

**Poem of the Two Tongues**  
**(for C. Seguin)**

already in my bastardized, Anglophone poetics  
apparently I've asked this comely quebecois  
not to dribble on my legs

and she in similar poetic spontaneity  
speaks some magnificent french phrase  
which severely titillates me  
but is translated she tells me as:  
"Your love is like vomitted wine."

Everything, obviously, is not going well  
admittedly, romantics have lead me astray—  
I have heard in our union the clanging of the Canadas  
the piecemeal mingling of our cultures  
and i'm trying too hard, so  
determined not to irritate  
the situation further  
i resort to simple high school french

"aaaaah la nuit descend dans m'ame!" I say  
'tu es ma lune, mes etoiles, mon uh....."  
and there I'm forced to stop

I want to say "You are the first red tongue of morning  
licking back black curls in the thighs of night!"  
but alas, I've never been a cunning linguist  
and such a phrase is quite beyond my capabilities  
O, I might say, "You are the crack of dawn."  
but even here my tongue might lead me into error, and  
besides, why should i stoop to such an old and worn  
cliche?

as it was i just stood there  
foolishly stuttering  
and, touched, i suppose  
by my child-like confusion  
she leant forward and kissed me  
'enfant', she said,  
no more words, Oui?"

"Oui." I answered sheepishly  
And though later that night I did come  
to have two tongues in my mouth  
for a time  
It wasn't until we came  
to that ecstatic region known by some  
as Cloud-Cuckoo Land  
that i began to think for a first time  
we might actually be perfect  
countrymen

— *Robert Priest*