

Address by Jacques Costongs during the ceremony presenting the Hans Berghuis Staff to Ronny Someck

On any given day, an executive councillor in a city such as Maastricht is called upon to cut through ribbons, hand out medals, raise curtains... Often, it is the mere presence of such an authority that matters most to the assembled audience. Indeed, sometimes the only reason to organize a ceremonial occasion is because some official like myself has agreed to be present. Unfortunately, it is very often the case that urgent business prevents you from attending. You then hear the following: *'You were greatly missed'* or *'It wasn't the same without you...'*.

Today, however, the roles have been reversed: it is my duty as executive councillor to pay my respects – at a highly unconventional time of day...or rather, night – to a representative of a much higher authority than that of executive councillor or government official: the Poet, a personage whose physical presence is not required at events such as the Poetry Nights, but whose words, either in print or spoken, are momentous enough to fill the room and those present in it with a deeper meaning. This is the fifth Poetry Nights Festival, and it once again shows that the enduring quality of words will always overshadow fleeting images.

That is why I am gratified that you, Ronny, are present here today not only in “words”, but also physically, having travelled all the way to Maastricht to receive the Hans Berghuis Staff. The Hans Berghuis Staff stands for much more than the comfort and support of our beloved poet. Viewed in the context of my own world, it could be seen as a sceptre, a symbol of the power that Poets have over us, representing the power of words, the invocation of reality. It could also be a baton for indicating the metre or rhythm of a poem or composition. Your poetry has a rhythm and an aesthetic all its own, however, so a baton would be pointless for you.

I can also imagine this staff as symbolising something of an entirely different order: like Moses striking water from the rocks with his rod, this staff also represents stubborn persistence, private, artistic discourse, overcoming all opposition along the way. It stands for a source at which we can quench our thirst, making it easier for us to survive in our prosaic, all too sensible world. This staff is our guide through the modern literary desert.

I therefore hope that this staff, bearing your name and those of your predecessors, will continue to guide us to true art, pure aesthetic experience. I also hope that it will be your comfort and support in difficult times, for example when you face yet another empty sheet of paper. After two years, the following laureate will receive the staff, and be inspired by you in turn. But right now, it is up to you to claim it. I'm warning you, however: it's stiff and inflexible and always wants to go first. Join battle, for you know you can win – and make the staff your own!

נקמת הילד המגמגם

היום אני מדבר לזכר המלים שפעם נתקעו לי
בפה,
לזכר גלגלי השנים שפוררו הברות
מתחת ללשון והריחו את אבק השורפות
בנוח בין הל'ע לשפתים החשוכות.
חלמתי אז להבריח את המלים שגארו כסחורות גנובות
במחסני הפה,
לקר'ע את אריזות הקרטון ולשלף את
צעצועי האלף-בית.
המורה היתה מניחה יד על כתפי ומספרת שגם מ'שה
גמגם ובכל זאת הגיע להר סיני.
ההר שלי הנה ילדה שינשבה
לידי בפתה, ולא היתה לי אש בסנה הפה
כדי להבעיר, לנגד עיניה,
את המלים שגשרפו באהבתי אותה.

Revenge of the Stuttering Child

I speak today in memory of the words which once stuck in my mouth
in memory of the toothy gears which crushed syllables
under my tongue and smelled the gunpowder
in the gap between the gullet and the arid lips.
My dream then was to smuggle the words packed like stolen goods
in the mouth's warehouse,
to rip the cardboard boxes open and pull out the
toys of the alphabet.
The teacher would lay a hand on my shoulder and say that Moses, too,
stuttered but nonetheless made it to Mt. Sinai.
My mountain was a girl who sat
next to me in class, and I had no fire in the bush of my mouth
to ignite, before her very eyes,
the words consumed by my love of her.

TR: VIVIAN EDEN

בלאדי מרי
 וְהַשִּׁירָה הִיא נֶעֱרַת פּוֹשְׁעִים
 בְּמוֹשֵׁב הָאָחוּרִי שֶׁל מְכוֹנֵית אַמְרִיקָנִית.
 עֵינֶיהָ לְחוּצוֹת כְּהֶדֶק וְאֶקְדַח שְׁעָרָה יוֹרָה
 כְּדוּרֵי בְּלוֹנְד הַגּוֹלְשִׁים לְצִנְאָרָה.
 נִגִּיד שְׁקוֹרָאִים לָהּ מְרִי , בְּלֹאדֵי מְרִי,
 וּמְפִיָּה נִסְחָטוֹת הַמְּלִים כְּמוֹ מִיץ מִבְּטָן הָעֵגְבָנִיָּה
 שֶׁקֹּדֶם חָתְכוּ לָהּ אֶת הַצּוּרָה
 עַל צִלְחַת הַסֶּלֶט.
 הִיא יוֹדַעַת שֶׁדִּקְדוּקָה הוּא הַמְּשֻׁטָּרָה שֶׁל הַשָּׂפָה
 וְאֵנְטֵנַת הָעֵגִיל שֶׁעַל אֲזָנָהּ
 מְזַהֶה מֵרְחוֹק אֶת הַסִּירְנָה.
 הַהֶגְהָ יְסִיט אֶת הַמְּכוֹנֵית מִסִּימָן שְׂאֵלָה
 לְנִקְדָּה
 וְהִיא תִפְתַּח אֶת הַדֵּלֶת
 וְתַעֲמֹד בְּשׂוּלֵי הַדֶּרֶךְ כְּמִטְפוּרָה לַמְּלָה
 זוֹנָה.

BLOODY MARY

And the poem is a gangster's girl
 in the back seat of an American car,
 her eyes squinting like a trigger, her hair shot
 in blond bullets to her neck.
 Let's say we call her Mary, Bloody Mary
 and words pour from her mouth like juice from the gut of a tomato
 mutilated on a salad plate.
 She knows that grammar is a language-cop
 and can detect its siren from miles away
 with the antennae on her earrings.
 The wheels steer her from a question mark
 to a period. Soon

she will open the door
 and stand on the roadside like a metaphor for
 whore.

סִבְתָּא שְׁלִי אֶסְרָה לְהַשְׁאִיר אֶרְז בְּצִלְחַת.
בְּמָקוֹם לְסִפּוּר עַל הָרָעָב בְּהַ' דוּ וְעַל הַיְלָדִים
נְפוּחֵי הַבֶּטֶן שֶׁהָיוּ פּוֹעְרִים פֶּה עַל כָּל גְּרִיגֵר,
הִיא גְרָרָה בְּחַרְיָקוֹת מְזִלֵּג אֶת כָּל הַשְׁאֵרִיּוֹת
לְמֶרְכֵז הַצִּלְחַת וּבְעֵינַיִם כְּמַעֲט דוֹמְעוֹת
סִפְרָה אֵיךְ יַעֲלֶה הָאֶרְז הַלֵּא אֶאְכּוֹל
לְהַתְלוּן אֶצֶל הָאֵל הַיָּם.
עֲכָשׁוּ הִיא מֵתָה וְאֲנִי מְדַמֵּין אֶת שְׂמֵחַת הַמְּפָגֵשׁ
בֵּין שְׁנֵי הַתּוֹתְבוֹת לְשׁוֹמְרֵי הַחֶרֶב הַמְּתַהַפֶּכֶת בְּשַׁעַר
גֵן-הָעֵדֶן שֶׁל הָאֶרְז.
הֵם יִפְרָשׁוּ, מִתְחַת לְרַגְלֶיהָ, שְׁטִיחַ אֶרְז אֲדָם
וְשִׁמְשׁ אֶרְז צֶהָב תְּכָה עַל
לֶבָן גּוֹפֵן שֶׁל יְפֵהפִיּוֹת הַגֵּן.
סִבְתָּא שְׁלִי תִמְרַח שִׁמּוֹן וַיֵּת עַל עוֹרֹן וְתַחֲלִיק
אַחַת אַחַת לְסִירִים הַקּוֹסְמִיִּים בְּמִטְבָּחוֹ שֶׁל אֵל הַיָּם.
סִבְתָּא, מִתְחַשֵּׁק לִי לֹמֵר לָהּ, אֶרְז הוּא צִדָּף שֶׁהִתְפַּוֵּץ
וְאֵת נְפִלְטָתָהּ כְּמוֹהוּ
מֵיָם חַיִּי.

RICE PARADISE

My grandmother didn't let us leave rice in the plate.
Insted of telling us about hunger in India and the children
with swollen bellies, who would have opened mouths wide for each grain
she with a screeching fork would drag all the leftovers
to the center of the plate and nearly in tears
tell us how the uneaten rice
would rise to the heavens to complain to God.
Now she's dead and I imagin the joy of the encounter
between her false teeth and the angels
with the flaming sword at the gates
of rice paradise.
They will spread, beneath her feet, a carpet of red rice
and the yellow rice sun will beat down
on the white bodies of the Garden's lovelies.
My grandmother will spread olive oil on their skin and slip
Them one by one into the cosmic pots of God's kitchen.
Grandma, I feel like telling her, rice is a seashell that shrunk
and like it you rose from the sea.
The water of my life.

TR: VIVIAN EDEN

חלב אריות

סְבִי נוֹלַד בְּאַרְצוֹת הָעֵרָאק
וְעַל תְּוִיּוֹת הַבְּקָבוּקִים צִירוּ אַרְיֹת מִסְרָקֵי רַעְמָה
בְּפוֹזָה שֶׁל כְּבִשָּׂה.
"זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַחַיּוֹת," הִיָּתָה אֶצְבְּעוֹ רוֹעֵדָת
וּבְשֹׁפְמוֹ הִדִּק סְרִטָּה הַרוֹיַח אֶת קוֹי הָאֶרֶץ
וְקוֹי הָרֶחֱבִיב שֶׁל הַגְּוֹנְגָל שֶׁחֲלַמְתִּי עָלָיו.
מִזֶּל שֶׁתְּעִיתִי בְּדַרְךְ,
אֶחָדָת גֹּ'ק דְּנִיאֵלִס יְכוֹל הִיָּה לְהִיּוֹת אָבִי
וְגִ'יִן הִיָּתָה מְנַעֲנַעַת אֶת עַרְיֶסֶת הַטוֹנִיק בְּגֵרוֹנִי.

וְרַק בְּבְקָבוּקִים הַרִיקִים שֶׁרְצִיתִי לְזַרֵק לָיִם
טְמֵנְתִי לְזִכְרוֹ פְתָק
שְׁכוֹר מֵאֶהָבָה.

Lion's Milk

My grandfather was born in the lands of arak
and the bottles had labels with drawing s of lions, manes combed,
posing as sheep.

"This is the King of beasts," his finger would tremble
and the ind mapped in his thin mustache parallels of latitude
and meridians of longitude, the jungle of my dreams.
It's a good thing I lost my way,
otherwise Jack Daniels could have been my dad
and gin would be rocking the tonic cradle in my throat.

And it's only into the empty bottles I wanted to throw out to sea
that I've slipped a note in his memory
drunk with love.

TR: Vivian Eden

שיר פטריוטי

אני עירקי-פיג'מה, אשתי רומניה
והבת שלנו היא הגנב מבגדד.
אמא שלי ממשיכה להרתים את הפרת והחדקל,
אחותי למדה להכין פירושקי מאמו הרוסיה
של בעלה.
החבר שלנו, מרוקו-ספין, תוקע מזלג
מפלדה אנגלית בדג שנולד בחופי נורבגיה.
כלנו פועלים מכטרים שהורדו מפגומי המגדל
שרצינו לבנות בכבל.
כלנו חניתות חלדות שדון קישוט העיר
על טחנות הרוח.
כלנו עדין יורים בכוכבים מסנורי עינים
הגע לפני שהם נבלעים
בשביל הקלב.

PATRIOTIC POEM

I'm a pajama Iraqi, my wife's a Romanian gal
and our daughter is the thief of Baghdad.
My mother still boils the Euphrates and the Tigris,
my sister has learned how to make piroshki
from her Russian mother-in-law.
Our friend, a knife Moroccan, stabs an English
steel fork into a fish born on Norwegian shores.
All of us are workers sacked from the scaffoldings
of the tower we wanted to build in Babel.
All of us are rusty spears
that Don Quixote threw at the windmills.
All of us are still shooting at dazzling stars
a moment before they are swallowed up
into the Milky Way.

Translated by Vivian Eden

היו לנו 30 שניות להסתער על הפטמה,
היא הייתה גבועה
שהזדקרה בקצה מסלול המכשולים של בסיס הטירונות.
צוארון השמים ג'הץ מעליה בעמילן העננים
ותאקי חולותיה הנה, בנוף אחר, שורה משיר טבע.
אבל איפה שיר ואיפה טבע,
כששתי מימיות התנדנדו על המ'תו,
עזי ביד
ונאת חפירה לא רך עמוד השדרה.
מה שנשאר היה לפטם בהזיות את הפטמות
של הפקינה הפלגתית שהתברחה תמיד
בג'יפ של המג"ד
ולהזכר בציר גוגן שהתלבט אם לאכיל את התרנגולת
שהיתה לו או לציר אותה.
שם, מול הגבועה, היינו רעבים מאוד.

30 SECONDS TO STORM THE TIT

We had 30 seconds to storm the Tit, a jutting
hill at the end of the obstacle course in boot camp.
Overhead clouds ironed the sky's collar with starch
and the khaki sand, in a different landscape, would have been a line in a
nature poem.

But where is a poem and where is nature
with two canteens juggling on my hip,
my hands gripping an Uzi
and a shovel strapped to my spine.
What's left but feeding lies to the tits
of the company clerk, reclining, as usual
in the colonel's jeep, and remembering how Gauguin
couldn't choose between eating
his chicken or painting it.

There, facing the hill, we were ravenous.

הבלדה על עמק האלכוהול

אין ספין מתחדדת אלא בִּיָּרֵךְ חֲבָרְתָּהּ
ובעמק האלכוהול ספין הסקס רוקדת על חֲדָהּ.

שוטרי הרוקנרול מצמידים שְׁכָם לְשָׁכָם
ובזעת הפֶּשַׁע נ' אכל לָחֶם.

הו נַעְרוֹת הָעֵמֶק, בְּבוֹת בְּרַבִּי בַחֲדָר הַמְשֻׁחָקִים הָאֲסוּרִים,
מִי יִפְרֹק אֶת רַגְלֵיכֶן הַלְּיָלָה
וְאִיזָה שִׁיר עֶרֶשׂ יִצְנִיחַ אֶת רִיסֵי הַנִּילוֹן עַל עֵינַי הַפְּלִסְטִיק.

הָעֵמֶק הוּא חֵלוֹם, חֵלוֹם בְּלֵהוֹת
וְהִירָח הוּא מְנוֹרַת הַלְּיָלָה שֶׁל דוֹקְטוֹר פְּרוֹיֵד.

נ.ב.

יִפְשֵׁר הַחֵלוֹמוֹת בְּעֵמֶק:
אִם אֶתָּה רוֹאָה בַּחוּרָה הוֹלְכַת עִם כְּלָב-
זֶה סִמָּן שֶׁהִיא סוֹבֶלֶת מְבַדִּידוֹת.
אִם אֶתָּה רוֹאָה בַּחוּרָה הוֹלְכַת בְּלֵי כְּלָב-
זֶה סִמָּן שֶׁהִיא שְׂכָחָה אֶת הַכְּלָב בְּבֵית

THE BALLAD OF ALCOHOL VALLEY

Only sharpen a knifeblade along its mate's hip.
In Alcohol Valley the sex knife spins on its tip.

Rock'n'roll cops push together straight ahead.
By the sweat of crimes - our daily bread.

Oh, girls of the Valley,
Barbies in the dangerous game room,
who will part your legs tonight,
what lullaby lower nylon lashes
over plastic eyes.

The Valley is a dream, a bad dream.
The moon is the nightlight of Dr. Freud.

P.S.

About the meaning of dreams in the Valley:
a girl seen walking a dog - a sign she is lonely.
A girl seen walking without a dog - a sign

she forgot the dog at home.

TR: VIVIAN EDEN

קיצור תולדות הוודקה

אָנִי לֹא זֹכֵר אֵיךְ קָרָאוּ לְבֵית הַמְרֻזָּח, בְּקִצָּה
אוֹלָם הַתְּרַבּוּת שֶׁל פּוֹעֲלֵי הַמַּתְקָת בְּצ'ליאבינסק.
אָנִי זֹכֵר רַק אֶת הַנְּעִרָה שְׁמִדֵי רֵבַע שָׁעָה יְצָאָה
מֵאַחֲרֵי הַדִּלְפָּק בְּדֵי לְאָסֶף אֶת הַכּוֹסוֹת לְתוֹךְ
קַעֲרַת פְּלַסְטִיק אֲדָמָה.
הִיא דִלְגָה מִשְׁלָחַן לְשִׁלְחָן נְעֻלָּה הַגְּבוּהוֹת
בְּקִשׁוֹ רֵיחַ שֶׁל עֶרְמַת שְׁלָל
כּוֹבֵעַ פְּרוּנָה מְרַח שֶׁלֵּג מְלַחֵמָה עַל מִצְחָהּ
וְאֲדֵי הָאֵלְכוּהוֹל טִשְׁטִישׁוֹ אֶת הַפְּנִים שֶׁהוֹנְפוּ בְּדָגָל לָבוֹן.
אֵין, אָמַר הָאִישׁ שֶׁיֵּשֵׁב לְיָדֵי, בְּשִׁים ל' אֵיפֹת
יֵשׁ פְּחוֹת מְדֵי וּוְדָקָה.

A SHORT HISTORY OF VODKA

I don't remember the name of the bar, at the end
Of the Metal Workers' Hall of Culture in Chiliabinsk.
I remember only the girl whom every fifteen minutes
Came from behind the counter to collect the glasses into
A red plastic bowl.
She skipped from table to table, her high shoes,
Clicking out the smell of heaps of loot,
A fur hat spread war snow on her forehead
And fumes of alcohol blurred her face furled like a white flag.
There is, said the man beside me, no woman who isn't beautiful
There is too little vodka.

TR: VIVIAN EDEN

הַבַּחֲוִירָה הַכִּי יָפָה בְּעוֹלָם נִגְבָּה בְּכָרִית אֶצְבָּעָה אֶת הָאֶבֶק
מִתּוֹיֵת בְּקַבּוּק בְּאַחַת מִחֲנִיּוֹת הַיַּיִן שֶׁבְּבוֹרְדוֹ.
אֶת מְנִיפֵת הַתְּנוּעָה הַזֹּאת לֹא מְדִים בְּבֵתִי-סֵפֶר לְאַרְכֵּאוֹלוֹגְיָה
שֶׁעָה שֶׁהַעֵינַיִם נִפְעָרוֹת לְזֵהוּת אֶת שְׁנַת הַבְּרִיאָה.
בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּקַבּוּקִים נִמְחַק מִפְּנֵי הַיַּיִן זָכַר הַיָּד שֶׁסִּחְטָה אֶת הָעֵנָבִים,
וַיִּמְהַעֲבֵבִים נִשְׁפַּח רִיחַ גְּבוּרַת הַצֵּל שֶׁל עָלִי הַגָּפֶן. בְּעֵלִים
כְּבִתָּה הַנוֹסְטַלְגִיָּה אֶת מְנוּעֵי הָרוּחַ שֶׁל גְּרֵגְרֵי הַחוֹל, וְהַחוֹל
כְּבָר לֹא כִּסָּה אֶת הַשָּׂרָשִׁים שֶׁזָּחְלוּ בְּאֲדָמָה כְּנֹחֲשִׁים
שֶׁמִּשְׁלֵים עוֹר בְּכָל עוֹנָה.

וְהַבַּחֲוִירָה? תִּשְׁעָה חֳדָשִׁים, אֲנִי מְנַחֵשׁ עַל פִּי מְרִיחוֹת הַמְּכַחֵל בְּגוֹפָה,
תִּשְׁעָה חֳדָשִׁים יָשַׁב לִיאֹנְרֵדוֹ דֵּה – וַיִּנְצֵ' בֵּין הַרְגְּלָיִם
שֶׁל אִמָּא שְׁלָה וְצִיר
אוֹתָהּ.

Testifying to Beauty

The most beautiful girl in the world used the pad of her finger to
wipe the dust off the label of a bottle in a wine shop in Bordeaux.
The fan of this movement is taught at archaeology schools.
when eyes open wide to identify the year of Creation.
Inside the bottles all traces of the hand that squeezed the grapes
have vanished and from the grapes the scent
of the shady roofs of the vine leaves has been forgotten. In the leaves
nostalgia has shut down the wind turbines of the grains of sand, and the sand
no longer covers the roots that crept through the earth like snakes
that shed their skin every season.
And the girl? Nine months, I guess from the brushstrokes on her body,
nine months Leonardo da Vinci sat between
her mother's legs and painted
her.

TR: VIVIAN EDEN

זֶה לְשֵׁמֶחַ הוּא הַרְמֵטֶכַּ"ל לְשֵׁל הַגּוֹף
 זֶה לְשֵׁגוֹף מְסִתִּיר תְּאֵנָה בְּמַעֲרַת הָעֵרְוָה
 זֶה לְשֵׁעֲרוֹה מְרִטִּיבָה אֶת לְשׁוֹנֵי הַשְּׂבִי
 זֶה לְשֵׁשְׂבוּי הוּא עֵן עֲבוּרָה בְּפִה לְשִׁעֶק אֶת הַפְּקֻדָּה
 זֶה לְשֵׁהַפְּקֻדָּה אֵינָה יוֹדַעַת גְּבוּל
 זֶה לְשֵׁהַגְּבוּל מְתוּחַ פְּגָרָב
 זֶה לְשֵׁהַגְּרָב שׁוֹתֵק
 זֶה לְשֵׁהַשְּׂתִיקָה מְפֹרְרֶת חוּטִים מְפַקְעוֹת הַמְּלִים
 זֶה לְשֵׁבֶמַח תְּקוּעוֹת הַמְּלִים כְּגֹדֶר
 וְשִׂאחַר־יָהֵן ל' א' נִשְׁאָר עַל מַה לְדַבֵּר.

THAT

That the mind is the body's commander-in-chief
 That the body hides lust in the genital cave
 That the genitals wet the prisoner's lips
 That the prisoner is a broken tooth in the mouth that shouted the command
 That the command knows neither limit nor border
 That the border is stretched taut like a sock
 That the sock is silent
 That the silence unravels threads from the tangles of words
 That in the mind words are stuck like a fence
 And that behind them nothing is left to discuss

TR: VIVIAN EDEN

דרמת כיוור המטבח

בלם בעירה היו שחורים. הרפכת האחרונה פבר
יצאה ומזלגות עינים ננעצו בקצפת עורי הלכן.
בתנות הקרובה קניתי משחת נעלים ומרחתי את עצמי
עד שפקיד הקבלה במוטל ל' א שנה את
האנגלית השח'רה לשכפיר, פשההא לי חדר.
"תעיר אותי מחר בשבע. בשבע נחצי הרפכת שלי
יוצאת". הוא העיר אותי בשבע ופשרים, ובק'שי
הגעתי לתונה.
בלם הביטו בי ונזכרתי במשחה. נסיתי, באצבעות רכות,
להסיר אותה. גם אצבעות קשות יותר ל' א הזיוז לעור,
ואז הבנתי שפקיד המוטל העיר
מישהו אחר.

ב'קר טוב שירה
המשיכי להעיר אותי מאחר,
ספגי משחת נעלים שח'רה לתוך
עורי והזרימי מלים לדרמת כיוור המטבח.
שם, שקשוק המים רחץ שאריות ע'נג
שהניחה אשתי בצלחת המרק
והפפות'שכחו להגע את מנהרת הפה
שנפער לקראתו.
עור הוא עור,
ומשחת הפלים תבריק את צפרני בתי
כמו היו פנסי רפכת הרים בלונה-פרק
של ילדותי.

Kitchen Sink Drama

Everybody in town was black. The last train had already
Departed, and forks of eyes were stabbing the whipped cream of
my white skin.

In a nearby store, I bought shoe polish and smeared it on
Until the motel clerk no longer changed
The Black-English he spoke when he showed me to a room.
"Wake me up tomorrow at 7. At 7:30 my train
Is leaving." He woke me up at 7:20, and I hardly
Made it to the station.

Everybody stared at me and I remembered the polish. With soft fingers, I tried
To remove it. But even rough fingers wouldn't get it off.
It's then I realized the clerk woke up
Somebody else

Good morning poetry.
Continue to wake me up late,
Absorb black shoe polish into
My skin and turn on a torrent of words into this kitchen sink drama.
There, wobbles of water will wash away leftover
Pleasure my wife has put into the soup bowl,
And for a moment spoons will forget the mouth's tunnel
Gaping towards them.

A skin's a skin,
And the dish soap will gloss my daughter's fingernails
As if they were rollercoaster lights in the amusement park
Of my youth.

את נעלי העקב המציאה בחורה
שתמיד נשקו אותה במצח.
מאז מכריק המצח כמשחת נעלים
ומברשת הגבות ל' א מפסיקה לצחצח
את חשמל העין, אחרי הפצוץ
על מוקשי השפתיים.
אני זוכר את הנשיקה הראשונה, ליד עץ לימון ריק
מעלים. מיישהו אמר לנו שאם נשפישף את השנים בעלה ימחק ריח
הסיגריות. לערפל היו אז אצבעות דקות. צנאר העיר היה רחב,
מס רב חניקה והבחורה שרציתי ל' א ידעה שריח הלימון בין השנים
ל'שון נמרח בדמיון על שפת הפנים שלה.

KISS

High heeled shoes were invented by a girl
who was always kissed on her forehead.
Since then the forehead gleams like shoeshine
and the eyebrow brush keeps on polishing
the eye's electricity, following the explosion
on the lips' mines.
I remember my first kiss, near a leafless lemon tree.
Someone told us if we rubbed our teeth
with a leaf, we wouldn't smell of cigarettes.
The fog had thin fingers. The city's neck was wide, choke refused
and the girl I desired didn't know the scent of lemon between tongue and teeth
rose from the riverbank of her face into my imagination.

בלוז הנשיקה השלישית

היא היתה כמעט הראשונה ורציתי לקרוא לה חנה.
היא קראה לי פג'ו כי היתי ה-306 שלה.
היו בינינו כמה שנים, לטובתה, ועד אז,
לא עלייתי על טרמפים של א עצרו לי.
עמדנו ליד גדר בית-הספר החקלאי ומתחת
לכפות הרגלים אפשר היה לשמ'ע איך
בצנורות ההשקיה ממתקים המים
סוד לאדמה.
"אם תשת'ל בה פרסה", אמרה, "תוך שנה
יצמח לך סוס", ו"אם", עניתי, "תשת'לי בה מאורר-
תוך דקה תצוץ השמלה המעופפת של מרלין מונרו".
אחרי שניה החלו שפתייה להתפורר כחול
ולשונה הגיחה אל פני
כשאריות גל.
העולם באותה שעה חלק בין עוצמי העינים
לבין המתופפים במגרש המסדרים
של השקיעה.
לכן לא ראיתי איך הצליפו גלגלי הטרקטור,
שעבר ליד, במי השלוליות
ואיך בנשיקות מעופפות נתזו הסיסי הב'ץ
אל שרירי העינים שנדונו בערב
לדחוף את השמש
לימים.

THIRD KISS BLUES

She was almost my first woman and I wanted to call her Eve.
She called me Peugeot because for her I was 306.
There were a several years between us, with her in the lead, and until then
I had never taken a lift from anyone who hadn't stopped for me.
We stood next to the fence of the agricultural school and beneath
our feet we could hear
the water in the irrigation pipes telling sweet
secrets to the earth.
"If you plant a horseshoe here," she said, "within a year
a colt will grow." "And if," I replied, "you plant a fan here –
within a minute Marilyn Monroe's flying dress will sprout."
A second later her lips began to crumble like sand
and her tongue curled over my face
like the remains of a wave.
At that moment the world was divided between those who closed their eyes
and those who beat the drums on the parade grounds
of the sunset.
Therefore I did not see how the wheels of the tractor
that passed nearby whipped the waters of the puddles
and how like flying kisses the mud shrapnel sprayed
over the muscles of the clouds that had been condemned that evening
to push the sun

into the sea.

TR: VIVIAN EDEN

אלג'יר

אם הייתה לי עוד ילדה
הייתי קורא לה אלג'יר,
ואתם הייתם מסירים בפני את הכובעים הקולוניאליים
וקוראים לי "אבו אלג'יר".
בבוקר, כשתיקחה פוקחת עיני שוקולד
הייתי אומר: "הנה אפריקה מתעוררת",
והיא הייתה מלטפת את הבלונד בראש אחותה
ובטוחה שגלתה מחדש את הזהב.
הגרגרים על שפת הים היו ארגז החול שלה,
ובטביעת הרגל של הצרפתים שברחו משם
הייתה מחביאה את התמרים שנשרו מהעצים.
"אלג'יר", הייתי מהדק ידים על מעקה המרפסת וקורא לה:
"אלג'יר, בואי הביתה, ותראי איך אני צובע את קיר המזרח
במברשת השמש".

ALGERIA

If I had another daughter
I'd call her Algeria,
and you would doff your colonial hats to me
and call me "Abu Algeria."
In the morning, when she opened her chocolate eyes
I would say: "Now Africa is waking up,"
and she would caress the blonde on her sister's head
certain that she had rediscovered gold.
The grains on the seashore would be her sandbox
and in the footprints of the French who fled from there
she would hide the dates that dropped from the trees.
"Algeria," I would clasp the railing of the balcony and call to her:
"Algeria, come home, and see how I'm painting the eastern wall
with the brush of the Sun."

חטה

שדה חטה מתנופף על ראש אשתי ועל
ראש בתי.
כמה בנאלי לתאר כך את הבלונד,
ובכל זאת, שם צומח הלחם
של חיי.

Wheat

To Liora and Shirley

A wheatfield blows on my wife's head and on
my daughter's head.
How banal thus to describe blonde
but nonetheless, there grows
the bread of my life.

TR: VIVIAN EDEN

שיר אושר

אֲנַחְנוּ מְנַחִים עַל הָעוּגָה
כְּמוֹ בָבוֹת חֶתֶן פֶּלֶה.
גַּם אִם תָּבוֹא הַסַּכִּין
נִנְסֶה לְהִשָּׂאֵר בְּאוֹתָהּ הַפְּרוּסָה

A POEM OF BLISS

We are placed on a wedding cake
like the two dolls, bride and groom.
when the knife strikes
We'll try to stay on the same slice.

TR: YAIR MAZOR

GABRIEL DAVID

Introduction for Ronny Someck at Oded Halahmi's Book Party September 29, 2002

Born in 1951, Ronny was uprooted from his native Iraq when he was four. Transplanted to Israel, Ronny spent his childhood in a transit camp for new immigrants. There he was surrounded by music, the great singers Umm Kulthum, Farid al Atrash, and Fairuz shouldering up against Elvis Presley and Billie Holiday. From these early experiences, Ronny has quickly become one of the leading Israeli poets whose work is rich in slang and distinguished by staccato rhythms, quick cuts, close-ups and disturbing segues. No wonder he is so beloved in Israel. In what other poet do we find Tarzan, Marilyn Monroe, and cowboys battling with Rabbi Yehuda Halevi for the hearts and souls of Israelis?

You are probably wondering how is it that I know about Ronny Someck. Believe it or not, I "discovered" him on the internet. As the editor of *phatit'ude Literary Magazine*, I decidedly took on an ambitious project, that is, to create an edition entitled "Awakenings" Bridging the Cultural Divide, which in the aftermath of September 11, was my attempt to present the works of Arab, Israeli, Jewish and Arab American poets and writers.

In doing so, I needed to find out more about Israeli writers, and when I found Ronny and contacted him, I was equally delighted by his enthusiasm of the project. Believe or not, and I do not think he knows this, the idea of *phatLiterature*, a literary television program that we just shot last night, was inspired by his visit to the United States to promote his new book, *The Fires Stays in Red*, from which he will read from tonight.

Ronny Someck is the author of eight books of poetry, and his work has been translated into twenty-two languages, including Arabic, Catalan, French, English and Albanian, and has appeared on the internet, anthologies and poetry magazines in the United States, South America and Europe. Some of my favorite poems of Ronny are from his collection, *Bloody Mary*, with many pieces reminiscent of film noir, filled with quick cuts of speed, danger and uncertainty. His distinct Sephardi voice invokes the odors of *falafel* and *schwarma*, the army with its supporting cast of recruits and commandos, the bustle of southern Tel Aviv with its small garages, shops, cheap restaurants, its gangs and its Arab workers. He is also the troubadour of the lovelorn, with poems that are hot, erotic, comic, tragic, agape at the wonders of a tear and a tattoo and a snapshot and a bra and a scarecrow. His prolific statement, "My mother dreams in Arabic, I dream in Hebrew," reappears consistently throughout his poetry, if not literally, in most cases it lingers in most of the pieces he has written.

I was so excited about Ronny's first U.S. book, *The Fire Stays and Red*, translated from the Hebrew by Moshe Dor and Barbara Goldberg. When I finally had a chance to review the galleys, it was a critical time in my life, my Dad was going in and out of the hospital, and there in the Emergency Room I read his galleys. There at 2:00 am in the Emergency Room's waiting room I laughed, my eyes watered, I was reminded that while life is hard, there are good things that we should always remember, especially during the bad times. This is what Ronny Someck constantly reminds us, in his poetry, and that when it really boils down to it, his poems are really about us, as human beings, and that ultimately that whatever happens, rich or poor, being alive, the essence of living and enjoying that which surrounds us, is a pretty good thing.

Ronny is an artist that pushes the envelope and challenges the vanguard by collaborating his poetry with music and art. It is worthy to note that Ronny's musical collaborations with New York musician Elliott Sharp and their groundbreaking CD, *Revenge of the Stuttering Child* has been proclaimed, and I quote, as a "collaboration of sounds - sounds as word and sounds as music, a tangled-up feedback loop that continuously builds and mutates. Much more than poetry set to music, each piece draws a bead, aims and fires in a different direction, hitting the familiar, the strange, the wry, the warm, the dark, the furious. As Ronny Someck's words are fleshed by his own throat, Sharp's music is manifest in his own varied instrumental voices

augmented by the talents of pianist Anthony Coleman, the cello and accordion of the Parkins sisters and percussionist Salifoski. In the prolific, unpredictable world of Elliott Sharp, this project stands apart." Since 1997, Ronny and Elliot have collaborated on two other CDs, including: *Poverty line* and *A Short History of Vodka*.

Yesterday, when I asked Ronny how is it that he collaborates with artists to reproduce his poetry into artwork, he responded that to him it is a natural transition, that poetry is visual in the mind and can and should be accessible to the canvas. He has therefore managed to do something that most poets can only dream of doing, having successful art shows that was created by him or after his work at such venues as the Eretz-Israel Museum, The Israel Museum, the Tel-Aviv Museum, Binet Gallery, the Z Gallery here in New York, in collaboration with such notable Yigal Ozeri, Amir Cohen and Benni Efrat.

Ronny is a modest soul. While he takes his works and his craft very seriously, he manages to not take himself seriously, that is why we take him seriously. Certainly, this is reflected by the numerous awards and prizes he has earned, including Acum (Society of Authors, Composers and Music Publishers in Israel) special Jubilee Prize for a special achievement, the Prime Minister's Prize (in both 1989 and 2000); the Afrat Prize, 1999 and the Ahi Prize (The Association for the Promotion of Research, Literature and Art, founded in Israel by Jews from Iraq) in 1999. Ronny has also participated in international poetry events, throughout the world including events held at Queens College, Washington D.C. and most recently at the Library of Congress, the JCC and of course, at my recent event at the Langston Hughes Community Library & Cultural Center during our *phatLiterature* taping, where he is and will always be warmly received.

Ronny has certainly done what many poets strive to achieve, to publish award-winning collections of international acclaim. Yet, Ronny clearly sees himself as merely the ordinary man who lives day-by-day in an almost impossible political situation, who helps children learn how to write and to write his own stories through observation. Not stories that regale anthems of nationality, not stories that dictate politics, rather, he writes stories about the invisible people, the street people, the ordinary people, sometimes in unordinary circumstances. Through all of that, Ronny manages to maintain a sense of humanity, which is reflected in the great body of works he has produced in the past twenty years. This is what makes his poetry special. This is what makes Ronny special, that his work can touch the life of me, an African American woman half way around the world.

It is my great personal to introduce to you, Ronny Someck.

ET AL

Emperor of Emotions

Yuyutsu RD Sharma

Last November when Israel's most celebrated poet Ronny Someck signed his collection of poems, *'The Fire Stays in Red'* for me, he wrote my name and generously added—'My fire from Israel, and a flower with friendship.' Elated, I took his hand and kissed it. I thought—what else do I possess to honor the generosity of this emperor of emotions?

When in the winter of 1998 Someck, together with famous artist Benny Efrat, showed an exhibition entitled "Nature's Factory" at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, critic and translator Shlomit Shakked had compared Ronny's poems to Peter Greenaway's movie, *The Pillow Book* where the client of the heroine, Shangon, writes on her body in invisible ink to hide his manifest talent. The woman uncovers the writing by immersing herself in a bath of hot water and standing near fire. She also washes her body with onion juice since tears turn out to be suitable solution for revealing the writing. Similarly, Someck's writing, I agreed with Shakked, can only be made visible through heat, sweat and tears of human struggle?

A few months later when Someck e-mailed his poem, 'Kathmandu, above the Rice Paddy', I could get an inside view of how Someck works, effortlessly baking life's essential loaf of bread on the hearth of his poetry.

"Above the rice paddies/Buddha's head turns gold. / In the tear hidden in his eyes/rain for the entire year collects. / On the plate of the plaza grains/of people are scattered, their faces pale as milk swinging in the udder of a sacred cow."

Someck addresses Mount Everest as "Your Majesty, the King", a mountain model in God's fashion show. In another poem, 'Rice Paradise' he describes his grandma who forbade him to leave rice on our plate. "She didn't talk of starving children /of India, their swollen bellies, or how their mouths opened wide/ for each grain." Instead, teary eyed she scraped leftover rice to the center of their plates and told her children how it rises and complains bitterly to God.

Someck then sees his dead grandma smiling at the gates of paradise. A royal carpet of red rice is spread at her feet and she brushes olive oil on each grain, slips them into the simmering cosmic pot in God's kitchen. "Grandma, I want to tell her," Someck concludes, "rice is nothing / but a shell washed ashore/ by the sea of life"

There's so much of East in Someck that one forgets one is reading a Hebrew poet immersed in the western culture and traditions. "I feel," Someck told me, "that I need to live in two cultures. I like, for example, to drink Arak and Coca Cola, or to hear Abad El Wabb with the Beatles in the same compact disk"

He alluded to Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" where the hero wears a mask and his face grows to fit it. Someck's mask is Baghdad, his birthplace. His parents brought

him to Israel when he was a baby and the black box of his memory was empty. But Someck grew up listening to the stories of a the Cafe near Tigris, smell of the fruit at Shugra Market and singers like Farid El Atrash and Adb El Wabb. In his parents house they spoke Hebrew, only his grandfather followed Baghdad's life style. He thought Baghdad had turned into a metaphor, into a place that existed only in his grandpa's heart

But during the Gulf War Baghdad came back knocking at on his door. In every shot he tried to place his stroller, or put lipstick on his mother's lips or see his father brushing his fingers through his hair. The next moment, he saw how the place was destroyed.

Now he misses the place where he was born and would life to mix it up with his life in Israel. "My mother dreams in Arabic. I dream in Hebrew"

In Someck's view, a poet living in Israel is like a pianist that we see in the western movies. He puts his piano in the corner of the saloon that always smells like gunpowder. ` For his safety he says: "Don't shut me I'm only a pianist"

A few months ago in America when they asked him to read an optimistic poem, Someck choose his poem, 'Bliss': "A wedding cake with us on high / bride and groom, two dolls in the sky/ we fight to stay on the same slice/ when the blade descends, by and by."

World famous poet Wislawa Szymborska discerns that this Bliss Poem can serve as a wedding toast throughout the whole world. "I'm waiting,' Someck said, "for a day when I will write a 'bliss' poem without the word knife in it."

Like in the game I played as a child I shout

"Your Majesty, the King, greetings" to Everest,

and he brushes shreds of cloud from his eyelids,

letting the wind blow away sand that stuck to his belly

and standing, for a moment, proudly on tiptoe.

It's been a while since he was reminded that

he's a mountain model in God's fashion show.

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(Ronny Someck was interviewed by Hanna Yaoz, Professor of Holocaust Literature at Bar Ilan University in Israel.)

A HEBREW POEM ACCOMPANIED BY AN OUD

Interview with Ronny Someck

Q How does a poet teach poetry?

A. I feel like a double agent. On the one hand, I'm familiar with the lab; on the other, I'm the display window of that lab. I work at various locations: at the Creative Writing Workshop of "Beit Ariella." I meet boys who know how to quote and can find their way along all the underground tunnels of any poem, and to me it's a sold game, because they know everything and I'm only a traffic cop directing the passing vehicles.

The true game is conducted at Municipal High School 11, a "second chance high school." There I meet students who have never had literature and poetry as their basic foodstuffs. I love those students of mine, and I feel like an architect, because I've been given the privilege to design their literary living room. I choose works that contain more emotion than common sense and I try to narrow the gap between life and literature. I use support players, like poems that have been set to music, movies, video excerpts, in order to prove that there is a tango between literature and poetry and the other arts.

Q. While teaching do you use know-how and experiences from your own "private lab" as a creative artist?

A. I've established several rules. First of all, the word "message" should be erased; second of all, one mustn't use the word "analysis," because anaesthesia is necessary before surgery. I regard the poem as a locomotive, and anyone can join his or her "association carriage" from home to that engine. That's definitely not a call for anarchy, because even the remotest association is somehow joined to an engine.

Q. The poem "Solo Arak" has cast you in the role of "Mixer of Cultures," Eastern culture intermingled with Western culture, entwining roots. Do you accept that?

A. I live in a vortex where it's extremely difficult to discern between "eastern" and "western" gusts of wind. I was born in Iraq, brought to Israel as a baby, and there was an attempt, at least up to the age of five, to educate me within the gap between Umm

Kulthum and recordings of American and French songs. I wasn't aware of any split between the two cultures--they seemed to me "day and night" of the same 24 hours. My first shock came when I entered first grade. Then, for the first time, I heard the repertory of children songs. It seems to me that my first day at first grade might illustrate my feelings. At that time we moved over from the transit camp for immigrants (on the border between Holon and Bat Yam) to a neighborhood of evacuees from that camp (near Zahala). My mother dressed me in a suit, including a tie, and sent me to the heart of Sabradom. The teacher asked every pupil to stand on a chair, tell his name and sing a song. When my turn came I was hovering between "Inta Umri" and "My Heart Belongs to Daddy." I decided to sing the American song. The teacher suggested to my mother that she dispense with my suit.

Eight years ago we had a kind of reunion. I asked my former class mates whether they remembered that event. All of them laughed, and one of them, a professor of psychology in the US, said that he was making his living out of that story. He studied how society treated it and evolved a theory that there was a crucial moment when the environment decided whether to go with its feeling of attraction or revulsion. Lucky for me, I aroused curiosity. The true battle was conducted between affluence and poverty. The children of Zahala lived in villas while we were crowded in a two-room apartment. But thanks to my survival instinct I learned how to turn that reality into a source of power. For example, a piano teacher lived in our neighborhood, and the Zahala children used to come to her with red satchels decorated with drawing of musical notes. I was terribly envious, but managed to hide it. Instead, I played on the theme that nobody forced me to play the piano, and thus felt that everybody lost and gained at the same time. I was quite fortunate in that my father knew an owner of a movie theater and so I became the great movie critic and narrator of both my class and my neighborhood. It's important to emphasize the ambiance of that neighborhood. People from all the diasporas lived there, and the smell of burekas mingled with kreplach, and only years later did we realize that we had lived in a genuine fusion of exiles.

Q. You underline the "fusion of exiles." What did you know about the Holocaust?

A. One day, a police car, an ambulance and a red fire truck drove into our neighborhood at the same time. All the children surrounded the vehicles that disturbed the regular tranquility. Then we saw Madame Clara carried out on a stretcher. We understood that she was dead. Only later we learned she had committed suicide. We asked her husband, "What did she die of?" and he answered, "Buchenwald." I thought that "Buchenwald" was the name of a disease. I told my parents, and they settled me on a chair and began to

talk about various episodes. They asked, "Do you understand why Ahuva's mother accompanies her every day to school and waits there till the school day is over? Do you understand why Isaac's father keeps loaves of bread in his car?" No, I didn't understand, and couldn't understand why they were asking me these questions. Only then they began talking about the Holocaust. I was in second grade. To this day I remember nightmares besetting me after that talk, and the guilt I felt vis a vis ridiculing Ahuva's mother or the bread loaf in Isaac's father's car. I grew up at that moment. I wanted to hear more, but it was immensely difficult to break the conspiracy of silence maintained by the families of survivors.

Q. How do you define your Ars Poetica?

A. It's as though I live in transit station. On the memory shelves are candies arranged from various cultures, but all of them are wrapped up in local tissue paper. My mother dreams in Arabic, I dream in Hebrew and speak in Hebrew, but sometimes, within the Hebrew, I can hear the sound track of a singer like Fairuz conducting a duet with Frank Sinatra or Elvis.

Q. In the poem "Solo Arak" you use the name of an intoxicating Eastern drink along with terms like "solo oud," meaning the Middle Eastern musical instrument. Do you continue to integrate Eastern terms and concepts in your poetry?

A. Yes, all the time. Let me give you an example. I've worked on two musical projects in recent years. One is called "The Retort of the Stuttering Boy," which I present with the New York musician Elliott Sharp. The instruments and the musical mood are definitely Western. Simultaneously, I've recorded one of my poems with music played by the Bedouin oud player Muhammed Abu Ajaj. I read the poem in the original Hebrew and he, Mohammed, sings the Arabic translation by the poet Samih El Kassem. The two discs lie side by side on the same shelf in my music library.

Yoram Kaniouk (Traduit par Marlana Braester)

Il ne tient pas à être un poète « respectable »

Ronny Someck écrit des biographies sous forme de poèmes. Il y conserve toujours le même ton, s'obstinant à rester lui-même, ce qui permet de reconnaître facilement l'auteur. Sa poésie épouse le caractère, le climat, le lieu. Chez lui, Dieu peut être associé au rouge à lèvres. Ronny Someck est un des rares poètes israéliens qui mêlent ironie et nostalgie dans leurs écrits. En effet, parmi nos poètes ou nos écrivains peu nombreux sont ceux qui ont le sens de l'humour et de l'auto-ironie.

Someck ne tient pas à être considéré un poète 'respectable'. Il se situe dans le domaine de la biographie pure. Il est de ceux, peu nombreux, qui n'ont pas besoin d'une voix solennelle pour lire un poème. Les chanteurs pop se servent du langage de Someck, tout comme les femmes les plus sophistiquées. Someck ne se prend pas trop au sérieux. Il peut être aussi bien le fils dont le père adoptif vit en Virginie que celui d'un père qu'il est en train de rechercher sur la ligne 61 des bus pour Guivataïm.

Il parle « poésie » comme un poète de Bagdad, car c'est vers son Bagdad israélien qu'il a fait virer la nouvelle poésie israélienne anglicisante, pour faire ressortir de -lui-même un héritage éblouissant qui permet d'apprécier sa poésie partout dans le monde. Il parle des angles aigus et imprévisibles de l'existence et les poèmes amorcés d'une formule grandiose se terminent sur une auto-citation contredisant son propre poème. Où qu'il aille - que ce soit à la frontière du Liban, que ce soit en Amérique ou en Espagne, il porte en lui, non seulement la poésie israélienne, mais aussi l'*Oum Kouloum*.

J'avais un voisin Irakien qui sortait en pyjama tous les shabbats matin, avec sa grande radio en bois comme celles d'autrefois et avec des lampes de contrôle - Someck en donne la description. La tenant sur les bras, il choisissait la station-radio « *La Voix du Caire* » et dans un tapage assourdissant il écoutait une chanson de Oum Kouloum pendant une heure entière.

Ronny Someck est capable de faire un poème sur base d'une histoire rapportée dans un journal -comme par exemple, celle d'un jeune homme ayant battu un record de *Guinness* parce qu'il avait les cils les plus longs au monde. Ce fait banal devenu poème sera enseigné dans les écoles, tout comme on enseigne la poésie de Nathan Zach. C'est un poème que Oum Kouloum glisserait parmi les mots d'amour, les mots de tristesse et de trahison.

Non ; il n'est pas aussi innocent que ça. Il a fait un long chemin en poésie sans se soumettre aux modes diverses pour retourner à la poésie de Bagdad à laquelle les Israéliens, arrogants, ne s'habituent pas.

Recueil après recueil, Someck retourne à ses racines, dans un camp de transit, dans la banlieue de Tel Aviv - Bagdad sur le Yarkon. Tout en étudiant la poésie moderne, il décrit, tel un poète arabe, « *les prunelles ardentes sur les ailes du feu* » d'une fille. Près de la frontière du Liban, entre la vie et la mort, il écrit « *celui qui reste éveillé rêve de la distance entre le bébé et la victime* » ou encore « *sur le plus tranchant des éclats d'obus les poètes écrivent des poèmes. Moi, non. Moi, je suis le géologue des couches de rouge à lèvres sur le bord du verre, comme un chiffon rouge mouillé dans le sang du taureau* »

Chez les grands poètes, il a appris que le poème doit être harmonieux, affiné, mais en même temps qu'il doit dire quelque chose de neuf, proposant une formule personnelle, dépourvue de l'embarras du pathos ou de la religiosité. Non seulement rendre l'essentiel de la vie comme dans les diagrammes mais aussi peindre la vie comme cette fille que Léonard de Vinci a peint entre les jambes de sa mère. Il nous dit qu'il n'y a pas de femmes laides, mais qu'il y trop peu de vodka, et moi qui ai travaillé comme barman, je vous jure que cette phrase aurait dû être dans la Bible.

Entre les lieux communs de la poésie de Bagdad et les souvenirs de son enfance dans le camp de transit où il grandit, là où se mêlent le western, le baiser dangereux et les cils les plus longs du monde, il a aussi écrit des sonates à la rivière du Yarkon ; des sonates qui contiennent miraculeusement - et le miracle caractérise sa poésie laïque - à la fois le Yarkon pollué d'aujourd'hui mais aussi la vaste étendue du Yarkon romantique de ma jeunesse, avant même que le poète ne soit venu au monde.

La poésie de Someck est imbue des saveurs du lieu, que ce soit la rivière Tsin, ou le Yarkon. Elle nous rappelle – non pas par sa forme ni par le ton mais par le courage de sa prosaïté mélancolique et sensuelle - quelque chose qui ressemblerait à la figue en tant que symbole du sexe de la femme et qui caractérise la poésie de D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence, qui vient d’être merveilleusement traduit en hébreu par Guyora Léchem, avait été lui aussi écarté par les poètes de la « neutralité des sens » et de la « purification » de la poésie jusqu’à une géométrie savante, parce qu’il avait osé écrire sur les raisins, les femmes et le désir.

Someck invente un rapport entre la Chevrolet et les cheveux de sa fille. Il ne veut pas être un grand poète, mais être, autant que possible, « vrai » par rapport à lui-même. On avait dit de George Gershwin qu’il était trop pop. Aucun compositeur « sérieux » du XXe siècle n’avait écrit de musique plus profonde que *Summertime* ou *I love you, Porgy*, mais les « prétentieux » ont décidé qu’il n’était pas convenable de faire entendre ce genre de musique à Carnegie Hall. Lawrence avait été rejeté par ces mêmes « prétentieux ». Quant à Someck, il a su charmer bon nombre de lecteurs et se fiche de ceux qui trouvent qu’il se répète ou que le pop ne convient pas à la poésie hébraïque ;. Grâce à son obstination à garder la spécificité de sa voix, il réussit à frayer délicatement et généreusement son chemin parmi les mondes où il vit, sans craindre ni la simplification ni l’ « epikos », ni la métaphore précise, puisqu’il est le « tambour de la révolution ».

Le « tambour de la révolution » sait que les révolutions se banalisent et deviennent despotiques en vieillissant. C’est la raison pour laquelle il n’est pas révolutionnaire : il ne fait que battre le tambour, sans se soucier des modes, tout en sachant qu’il n’y a pas de révolution sans tambour mais aussi que le tambour n’est pas responsable de l’écroulement de la révolution.

(FROM:POESIE AND ART/UNIVERSITE DE HAIFA)