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[Debra Band](#), "Deborah Illumination 10, ink, watercolor, and gold leaf on kosher slunk vellum

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CONTRIBUTOR EXCHANGE

Below are titles of books (mainly poetry collections) by contributors, as well as URLs. * indicates a page in the "Hexagon Forum" of www.pointandcircumference.com. ** indicates a page in the "Kippat Binah" section of the same site.

Hayim Abramson, *ShiratHaNeshamah: Shira letzadmekorot (Song of the Soul: Poetry with Sources)*, Beit El, 2016.

**YakovAzriel is the author of *Threads from a Coat of Many Colors: Poems on Genesis* (2005); *In the Shadow of a Burning Bush: Poems on Exodus* (2008), *Beads for the Messiah's Bride: Poems on Leviticus* (2009), *Swimming in Moses' Well* (2011), all with Time Being Books. Many of his poems can be found on the 929 Tanakh site, at <https://www.929.org.il/lang/en/author/36669>.

Mindy Aber Barad, *The Land That Fills My Dreams* (Bitzaron 2013).

Gary Beck has published 32 poetry collections (see online Contributor's Exchange).

Judy Belsky, *Thread of Blue* (Targum Press, 2003) (memoir); *Avraham and Sultana*, 2018.

Jane Blanchard's latest collection is *Never Enough Already* (2021).

**Esther Cameron, *The Consciousness of Earth* (Multicultural Books, 2004); *Fortitude, or The Lost Language of Justice: Poems in Israel's Cause* (Bitsaron Books, August 2009); *Western Art and Jewish Presence in the Work of Paul Celan: Roots and Ramifications of the "Meridian" Speech* (Lexington Books, 2014); *Collected Works* (6 vols.), Of the Essence Press 2016; www.pointandcircumference.com.

Marguerite Bouvard has published 11 books of poetry, the latest being *The Cosmos of the Heart* (Human Error Publishing, 2020). She also has a number of prose works, including *Pandemic Heroes and Heroines: Doctors and Nurses on the Front Line* (Academica Press 2021).

Amichai Chasson, <https://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/29459/Amichai-Chasson>; *Medaber im HaBayit (Talking with Home)*, Even Hoshen 2015; *Bli Ma*, Bialik Institute, 2018

Roberta Chester, *Light Years* (Puckerbush Press, 1983).

Eric Chevlen, *Triple Crown* (2010), *Adrift on a Ruby Yacht* (2014), <https://triplecrownpoetry.com/>.

Heather Dubrow, *Forms and Hollows* (Cherry Grove Collections), *Lost and Found Departments* (Cornerstone Press)

Esther Fein has three books of poems: *Journeys*, *A Fine Line*, and *Carved from Jerusalem Stone*.

Ruth Fogelman, <https://jerusalemilives.weebly.com/>, is the author of *Cradled in God's Arms*, *Jerusalem Lives*, and *Jerusalem Awakening* (Bitzaron Books), *Leaving the Garden* (2018), and *What Color Are Your Dreams* (2019).

Gerald Greene, *Kaleidoscope: A Poetry Collection*, <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1547124903>; *White Window: My View of the African-American Experience*, <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09BF7W7Z4>

Katharyn Howd Machan's *Dark Matter* (2017) and *Selected Poems* (2018) are both available on Kindle. The latest of her 39 books of poetry is *A Slow Bottle of Wine*. (Comstock Writers Group, 2020)

Rivka Miriam, *These Mountains, Selected Poems of Rivka Miriam*, translated by Linda Zisquit, Toby Press, 2009.

Irene Mitchell, *Fever* (Dos Madres Press, 2019), *Equal Parts Sun and Shade: An Almanac of Precarious Days* (Aldrich Press, 2017), *Minding the Spectrum's Business* (FutureCycle Press, 2015), *A Study of Extremes in Six Suites* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2012), *Sea Wind on the White Pillow* (Axes Mundi Press, 2009).

Mark J. Mitchell has several full-length collections including, *Lent 1999* by Leaf Garden Press, *Starting from Tu Fu* by Encircle Publications and recently, *Roshi, San Francisco* from Norfolk Press. Chapbooks: *Three Visitors* (Negative Capability Press, 2010), *Artifacts and Relics* (Folded Word Press,) 2015, and *Fishing in the Knife Drawer* (Fowlpox Press, 2020).

Rumi Morkin has published two volumes of *The Ogdan Nasherei of Rumi Morkin*. A third volume is in progress.

Ruth Netzer's books are listed on her website, <https://www.ruthnetzer.com/>

James B. Nicola's collections are listed on <https://sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola/poetry>. Most recent: *Quickening: Poems from Before and Beyond* (Cyberwit.net, 2019). Forthcoming: *Natural Tendencies* and *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense*.

Susan Oleferuk, *Circling for Home* (Finishing Line Press, 2011), *Those Who Come to the Garden* (Finishing Lines Press, 2013), *Days of Sun* (Finishing Line Press, 2017), and *When There Is Little Light Left in Late Afternoon*, forthcoming in 2022, Kelsay Books.

Reizel Polak's books include *Four Entered Pardes* (Greville Press Pamphlets, Warwick, UK, 2016); *And Where Did We Say We Were Going* (Black Jasmine, Sharon, MA, 2015); *Among the Red Golden Hills* (Black Jasmine, Sharon, MA, 2012).

Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehory, *Medusa Shkufah Holekhet (Transparent Medusa Goes)*, Even Hosehn 2016; *Matmon shel Shamaniot (A Cache of Geckoes)*, Pardes 2018; *Pere Kelev Hi Haytah (Wild Dog)*, Levin Press, 2021/

Tony Reevy has three books, *Old North*, *Passage*, and *Socorro*, all published by Iris Press, as well as four chapbooks, four chapbooks: *Green Cove Stop*, *Magdalena*, *Lightning in Wartime* and *In Mountain Lion Country*.

Michael E. Stone, *Selected Poems* (Cyclamens and Swords Press, 2010). *Adamgirk': The Adam Book of Arak'el of Siwnik'* (Oxford UP, 2007).

Henry Summerfield, *That Myriad-minded Man: a biography of George William Russell, 'A.E.' (1867-1935)* (Colin Smythe, 1975)

Elizabeth Tornes has published three poetry chapbooks, *Between the Dog and the Wolf* (Five Oaks Press, 2016) *New Moon* (Finishing Line Press, 2013) and *Snowbound* (Giiwedid Press, 2012).

James Tweedie, *Mostly Sonnets*, Dunecrest Press.

Lois Michal Unger's books include 'Miscarriage in Vermont', 'The Apple of His Eye', 'White Rain in Jerusalem', 'Tomorrow We Play Beersheva', 'Political Poems', 'The Glass Lies Shattered All Around'.

Florence Weinberger, *Carnal Fragrance* (Red Hen Press, 2004), *Sacred Graffiti* (Tebot Bach, 2010), *Breathing Like a Jew* (Chicory Blue Press, 1997), *The Invisible Telling Its Shape* (Fithin Press, 1997).

David K. Weiser, *Ladders: 333 Poems*, <https://www.amazon.com/Ladders-Poems-David-K-Weiser/dp/1709033517>

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The poems by Katharyn Howd Machan are from a forthcoming collection of poems in tribute to her friend, the poet Barbara Crooker. Yakov Azriel's "Yiddish," "Yigdal," and "Seeking in Jerusalem the Gateways" appear on the 929 Tanakh site.

I. What Might Be Outside

DARKNESS WILL NOT OVERTAKE US*

though so much rain upon heavy rain
has blackened the full maple leaves
and now they drop down this way, that,
littering bricks and cherished gardens
as August has just begun...

though once again we must wear masks
because the virus has eagerly changed
and laughs at us with our vaccines
in what became complacency
in a war we thought we'd won...

though love holds back for fear of death
from random touch and unguarded breath
as doors stay closed and visits cease
and nightmares vanquish dreams of peace
for there's nowhere to run...

still we cook and eat and sleep,
still we watch as summer wanes,
still we feed wild birds sweet seeds
believing we'll again see nests
next year in April sun

— Katharyn Howd Machan

*last line of a poem by Barbara Crooker

ON THE WINDOWSILL

Our basil plant,
still alive and well.
But it likes direct light—
shouldn't it be on the window sill?—
and should I—
Well, a lot is still out of place
even if one places oneself among the vaccinated.
Our sage plant,
reigning star of three Thanksgiving sauces,
despite its name it ignored social distancing
and died. Or maybe just rested on its laurels,
predicting fears of Delta would force us to cancel
the next Thanksgiving feast.
Our chive plant,
determined to overlook
and overwhelm
its brown shoots,
wanting to make its owners grateful,
and planning to make it into the topping of their soups,
and hoping to make it into a poem too.
Our aloe plant,
long tended by our dear neighbor,
then tendered to us by her mourning son,
thrives and grows quickly enough

to make the neighboring chive a little jealous.
And it cured our burns
when we didn't dare venture to the drugstore.
Sticky ointment? plants, unlike predictions, thrive on
sticky.

Our plants look through the window
and we look through them
at what might be outside of
and beyond the pandemic.

— Heather Dubrow

THE WARRANTS

I will return to the Aegean, the sea
Of my youth where dolphins raced
After our boat in swathes of lucent arcs
Breaching, jumping, leaping into myriad
Rainbows. The Aegean hides its carnage
Of flesh below its waves yet diminishes
The virulence of the virus that censures
Our tattered world. I will now return
To the Aegean to watch its cerulean
Waves mingle with the Mediterranean
The navy-blue and teal mother-sea
Wave-ripples and tides swell the surface

And a plankton-filled potency conducts the currents
Through perennial sun-cycles, our earths warrants.

— Emily Bilman

BS"D

On the evening of 27 Heshvan, 5782

AFTER THE FIRST YAHRTZEIT OF AVI Z"L

The lemon tree bears fruit
You planted with your own hands.
Lines of aliveness
Give pulse to the quiet,
A loving gaze
Revives the heart,
A lucid word
Still brings wisdom,
Continues to echo.
Being unfolds
From nothingness,
Waves upon waves
From silence.
The stone closes the grave-mouth,
Something
Opens.

— Tziporah Faiga Lifshitz

FIRST FRUITS, MAINE GARDEN

Once, in a garden
in a country to the north
where the growing season is short—
several warm days, fragile hours
pressed between storms,
I brought forth a cantaloupe
out of my great, green thumb
when it should have been impossible.

I was as full of disbelief
as Sarah was with Isaac, and I laughed.
But I bent to touch it every day,
and watched it ripening,
I felt it fill my fingers, one by one,
imagined how it was satin smooth inside—
plump and orange as the harvest moon at night,
the seeds like stars in the sweet, deep dark.
So day after day, I believed
we had been smiled upon.

And yet like dream notes carried
garden to garden, place to place,
knowing that grains of earth become
bread, bones, parts of speech,
the difference between life and death
before becoming cantaloupe,
I remembered hearing
First Fruits—
They are not ours to keep.
Consider them gifts that must be sacrificed,
in exchange for grace.

— Roberta Chester

KANSAS, OLD ABANDONED HOUSE

House, weathered, bashed in grays, spiders,
homespun surrounding yellows and pinks
on a Kansas, prairie appears lonely tonight.
The human theater lives once lived here
inside are gone now,
buried in the back, dark trail
behind that old outhouse.
Old wood chipper in the shed, rustic, worn, no gas, no
thunder, no sound.
Remember the old coal bin, now open to the wind,
but no one left to shovel the coal.
Pumpkin patches, corn mazes, hayrides all gone.
Deserted ghostly children still swing abandoned in the
prairie wind.
All unheated rooms no longer have children
to fret about, cheerleaders have long gone,
the banal house chills once again, it is winter,
three lone skinny crows perched out of sight
on barren branched trees silhouetted in early morning
hints of pink, those blues, wait with hunger strikes as
winter

that snow starts to settle in against moonlight skies.
Kansas becomes a quiet place when those first snowfalls.
There is the dancing of the crows—
that lonely wind, that creaking of the doors, no oil in the
joints.

— Michael Lee Johnson

JADE HORIZON

inspired by a mural by Ernest Doty

Not quite a homestead,
Not quite a morning vigil site,
But it's there, perched on
Another East Bay
Oak tree branch.
Little rainbow
With a beak
And sharp
Taloned feet.
Dressed in yellow, brown, grey,
Mismatched colours
Borrowed from the spectrum
On its feathers,
Stripes of ivory
Tip its long tail.
Small bird face veers left,
Distant western stare,
Attention averted from
The eastern sun slowly rising
Over Oakland Hills.
Gradual change from night to day.
Thick wisps of white post-dawn fog
Float over the vibrant
Jade horizon
Of the nearby trees.

— Dee Allen.

FEATHERS

This time there is no beak,
no little bloody head, no bony
claw, no loose wing— only a small
pile of feathers without substance
or center. The cats dig through
the leaves, they stare at each other
in surprise. They look carefully over
their shoulders, they touch the same
feathers again and again. They have
been totally cheated of the body,
the body with its veins and its fat
and the red bones has escaped them.
All that's left is a kind of spirit.
A slipped shadow. A trace of wind.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

IT IS STARDUST

September in the arroyo and a Great Horned slumbers in the cottonwood.
September's owl is a singularity. His skeptic eye is a singularity.

When we pass along the mumbling ditch the winged helmet swivels, a languid lid
shuttering awake awakens the landscape whole, imploding into his mercuric stare.

September and we tumble over the roiling event horizon of his gilded onyx gaze,
into its moonless midnight lake, into a world like this one but much, much bigger.

We tumble headlong into another world where owls also roost in the tall trees
and call to one another just as here with lonely voices to disturb the dreaming leaves.

This is our abstraction in the world concrete where the fur, the flame, the feather
know no spirit, where the dear dangerous earth's own mud and flesh flash out

To scar the retina and draw us heart and bone into its downy savage breast,
into the fulgurations of the stone, the tangled vascularities, into the consuming glare

Of mountain and cloud and the sloshing bucket's transient flare, from which
our several songs are drawn,

from which we startle

into the presocratic sky.

— D.B. Jonas

BEFORE AND AFTER

Rather the flight of the bird passing and leaving no trace
Fernando Pessoa, The Keeper of Sheep XLIII

Sea rears and smashes as shore trembles, its gown of
sand dunes stripped and sucked into tidal claim.

And afterward the great silence that gathers above the
now sleeping waters like a mother calming her child.

Silence the forgotten one that lived long before the
swarm of sounds in their rage their kinship of blood.

As the primal darkness in its infinite reach
refusing all light, the intrusions the beggary.

As nighttime taking away the scatter shots of day,
quietude restoring breath to heaving flesh.

I imagine a false plenitude and the truth of
absence long denied.

I think of a beautiful nothingness
calling calling.

I watch twilight nearing as overhead
a single sea gull rises and vanishes.

— Doug Bolling

STASIS

The loon is gone
the game of peek-a-boo on water is over
along with the morning hymns of choristers in puffed up
robes
their own compositions sent to the endless sky

I slip on a nut and then another
it's neither hot nor cold
stasis
holding its breath to a coming loneliness
of sound and color
a melancholy of memories
and I fill the emptiness with farewells

I'll pick a leaf and carry it all winter
a red one, like a drying heart
for autumn is an old friend I met long ago
it always means time to part.

— Susan Oleferuk

AUTUMN ELEGY

Autumn's whirling winds
 make trembling prayer flags
 of leaves pleading for
 a last nod to summer;
 as the wan light leans westward
 chipmunks burrow in mossy nests
 while mice make their musty beds.

In the long shadows of late day
 I am called to grasp my favorite pen
 with hopeful hand to weave
 the wool of word and tone
 a drifting melody
 while autumn petals tumble
 with shimmering rhythmic purpose
 towards soon and still
 and frozen earth—
 the withering winter and its cool pale sun.

My candle flickers
 and its wick is bent
 as summer cedes
 what was too briefly lent
 — Vera Haldy-Regier

DEER PARK

There is a very small woods I walk in on cool mornings
 a doe lives there who looks like Jane Austen
 long lashes, a curly cap, gentle aspect and very
 observant

I feel like a clod as I slide down the trail
 and she looks up from her morning sips of water
 and I feel her disapproval for my general demeanor

No doubt she has a diary in the upper hill she is fond of
 I never see her with the other does
 but I assume she knows them well and there is
 congeniality
 and much sensible advice on the weather and such
 trifling
 and then a fleeting run to her own sanctuary
 to work on her writing

What narration though can she find in this small wood
 this I wondered till one day I took myself
 at a different hour and in the middle of the trail stood
 snorting and chest heaving like in a tight jacket, a huge
 buck
 his antlers in magnificent display and legs finely formed
 I turned around and ran, but wondered his yearly
 income and how many acres he owned.

— Susan Oleferuk

THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

Pin oaks, lindens and maple trees
 are stripped bare, their limbs
 seem to be touching the sky,
 their naked strength and beauty,

their branches stretching out
 as if they were lifting a weight
 we cannot fathom, with so much
 grace, and a deeper kind of knowing,

and in the distance, the pin oak
 is holding just a few last leaves,
 its gleaming gems. The air is filled
 with cascades of falling leaves

that are liberated as if they were
 unwrapping themselves from
 flesh and bone, flying in so many
 different directions, and my long

gone Cherokee friend, Awiakta,
 is still singing in the seeds,
 the many dimensions of being,
 the turning of time.

— Marguerite Bouvard

MELODY

The cold that warms my heart- this snow
 in soft drifts, swans sleeping
 reflects the moonlight. Feathers glow-
 gifts in starlight keeping

me at watch, at least for now,
 quiet winds stirring.
 Bare branched trees on woodland's brow
 call to me assuring

of pond side rhyme, note by note
 in song. There's no mistaking.
 My Winter muse begins to float.
 A swan is now awakening.

— Lucia Haase

STARING OUT THE WINDOW ON A STORMY EVENING
(after Frost)

I wonder what
 I'll do tonight,
 although I'm sure I know:

I'll feed the cat,
 put the kettle on,
 and watch the falling snow.

— Frank William Finney

VIEWNERAL, 2020

The good news at my best friend's funeral:	I could Zoom the Gallery View,	mourners as if six feet apart in cyber pews	droplets of Hebrew like invisible souls
even the boxed de- ceased in a box	the rabbi's square a virtual ark	housing his mutable Kaddish.	I could also Zoom from the hearse
its picture a shaky dash- board cam	as it crept from shul to gravesite	where a pair of masked diggers	distanced the coffin from the living.
Better yet, I could leave when I wanted	if I heeded pleas not to distract the bereaved	but just went to the sink to wash my hands	of everything and everyone I had touched.

– Richard Krohn

A YEAR GONE WRONG

a year gone wrong – a year turned with feet up in the
air.
all hope and promise vanquished to some forbidden
place.

caged like some poor animal,
gone wild with torment and fear.

where are the deeds that have gone undone?
are they hiding deep within a shadow?

the plague has raged, gathering its reward.
many have fallen prey to its hunger.

we wait and watch, we hope and pray.
we do not ask for more than the gods are willing to give.

all we want is a little light, a little breath,
so we can live again.

time plays cruel tricks on us, as we walk into the sun,
searching for that glimmer of hope to reappear.

we peek around the corner to find a path of truth.
counting moments, until this year is done.

– Christine Tabaka

THE SEA THAT CALLS

There's a sea that calls beyond the door
to one whose heart craves want of more...
the crash of waves, the sifting sands
and thoughts of new and foreign lands.
There are steps to take. One must decide
to board the ship or gaze cliff side –
to dream or leave to find new shores
beyond the distant fields and moors –
to stand your ground or ponder breadth
and contemplate from deeper depths
as though the very ocean's core.
There's a sea that calls beyond a door.

– Lucia Haase

II. From Water Born

MYSTIFIED

Three grandkids arrive without my presence; for the fourth,
I'm slipped into a busy arena, father-to-be holding a list of manly appellations,
next to him a relaxed mid-wife, a nurse, and there's Amy,

giddy and drugged, her legs spread, and there's me, wedged between dread and meddling, terrified and mesmerized,
hours adding up until
the suddenness of it, red hair, a flash of blood,

and out drops Zachary
and I say *it's a whole person*.
I keep saying it, out loud, bold and all in caps, **IT'S A WHOLE PERSON**.

— Florence Weinberger

THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

for Kap

All things are from water born and into darkness grow.
Each to each its path to crawl, so many ways to go.
The hermit crab must leave its shell a larger shell to find.
The nautilus accretes its home, a chambered path to wind.
The Navajo his hogan leaves when one inside has died
Doors and windows boarded up, a hole poked through topside.
A pair of aging futurists must jettison their books
Their time has come, their race is run, no time for backward looks.

All things are from water born and into darkness grow.

A city burned, a lover lost, dwellings fall to ruin.
All aboard the midnight train while leaving's opportune.
Does the hermit crab give thought while scuttling ahead?
Does Nautilus think ought of it while climbing his bunk bed?
What thinks the migrant Navajo while driving his last nail?
Does sealing ghosts within his hut prevent their piercing wail?
"What's the point?" cries white-haired man, his wife beside him shaken.
"The rules have changed, our lives deranged, the furniture is taken."

All things are from water born and into darkness grow.

I close the door sweet sleeping wife, I'll not beside you lie
While words dance 'round within my head, you dwell in my mind's eye.
May the love that we do share suffuse our days with calm.
May the union of our souls be separation's balm.
Our children sleep in their own rooms, toys not put away.
The game begins anew for them each and every day.
Each day presents a different stage, performance is a lark.
We hover here at curtain call and when the stage is dark.

All things are from water born and into darkness grow.

— Michael Diamond

GRANDMOTHER BAKES A PSALM

wake early
*Exalt the living God**
 stretch dough thinner
 than you thought you could
There is no unity like His Oneness
 but not to the point
 of transparency
He has no form or body
 press out circles
 with a water glass
His holiness has no measure
 place heaping spoon full
His flow of prophecy
 at the center of every circle
Master to every creature
 crimp edges
 some will escape
To his treasured people
none like Moses will rise again
 bake until plump and golden
His clear vision
 allow to cool
 the perfect pan
He will never change
His laws for all eternity
 permit the contents to grow
 against tension of sides
 test with tines of fork
Our innermost secrets
He perceives the outcome
at the beginning
He will revive the dead
 awaken the children
In abundant kindness
 sing together
Blessed forever
 Serve
 layered
His Name
 the language
 of my childhood

— Judy Belsky

NATAN

*He counts the number of the stars,
 He calls them all by name.*
 Psalm 147: 4

*Every night stars
 light the sky
 dew on a branch
 tears on eyelashes*

among all the stars
 in the Yad Vashem sky
 six-year-old cousin
 Natan Kahn
 may his memory be a blessing

beloved
 son of Harry and Fanny Weinberg
 grandson of Marta and Levi Kahn
 nephew of Herbert and Lothar Kahn

*Every night stars light the sky
 And the people of the cities light lamps.*

*This night is all stars.**

— Felice Miryam Kahn Zisken

*Leah Goldberg, *Barak Baboker* [Splendor in the Morning]

FAVORITE GAME

My mother's time to muse about her foes
 was Friday night, post-shul, Father back at desk,
 each set of valiant pawns in eight-man rows,
 our Maccabees, a battlefield of chess.

She called the bishops rabbis, slanting black
 or white, the queen that roamed the board
 an Esther prone to angles and to rook attacks
 that toppled all to save the helpless lord.

She claimed the key was hunger for the fight,
 the sacrifice for each embattled square
 to camouflage triumphant end-game plans,

though she admitted love for little knights,
 who leap and hover, turning in the air,
 before they settle down to war-torn land.

— Richard Krohn

B"H

LEAVINGS FROM THE REBBE'S TABLE

I gaze in silence as he concentrates,
 Takes a white linen handkerchief from the inner pocket
 of his black suit
 And spreads it carefully on the palm of his left hand.
 In the center, a piece of carp in shades of black and gray.
 With his right thumb and finger he pinches off a little
 piece from the little piece of carp
 And slowly, carefully, places it on my palm, as if to say,
 "I have placed something precious on the palm of your
 hand,
 It is yours, take, eat."

I look, my stomach contracts,
 A feeling of nausea rises in the back of my throat,
 In another minute I'll throw up!
 I can't bring myself to put it in my mouth.

Suddenly the piece seems to move, opening a tiny
 mouth.
 As I gaze at it as if hypnotized, the piece seems to be
 whispering:
 "I am a small part of a great big gray-black carp that was
 cooked in a special pot in honor of the Sabbath.
 In honor of the Rebbe and the *tisch* that he held for his
 Hasidim. I was cooked with great care.
 On Shabbat I was present in the middle of the table, near
 the Rebbe and his followers.
 I was happy, I was excited, I knew that now the Rebbe
 would say a blessing over me, and I would be a
 blessed fish.
 The assembled followers would rise up, jostling each
 other, struggling, each Hasid wanting to receive a
 portion,
 Each Hasid wanting to be blessed...
 And your father made the effort, he sweated, he wanted
 to get a piece of the blessed carp.
 He succeeded, he wrapped me in a clean white linen
 handkerchief, gently and reverently."

I looked again at the revolting little piece of fish
 And put it in my mouth

I place my hand on the white stone monument

— Sari Kummer

ONCE

respects to Countee Cullen

Once driving down the Eastern Shore,
 my family on vacation
 in search of patriotic lore,
 the founding of our nation,

late '57, I was eight
 and hungry, thinking chicken,
 we spied a billboard of a plate
 and stopped at Billy's Kitchen.

A Jersey Jew, I'd never seen
 a scrawl that said Whites Only —
 my parents turned and got back in.
 The silent car was lonely.

I saw the whole of Williamsburg
 in costume for December.
 Of all the past I tried to learn,
 that sign's what I remember.

— Richard Krohn

AMERICAN HARBOR

All nine years of her
 hesitated on the gangplank
 willing the floor beneath
 to finally steady
 with promise of durability

looking on a bewildering world:
 swarming sinewy bodies
 towing and tying great ropes
 toiling to secure
 what had floated her here

America
what will you be
for me
over nine further winters?

for she could see no further
 than the golden bridge across the bay;
 know scent of sea
 caress of wind
 hair flying across eye and cheek;

a mother's rescuing hand
 leads her forward...
 finally

— Vera Haldy-Regier

THE CROW AND THE LONELY CHILD

What is given to us by open hands
is not asked for.

What is given is placed in our care
at unexpected times when clouds are changing
from clowns to foxes.

Who expects an apple to fall on us
when we walk in the orchard?

Who expects a tree to sprout in our sandbox
when we are at school?

What is given leaves an open space
in the silence: a space for our "Yes!"

(That insatiable three letter word,
the metaphor for God.)

What is given can be lost when we sleep
with a voiceless Raggedy Ann or
the Giant at the end of the Beanstalk.

It is when I walk alone, gifts are given.
They fill the footsteps with mint and
red-lipped poppies.

They appear on the path as freshly-lit fires,
as empty cocoons to rest in.

There was the lonely child in the empty house:
his coloring books full of scribbles
and misspelled words for family.

One day, a wise crow knocked at the door.

The lonely child answered.

Wise crow invited him to her nest.

The child saw eggs opening and life
without feathers emerging in that nest
of twigs and broken shells.

When wise crow returned the child
to his empty home, she left a single gift:
to recognize living in twigs and broken shells
is how one begins to sing and to be beautiful.

— James McGrath

Inspired by Margaret Atwood's "The Hurt Child," which may
be found at <https://theeverlastingfallout.com/hurt-child/>

AND HOW IT ALWAYS BROUGHT YOU SAFELY
HOME AGAIN*

That path, before the wolf.
Basket full, red cape swinging
as you skipped your way to Grandma's house
no matter the day, the season.
Then, you had reason to believe
a girl holds power in her life
if she is good and true and loving,
if she respects the trees and sky
that shines bright through their branches.

But all Time needs is one harsh moment
to trip you, rip your simple peace
to shredding threads of scarlet.
No matter you have said your prayers.
No matter you have helped your mother.
Ragged teeth wait where sweet flowers
seem a harmless happy gift,
and all you've known of who you are
disappears in one big bite.

— Katharyn Howd Machan

*last line of a poem by Barbara Crooker

SPEAKING OF CHILDREN

I am trying / to sell them the world.
— Maggie Smith, "Good Bones"

I used to do the same damn thing:
I told them just so much,
Thus sold the hope the world would bring
This, that, or such and such.

But lately what I want to tell
Concerns the world to come,
Since here and now is some hard sell:
The hell we all hail from.

— Jane Blanchard

SACRED DUTY

Chaplain and officer
in formal uniform
immobile in front seat
of a dark sedan
navigating an unpaved road
leaving a contrail of dust
obscuring the rear view

of the farm woman
with the service flag
gently draped
over her forearm
her free fingers
carefully outlining
the gold star

— Philip Venzke

GLANCE

The *chassen* and his *chaver*
bellow songs in elation and pound the *tish*.
Those standing sing till their ears ring
and clap till their palms sting.

The *chaver* glances at the *chassen*
who meets his eyes and nods once.
They jump up and a throng gathers
to dance the *chassen* out of the room,
a bobbing knot of locked arms and thrashing legs,
to meet his *kallah*
to start his life.

— Ken Seide

SARA'S TEARS

I say the *bracha* and drink her tears,
the *bracha* for tears of jubilation,
not the one for tears of affliction.
I sip them from her cheeks and lick them off her eyelids.
They enter me
become part of me
give me sustenance.

— Ken Seide

SOUL FOOD

What is a man to do in the middle of the night?
His wife is asleep his children in bed he
tosses and turns between the sheets
tries to pass the darkness until
the light, counts his well-ordered possessions:
food in television, necromancers in the radio,
soothsayers in the newspapers, grass in the bread box
a whisper of prayer in the mobile phones
hundreds of unread books
unpaid bills, forms
unwritten scripts.

What is a man to do in the middle of the night?
It's already the second watch maybe the third
he no longer remembers where they are holding
no one will arrive suddenly in the night
and outside the buildings are similar.
He turns to look at the children
trying not to fall among the toys
there is food in the television in the reruns
he is tempted to turn on the gas
in the middle of the night to sear eggplants
once he read in a cookbook the instructions
for preparing lettuce: "When you come to the heart,
just tear it with your hands."

— Amichai Chasson
translated from the Hebrew by Esther Cameron

FAMILY TREES

to the memory of HFL

"The apple doesn't fall far from the tree —
unless it falls in a completely different orchard,"
observed my beloved friend, the apple of so many eyes,
who fell and then rose gloriously high
in an orchard far from the mother
who unaccountably produced her.
Why did all of the other apples
stay close to that tree
never growing up, never looking out,
so much like the parent
whose roots and tongue were always loose?

But this daughter thrives in her new orchard,
delighting in her unstunted, unstinting new space.
And sharing the fruit of what she learned the hard way
because of those she will not name.

— Heather Dubrow

CLOCK

Survival scars are sometimes seen.
A granddaughter, two plus pounds
eleven weeks premature, struggled.
Fluid flowed through IV tubes.
Rabbi gave her name as life, death,
death, life, sounded in our heads.

Currently she drapes a medical school
stethoscope around her adult shoulders.
Her fingers can feel thicker skin under
armpits once assaulted by equipment
reminders of aiding physical existence.
tick-tock, tick-tock
Some scars signify victory.

— Lois Greene Stone

DIDN'T WE KNOW

Didn't we know when we wore black dresses
and ran through Saks Fifth Avenue
that it would all come to nothing.

When you held me close in your trenchcoat
kissed me then spun away
you didn't know
what came after would come to nothing.

We didn't know any of it
I'm going to live to be very old
and my memories will fade.

— Lois Michal Unger

LANE

They're closing up the lane that I've been in.
The signs say that I must slow down.
The traffic's thick there, but shall make a place
for me until construction's done.

It's one thing when 'two roads diverge.' I've differed
and smelled some rubber burns en route,
not minding the sparseness of mass attention,
enjoying an abandon's pursuit.

Nor am I irked re-learning to downshift
at the imminent convergence of a while
though I don't even know whether the impasse
will last for leagues, forever, or a mile.

For coping's coping. I can cope with crises.
Man's an adapter — so am I,
and only fear, should my old lane reopen:
Will I shift back, or grow too slow to try?

— James B. Nicola

TALKING TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Heed well;
for my words are but a concept in your young mind.
We cannot pass through the barrier of time. I am

a memory that you do not know. Looking back
many years, we traveled seventy journeys around

this sun; seventy-one, counting heartbeats within our
mother's womb. Remembering all the tears shed; all

the mountains scaled; all the sins buried deep.
I tell you, do not look back, do not fear the future,
do not give up hope. Your passion and your desires
are held in a secret trove; hidden from all but you

and me. They are not to be revealed to a hungry world,
ingesting each weary breath. Past-lives tumbling off the

edge of an eyeblink. It is too late for regrets. It is never
too late to change. We have shared a history that no

one else can share. We touched the sky, we sailed
through
clouds. Icy oceans held us up, as we were about to sink.

We loved, we lost, we survived this far. We do not see
where we are going, but we know where we have been.

Listen, yes listen to the voice within. Your future is my
past.

— Christine Tabaka

THE HOUSE WHERE HE ONCE LIVED

inspired by Robert Frost's "Ghost House"

The house where he once lived still stands. Empty.
He wonders if its rooms yet remember
his son's singing, his daughter's laughter; if
pink and white azaleas even now line
the stone steps to purple lilacs planted
by his children for their mother; if red
roses, beneath which lies a much-loved dog
will bloom next spring. He sees the setting sun,
the coming darkness; aims memory's lamp
at twilight, carefully tending its wick.

— Gershon Ben-Avraham

DEEP IN MY COUCH

Deep in my couch
of magnetic dust,
I am a bearded old man.
I pull out my last bundle
of memories beneath
my pillow for review.
What is left, old man,
cry solo in the dark.
Here is a small treasure chest
of crude diamonds, a glimpse
of white gold, charcoal,
fingers dipped in black tar.
I am a temple of worship with trinket dreams,
a tea kettle whistling ex-lovers boiling inside.
At dawn, shove them under, let me work.
We are all passengers traveling
on that train of the past —
senses, sins, errors, or omissions
deep in that couch.

— Michael Lee Johnson

UNDERSTANDING TIME

Looking at an hour glass with congested sand
 An old man admires glass curves and a clock with no hands
 It's odd how the sand falls upon itself
 Like pouring water into a pitcher, not knowing from
 where the rise
 The mass builds without a single outstanding grain
 It's majestic Moroccan desert origin a tributary to itself
 For him, the emptying funnel's pace is exhausting
 How will he finish in time that which his time masoned
 He contemplates flipping his fate to a fuller bottom
 Yet to lose its fullness, is to lose the oneness of life
 The old man returns his eyes to his parchment
 He dips his quill in the velvet ink and he'll finish what
 he can
 Or it will finish him, but he will leave something more than
 Sand.

— Ophir J. Bitton

LANDMARK

If I find my way back to the mountain blue
 will I find you
 standing hand on hip
 watching clouds stalk the easy spring sky

If I find the house with the broken porch
 with the soft chimes swaying like dancers in jewels
 if I find the right road and the right turn
 will anyone be home

I can wear the same colors gray and blue
 white linen pants of centuries worn
 the same hue
 colors rushing through paths of June green and
 tumbling roses

The years are gone
 my body sore and worn down
 you in repose below the once tender ground
 and I lost that landmark, the bluish mountain that
 guards my early heart.

— Susan Oleferuk

WINE MEMORIES

A graceful swirl
 of Cabernet
 dervishes me down
 to Grandpas' cellar
 dark shrouded
 pungent
 sweaty barrels
 stained red

A coquettish
 swirl
 of Chardonnay
 and
 I feel his
 velvet eyes smile
 through legs
 transparent
 dancing around
 the glass

I sip
 Pinot Noir
 recline
 impromptu
 in Provence vineyard
 Taste lacy flowers
 waltzing
 with wild fruit

disco swirl
 whiff
 aeriaded memories
 Another sip

— Marianne Lyon

CHOCK FULL O'NUTS

I will never forget the Seder tables of my childhood
 with Grandpa Sam leading the service and
 with the ubiquitous Chock Full O'Nuts Haggadah
 at every plate.
 "Chock Full O'Nuts is the heavenly coffee;
 better coffee a millionaire's money can't buy."
 No.
 Wait a minute.
 It wasn't Chock Full O'Nuts.
 It was Maxwell House.
 I think it was Maxwell House.
 It was definitely a coffee company.
 I can see it:
 It had a blue cover with a round silvery logo of the
 coffee company.
 Maybe it *was* Chock Full O'Nuts.
 Damn!

I am 64 years old but age is only a number
and what really matters is how you feel
and I feel like I am about 104
and senile
and I must know which coffee company made our
Haggadahs.
But why must I know?

— Pesach Rotem

BLIND TRAVEL

Every year without knowing it I have passed the day
When the last fires will wave to me . . .
W.S. Merwin, "For the Anniversary of My Death"

I carry the flesh that carries me
this far from the womb
and somewhere ahead
somewhere unknown.

Sunlight and shadow, rain
and after and earth tuning
about an impossible flaming.
In youth I imagined stepping
above gravity's drag and
becoming god or some
lesser hero of fame.

Only rarely did I feel time's pursuit,
its reaching for my proud neck,
its hurrying me along as though
for. some purpose.

Now I sense mostly a ghost in the
family mirror, cloud shape
weightless and unsteady.
I no longer ignore the smirking
calendar or scoff at what
it offers.

I walk the unfamiliar corridors
of my years pausing at countless
closed doors not daring to open any,
uncertain of the one waiting,
my name in its grasp.

— Doug Bolling

[untitled]

The crematory smokestacks dominate the landscape.
Right next door on the same grounds
are Family Care Housing Facilities.
The seniors can view the smoke
from their windows.
Sometimes they can smell the burning.

— Vincent J. Tomeo

LET FLY

for Arnie on the loss of Ora

Let fly the petals of the dogwood tree
Their pent-up demand for earth met at last.
Elegant streamers of pink and white translucence
Gentle against the steel gray firmament,
A lilting motet of wind, sky and tree.

Letters that rise from the granite face
Of a funeral monument, grim reminder
That what's past is past. The story of a teacher
Compelled to teach, his inner fire made manifest
By his Roman tormentors, Haninah ben Teradion
Died wrapped in the holy Torah. His eyes saw
Only sacred letters rising to the heavens.

Back home rose petals litter our front walk.
Beauty stalks those who would see her.
Two teachers memorialized in granite, one
Whose soul has flown its mortal coop
Some months past. The other, her husband who,
In one hundred twenty years, will join her, sits
And contemplates the beauty riven in stone.

— Michael Diamond

[untitled]

The fear of death is the fear of not
Having lived. Otherwise,
The mind is clean. Out comes
The moon again: death that cries

Does not exist, that drags its longings
In the sand, that, the killer,
Destroys eyes, and sets the wasp
To disembowel the caterpillar,

If you have lived, then why not sing?
How great is God that I have done
My little life, what a sky,
Whose stars are bright in unison.

— Yaacov David Shulman

ALBUM

If I had been the clock to tell your time,
 You never had grown old, but as I see
 You in this faded print – immune to Time
 And change – you had remained, forever free
 From Nature's harsh necessities. But I – beside
 You there – need only now to look into
 My face to see how vainly we have tried
 Withholding Nature's payments, long past due.
 And though we can conceal some change by slight
 Of hand, yet there are things that do not change –
 Those qualities of mind and heart that sight
 Cannot confuse, nor seasons rearrange.
 Your kindness, grace and charm of wit are such:
 They are the soul of you Time cannot touch.

– Frank Salvidio

TODD, AERIALIZED

This is the sound of four faces speaking:
 Tears in an armchair. The riven father.
 It was a lightning strike. Zai gezunt.
 Taken together. An undifferentiated mass of sorrow.

Touch down lightly, O four-faced one,
 The air around you is on fire and a thousand eyes
 Turn at the fall of your foot.

Grief is a leonine thing, the noble creature bereaved
 Drenches earth to wash away death's stain.
 Two fans to flutter in the mist before her eyes,
 Two fans to drape the deadened body.

Hard mourning becomes the stone ox
 Still in his traces, caught mid furrow
 Collapsed on his fetlocks, hindquarters
 Ground to a halt.

Brother eagle takes to ten thousand feet
 Searching, searching for signs, for signifiers.
 Two wings beating against the nothing,
 Two pinions grasping air.

Bereavement is the mother of sorrows
 Most human, the touch of earth itself.
 Two words from the shiny black hollows of her eyes,
 Two more from the ageless heart. Zai gezunt.

*

– Michael Diamond

III. Now, Israel

PREVAILED

Jacob with his staff,
 alone in the camp.
 All that is dear to him,
 wives, children, flocks,
 all he brought from Haran,
 across the river.

He stands gazing
 at the other side,
 all he loved are there,

his father's home,
 his mother,
 in his mind he saw them,
 his twin – his brother,
 his strong, red-haired brother.

he saw the tent,
 blind Isaac at death's door,
 he felt the goat skin
 rough and raw,
 bloody cuffs and collar.

He struggled with God
 and with self and
 prevailed.

Now, Israel.

– Michael E. Stone

KEEN

It was so long ago
 Only a few do truly know
 what happened in this place
 here where ironic flowers grow
 fed by the stench of death
 killed by the Master Race
 It was so long ago
 Only a few do truly know.

Books and monuments stand erect
 Their footnotes can dissect the pain
 and walls of stone themselves will weep
 The oldest who do yet remain
 will never get a full night's sleep.
 Their nightmares still dismember
 those bodies in a heap.

The years have quickly gone
 The sun and snow have followed them

where bones can still condemn
and violence with its tears can stun.

It was so long ago
Only a few do truly know
what happened in this place
where here ironic flowers grow
fed by the stench of death
killed by the Master Race
it was so long ago
Only a few do truly know.

— Estelle Gershgoren Novak

WHO WILL HEAR THE WHIRLWIND WEEP?

Surviving, Orpheus knew returning alone
from flesh-fueled fires to a deaf, dissonant earth
that the calling sea, wind whispering trees, a stone's
silence, a child's cry — no songs could soothe

the hard truth known — nothing would sound the same.
The rhythms of hope, listening skies, once blue —
all harmony was lost. We perished name-
less — how could he turn away? On fiery wings we flew,

bodies of ash — our sparks filled the burning night.
Sealed in airless cattle cars, lives torn apart —
no songs nor screams could survive the fires. Our weight-
less dead, silenced chambers of despair seized our hearts.

All whom we loved, heartrent last breaths, all hope
held perished. Oh who will hear the whirlwind weep?

— Amos Neufeld

HOMELAND

According to historians, the Jew
left his homeland, being three times exiled:
Assyria, Babylon, Rome. (A few
remained throughout the centuries.) Reviled

or tolerated, strangers in strange lands,
settling, wandering again, as new kings
conquered their new homes, issued new commands.
(They'd conquered tribes themselves and knew these things

could be expected.) My family found
themselves in England, in all appearance
like other citizens, felt safe and sound;
but in the Thirties, my British parents

heard neighbors yell at them, "You dirty Yid,
Go back to Palestine!" And so, I did.

— David Shaffer

THE LIGHT RAIL

Jerusalem, 2012

The future was a long time coming
not quietly from out of the blue
but with dirt and dust and grime
curses and cries and woe,
and hopelessly behind schedule.
The artist's rendition was a joke —
nothing but empty promises
and we were angry for the suffering.

Then one cloudless morning we awoke
and the future appeared,
straight as an arrow, silver as a bullet
sleek and shining as a leviathan
riding a wave from out of the deep,
powerful and fast along invisible tracks,
yet hardly above the sound of a hum,
without a blemish on the cold, clean metal,
pristine and glistening in the sun.

Sliding between the old stone buildings,
mocking the cracked pavement, the faded
green awnings, the tired store fronts,
the racks of second hand clothes,
the litter of coffee cups, yesterday's newsprint —
it was cocky and defiant and terribly new
and so effortlessly beautiful.

We marveled at this miracle,
pronouncing it "phenomenal" and "incredible"
feeling ourselves a little bit shabby, not so graceful,
too bitter and heavy hearted, too weary and cynical.
Perhaps it was time we parted from the past,
the burden of that sad sack of regrets
weighing us down, holding us back
that we insist on dragging behind us.

You and I with our palpable sadness —
felt suddenly blessed with an instant of forgetfulness,
all of us feeling a little bit smart, a little less old,
a little bit proud, impatient to press ahead,
our eyes opened wide, our ticket in hand,
amazed to be along for the ride,
as we take the step up, and go on.

— Roberta Chester

LIVING STONES – TOWARDS HANUKKAH

Ancient trees and moss-covered stones
mark the battlegrounds and graves,
Here the heroes, the brave Maccabees
Stood, fought, fell, stood again,
united in their faith and loyal
in life and death to the living tree, the Torah,
with arrows and boulders, soil and bones, they
speak to us of rededication
in the rock-filled fields of old Modi'in

Clusters of grapes, vines and leaves
carved in caves and lintel stones,
in Sanhedriyah and Yerushalayim,
ancient springs, Gihon and Shiloach,
plow paths through streets of stone,
above, on the holy Temple Mount,
still echoes the steps, hidden flame,
where Avraham walked and worshipped
on the high places of Har Moriah

– Brenda Appelbaum-Golani
19 October 2021

YIDDISH

Yiddish,
You lived across the sea
In *die alte haim*, the Old Country,
In a kingdom that is no more.
Come to my country
To teach me the *lieder*, the songs
You once sang
And the *niggunim*, the tunes
Your clarinetists and your violinists used to play.

Speak to me, Yiddish,
I fear I am becoming as mute as you,
Another *Bontshe Schweig*, Bontshe the Silent.
Look, I have brought you a buttered roll,
I have brought you raisins and almonds
And a little white goat to sleep under your bed.
Yiddish, *mein tei'ereh*, my precious one,
Light your *Shabbos* candles
And let me hear your voice.

And dance with me, Yiddish, we shall dance together
Like a *chasan* and *kolleh*, a bridegroom and bride,
With only a handkerchief between us,
Gelibte meine, my beloved one.

Zog mir, tell me, please –
What light in the night-sky will the world know
And who shall pull its tides
Without the *levoneh*, the moon, of a Yiddish word?

I wander in a castle's unweeded garden,
In an untended orchard, in a forest,
And cannot find my way.
Perhaps you can be my guide,
Shaine Yiddish, die bas-melech,
Beautiful Yiddish, princess –
For I am lost,
Lost in translation.

– Yakov Azriel

For Avrom Sutzkever's poem "Yiddish," see
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTPHGZdA8fw>

LETTER TO LEAH GOLDBERG

The beauty of your longing
To the delight of the soles of His feet
Upon the earth that you are
On your living body
In the light of the breathing land
You the earth absorbing
The feet of God
The dew of heaven
The passion of the reviving people

– Imri Perel

translation from Hebrew: EC, Sarita Perel

A BACH PRELUDE

Valley of grain and grove of olives
Valley of wheat the color of unbleached linen
And Gadi and Zvi in the splendor of their courage
After all we're bound to meet again, without battle and
fire
We shall yet return to Dothan Valley
– Dalia Ravikovich, "Dothan Valley"

Runner running in Dothan Valley
Toward the dreams in the pits what are you seeking
A Bach prelude
In the pit of the pump
A convoy of half-track for the evacuation approaches
And we shall all return
And enter like an opening prayer into the world of
Egypt
And hard labor
And a cry for help
Playing heavenward
On the banks of the valley
(Gadi and Zvi in the splendor of their courage)

When the preludes
Grow weary and the energies
Softly overflow
Even Joseph and his brothers and the pit
That dreams
That weeps

– Yoram Nissinovitch

translated from Hebrew by EC and Tirtsa Posklinsky-
Shehori

ON THE PLAINS OF KIDRON

Until that Sabbath holy day,
I was ignorant of the story of the boy,
Josiah, eight years of age, escorted
upon the death of a father, ruthless, vain,
crowned king to advance a regime heartless
for certain citizens' lives, made unbearable.

In time a servant of the new king knows
to retrieve a parchment concealed until now
in the King's Temple. With courage, he presents
the sacred script to the king, grown in years,
who reads what plainly shocks, opens his eyes
to grasp the scale of his father's unjust laws

carried into his own sovereign rule —
cruellest of all treatment of the Jews.
Not until that hour would he know
that he too is a Jew — grandson of the righteous
Hezekiah. Overtaken, shaken in mind,
his heart seized, soiled to the core. Whereon

he rises, commands the restoration of his kingdom.
Burning the idols, figures craven to the Baal,
and its degenerative politic. You, too,
may rejoice as I did in this tale
of hand-me-down wickedness, father-to-son,
duly healing in time, on the Plains of Kidron

by a king, who merits his name, Josiah . . .
— Reizel Polak

HASHEM

There is, let's say,
all at once
about the ankles
the merest whispered
air of elsewhere
to suggest a door
left open in another
room, some subtle
violation of the house,
its bolted barriers
breached, its dearly
harvested warmth
escaping into the night.

Or there is perhaps
only the memory
of remembering

but no precise recollection
of that three-bar melody
from maybe JP Sweelink
or the late John Prine,
a simple air that hangs
like a wasp's nest
abandoned in the brain,
or of the sound made
by the strange name
of that little village
just outside, was it
Taxco? or no,
perhaps Tashkent?

And there is
that sudden plosive
moan of a city bus
in the rainy street,
in each *es gibt*
of every here and now
and all the errant syllables
that surround you
in the breath, the breach,
the sigh, the song,
where all the whispered world
has found you.

— D.B. Jonas

BS"D, 29 Tishri 5782

Rabbi Elazar HaModai says "and a layer of dew went up"
The words of prayer arose from our ancestors
Who lay like dew on the ground
— Mekhilta De-Rabbi Ishmael, Beshalah,
Masekhta de-Vayissa 3

The rustle of willows waved in the wind, wave after
wave
In a gentle movement the ends of their leaves were
slightly folded
Dance steps of hush-murmur that took place just now
A thin singing dawned in a muted dampness
A tremor of encounter, now it is rising.

What is it, where is it from
The same that sprung from the note of the pleading
heart
A new category enters the lexicon of man:
Who brings forth bread from the word.

Sate me with the dew of Your mercy
In the doors of my heart I shall wedge an opening
Day after day.

— Tziporah Faiga Lifshitz

BEFORE THE LAW

to the memory of Emmanuel Levinas

Before the law, I am no rectitude.
I stand upright only by lacking
The capacity to fall.
Before the law, my native irresponsibility
Has no option
But to respond, and my response
Is neither acceptance nor refusal,
Not acquiescence, not surrender,
But simple consequence, pure substance,
An inescapable identity prior to all decision,
Older than being. It is the vestige, the urgency
Of a bygone commitment, a trysting place
Always forgotten, a time of assignation
Always just elapsed, depositing me
Alone in this specific place and time,
This investiture, concretion or vocation
That is the flesh and bone of me.

Before the law, I am cast out
From all home and hearth, exposed
To the ruthless demand
Of whatever is not me, of a disproportion
In things, in the imperious indigence
Of the mouth of another,
A proximity that is speaking,
Or maybe summoning,
An Other that I cannot refuse, an other
To which I am forever subject,
Yet will always manage to ignore,
Because ignorance is in my power.

Before the law, I am subject
To the ceaseless inspiration
Of "someone in the proximity of someone,"
Solely responsible, yet ever oblivious
To the intimations of an impersonal intimacy,
The fugitive whisper of my recent displacement,
The "creak of furniture in the quiet night."

Before the law I am powerless,
For the law is itself powerless, and calls only
To that which is powerless in us,
Silently, urgently, demanding of us
Through a thousand thousand
Imperative acts of righteousness
Only that we love, and that we
Pause to hear the speaking of the world,
Pause to acknowledge irredeemable loss, and live
In celebration, outside all belief
And faith and certitude, renouncing
All nouns and fetishes, the graven images
That return me only
To myself. For the law demands only

The improbable, only the impossible,
Demands only this imperious,
This unreasonable
:Love.

— D.B. Jonas

THE TREE OF LIFE

I search for truth-
to know the essence of things
but life goes on and I never reach my goal.
It eludes me to grasp it in my mind
it seems that I pursue an infinite light.
I know logically that truth is near
it is an extension of fearing God
and following His ways.
Yet the thread of the story gets lost in translation
under my own interpretation
so near and yet I miss it
my inner soul knows me well
and it rings the tiny bell of the conscience
Yet I fight it with my emotions
make excuses and create gaps
pass over the gold and search shale for pyrite
What is real and clear is a guidance book
with the depth of written and oral Torah
As I drown in the tempest of my desires
I should but pray and reach out
to grasp the Tree of Life and survive.

— Hayim Abramson

FLUTTERING DOVE

inspired by Leonard Cohen's song "It's Torn"

Beside the asphalt crowned with scars
I saw her fluttering
One wing upon the pavement drooped
the other wing — brightening

I remembered her far different,
Much purer, from days of old
Behind her the blue of youthful skies
Beneath her topaz, ruby and gold.

I remembered her sitting
on the cape of kings of yore,
Pulsating flames of prophecy.
Carrying in her claws a scroll of war

And beside the asphalt fluttering to death
I almost turned away from there
I wouldn't have known her without her cooing
if I hadn't seen the seal on her

I remembered her singing, cooing lament
On the day of the darkened sun
In ruin, in fire, in the books of old
The whiteness of her beauty shone

I remembered her wandering
through mountain haze and desert sun
The fires of the kingdoms hunting her
She traded her feathers for a flaxen gown

I almost passed by her fluttering wings
I did not recognize her on the ground.
In this land beauty dwells in them all
But the pathways to love have still to be found

Beside the asphalt still she is screaming
As she dies and revives, dies and revives
The thousand songs and prayers of longing
That her beauty might shine for my eyes

— Imri Perel
translation from Hebrew: EC, Sarita Perel

ON THE EVE OF MASHIACH

On the eve of Mashiach

We are woken up
tested and
Retested
Re-think
Everything

We are alone
And surrounded
Our books — our friends
The sages of old
Typed pages
From the Rabbis of today
Our sofa —
Enveloping
Like our closest family

Need metaphors!!

The mundane that ties us to life
Like chassidim eating at a shiur
To keep their
neshama in their bodies

Pessach
Freedom
NOW?!

The birds are free to fly
Call to one another
Meet and mingle on the branches
Of electric poles
Stop signs

Twitter across unseen borders
Politically free

Hashem is talking straight at me:
Pull away from what was
Go inside
Find yourself
Bring it all out
I am me

Without toys strewn all over the floor
Without something in the oven
Three pots simmering on the stove
Who will eat all this food?
No more background scenery
Malls, cafes

Sweep away the
distractions
Once removed
Is this mourning?
Anticipation?

I remember to breathe
As I gaze at my
Burning bush
This could be it!

Our conclusions
Are now our starting
points
Our judgments
Softening
We know, we finally do
know
That everyone is doing
Their un-clichéd best.

It starts with us

With me

In our hearts
Where only we know the truth
We now recognize
recognize
That we may have been
Wrong
There's no going back

In my heart
I

right

Have we changed?
Has anyone really changed

— Mindy Aber Barad Golembo

JONAH, HIS LEVIATHAN

He does not know this fact / who dwells serenely on the dry land

– The Seafarer

Sang we then our mountain canticles, brave threnodies of whippoorwill, of chorused cricket, and sang full loud the strong songs of cypress and the ash.
For we were lost a full three days within the fish.

It's then we heard the vivid tongue and dreamed a livid heaven, a flame that drove us onto burning sand like sailors left to wander under shipwrecked skies.
For there we lay a full three days in the furnace of the fish.

We kindled too our candle in the blue light, blue not like lapis, sky or sea but blue as sapphires are, a temple-blue as of the anemone and raven's wing.
For we sought sanctuary a full three days in the twilight of this fish.

The fish was larger than the world entire, his blue a boundless firmament without foundation, a north without south, a west without east,
where we lay dreaming many days within the bowel of the beast.

Awakened in the belly of the night we found we'd lost our road forever in that heedless blue, forsaken the people-purposed shore and every admonition of the flesh.
For we'd at long last found our sanctuary, cradled in that fish.

– D.B. Jonas

IV. ConVERSEations

We begin this section with a song by Hadassah Haskale, a former contributor who passed away in the summer of 2021, and a sonnet written in response to the song.

I woke to hear them sing the light in

I woke to hear them sing the light in One began one

begins One began one begins To sing!

BIRDSONG

I woke to hear them *sing* the light in
I woke to hear them sing the light *in*
One began one begins
One began one begins to sing!
Try a note in morning dark
I will answer where I am
I am!
Try a note in morning dark
I will answer where I am
I woke to hear them *sing* the light in
I woke to hear them sing the light in

– Hadassah Haskale

TO A FELLOW-POET

As after midnight's muteness the first birds call to one another and seem to make the space between them, even so the words within a poem call each other, wake each other to a life before unknown. And should there be an end to this, a stop, at the poem's edge a boundary- or gravestone? Should we put love in quarantine, and lop, before they touch, association's trees? I hope not so; but in a pleasant shade woven of all our words to walk at ease, delighting each in what the other said, would be the highest art and truest praise of God whose life quickens each leaf, each phrase.

– Esther Cameron

OUT MY WINDOW

after Howard Nemerov's "View from an Attic Window"

When I look out my window or
go out my front or any door,
I'm looking at or going to
the very same outside as you.
You could be miles away, or more –
time zones, millennia; this is still true.

There's part of us that's not within
such walls or windows, nor our skin.
It goes and reaches, unlike windows,
walls, or doors, which close and open.
"Soul," it's sometimes called: the part
of us not here, but full of hope,
just as the body's fueled by heart.
The former is the metaphysical;
the physical's what "is."
The veil between them is as thin
and light as any veil might be –
so light it may be easily
lifted in love, romance, dance, prayer, or poetry.

The heart of me beyond these eyes,
the white space that surrounds these lines,
the memories of valentines,
the thing that lives when something dies,
are something like that vast outdoors:
All One. And mine is quite the same as yours.

– James B. Nicola

WINDOW POEM

Foundation work cracked
the rippled pane
in our basement –

marks from glass
laid in an oven
to flatten.

Now, the new window
is perfect
and clean –

as if you are looking
straight out
at Earth and sky.

Nothing between
you and the stars
at night.

It seems
an easy escape
from these old, brick walls –
not one that would cut,
and then scar.

– Tony Reeve

In response to Wendell Berry's "Window Poems," and
excerpt from which can be found here
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=30905>

OFTEN I AM PERMITTED TO RETURN TO A RIVER
after Robert Duncan

where white lotus blossoms, strung on scarlet roots,
chase dragonflies on summer afternoons. It is a place
both of the mind and outside of it, a thought sunk in
nature

that emerges, fully- or half-formed, depending on
the mood of the day. Sometimes thunderstorms
blanket the earth with terrifying darkness, a thick rain

pelts the trees, fields and houses.
Sometimes the river floods and spills over
its banks, drowning wildflowers as thoughts

drift off to faraway places. They emerge in a new
world of the mind. Sometimes they begin to sing
newly-remembered choruses, under distant suns.

Often I am permitted to return to a river
which nourishes and fills the heart's cave,
ebbs and flows, out to the world again.

– Elizabeth Tornes

Cf Robert Duncan
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46317/often-i-am-permitted-to-return-to-a-meadow>

THIRTEEN WHITE BIRDS

after Wallace Stevens' "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"

Fairy tern	needle bill black sphere eyes ridiculous nest on a tropical twig a life at sea, parenthood.
Mute Swan	push of a leg, bend of a neck, arch of wing bill of red; you merge with your neck's bow, dabble together, hiss – together.
Great White Egret	white angles, aigrettes like fluff etched in, you mark the fields and rivers with your oval body and neck of long light.
Leucistic Blackbird	the <i>tchook</i> , the raising tail the <i>plink – plink</i> of roosting, and the song: evening. Yet – unworldly – yellow bill and eye of black.
Ross's Gull	bobber on water, swimmer, in storms on the wing, on ice floes you rest, and summer dawn tints you as long-awaited spring lights
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	cutter of fences, you shine in Texan light: poised, feathers, white wings that pull that tail like ornate swash across a page
Rock Ptarmigan (winter)	I saw a black beak, black eye, red ring on the Schilthorn glacier that flew away
Gyrfalcon	fresh-in from Iceland, across the Loch of Spiggie streak of snow, streak of lightning thunders through the golden plover
Siberian Crane (Omid)	I keep returning it's my place but it's always empty, oh, there's ducks and geese and things, but no more dancing.
White Bellbird	Loudest door – unhinging – bellbird moving sideways, forwards, building a redoubt – A castle comes to the forest of Caracarai
Snowy Owl	Pile of snow with lava flakes stares, orange-eyed; flips into the air, over tussocks, cotton grass, tips its head over a lemming – brakes.
White Conella	sidles over, chews my ear hangs upside down on the sunflower head drops with a screech – crest Radium red.
Whooper Swan	a swirl of snow, a triangle of yellow fiercely together in the piles of storm, white is the white on whitest

ON THE COLLECTED POEMS OF RUPERT BROOKE

A fly spared him the handicaps of fame,
 His mastery sealed with a little bite.
 The fever did not leave him time to write
 A single line devised to make a name.
 The words we have from him are just the same
 As he first chose. No pundit found them trite.
 No critic panned them for a fancied slight.
 No helpful editor improved their aim.
 Before he could be misled he was gone,
 Leaving this modest book of hopeful song
 To lend us respite from our dreadful news.
 Weight does not save work from oblivion,
 But this light beauty shall be treasured long,
 A monument to his unsullied muse.

— Lionel Willis

GO GENTLE VILLANELLE

a reply to Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle"

The poet raged. He had no need to pray
 for gentleness when exiting the light,
 that peaceful sleep would mark the close of day.

He never met with friends at a café
 wondering if a firebomb would ignite.
 The poet raged. He had no need to pray

terrorists would not shoot him on his way,
 his child would safely from each bus alight,
 that peaceful sleep would mark the close of day,

he did not need to find words to convey
 his thankfulness at reaching one more night.
 The poet raged. He had no need to pray.

We rage at those who slaughter, burn and slay,
 who target innocents with dynamite
 where peaceful sleep should mark the close of day,

we rage when mothers die, children at play,
 not for old men whose lives were full and bright.
 The poet raged? He had no need to. Pray
 that peaceful sleep will mark the close of day.

— Judy Koren

NOTE TO E.D.

The reverie alone may have to do
 Since bees are few.

— Esther Cameron

TO MAKE A PRAIRIE, 21ST CENTURY VERSION
 after Emily Dickinson, "To Make a Prairie"

To make a prairie takes a clover and one bee
 multiplied in the mind
 by all the bees and flowers we cannot find
 no longer see
 must recreate from memory
 of strolling through meadows of summer sun
 which will be gone forever when not one
 bee shall remain.
 How shall we then explain
 what bees once were when bee-hum filled the air
 when bees were everywhere?

— Judy Koren

AFTER HERBERT

inspired by "The Flower"

A bushel of crackling leaves and shadows shook,
 A maple's deep within: Then wiggled out,
 A liquid drop of fur from bushy spout.
 Though brush and trees revealed a glimpse of brook,
 The squirrel preferred a saucered basil plant.
 She bent her acorn head as one in prayer
 Before the tinted algal water there:
 A stutter-step of patterned, hesitant
 Partaking; stopped; looked up, a flickering stare;
 Then bowed her head again, resumed her drink.

A penitent, too, I kneel at your heart's brink,
 A broken face, a what without a where.
 I sip the water there and am relieved,
 The sum of all I've ever loved, and live.

— Stuart Lishan

I DON'T REMEMBER IF I WAS BORN

Was I born in light or in darkness?

— Rivka Miriam

Perhaps I was not born at all
in an hour when it was possible to distinguish
between light and dark
between blue and blue-green
between the contours of my body
and the transparent membrane called soul

Perhaps I was born in the hour of absolute chaos
like a doe screaming for water on a mountaintop
in a hidden crevice under the desk drawers
at the end of the fence on the border of Lebanon
on synthetic turf in the stadium
between the goalposts of the Ancient Holy One

Perhaps the serpent will come up to the birth-canal
and writhe between my legs till I am revealed:
a great stag with kindly eyes
and pleased to create new creatures.

— Amichai Chasson
translation from Hebrew: EC

[untitled]

Was I born in light or darkness...?
You were born in light, my mother answers,
folding her arms on her stomach
and groaning.
You were born in light with open windows
and people in colorful clothes were hurrying in the street
and talking a lot
in many tongues from many mouths...
I was born in light, I say,
and so I close my eyes,
Mother, and reach out my hand
to feel your mouth,
so as to come to you like a blind man
in the dark.

— Rivka Miriam
translation from Hebrew: EC

AGNONESQUE AGONIES

I sought a whole loaf

not too sweet
not bitter
not too long
not short
not too heavy
not light
not too hot
not cold
not too soft
not hard
not too healthy
not harmful
not too fresh
not stale
not too tasty
not tasteless

Shall I find it at last?

— Araleh Admanit
translation from Hebrew: EC

(inspired by S. Y. Agnon's story "A Whole Loaf," which
is summarized here
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/whole-loaf-pat-shelema-s-y-agnon-1951>)

HALEVY ON THE SHORE

And in my going/out to meet you/I found you approaching me.
Yehuda HaLevy (c.1075-1141)

Not mind, not heart, but only
this urgent salt responds. Only
what is not my own, only
the moonstruck blood,
only the coursing fluids of me,
not I, can hear this imprecation
of the roads, cannot fail to answer
the churn and slap of calamitous waters,
cannot cease to dream the mournful buoy's clank
out past the harbor fog, beckoning
the tossing surge, the bone-bitter night,
where every compass needle freezes.

Only the unquiet blood can know,
not I, it's always not yet home, never yet
nestled in secure repose, not,
like me, in search of rest at all,
but headed out to meet the drowsy jolt
and sway, the maternal rhythms
of the goat-track, the cart-track,
the restless, cradling deep.

Not refuge, not destination, but only
 this departure is our Zion, the unsettling
 of all belonging, the journey out, away
 from those sanctuaries that without fail
 invite the pounding, pre-dawn visitor,
 observe without fail the furtive flutter
 of the neighbors' curtains that secure
 their darkened rooms along the unlit street.

While my yearning heart and mind
 envision a return to where
 they've never been, it is the circling blood
 returns me always to this very place,
 the place and time that is my chosen-ness,
 my own companionless exposure to this
 unquiet dream, this dream that chooses me,
 that changes me, to this returning
 I can never cease to dream, a returning
 I can never know, yet never cease to be.

— D.B. Jonas

COMING HOME

Amor, ahora nos vamos a la casa / Love, we are going home now
 —Pablo Neruda

My treasured soul, let us return home
 It has been an elevating journey
 From winding trails to mountain peaks
 From silent deserts to singing rivers
 Regal trees accompanying us
 As soldiers on guard
 Monitoring our safety
 The steadfast redwood, the evergreen and eucalyptus
 Thank you, dear creatures, for your loyal camaraderie
 For your cooling shades, your whispering lullabies
 Now we bid you farewell
 As we turn into our own courtyard
 Vines overhanging our *Sukkot***
 Almond blossoms greeting us at our doors
 — Esther Fein

** Sukkot— huts constructed for the holiday of Sukkot,
 commemorating G-d's protection of the Jews' wanderings
 in the desert before arriving to the Promised Land

"AMOR, AHOR NOS VAMOS A LA CASA"

Love, we are going home now
 Where the vine climbs the stairs;
 Before you arrive, the naked summer
 Will have arrived in your chamber on feet of
 honeysuckle.

Our wandering kisses will travel through the world:
 Armenia, thick drop of exhumed honey,
 Ceylon, green dove, and the Yangtse that separates,
 With an antique patience, the days from the nights.

And how, beloved, over the sparkling sea
 We will return like two sightless birds to the wall,
 To the nest of the distant spring,

Because love cannot fly without stopping
 Our lives go to the wall or to the stones of the sea,
 To our own territory our kisses have returned.

— Pablo Neruda
 translation from the Spanish: EC

EARTH, 2022

Wordsworth! Thou shouldst be living at this hour:
 The world doth need thee, she is a morass —
 For lately our discourse has become crass —
 And neutered is our creative power,
 We've taken Gradgrind's view of the flower:
 Made slaves to statistics, money, and math,
 In schools devoid of art and music class.
 The child is the father of the man, sour —
 Your voice taught us the breathings of our hearts,
 The spontaneous overflow of our soul;
 The rainbow in the sky that makes us whole;
 To observe divine nature and create,
 And elevate ourselves by making art —
 To leap up again before it's too late.

— A.A. Rubin

GETTING BACK INTO WORDSWORTH

How often has my spirit turned to thee!
 — William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few
 Miles Above Tintern Abbey"

Dear Wordsworth,

Yestereve (why did we drop
 that sweet and economical locution
 for our inept "yesterday evening?"),
 in the kitchen of a house that seems to wait
 unknowing for my father to return,
 I read aloud the lines that came to you
 beside the "sylvan Wye," where you went roaming
 with your "dear sister." Not with ease I read them:
 I am a Modern Poet after all,

and such expressions as "wild eyes" awaken the scoffer who, whether or not we like him, is well ensconced in all of us these days, and with him the regretful skeptic, versed in all we have been told concerning Nature – "red in tooth and claw," Tennyson wrote soon after you. And in me also lives a disappointed mystic, who when young desired likewise to be at one with Nature but always felt a barrier: could never shake off a tedious self-consciousness. Moreover, just that day I had perused some verses of the kind the wise admire these days, well guarded against any charge of mush or gush: so much so that at times they seem devoid of love for any thing in all the manifest universe, and only proud of the shrewdness of their unbelief. Surely their lines and yours cannot be called by the same name. If one is Poetry, the other must be something else. Yours have the prior birthright, theirs the present field. But theirs I never could have read aloud to make an evening less desolate. So on I soldiered, through "sensations sweet," through "influence" and "aspect more sublime," through a syntactic underbrush that now and then would open for a blessed moment upon the clearing of an end-stopped line. And as I read, yes, I was visited by "many recollections dim and faint" shimmering through your scene and your reflections: I saw again the hill farm which my father purchased for recreation (which for him meant a new form of work in which to pour his endlessly constructing energy): I saw the house upon the spur, the high pastures, the paths down through the sandstone bluffs to the valley where a little nameless stream meanders, softly purling, overlooked till recently only by oaks and birches and by those bluffs. Their faces, scored by strata, were pages of Earth's immemorial volume which he had deeply studied, and sometimes had opened to the wondering ignorant gaze of a child apt at neither work nor knowledge, yet capable of awe, that looked back through his vision at the silent wastes of time with something of a "natural piety" – that could not help but trace in rocks and skies a semblance of his will, sternly exacting because profoundly kind. For this child only he also, at rare intervals, took down one of the small red volumes he had kept from college days, and pointed in it to your words. As though he'd had them in his mind,

but like a place seldom revisited. They would come back to me in that still valley, where every chance-met flower seemed aware of some abiding friendship in all things. In that half-wilderness I came to feel not "wild ecstasies," but nonetheless a peace that never came in city limits, far less upon the outskirts of the city where speed and greed transform the very substance of everything we are compelled to see. But since the failing of my father's strength that land reproaches us, as a possession held onto out of weakness and regret. I have not walked the valley's length this spring, and with those memories comes the thought how few can still afford to see their Mother's face! – Thus, Wordsworth, while conversing in my mind with you, I read, and stumbled now and then, and from my mother's face could not be certain whether she heard or drowsed. But when I finished she opened up her eyes and, smiling, said, "How lovely – and you read it well," nor could I doubt her praise sincere. How blest I am in one such parent still, in whose white age more innocence and joy survive than in most infant fosterlings of this dark time, besieged even in their cribs by strangers' greed! Fortunate, too, in that I still can hear, Wordsworth, your voice, though distant, and can still guess at what you meant, and answer you as I could never answer those who doubt.

– Esther Cameron
Madison, Wisconsin, 1999

NATURAL PIETY

The child is father of the man;
The baby, of the child;
And in the not-yet-born we see
The same, unless beguiled
By sophistry and self-concern,
The threadbare daily lie
Which hails the mother's right to choose
To make her baby die.

– Eric Chevlen

AFTER TRUTH

Companioned...by the love of those not loved.
Paul Celan, Conversation in the Mountains

Exposed to the limitless,
the crystalline, the imperious night,
to an indifferent firmament's
immemorial procession
across the icy vault of heaven,
over the forest-girdled,

concertinaed camp,
did you lie together?

Did you murmur sullen comfort
in the crowded dark, your slow ablation
invisible to you there, invisible in her
appalled, appalling daylight eye,
while the soul-shattering,
boreal winter held you fast
to the bitter, senseless brutality
of all the words, the disappearance
of all that our familiar meanings meant
that morning, long ago,
that barely yesterday,
before the speckled hand's taut tegument,
vellumed by time and dread,
reached toward me at the siding,
through the brambled fence,
and while the mother's voice
still rang familiar as a name,
quiet as a caress, relentless
as a melody mostly unremembered,
as I stood frozen, as I fled?

Survivor, bona fide citizen
of this post-truth universe,
my indigent, geologic speech
stammers its colliding,
crumbling marl of syllables,
arranges itself in decompositions
that fall away when spoken,
where all concept
disaggregates of itself, out there
in the realm of concept,
requiring no intervention
from me, where all speaking
collapses in *fratrasie*, I fear,
in jumbled residues of reason,
an unbidden, unlovely
lung-music.

Yet here I stand
accused of a gruesome lyricism.
And who will see that here
I do not really stand at all,
but somehow only manage
a tenuous verticality
shaken by the turbulence
of this mad flight from flesh,
from self, from the flesh
of this self, to muster
on occasion a feeble response
to the obligations of the human,
and to scatter here and there
my miserable offerings,
these paltry *shalach manot*,

and from time to time
beckon the *Shechinah*, reach
toward the father's gnarled hand
through the wire, assemble
a fragile shelter, and ring
these vowels once again quiet,
once again manage, briefly,
to unremember the carnal
consonants, the maternal melody
of *her* name?

— D.B. Jonas

BAT KOL (ECHO, IN HER OWN VOICE)

Once again returned
to that spectral wood and the glimpse
of another shape in the dimness.

Can this one see me?
Does the internal conflagration
lit by the fall of an arrow of fiery ice
into the heart,
the ignition of a name
abandoned and claimed,
show as a light here?

Who wants
the love of those not loved?
Who would stretch out
a finger to be bundled
with others into an awkward ring?

Who was there
with me
where are all the others
who felt on their flesh
the touch of a word

*pray recognize whose are these
the seal the cord the staff*

The spectral wood.
The silhouette — within reach?

*miserere di me
whoever you are
anticipated shade
or solid mensch*

End of all riddles.
The simplest words.
This

*living
hand.*

— Esther Cameron

SOUL

*By its sense of light
you divine the soul.*

Paul Celan, *Language Mesh*

Oh, I know, I know how ruthlessly and long
you have pursued the arc and the ring
before other geometries.

Hallelujah
that at last the neck is supple again
so that now you may see the entire circuit.

You will see
nothing
that does not answer
to the concord of a circle
as surely as the mesh of a net
folds inward to embrace the catch.

— Irene Mitchell

PROZZE

I read Chana Kremer's poem. She doesn't write poetry at all.
She's out of her mind.
She lets her poem make her crazy
lets her poem spew out its lines all by itself
lets her poem kill her
make her suffer
stupefy me
Her line kneads me
Her line is unpoliced
The line she starts gets loose throws off the yoke flies off
where it wants she barely manages to catch the end of it
in the end on the rebound and pull it back into the box
that's call brain wrap it in a frame of sanity
calls it a poem, calls it prose, the main thing is she calls it
and it comes.
Like the no-discussion that sits and rests in the no-
reason
everything begins and ends in the wild thought of the
point of Chana, a starting point, freeing her to burst
open, a point without space without time, freeing her to
run wild, freeing her to make others crazy, freeing her
and she has no intention of freeing it, freeing her and not
freeing the hand that holds her back side, the side of the
rude backside, rooting her in the here and now, at least
not in the there and then, not in a little later, not in a
little less painful, as I am, as everyone is.

— Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehori
translation from the Hebrew: EC

TWO POEMS BY CHANA KREMER

1. [untitled]

She died the death by a kiss
How is it possible to die so beautifully?
I too want to die beautifully
Death by a kiss death by love death by affection death
by silence
To fall like that, like she did, in a white dress and white
shoes
In the Rosh HaShanah morning prayer
What a splendid death what glory
Rabbi Amnon did not appoint her such an honored
death a death that has something
of the revelation of Divine Presence
and from there to a world of love to a world of death's
lullaby
Like clay in the hands of the potter I want
to lie in wait for death to satisfy him with the death by a
kiss
that never ends

2. LOVE

In the Tiferet Yochanan synagogue
The Sabbath of Sukkot
love is love
in the morning prayer the righteous women are righteous
the dresses are dresses
clouds of cloth interwoven with hymns interwoven with
rhymes
powerful stockings
the wigs are wigs and on them are hats
the heads of the girls are braided
the tear is a tear
the oy oy is oy
the woe is woe
the white is white
the cold of the air conditioner enfolds them as a single unit
the daughter is a daughter
the mother is a mother
the voice of the men's section murmurs in Hasidic accents
and it will be if you hear and even before
to unify You with love for love Who chooses love
this is the first time that I am in love
Love is spread out before me revealed
the body and not the body
spread out like a slice of bread
warm tasty fragrant
desire love
the velvet is velvet
the sash is a sash
the shtreimels are hung on the wall in a row
waiting humbly to get their heads back
the devotion is devotion

save us please save us
 the swaying is swaying the longing is longing the
 melody is melody
 women are urgently requested
 not to talk during prayer
 the notice is hung up enlarged
 and the still small voice and only sobbing is permitted
 and the sobbing is sobbing
 for the kingdom
 for your sake You who seek us save us
 in the Tiferet Yochanan synagogue the Sabbath of Sukkot
 I allow myself to weep
 go deep into Kohelet vanity is vanity
 and a time to be silent and a time to mourn and what
 more will this year bring to me? What?
 Ani vaho we beseech you I I I and He He He
 Tiferet Yochanan the white is white the tablecloths are
 tablecloths and the mechitzah is a mechitzah
 and I could throw myself could wrap myself around you
 touch Your lips immerse myself in You purify myself
 sing myself purify myself fall in love draw near
 the faith is faith
 the prayer is prayer
 and the hope is hope
 and the sea in the distance roars and is not heard
 its breakers are it breakers
 and its song is its song
 and I am divested of the body and close my eyes to the
 beauty
 absolved of all suffering simple lunging out of
 enclosures
 until a granddaughter is a granddaughter
 pulls my hand to her hand
 to the blazing of the street

translation from the Hebrew: EC

I GIVE THANKS TO YOU

I give thanks to You...for restoring my soul to me
 – prayer upon waking

I give thanks to You, who do not make haste
 to take my soul – my time I'll not waste.

Teach me to go slowly, not rashly connect
 meanings to words, but with compassion reflect.

Behind the words let me hear the still tone
 That touches the soul in secret, alone.

– Eva Rotenberg
 translation from the Hebrew: EC

YIGDAL

"How great is the living God, may He be praised."
 – the first line of Yigdal, a medieval Hebrew hymn
 attributed to Rabbi Daniel ben Judah Dayan of Rome (the
 14th century)

How great is God, the One before all ones,
 Who will last beyond all lasts and never change;
 Whose light ignited galaxies of suns
 In spheres and vessels, marvelous and strange.

How great is God, Who turns to us in grace,
 Who hands us down His words and His commands
 Through Moses, - prophets, - scholars, who embrace
 The Torah's oceans, coral-reefs and sands.

How great is God, Who knows our thoughts and deeds,
 Our inner hopes before our hopes are born;
 Who sees unending orchards grow in seeds
 Before they're sown, Who gathers those who mourn.

How small is man, yet God, in greatness, gives
 His promise that despite man's death – man lives.

– Yakov Azriel

WHO KNOWS ONE?

"Who knows one? I know one – one is our God, in the
 heavens and the earth."
 – from *Echad Mi Yodea?* ("Who know one?"), a song sung
 on Passover night

Who knows one? Who knows two, three, four or five?
 Who knows six or seven? Eight, nine or ten?
 Eleven? Or twelve? Or thirteen? But when
 All numbers lose their meaning, we arrive
 At logic's limit and its grave. We strive
 To understand and try to count again,
 In vain; instead, we say a soft 'amen,'
 For logic's sister, faith, remains alive.

Although we could conjecture the amount
 Of star dust needed to ignite a sun,
 Or measure time till time becomes undone,
 Not one of us can comprehend or count
 The mathematics of God, the primal One,
 The holy One, the unknown, hidden One.

– Yakov Azriel

CONTRITION

in response to Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach"

I thought I'd have to put aside my eyes
In order to believe, and put aside
My brain, because belief in God had died
I thought, when hearing helmsmen eulogize
Its recent death or imminent demise.
The sea of faith was shrinking and its tide
Had surely turned, so I felt justified
Surmising that its shallows swarmed with lies.

Or so I thought. For I was full of pride,
Self-confident the human mind was wise
Enough to analyze the brine of life.
Oh what a fool I was, my God, to hide
Behind this mask and wear this cheap disguise,
While stabbing oceans with a pocket-knife.

— Yakov Azriel

FIVE PORTRAITS

1) LETTER TO ERNST STADLER

A century has passed since he was killed
in the trenches of the first World War.
Now his poems blossom for me
full of radiance and innocent joy.
He was thirty-one when he died, even younger than my
son.
The tide of his feeling still rises above the ponds,
the trees, the river mists swirling in sunlight
in the landscapes of Europe which my parents breathed,
who were not yet born then. The flame of his young
heart
still beats like a struggling bird
in my hand.

(Stadler's poem "Setting Out" may be found here
<https://www.poetrybyheart.org.uk/poems/setting-out/>)

2) CZESLAW MILOSZ

The pained intelligent look, the eyebrow erect like a bat's
wings. The hands
Holding each other confidently, whereas the spaces
between the fingers are doubt.
But one finger touches his lips – to hush the desire of
being given,
To mask embarrassment, to delay the formulation that
polishes itself like glass,
To forestall the betrayal of the last secret

The high forehead is gradually moving away
Toward the compassion of one who knows everything,
sees everything, renounces
Everything, so to speak

3) ZBIEGNIEW HERBERT

Not explicitly, but I thought you would not die –
because of the truthful voice,
The morality, the conscience, the unshakable wisdom
(which does not mask
The emotion), the classicism of the last of the giants – not
only
You, but also others whose words (not lives) became an
example.

Always the astonishment: he too? You too? You too
were not helped by what you were –
You too did not decipher the eternal – against your will
you gave place
To those who came after you – to invent a voice, their
own voice
– To say the word from within their own anxious
Lives.

*

It won't help you how heartfelt the funeral will be; they
will forget you.
They always like to forget. For how could they love one
of whom they knew
Only the name. Will it comfort you to know that our
fate was no different
From yours, for we shall be forgotten – even if the
name remains – for the name of a person is not the
person –
It is not the flesh and the blood, the beating of his heart,
the breath of his nostrils, the talisman of his soul,
his wonder in the presence of creation –
Forgive me for saying such things,

after all I
Don't know you – for me you are just like all the others
who have names – and those who truly
Love you from the depths of their hearts, let's say your
parents, they are no longer here to testify what
You were, at least for them – are now wringing their
hands in desperate sorrow there on high
Because you are not continuing in the human eternity –
and your mother wants to know only this:
That the end was not too painful

5) LIKE FOR INSTANCE SYLVIA PLATH AND TED HUGHES

She, too, in a poisonous quiet
Which began with a drugging adoration
Took from him the freedom to be
What we all are most of the time
before the deceptive radiance was bestowed on mortals.

And being destroyed like a voodoo doll
Refusing – despite everything – to relinquish the
image of his love
Havng to hate in him her innocence
Which trapped him like a peach
That desires to be swallowed.

Someone had to be in this
Rage, to rescue the lie from the trap of truth, or vice
versa,
For everything got twisted, the soul of the one became
not his –
Not hers –
Like birds that forgot their nests
Where they laid their eggs
The destination of the ancient flight.

Her love was the breakdown, the sacrifice, the betrayal
that crucified itself
Because it sought the divine
And still would not look directly
At the weak link –
Expecting that the words would magnetize Cupid's
arrows
And give Hades the dark intoxication
Of the resurrection of the dead.

5) EUGENIO MONTALE

Even with this slim volume
It is possible to swat a mosquito hovering
Close to the wall tiles
And then Eugenio Montale looks at me
From the cover, with his soft, shadowed
Peasant's face, a cigarette in his hand as if
Holding his intelligence delicately –
His fragile maturity

Only just now, on rereading
(because of the mosquito), I discover
His measured, quiet, conciliated voice
Speaking from the trivia of my daily life
With ironical sadness
To her who is always listening
For the music of memory

– Ruth Netzer
translation from the Hebrew: EC

HARROW BOYS

Missolonghi: 19 April, 1824.

Clare....
Of course I'll die with Clare's name on my lips;
They'll think I mean Claire Clairmont – Jane –
Allegra's mother. Poor Allegra! – tossed in
A nameless grave for spite: my sins
Upon my daughter's head, like Zeus's curse
On the House of Thebes. Well, peace be to her,
And peace to me. But it was always Clare
I meant, from when we were boys together,
Before I awoke one day and found that I
Was famous. But it was never fame
I wanted – only to be loved, and to
Believe that I could love whoever loved me.
But when they did, I hated them, because
It was too late; all but Clare – Clare, who loved
Me first, before it was the fashion to.
Love was a new experience for me:
"Too bad about the boy," my father said:
"Club-footed, you know." Club-footed, he said
In Paris, while I was in Aberdeen.
"Lame brat!" my mother said. Then
One day, all at once it seemed,
I had a second birth when I became
A Harrow boy with Clare and Long,
With Dorset and Delawarr – those few,
Fast-fleeting years, no sooner lived than lost;
Till I saw Clare again three years ago (three years
Already!) – the last time I shall ever see him –
Along the road between Imola and
Bologna. Our carriages were passing, and
I caught a glimpse of him – that look of his –
Across the open way; and "Clare!" I cried, and he,
"Byron!", as we both leapt into the dusty road,
And all the years between us passed away at once:
"Where do you come from?" – "Where are you
bound?" –
"I heard of you in Venice, or in Rome." –
"I left a note in Bologna." – "You are always in
My thoughts; think of me when you can." –
"Pray write to me, or do not, as you choose." –
A hurried word or two before, "We'll meet again,"
And it was over. Five minutes in a public road;
And yet there is no hour in all my life that could
Be weighed against them. We shook hands as
We parted, I for Pisa, he for Rome,
And my heart beat in my fingertips,
And beats there now, remembering:
Conosco i segni de l'antica fiamma – *
A flame no woman's love has ever lit.
Tomorrow, when this fever breaks, I must
Tell Fletcher: Go to Lady Byron; tell her –
Everything. She will not understand –
At least she'll know. – Then it is settled – Good –

Good—I shall rest now...Annabella....
 Augusta...Ada...Allegra...Clare....
 Clare.

— Frank Salvidio

*"I know the signs of that ancient flame." Purgatorio. XXX, 48.

BACH'S SAINT MATTHEW PASSION, AFTER WORK

The bass flows downhill, offering mercy
 to high songstresses and tenors. New notes
 climb like rosemary up clefs. When they float
 through your tired bones you know both sinful trees
 are absolved. There's nothing left to redeem.
 Relax. It's music, not a prayer.
 You don't believe. Choirs ride the air—
 they're not angels. Of course, God touched Bach's
 mind—
 a kiss in B-minor left its mark. Time
 changed. And now you hear a truth, pure and bare.

— Mark J. Mitchell

TRYING TO DRAW DANTE

Ponete mente almen com'io son bella

Consider at least how beautiful I am.

— Dante Alighieri

The gimcrack bust on your bookshelf outlines
 his face but little else. The nose that cut
 old sins into living men. The cold thrust
 of that chin. Cold, still stone framing white eyes
 that judged all. None of that meets his lines.
 And your hand, your pencil, never adjusts
 itself to pages of sketchbooks with such
 sharpness as his metaphors. This fast time,
 the penance, made you open an old pad
 and darken it with wood and lead. You're far
 from talented. You try. It will be bad—
 you're sure. It won't have his particular
 edge. Still, you might limn his shape. Your rough hand
 shakes. Look at the page. Look at the dark stars.

— Mark J. Mitchell

THE DISAPPEARED WORLD OF EDMUND HUSSERL

i

How does a phenomenologist begin his day?
 He gets up fully conscious, as he takes his shower,
 that he is merely soaping a body whose existence
 has no foundation, then wolfs down a few
 slices of toast and jam that have been nihilized,
 slips on some clothes that are largely
 parenthetical, heads to the office...encounters a cat.

It matters little to Edmund Husserl
 whether the cat exists or does not exist
 or even what the cat is in its very essence.
 All that matters is the *perception* of the cat.
 And the cat itself? Well, we can just do without it.
 Bye-bye, Kitty. Who needs a cat? What cat?

What do we know of the world? Nothing.
 All knowledge is reflective consciousness exploring
 its own self: the immaculate, the merciful good.
 I imagine him toward the close of the day—
perceive might be the better verb—
 distilled in thought, thinking of himself thinking,
 as she sits alone in his study:

*It is not in the premise that Reality
 is a solid. It may be a shade that traverses
 a dust, a force that traverses a shade...
 evening evoking the spectrum of violet...*

ii

Husserl died at seventy-nine. I am eighty-three.
 I have loved and enjoyed cats all my life.
 I mourn them when they die. Extravagantly.
 I play loud dirges on the piano.

I am not going to play a dirge for Husserl.
 You cannot put him on your lap and pet him.
 Yet strangely enough I will miss him.
 (Or rather my version of him).

To contend with another is to get
 to know them—for better or for worse—
 just as in marriage. And just like that,
 like a knock at the door, my cat shows up
 and proudly presents me a lizard.

He often catches lizards in the summer.
 Wonderful playthings that usually manage
 to get away. As does this one.
 Perhaps tomorrow he'll bring me a mouse.
 Yes, yes! Here Kitty, Kitty! I am restored.

I bid you a fond farewell, Herr Husserl. We met
 years ago at *la Bibliothèque nationale, à Paris*.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

AUDEN REDUX SONNET

We share the darkness and the air
 We even occasionally talk of despair
 Sighing and murmuring, we cover up the fact
 That we are always completely separate
 Even thrown together, entangled in our shelters
 I grow irritated by your habits, you by the welter
 Of all my unexpressed wishes
 I by your messes, you by all my unwashed dishes
 Yet when we long to be alone again
 If only to yearn for a truer friend
 We grow frightened of it as well
 And that in part is the story the pandemic tells
 Auden wrote that we must love one another or die
 He forgot to add: At our best we can only try.

– Allan Appel

AT A STOP & SHOP IN NEW HAVEN

with thanks to Allen Ginsberg's "A Supermarket in California"*

Donning mask, glove, and baseball cap
 Like a thief I go out to shop
 No surprise everyone's dressed like that
 It's kinduv fun to see all the robbers by the Cheerios
 And that gaggle of felons
 Keeping distance by the melons
 But now in comes a fellow with no gear at all
 Healthy-looking, asymptomatic for sure, and tall
 The store grows quiet, then with a start
 The thieves scurry off with their wiped-down carts
 This man's stride is sure, his smile long and bright
 He's the one likely to take your life.

– Allan Appel

*<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47660/a-supermarket-in-california>

I TOO

after Robert Frost's "Acquainted with the Night"

I also am acquainted with the night,
 as if this fact is worthy of acclaim.
 I too have passed the farthest city light,

where single modern houses look the same.
 I know the smell of city dirt and slime,
 this is the urban womb from whence I came.

And anyone who stops will hear the crime,
 above the noise of engines and exhaust,
 regardless of the season or the time.

There is a hidden penalty and cost,
 prevailing in these hours of fight and might,
 where evil congregates and all seems lost,

As men with guns patrol in black-and-white,
 and cries for help are heard above the night.

– Gerald Greene

I ALWAYS WANT EYES TO SEE

in conversation with "Ani Rotzeh Tamid Einayim" by
 Natan Zach*

I always want eyes to see
 the beauty of God's world –
 the fuchsia sky at dawn
 the sun sparkling on a lake
 the full moon sliding out
 from behind a cloud
 a lizard as it scurries out
 from under a stone
 a rainbow's curve across the sky
 raindrops on a petal
 the rich purples, pinks
 and reds of roses.

I always want eyes to see
 my children's smiles
 and to look at their artwork
 displayed on my kitchen walls
 eyes to see
 the walls of Jerusalem lit up at night
 the beauty of her ancient, tunnelled alleys
 her domes and the splendour of her light
 eyes to read –
 whether words of inspiration
 that uplift my spirit
 or wisdom in a good novel.

I never want to be blind
 to my mistakes and misdeeds
 or to your feelings and needs
 or the beauty and goodness within us
 never want to lose sight
 of our destination and fall
 into a depression
 and torpor of my spirit.
 I always want eyes to see –
 to understand what I must do
 and recognize
 that G-d is running the world.

– Ruth Fogelman

*a partial translation of Zach's poem can be found here
<https://www.eng.chagim.org.il/LIFE-STUDY/I-always-want->

WITHOUT APOLOGIES TO WILLIAM CARLOS
WILLIAMS

In conversation with William Carlos Williams' poem,
"This is Just to Say"

I have eaten
the white chocolate bar
that you had put in the top cabinet,

and which
you might have been
saving for the children.

You don't have to forgive me.
It was so creamy it begged to be eaten
by this fifty-year-old child.

— Ruth Fogelman

WHITE CHICKEN HAIKUS

cf. William Carlos Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow"

I
Sparkling in sunlight
Silent red wheelbarrow stands
Beside white chickens

II
Beside fried-chicken-
Fast-food take-out restaurant
Red wheelbarrow sign

III
Chickens run around
Beside the red wheelbarrow
Free ranging, alive

— Mindy Aber Barad Golembo

SO LITTLE

No,
nothing at all depends
on that red wheelbarrow
or on those chickens either.

A pretty pass we have come to
when *things*
begin to assume self-importance.

It is of no consequence whatever.

— Esther Cameron

THE SPYDER

inspired by William Blake's "The Tyger"

Spyder, spyder, in the night –
Gosh, you gave me such a fright!
What spirit could think up and plan
a creature so unloved by man?

In some dark corner, there you hide
in silence, poised and beady-eyed
watching your web for bugs and flies
to pounce and catch them by surprise.

What master craftsman, with what art
could paint in black both head and heart
then mould and shape with skillful hand
eight long black legs on which to stand?

Small monster – seeing you appear
the world cannot contain my fear;
hairs stand up like a porcupine
and shivers run along my spine.

The angels sympathize and cry
at my distress and justify
the terror that I feel, to see
this gruesome thing approaching me.

Spyder, spyder, what a fright –
I'll keep my slippers on tonight
in case you creep out from your lair
and try to catch me unaware!

— Rumi Morkin

UNBECOMING

It brings no relief to confess
how often I've wished to write poems
others have written first.

I am even jealous
of water, of lines that move like water
past trees with mangos and sugar
birds perched on teacups in St. Croix.

It would seem I've nothing more to do
than sit long hours tweaking this word
or that to breathe deeply
in the margins of someone else's poem,
someone else's life.

In *Please Don't*,
one silly bird packs a bag of hope
and flies into the white page
it calls home.

I mistake it for mine,
my home at the end of a dirt road,

a lawn mowing goat, chickens
with Yiddish names, and a charitable wife.

Unlike that poem, mine falls flat
on its unrhymed face, dazed. "Please
don't slam the door on your way out.
You'll wake the child we might have had."

It's not uncommon for me to hold
my Kuretake pen, best friends
until the ink dries and my fingers look
like those of a tree frog.

For sure
it brings no relief to imagine
fatigue in a pen's heart or mine
while staring at a blank page, at
the sugar bird who lands briefly
to sip nectar from words yet to appear.

— Mark Rubin

AFTER INSOMNIA

after Elizabeth Bishop

And it ends so sweetly, especially
Since we've never ever been
Properly introduced or for that
Matter, introduced at all, but then,
Who of us have those rare moments
That begin, in innocence with, I'd like
To, but then, the moment fades
Like Elizabeth fades as well when
She writes "and you love me,"
And after that, I'm so in love,
Wondering how she knows how
I've waited forever, even if it's only
A bird whispering, but then, the one
I lost, she'd say that every day, but
Not "you love me," but I love you,
And now there's no moment left
To echo yes dear, I love you, too,
Even after you just up and left
For places so far away in dark space,
A place none of us ever want
To travel to, though there you are,
Out there, floating so peacefully
In that icy cold space some of us
Are so afraid to visit, the space
Where you are, even though we
Knew what love was, yes, you'd
Say I love you over and over in your
Last days though I never wanted
To say it right after you, and now
In your "far and way beyond sleep,"
Well, please know I'm losing more
And more of these precious dreams
Some say all of us might want more
Of in this all-new inverted world.

— DeWitt Clinton

V. Love's Perils

THE INTERVAL BETWEEN BREATH AND BREATH

The interval between breath and breath
makes all the difference

Deep breathing exercises
fill the stomach breathe out slowly
till the punch in the stomach

I tell you
that the interval between breath and breath
makes all the difference
and you retort that you don't want to get married

You know, because you saw
your mother scream in pain
after your father slapped her in the face.
The scars are still visible on your perfectly
beautiful face and only I
see you between the intervals.

— Iris Bashiri
translation from the Hebrew: EC

AN ARBITRARY POINT

When your voice has almost died and there is no water
in you and the air has become really dry
when almost all the signs say it can no longer happen
put your index finger on an arbitrary point on the map
and you will see a wind wake up around it
kick up a bit of sand into the eyes

when almost all the signs say it can no longer happen
and the heart begins to forget what you called "homeward"
you'll see the wind kicking up a bit of sand into the eyes
and under that screen something stirs and aerates itself

the heart begins to forget what you called "homeward"
and you are still mourning (just sometimes) for what
was lost
and under that screen something stirs and aerates itself —
perhaps it will be silence, perhaps a renewed will.

And you are still mourning (just sometimes) for what
was lost
put your index finger on a point on the map
perhaps in silence, perhaps with renewed will
Now, quick, when your voice has almost died and there
is no water in you and the air has become really dry

— Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehori
translation from the Hebrew: EC

ACCEPTANCE CRIES OUT FOR MORE

disappointment carries a torch
it longs for acceptance from the gods that be

we went our separate ways
you and I
shattering promises as we left

pieces of a time once spent
upon the garden wall
listening to the serenade of birds

the warmth of summer on our faces
now fades with the setting sun

once again our lives collide
with impressions of what could have been

yet we accept what it has become

— Christine Tabaka

RACHEL

If I had known when we chose to obey
you one last time, Daddy, that my sad years
as childless aunt and wife, day after day
raising others' sons, shedding nightly tears,

my shared husband - more than thirty years' strife -
I could avoid it all: just marry him
and save my sister later... How my life
might have glowed and only slowly grown dim.

And then, these last seven years, with my son:
I watched his father dote on him and smile,
tell me his own childhood, a different one
in which his mother got her way with guile.

Whichever way our wedding story's told,
you threw her in, but it was me you sold.

— David Shaffer

LOVE'S PERIL

How can I ever forget
my earliest teacher...
a caged canary
when we were both young?

At home in a sunny nursery alcove
just within reach of tiny hands

it sent its song into my small heart
— daily
but especially mornings;
feathery yellowness
beamed out between the bars
surely wishing to be free.

I gazed at her golden glow
heard a melodious plea
asking for liberation
imploring my help.

Reaching for canary
her pulsing soft warmth
now in my palm
I tightened my fingers around her
in paroxysm of love

then followed with streaming eyes
her tiny weight to the floor
as motionless she lay —
a tormenting testament to my love.

Her song has sounded for years:
love with a light hand
and hold not too close.

— Vera Haldy-Regier

VI. Navigating the World

DEATH CALL

Nuclear threats proliferate,
the most dangerous
non-state actors
burning with hate
for the arrogant West
that allows its women
to stroll around half nude,
displaying the flesh
that tempts men to sin,
unforgivable
for men too weak to resist
desire for the forbidden,
preferring to destroy
rather than change
and live and let live.

— Gary Beck

FACE

The wind raced with her face
down the street toward the river.

She had been torn from the front page
of the Sunday paper.

Her story lay shredded in the garbage can
on the street corner.

Her face was tearful, half hidden
in a frozen white scarf.

Her eyes held the images of dead sons.

Her mouth, the petrified scream of grief.

The wind was gentle with her.
It would take her to the water
where her colors would fade,
her wailing would mix and stir
with the flood rushing from the mountain.

She would find peace many miles from her home.

In years to come
a rainbow might light up her sky in Sana'a.
She might remember the photographer
who stole her grief, who sent her sadness
around the world for others to cry with her.

— James McGrath

Poem inspired by "The Face," by Abdul Wahab al-Bayti, from
"Love, Death And Exile," 1990, Georgetown University Press.

SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT INDEED

You say, Mr. Meek, that something's not right.
What stretch of time is in your sight?
Something's been wrong since first a flint knife
Became a tool for taking life,
And something is still not right worldwide,
Which should leave a dent in human pride.
Deserts of poverty, islands of wealth,
Innocents ailing, bullies in health:
Man-made economies man cannot control
And lust for dominion gnaws at man's soul.
The reasoning defective, the heart corrupt—
Something evil is going to erupt.

— Henry Summerfield

MICROAGGRESSION

You took my blood
took it
my withins
not in friendship
a scar to remind me I am never alone
not when the moon was right
not when I would have poured it out for the love of this
world
no you took it

You stole a skin
you hung it up in the doorway
and said
you can't come in
even if there is hair bristling out like a boar
and wrinkles like desert dunes drawing what came
before
you made cruel choices
but a skin holds the within
You took my name
trapped me
in ugly walls so I had to answer lies
be nice, be someone small
an appointment in a book
if I told the truth or fought or left
they'd give me a different name
the walls then would always be the same.

I close my eyes and see green and blue
fly like a swan
swim like a seal
know what is real
seek what is true
there are lairs and burrows and mountains
places in my head
where we are not prey for you.

— Susan Oleferuk

FOUR POEMS

MEAT

While still parched in the desert
but with pitiless foresight,
Bugsy breached the bastions of Ba'al,
and Lepke looted the last Amalekites,
both, as it turned out, cash cows.

My own blinkered deontology,
disdaining such sharp-shaving shtarkers,
shackled me, ever desiccated,
to the sticky table of Mama's tent,
where I licked up any bland bowl of powdered porridge
set before me as my so called birthright.

Only later, adrift in the breadth
of Gotham's rushing canyons,
after Leviticus, Titus Andronicus,
Index Medicus, and NexisLexus
had all been commodified, and after
a liquid portfolio had made off down the rapids,
bearing all the really juicy fleishigs,
could I scope out,
with my crusted nose pressed up against
a gilded pane guarding every numerology of Meyer's
Bigger Than U. S. Steel trading pool,
the stinging spine of our id's jagged depths.

MYRRH

Ezra scribbled
into the wee hours
his analog glue
reassembling those broken tablets
in a new digital format
despite whining
from the Am Haaretz.

"It's not much comfort"
kvechted the chafing mob,
"that we
see the pixels of the mosaic,
hear the Fourier transforms,
feel the keystrokes.
Where are the goddam
fragrances and flavors?"

"The pit viper
has a Jacobson's organ
fed by its flicking fork,"
warned the programmer,
"and its rattle
can fan
the musky allure
of the Golden Peccary
on the altar of the Aztecs
or the smoked-fish scent
of Roy Cohn's
congressional schmear
half a globe away."

Chemical senses au jus
have proven to be the key cocktail
animating New Worlds,
where the tribes crave
a fuller bouquet of the law.
Waves of continuity have flowed
from Aaron's spice rack,

seasoning Dylan's coffee house,
buttering Spielberg's popcorn,
permeating the books of Fyvush.

Would you like some fresh pepper
on your haroseth?

HILLEL'S KOAN

and pen a haiku
condensing all the scrolled ink
as you stand stork like

DRAGNET

some of us
had felt subspace vibes
spawned long ago
and far away
by a pastor's finger wagging
against the nacht und nebel

yet all of us
clammed up
looked elsewhere
played dumb
as government goons
came gunning for Klaatu

and most of us
were vaguely relieved
when the feds zapped
that shadowy shape shifter
betrayed by his tell-tale
proboscis

hey none of us
had reckoned on
Gort the galactic golem
wreaking global vengeance
a trillionfold worse than
Rabbi Yehuda's acrostic

those not of us
beyond the Kuiper Belt
without exception
yawned, tuned out,
and switched off our access
to wormholes

THE CAPTAIN

Forty gloomy days I saw no sunlight,
no full moon through that clear rock above –
the skylight. The others rested at night.
I patrolled (sometimes pausing near the doves)

moving what must be moved. After the rain,
light came out to play, striping colored bands
the same way each day, through the crystal pane,
it moved across the wall to take my hand.

But I had bellies to fill, barely time
to count the days and lead my sons and strain
all aching from daily labor, slimed, begrimed
never easing since the start of the rain.

Above all this, the worry she could sink.
You understand? A person needs a drink.

– David Shaffer

A REPLY

When the wind blows down the house we thank the Lord
that we were out that day; or, when the sea
turns our mast under its swashing opaque belly,
and we are thrown clear, we swim and pray
thanksgiving, thanksgiving, selfishly forgetting
that, like so many bits of bait, our brothers
twirl downward in the darkness, being bitten and
consumed
–but when you say you are an atheist,
then qualify that you're a rationalist as well,
you say to me your reason's on vacation.
For all we know, there *is* a God, a chemist,
and we are the byproducts of experiment,
luckily unknown to the great creator,
who, if that creator were to learn of us,
might draw from a vast laboratory a sterilizer
and spray us from the surface of the earth.

We don't know what or why we are, my epistolary
friend,
only that we are and we can think,
and with this small equipment we can challenge
existence,
that it not best us for a time, at least.
For each of us can triumph for a time, even the unborn
has spent some positive force in first
dividing against the inertia of matter, a tiny Knight
against the Dragon of Death, or unaliveness,
a dust adumbrating itself against the odds.

– E.M. Schorb

PLANETARY STORM (an ovillejo)

Our overheated planet cries, clouds form,
the storm
batters and floods everything in its way
yet may
thunder and lightning past, its fury spent,
relent
display a rainbow, fractured sunlight bent
into a promise of eternity:
uncertain as our future seems to be
the storm yet may relent.

– Judy Koren

[untitled]

*Why look for God?
Look for the one looking for God
but then Why look at all?
He is not lost
He is right here -Rumi*

I circle dawn lake
stop at brilliant light patch
scented Pinecones drop

From ceiling of trees
blackbirds preen on branches
sagging over tarn

Am drawn to clearing
cannot walk by breathe deeper
lose urge to go on

Is God right here
He may be dear Rumi
but still I feel adrift

He gently whispers
look for unmarked path
feel your breathing unravel

Still hear breeze on lake
a song that blackbirds imitate
I walk off matey footpath

Off familiar stretch
silence walks with me
wish I was a bird

A black bird not lost
cheeping long vowels
trilling contented

– Marianne Lyon

LADDERS

233.

We navigate the world
 With antiquated maps
 Full of uncharted spaces;

We shout at one another
 Words that have lost their senses,
 Worn out, senile phrases,

And still we sail ahead
 Pretending not to know
 Our knowledge has no basis.

245.

A slender shaft of green
 Protruding from the soil
 Stretches towards the sky.

Something drives it upward
 As if it scorned the ground,
 As if it had a mind,

And something in my soul
 Would soar beyond the flesh
 And leave this world behind.

251.

Since angels are pure spirit,
 Their essence like clear glass
 Allows the light to pass,

But mortal souls, opaque
 And strongly stained by sin,
 Can scarcely let light in.

The patterns that we make
 Are dark yet beautiful –
 Rose windows of the soul.

262.

Hatred without a cause
 Covers the town like smog
 And paves the streets with fear.

We peer through boarded windows
 For chaos yet to come,
 We know not when or where.

We wait for the messenger
 Who brings us words of peace,
 But when will he appear?

267.

She guards an ancient code,
 The secret combination
 To the seven gates of gold.

Standing by the wayside,
 She points to a narrow path
 And asks to be our guide.

We pass her with a smile
 And judge her actions strange,
 But we are the ones on trial.

279.

As trees embrace the wind
 Before it flies away
 And leaves them standing still;

As roots pursue the water
 That drips beneath the earth
 Until they drink their fill,

So my soul is searching
 For traces of His glory,
 The shadow of God's will.

– David Weiser

WHEN GOD DIES

The silent echoes of a stillborn sun
 Portend the doom of uncreated day,
 As once-knit atoms come unspun
 And time implodes in random disarray.

Now-soul-less life unbreathes its final gasp,
 Unsuffering in meaningless distress,
 As darkness holds the cosmos in its grasp –
 Imbued with mindless, rapid, pointlessness.

Abandon hope, all ye who enter here,
 For separated from eternity,
 Love, truth, and beauty quickly disappear,
 The hapless victims of Modernity.

A universe that's empty, formless, void,
 Is all that's left when God has been destroyed.

– James A. Tweedie

CREATION

Initially energy. Electrons.
Elements eventually – air or ore -
ordered, arranged into earth and oceans:
constellations from the chaos before.

Molecules moved, motion engendered growth:
greenery gripped the ground and slipped into sea
and sky... Next, up or down, sideways, to and fro both
birds and fish could float and flash, feed and flee.

These and less haphazard life, the earthbound
animals which creep, leap, clamber or climb,
slither or stride upon or under ground
all did and shall evolve while there is time.

And outside time, existing outside space
Is He Whose work we are, Whom we must praise.

– David Shaffer

LEVELS

Heaven and Earth and Hell:
Earth is where most of us dwell,
"Indifferent honest," like Shakespeare's Prince,
With enough offences to make us wince,
But sufficient to put on the other scale
To tell, we hope, the weightier tale.

Heaven and Earth and Hell:
No human can foretell
When the craving for power found in our breed
Will issue in violence, lust, or greed.
Do they act out their genes or succumb to a lure
Who slaughter the innocent, crush the poor?

Heaven and Earth and Hell:
On few Heaven casts her spell.
Our teachers, our guides, overmastered by love
Appear to receive a light from above
That from themselves makes them almost free.
That light we earth-dwellers seldom see.

– Henry Summerfield

SEEKING IN JERUSALEM THE GATEWAYS

Jaffa Gate: Saturday. Dusk. From the Throne of God
*Silently descend threads of a blue veil
To enwrap, entwine, and tint the pale
White stone houses of Jerusalem. Three stars wait
In the darkening sky for us to celebrate
Havdalah, and shut the Shabbat gate.*

Zion Gate: Monday's dawn unlatches the gate
Of learning. Can you overhear God
*Whisper, or can you glimpse the veil
That masked Moses as we read from the pale
White parchment of the Torah? The Jerusalem winds
impatiently wait
Outside the stone study-hall, and in the leaves of olive trees,
celebrate.*

Flowers' Gate: Tuesday morning clouds embrace,
merge, celebrate,
And stroke the Jerusalem hills. The gate
Of beauty never closes; the clouds, in their search for
God,
*Transform into stones, trees, temples, and finally a veil.
Leaves of olive trees (turning from dark to pale
Green), turning like the pages of a prayer-book, whisper and
wait.*

Damascus Gate: Do you too seek revelation? Why wait
For the blinding sun-rays of Wednesday noon to
celebrate
Jerusalem's splendor, and entrance you; the gate
Of prophecy needs only a gentle touch; God
*Has written you a message in the crevices of stone; under the
veil
Find inscribed your name: deciphered, decoded and pale.*

Lions' Gate: After touching the Kotel's stones, a pale
Hand opens a prayer-book. The words do not wait
For a minyan to gather as they reverberate, celebrate,
And ascend on Thursday afternoon, unlocking the gate
Of prayer. Beyond words, beyond Jerusalem's skies,
God
Listens as words of prayer strive to move aside the veil.

Dung Gate: Do the large, silent stones of the Kotel veil
The Shechinah, blushing beyond the pale?
The stones, losing color in the Friday twilight, wait
For us to dance, to herald and celebrate
The Shabbat's arrival, opening the gate
Of compassion, the gate closest to God.

The Gate of Compassion:

*Who cannot celebrate Jerusalem? Who can wait
Outside the Sanctuary's gate? Pale
Pilgrims, we lift, hands trembling, the veil of God.*

– Yakov Azriel



Judy Belsky, Man and Boy, on canvas 40 X 40 CM acrylic and collage, www.judybelsky.com

I join the mourners
The revelers
I join the sweat
To the tears
In a flowing stream
Through history
Geography
Climate change
Catastrophe

I join the lovers
Wave goodbye
To what was
Will there be?
A future
Waves of culture
Undulating to the crowds
The bending willows
Staunch oaks
Autumn fields
Sunset chill

I love
And beg to differ
With you all!
To unite
Our raucous voices
Disparate languages
That weep and wonder

We are a full orchestra
Tuning up
Out of tune and back
Dissonant
Yet at the ready
Conductor holds up His baton
And...

-- Mindy Aber Barad Golembo