



Reviews of Literature Titles for Adults

Someck, Ronny. *The Milk Underground*. Trans. by Hana Inbar and Robert Manaster. Buffalo, NY: White Pine Press, 2015. 90 pp. \$16.00. (9781935210726).

Ronny Someck, born in Baghdad in 1951, immigrated to Israel with his family as a young child. He has published 11 volumes of poetry in Hebrew. His poems have been translated into many languages and he has won numerous awards, both in Israel and internationally. The poems in this slim volume, appearing in both Hebrew and English on facing pages, were translated by Hana Inbar and Robert Manaster who also wrote the introduction.

In their introduction, the translators characterize Someck as a bridge builder. He is of the East as well as of the West, Sephardi in heritage and culture as well as Ashkenazi in his literary approach. He is both Jewish and Israeli as well as universalist. This “pajama-Iraqi” as he calls himself, conveys a message of love, as in his poem entitled *A Sprinkler*.

*Love bursts out in thin streams/ From the pores of the sprinkler /
We too are like the earth's cheek / Thirsty for the kiss of water.*

The poems in this collection are short, disarmingly simple at times, and packed with emotional content that can startle the reader with their incisive impact. The poem *Abraham on the Way to the Sacrifice* begins:

The explosives belt was ticking / On his terrified body

And ends:

Luckily, a minute before the blast / God reminded him there is / A God.

Although it is quite difficult to render poetry accurately across linguistic and cultural barriers, this translation is both precise and reflective of tone and intent. The book was awarded the Cliff Becker Book Prize in Translation, bestowed annually on one volume of literary translation in English.

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