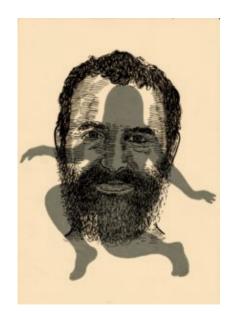
My Arabic is Mute & Not to be afraid to say the word nostalgia



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

quitely 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