

**Roy Chicky ARAD**

### **Just Wanna Be Your Dog**

My real career exists in the street. My interior is the broad exterior. If I were operated on, they would find lakes, lawnmowers, and pink cactus statues instead of blood cells. I enjoy traveling, around Tel Aviv and all over the world. There are those who hope to get rich or aspire to write a bestseller, but my goal in life is not to sleep in my own bed more than 180 nights a year.

I leave the house in the morning, return home after midnight, and hardly ever stay at home—home is actually a book storage facility with a bed that my ex-girlfriend, a hobbyist carpenter, elevated to make room for storing books underneath it. I always keep my backpack equipped with a toothbrush, underwear and a beach blanket. I am prepared at all times for any adventure to come. My passport is always available for stamping. How is my passport different from any of the books I published?

I usually write poetry in coffee shops. Two years ago, I rented a studio. I thought perhaps in a studio I could be more prolific. But I never wrote a single poem there. I pay rent and still write poetry in cafés or bars.

Oftentimes I forget to take a notebook with me, meaning that I end up writing a lot on paper napkins. These conditions are ideal for the poetry format that I invented – the *kimo*, which is a sort of hairy Israeli cousin of the haiku. If the haiku consists of three lines with 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively, the kimo is built on three lines of 10, 7, 6 syllables adjusted to the size of a napkin.

For example, this is a kimo that I wrote during the Iraq war.

#### The Coffee (Translated by Eran Hadas)

The coffee sits above the saucer.  
Under them, the table.  
Under it, the country.

Writing on napkins is romantic. But it is also how I lost plenty of my poems. Many poems disappeared in the laundry, maybe an entire volume, since I forgot to take the napkins out of my pockets. I also write in dark bars, such that my own penmanship becomes unclear to me, making it hard to decipher the words.

While writing this lecture I came upon a poem that I had written on some Chicago hotel stationery in an even smaller format than kimo:

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ICPL and the International Writing Program Panel Series, November 1, 2019  
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Amanda Michalopoulou (Greece), Clara Chow (Singapore)  
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## Love

I stole pens from all  
The hotels

I write poetry and prose, which I approach in two very different ways. Physically speaking, prose is matter, and poetry is energy. In Israel, everyone always talks about real estate. Poetry is the opposite of real estate. It is unreal estate. Sometimes it is real un-estate.

It would be interesting to think of poetry and prose in the context of the biblical Cain and Abel story. Briefly summarized, two brothers, Cain the farmer and Abel the shepherd, offered sacrifices to God. But God didn't want to eat steak that day, and so he took Abel's sacrificial offering. Cain, the ostensibly stable agrarian, got very angry and murdered the shepherd. This was the beginning of the conflict between poetry and prose, between the free nomad bard Abel and the supposedly ambitious prosaic Cain. Ultimately, despite the criticism, the farmer with the prose is the survivor.

Cain seems to have been punished for his deed. He really gets a bad reputation in town. He would probably be rejected for a residency in IWP with his résumé. But I think he received a gift—he would have to wander around for the remainder of his life. He is said to have founded the first city. I imagine he also established the first café. Cain sounds rather cool. Much groovier than the third brother, Seth, the boring brother who never murdered or got murdered and from whom the entire human race developed. Another lesson to be learned here is that if you wish to succeed, be boring.

In Hebrew, we don't wish you "good luck," but rather we bid you to "succeed!" on all endeavors. But is there no greater failure than that of success? Occasionally I receive tempting job offers, but then I recall that my goal is neither the acquisition of money nor prestige, but rather more free time to be able to gaze at the sea.

The point is not just failing, but failing elegantly, gloriously. Unfortunately, there is no guidebook on How to be a Failure in Ten Easy Steps. The author of such a book is doomed to never find a publisher.

My friend, the musician E. B. Dan, compares the possibilities lying before creative artists to the range of choices available to dogs. You can be a domestic dog who will get fed every day and live a carefree existence, but then you will also be castrated and imprisoned. Or you can be a stray dog, free and loose, but without knowing where your next meal is coming from. On this spectrum, I prefer the unsuccessful stray dog—always on the road.

*Translated by Michael Eingal*

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