

UNDERSIEGE

M a h m o u d D a r w i s h

Excerpt

-5-

In the state of siege, time becomes space
Transfixed in its eternity
In the state of siege, space becomes time
That has missed its yesterday and its tomorrow.

The martyr encircles me every time I live a new day
And questions me: Where were you? Take every word
You have given me back to the dictionaries
And relieve the sleepers from the echo's buzz.

The martyr enlightens me: beyond the expanse
I did not look
For the virgins of immortality for I love life
On earth, amid fig trees and pines,
But I cannot reach it, and then, too, I took aim at it
With my last possession: the blood in the body of azure.

The martyr warned me: Do not believe their ululations
Believe my father when, weeping, he looks at my photograph
How did we trade roles, my son, how did you precede me.
I first, I the first one!

The martyr encircles me: my place and my crude furniture are all that I have changed.
I put a gazelle on my bed,
And a crescent of moon on my finger
To appease my sorrow.