

# My Arabic is Mute & Not to be afraid to say the word nostalgia



Almog Behar - Ills.: Joseph  
Sassoon Semah

*My Arabic is Mute*

Strangled in the throat  
Cursing itself  
Without uttering a word  
Sleeping in the suffocating air  
Of the shelters of my soul  
Hiding  
From family members  
Behind the shutters of the Hebrew.  
And my Hebrew erupts  
Running around between rooms  
And the neighbors' porches  
Sounding her voice in public  
Prophesizing the coming of God  
And bulldozers  
and then she settles in the living room  
Thinking herself  
Openly on the edge of her skin  
Hidden between the pages of her flesh  
one moment naked and the next dressed  
She almost makes herself disappear  
In the armchair  
Asking for her heart's forgiveness.  
My Arabic is scared

quietly impersonates Hebrew  
Whispering to friends  
With every knock on her gates:  
"Ahalan, ahalan, welcome".  
And in front of every passing policeman  
And she pulls out her ID card  
for every cop on the street  
pointing out the protective clause:  
"Ana min al-yahud, ana min al-yahud,  
I'm a Jew, I'm a Jew".  
And my Hebrew is deaf

Sometimes so very deaf.

*Not to be afraid to say the word nostalgia*

Not to be afraid to say  
The word nostalgia  
Not to be afraid  
To feel longing  
Not to be afraid to say  
I have a past  
Placed in a box  
Of locked-up memory  
Not to be afraid  
To buy myself some keys  
To press my eyes to keyholes  
Until it all opens  
Until I can steal a glance  
Into me  
Not to be afraid to say  
I'm a forgetful man  
But I have a memory  
That wouldn't forget me.

*Translated by Dimi Reider*