

**Habib TENGOUR**

**Where Does My Work Meet “Reality?” Is Poetry Indifferent to This Impulse?**

“Poetry is the absolute real. The closer to poetry something is, the truer it is.” These words by Novalis which I had placed as exergue to my book *The Old Man of the Mountain*, clearly showed the process of my poetry, defining me as a poet and giving poetry the job of unveiling the real. The poet is the one who will be attentive to the words, to the movement of the sentence, to the unveiling of things through language. The writing of poetry has a demand in relation to language as it wants to explore all its possibilities in the simple sonority of its resonances. It articulates language with the body of the one who writes so that the words may emerge in their accurateness and precision. Poetry remains a labor on oneself and on the real, it founds the latter and that is why it is the real.

The real is a multiplicity of languages. What the poem translates is the manner of apprehension of the real, often as a stutter. In terms of translation, the fragments permit to catch the real in its instantaneity; in fact, the real can only be perceived in instants, snapshots. It is those bits and pieces which the poet works and organizes so as to produce something—something that is not past reality but the becoming real. The manner in which these fragments of the real are imbricated gives rise to another reality. That reality is never produced completely; each time these fragments—for the one who will read them—can produce different realities because the words, depending on how they are accented in such or such a sequence of the sentence, will produce something else.

It is only the reconstructed real that will be theorized. Poetry permits to take apart and exhibit the parts and gears of this construct. The work of writing poetry is totally a matter of deconstruction-reconstruction of the linguistic structure. It has to be there without however imposing itself on the text. A reconstruction which the classic novel demanded in the name of a fictive continuity. The real is never given in writing but rather its discontinuity, its perception is only fragmentary. Catching the real through the poem is a matter of confrontation, collage, montage, of a meeting of images or objects that were not meant to meet, that will animate the poem and make one reflect on what it is one sees in the real. It is not objective reality but its assemblage due to the chance of the selection. The real can be read in a thousand and one ways. Therefore, the poet is careful to register all the facts he sees—his eye will register them, his mind will question them differently—the clashes that come from this will produce illuminations.

My writing, because it interrogates the real, consigns dogmatism to nothingness. To dare enter the myth in order to break it if it is petrified or reorient it if still alive. Religious fundamentalism does not admit of such a procedure. Fundamentalism resides in the affirmation of the truth, its vision is unshakable. Now, any and all visions are there to be shaken up. The writing of poetry is perception of the real in movement. It is exactly that calm instability. Instability is not non-stability, it is, to the contrary, deeply anchored in movement. The poem never offers a truth, but opens possibilities, it never offers a totally framed, finished image, but threads allowing the reevaluation of the image the poet perceives and wants to give to see in his own language. These threads permit, depending on the moment, depending on how one picks them up for oneself, to give different images and to open the view on something else—on a future, on an other... That is not the case in a dogmatic ideology.

**Translated from the French by Pierre Joris**