

# Sonnet VI

**Mahmoud Darwish**

*translated from the Arabic by **Fady Joudah***

## SONNET [ VI ]

A pine tree in your right hand. A willow in your left. This  
is summer: one of your hundred gazelles has surrendered to the dew  
and slept on my shoulder, near one of your regions, and so what  
if the wolf notices, and a forest burns in the distance.

Your sleepiness is stronger than fear. A wilderness of your beauty  
dozes off, and a moon out of your shadows wakes to guard its trees.

What's the name of the place your footsteps tattooed on the ground,  
a heavenly ground for the salaam of the birds, near echo?

And stronger than the sword is your sleep between your streamlined arms.

Like two rivers in the dreamer's paradise of what you do on the banks  
to yourself carried above yourself. The wolf might carry a flute  
and cry by the river: what isn't feminized . . . is in vain.

A bit of weakness in metaphor is enough for tomorrow.

For the berries to ripen on the fence, and for the sword to break under dew



"I resemble  
what no  
longer

**Mahmoud Darwish**

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## SONNET [ VI ]



resembles  
me."

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## **Two Stranger Birds in Our Feathers**

**My sky is ashen. Scratch my back. And undo  
slowly, you stranger, my braids. And tell me**

**what's on your mind. Tell me what crossed**

**Youssef's mind. Tell me some simple**

**talk . . . talk a woman always desires**

**to be told. I don't want the phrase**

**complete. Gesture is enough to scatter me in the rise**

**of butterflies between springheads and the sun. Tell me**



**More  
Perihelion:**

**I am necessary for you like sleep, and not like nature  
filling up with water around you and me. And spread  
over me an endless blue wing . . .**

**My sky is ashen,  
as a blackboard is ashen, before  
writing on it. So write with my blood's ink anything  
that changes it: an utterance . . . two, without  
excessive aim at metaphor. And say we are  
two stranger birds in Egypt  
and in Syria. Say we are two stranger birds  
in our feathers. And write my name and yours  
beneath the phrase. What time is it now? What color  
is my face and yours in new mirrors?**

**I own nothing for anything to resemble me.  
Did the water mistress love you more? Did she seduce you  
by the sea rock? Confess now  
that you have extended your wilderness twenty years  
to stay prisoner in her hands. And tell me  
what you think of when the sky is ashen . . .**

**My sky is ashen.**

**I resemble what no longer resembles me.  
Do you want to return to your exile night  
in a mermaid's hair? Or do you want to return  
to your home figs? For no honey wounds a stranger  
here or there? So what time is it now?**



**What's the name of this place we're in? And  
what's the difference between my sky and your land. Tell me  
what Adam said in secret to himself. Was he emancipated  
when he remembered. Tell me anything that changes the sky's  
ashen color. Tell me some simple  
talk, talk a woman desires  
to be told every now and then. Say  
that two people, like you and me,  
can carry all this resemblance between fog  
and mirage, then safely return. My sky  
is ashen, so what do you think of when the sky  
is ashen?**

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Crab Orchard Review, Hayden's Ferry Review, and is the recipient of River  
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Darwish's most recent collections of poetry, is forthcoming from Copper  
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**Fady Joudah**

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