



You Who Cross My Path (English and Hebrew Edition)

Erez Bitton

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This first U.S. 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 poetry, 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 JewishMoroccan.

The 2015 recipient of the Israel Prize, 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 Israeli 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.

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