

Songs by Adam Fehti

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Introduction

Fathi Guesmi, better known by his pen name Adam Fethi was born on October 3rd, 1957. He is one of the most celebrated leftist writers in Tunisia and his politically engaged poetry is highly popular among students. Writing under the siege of political oppression in the 1970s and 1990s, several of his poems were banned. He wrote songs to several committed groups such as *Al-Bahth al-Musiqi* ("Music Research") and *Awled al-Manajim* ("Children of the Mines"). His poems are also sung by such famous artists as Tunisian Lotfi BouChnak and Lebanese Marcel Khalifa. He is the author of *Ughniat al-Naqabi al-Fasih* (Song of the Eloquent Unionist, 1986), *Anachid li Zahrat al-Ghubar* (Songs to the Dust Rose, 1992) and *Nafikhu al-Zujaj al-A'maa* (The Blind Glassblower, 2011), which won the prestigious Abou Kacem Chebbi Prize.

Fethi claims that "the song is as powerful and extraordinary"¹ as any other literary text. His repertoire of songs includes texts written in Tunisian dialect as well as standard Arabic. Both "Tell Me About Your Dreams" and "Living for My Songs" are written in Tunisian dialect and address two subjects often reiterated in Fethi's songs. Indeed, The poet's dream of a free and democratic country infiltrates all his poetic texts. The dream turns out to be a mode of resistance. The second song represents a meta-poetic moment, if we can venture to use this phrase imitating meta-fiction. The song is self-reflexive; it mirrors the poet's lifelong devotion to songs as well as his anxieties over a misunderstanding and belittling of this artistic genre. The two other songs, "Coming Back to you" and "I'll Take My Face and Leave" are written in standard Arabic and differ in register. The first is a love song; the second is highly political.

¹ Interview by France Culture. 9 July 2012. <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/la-poesie-nest-pas-une-solution/adam-fathi-tunisie>

Writing songs translates Fethi's belief in bringing poetry to everyday life. A poem should be consumed by everybody, and not restricted to a closed circle of intellectuals. He finds in the song an apt medium to reach a large audience with different musical tastes. "I'll Take My Face and Leave", for instance, is set to a simple melody with only the lute as a musical instrument². The aim is to give the greatest space possible to the word. While this type of music attracts mainly students, another audience has a predilection for the large number of Fethi's poems composed and sung by Lotfi Bouchnak. "Living for my Songs" offers an interesting case of transnational art, as Bouchnak uses Chopin's "Etude Op. 10 No. 3" to sing in a fluid way a poem written in Arabic³.

If Tunisian dialect is my mother tongue, standard Arabic is my first language and therefore there is no difference translating from both. Actually, Fethi's songs written in Tunisian language are as beautiful and powerful as those written in the standard one. The most challenging venture was to recreate the musicality of these texts. I had to choose one option: either a close translation wherein I ignore the rhyme patterns of the songs or a creative one wherein I keep the spirit of the songs and their music. I opted for a rather creative translation while trying to recreate the songs by imitating the rhyming patterns of the original texts. To achieve that, I had to work on images not words. A literal translation yields insipid texts, a mere cluster of words. Here is an illustrative example from the third and fourth lines of "Tell Me About Your Dreams": the literal translation gives: "There are dreams that burrow/ in a wound that doesn't heal." I opted for a domestication strategy by opting for an English idiom, "turn the knife in the wound", which captures the meaning of suffering expressed in the two lines.

² Link to the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkG8iYRrUbs>

³ Link to the song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ps2wsGYh_qk

Tell Me About Your Dreams

There are dreams that live
and then over time peel.
There are dreams that turn
the knife in wounds difficult to heal.
There are those lingering behind
in our dark recess
and those who always outstrip
us in their progress.

*

There are dreams that diverge
and dreams that converge,
those that bring joy
to the bleakest dirge,
those that spin a story
out of a dream wool,
those that steal us inside out
and spoil our story to the full.

*

There are faithful dreams
that remember dear old friends,
there's a treacherous kind
whose betrayal never ends.
There are those that hide us inside
we catch up with them when we're left behind
and those that from us hide
we keep seeking them and never find

*

There are dreams that grow large
the way ambitions grow.
There are those that grow old,
wither, and lose glow.

Ones that become tired when mature,
others that tire you when obscure,
ones that put years on you when unsure,
others that fail you when they lose allure.

*

There are dreams that torture
the pursuers,
and dreams that only torture
the doers.
There are dreams that elevate,
make a tree out of a seed,
and those that destroy, cultivate
hatred and never concede.

*

There are dreams that fade,
dreams that cannot be staid,
ones if ever weighed
become difficult to carry.
There are those that lurk,
those we erase,
those ready to burke
those that leave no trace
those that bring back the best days
confront us with the tough query:
what have we done with our dreams?

*

I, for a long time beam
nestled in a dreamy gleam,
can no longer distinguish
between memory and dream.

Living for my Song

Living for my song,
living for people,
living like my song
anything in my heart spills on my tongue,
and anything I own goes to people ...
Words hurt, songs soothe
I'm, since my early youth,
living for my song
living for people,
living like my song
anything in my heart spills on my tongue,
and anything I own goes to people ...
Don't ask why I sing.
Maybe the song will take me away
to a new day
whose sun will open the door
and laughter will roar;
our life becomes a holiday ...
The journey reminds me of the miles ahead,
of those who aged early and those who were dead,
of gridded windows in people's eyes,
of fire I crossed with a heart that fries.
My soul asks me: have you achieved anything?
Ah! That cruel question of the soul ...
It's true I sang to the wind,
but it's enough for my song
to sweep my people's tears.
It's enough for my song to take
the road without a break ...
It's enough for your streets afar,
full of tears and many a scar,
to see me living, holding a song,
a candle telling a story, a story burning,
dreaming of a new morning.
And I'm living for my song
living for people,
living like my song

anything in my heart spills on my tongue,
and anything I own goes to people ...
Don't ask why I sing.
Maybe the song will take me away
to a new day
whose sun will open the door
and laughter will roar;
our life becomes a holiday ...

(Music: Chopin, "Etude Op. 10 No. 3"
Singing: Lotfi Bouchnak)

Coming Back to You

With the morning's desire for your lips,
With the rose's fragrance on your face,
I come back to you, for how to eclipse
all the roads that show but your trace.

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Before me, the city sleeps and gets empty.
I go out in a night silent and jetty.
I watch nocturnal cats alert and stretchy
looking for warmth in your space.
I call them; they yield only to turn snubby.
Like me, they escape you while seeking your place.

*

Like songs, years tick away
before eyes never looking my way.
years tick away, I in my place stay
like some dust on your shoulders plays.
I wake up in my time, stranger and stray
and snatch my soul from you in your embrace.

(Composition: Lotfi Bouchnak.
Singing: Alia Bel Eid)

I'll Take my Face and Leave

I'll take my face and leave when death calls,
storming like the wind,
flaming like a field burned with a wound.
I'll take my face and leave.
I'll take my face and leave,
shrouded in songs and memories.
So save my skin and cane
for the child who shall grow up and reign.

*

I'll take my face and leave.
I'll take my face and leave.
But back I shall come
with anger beating on a drum,
with a huge jump taking me home.

*

I'll bring my face back riding a song
telling birds never fear a wound
telling palm trees and oranges newly born
let's build a land in the new morn
let's build a land in the new morn.

(Composition: Nibras Chammam
Singing: Amel Hamrouni & Abir Chammam)

قل لي شنيّة احلامك

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ثَمّة الأحلام الّلي تحيا
وثموت مع الصُّغرة
وثَمّة الأحلام الّلي تحفر
جُرح الّلي ما يبرأ
وثَمّة الّلي تخفي خطوتها
وَرانا وسط ظلامنا
وثَمّة الّلي ديمّا تسبقنا
كي تجري فُدامنا

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ثَمّة أحلام تُفِرُّنا
وثَمّة أحلام تُوحِّدنا
وثَمّة الّلي تُونسنا
حتى كي نُكوئو وَحَدنا
وثَمّة الّلي تُطرز لحكاية
من صُوف منامتنا
وثَمّة الّلي تسرقنا مِنّا
ونُقِص غلينا حكايتنا

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ثَمّة أحلام تُصاوبنا
وَمَا تَنسَاشن الماء والملح
وثَمّة الّلي تُصاوب غلينا
تَجرح وتداوم ع الجرح
وثَمّة الّلي تُخَيِّننا فينا
تُضيِّعنا حتى نلقاها
وثَمّة الّلي تُخَيِّب غلينا
وُكي نلقاها نُضيِّع معاها

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ثَمَّةُ الأحلام اللَّيِّ تُكْبِرُ
كَيْفَ مَا يَكْبُرُ الطُّمُوحُ
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تَكْبُرُ فِي السَّنِّ
تَهْرَمُ كِي جَسْمِ بِلَا رُوحِ
ثَمَّةُ اللَّيِّ تَتْعَبُ كِي تُطِيبُ
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تَتْعَبُ كِي تَغِيبُ
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تُشَيِّبُ كِي تُخَيِّبُ
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تُخَيِّبُ كِي تُشَيِّبُ

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ثَمَّةُ الأحلام اللَّيِّ تُعَذِّبُ
اللَّيِّ يَجْرِي وَرَاهَا
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ مَا تُعَذِّبُ
كَانَ اللَّيِّ يَقْدِرُ يَحْيَاهَا
وِثْمَةُ الأحلام اللَّيِّ تُعْلِي
تَرْدُ البَذْرَةَ شَجَرَةَ
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تَهْدِمُ وَتُخْلِي
الحَجْرَةَ تَرْدُمُ الحَجْرَةَ

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ثَمَّةُ الأحلام اللَّيِّ تَطْفِي
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تَتْعَبُ مِ الوَقْفَةِ
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تُنْقِصُ الفَقَّةَ
وَتُنْقِلُ عِ الحَمَالِ

وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تَتَخَبَّى وَرَانَا
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ نَنْسَاهَا
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تَنْسَانَا
وِثْمَةُ الأحلام اللَّيِّ تَمْشِي وَتُخْلِينَا وَرَاهَا
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تَتَخَبَّى وَرَانَا
وِثْمَةُ اللَّيِّ تَذَكِّرُنَا بِأَحْلَى إِيَامِنَا
وَتُقْتَلُنَا كِي تَوَاجِهُنَا بِالسُّؤَالِ:
شَعْمَلْنَا بِأَحْلَامِنَا

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وَأَنَا اللَّيِّ فِي حُضْنِ أَحْلَامِي
عَاشِشُ طُولَ حَيَاتِي

مَا عُدَّتْش نَفَرَقْ
بَيْنَ أَهْلَامِي وَذِكْرِيَاتِي

شعر آدم فتحي

عَايشُ لِعُنَايَاتِي

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عَايشُ لِعُنَايَاتِي
عَايشُ لِلنَّاسِ
عَايشُ كِي عُنَايَاتِي
اللي في قلبي على لِسَانِي
واللي عِنْدِي لِلنَّاسِ..
تَجْرَحْنِي كَلِمَة نَوَاسِينِي عُنَايَة
وَإِنَا مِنْ أَوَّلِ لَحَايَة
عَايشُ لِعُنَايَاتِي
عَايشُ لِلنَّاسِ
عَايشُ كِي عُنَايَاتِي
اللي في قلبي على لِسَانِي
واللي عِنْدِي لِلنَّاسِ..
مَا تَقْلُيشْ عَلاشْ تَغَيَّيْ
مُمْكِنُ لِعُنَايَة نُوَصِّلْنِي بَعِيدُ
لِصَّبَاحِ جَدِيدُ
شَمْسُهُ تَجَلَّ الْبَابُ
وَتَضْحَكُ لِلْأَصْحَابِ
تُخَلِّي الدُّنْيَا عِيدُ...
سَاعَاتُ الرِّحْلَة تُفَكِّرْنِي بِطُولِ الرِّحْلَة
بِاللي غَابُوا وَاللي شَابُوا فُعْمَرُ النِّحْلَة
بِشَبَابِكَ فِي عُيُونِ النَّاسِ عَلَيْهَا فُضْنَابُ
بِالْجَمْرَة اللي مُشَيِّتْ عَلَيْهَا وَقَلْبِي حَفِيَانُ
وَتَسْأَلْنِي رُوحِي: شَعْمَلْتُ؟
بِعُنَايَاتِيكَ شَعْمَلْتُ؟
أَهْ مِنْكَ يَا سُؤَالَ الرُّوحِ الْقَاسِي..
أَنَا صَحِيحُ
عَبَّيْتُ لِلرَّيْحِ
لَكِنْ يَكْفِينِي لِعُنَايَة
تَمْسَحْ دَمْعَهُ نَاسِي..
يَكْفِينِي لِعُنَايَة نَسَافِرُ

فِي طَرِيقُ مَا عُدُّوشِي آخِرُ..
يَكْفِي شَوَارِ عُمْ لِبَعِيدَةٍ
وَيُنْ الدَّمْعَةُ وَالتَّهْيِيدَةُ
ثَرَانِي عَايشُ فَيِدِي غَنَائِي
تَحْكِي شَمْعَةُ تَضَوِي حُكَايَةِ
وَتَحْلُمُ بِصَبَاحَاتٍ جَدِيدَةٍ
وَإِنَّا عَايشُ لِعُنَايَاتِي
عَايشُ لِلنَّاسِ
عَايشُ كِي غَنَائَاتِي
اللي فِي قَلْبِي عَلَى لِسَانِي
واللي عِنْدِي لِلنَّاسِ..
مَا نَقُولُ لِيَشْ غَلَّاشُ نَغْنِي
مُمْكِنُ لِعُنَايَةِ تَوْصَلْنِي بُعِيدُ
لِصَبَاحِ جَدِيدُ
شَمْسُهُ تَجَلَّ الْبَابُ
وَتَضْحَكُ لِلْأَصْحَابِ
نُخَلِّي الدُّنْيَا عِيدُ...

شعر آدم فتحي/ موسيقى شوبان (Etudes.Op.10.No.3)/أداء لطفي بوشناق

أعود إليك

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بِشَوْقِ الصَّبَاحِ إِلَى شَفَتَيْكَ
بِرَّقْصِ الْأَقَاظِي عَلَى وَجْهِكَ
أَعُودُ إِلَيْكَ وَكَيْفَ الْمَفْرُ
وَكُلُّ الدُّرُوبِ تُؤَدِّي إِلَيْكَ

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تَنَامُ الْمَدِينَةُ قَبْلِي وَتُقْفِرُ
وَأَخْرَجُ وَاللَّيْلُ بِالصَّمْتِ يَقْطُرُ
فَارْتَوِ إِلَى قِطْطِ اللَّيْلِ تَسْهَرُ
وَتَلْتَمِسُ الدَّفْءَ مِنْ قَدَمِيكَ
أَقُولُ تَعَالِي، فَتَدْنُو وَتَنْفُرُ
وَمِنْ لِي تَهْرَبُ مِنْكَ إِلَيْكَ

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تَمُرُّ السِّنُّونُ مُرُورَ الْأَغَانِي
أَمَامَ الْعُيُونِ الَّتِي لَا تَرَانِي
تَمُرُّ السِّنُّونُ، وَأَبْقَى مَكَانِي
كَأَنِّي غُيْبَارٌ عَلَى كَتِفَيْكَ
فَأَصْحُو عَلَى غُرْبَتِي فِي زَمَانِي
وَأَهْرُبُ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْكَ إِلَيْكَ

شعر آدم فتحي/ تلحين لطفي بوشناق/ غناء علياء بلعيد

سَأْخُذُ وَجْهِي وَأَرْحَلُ

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سَأْخُذُ وَجْهِي وَأَرْحَلُ إِنْ أَزِفَتْ سَاعَتِي
ثَانِرًا كَالرِّيحِ
وَمَلْتَهَبًا كَالْحَقُولِ الَّتِي أَشْعَلَتْهَا الْجِرَاحُ
سَأْخُذُ وَجْهِي وَأَرْحَلُ سَأْخُذُ حَزَنِي وَأَرْحَلُ
مَلْتَحَفًا بِالْأَنَاشِيدِ وَالذِّكْرِيَّاتِ
فَاَحْفَظُوا قَرْبَتِي وَعَصَائِي
لِلصَّغِيرِ الذِّي سَوْفَ يَكْبُرُ يَوْمًا وَيَقْفُو خُطَايَ

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سَأْخُذُ وَجْهِي وَأَرْحَلُ سَأْخُذُ حَزَنِي وَأَرْحَلُ
لَكُنِّي سَاعُودُ
وَمَعِيَ غَضَبٌ قَاصِفٌ كَالرُّعُودِ
وَمَعِيَ خُطْوَةٌ بِاتِّسَاعِ الْوُجُودِ

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سَأَتِي بِوَجْهِي وَأَرْجِعُ مَمْتَطِيًا صَهَوَاتِ النَّشِيدِ
قَائِلًا لِلطُّيُورِ لَا تَخَافِي الْجِرَاحُ
قَائِلًا لِلنَّخِيلِ قِفْ بَرِّغَمِ الرِّيحِ
قَائِلًا لِلزِّيَّاتَيْنِ لِلْبَرِّتَقَالِ الْوَلِيدِ
فَلْنُقِمْ وَطَنًا فِي الصَّبَاحِ الْجَدِيدِ
فَلْنُقِمْ وَطَنًا فِي الصَّبَاحِ الْجَدِيدِ...

شعر آدم فتحي/تلحين نبراس شَمَام/غناء آمال الحمروني وعبير شَمَام (البحث الموسيقي بقابس)