



If I Were Another: Poems

by Mahmoud Darwish

Translations from the Arabic by Fady Joudah

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“Mahmoud Darwish was that rare literary phenomenon: a poet both acclaimed by critics as one of the most important poets in the Arab world and beloved by his readers. His language—lyrical and tender—helped to transform modern Arabic poetry into a living metaphor for the universal experiences of exile, loss, and identity. The poems in this collection, constructed from the cadence and imagery of the Palestinian struggle, shift between the most intimate individual experience and the burdens of history and collective memory. Brilliantly translated by Fady Joudah, *If I Were Another*—which collects the greatest epic works of Darwish’s mature years—is a powerful yet elegant work by a master poet and demonstrates why Darwish was one of the most celebrated poets of his time and was hailed as the voice and conscience of an entire people.”—Publisher

“Darwish was born in the village of al-Birweh in Galilee, Palestine, on March 13, 1941. His family was forced to flee to Lebanon when he was six years old, but they returned after the creation of Israel in 1948. Darwish remained in Israel until 1970, when having been jailed several times for his poetry and activism, he decided to leave Haifa for Moscow. He later lived in Cairo and by 1973 had moved to Beirut, Lebanon, where he became the cultural editor of *Palestinian Affairs*. After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, he moved to Tunis, and then to Paris, where he settled for more than a decade until his return to Ramallah in 1996. During his years in Paris, where he published all the works of his middle period, Darwish was recognized as a world poet. In the last twelve years of his life, he lived between Amman, Jordan, and Ramallah, Palestine. Darwish wrote more than twenty books of poetry and ten of prose. His work has been translated into nearly thirty languages. Among his numerous honors are the Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters, the Lannan Cultural Freedom Award, the Prins Claus Award (Holland), the Golden Wreath (Macedonia), the Ibn Sina Prize, the Lotus Prize, and an honorary doctorate from the University of Chile. He died in Houston, Texas, on August 9, 2008, after complications from cardiovascular surgery.” (*If I Were Another: Poems*, 2009)