

*On 30 September 2000, Muhammad al-Durrah was martyred by the Israeli Defense Forces in the Gaza Strip*

## **Muhammad**

### **Mahmoud Darwish**

Muhammad  
nestles in his father's embrace, a bird  
afraid of the blazing sky: Protect me father  
from flying away. My wing  
is too weak for this wind... and the light is black.

Muhammad  
wants to go home  
without a bicycle...or a new shirt.  
He wants to return to his school desk  
and grammar books. Take me home,  
father, so I can do my homework  
and live out my life, little by little  
by the seashore, under palm trees  
and nothing further than this.

Muhammad  
faces an army, without a stone or the shrapnel  
of stars. He doesn't notice the wall  
where he might have written:  
"My freedom will not die."  
He has no freedom to defend yet  
no horizon for Picasso's dove.  
He is still being born  
into a name that carries the curse of that name.  
How many times will he give birth to himself  
a boy without a homeland...without a chance at childhood?  
Where will he dream, if a dream came to him  
when the earth is a wound... and a temple?

Muhammad  
sees his death approaching, but remembers  
a panther he saw on TV.  
The powerful cat had cornered a nursing fawn,  
but he smelled the milk and shied away  
—as if milk could tame a devouring beast.  
I'll be saved then—says the boy  
and he weeps: My life is over there  
hidden in my mother's cupboard. I will survive  
and I will testify.

Muhammad  
is a poor angel, trapped at close range  
by a cold-blooded hunter  
in the eye of a camera that captures each movement

of a child becoming one with his shadow.  
His face, like the morning light, clear.  
His heart, like an apple, clear.  
His ten fingers, like candles, clear.  
And the dew on his trousers, clear.  
His hunter could have reconsidered the case  
and said: I'll leave him until he can spell  
Palestine correctly...  
I'll leave it to my conscience for now  
and kill him later when he rebels!  
Muhammad,  
is a little Jesus sleeping  
and dreaming inside an icon  
made of copper and an olive branch  
and the spirit of a people renewed.  
Muhammad,  
blood far beyond what the prophets have needed.  
blood—far beyond the needs of the prophets  
Ascend then  
O Muhammad  
to the furthest bough in the highest heaven!

Translated by Zahi Khamis and Kim Jensen

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