

Home Culture Poem of the Week

## Poem of the Week / This conversation could never happen in real life

What happens when a young Israeli-American poet 'speaks' with the late Mahmoud Darwish.

By Vivian Eden | 11:08 12.03.14 | 2

### From the sequence "Nakba Museum"

*Morani Kornberg-Weiss*

If we are given access beyond the walls  
 have we entered a museum.  
 If we live in settlements  
 are we residing in a museum.  
 If we live in refugee camps  
 are we part of a museum.  
 If we drive on those roads  
 do we easily access a museum.  
 If we cross checkpoints and barriers  
 have we made our way to a museum.  
 If we are granted permits  
 can we enter a museum.  
 If there are no curfews  
 can we leave a museum.

If the Nakba is still in progress  
 can we visit a museum.

*From "Dear Darwish," Blaze VOX, 2014.*

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Poetry allows for conversations that could not or do not happen in real life. Born in Tel Aviv, Morani Kornberg-Weiss spent her early childhood in Southern California, did military service in Israel, studied at Tel Aviv University, pursued a Ph.D. in English at SUNY Buffalo's Poetics Program and now lives in Los Angeles, California. Her poems have been published in various print and online journals.

Her debut poetry volume, "Dear Darwish," is a series of letters/poems addressed to Mahmoud Darwish, who became known as the national Palestinian poet. He was born to a middle-class Muslim family on March 13, 1941, in the village of Birweh, east of Acre. In the 1948 war, which the Palestinians call their Nakba – Catastrophe, in Arabic – his family fled to Lebanon but later secretly crossed the border and settled in a town near their village, which had been destroyed. As a young man, Darwish moved to Haifa, where he published the first of his more than 30 volumes of poetry, and left Israel in 1970 to study in Moscow and thence to Cairo and Beirut. He joined the Palestine Liberation organization in 1973, accompanied Yasser Arafat to Tunisia and was barred from visiting Israel until 1995. He lived his last years in Ramallah but said the West Bank was never his true home. After heart surgery, he died in Texas in August, 2008. At his burial place in Ramallah, there is a Mahmoud Darwish Museum.

Darwish told Dalia Karpel in Haaretz in 2007: "I have no home. I have moved and changed homes so often that I have no home in the deep sense of the word. Home is where I sleep and read and write, and that can be anywhere. I have lived in more than 20 homes already, and I always left behind medicines and books and clothes. I flee." Could a Jewish poet have said this?

In her poetry, Kornberg-Weiss makes extensive use of the rhetorical device anaphora, the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginnings of segments of a text, which is common to English, Arabic poetry and the Hebrew of the Bible and the liturgy.

Kornberg-Weiss talks about her views here.

Musings:

\*The syntax of all the sentences in the extract from "Dear Darwish" is interrogative but there are no question marks. Why?

