

Between Fleeting Words

by Mahmoud Darwish

O those who pass between fleeting words
Carry your names, and go
Rid our time of your hours, and go
Steal what you will from the blueness of the sea
and the sand of memory
Take what pictures you will, so that you will understand
That which you never will:
How a stone from our land builds the ceiling of our sky.

O those who pass between fleeting words
From you the sword - from us the blood
From you the steel and fire - from us our flesh
From you yet another tank - from us stones
From you tear gas - from us rain
So take your share of our blood - and go
For we have to water the martyrs' flowers
As for us, we have to live as we see fit.

O those who pass between fleeting words
As bitter dust, go where you wish, but
Do not pass between us like flying insects
For we have work to do in our land:
We have wheat to grow which we water with our bodies' dew
We have that which does not please you here:
Stones or partridges
So take the past, if you wish, to the antiquities market
We have that which does not please you: we have the future
And we have things to do in our land.

O those who pass between fleeting words
Pile your illusions in a deserted well, and go
Return the hands of time to the law of the golden calf
Or to the time of the revolver's music!
For we have that which does not please you here, so go
And we have what you don't: a bleeding homeland of
a bleeding people
A homeland fit for oblivion or memory
O those who pass between fleeting words
It is time for you to be gone
Live wherever you may, but do not live among us
It is time for you to go
Die wherever you may, but do not die among us
For we have work to do in our land
We have the past here
We have the first cry of life
We have the present, the present and the future
We have this world here, and the hereafter
So leave our country
Our land, our sea
Our wheat, our salt, our wounds
Everything, and leave the memories of memory
O those who pass between fleeting words!

