



You Who Cross My Path

Erez Bitton

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This first US publication of Erez Bitton, one of Israel's most celebrated poets, recalls the fate of Moroccan Jewish culture with poems both evocative and pure. Considered the founding father of Mizrahi Israeli, a major tradition in the history of Hebrew poetry, Bitton's bilingual collection dramatically expands the scope of biographical experience and memory, ultimately resurrecting a vanishing world and culture.

Preliminary Background Words

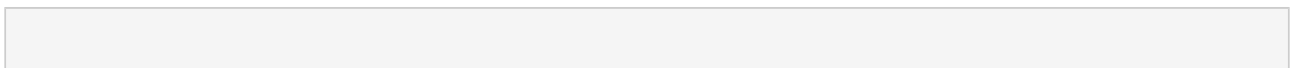
*My mother my mother
from a village of shrubs green of a different green.
From a bird's nest producing milk sweeter than sweet.
From a nightingale's cradle of a thousand Arabian nights.*

*My mother my mother
who staved off evil
with her middle fingers
with beating her chest
on behalf of all mothers.*

*My father my father
who delved into worlds
who sanctified the Sabbath with pure Araq
who was most practiced
in synagogue traditions.*

*And I—
having distanced myself
deep into my heart
would recite
when all were asleep
short Bach masses
deep into my heart
in Jewish-
Moroccan.*

Erez Bitton was born in 1942 to Moroccan parents in Oran, Algeria, and emigrated to Israel in 1948. Blinded by a stray hand grenade in Lod, he spent his childhood in Jerusalem's School for the Blind. He is considered the founding father of Mizrahi poetry in Israel—the first poet to take on the conflict between North African immigrants and the Ashkenazi society, and the first to use Judeo-Arabic dialect in his poetry. His most recent award is the Bialik Lifetime Achievement Award (2014).



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