

The relationship of author and word is tangled, a mutual dependence. But there are moments, the bleakest in all the books, when this relation breaks down and man is deprived of his essence:

"Indeed. I once thought I would find my place in my words, but then. . . .

"How shall I put it? The words suddenly proved to be different."

"I'm not sure I understand." . . .

"Well . . . as if, suddenly I could only speak through the silence of the spaces left empty by their difference."

"Their difference?"

"Some basic incompatibility between man and his words, something that keeps them apart . . ."

"But isn't it always words which express us?"

"No doubt, at the moment my pen draws them, when my voice sets them free. . . . But immediately after, I realize that I have not written, not spoken."

"But in that case, what you read, what other people hear, what is that?"

"A mixture of sounds, of words bitterly remote in their alien truth. Man is mute. I tell you. The only mute creature."

Better to be tormented by the words, to let the sentences be tattoos, arrows, insect-bites on his page of flesh. The writer is the book. The book is the writer's wound. The cause and the process are one. The process and the goal are one. Yet they are not:

For I am writing
and you are the wound.
Have I betrayed you, Yukel?
I have certainly betrayed you.

And the translator? Edmond Jabès knows: "We grow old through the word. We die of translation." And, with a chuckle, underlines the sentence in my copy.

I have certainly betrayed him. And taken pleasure in it.

Readers who read Edmond Jabès in English do not read Edmond Jabès. They do not read Rosmarie Waldrop either, but our dialogue and collaboration. A necessarily imperfect approximation trying to locate itself on that fine line that is as close as possible to the French yet as remote from it as necessary for the text to stand on its English feet, as it were. In the space between. "Not resemblance," says Maurice Blanchot perhaps too optimistically, "but identity on the basis of otherness."

Güneli Gün: "Translating Pamuk is like mirroring his gestures." I like this analogy. But I am translating a work in which "a double mirror separates us from the Lord so that God sees Himself when trying to see us, and we, when trying to see Him, see only our own face." Which *n*th reflection does translation catch? Or am I setting up my own double mirror? Am I reading Edmond Jabès in such a way that my translation can resemble him?

I am again betraying Edmond Jabès in these pages. I put words in his mouth as if my memory were not notoriously poor. *English* words yet, which he never said. Words that cannot catch his tone, his *Ce n'est pas ça*. Sentences too complete, without interruption, assent or opposition, without the gestures that replace the "big" words or put them in quotation marks, without the smile that nuances a judgment, without the laugh, without the digressions and non sequiturs of conversation. Without body.

With quotations from his books to protect my rear, I speak for him. I choose and cadence.

From the beginning, one of the difficulties in translating Edmond Jabès is the distinction between *mot* and *parole*, a distinction that English covers over with one single term: "word." It is true we have "utterance," which has the oral dimension of *parole* and, if more weakly, the sense of its opposition to—and circular interdependence with—*langue*, the code of language. I try to use it, but often find it clumsy in its sentence. Except in cases where orality is crucial, I