say it—through the power of morality. Through the power of the rifle, you succeeded. Through the power of the stone, the Palestinians also succeeded—in being present, nothing more than that. So if we understand one another in this way, a background will be set for true debate. The time has come. But don't set preconditions. I won't speak with you if you think that Palestine is yours! Palestine is mine. And I will think that forever. What right did you have to think the Land of Israel was yours for two thousand years? And how many cultures, how many empires were there! You never stopped dreaming. OK, dream. But your dream was farther away in time and place than the distance between myself and the dream and the place. I have been an exile for only fifty years. My dream is vivid, fresh.

*You know very well that time doesn't apply to a dream.*

I know how much power the dream has. But it's also possible to dream differently in the future. To dream that this land will become a paradise. This land is called the land of peace; there was never any peace in it. But don't ask us to justify our presence there. We weren't conquerors. There's a certain tendency now to push the Palestinians to think that they've erred in their account of their connection to the land.

*Where do you get that?*

It expresses itself in the perception of the Zionist movement as a national liberation movement. That wasn't so. It was a complex and nonreligious

settlement movement, which was connected to commercial interests of the West. You think that the Arab liberation movement was neo-fascist. One must establish a dialogue between the two accounts. This peace doesn't require me to change my reading of the history of Zionism and my position toward it. I need to change my perception of the future, but the battle over the past exists. Only the language has been refined.

Even if I think that your grandfather was a conqueror, that doesn't prevent me from recognizing your right to exist. Every one of us has a conquering grandfather. Show me one innocent grandfather in all history. So why do we need to acknowledge that Zionism is a liberation movement? Liberation from whom? At whose expense?

*A not insignificant number of Israelis speak about the tragedy of one justice opposing another.*

I don't accept that the two sides are both just. Justice doesn't battle justice. There is one justice. I prefer entity versus entity. Account versus account. Claim versus claim. Absence versus presence, or vice versa. But not justice versus justice. That's the biggest sham I've ever heard, like the other one, "that the Land of Israel is a land without people for a people without a land." Two lies. Why are we renewing this conflict? In order to liberate Israeli consciousness from the illusion that the Palestinians lost their collective memory. For the Palestinian there is no other land. And for the Israelis there have been many lands. You are a mixture of how many people? From how many places of origin have you come? At least fifty. Yet historical development created two entities in one land and it's good that we've arrived at a dialogue. Permit the historian to speak. Otherwise you'll suffocate the right to speech. That is the cultural aspect of the matter. And it will recover from a number of diseases, illusions, and lies.

*I have also listened to Israelis who see Palestinians as their brothers in this land. Are you able to feel that way toward Jews?*

Not yet. Because I was cut off from the land for twenty-six years. Helit, the conqueror is always more forgiving. He has the luxury of being moderate. If I had been victorious, I would have been able to say that. But in the meantime, don't believe me if I say it. There are conditions for love. The lover must be accepted, and not hungry. It's true that there is no absolute equality in love, but the lover must at least feel desired. Until now the Palestinians haven't felt accepted. What you said sounds beautiful to my ears. The Palestinian must tell you that you are his sister, and one must work to actualize that understanding. But let him complain.

*The history of relations between intellectuals and power has always been characterized by a healthy antagonism. Don't you think that there are historical moments when their courage should be expressed precisely in support and encouragement, as when some among us supported Rabin and Peres?*

Our task is to criticize the process. I wasn't opposed to the Oslo accords. I expressed doubts about them. I'm not opposed to peace. I wanted the land to be divided between two peoples, not to have one part here and another part there, closed off in ghettos. Only culture is a guarantee of true peace. I encouraged the leadership in its time of weakness. Now that they are strong, I'm allowed not to applaud. If a Palestinian state is established, I will be in the opposition. That's my natural place.

*In an interview the two of you held, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze posed the question: "Why did the Israelis choose Hebrew and not another living language?" You answered: "This choice was a part of the creation of the great legend that the 'right to return' to the land of the Torah requires its own linguistic tools: the language of the Torah." . . .*

I know that the Israelis *chose* the Hebrew language. For five hours already we've been on good terms, and it seems to me that there'd have been no point to the interview if we weren't going to argue. The choice of Hebrew was meant to actualize the Israeli national identity. It is impossible to create the consciousness of a true identity without a common language. Hebrew existed only in the synagogue, in texts, perhaps in the heart. That is beautiful. But it was not the language of communication between people, just like a few crazy people still write in Latin. Maybe there is someone still writing in Assyrian? Hebrew was an almost secret form of writing. Without relation to society. There were writers, but there weren't any readers.

*Hebrew never ceased to exist, and in any case it wasn't a question of choice. It was also the language of longing.*

I'm not an expert in this matter.

*You're not an expert in longing?*

The language of longing was sometimes Yiddish, no? But the State of Israel chose Hebrew and fought against Yiddish. Deleuze's question was about Jewish genius. He thought that the Jews were geniuses who had contributed a great deal to human culture. Why did a portion of them agree to cut themselves off from world culture and go into the ghetto of Hebrew? That is a philosophical question that shouldn't be taken lightly.

As a philosopher, as a student of Nietzsche, [Deleuze] has the right to ask how a culture can be created through the choice of language, out of an ideological impulse, and succeed. The question is simply a question.

As to the expression “the legend of the right to return,” which bothered you—it’s good that we’ve passed beyond the era of legends. What was a legend has become true. I am busy with my own right to return. I can’t defend the Israelis’ right to return.

*Your poem “Other Barbarians Will Come” ends like this: “Can a new Homer be born after us . . . and myths open their doors to everyone?”<sup>20</sup> How do you see the Homeric poet in our era? Is there a place for epic poetry today?*

There is no place for the Homeric poet, but there is a place for the poet of Troy. We haven’t heard his poem. We haven’t heard Troy’s account. I’m sure there were poets there. The voice of Homer, the victor, vanquished even the Trojan’s right to complain. I try to be the poet of Troy. Is it painful? I love the vanquished.

*Be careful, you’re beginning to sound Jewish.*

If only. Today it’s very accepted. There are always two faces to the truth. We’ve heard the Greek account. We’ve even heard the voice of the Trojan victim from the mouth of Euripides, the Greek. I am searching for the poet from Troy. Troy hasn’t told its story. Does the state that has great poets have the right to vanquish a people that has no poets? Is the absence of poetry in a people reason enough for it to be vanquished? Is poetry allusive, or is it one of the instruments of power? Can a people be strong without poetry? I am the son of a people that until today hasn’t been recognized; I wanted to speak in the name of the one who is absent, who is the poet of Troy. There is more inspiration and human wealth in defeat than in victory. There is great poetry in destruction. If I belonged to the victors, I would turn out for demonstrations of solidarity with the victim.

*Are you sure?*

I wrote it. “Let Arafat besiege Tel Aviv, and I would turn out to demonstrate against him.” Do you know what a pleasure it is to be both victorious and humane? To be in solidarity with the defeated? . . . Do you know why we, the Palestinians, are famous? Because *you* are our enemy. Interest in the Palestine problem comes by way of interest in the Jewish problem. . . . If our war had been with Pakistan, no one would have heard of me. So we are unlucky that our enemy is Israel, which

has so many sympathizers in the world, and we are lucky that Israel is our enemy, because Jews are the center of the world. You have given us defeat, weakness, and publicity.

...

*When you say that you would like to be the poet of Troy, isn't there some desire for defeat in that?*

No. I find what is vital there. There I can speak the un-spoken, say the things that haven't been said. Poetry is always a search for things that have yet to be said. I can't add anything to Homer, but the human void within me, which is Troy, I can build on that. Defeat is a key to observing human fate, an observation impossible for the victor. Despair brings the poet closer to God, returns him to the genesis of writing, to the first word. It counteracts the victor's power of destruction, because the language of despair is stronger than the language of hope. Troy's words have still not been spoken, and poetry is the beginning of speech.

*Do you know the Book of Lamentations? That is also a poem of Troy.*

True. But you must choose: to be Sparta, Athens, or Troy. You can't have it all.

...

*In Eleven Stars you write: "Soon we will investigate the affinity between our history and your history in distant lands."<sup>21</sup> Has the moment of investigation arrived? How does it illuminate this affinity?*

The time for investigation has arrived. We are now turning to one future. We are now speaking in the language of a new world, economic prosperity, mutual forgiveness. I think that the future is clearer than the past. We will fight over the past. I am linking this to what I said about the right of every side to its own account. When one goes to the international party of dreams, all of the opposing sides speak one language. I could write the speech of every side. But the struggle is over the point of departure. We are the two stupidest peoples in history. We are so small, unaccepted, Josephs hated by their brothers. The ideology of states and identity cards is what created the conflict. We are peoples who were born to be the subject of poems. When we came to the political game we began to fight. When we make peace, we will laugh about this entire phase. But there is a question that worries me: Are we ourselves? Are we free enough to make independent wars and an independent peace, or are we pawns in a game of chess? Once we wanted to be Jews. Now you want to be Palestinians. What is it with you and the Palestinians? You have obtained the whole universe, why suddenly do you want to be Palestinians?

*What do you mean by "Are we ourselves?"*

Poetry must always ask the question without answering it. This poem is about people returning and not finding themselves. Is the I-that-was the I-that-returned? Even Ulysses didn't return as the same man. The sea changed him. The sea and the years. He didn't find the same house. He didn't find the same Penelope. You don't find yourself twice. Every day you are a different man.

*Who told you that we want to be Palestinians?*

You came to Palestine. Culturally, you were global. Is the flag more important than Homer? Let history answer the question. And we wanted to be Jews. Our whole region hates us. So we play games that might entertain the historians, but I am sure that in ten years we'll become bored. We will have obtained the whole legend, all of reality, all the wars, and all the peace. What will we work for? Will it be possible to turn this hole into a place of musical creation? I doubt it. We will be normal. And to be normal, everyone must pass through legends, myths. Afterward I think we will all be assimilated into the region.

*. . . In Eleven Stars you write: "I am one of the knights of the end/I will jump off/my horse in the last/winter, I am the Arab's last gasp." Does the poet have no other mission than being a "knight of the end"?<sup>22</sup>*

That saying comes from Abu 'Abdallah al-Saghīr, the last Arab king of Granada, who, upon arriving at the mountain, looked behind him and wept. The Spanish engraved it on a stone: Here was the Arab's last sigh. His whole story is tragic. His mother pushed him into a war whose outcome was clear. He had a choice: to accept peace, which was nothing other than surrender, or to suffer defeat. I identify with this. I am not "the Arab's last sigh," but when I write it, I live within it. As if I'm not of the twentieth century.

There is a very important level to your question, and that is the matter of the past in poetry. I think that poetry is a reactionary form of writing. It always listens to voices from the past, to voices that are no longer. There is no modernism that comes from the present. The past is the most inflexible time. You need to be on the oldest street in Paris for the tone of the poem to be modern. Poetry that is cut off from the ancient past is an echo that cannot return. In every poem it's possible to read the history of poetry. A poet is the first man. Every poem must say that man is currently arriving, currently being expelled, and returning to his true paradise. The balance between the past and the future in poetry is that, however far in the past it may be, that is how close it is to the future. No poetry comes

from an "American way of life."<sup>23</sup> The more you delve into the Canaanite, the Sumerian history, the more rooted you will be. No piece of earth ever completely dries up. Even when you listen to a song on the radio, if it doesn't remind you of a distant place, it doesn't touch you.

*And the poet is the knight of the end?*

As a poet I felt as though I was the last knight on the page of history. I identified myself with the man who was the Hamlet of Andalusia. He doesn't know [what to do]: To fight or not to fight? So his mother recited the famous poem: "You cry like a woman over a kingdom that you did not defend." She knew that he would lose, and pushed him to fight. That is exactly what is happening now. Truth doesn't have only one face. No historian can judge him. His fear, hesitation, and defeat are understandable. There were those who said to him: Kill yourself. Be valiant. So between being valiant and being pragmatic, this man became the Arab Hamlet. And every generation curses him. Granada was finished. All of Arabic culture ended there. So how does a man respond to such a trial? He saves himself. They allowed him to flee. They promised him a small kingdom, but they betrayed him.

*"Who am I after the night of the stranger?"<sup>24</sup> Who are you?*

Ooh la la! That question remains unanswered in the poem. I am not myself. If there is no stranger in my identity, I don't recognize myself. I can be defined only through the dialectical relationship between myself and the other. If I were alone, without my fellow man, what would I understand? I would be filled with myself, my entire truth, without dualism.

Ever since I left Andalusia I have been searching for the answer, ever since I left the history of the other, of my fellow man. Ever since and up until today I have been searching for a place in history and am far from finding it. I am outside the history of my fellow man and outside the history of myself.

...

*You speak about the other, when for the most part the other is the Palestinian. Is there a place within yourself today for the other who is the Jew, the Israeli?*

It is impossible for me to evade the place that the Israeli has occupied in my identity. He exists, whatever I may think of him. He is a physical and psychological fact. The Israelis changed the Palestinians and vice versa. The Israelis are not the same people that came, and the Palestinians are



not the same people that once were. In the one, there is the other. If the Israeli left my identity, would it crumble? That, I suppose, was your question. I don't want to get into these types of questions. After all, I am a son of Arab culture. If I were absent from this historical moment, I would find myself in Morocco or Yemen. So you should know that neither the Israeli of yesterday nor the new Israeli has the power to remove me. Because I have a massive identity card and it stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to Yemen. I have somewhere to flee, somewhere to die, and somewhere to be born anew. At this moment we are speaking about the Israeli component of Palestinian identity. It is a multivalent, heterogeneous element. I need heterogeneity. It enriches me.

The other [*aḥer*] is a responsibility [*aḥarayut*] and a test. Together we are doing something new in history. Fate asked us . . .

*Forced us . . .*

Initially it forced us, now it asks—it is so polite now!—to be examined a different way. Will a third way emerge from these two? That is the test.

. . .

*What is Hebrew for you?*

. . . Hebrew is the first foreign language I learned, at the age of ten or twelve. I spoke in this language with the stranger, the police officer, the military governor, the teacher, the prison guard, and the lover. So it doesn't signify the language of the conqueror, because I spoke words of love in it. It is also the language of my friends. My relationship to it is pure. It opened the door for me to European literature. I read Lorca in Hebrew, as well as Nazim Hikmet, who was required reading in the leftist camp. I first read Greek tragedy in Hebrew. It is also the language of memory for my childhood. When I read Hebrew I am reminded of the place. It brings the landscape with it. Many of my friends in Europe are jealous that I can read the Bible in the original. I haven't stopped reading Hebrew, even Israeli newspapers. And I am interested in the literature, particularly in the poetry. I hope that I will be able to recreate the language. I don't have any complex about it.

. . .

*Has exile become a mask?*

No. I am now being tested: I can choose between an external exile or an internal one, an external or internal homeland—I don't know what I want. Exile is so strong within me, I may bring it to the land.

## ENDNOTES

1. Literally, this sentence reads: "I can't say that I'm moving from one exile [*galuī*] to another, because I am exiled [*galuī*]*—*does one say *galuī*?—an exile [*goleb*], insofar as it hints at the two aspects." The uncertainty voiced by Darwish in this response centers on the grammatical permissibility or impermissibility of using the adjective *galuī* in relation to "exile."
2. See Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness*, trans. Ibrahim Muhawi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 87.
3. An Arabic language journal published in Israel between 1994 and 1996 by the Palestinian author and journalist Emil Habibi. It was revived in 2002 under the editorships of Anton Shamma, Salman Masalha, Muhammad Ghanaim, Ramzi Suleiman, and Anton Shalhat.
4. See *The Music of Human Flesh*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (London: Heinemann Press, 1980).
5. See Mahmoud Darwish, "Eleven Planets at the End of the Andalusian Scene," in *If I Were Another*, trans. Fady Joudah (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2009), 57.
6. Layla and Lubna are two figures from the classical tradition of Arabic love poetry.
7. See *Memory*, 46.
8. See *Memory*, 49.
9. See *Mifgash/Liqā'* 7–8 (Autumn 1987), pp. 46–47. The article appears simultaneously in facing Arabic and Hebrew.
10. See *Memory*, p. 81.
11. See *Memory*, p. 176: "My life is the scandal of my poetry, and my poetry is the scandal of my life."
12. See *Memory*, p. 90.
13. See Darwish, *If I Were Another*: "There is no land for two bodies in one, no exile for exile/in these small rooms, and exit is entry:/We sing between two chasms in vain," 93.
14. Rakaḥ is an acronym for *reshima komonistit ḥadashab* [The New Communist List]. It formed in 1965 as part of a split within Maki, the Israeli Communist Party, in which a largely Palestinian contingent broke away in protest of the party's support for Zionism and the State of Israel.
15. Mahmoud Darwish, *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?*, trans. Jeffrey Sacks (New York: Archipelago Books, 2006), 126.
16. Mahmoud Darwish, *Al-a'māl al-shi'riya al-kāmilah* (Beirut: Al-mu'asasa al-'arabiyyah lil-darāsāt wal-nashr, 1973), 337.
17. See *Memory*, pp. 109–10.
18. See Mahmoud Darwish, "A Soldier Dreams of White Tulips," in *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, ed. Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché, trans. Munir Akash et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
19. See *Memory*, p. 68.
20. See *Unfortunately*, p. 20.
21. See Darwish, "Eleven Planets," 57.
22. See *Ibid.*, 60.
23. This phrase appears in English in the original.
24. See Darwish, "Eleven Planets," 63.