

Rita and the Gun

by Mahmoud Darwish

Between Rita and my eyes  
there is a gun. And whoever knows Rita  
kneels and prays to a god in her hazel eyes.

And I kissed Rita  
when she was young. And I remember  
how she held onto me and covered my arms  
with beautiful braids.

And I remember Rita  
as birds remember the river.  
Ah...Rita  
between us a million birds and pictures  
and dates, shot down by a gun.

Rita's name was a holiday in my mouth.  
Rita's body was a wedding in my blood.  
For two years I lost myself in Rita.  
And she slept upon my arms for two years.  
And we made toasts and promised each other  
and burned in the wine of lips  
and we were born twice!

Ah...Rita  
What separated your eyes from mine  
except for two moments of sleep and clouds  
in front of a gun.

Whatever once was—  
in the silence of evening—  
my moon departed in morning  
far away in hazel eyes.  
And the city  
swept all its singers away, and Rita...

Between Rita and my eyes  
there is a gun.

Translation: Zahi Khamis and Kim Jensen