

Mahmood Darwish

MOHAMED

Translated into English by Amr Khadr *

Mohamed,
nestles in the bosom of his father, a bird afraid
of the infernal sky: father protect me
from the upward flight! My wing is
slight for the wind * and the light is black

Mohamed,
wants to return home, with no
bicycle ... or new shirt
yearns for the school bench *
the notebook of grammar and conjugation, take me
to our home, father, to prepare for my lessons
to continue being, little by little *
on the seashore, under the palms *
and nothing further, nothing further

Mohamed,
faces an army, with no stone or shrapnel
of stars, does not notice the wall to write: my freedom
will not die, for he has no freedom yet
to defend. No perspective for the dove of Pablo
Picasso. He continues to be born, continues
to be born in a name bearing him the curse of the name. How
many times will his self give birth to a child
with no home ... with no time for childhood?
Where will he dream if the dream would come *
and land is a wound ... and a temple?

Mohamed,
sees his inescapable death approaching. But then
remembers, a leopard he has seen on the tv screen,

a fierce one besieging a suckling fawn. When it
came near and smelt the milk, it would not pounce.
As if the milk tames the wild beast.
Hence, I will survive - says the boy -
and weeps: for my life is there hidden
in my mother's chest. I will survive ... and witness

Mohamed,
a destitute angel, within a stone's throw from
the gun of his cold blooded hunter. For
an hour the camera traces the movements of the boy
who is merging with his shadow:
his face, clear, like dawn
his heart, clear, like an apple
his ten fingers, clear, like candles
the dew clear on his trousers *
His hunter could have reflected
twice, and say: I will spare him till when he spells
his Palestine without mistakes ...
I will spare him now subject to my conscience
and kill him the day he rebels!

Mohamed,
an infant Jesus, sleeps and dreams in
the heart of an icon
made of copper
an olive branch
and the soul of a people renewed

Mohamed,
blood beyond the need of the prophets
for what they seek, so ascend
to the Ultimate Tree
Mohamed !

(October 2000)
A State of Siege

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Mahmoud Darwish - Ramallah - January 2002

Translated by Ramsis Amun

Here, where the hills slope before the sunset and the chasm of time
near gardens whose shades have been cast aside
we do what prisoners do
we do what the jobless do
we sow hope

In a land where the dawn sears
we have become more doltish
and we stare at the moments of victory
there is no starry night in our nights of explosions
our enemies stay up late, they switch on the lights
in the intense darkness of this tunnel

Here after the poems of Job, we wait no more

This siege will persist until we teach our enemies
models of our finest poetry

the sky is leaden during the day
and a fierv orange at night* but our hearts

are as neutral as the flowery emblems on a shield

here, not "I"

Here, Adam remembers the clay of which he was born

He says, on the verge of death, he says,

"I have no more earth to lose"

Free am I, close to my ultimate freedom, I hold my fortune in my own hands

In a few moments, I will begin my life

born free of father and mother

I will chose letters of sky blue for my name

Under siege, life is the moment between remembrance of the first moment, and forgetfulness of the last

here, under the mountains of smoke, on the threshold of my home,

t

ime has no measure

We do what those who give up the ghost do*

we forget our pain

Pain is when the housewife forsakes hanging up the clothes to dry and is content

that this flag of Palestine should be without stain

There is no Homeric echo here

Myths come knocking on our door when we need them

There is no Homeric echo here* only a general

looking through the rubble for the awakening state

concealed within the galloping horse from Troy

The soldiers measure the space between being and nothingness with field-glasses behind a tank's armoury

We measure the space between our bodies and the coming rockets with our sixth sense alone

You there, by the threshold of our door

Come in, and sip with us our Arabic coffee

[you may even feel that you are human, just as we are]

you there, by the threshold of our door

take your rockets away from our mornings

we may then feel secure

[and almost human]

We may find time for relaxation and fine art

We may play cards, and read our newspapers
Catching up on the news of our wounded past
and we may look up our star signs in the year
two thousand and two, the camera smiles
to those born under the sign of the siege

Whenever yesterday comes to me, I say to her,
Now's not the right time. Go
and come tomorrow!

I wrack my head, but uselessly.
What can someone like me think of, there,
on the tip of the hillside, for the past 3 thousand years,
and in this passing moment?
My thoughts slay me
my memory awakens me

When the helicopters disappear the doves fly back
white, very white, marking the cheeks of the horizon
with liberated wings. They revive their radiance and their ownership
of the sky, and of playfulness. Higher and higher they fly,
the doves, very white. 'O that the sky
was real' [a man passing between two bombs cried]
A sparkling sky, a vision, lightning!
all very similar*.
soon I will know if this is indeed
a revelation
or my close friends will know that the poem
has gone, and yoked its poet

[to a critic]: Don't interpret my words
as you stir the sugar in your cup, or munch your breast of chicken!
Words put me under siege in my sleep*
the words I did not utter.
They write me, then leave me searching for the remains of my sleep

The evergreen Cypresses behind the soldiers are minarets protecting
the sky from falling. Behind the barbed wire
are soldiers urinating- protected by a tank.
The Autumn day completes its golden stroll on the pavements of
a street as empty as a church after Sunday prayers

Tomorrow we will love life.
When tomorrow comes, life will be something to adore
just as it is, ordinary, or tricky
gray, or colourful*stripped of judgement day and purgatory*
and if joy is a necessity

let it be
light on the heart and the back
Once embittered by joy, twice shy

A satirical writer said to me:
If I knew the end of the story at the very beginning
there would be nothing to laugh about!

[To a killer:] If you reflected upon the face
of the victim you slew, you would have remembered your mother in the
room
full of gas. You would have freed yourself
of the bullet's wisdom,
and changed your mind: 'I will never find myself thus.'

[To another killer:] If you left the foetus thirty days
in its mother's womb, things would have been different.
The occupation would be over and this suckling infant
would forget the time of the siege
and grow up a healthy child
reading at school, with one of your daughters
the ancient history of Asia.
They might even fall in love
and give birth to a daughter [she would be Jewish by birth].
What, then, have you done now?
Your daughter is now a widow
and your granddaughter an orphan.
What have you done with your scattered family?
And how have you slain three doves in one story?

This verse was not
really necessary. Forget about the refrain
and forget about being economical with the pain.
It's all superfluous
like so much dross

The mist is darkness- a thick, white darkness
peeled by an orange, and a promising woman

The siege is lying in wait.
It is
lying in wait on a tilted stairway
in the midst of a storm.

We are alone. We are alone to the point
of drunkenness with our own aloneness,
with the occasional rainbow visiting.

We have brothers and sisters overseas..
kind sisters, who love us..

who look our way and weep.
And secretly they say
"I wish that siege was here, so that I could*"
But they cannot finish the sentence.
Do not leave us alone. No.
Do not leave us alone.

Our losses are between two and eight a day.
And ten are wounded.
Twenty homes are gone.
Forty olive groves destroyed,
in addition to the structural damage
afflicting the veins of the poem, the play,
and the unfinished painting.

In the alleyway, lit by an exiled lantern,
I see a refugee camp at the crossroads of the winds.
The south rebels against the wind.
The east is a west turned religious.
The west is a murderous truce minting the coinage of peace.
As for the north, the distant north,
it is not a place or a geographical vicinity.
It is the conference of heavenly divinity.

A woman said to a cloud: cover my dear one,
for my clothes are wet with his blood.

If you are not rain, o dear one,
then be a tree,
fertile and verdant. Be a tree.
And if not a tree, o dear one
be a stone
laden with dew. Be a stone.
And if not a stone, o dear one,
be the moon itself
in the dreams of she who loves you. Be the moon itself.
[thus a woman said
to her son, in his funeral]

O you who are sleepless tonight, did you not tire
of following the light in our story
and the red blaze in our blood?
Did you not tire, you who are sleepless tonight?

Standing here. Sitting here. Always here. Eternally here,
we have one aim and one aim only: to continue to be.
Beyond that aim we differ in all.
We differ on the form of the national flag (we would have done well if
we had chosen
o living heart of mine, the symbol of a simple mule).
We differ on the words of the new anthem
(we would have done well to choose a song on the marriage of doves).
We differ on the duties of women
(we would have done well to choose a woman to run the security
services).
We differ on proportions, public and private.
We differ on everything. We have one aim: to continue to be.
After fulfilling this aim, we will have time for other choices.

He said to me, on his way to jail,
"When I am released I will know that praise of nation
is like pouring scorn on nation-
a trade like any other!

A little of the infinite blue
suffices
to reduce the burden of our times
and cleanse the mud from this place right now

The spirit needs to improvise
and walk upon its silken soles
by my side, as hand in hand, two old friends
we share a crust of bread
and an old flask of wine
walking the path together,
then our days fork off into two separate paths:
I to the unknown, and she
sits squatting upon a high rock

[to a poet] Whenever the sunset eludes you
you are ensnared in the solitude of the gods.
Be 'the essence' of your lost subject
and the subject of your lost essence. Be present in your absence

He finds time for sarcasm:
My telephone has stopped ringing.
My doorbell has also stopped ringing.
So how did you know
that I am not here?

He finds time for song:
Waiting for you, I cannot wait
I cannot read Dostoyevsky
nor listen to Umm Kalthum, Maria Callas or another.
Waiting for you, the hands of the watch go from right
to left
to a time without a place.
Waiting for you, I didn't wait for you.
I waited for eternity.

He asks her, "What kind of flower is your favourite?"
She says, "The carnation. The black carnation."
He asks her, "And where will you take me, with those black carnations?"
She says, "To the abyss of life within me."
She says, "Further, further, further."

This siege will endure until the besiegers feel, like
the besieged
that anger
is an emotion like any other.

"I don't love you. I don't hate you,"
The prisoner said to the interrogator. "My heart is full
of that which is of no concern to you. My heart is full of the aroma of
sage.
My heart
is innocent, radiant, brimming.
There is no time in the heart for tests. No.
I do not love you. Who are you that I may give my love to you?
Are you part of my being? Are you a coffee rendezvous?
Are you the wind of the flute, and a song, that I may love you?
I hate imprisonment. But I do not hate you."
Thus a prisoner said to the investigator. "My feelings are not your
concern.
My emotions are my own private night*
my night which moves from bed to bed free of rhyme
and of double meanings!

We sat far from our destinies, like birds
which build their nests in cracks in statues
or in chimneys, or in tents
erected on the prince's path at the time of the hunt

On my ruins the shadows grow green
and the wolf sleeps on a hibernating poem,
dreaming, like me, and like a guardian angel,
that life is pure and free of label

Myths refuse to amend their patterns.
Perhaps they were struck by a crack in the hull;
perhaps their ships have been stranded on
a land without a people.
Thus the idealist was overcome by the realist.
But the ships will not change their mould.
Whenever an unpleasant reality crosses their path
they demolish it with a bulldozer.
The colour of their truth dictates the text: she is beautiful,
white, without blemish.

[to a semi-orientalist] Let's say things are the way you think they are

-

that I am stupid, stupid, stupid
and that I cannot play golf
or understand high technology
nor can fly a plane!

Is that why you have ransomed my life to create yours?

If you were another - if I were another

we would have been a couple of friends who confessed our need for
folly

But the fool, like Shylock the merchant,
consists of heart, and bread, and two frightened eyes

Under siege, time becomes a location
solidified eternally

Under siege, place becomes a time
abandoned by past and future

This low, high land

this holy harlot*

we do not pay much attention to the magic of these words

a cavity may become a vacuum in space

a contour in geography

The dead besiege me with every new day

and ask me, "Where were you? Give back

to the lexicon all the words

you offered me

and let the sleepers sleep without phantoms in their dreams!

The dead teach me the lesson: there is no aesthetic beyond freedom

The dead point out to me: why search beyond the horizon

for the eternal virgins? We loved life

on earth, between the fig and the pine trees

but we couldn't find our way even there. We searched

until we gave life all we owned: the purple blood in our veins

The dead besiege me. "Do not walk in the funeral
if you did not know me. I seek no compliments
from man nor beast

The dead warn me. "Do not believe their rejoicing.
Listen instead to my dad as he looks at my photo crying.
"How did you take my place, son, and jump ahead of me?
I should have gone first! I should have gone first!"

The dead besiege me. "I have only changed my place of abode and my
furnishings.

The deer now walk on my bedroom's roof
and the moon warms the ceiling from the pain
thus putting an end to my pain
to put an end to my wailing."

and the moon warms the ceiling
to put an end to my wailing."

This siege will endure until we are truly persuaded
into choosing a harmless slavery, but
in total freedom!

To resist: that means to ensure the health
of heart and testicles, and that your ancient disease
is still alive and well in you
a disease called hope

in the remains of the dawn I walk outside of my own body
in the remains of the night I hear the footsteps of my own being

I raise my cup to those who drink with me
to an awakening to the beauty of the butterfly
in the long tunnel of this dark night

I raise my cup to those who drink with me
in the thick darkness of a night overflowing with crippled souls
I raise my cup to the apparition in my being

[to a reader] Don't trust the poem
She is the absentee daughter. She is neither an intuition
nor a surmise, but a sense of disaster

If love is crippled, I will heal it
with exercise and humour

and with separating the s
inger from the song

My friends are ever preparing a party for me-
a farewell party, and a comfortable grave in the shadow of the oak
together with a marble witness from the tombstone of time
But I seem to be first in attending their funerals.
Who has died today?

The siege is transforming me from a singer
to a sixth string on a five string violin

The deceased, daughter of
the deceased, who is herself daughter of the deceased, who is the
deceased's sister
The deceased resister's sister is related by marriage to the mother of
the deceased, who is granddaughter of the deceased's grandfather
and neighbour to the deceased's uncle (etc. ..etc.)
No news worries the developed world,
for the time of barbarism has passed
and the victim is Joe Bloggs. Nobody knows his name,
and the tragedy, like the truth, is relative (etc. ..etc.)

Quiet, quiet, for the soldiers need
at this hour to listen to the songs
which the dead resisters had listened to, and have remained
like the smell of coffee, in their blood, fresh

Truce, truce. A time to test the teachings: can helicopters be turned
into ploughshares?
We said to them: truce, truce, to examine intentions.
The flavour of peace may be absorbed by the soul.
Then we may compete for the love of life using poetic images.
They replied, "Don't you know that peace begins with oneself,
if you wish to open the door to our citadel of truth?
So we said, "And then?"

Writing is a small ant which bites extinction.
Writing is a bloodless wound.

Our cups of coffee, and the birds, and the green trees
with the blue shade, and the sun leaping from wall
to wall like a doe
and the waters in the skies of infinite shapes, in what is left to us
of sky*and other matters the memory of which has been put on hold
prove that this morning is strong and beautiful
and that we are guests of evermore

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The one who has turned me into a refugee has made a bomb of me
I know that I will die
I know that I am venturing into a lost battle today, because it is the
battle for the future
I know that Palestine on the map is away from me
I know that you have forgotten its name and that you use a new name
for
it
I know all that
That is why I carry it to your streets, your homes, and your bedrooms
Palestine is not a land gentlemen of the jury
Palestine has become bodies that move
They move to the streets of the world, singing the song of death
Because the New Christ has given up his cross and gone out of Palestine

Check this website

[1_Mahmoud Darwish, LIVE! at the Homeless Poets' Cafe.htm](#)

Mahmoud Darwich le voyageur des mots Jeudi 3 avril 2003 (LE MONDE)

Né en Galilée, le poète palestinien a grandi dans plusieurs langues. Figure de la modernité littéraire arabe, il veut tenir l'actualité à distance de ses textes.

Il chante les nuages, les arbres et le vent. Il chante l'amour, les vacillements du coeur et du corps. Il chante la terre et toute la blessure d'un peuple déraciné. A soixante-deux ans, le poète palestinien Mahmoud Darwich tutoie la mort et l'exil, l'herbe et le cosmos, la quête de soi et la rencontre de l'autre. Il a publié une vingtaine de recueils

de poèmes, dont une anthologie, *La Terre nous est étroite*, dans la prestigieuse collection *Poésie* de chez Gallimard, des livres d'entretien, tel *La Palestine comme métaphore*, des récits autobiographiques comme *Une mémoire pour l'oubli*, traduits dans une trentaine de langues, y compris l'hébreu.

En France, sort ce printemps *Murale* (Actes Sud), méditation sur la mort, sous forme d'un long poème écrit à la suite d'une maladie grave, servi en français par la belle traduction du romancier et historien Elias Sanbar.

"Chaque fois que j'ai fraternisé avec une ville, elle m'a jeté une valise à la figure. J'ai alors trouvé refuge sur le trottoir des poèmes et du rêve", écrit-il dans le poème *Ahmad al-Zaatar*, en 1977. L'histoire singulière de Mahmoud Darwich se conjugue avec celle, collective, de son peuple. Deuxième enfant d'une famille qui en compte huit, il est né en 1941 à Birwa, village de Galilée voisin de Saint-Jean-d'Acre. En 1948, chassé par les forces israéliennes comme des centaines de milliers d'habitants palestiniens, il s'enfuit au Liban avec sa famille. Un an plus tard, les Darwich reviennent clandestinement chez eux : leur village a été rasé et une colonie juive y est installée. La famille s'installe sans autorisation au village voisin de Dayr Al-Assad. Le jour, auprès de son institutrice juive, la nuit, à l'écoute des poètes itinérants, l'enfant découvre la puissance des mots. "Mes premiers contacts avec la poésie se firent à travers des chanteurs paysans infiltrés et pourchassés par la police israélienne. Ils venaient la nuit au village, participaient aux veillées et disparaissaient à l'aube dans les montagnes. Ils chantaient des choses étranges que je ne comprenais pas, mais que je trouvais très belles et qui me touchaient."

A vingt ans, déjà remarqué pour ses poèmes, il rejoint à Haïfa le cercle des intellectuels et des écrivains de sensibilité communiste, animé par le romancier palestinien Emile Habibi. Emprisonné à plusieurs reprises dans les geôles israéliennes, il entame une longue route de voyages et d'exils, d'abord au Caire, puis de 1972 à 1982 à Beyrouth, où il rejoint l'Organisation pour la libération de la Palestine (OLP), enfin à Paris, jusqu'en 1996, date à laquelle il s'installe à Ramallah, capitale intellectuelle et politique de Cisjordanie, tout en se ménageant une base de repli à Amman (Jordanie).

De la Galilée aux exils et à la Cisjordanie, sa trajectoire ressemble à celle des milliers de Palestiniens de la diaspora qui "ont appris à

faire pousser la menthe dans leurs chemises", comme il écrit dans le poème Et la terre se transmet comme la langue à une proximité qui explique aussi sa popularité auprès des petites gens prises dans le borbier proche-oriental. Au printemps 2002, quand il se rend à l'université de Bir-Zeit, nous serons témoins de scènes étonnantes : au check-point, qu'il traverse à pied, comme tout le monde, devant les soldats israéliens qui nous tiennent en joue, des dizaines de passants veulent se faire prendre en photo, avec femme et enfants, à ses côtés ;
à l'université, les étudiants font la queue pour lui arracher un autographe...

Héritier d'une terre où s'entrelacent, de gré ou de force, les multiples strates historiques, culturelles, religieuses, Mahmoud Darwich grandit dans plusieurs langues. Si sa langue maternelle est l'arabe, il apprend très tôt l'hébreu à l'école, puis l'anglais. C'est en hébreu qu'il accède, pour la première fois, à la Bible et aux grandes littératures étrangères : grâce aux traductions israéliennes, il lit très jeune les tragédies grecques, les classiques russes et des auteurs contemporains tels Federico Garcia Lorca, Paul Eluard ou Pablo Neruda. Au-delà de ces lectures, le mélange des langues impose un dialogue entre les êtres et entre les cultures. "Chaque langue a sa rationalité, son identité, sa façon d'aborder les choses, ses métaphores, son féminin, son masculin. Chaque langue véhicule le mode de vie de ceux qui la parlent, leur univers culturel", estime-t-il. Le professeur qui a le plus marqué sa scolarité est une Juive israélienne, tout comme la première femme qu'il a aimée. Et le thème de l'étranger traverse toute son oeuvre, jusqu'au titre de l'un de ses recueils, Le Lit de l'étrangère.

Au Centre culturel Sakakini de Ramallah, il a installé la revue littéraire Al-Karmel, qu'il avait fondée à Beyrouth, attentive aux courants littéraires internationaux, en en modifiant quelque peu la ligne éditoriale. La revue, éditée simultanément à Amman pour en faciliter la diffusion dans les pays arabes, accorde désormais plus de place à la culture et à la pensée israéliennes, ainsi qu'à la mémoire collective palestinienne.

FIGURE de la modernité littéraire arabe, messenger du destin palestinien, Mahmoud Darwich est aussi un poète du coeur, du toucher, de la musique. A travers tout le Moyen-Orient, ses poèmes sont copiés en éditions pirates, chantés par les musiciens, calligraphiés par les plasticiens et même enseignés dans des écoles israéliennes... Dans le monde arabe, il est considéré comme l'un des plus grands poètes contemporains, et des milliers de personnes se pressent à ses lectures publiques comme,

ailleurs, on se bouscule aux concerts des Rolling Stones ou aux grands matchs de football. Il attire facilement vingt mille personnes à Beyrouth, Damas ou Casablanca, où les organisateurs doivent louer des stades pour faire face à l'affluence.

Debout, seul à la tribune, avec sa voix et son corps, il scande ses textes, fait danser la rime, la cadence, le tempo. Comme on le voit dans le beau film de la réalisatrice Simone Bitton, Mahmoud Darwich, et la terre comme la langue, cet homme assez timide à la ville révèle sur scène une présence électrique inattendue. "Le poème écrit est sourd. La poésie est faite pour s'écouter avec l'œil et le rapport direct entre le poète et son public se fait par l'écoute", affirme-t-il. Déclamer en public requiert une forme de théâtralité. "J'ai toujours le trac. Je lis mieux quand il s'agit d'une première, quand ce sont des poèmes récents, que je ne connais pas encore bien. Alors je lis et pour le public et pour moi. Ensemble, nous partageons la même expérimentation."

Chez lui, il travaille la musicalité de chacun de ses textes.

"Autrefois, j'enregistrais mes nouveaux poèmes sur une cassette, pour entendre et corriger mes fautes de rythme." Il se dit "fanatique de cet immense trésor de cadences que recèle la poésie arabe". Il cite volontiers René Char, le Caribéen Derek Walcott ou l'Irlandais Seamus Heaney, trois poètes qui portent attention, entre autres, aux rythmes et aux sonorités.

A travers le son et la métaphore, le bruissement de la nature et la méditation sur l'histoire, émerge une quête du sacré à échelle humaine, déliée des cadres théologiques. "Ma lecture du sacré n'est pas religieuse, mais culturelle et historique. La Palestine est le pays d'une multiplicité de dieux et cela explique la floraison de civilisations et de cultures qui ont émergé de cette terre. Ses très nombreux prophètes sont utiles à mon travail de poète, même si je porte parfois sur eux un regard sarcastique. Je ne recherche pas le droit et la justice à travers le sacré, car cela ramène à des combats sans fin autour du monopole religieux."

Le personnage du Christ, "ce Palestinien", très présent dans ses poèmes, le touche "par son discours d'amour et de clémence et par cette idée qu'il est le Verbe". "Le sacré et la poésie sont issus de la même souche, le mythe. L'un des deux est devenu religion. Pour moi, qui suis poète, c'est la présence de l'être humain qui transforme un lieu non sacré en lieu sacré." Si le réel, insiste-t-il, est à la base de sa poésie, il veut tenir l'actualité à distance de ses textes. "Des

milliers de poèmes ont été écrits sur l'Intifada dans le monde arabe. Mais ils ne constituent pas un événement littéraire, car les médias expriment le quotidien mieux que l'écrivain. Ils ont soulagé les poètes du souci de la chronique et de l'archive."

Proche de ses lecteurs, en particulier depuis son installation à Ramallah, il sent qu'ils voudraient parfois faire de lui un porte-parole. "Ils me demandent de réagir aux situations, ils voudraient entendre ma voix dans les situations tragiques. Cette attente n'est plus un fardeau. J'ai ma façon de brusquer _ amoureusement _ mes lecteurs, en leur donnant mieux que ce qu'ils attendent. Ils savent que je suis un poète imprévisible. En m'accordant leur confiance, ils me confient aussi ma liberté." Le lyrisme est son arme de résistance. C'est ailleurs que cet ancien membre du comité exécutif de l'OLP exprime ses opinions, dénonçant toujours l'occupation israélienne, qu'il qualifie de "déclaration permanente de guerre contre nos corps et nos rêves, nos maisons et nos arbres".

Quand nous le rencontrons à Paris, en route pour une importante manifestation organisée autour de son oeuvre à la Cité du livre d'Aix-en-Provence, Mahmoud Darwich est plongé dans la presse arabe consacrée à la guerre en Irak. "Les sociétés arabes espéraient que l'entrée dans le nouveau millénaire permettrait l'accès aux valeurs universelles de démocratie et de liberté. Mais nous sommes confrontés au despotisme absolu des Etats-Unis. La guerre contre l'Irak est une guerre qui atteint, à travers l'Irak, la vision que l'humanité se fait de son avenir. Loin de vivre un temps de partage, nous allons vers un temps de domination et d'hégémonie. Les Etats-Unis ont réussi à faire prendre conscience à toute l'humanité que leur folie militaire et leur vision fondamentaliste du monde constituent le principal danger pour la terre entière aujourd'hui", déclare-t-il.

Dans cette nouvelle donne, la situation des Palestiniens semble plus vulnérable que jamais. "Bien entendu, Sharon entend profiter de la guerre et de cet écran de fumée pour faire avancer le projet auquel il n'a jamais renoncé, l'expulsion des Palestiniens. Mais Sharon ne nous fera pas partir. Nous resterons, nous n'avons pas le choix." Les Américains veulent "libérer" l'Irak, "mais non la Palestine, qui est occupée depuis trente ans". "Des projets de résolutions de l'ONU ont été contrés par 60 vetos américains. J'aimerais juste demander aux Américains d'envoyer des observateurs et d'appliquer les résolutions

qui ont été votées par le Conseil de sécurité. Ils disent aussi qu'ils sont en Irak pour rechercher les armes de destruction massive qui y sont cachées. Mais les mêmes armes existent en Israël, à la face du monde. Que font les Etats-Unis contre elles ?"

Le dernier recueil de Mahmoud Darwich, Etat de siège, non encore traduit en français, a été écrit en 2002 à Ramallah. Dans les fragments publiés par Le Monde diplomatique (avril 2002) et sur le site du Parlement international des écrivains, dont il est l'un des membres fondateurs (www.autodafe.org), il crie la solitude palestinienne :

Ici, aux pentes des collines, face au

-crépuscule et au canon du temps

Près des jardins aux ombres brisées,

Nous faisons ce que font les prisonniers,

Ce que font les chômeurs :

Nous cultivons l'espoir. (...)

Seuls, nous sommes seuls jusqu'à la lie

S'il n'y avait la visite des arcs-en-ciel.

Catherine Bédarida