

The Immigrant's Lament

by

Moshe Benarroch

The Immigrant's Lament

This book is dedicated to Lyah Benarroch
keeper of the flame.

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I. THE IMMIGRANT'S
LAMENT (1992)
THE IMMIGRANT'S LAMENT

*

In Morocco I was the center
of all the parties
a social phenomenon
always surrounded by friends
until I came to Israel
and ended up in a corner
the corner of all the parties
I stopped going
always on the outside
the outsiderwhen
I came
I became a poet.

*

I can see you

Moshe

I can see you my friend Moshe
a twelve and a half year old boy
sensitive and lazy

I love you Moshe

I see you after the Bar Mitzvah
your mother announcing that
tonight we are leaving

I see you with the suitcases
always looking for something secure
suddenly nothing is secure

I see you in Ceuta
waiting for your father to sell the buildings
for peanuts

the Arab took out a knife
before he finally paid in Spain

I see you on the ship
on the way to Algeciras

I see you dreaming
dreaming of the land of Israel
dreaming a dream

a wonderful dream
with a temple

a dream full of light

I see you full of joy
traveling through Spain
in Valencia, in Barcelona

see you full of happiness and full of hope
that the land of Israel will heal
your brother Ari who is dying
see you in a hired taxi

you are wonderful Moshe
trying to be loved by everybody
tired and lazy
but always nice
I see you arriving at Marseille
entering the bus there
your father is angry
at the manager of the transit hotel
the sewer is plugged
shit is flowing everywhere
everything is wonderful
but there is shit everywhere
you cannot know what is awaiting you
I see you Moshe
landing in the land of Israel
half-drunk in the airport
you don't understand what is happening
but you don't kiss the land
or more precisely the asphalt
I see you
a week in the boarding school
of Aliyat Hanoar
a week you cried without stopping
I see the nice tutor
coming from the boy scouts
saying you, you are too big to cry
and you cry even more
that it's going to pass
and you cry even more
I see you Moshe
and my heart goes out to you
I love you Moshe
and suffer with you there

in Zichron-Yaacov
when will you forget Moshe
when will forgive
a week later your mother came to save you
took you to the secondary school
in Pardes-Hanna
they didn't want you in 9th grade
in spite of skipping a class
because of your age
and your mother
"why should he lose a year?"
Insisting and insisting
till you finished the final exams
at sixteen and a half
and then waited a year
studying physics and mathematics
at the Hebrew University
she pushed you to this too
always pushing
you wanted to walk slowly
It took you so long to learn to go slow
my heart goes out to you Moshe
Moshe the immigrant
Moshe looking for redemption
Moshe disappointed
Moshe crying
Moshe becoming religious
Moshe a half-year atheist
Moshe who doesn't get along with girls
Moshe believing in reincarnation
Moshe studying mathematics
Moshe studying literature
Moshe wanting to be a poet

Moshe running after literary editors
Moshe editing a literary review
Moshe writing a novel in 3 weeks
Moshe writing thousands of poems
Moshe writing ten novels
nobody publishes
Moshe always trying to be loved
by people
Moshe after people who don't understand
his sensitivity
Moshe who wants to be loved for his poems
Moshe my heart goes out to you truly
Moshe I love you
in all your searching
in all your impossible searching
Moshe who knows everything will have
an explanation one day.
Two things always
writing and listening to music
music
especially after you visited your cousin
in Madrid
arrived religious and returned a heretic
there you bought
your first Van Morrison record
since then you bought them all
and thousands more
always music and writing
to save yourself
from going insane
in this crazy world
my heart goes out to you
Moshe the poet

Moshe the true poet
I love you at last
with all your travels
with all your suffering
I would caress you
in every step of your life
caress and kiss you
me who hated you so much
who suffered so much from you
now I love you
all the yous
you ever were.
Twenty years twenty
passed since those two weeks
that changed your life
the last week of August
and the first week of September
nineteen seventy two
everyday changed your life
making you a poet
writing in Hebrew
in your land
and not a writer
writing in a foreign language
in a foreign land
twenty years
in which you tried so hard to escape
not loving yourself
not wanting to be like the others
writing about suicide
angry at God
twenty
with asthma and without asthma

with allergies and skin sores
angina and digestive pain
crazy eating, women problems
trying to escape reality
trying to escape Israeli society
travelling abroad as much as possible
and coming back
to Paris, specially to Paris
dreaming about living there
marrying a French woman
emigrating to France, what else,
but she, what else,
just not to go back to France,
each one his own escape
always weak in front of women
and difficult to make changes
you are still here
with all the oxymoron and all the morons
possible inside your head
feeling the most here
and most there that is possible
so close to the land of Israel
and so far away from the State of Israel.

I love you Moshe
and I enjoy writing it
at last I love you
with all that you did
and all that you failed
and all that you fucked up
and all that you are ridiculous
and with all your running
away from here and escaping again

and again escaping
and still, staying here

I love you
Moroccan, Spanish, Sephardi,
European, looks Ashkenazi,
Western, Eastern, Mediterranean,
Middle-eastern, Palestinian,
African, French
with all the things you are and aren't
I love you crazy and insane
and most logical
but then it is you
it is all the you that made me
and I love you.

*

I embrace you
go to the world
love it
give it all you have to give
even what it can't accept
give the world all your love
all you have learned
and your experience
in all your previous lives
it won't accept
but it needs you
the world needs you
it needs your love
give it
but don't expect any reward
go to the world
go to God
go
don't be afraid anymore
I caress you good-bye
go your way
I kiss you good-bye
go.

*

This land in which I was not born
said the immigrant
this land in which my children were born
now I leave it
like a man leaves his lover
who cheated on him
like a man leaves the mother
of his children
in pain in joy in suffocation in liberation
that's the way I leave this land
in which I did not plant a tree
in which I did not seek revenge
and if you say this is a descent
I will tell you, said that same immigrant,
it is a descent meant to go up
and if this is your face
I am an ass
and if these are your legs
I am a wheelchair
everyday in my land is suffocation
and everyday abroad is oxygen
I travel twice a year abroad
to have enough oxygen to breath here
and not suffocate
in this ghetto, in this mellahh,
this land in which I was not born
my children were born here
this land
didn't rejoice toward me
and didn't give me joy
nor did I rejoice toward her
in spite of not having another land

beside her
not having
but, said the man angry
with tears in his eyes,
it is impossible for things
to be done infinitely
just for lack
of alternatives.

*

My childhood,
a black flower I did not pick,
Tetuan mountains around her
Arab children shouting
“awadel yahoud”
and throwing stones at us
on the way to school
hugging the girls in class
the old Arab who touched my chin
the Arab beggar
to whom I always gave a coin
my mother always knowing what’s good for me
the smacks I got from her when I lit matches
and almost burnt the house
hugging the son of the Rabbi at ten
Saturday night at grandma and grandpa’s home
and shouting and noise the whole family
my cousin getting on my nerves
I hit my cousins
the vacation house in Restinga and tennis
the motorcyclist who broke his hand
my daddy’s toy store
he brings me a red Mercedes
me and my brother breaking it with a screwdriver
my sick brother who died at 8
the scissors I threw at my sister
my brother Levi disappears
and we’re looking for him again
the recurrent dream of the falling lamps
private lessons in Arabic
the giant house made of granite
Levi and me climbing the walls

Levi and me not going to the solfege class
and going to play soccer
the cakes we bought after the Shabbath prayer
my uncle hitting me when I
touched a moving car
the cruel stick of the teacher
breaking the stick after class
the three loyal classroom friends
the club I started with my cousin Levi
mama and dad travel to the U.S.
to take care of my brother
I am left with grandma and grandpa
in the vacation home playing and swimming
the one handed French tourist
suffocation
asphyxiation
suffocation
my childhood
a black flower I did not pick
a black flower I did not smell
I did not remember
I did not forget
I did not love
I did not appreciate
I did not hate
I did not understand

my childhood
I don't miss you
nor your smells
nor your wealth
everything was asphyxiating
pressuring

my childhood
I don't miss the famous Alliance school
maker of students in the universities
of Strasbourg, Madrid, Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv
I don't miss the Jewish community
nor the family who always knows what's best
for the others
nor the feeling of superiority
for being true Sephardim
nor the smell of Ladino nor the ballooning wealth
nor the imagined honor of the family
nor the synagogue I was always forced to go
my childhood my lost childhood
my insensitive childhood
where are you, where did you go
if you ever came.

*

Every Friday evening
all the grandchildren
gathered on the steps
of Papa Levi's giant store
and waited to be called one by one
to receive money for Shabbath.
First he used to call
the grandchildren bearing his name
sons of his sons
then the grandchildren bearing his name
sons of his daughters
who received less
and then the others, me among them,
and he called me Mosselito,
who received even less,
and then we all compared
how much we received
and I always was jealous of the others
who received more than me
and the same day I wasted everything,
they said I had holes in my hands.

*

On Sabbaths my grandfather used to sit
in the middle of the living room
his thumb on his mouth
every few hours going to the bathroom
to smoke a cigarette
they called it Sabbath diarrhea.

*

My grandfather was very rich
every five years he traded his Plymouth
but not the chauffeur
who stayed with him
his whole life.

Just before he emigrated to Israel
he caught emphysema and died
didn't do what I did
died staked to machines
physician's machines
who keep the angel of death unemployed.

*

Out of four who came to Israel from Tetuan
three left
all the cousins now
in Paris, Madrid and New York
one by one they left
married abroaders
and left
they understood
this was not for them
where everyone categorizes them
as something they are not
forced to defend something
they couldn't identify with
when they say
you are a Moroccan
or an oriental
and you have to defend the Moroccans
to whom you can't feel affiliated
you have no choice but to become arrogant
with the Ashkenazi especially
for their arrogance and their cultural ignorance
to the eastern Jews and their customs
and they always repeat that same sentence
half funny half sad
but you don't look Moroccan!

I once said to someone
after this sentence
“yeah, that's true, I had an operation
I took off the tail
and now I don't look Moroccan.”

*

In front of my house
with the granite walls
there was a mountain
covered in trees
in front of my house
the police stood
called Consul Murphy street
in front of my house
my only home
where I drown the years
that made me
till I arrived in Israel
to the years that broke me

since the third of September
nineteen seventy two
I collect the pieces

I try to find some logic
to the puzzle
with my words
I try to find warmth
human warmth that always scares me,
I collect the pieces
and stay an orphan
in my words.

*

I had everything in Morocco
I had everything
my grandfather was
the richest man in town
but I was always anxious
a sensitive boy
in a pressure-cooker family
I had everything in Morocco
except what I needed
air to breathe time to think
time to create
to be myself
to be a child
and dream.

*

What's going to happen to you
Moroccan prince
what's going to happen to you
spoiled child
who never made his bed
what's going to happen with you
in the land of Israel
when you won't be able to shout
Fatima bring me a glass of water
Fatima I am hungry
what's going to become of you
Moroccan prince
here in the land of Israel
where everyone has to work.

*

The father of my grandfather Mimon
used to ask my father everyday
when? when is it happening?
(the State of Israel)
and he answered
it is coming
just coming
he died in 1946
he had a grocery store
before dawn
he used to put bags of food
near the houses of the poor
so they wouldn't know
and wouldn't be ashamed
he never made any money
like my grandfather Moshe
but thanks to him and to his deeds
I live today in Jerusalem.

*

My grandfather died of diabetes
when I was four or five
I remember his completely bald head
covering his head
like a dream
he walks in the house
he is ill in bed
after his death
my father grew a beard
my grandfather made a lot of money
and lost a lot of money alternately
he willed me a building
so I'd have the money to study
because I was named after him.
I was the grandson of my grandfather.
They say I am like him.

*

My Grandfather Moshe
stood with suitcases
ready to travel to Argentina
to manage a milk company.
He was going for six months
then the family would
follow.

My grandmother and her mother
stood in front of him and
cried
wo wo he is going and won't be back
wo wo
he is going forever.
They stood and cried

my grandfather dropped the suitcases
and said
I stay here

and that's how I wasn't born in Argentina.

*

Where is my house now
where are the walls where I grew up now
who is in my house now
the house my grandfather built
built every stone in it
the house in which I played with my brother
and run in its corridors
who lives in my house now
Arabs live in my home now
and I
live in an Arab house
the immigrant who lived here
may be writing poems now.

*

Years

Years you didn't remember your childhood
and after you
remembered

years

you didn't want to write about it

you didn't want to write

what everyone expects

from a Moroccan poet

you knew every poem

about Tetuan and about the couscous

will be published

and that's why

you didn't write the poems

inside of you

years you walk

with a tree that has no roots

years

the roots

are in the sky.

*

I went to three meetings
of the Bnei Akiva boy scouts
and heard many times
hebraya hebraya hebraya
and didn't understand
all the aya aya aya
I never understood the togetherness
of the sabras
not in the scouts
nor in the school
nor in the army
a lone wolf
in the company of snakes.

*

The name of my grandmother is Mercedes
her son the doctor
always buys Mercedes
He was the gynecologists of
some of the king's wives.
In the early seventies
a Zionist minister
of Morocco
told him it was time to leave
He went to Madrid
then to Nice,
tried a few times to get a job
in an Israeli hospital
and failed.
He didn't make his Aliyah
didn't leave
and wasn't disappointed.

*

My father never made it here
he didn't want to come either
he wanted Canada, Spain, Venezuela
but my mother said that from Morocco
she would only leave to the land of Israel
he always said this won't suit him
and he was right.

I saw him
failing from business to business
until he got emphysema
asphyxiated from the neglect
of the Ashkenazi bureaucracy
and died.

*

The head of the absorption center
at the time of the government of
the Yiddishe mama
and this was in 1973
and not in the fifties
said to my parents
that we don't have a high enough
cultural level to live in Jerusalem
my parents
went back enraged
to the small apartment
and decided to leave the country
it happened every two months
for four years
the winds blew to the immigrating direction
I think this caused a genetic change in me
and it happens twice a day
I would like to meet the little principal
the son of a bitch
and spit on him.

*

For years I used to walk and discuss
in my head
I am religious I am not religious
I am secular I am not secular
discuss with imaginary Rabbis
and with atheists in my head
for years without concluding
my head was a theological soccer camp.

*

Every Yom Kippur eve
I redeemed all my sins
when the Rabbi came
to slaughter the chickens
we had raised a few days earlier
me and my brothers
and we cried trying to escape
and the Rabbi says
ze kaparateja
this is your redemption
and beats the chicken
and says again ze kaparateja
and blood is everywhere
and sand on the floor to dry the blood
and this way
a chicken per person
he slaughters
and this way every Yom Kippur
in every slaughter
I redeem all my sins.

*

I shout my right
to be different
to be Sephardi
to be traditional
in the Israeli society
not right and not left
I demand my right
to stop feeling
strange and detached
I the Israeli.

*

The last words of the immigrant

the
more I explain
the less I understand

II. YOUR THOUSAND LOVERS (1994-2000)

Watch

Watch the green leaves
Dropping and falling
From the wind
If it didn't shake the tree
How long could they stand
Watch
Our love
Falling
And who will stop it
If it is a leaf
The land will bury it
If it is a fruit
A tree shall rise.

PROMISES

You didn't promise anything
like lovers do
but you fulfilled
you didn't promise wealth
you didn't promise happiness
faithfulness
or a long marriage
but what you didn't promise
you kept.

I didn't promise you anything
not a big house
not infinite love
or a long marriage
but what I didn't promise
I kept
and what I won't promise
I will fulfill.

LISBON

While writing poems to you
in a cafe
in front of the birds
the painter painted me
smiled to me
while I wrote you poems
and wrote that he was painting me
all the world was invaded by love
our love
filled the world.

IN THE PLACE WHERE WE SAT

In the place where we sat
before we made love
and discussed the last tango in Paris
a couple sat today in the sun
I don't know what they were talking about
they sure weren't talking about our last tango.

CAN A POEM HELP

You buy clothes
and I buy records
you cough
and I have hemorrhoids.

When discussions go well into the night
and the feeling is that only the wall understands
that all paths lead to a dead end road
that everything is gray and gray and gray
and nothing is white or black

You wear yellow clothes
and I go to Fendelkreiss
looking for a way to fly abroad for a month
or trying by all means to avoid you

How can a poem help...

IF NOT FOR YOUR

If not for your smile
if not for your anger
if not for your screams
if not for your gaiety

I would walk
the fields
barefoot
looking for spines
to fall upon

I would walk between countries
stumbling and falling
like an ant without a nest
like a sun without people

if not for your smile
I would be walking naked
from cafe to cafe in Paris
collecting fume donations
if not for your joy of living

I would be walking in Spain
from bar to bar
eating shrimps and calamaris tapas
looking for cheap shoes to wear
instead of worn boots

if not for your smile
what would have happened to my poems
what would have happened to my poems...

UPS AND DOWNS

There were many ups
but I always wrote in the downs
every second day thinking of divorce
like i think about emigrating
every second day thinking it's the end.

I got married for six months
never thought it would hold longer
six months passed

nine years now
I am with you
and you are with me.

Every second day I rediscover you
every second month I reall in love
every second year I chose you
to be miss universe
I touch your breasts
dripping honey
and above sex there is warmth
above warmth smell
touching
joining
mating
hope
tikkun
every second day I say to myself it is the end

every second day
every second month
every second year

The ships anchor in the harbor.

WHEN YOU DREAM DISTANT INTO YOURSELF

When you dream distant into yourself
into a dream-balloon somewhere
and I don't know what you are thinking
I don't love you
you scare me
when you repress your feelings
when you hear without listening
you scare me
and I don't love you.

YOUR THOUSAND LOVERS

Sometimes when I lie near you
I think of your thousand lovers
those you loved
those who bought you
those who deluded you
who exploited you
who took advantage of your dreams
those you used
those who desired you
those who used you
I think of your thousand lovers
think of them and I want you
more, think of them and become
angry with myself
angry with them
angry with my abysmal loneliness
with my fear from women
with my fear from you
when I think of your thousand lovers
about your crazy life before me
I can't understand what happened to us
two lunatics, how two lunatics
become after x years boring
deadly boring, when I think of your
thousand lovers I love you more, I hate you
I want you, you repel me

when I think of your thousand lovers.
When I think you are the only lover in my life
I am proud, I am angry
I want you, I want to kill you
when I think about
my gorgeous loneliness, universal
about my fear from women,
from the thousand women
who wanted me, from whom I ran away
and drove away.
When I think of your thousand lovers
and see you staring at me with your naiveté
I want to embrace you, I want to strangle you
I feel I am going crazy
where are you? Where are you?
I want you, I don't know you
don't recognize you, who are you?
When I think of your thousand lovers
of those who loved you
those enchanted by your eagerness
those who bought you with money, with presents
those who hated you
those who wanted to dominate you
who am I, when I think of those
who visited you before me, before I knew you
who are you when I think
of your thousand lovers
who am I when I want to lie with other women
to be with a thousand women who will love me
or not, I will love or not.
Who am I within your thousand lovers
within and without your thousand lovers?

COME, THE TEARS HAVE FALLEN

Come come, the tears have already fallen
you have cried enough a star would dry
the coma of our pain cannot tell
who is going to feed the rain.

Come come on you can cope with it
you are stronger than mountains and seas
stronger than waves and winds.
We have seen bones walk again.

We have seen the dying bird fly
the poor become rich
the amputated hand grow again.

We have seen in the mirage of our imagination
the desert become a river and its water
was never enough for our thirst.

So, now come come again
your tears are sweet.

TIME TO GO

And if it's time to go I'll go
but you rarely know when the time has come
to do the right thing
to leave the things that have perished
when they look as if
they were just born today.

It's a place that once was home
or a friend that was once best
or a woman you never loved
a street where cars are torn

or a book, a poem with too many lines
a line for years in my mind
If it's time to go I'll go if I ever know.

YOU NEVER ASKED FOR ANYTHING

You never asked for anything
when I offered money you just smiled
you had nothing but nothing you wanted,
and then
you left twenty years ago, the smile on your face
the laughter melted to your skin
you didn't say why, you didn't say where
there was no one to ask you were
and you weren't as well.

Now here you send me this beautiful flower
so much like me so much like your memory
she says she's my daughter,
she says you said so
on your deathbed, you never said why you left
to France, you never said you'll be back
half you half me.

Like you, she doesn't ask for a thing.
She just smiles.

NOTHING I'D RATHER DO

There is nothing I'd rather do
than lie with you in bed
this cold sunny winter day
without an erection.

Kiss your lips again and again
smell your skin and your hair's shampoo
not say a word for hours
just a smile from time to time.

Nothing I'd rather do than sit and talk with you
while only the streets remember there is a war.

SALTY LOVE

I came all this way to ask for your hand
my camels need water
my hands, olive oil.

I came all this way to sit by this tree
your hands never smile
your breasts always do.

In my Ketubah I give you
100 poems people will dream about
and one day
pay
100 camels for them.

I came all this way to ask for both hands
but more than that I came
to ask for your tears

those you cried before you knew me
before you dreamt me, I come for
those tears in the jar
to taste the saltiness of your love.

SHE WRITES A DIARY

She sun on her face cafe Friday noon
writing her diary it's not the first time
I see her
we frequent the same cafes, she ignores me
how lovely, her face changes
from line to line
now she is almost crying
looks like she's writing in jail,
then it returns to normal
and then she smiles she is running
naked on the beach
the sun on her breast and face,
and then it's pain again.
Lady, I have seen you in your secrets
so many times
and wanted to write this poem in front of you
but I didn't have a pen,
no notebook like I used to
in those early days when words were waves
floating into my hands, then you go inside
the winter's sun is too hot to write
I still see you and can decipher
all your secrets
and I want to tell you,
I want to see you everyday
every day writing your diary, know you love you,
be afraid to say something
that might turn into words
but instead of that I am thinking

that the war is near
half of the people sitting in this cafe
will die, half, I mean it,
it's either you with your diary or me,
pure chance,
either me or my wife, my son or my daughter,
I wish I didn't believe my thoughts,
and all this time
you are still there writing,
turning the pages back and forth
writing such wonderful words,
tense and intense,
and your face changing from silver to blue
from gold to black, what's a young girl like you
writing such things, obscure and wonderful.

SANE AT LAST

It's as if you are not here
you don't listen
and when you talk things don't make any sense
when did you disappear,
when gone away from the world,
years ago I did not notice,
or just an hour ago, have I changed
or have you,
or did our directions change,
I am not even asking you to come back,
there is no coming back,
no place in the past for both of us
we can now let ourselves distance
and hope to meet or try to force it,
but force is not love,
I am not even disappointed or crying
like I used to
it's like I am living in a cave full of light,
like a dream
where waking up is impossible,
I am not in despair, not in pain,
where am I, is this enlightenment or
dissociation from the world, am I.

SPEECH OF THE MAN AFTER THE BIRTH OF HIS FIRST SON

look, he said,
while eating a croissant quickly
and drinking capuccino
she is so busy with the child
she doesn't even think of herself
her whole world is the boy
so so how is it possible
that she'll pay any attention to me
attention I need so badly.
don't misunderstand me
I love her
but also need some attention.

SPEECH OF THE MAN AFTER THE BIRTH OF HIS SECOND DAUGHTER

look, he said,
after he finished his cafe au lait
I was always the one to concede
but one day I suddenly felt
I couldn't compromise anymore
I can't communicate with her anymore
and I don't hide our discussions anymore
and the tensions, I don't mind if
everybody knows
I try to survive day by day
somehow continue another day
but relationship,
there's no relationship anymore.
oh... I need some warmth
someone to give me some warmth,
he said while smiling to the girl
with the enormous earrings
sitting with her two friends
in the table near us,
how I need some warmth...

THE SPEECH OF RABBI AKIVA

how hard this separation
from this woman I love
or loved
how hard this departure
if there was no love in it
if there were only fights and anger
we could say
this separation is better than joining
but how difficult this separation
to set out for a new road
from this woman who bore my children
who gave me a home
who taught me to love
who saved me from the dark
who helped me study
how long and hard this separation.

THE BODY

As the tensions grew
and silence invaded our lives
sex improved
intercourse grew longer
fuller
and more
communicative

as we learned
each other's body
silence grew longer
conversations became
autistic
each one in his corner
quiet and shouting
roaring and still
only
the body
could express love
hope and frustration
all the possibilities
and the impossibility of being fulfilled.

BETWEEN ME

Between me and the crown
she stood
she
stood between me and the crown
and I knew I should make peace with her
to reach the crown
but I fought
and fought her
till I reached the crown.

GOOD BEING ALONE

It's so good being alone
I write poems to you
I sing the trees
it's so good being alone
on my way to London
on my way to Paris
on my way to you
I sing the trees
the snow and the wing
I sing Europe
I sing you a love son.

It's so good being alone
wonderful loneliness
of coming back to you.

A SECRET KISS

Rescue
eyes that look at me and are not

distant

from a sea without waves
I never saw

grapes I did not eat

days I did not live

still
they are memories like ships
they are branches rowing east

and behind my hands
a kiss
I never gave.

YOUR BREASTS

Your breast falling on my chest
I wonder
Is this
aging
or love

are these the flowers of our past
or the roots of our future

somebody knocks on the door
asking

if there is somebody alive in this house.

I WILL SING YOU OF RIVERS AND SEAS

I will sing you of rivers and seas
of waves that never see thunders
I will tell you of ships
and whales that eat honey at night

I will sing you my love of ladies
that left their houses in search of fishes
I will tell you of jellyfishes
that became sirens

look at me, my eyes are glass
my back is a map

map of unknown lands
map of future settlers.

Look at me I am the moon with its own light
I am the sun that doesn't blind.

LOVE IS NEVER BLIND.

When love was blind our eyes could see
the beauty in our ugliness.
Now love is wise and things are nice
all is dead around us in this house.

When love was our eyes we were
blind to the beauty of the flower
every plant in the universe was inside
our funny looking sunny glasses.

When time has come to live
how do you say good-bye
poems and songs are nothing
but another shameless lie

another excuse to keep talking
about things that don't use words.

III. THE TEA NEVER ARRIVED (2001)

MY POEMS

My poems don't open doors
they close them.

Each door opened by the human race
has brought more atrocities.

There are very long Saturdays
and wars that end in less than a week.

I am tired of peace agreements
I just want to see less people dead.

That's why I have closed the doors
to all the cemeteries
with my poems.

HIGHS AND LOWS

We don't know the place
where Moses was buried
nor where Hitler's grave is.

One saw the back of God
the other showed us the back of Satan.
We won't be able to clone them.

THE TRANSSEXUAL'S LAMENT

What I thought was the solution
only brought the real problem

what kind of woman am I
if I can't give birth to another woman?

What people now see in me is
the woman who was a man

and I who was never a man
will never be a woman.

I am God's mistake
and I cannot fix it.

But my imagination is stronger
than the power of God.

MY FRIEND

I never wanted to be your enemy
I don't know how it happened
each time I reached out my hand
you thought I was going to beat you
all I wanted was to say hello.

I still don't want to be your enemy
but each time you smile
I ask myself what are your intentions
if your smile is just trying
to make me give you something I don't have.

We don't talk anymore
our words are masks
behind untrusting faces
words that should be communication
have become weapons against the light.

GLOBAL ECONOMY

I will work for peanuts
if you fire me
or I will set fire to your house
I see now that you have made of me
a commodity
my work my life my wife my children
will be slave to you
and I will work for peanuts
like the monkey in your circus did
and my daughter if she's beautiful
she will whore for you
if she's not your houses she will clean
I will work for peanuts
if this is what you ask
you call this progress, realistic economy,
the global village,
but it's just as always the rich against the poor
you win I loose
just give me some peanuts. Again?

It's again
"It's going to get worse before it gets better"
while politicians play again the game of power
for which they were elected or not,
they are in power
and now they have to show everybody
they are strong.

It's again cries of children and mothers
fear of living and dying
the world was never better or worse
The end of the world is coming
says the Muezzin says the Rabbi
says the mystic
but,
the end was here all the time

the world has not even begun.

PROMISES

Who are you in the morning
and who are you at night
do your dreams wake you up
when you see those sights
who's your mother who's your father
who's the son you never had
when will you lead your life like an ant
and where is the freedom you promised us
where is the way you said was clear
and where the peace you knew was near

I heard your promises and I didn't trust you
I read your lips but your tongue was short
the words of your lecture were kind
but you stopped in the middle of the sentence

THE PRICE OF A DIAMOND

*"What's the sound of one hand
clapping?" - Van Morrison*

They cut the hands of women, men
and eight year old children
to get diamonds to you.

People enslaved worse than trees
and you demonstrate for the whales
the forests and the penguins
with a diamond on your finger.

Next time you receive a present
think of little hands that will never caress
their children
think of fingers chopped to make yours beautiful
think of amputated legs and hands

Think of the future of amputated Africa.

THE LAND OF FREEDOM

Nobody is going to give you freedom
you'll have to take it
and take the risks, even
in a democratic country
the only freedom you'll get is
to be like they expect you to be
to be like the others you see.

But to be free you'll have to be different
you'll have to pull the fences
and to be ridiculed, laughed at,
those who love you
telling you that you are crazy, that they
can't understand what you're after,
that there is nothing else
that you are wrong,
that you are destroying yourself,
when you hear all these together
you'll know you have conquered some land
in the land of freedom.

COSMIC DNA

When she was already crazy
she used to sit by her old father and caress him
for hours, he would think about smoking
and cancer
behind her eyes her statuesque beauty
sometimes would flash
as a reminder of all the things that must pass.

By night we could hear her screaming like a wolf
then she would disappear to the asylum
for days or weeks
and the week she died from over medication
flashes of her beauty could still be seen
below the open sky.

By now the worms have had it all
eaten the beauty and the madness
the drugs and the flesh,
memory still flowing out somewhere
between Andromeda and the Milky Way
neutrinos of beauty and cosmic DNA
forever her beauty in my memory
as long as I live.

KLOOM

So you ask me for the meaning
of the Hebrew word “kloom”.
Kloom is usually used as nothing
but its real meaning is something
something that is close to nothing
a small, minimal thing, something nothing
like, say, a grain of sand
compared with the shore,
a man compared with humanity,
or a planet compared with a galaxy,
or a galaxy compared with the universe,
relativity in one word: kloom.

BIRDS ON TEMPLE MOUNT

When night gives birth to day
I can smell bad sex
in the Seizieme quarter in Paris
see the young rich whore in her red Mercedes,
Rue Tilsitt,
ashes falling in Las Ramblas,
last tapas going to the dirty floor.
I can smell the smoke in a yellow cab
in New York
but most of all I see birds circling
the temple mount
at the precise hour when God thinks again, tired,
of destroying the world for it sins, and sees
the birds trying to transmit an ancient message
in an ancient tongue
long forgotten, they just sing it
as Jews praying for years in synagogues
all over the world
in a language no one understands,
and when understood it's the wrong way,
the shadow that wins over the light.

We live in caves and we believe we see
the light of day.

AFTER THE FLOOD WE COULD EXPLAIN

The old men said that the trees were pale
but the young couldn't remember
the old men said that the light was dim
but the young couldn't care less.

The old men warned but the young men
said they were crazy that their time
had passed, that it was all inventions
and light never travelled faster.

And then there was an earthquake
and still the young could explain everything
but the old men were dead or deaf.

They couldn't speak or warn anymore
when the flood started raining over their heads
only the young could still swim
for a few more hours.

THE BUDDHA FROM AFGHANISTAN

The great scandal, a god of 20 meters
has been destroyed
the UN and all the civilized world are surprised
they would do anything to save the stones
from becoming sand again
Buddha, would he mind,
but like Abraham, the son of Terah, the Taliban
has shown the world its misery,
the UN will be holy when it shouts
the same way for every person killed
or are the statues more still more important
than people.

GOOD-BYE

My brother died
and I said
good-bye
to my brother.

My father died
and I said
good-bye
to my father.

My best friend died and I said
good-bye to my friend

and all this time all I wanted
was to say good-bye to myself,

to say good-bye to myself
and not to anybody else.

SUNNY LIGHT OF SPRING

So this is why people fight over this land
the soft sun of the spring
the light over the cypress trees
the green on the desert,
so this is why god's eyes watch
this place from the beginning of the year
until it ends, watches the trees
and misses the people
dying to get the sun, to get to the sea
to see it from the hills and the mountains
they move and move as they always did
since a king poet sang its movements
and we dance along, dance along a trip-dance
a death-dance, a kiss-dance.

POSTCARDS

My poems are postcards to dead people
sailing in seas of death,
on their way to freedom misery was their fate
and the pictures of them on the other side
are the faces I have never seen.

People of Sepharad, unknown faces of my life
mysteries of my soul, I send you postcards
every week
and your weakness is my strength

Genetic memories drunk with mother's milk
geographical places in the map of the heart
postcards from Lucena, Seville and Granada
places first seen in words then in sights
postcards of the soul, postcards of the past
that never was, the future that refuses to be.

LES ENTRAILLES DU POETE

When they did the autopsy they
found pages and more pages
full of poems written in seventy languages
more and more pages and no blood
no gallbladder and no heart only words

each line a different tongue, and they brought
the biggest linguists until they deciphered
every language
but one, one who sounded so ethereal
even the professors started to cry

and people read the sounds of these poems
and they could not understand a word
not one word resembled any known word
in any language
but when they heard the sounds
they cried and cried
and when their tears ended they were happy
like never before, like never known.
Right or wrong
If you think you've got the answer
I am here to prove you wrong
if you think you are wrong
I am here to prove you right.

TEARS WAITING TO FALL

Some tears they have to fall
sooner or later, they wait for years
in the kidneys, stick to the liver, the heart
the eyes, the eyebrows, until they fall, and
whatever was dry becomes wet, and
on the wet land more rain will fall,
and wherever there is rain flood will come
until these tears we hide for generations fall
upon our chest, fall upon our graves.

Right or wrong

If you think you've got the answer
I'm here to prove you wrong
If you think you are wrong
I am here to prove you right.

ANOTHER PLACE

Take me somewhere else lead me
to a place I've never seen
the waves are closing in on me
too many words, too many words
I don't understand, too many sentences
that don't make any sense to me
just make me long for another place.

A place of sand and sea, of little waves
that sing like birds, like coconut trees
a place of dying cars, a place of women

A place where no one has been
or too many have
a used place where war has not arrived only
been heard by old men with decaying teeth.

THE TEA NEVER ARRIVED

Planes flew above us
trains left the station
but the tea never arrived.

We drank the water
we drank the juice
but the tea never arrived.

We waited until we forgot
what we were waiting for
but the tea never arrived.

We heard bombs outside some said
it was a war, other said just a robbery
but the tea never arrived.

Some of us grew old, very old
our teeth dropped out, our beard was white
but the tea never arrived.

But no one ever asked about the tea
no one really remembered what
we were waiting for, and it didn't help
the tea never arrived.

LES POETES MAUDITS

She was an old poet and I was a young one,
and she said to me, look
the best ones die young
they write such great poems that the angels
come to take them
they leave the others here to suffer
more and more
from their poems and their words.

Come to think about it, les poetes maudits
are not those who die young
but those who write poems when they are grown
when they should be feeding families
and paying mortgages
when they should be going out to work
at 8 o'clock
and they don't do it, believing they are stronger
than gravitation
believing that their words, if they could be heard,
that their words can make this place
a better planet.

WE WEE

We wake up we fall we go to sleep we
dream, nightmares, we wake up we
take our fears to the streets, we
build a world from our fears we have
no place in it, we go to sleep we live
in worlds where our hopes have gone
to sleep, we drink we eat we make love we
look for words to describe all this useless
madness, in the wee wee hours I saw the bird
of Solomon he had in his tongue all the
secrets of the world but he could not
sing he was too sad his eyes said
he was too sad for this beautiful day sun
shinning our skin burning we go to work
we don't believe in miracles we create them
we are gods, we are trash to be recycled
when we are not gods anymore when we
are we, when we are not we anymore.

A PEACEFUL SHABBATT, REST IN PEACE

First there was the neighbor
who didn't stop looking at my wife's breasts
then it was my mother
who decided I should do a Ph.D. in math
because she saw this poet
who was also a mathematician
she wants a son with a Ph.D.
she would trade me for the diploma
then my wife's nephew wanted me
to tape a cd for him while his wife started
speaking about religious people
and how she couldn't stand the fact that women
have no place in synagogues
so I just asked her if she would go
to the synagogue if there were more room
she said no then my sister told everybody
how she convinced one ultra orthodox woman
to stop having children after she had ten
and the doctors asked her to stop,
even the rabbi, and yes I forgot
my son also said that he hated me
"I hate this person!" his words
no wonder I went to sleep at ten o'clock
and woke up with angina at 2 A.M.
and what did I do? The shabbatt dishes
were there waiting for me.
Sunday came I went to the post office
and there was a check waiting for me,
I will make it to the next shabbatt,
there will be more food.

THE SHORE OF THE OTHER

By the border of the sea
between water and sand
my life is born
between salt and water
my eyes turn blue
between shore and sand
my skin glitters
I am the one coming
from the other side of the sea
the other shore
the one which people say it doesn't exist
at the end of the sea
I am the sun that awakens
the sun that sets
I am
the other.

ARMS

Take me to lands of no cold
where the summer never ends
where clouds never show
where people never cry

Take me to the clouds of no tears
to people who never saw fear
to people who never had to decide
where to live or when to leave

Open your arms to me but do not kill me
I am tired of dying life after life
and coming back to die again

Open your heart to me and I will not eat it
I will caress its beats and bits
then through fire we will walk and kill the heat.

HUMAN SACRIFICE

is not dead.

I must ask how many people
are killed for CNN, the new god
the new Baal the new Ashtoret,
bring us your children to die
and we'll cover you, you will be right,
bring us your children
to the altar, we will have more ratings,
die for the sake of Pharaoh
for the afterlife of share-owners,
die and be right, kill and be cursed,
die and be blessed.

Beware of modern gods asking for your life,
hands and legs,
beware, they are everywhere.

I definitely want an answer to this question...

SIX MILLION

When we say 6 million
what do we mean?
We mean that six millions Jews
according to the Nazi's definition
were killed,
anyone who had a Jewish great grandfather
could either be killed for being a Jew
or be a Nazi if nobody knew.

Do we accept the definition of the Nazis
for people that didn't want to be Jew
and were they alive would be annoyed
if they were called Jews?
So, now, even dead, their race and entity
was defined by their killers.

What does all this mean?

It means that science invented the idea
that Races exist.
This was real Science in the nineteenth century.
What next? Genetic extermination?
Genetic races? Hears about it already

the Jews have a specific Gene.

Which means?

People from a religion that accepts everyone
and has mixed with every nation on earth
was killed for being a scientific race.

Which also means?

That the Germans exterminated not only Jews
but also their own people and race accusing
them of being Jews.
It means that scientific truth can lead to hell.

STRIP POETRY

Pour it down words like tears words like waves
pour it down until it bleeds people love the blood
not the words not the world behind them
pour it down till there is no more coagulated
blood in your veins, pour it down until
there are no more sounds, no more throat,
pour it down like an orange juice,
like lemons from caves, like olives without oil,
pour it down until you have no more words,
pour it down, pour it until you have
nothing left, they want you naked,
naked not only from your clothes
naked from your skin, naked from your bones,
naked from your hormones,
they want you transparent, bleeding
and invisible, dead and nonexistent,
they want you all and nothing
you are never good enough for the fearful
frustrated you have never gone far enough
while they have never left their room
and you have traveled the moon, but no
it's not enough
castrate yourself, but it's not enough
cut your finger, your hand until you can't write
but you've not gone far enough
amputate your legs until you can't walk
but it's not far enough
this is the new circus of poetry we want you
famous and unknown, we want you killed

by a fascist, dying of cancer, dying in car
accidents, we will interview you
again and again
but we won't read your poems
until you are dead, we want to interview you
about your divorces, your terminal illness,
your mother and how she used to beat you
about your father who raped you,
poets do it, it's the striptease of poetry,
poetry of the striptease,
you want publicity don't you, you have to do it
and people will read you, get drunk, get beaten,
get busted, beat someone, get some news,
be a whore, be a pimp, fuck your own mother,
we love you but we won't read your poems,
be a killer, we will interview you, we will praise
you, be unknown and be famous,
you are selling out man, you are selling out
way before you can sell a book,
you are selling out and selling in, sailing out and
sailing away from
humanity.

IV. SELF PORTRAIT OF THE
POET IN A
FAMILY MIRROR (1990)

Everyday he asks himself
what's the purpose of his poems
and for whom does he write
everyday he decides to stop writing
to publish a book immediately
to be in a literary clan and make contacts
so he can publish
and in spite of all he always writes
in incredible quantities
everyday he asks himself
about the purpose of the world
his purpose in the world
and everyday he changes his mind
a strange man, very strange in my eyes,
everyday he decides to leave the country
to divorce, to have another child,
to love another woman,
to relax, to change his work, to write a novel,
to write a poem, to speak with editors,
to travel abroad
to write to Marlene to talk to Beni,
to study medicine,
to leave medicine, to give a lecture
on vaccinations,
to attack vivisection, or against
the government, to make a revolution
in his life and his country, to do justice,
to be a criminal
to steal, to return what he stole
and what he didn't steal
to put the tefilinn starting tomorrow,
to keep the shabbatt,
to send his wife to the Mikveh,

to make love during menstruation,
to leave everything
sit down and write no matter what,
to publish in Hadarim
in Moznayim, to publish a literary review
how many decisions in one day,
a man of decisions
he can think
about seven things at the same time
and indeed his head works all the time
the fuses burn every seven days
he thought about moving, buying a car
having a license, closing his bank account
buying the Passion According To Matthew
selling the sound system
repent, become an atheist,
travel abroad, write a letter to the chief rabbi
and pray to God that the rabbinic court will fall
he cursed the rabbis but didn't hate them
they are not more idiots than the others
afraid to talk to literary editors
afraid of examinations, of being criticized
afraid of publishing wants to be famous
as the year passed he became a frustrated poet
but not frustrated enough to get a degree
he rather hates literature, especially prose
but poetry too,
poets and writers get on his nerves
leftists too,
he doesn't get along at all with Ashkenazis
they somehow
always seem to be strangers to him
was scared of the Russian immigrations,

but was happy they came
he never spoke with an Arab
more than ten minutes
he never had an Arab friend, once in France
almost became friends with an Arab
but of course no, as a matter of fact
he doesn't have many friends either
even with himself the situation is not that easy
he was dismissed from the army
because of his auditory problems, a week ago
he hears but only when he wants to
he hears Bach all the time
even when the system is off
he likes Torah classes, and Talmud too
but hates authority, any authority but God
hates politicians, rabbis, doctors, judges, editors
hates them but not really
hates them theoretically
when he meets them he pities them
for thinking they are important
because of their position
they look ridiculous to him, there are days
when all people seem ridiculous to him
a very strange guy this guy,
very strange in my eyes and yes,
why doesn't he learn from experience
they said you'll be thirty and you'll see
he didn't see anything and now
he doesn't hear, what's there to see
that you can be an idiot he always knew
honestly he would leave everything
and emigrate
leave his wife his children for two years

but return after two months, you can never know
he may do it, he is a psycho
but not enough to get a degree
he may divorce but he has no reason
beside the fact that he once decided
he will divorce
married as an experiment for six months
now he is already married six years
his wife is nice understands him
and puts pressure on him
loves his children but all this
just drives him crazy
he is a Sagittarius
more exactly a Libra ascendant
Sagittarius and the moon in the first house
looks for freedom, scared of limitations
once he thought he'd make a living
from literature
at the age of thirty
wrote seven novels (where are they now?)
once he wrote a novel in three weeks
but didn't find a publisher
wrote a thousand poems or more
but published thirty or less
and a poetry book that sold seven copies
some say he is talented
poets expecting him to say they are talented
talent for sale
he thinks he is a genius
of Bachian proportions
but he is not sure anymore, he thought once,
look it is years of frustration
without publishing almost

years of searching
he went to study natural medicine in France
he always has malaises
colds, asthma
less than once but not brilliant
the truth is I wouldn't befriend him so easily
he is strange, moody
sometimes unbearable, yawns
near people who bore him
he doesn't notice, his wife tells him
he likes to think about himself but also avoids it
he of course is not egoistic nor egocentric
no no, he is not like the other poets and artists,
he is different
he avoids them, most of them
they are only into themselves
when he is with people he seldom talks
he talks only of big subjects
philosophy, vaccines, death
and other depressing subjects
he interests his listeners
but gets bored quickly from his own subject
and changes to the next one
what's going to happen to him, seriously,
he asks himself, what can his life interest you
and really what do you care
and really it doesn't seem to, for the moment
who is this man I know and don't know
who is me but I am not him
who is this man
I criticize so much
this question is called positive schizophrenia.

He was a vegan for six months,
didn't really work out,
a vegetarian six years,
now he sometimes eats meat
the doctors proposed he have an operation
for his ears
he thinks doctors are priests,
medicine has become a dogma
they create feelings of guilt,
they cause the illnesses,
they create dependence
they left the angel of death unemployed,
their churches are full of expensive
and frightening machines
he talks a lot about medicine
once he talked a lot about Judaism
with him it is neurotic, the neuroses stay
the subject changes
he is egocentric but less than the average poet
which doesn't say anything
because the egocentricity of poets
is of leviathan proportions
he likes coffee, whole rice, and organic carrots
yes, he eats organic foods
yuppie without money
listens allot to Bach
and Schubert Beethoven Satie and others
for example now while writing he is listening
to Bach
not so long ago he was caught
by classical music
his neighbor Birman also listens
to classical music

they exchange cd's between them
but they have nothing to talk about, yes really
this long poem is starting to resemble
Ashberry's "self portrait in a convex mirror"
that was not the intention,
or maybe there is no resemblance at all
I read it a thousand years ago
he is very cultivated, can talk about any literature
and say interesting things,
he reads allot of poetry
or at least did, read thousands of books
in the four languages he knows
English French Spanish Hebrew
honestly he would stop
in the middle of this poem
take a plane and fly abroad
always dreaming of flights and journeys
dreams and accomplishes, in the last two years
he flew five times, to London and Paris.
He put his daughter to sleep to be able to write
he guards the children, he's had enough of it
would like to find a job
that keeps him away from home
for 20 hours a day
but he is lazy, he needs space
many sleeping hours
the son now asks "what are you writing?"
"I am writing a poem"
"what is a poem?"
and the irritating kid
with chewing-gum in his ears
he proposes to them that they play in their room
and let him write

"where?" really, where
how can you write a poem
in the middle of a family
really how, what does it matter
househusband half a week
I want out
now they climb the desk
both of them, that's enough
the kid got hurt, he cries
and this is no way to write,
he tries to raise his children healthy
granola kids, but the big one already got it
he wants chocolate, chewing-gums,
and everything with sugar
once a day he thinks of moving to another town
of leaving everything, in nature
this is also stupid bourgeoisie
he has a theory
about the strength of imagination
that can be resumed in one sentence
imagination is an industry
that produces reality all the time
he is convinced, like any other theory holder,
that reality proves it
the day after tomorrow he will give a lecture
on vaccinations
he didn't vaccinate his daughter,
but he did vaccinate his son
he didn't know at the time about the corruption,
and the lies behind vaccinations
he can't accuse himself all the time,
he will extinguish himself
but that's what he does

he has a strong Pluto he changes all the time
every time he questions everything
and starts again
this poem is probably a new start
he has changed his ars poetica
a thousand times
now he is thinking about printing this poem
in a hundred copies by himself,
he's had enough of sending to publishers
to literary prizes and foundations without guts
but tomorrow or the day after
he won't be able to read this
it will bore him, like most of what he wrote
he runs all the time, runs with no end
his head explodes from races, always forward
his wife is Leo with ascendant Leo
quite dominant in his eyes, but all women are
was a virgin when he got married,
impotent before that
impotent in his head
was in psychological treatment,
and it solved the problems
he never had intercourse
with any woman but his wife
it is a bit out of date, or maybe
a new avant-garde
for a long time he put the tefilinn every morning
then he stopped, this week he bought new ones
when he treats a patient he puts them and prays
so he won't forget there is no doctor but God
God is the doctor and the others
are his emissaries,
monotheist, but likes stereo

today is the fifth year of his father's death
he had a very nonexistent relationship with him
toward his death they started talking a bit
maybe now that he has a son
things could be different, they could talk
his father was a vegetarian at eighteen
and a communist
and the first one not to fast
on Yom Kippur in his town
he used to listen to the Russian radio,
but he was never a communist
a socialist maybe for six months,
he is for a free market
he was once in a demonstration of Peace Now.
Now he can't stand them
but it is maybe a common feeling
for Peace Now people they
can't stand anyone, nor themselves
but this is not engaged poetry,
so let's change the subject
a movement of Ashkenazim,
he gets along better with Sephardim
also with French Jews and gentiles
once a neighbor, a Goy from Australia,
who came to study Torah and Hassidism,
said to him-
"the Ashkenazim have a problem,
they are either religious or secular
the Sephardim don't have this problem,
but they will,
they become Ashkenazim in the middle east
he knows very well that the moment
he starts talking

about Morocco
about the cookies of aunt Sultana
or about couscous
there is a good chance that the poem
will be published
the Ashkenazim want action
they want tamed Sephardim full of longings
to the couscous, to the transit camp
but not Sephardim who will write
philosophical poems
no no no, we won't agree to this,
it is our territory,
what the hell
do they think, they should sit in the corner
we will choose a representative Moroccan poet
or writer that will be mediocre enough
not to put us in danger
or maybe he develops such a point of view
to feel Jew, persecuted, diasporical,
someone has to persecute him
everyone can make it here,
everyone can publish
if he has the right connections
the right group, like anywhere else
a Sephardi has chances to publish
if he is mediocre or worse
even if you are Ashkenazi it is not easy.
(you've had enough of this, haven't you?)
There are people who keep a low level
of literature
it is their main job
he really questions himself, really asks himself,
what's the use of all these words,

for what, for whom
not only you ask yourself
he really doesn't know why he writes
he doesn't think it is important or significant
he wants to be famous but is afraid of fame
he doesn't want to expose himself but he does
come on, really, what's going to happen to him,
he doesn't compromise at all
walks in the room, looks at the mirror
doesn't see himself, bald, glasses,
thinning hair, beard,
someone who missed the year,
comes from May '68
or from the October revolution,
or from the next revolution
he often changes his mind
but he has a strong base of ideas
you can't say he is unstable
he aims for the truth with all his heart
accepts the Torah but hates rabbis
the Torah is for him the only divine law
the children have brought down
all the books now
the house is a mess,
his wife will make a scene
when she comes back
he hates her scenes and faces
it reminds him of his mother
he cannot stand criticism but he is very critical
he swallows a lot of vitamin C
magnesium and plants
he passed his exams on naturopathy,
he succeeded,

couldn't believe it
he is afraid and he hates examinations,
in a pathological way
he doesn't have a driving license,
he sleeps allot, ten hours a day
like La Fontaine, always mentions him,
the sleeping genius
he is always looking for pens,
a poet out of his time
who doesn't find himself, who was knowledge
who knew but forgot, who was in Har Sinai
and forgot
that forgot and forgot until he forgot
that he forgot
wandered like the Jewish people
almost everywhere
and now can't find his place
even in his own country
and his feet are worn but his shoes are new,
his clothes clean
like he bought them yesterday, he wandered
in all the countries and his tunic isn't worn out,
and now he doesn't know Hebrew
but it is his upper tongue
with his lower tongue
he speaks three more languages
he doesn't know Hebrew
but knows it better than any other language
he studied English and Latin-American literature,
physics and mathematics, computers
natural medicine, and other stuff
he can't remember,
works as an accountant clerk,

was a cashier, bell boy, translator, librarian
in the national library,
was the manager of the Agnon house,
two months and they fired him,
made a mess
always making a mess everywhere,
now he has settled a bit
but only to make a bigger mess
now he has to feed a family
to go out of the house and chase the beast
he was a journalist for six months
wrote about pop music, worked two weeks
in the plaza hotel
he couldn't wake up in the morning,
six months in the Hilton
now an accountant
for the binational science foundation
and also treats one patient per week
he doesn't have the time to write prose,
that's why
he writes poetry
it asks for high concentration in a short time
prose asks for medium concentration
for a long time
he decided that he'd only write prose if
he is paid for it
at least a small advance,
he likes to think of himself
as a poet who will be discovered after his death,
but that won't happen either
he will be famous long before that,
he works on it with his imagination
and now it is just a matter of time,

a bit of luck, the right place, good relations
and money
but fame is not important
it is important to live well
yes fame is important to him, very important
he has to check all the time if others love him
when they do, he doesn't believe it,
he doesn't believe he will ever be loved
or that it is possible to love him
his head turns in all directions
and he doesn't have time for public relations,
and especially he doesn't have the strength,
he went a few times to the literary cafes,
and spoke to all the editors
in every literary review he was published once
they gave him a chance but he was
not consistent in his attempt to publish,
and the editors weren't consistent
in their will to publish him, all this has to change
all the foundations rejected him,
never won a prize
except for the Amos Foundation
that once gave him a hundred dollars
and with it he published *The Suicide Of God*
a book not understood,
so what, he is happy about that
and that it won't be understood so quickly,

it will take time
he has time, everyday he has more time
and more patience
but the frustration accumulates

if it didn't he wouldn't have written this poem
if he was famous he wouldn't have written
this poem
everything has a sense and a direction
and every thing has its time
now he waits, it will come, tomorrow it will come
it will come
at its time.

Glossary:

Sephardim (or Sepharadim): Jews from the Arab world.

Ashkenazim or Ashkenazim: Jews from eastern Europe mostly from Poland or Russia.

Mikveh: traditional bath of natural waters (from rain, sea or snow) taken by women 7 days after the end of menstruation. No intercourse is allowed before this bath.

Hadarim: the most prestigious poetry magazine in Israel (well, yes, part of this poem was first published there in Hebrew).

Moznaim: literary magazine.

Goy: non Jew.

Yom Kippur: day of fast, day of forgiveness.