



Darwish Sits In

Robert Lipton

Poet and Writer

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The poem “Darwish sits in,” by poet Robert Lipton, weaves the everyday moments and the larger historical predicament of Palestinians as conveyed through the poetic sense of their late national poet, Mahmoud Darwish. Lipton asks in the poem, What would it take to resurrect Darwish’s face, to have it raise its self-flagellation like a theater curtain? The answer is first placed within the well-trod terrain of the poorly diagnosed, the unfortunately lavish. Lipton then explores home incarceration which has the added benefit of accounting for all the Hansels and Gretels, the trail of crumbs, dense black smoke, without a roof and supporting walls, a village covered in wild mustard. These are unsatisfactory results. We are left with the disease of music, a man on a stool, a hissing tea kettle, the final exsanguination of words.

Darwish riffed off the simmering exchange between
his mother-in-law and the border
police recruits, a high little 2 bar interlude

you could hear the dry crackle of olive tree
leaves or it simply could be the feedback

in the monitors

he was told once that the visions
of Christ in the desert were just the wind
charitably blowing from the Mediterranean

down into the Jordan valley, he would strike
the guitar with his palm, like a Dumbek
then thump! the water tower would be shot

off the house.

Robert Lipton has a book of poetry *A Complex Bravery* from Marick Press (2006). His poems have appeared in *New Orleans Quarterly*, and the *Texas Observer*, amongst others. He writes journalistically for the blog Muzzle-watch.org and has published the essay “Bearing witness in the promised land” in “Live from Palestine.” He works doing public health/medical research at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston and writes on the philosophy of science/causation.

he was querulous when it came to claw hammer
guitar and the amount of sugar in his Turkish
coffee, sometimes when the moon had darkened

and there was no time to worry about bombing runs
(something like a reminder to practice more)
the dust and the wife telling him to stop watching

water beading and running down the wall next to
the stove, his powers of contemplation were often acute
and badly targeted. He had a little spell of prison

in his picking hand, a nose like Dylan that deflected
children jeering his terrible football skills.

Most of his rattle and hiss was just the Fender
double reverb talking to itself, Darwish likes
a slow rhythm low panicking his left hand driven

arpeggios, counter balanced copter blades lending
a whupping like a Hammond b3. Piedmont
blues? Well, he had issues like the broken bell

of ancestral tone deafness, an analgesic of a voice
he would smoke in that bitter way men of drama
offer, thumb and index finger, pain at inhale

or there would be the burnt tire blues
constantly dickered with, "baby too much trouble
for a smile/I'll love you for your soft umber hills/

anyways, I'll stay a while/"

just a raspy croak, Calandria and rebar, the water
park one block off the Muqatta, adenoidal squeals
of children and the chevron scat of heavy

tracked vehicles marking up the streets, he sits
in an armless chair and listens to cacophony
with no commercial breaks. He will overlook a city

overlooking a city that has no music but the settling

of old stones