

HUMAN ARCHITECTURE: JOURNAL OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

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Assassination

Mahmoud Darwish

Translation by Catherine Cobham

The critics kill me sometimes: they want a particular poem a particular metaphor and if I stray up a side road they say: 'He has betrayed the road' And if I find eloquence in grass they say: 'He has abandoned the steadfastness of the holm oak' And if I see the rose in spring as yellow they ask: 'Where is the blood of the homeland in its petals?' And if I write: 'It is the butterfly my youngest sister at the garden door' they stir the meaning with a soup spoon And if I whisper: 'A mother is a mother, when she loses her child she withers and dries up like a stick' they say: 'She trills with joy and dances at his funeral for his funeral is his wedding'

And if I look up at the sky to see the unseen they say: 'Poetry has strayed far from its objectives' The critics kill me sometimes and I escape from their reading and thank them for their misunderstanding then search for my new poem. River Dies.

CREDIT: Darwish, Mahmoud. 2009. "Assassination." Pp. 51-52 in *A River Dies of Thirst: Journals* by Mahmoud Darwish. Translated from the Arabic by Catherine Cobham. Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books. Gratefully reprinted by permission from the publisher of the poem.