

# The Deronda Review

a journal of poetry and thought

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*Walls, photograph by Courtney Druz*

## OVERHEAD AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT SINAI

Mother, why can't I go there,  
to where grass sprouts and red flowers bloom  
and lilies nod their heads?

*Shhh, darling, there's the border.  
None of us may cross it, not even touch.  
Look, even the sheep and cows remain in their  
folds;  
they too, may not cross.*

Why not, mother, why not?

*The border is there to protect us, darling,  
to protect us.*

From what?

*From the Holy One,  
so He does not destroy us.*

Why would the Holy One, the Compassionate One,  
who brought us across the Red Sea,  
and feeds us manna sweet as honeycomb,  
want to destroy us, mother? Why?

*He doesn't want to destroy us,  
but we should stand here,  
each one of us, witnesses to Him.  
But His glory can devour us – a blazing fire  
if we draw near, my child."*

She trembles, drawing her daughter close.

– Ruth Fogelman

## CONTRIBUTORS' EXCHANGE

Since its inception as *The Neovictorian/Cochlea* in 1996, *The Deronda Review* has included a Contributors' Exchange of addresses (surface, email, URL) and available books. As of this issue, the Contributors Exchange will be a separate .html file, and in future will include contributors to past issues as well as the current one.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ken Seide's "Neilah #1" was first published in the 2012 issue of *Kerem*. Courtney Druz' "The Wander-Root Court" appears in her book *The Light and the Light* (2012, [www.courtneydruz.com](http://www.courtneydruz.com)).

## IN MEMORIAM: IDA FASEL

"The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree . . . Even in old age they shall bring forth fruit; they shall be full of vigor and freshness. . ." (Psalm 90)

Since the previous issue went to press, *The Deronda Review* has learned of the passing of a senior – in more than one sense – contributor, Ida Fasel, who died January 13, 2012 at the age of 102.

Ida Fasel lived in Denver, Colorado, where she had moved in 1959 with her husband, Otto, whom she lost in 1973, and where she had taught for thirty years at the Colorado College for Women and the University of Colorado before retiring. Her passions included ballet, Milton, gardens, angels, and the human future. She published 12 collections of poems and two chapbooks; all but the last (*Milton on My Mind*, finished only a few months before her death) are listed on [www.idafasel.com](http://www.idafasel.com). She was a righteous Gentile and a staunch friend of Israel.

Ida Fasel's poems appeared in every single issue of *The Neovictorian/Cochlea*, and in four of the eight previous issues of *The Deronda Review*. The qualities of her poetry? Keen intelligence, wonder, a rich culture, courage, warm humanity... All of her contributions to this magazine, up to a few years ago, are posted in the "Hexagon Forum" section of [www.pointandcircumference.com](http://www.pointandcircumference.com). For a farewell, let me here reproduce one of the two poems that appeared in the first issue of NV/C, in 1996. Having been blessed with her presence for so many years, may we continue to draw on her legacy of "vigor and freshness." – EC

## READING DANTE LATE AT NIGHT

Strong as winters of spring, jonquil adjacent  
to snow;  
secure as small perfect industries  
of the sea;  
hidden as psalm numbers behind church columns;  
suitable as the wooded corner of Wyoming  
with its stark connections,  
strange as the familiar making itself known:  
strong, secure, hidden; suitable, strange,  
to read so far from where I am  
on my side of the lamp

till I am startled – the shadow  
your page makes as it turns,  
the lift of your face in the corner  
of my eye  
as you wait for my look to meet yours.

What a blessed crossing, our separate ways,  
in the love that moves the sun and the other stars.  
Strong, secure, hidden, suitable, strange

to move lenient within another motion.

To recover quiet.

– Ida Fasel

## *I. Marking Time*

### MARKING TIME

High in the sky two cranes spin and glide  
with ballet precision as on earth the last  
summer days slip off like a loosened harness.  
The forecast is the furrowed clouds may bring  
rain to a soil raked by fever.

I wish the sky to gleam with water,  
to fondly embrace us and clear up our heated brain  
so we can look in the mirror and recognize our true  
self,  
the one envisioned by our Maker.

O let me wake in Monet's garden of flowering azaleas,  
narcissi, masses of pink, mauve and off-white roses,  
the air thick with bees, the sky of bright blue marking  
time,  
when a year becomes a second like somewhere over  
the edge  
of the Milky Way, giving me more time to pray and  
entreat,  
to supplicate the Lord to take away my heart of stone.

I have known this mood before.  
But I am becoming more and more desperate.  
I want my love to be greater and truly substantial;  
I beg to have the signature of the Holy One etched  
on my errant heart, on each thought I have,  
and on everything I write.  
— Gretti Izak

### END OF ELUL

We had a hard summer this year,  
Hotter and harsher than usual.

And the journey across the mountains was difficult.  
For I've come from a distant country;  
Here is my bread —  
Fresh, with a pleasant aroma, when I left  
But now stale and crumbling.  
Here is my wine-gourd, which I had filled  
with cool wine,  
Now empty, worn and rent.  
Look at my garments and sandals —  
Tattered and torn from the journey.

This is the oath I swore was true,  
An oath  
Full of lies and deceit.

For the end of *Elul*

Has pounced upon us  
And I want to — I need to —  
Make a covenant  
With You, O Lord,  
To be allowed into the camp.  
Even as a hewer of wood.  
Even as a drawer of water.

Everyone knows  
That after *Elul*  
A person can fall from a cliff,  
Like the scapegoat to Azazel.

O Master of forgiveness, *Adon HaSelichot*,  
If You permit me  
To be one of the congregation,  
I will testify  
Forevermore:  
The Lord, He is God,  
The Lord, He is God.

— Yakov Azriel

### TASHLICH

Saying Tashlich between the olive green branches of the  
willows.  
I sway with them in unison.  
Watching over the aqua filled pond in the park.  
Orange goldfish are swimming in schools.  
Large groups of them under the muddy waters.  
Mallard ducks take off in flight on mysterious missions.

It feels good sending the past year adrift.  
Time for facing our inner selves.  
The cool wind feels refreshing on my face.  
The leaves are turning yellow on the tops of trees.  
Fall is nearby.

The New Year has crossed the threshold of our  
doorposts.  
Welcoming it in with blessings of apples and honey.  
May we be at the head instead of the tail.  
May our enemies and obstacles be torn asunder!

The Teruah sounds out the day.  
We must recognize this inimitable cry.  
Tears well up inside.  
The Shofar notes are flying out of the blue and white  
stained glass windows.  
Crowning the Creator of the World once more.

— Shoshana Weiss-Kost

## NEILAH #3

The gates of brokenness barely hang on their hinges and stand open.  
 The gates of illusion only seem to close.  
 When the gates of judgment close, they really close; don't stick your foot in.  
 The gates of mercy can tell when you're faking contrition; don't try it.  
 When the gates of eternity open, another opens behind it, and then another, then . . .  
 The entry to the gates of mirrors can't be located.  
 The gates of memory have another name, but it has been forgotten.  
 The gates of change have been reconfigured again; you can't go in that way any more.  
 The gates of secrets have a way in, and no one knows it.  
 The gates of wisdom never open for some people; sound like anyone you know?  
 This strange pendant that I've worn for as long as I remember, is it a key to my own gate?

— Ken Seide

## NEILAH #1

The last prayer  
 I uttered  
 before Neilah  
 had only four words.  
 Help me, God.  
 Amen.

But the Gates of Prayer  
 snapped close  
 and snipped my prayer in half,  
 which means  
 I pray  
 that my sigh  
 at least  
 slipped through.

— Ken Seide

[note: Neilah is the closing prayer of Yom Kippur.]

## CLOSING DOORS

Rain through the woods.  
 Autumn. You could see it  
 in the wind.  
 A yellowing, the broken leaves  
 crookedly drifting.

Somewhere in this I am,  
 memories coming and going  
 as though not mine,  
 small boats aimless  
 or driven toward  
 unknown shores.

Once I kept a diary.  
 Once I believed in the  
 surety of words

as though they could  
 gather even the sun  
 even the moments  
 that hide behind the  
 face of a clock.

Now a door is closing  
 pushing back the tomorrows,  
 turning all green things  
 into chimeras

a form of sleep  
 a small dying  
 like roots  
 not seen  
 deprived of  
 water.

— Doug Bolling

## NOVEMBER MORNING

No winter promise,  
 no dawn glitter  
 of eastern hope  
 this frigid day,

a call to look out  
 at the sputtered cries  
 of park geese pretending

to fly south again  
 with preparatory clatter  
 before settling once more

on Soldier Creek,  
 where the Choctaws  
 watered long ago.

My window offers  
a sweep of gray  
behind the silhouette

of fingers, skeletal  
and reaching for some  
escape from this nothing  
of cold, empty air.

— Carol Hamilton

#### SNOWFLAKES DRIFT

Snow flakes drift tranquilly from ashen skies,  
small remnants of the storm that howled last night  
in winds whose fury shook the dark with cries  
of winter's deepening grip upon our town.

Now, as morning whispers silver silence,  
snowflakes drift tranquilly from ashen skies.  
They layer sheen of white on white across  
the lawn. Against my door snow piles waist-high.

Heavy lifting, alone, can clear my ties  
to the great outside. But for now I'll watch  
snowflakes drift tranquilly from ashen skies.  
Rest is on the land and death — along with

nascent life. These all look the same within  
cold burn of winter light — deftly defy  
my mind's habit of drawing boundary lines.  
Snow flakes drift tranquilly from ashen skies.

— Charles H. Harper

#### ON THE SHORTEST DAY OF THE YEAR

a woman goes into darkness,  
past the black ruby roses  
and is never heard from again.  
She moved quietly past the  
bleached grass a December  
day it got into the sixties. It  
was a day, foggy and warm,  
very much like today. It was  
today. Now you probably  
think it could be me, it seems  
there are reasons. But listen,  
I've never seen, only imagine  
those tissue thin roses and  
that last minute before light  
collapses. A garnet leaf  
on the pond is less red than  
my hair blazing, a lighthouse  
beacon past the trail of  
petals to bring you closer  
than you imagine you are

— Lyn Lifshin

#### AT PEACE

When did nature take this hold  
Over me and my mood?  
When did she take me under her wing  
Like one of the chicks in her brood?  
The sky is gray flannel and inside my head  
My thoughts are fuzzy, I think.  
It seems as if nature is weary as well —  
It seems as if we are in sync.  
She doesn't want to open her eyes —  
She wants to stay asleep.  
She's quiet and pensive allowing me  
To ponder my thoughts as deep.  
Everything's muffled and only a bird  
Sounds through the silence today.  
Nothing else utters even a word.  
Background noise fades away.  
It's one of those days where it threatens to rain,  
But not a drop falls all day long.  
It's one of those days where I threaten to change  
In a feeble attempt to belong.  
But under blue-gray and overcast skies,  
My senses as numb as my mind,  
I can only manage a normal routine:  
"Hello, how are you?" "Just fine."  
So as gray turns to black and another day's gone  
I ask myself, "What is the reason?"  
Ah, but nature she knows, as she takes to her rest:  
"To everything there is a season."

— Connie S. Tettenborn

#### RICH MOON, POOR MOON

Moon is back again, a pock-marked  
one-eyed beggar at my window.

Through cycles of life, moon drifts —  
lost, and sometimes penniless.  
Still, moon hangs on,  
hitching by with a smile, existing  
on mere slivers of sustenance.

Camping among the gypsy stars,  
moon continues to roam. In sympathy,  
the heavens arrange a periodic  
crossing of paths with fortune.  
Moon more than tithes for the favor,  
giving all to the darkness.

Yet, on its richest of nights,  
moon trades its coin for silver,  
steals close,  
gives dreams of treasure.

— Cynthia Weber Nankee

## II. *Costs of Living*

### WEALTH

White metal,  
Silver —  
Yellow metal,  
Gold —  
Red metal,  
Copper:  
All are wealth  
I'm told;  
Yet what'll  
All these buy me  
When I'm old  
Or nearly dead —  
That a meadow  
Cannot give  
Me now,  
Properly  
Instead?

— David Kiphen

### AND YOU MY FATHER

One evening younger than school time,  
I wandered onto the back porch.  
Saw my father sitting on the top step.

I sat down next to him and asked,  
"What are you thinking about?"  
He seemed to look through me.  
Like for several seconds. Then said,  
"Just wondering why I am not happy."

For moments I gazed at him.  
Then, as if to offer solution, said,  
"I'll tell mother." It seemed right  
to make that offer. Mother would help  
when I was unhappy.

When I started toward the screen door,  
he called, "Wait, Jerry." I stopped, but held  
onto the door latch.

"Don't tell your mother." "But why?" (my query).  
"Don't tell her what I just said to you.  
Do you understand?"

I reassured him that I did.  
My father turned away and  
settled into twilight silence.  
Maybe to watch the purple martins  
swoop for flying insects.  
The night seemed flooded with them.

I remained near to him — turned  
furtive glances his way while  
the mosquitoes whined.  
But didn't seem to bother

him.

— Jerry Hauser

### THE BOTTLE OF TEETH

baby teeth, dried blood  
still on them. Sharp  
still as certain phone  
calls. None of them  
crumbling. Labeled.  
"Rosalyn's 1st lost  
tooth, July or was it  
September," kept like  
diamonds or a flapper  
dress studded with  
crystal on silk that  
falls apart at a touch.  
Packed away just so  
she could put her hand  
on them, as she wanted  
me to be. She saved  
every letter since  
second grade, old  
jewels, touchstones,  
hand knit baby clothes,  
triplicate news clips,  
every mention of  
my name as if they  
were me

— Lyn Lifshin

### A MOTHER'S LAMENT

How she judges me, my child —  
well, child no longer.  
She casts me a wild look,  
fierce, full of hunger.

Her rebellious disquiet,  
her pitiless truth:  
What kind of justice is this?  
Age closes my throat.

We shared a bed half a decade.  
She gives no quarter.  
I suckled her; for whose sake,  
did I nurse till I ached?

Yet she accents all my fears,  
measures atonal,  
stress upon stress, no pyrrhics.  
I'm old. I atone.

Eyes the color of celadon,  
she chants her hwyl.  
Her hardness once hidden,  
she flashes steel.

Well, her solo has glory!  
Forged in this new self,  
what if she should come to me,  
my daughter, my weft?

We weave our mutual fury.  
I'll not cock my ear  
or pretend I can hear her  
if I be deaf by then.

— Zara Raab

#### DYBBUKS AND DEMONS

As if the world had not shifted  
the table set as it should be:  
fork on the left, stirring spoon on the right.  
Pastry houses with chocolate roofs  
upright on a scalloped plate  
its painted flowers blooming  
in a permanent state.

Anxiety leaks from my friend's eyes  
as she drifts in her tiny kitchen  
bouncing from sink to stove.  
Broken blinds sag like  
a face giving way to gravity and exhaustion.  
Her daughter beyond reach.  
The kettle shrieks its warning of  
ravens on a chipped stone wall.

I know what it's like to live with a teenager  
a look of contempt thrown across a room  
her door slamming;  
Such condescension, as if mothers were born  
for this.  
Still I am the lucky one  
with a daughter who brings home stacks of  
books  
fusses only over hair and clothes.  
Her stubby fingers reach in a box for earrings  
not for a metal spoon, plastic bag, a flame  
releasing a rage of dybbuks and demons.

— Carol V. Davis

and then in cairo  
the guide takes us  
to "weavers college"  
leading us through  
warehouse gloom  
past rolled-up carpets  
to a back room  
where  
11-year old girls  
at looms  
flick restless  
deft fingers  
pulling, twisting  
snapping rough yarn  
into place  
bleeding young  
hands of flesh  
in preparation  
upon graduation  
in two years  
for a life of beggary

— miriam chaikin

#### BY THE SEA OF SODOM

"Lot settled among the cities of the plain and  
pitched his tents toward Sodom." Gen: 13:12

Here, on a morning at the marina,  
heat glittering off the salty sea,  
my brief boy attends me, resting his curls  
on my lap like a limp butterfly  
not dry from its delicate cocoon.  
If I did not know I had no son  
I could rest in him as he rests in me.

Do I take your name in vain or are you  
in this near-man child? Remember the nights  
I guarded your secrets in Haran,  
climbing the curved worm tunnels alone,  
burrowing up baked river earth to stand  
at last sprinkling rosewater over prayers  
chiseled on the sacred shelf of heaven.

There I watched your wet breath blow the moon  
through slit windows in your ziggurat,  
turning the marks of dusty alphabets  
to liquid silver as the moonbeams struck.  
My grief has been this mute attendance  
at your mysteries, when all your magi  
are ash already in a brimstone fire.

This morning, when I can hardly stop  
melting in my blue-and-white burnoose,  
show me favor, my difficult master,  
with the elixir of your blessings,  
one drop of which gives me my voice,  
so, climbing your stairs at dark, I might  
once more roar praises from the ramparts.

— Judith Werner

## THE FORECAST OF WINDS

This sadness has swept in before  
 on a chilly breeze that carries me  
 to an evening long ago  
 when the sun turned sullen  
 and the tall pines became dark and hooded - cruel  
 I stood by the pool shivering and turned to you  
 but I was alone  
 and I knew then  
 as clearly as if a mage had studied my stars  
 and read to me of the painful designs  
 printed on a page of black  
 the forecast of winds that would bring strong love  
 and the breezes in memory of their loss.

— Susan Oleferuk

## ACROSS

I've drunk white whispers from across a lake  
 and once, between words, in a loved one's sighs.  
 (The air and liquid clear the routes sounds take  
 so ears can "feel" what's too remote for eyes.)  
 And ink conveys like water, or the cliff,  
 to render audible whole worlds unknown,  
 between their author's breaths — but only if  
 we pay attention, that is, when alone,  
 or being quiet by the shores of ponds.  
 And through the crystal of an empty wine  
 glass (crystal "ball") the universe responds —  
 to silence-sippers . . . Red . . . White? . . . Red,  
 then. (Note how it's reflected in the stein,  
 flush with the mystery of all, unsaid.)

— James B. Nicola

## WAITING FOR ANNA

\*

Scotch broom  
 fraught with yellow pleasure  
 and luminous with dusk  
 straggles down the hillside.  
 In contrast with the purple clouds  
 that loom to the east, its glow  
 is ravenous, preternatural.

\*

Across the valley, on a high ridge,  
 a lone eucalyptus — usually  
 such a messy tree — swaying,  
 groaning, throwing off bark —  
 stands darkly etched,  
 each leaf a perfect point,

each white blossoming flower  
 a study in stillness . . .  
 the world on hold.

\*

And then, from the quiet stealth  
 of evening, voices emerge. Some cry out  
 with a desperate will to live;  
 others whisper with wasted breath.  
 Within me, yearnings — traces  
 of that old surmise — passion dense  
 as fatigue, faithful as pain —  
 as joy foreboding. I know them well.  
 Lift anchor! I will abroad!  
 Renew myself on double pleasures!

\*

*But how much further do you want to go?  
 Why not refuse the bossy insistence  
 of new impressions?  
 Behold instead your own fields and hills.  
 Regale yourself with the lilac  
 about to flower, the gold cups  
 of the flannel bush, the crimson beauty  
 of the wild rose.  
 Stay awhile. Replenish in repose.*

\*

Thus did reason speak to me . . . And thus  
 do I sit, in my sigh-blown age, on a bench  
 within a garden — marvelous and reminiscent —  
 and wait for my dear friend Anna.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

## BEING THE SAME AS DUST

What I miss  
 you and me our  
 words, and pieces of words,  
 which may cross universes,  
 the long distances between stars  
 the purple black  
 empty nothingness  
 which knowing you gulfed  
 but then to throw me into an  
 impossible abyss  
 me left open  
 and the nights fearsomely dark  
 and the hurt dark thoughts which exist now  
 within my brain, and I cannot  
 discuss the great not understoods  
 standing between me and

— Peter Layton



## EXPONENTIALLY THE WORDS DESERT

In my singularity, I used to hear words.  
They rushed in on me. All I had to do was listen.

Now in my forgettable years, I'm either deaf,  
or they, of their own stubborn will, have severed

the connection. Perhaps they're increasing  
with Chaos, off on a merge with the Great Sprawl.

They'll organize its lifestyle. Subject it to Bach.  
I liked it better when they sang to me and me

alone. Now when I'm able to grab a few snatches,  
the lyrics seem pointless, absurd. The message

a kind of Babled-down version. Sleepy-time talk  
for a Lear in his dotage. Of course it's none of my

business what they do out there. Although I suspect  
they are moving one square to the next, to the next,

building on their increasing order. Building toward  
the Poem of all Poems. Toward epic seizure.

What Homer wrote. Or even Virgil. *Sing, goddess—  
Tell me, Muse — Arma virumque cano.* I shall go

back to the beginning. Undo myself rhyme by rhyme.  
Then start again, with one word. Two words. And so  
on.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

## THE DIAMOND MERCHANT

A diamond is forever.

— B.J. Kidd

The buoys of memory have faint bells, noticed in the night.  
I have left these chiming seamarks for the time of my return.  
They ring out there, but faintly, so faintly I can hardly hear.  
I think they want me to remember the severances of the soul,  
if soul is more than mere electric tissue. If Death is king  
and I do not reclaim what I have jettisoned, it goes to him.  
I do not want the king to have my life. Therefore, each night at sea,  
I must set out to find the ringing buoys and haul aboard  
the lagan realities, for now my aging body, my emotional mal de mer,  
lend renewed reality to the cold, damp camps. One numbered friend  
should wear a wedding ring, another was engaged, and yet a third,  
below and silent, had eyes like Tavernier blue diamonds set in Fabergé  
eggshell by the master. I cannot put a name to the smiling face I see,  
but she existed, who is now the faint dream of a denouement.

*Shalom alekhem      Shalom alekhem*

So now I sail all night to find them and their symbols, to  
connect with them whatever seems appropriate, their rings,  
their eyes, their ways: but not alone to find the persons  
but to find the meanings of the persons to myself, the electric  
mind, before the king should claim them from my life.

— E.M. Schorb

## FOR THE HEAD-STRONG &amp; STUBBORN

This old sword still serves me  
For the steel is still sound;  
This old dog moves slowly  
But can still get around.  
This old heart is broken  
Yet manages to beat;  
The head-strong & stubborn  
Don't go down to defeat.  
This dark beard is graying  
But grows thicker each day;  
For grim costs of living  
Each return some small pay.  
Through mid-life's tough sledding  
Our bright youth must grow old;  
But with wisdom's increasing  
We're repaid some tenfold.

— Steven M. Sloan

## HOW MANY MORE

1/28/2011

How many more birthday mornings  
Will I awake sans mortal pain

How many more poems will I write  
Before I leave this human stain

How many more thoughts will visit  
This increasingly scattered brain

How many more years will I know  
Of sunshine, snow, of wind & rain

How many more? Do not tell me —  
Just let me breathe and hear and see

— George Held

## HARD

Dad, it was hard to see you lying there —  
And all the weight of nightmare on your chest  
Pressing you down. Your death was in the air.  
Wisdom offended when it dared suggest  
That all that weight and pain were for the best.  
No tears, I tell you, gathered at my eyes.  
My orphan status I'd not yet confessed.  
I cursed myself for being strong and wise.  
I wished you to grow stronger and to rise —  
And knew my wishes were a childish joke.  
Philosophers I called on to advise  
My infancy were not ashamed to choke.  
I showed up and was present when you went —  
But still can hardly face the gray event.

— Tom Riley

## LEVAYAH

*for Dr. Pollack*

Heaven unlocks  
the gate of tears,  
a crashing wave

of black umbrellas,  
topcoats,  
hats and veils.

Dark waters  
                cresting  
cleanse the street.

The hearse  
rolls forward  
and we follow

down the block —  
debris  
receding in its wake.

— Steven Sher

## DUPLICATES

If it's days of spring you want, I've seen you gazing  
                ahead in the field,  
Reddish buds opening on a green background  
Winking toward the plain that rears up.  
Which way are you headed? Which way will your feet  
                carry you?

Many paths are deceptive. They plunge into wadis,  
                they disappear.  
In the distance appears a Bedouin leading his flock, an  
                everyday occurrence,  
And a sweating camel gallops through the desert to  
                gulp artesian water.

Where are you? And you? Where are they? Where's  
                everybody??

We're all duplicates. On far-off stars  
Our likenesses, our actions, past, present, and future,  
                are duplicated.

Our thoughts, our inventions, our actions on our own  
                behalf —

Out there in the stars, far away and close up, they're all  
Thinking the thoughts that were once ours  
Doing the deeds that we once did  
Do the lines of a poem need immediate explanation?  
Give time time to play with the wind, with our creative  
                spirit.

Isn't it enough that our works are written down  
To be duplicated in our future mirroring  
Preserved on other planets  
Even after the Big Bang  
For future eternities, and after them?  
Shall not all of us, as envisioned, arise and renew and  
                be renewed

As though we had not been here before, as though time  
                had stopped running . . . ?

— Adeline Klein

From the Hebrew: E. Kam-Ron

## ECHOES

When the soft, sweet sounds of love are whispered,  
their echoes fill all the hills and canyons,  
                repeating every word  
over and over, and over again  
to touch all who are near or far away;  
                so, we must be aware  
the sounds of love make form our memories,  
once spoken they last for eternity,  
                and will be repeated  
through the long corridors of timeless time,  
be heard by every thing and every one,  
                and echo forever.

— Robert William Russell

### III. There For a Reason

#### FENCES

I knew that the fence was close  
and that I could climb it,  
using all of my determination  
and cunning,  
but I didn't.  
It's there for a reason.

I'd peek through,  
pressing my cheek  
against its fissures,  
thinking,  
*Doesn't that feel like me.*

I came to know the difference  
between the sound of a door opening,  
and the sound of a door closing.

Dams form  
while waiting for the next  
interesting thing to happen.

What *is*,  
is what's happening  
and what's apprehending.  
So the individual validation  
of significance  
is the part of the equation  
that keeps an inventory  
on where the body  
has been  
and where  
it is going.

I know all  
these tragedies that will befall me,  
just not their order.

Impermanence is practical,  
and infinity is romantic.

Time is loss.  
Time is gain.

Inherent nobility as a reflex  
is what I'm after,  
but my surroundings  
are roadblocks,  
as they should be.

Nature tells me nothing  
of morality.

I gesture  
from car windows.

Staking and tying  
the boundaries of convictions,  
I claim this tiny portion  
of existence  
mine.

Fences are just trees  
rearranged.  
The further you get from something,  
the more it becomes you.  
— Daniel McDonell

#### my space

i do not speak  
of a cinema seat  
space i cannot  
stray from, step out of  
move aside in or share

temporarily  
vacated, and  
claimed again

i speak of space  
wholly mine, until  
as from shadow  
ousted by time

but of a space  
i alone occupy,  
space the air  
defines as mine

— miriam chaikin

space about which  
they say,  
"there she is,"  
when i am there

#### [Untitled]

Take one more breath  
Before the soul arrives,  
One more breath of freedom,  
One more breath of light,  
Before the soul descends to the world of constrictions  
Take one more breath —  
Tender, lucid, lovely —  
That will fill you wholly,  
And try, my soul, not to forget everything in the  
constriction,  
Try to remember a little of the light,  
So that the light may shine for me in dark hours,  
Illuminating freedom, flight, existence,  
So that I may never forget, my dear soul,  
That I came from there, from the light,  
And that to that place I am destined  
To return

— Ma'ayan Or Batt

## A FRAME

A frame holds me, borders me,  
and within the frame  
I splash purple, crimson and peacock blue.  
The colors whirl and create circles and heptagons.

Within the colors  
I place quavers and semibreves.  
The notes play their song  
and their melody is heard beyond the borders.

Within the melody  
I pen letters.  
The letters join together and form words.  
The words — a fence around the truth.

Truth sprouts white wings,  
gains strength and flies  
to a canopy standing on four poles  
and under the canopy, Truth's bride —

Peace.

— Ruth Fogelman

## POOLING SAND

It's disruptive  
hearing the front door open and shut  
I who am mostly seeking solitude and silence.

The whole open outdoors  
exposed now to my house  
veins of light  
from lampposts, an occasional passing car,  
the noises of the street.

Why is it  
that the thought locked front door jamb opens  
swinging from the caught wind  
the nasal smell of tumbleweeds  
the tumbling ghosts whose  
whereabouts, what-about, like you,  
remain unknown?

— Peter Layton

## HORIZONS

1.  
Bare oak filigrees  
engrave the pewter sky.  
Each twig obeys genetic dictates  
while growing this way or that  
at the whim of the wind.  
Random yet preordained,  
a tree is a fractal struggle  
between entropy and destiny  
that somehow yields a perfect peace  
like the patient lattice  
of atoms in a single snowflake.

2.  
Poplar skeletons along a ridge  
are poised to paint in unison  
a blood-hued sunset.  
A dogged blaze of hubris  
is a self-deluding prelude  
to benighted havoc:  
an unintended apocalypse of folly.

3.  
Our view from the train  
renews itself like each passing day,  
yet we can't see past  
the vain prophecies  
called the foreseeable future.  
While accident engulfs intent,  
we plan and make lists,  
unaware of the black swan  
beyond the horizon.

— David Olsen

## A PERFECTLY SPHERICAL BEAD

At the beginning each is issued a separate spherical bead,  
perfect, that contains them, one by one,  
Translucent boundary, order of self,

And everyone is able to press  
a face against the bead's hard surface,  
from inside, or outside,  
catch glimpses,  
shadows shifting —  
but always clarity is marred.

If one were to chip away at the bead as at coal veins,  
only tiny shivers would come away,  
even with the hardest of tools, leaving the  
perfectly spherical surface blemished — imperfect,  
and marring what clarity there once might have been.

Each life being a separate, perfectly spherical bead  
and the path up on its surface never marked,  
each path to be determined by each step upon it,  
commencing at the very first,  
and never a real trace that can be used  
for following the lost to where they've gotten to.

Each perfectly spherical bead –  
bumping up against other perfectly spherical beads,  
making it possible for the joining of hands  
and the linking of paths  
even as each proceeds within one's own  
separately rounded shelter;  
– making it also possible for  
pushing and shoving off paths and  
sometimes into the final step – before its time.

Each life being a perfectly spherical bead,  
with only the end marked,  
the choice being to blaze the path  
and always flee the final step,  
or simply to circle it over and over again,  
until it becomes familiar.

Or to stride directly for it  
and hesitate perhaps, at the last,  
just before the final stride  
that will cause the bead to collapse upon itself  
to its shadowed center.

Each life being a perfectly spherical bead  
whose curve conceals the ending,  
so that even when the ending is pursued,  
it is always beyond the horizon,  
not taunting you in an open field  
to come forward and take it.

– and the irony that no matter what direction,  
what labyrinthine path,  
the final step, though concealed,  
is never more than a step away  
and, if looked for, in the proper light,  
always visible.

– Harry Youtt

#### JACK-IN-THE-BOX

When the lid is open  
I experience a world of beauty and song.  
alive and full of energy.

But when the lid is closed  
I am pushed down  
deep into empty darkness;  
I experience only fear and despair.  
Directed inward  
I can see no further than my little box  
and forget how it feels to be free.

But I know,  
deep within my heart,  
that a time will come  
when the lid will be opened again.

Then the sun will shine on my face  
Light through my being  
I will laugh, sing and be filled with love. . .

Oh how ecstatic I shall be!

– Avril Meallam

#### OCEAN WITHOUT END

I am a spirit  
Like all other human spirits  
A point of light  
An aura.  
I am a universe  
Endlessly expanding . . .  
Contracting to . . .  
Nothingness.  
I cannot sail all  
Of my cosmic seas  
Nor behold all  
The jewelled galaxies  
Or widening black holes  
Of my ocean without end;  
My craft is too frail  
My candle too dim  
And my wick,  
Though constantly relighted,  
Too soon snuffed out.  
Yet I would proclaim myself.

– Roy L. Runds

## FENCED IN/OUT

My virtual white picket fence  
keeps out the respectful  
and the law-abiding

but not the trespassers,  
terrorists and proselytizers,  
and it's pervious to viruses,

paranoia, and the perverse,  
and fear seeps through it, fear  
of life lived beyond its pale,

fear of the teeming street  
with its filth and otherness,  
its wildness and allure.

o how I need and detest  
my virtual white picket fence!

— George Held

## THE COUNTRY OF THE SOUL

"... at the skin my being doesn't end." — George Faludy

A porous organic fence built not only for defense but as  
an explorer of the unknown and an envoy to the familiar;  
antenna and transmission tower: the skin.

That's the border of the country of being, but being  
doesn't have to stop there if the border guards let  
the soul slip in and out on the waves of the universal wing;

where are you now? Still hiding in your skin?  
The outside stops where you hang your skin curtain,  
but it doesn't have to be of iron, does it?

Teased by the fingertip lights of life it becomes  
tight and you're ready to jump out of it;  
but if life throws tear drops at your skin,  
are you willing to step out and ask why?

Better yet, just ask how? Reach out and ask how  
you can help to stop the flow of tears; but even better  
yet, show there's life beyond the skin; beyond  
the pain and pleasure, that's where life begins.

— Paul Sohar

From *SONNETS TO ORPHEUS, SECOND SERIES*

29

Hushed friend of many distances, feel how  
your breath is even now extending space.  
From belfries' darkened carpentry let you  
be heard to strike. Whatever being draws

its nourishment from you grows strong from this.  
What, of what you've lived through, gave most  
pain?

Explore all sides of metamorphosis.  
Is your drink bitter? Change yourself to wine.

In this night's immensity, become  
the magic where your senses undergo  
their nexus, unexplained: be what it means.

And if the spirit of the world disdains  
your memory, tell the still earth: I flow.  
To the rushing water say: I am.

— Rainer Maria Rilke  
from the German: T.P. Perrin

## NIGHT-BRIGHTNESS

The night is peerless and serene,  
Its brilliance luminous.  
Each house stands marvelous within  
A silver universe.

A magic brightness reigns in me  
So rich and prodigal  
It fills my being clear and free  
From sorrowing or trial.

In my heart's house I cannot cage  
All this rich light alone:  
It will, it must, escape, must break  
The final barriers down.

— J.G. Seidl  
from the German: T.P. Perrin

[Note: this poem was set to music by Franz Schubert.]

BEYOND MY VIEW...

... the endless waves roll on, and beyond view  
is a sanctuary where dreams come true;  
somewhere in my mind, shrouded in darkness,  
is that refuge, holding my happiness;  
somewhere in my heart, there without a trace,  
memories hide, only to reappear  
whenever all my sadness I embrace,  
and be aware somewhere there is the place  
where the long lost past will come in to view,  
beyond the horizon ...

there I will find  
memories not longer hide, and my mind,  
freed from darkness, will see a rendezvous  
far beyond the waves, where One has divined  
a sanctuary where dreams will come true.

– Robert William Russell

## STRANGE HORIZONS

1

In his life he'd traveled far,  
obsessed with strange horizons.

Nights full of restless noises  
lured him to lighted, crowded places.

But the days, melted into calm,  
mundane moments, dulled the blood.

To quell the sluggish pulse of it,  
wanting adrenaline, he'd move on.

2

Later, old, only a dull coolness  
in the veins, he looked to the gloaming.

The horizon's last orangy glare  
left him with pitch-black moments--

then the wind, yet restless in memory,  
blew up to scatter its debris.

– J.E. Bennett

## THE SAME SUN

*for Yifat Alkobi*

the same sun  
dries the clothing on the line  
sleeveless blouses  
floor length skirts  
shorts  
scarves  
ripped t-shirts  
orange, black, red, blue

the same breeze  
dries the clean tiled floors  
rustles heavy drapes  
flickers curtains  
ripples blinds

a loose tile in the corner  
a house  
of heavy beige stone  
seems made to last  
stucco seems to crack  
crumble  
only seems

the same sun blinds  
warms  
cannot be faced  
we avert our eyes  
to floors  
where different souls tread

– Mindy Aber Barad

## STORIA

A gravel path winds through  
wild shrubs, dense thickets  
of trees. There are no footsteps,  
just the clamorous buzz  
of cicadas, wave upon  
wave. Rocks jut out among  
openings of tall grasses, holding  
eons among the leaves  
temporary appearance.  
The path leads to an empty  
garrison devoid of thudding  
boots, the rifle's crack.  
Demarcations are cancelled  
by oblivion, Slovenia blurs  
into Italy, borders shift beneath  
my skin. Butterflies  
weave the air with their colors,  
hold the beauty of the moment  
in their wings.

– Marguerite Guzman Bouvard

"GUN-FIRE OR FIRE-WORKS? "

May 2001 Jerusalem  
Yom HaAtzma'outh (Israeli Independence Day)

Gun-fire or fire-works?  
Damn those terrorists  
Damn those jerks  
More gun-fire; G-d I'm tired.

Fifty-third "Atzma'outh" Anniversary  
Oh my G-d: Absurdity.

Went to Shul, went t'Efrata  
Debated myself, if I ought ta

Almost didn't go, almost didn't show  
Shall I walk by our "Berlin wall;"  
But they say, I'm not so tall, so  
Maybe the bullets'll sail . . .  
Over my head, and I shan't be  
All that dead?

Stay at home or celebrate outside?  
Darn it, I must decide!

Went to Shul, davened Hallel;  
Din't ask th' enemy t' go t' Hell.

"Gaba'eet " insisted I stay 'n dine  
'Twas of no use . . . I tried t' decline,  
As she convinced me all too well.

Food was great, my mood improved  
'N Local Joe guitar'd us with  
Old-fashioned tunes.

Guest speaker was smart enough  
Not to preach; rather,  
T' entertain us with a  
Relevant speech.

Neither moralizing nor polarizing  
Nor imploring nor ignoring  
Past wars and scars  
From our present-day wars.

But...that un-welcome sound  
On familiar ground, it's been  
Seven months of machine-gun rounds.

We heard it again, we quietly shrieked,  
Some got up, out of our synagogue seats.

We mildly yelled at each other:  
Fire-works, or, machine-gun fire?  
Some ran out doors to take a look;  
Most sat in our seats and clenched our teeth.

Eventually I too walked home  
Electing main-street Gilo  
On the fire-works side  
Leaving aside the "Berlin wall "  
A big-black-hole of Nothingness  
Walking home, breathing G-dliness

Getting home with Holiness.  
Getting home from a great big mess.  
Getting home. Emptiness.  
Getting home. Empty-nest.  
Getting home. That's the best.  
Getting home. Away from blasts.  
Getting home safe.

While it lasts.

— Sue Tourkin-Komet

IN NO MAN'S LAND

what happens to those afraid to move  
frozen forever like a shadow  
behind an indifferent oak

a dream can still freeze me in the drama  
of my run across the border  
a tableau pregnant with bullets and finales

what happens to the footsteps  
frozen to the spot  
not knowing which way to run

what happens to the corpses of  
those shot at the border  
trying to escape the script

what happens to the prayers  
that turn into stones and attack  
their own tired feet

what happens to the oaks  
that failed to report the escapee  
hiding behind them

and how do the oaks feel now  
the ones that refused to tell  
the hunted which way to flee

oaks are indifferent border guards  
they guard neither the border  
nor the shadow hiding behind them

don't look back at the border you've  
crossed alive  
it might come after you

— Paul Sohar



## BOUNDARY

Here, beside the sources of the Jordan  
 River that's been like a brother to me,  
 the brother who carried me, striding  
 in the only direction, on his shoulders,  
 I awoke from a wild drive  
 in a blazing-hot, desolate place,  
 not knowing where, in my life and in all your lives  
 is the boundary line  
 between the fertile pastures of generosity  
 and the field mined with weaknesses.

— Hamutal Bar-Yosef  
 from the Hebrew: E. Kam-Ron

(e)the(real)  
 87.

hark the hark  
 & herald the herald  
 wince as a  
 mighty voice preens,  
 slapped back into  
 a fable full of  
 puns & symmetry.  
 how daring these  
 puffs of air  
 tampering with the songs  
 of zions living  
 on the edge of quicksand  
 & a red, red, sea.

— Guy R. Beinig

## ASYLUM SEEKERS' FEARS

Gathering storms of uncertainty frighten them  
 as they assemble at the border of prolonged wait for  
 unjust decisions  
 At the frozen glacier of complex asylum system, they  
 breathe fire  
 Their immigration status causes constant panic and  
 fear  
 Minute by minute they are petrified by their  
 predicament  
 Night is naught as it brings no hope of heroism  
 Instead nightmares terrify these sleepless asylum  
 seekers

Possible detention propel nervousness  
 as they become scared of being locked like foreign  
 criminals  
 They pray unceasingly for the removal flights to be  
 cancelled

because they are deeply horrified to return to their  
 homelands  
 They are frightened by prospects of poisonous prisons  
 Where vast hell cannot endure human rights abuses  
 Honestly, sanctuary seeking is journey littered with  
 endless trepidation

— Handsen Chikow ore

## THE ETHIOPIANS

War being war  
 only trouble harrowed our days.

Even the oases dried up.  
 Wild horses roamed  
 the shrinking marshes  
 kicking up dust.  
 Migrant birds didn't stop  
 to visit between continents  
 but scud missiles did.

To keep the heart alive  
 rumours flew:  
     the improved model  
 of the world will end  
 this latest celebration  
 of egomania —  
 ( as Jeremiah foretold )

while the Ethiopians'  
 chocolate doe-like eyes  
 beseeched the sky for explanations.

To reach their ancestral home  
 they travelled on foot  
 across deserts and drought  
 as deliberate as the gap  
 between atomic and rotational  
 time around the sun,  
 when leap seconds rush in,  
 global winds and the moving  
 molten matter in the planet's interior  
 relate to distant points in the solar system —

wonders understood by scientists  
     and, of course, the Ethiopians,  
 who knew that nothing in nature  
 recognizes borders,  
 territorial claims or invasions.

— Gretti Izak

## OFFENDING BORDERS

It's so hard to break the American shell  
I find myself in, ignorant of cultures not my own.  
All I know is imported, what they sell

like Ferrari dreams, sushi, and tequila. They'll  
try to immigrate, those foreigners, then bemoan:  
"It's so hard to break the American shell."

George W. wanted a patrolled wall to compel  
*Mexicanos* to stay at home (because they are brown?).  
All I know is their rhetoric, what politicians sell

(being a jingoist is why Bush is going to hell).  
Voting for big oil, the cost is well known.  
It's so hard to break the American Shell

Oil Company's hold- all the CO<sup>2</sup> we expel  
while driving a truck on vacation to Yellow stone.  
All I know is capitalism, what TV ads sell.

How does it affect the world? Some foretell  
disaster, some say we're a citadel, some disown.  
It's so difficult to break the American shell;  
all I know is what I buy, what they sell.

— Ryan Peeters

## EXTRAS

Thrilled by Titicaca's wicked syllables,  
I'd begged to be Peru; I am El Salvador,  
Mrs. Richardson told me I was. I sit  
in a semicircle on a school stage  
between Ekwadour and Gwatamala.  
Alphabetical order trumps geography,  
but we are all Paramount or MGM  
Mexicans, extras, scratchy serapes  
draped over siesta slumped shoulders  
our sweeping sombreros with *Tijuana*  
or *Ensenada* stitched to the crowns.  
*Put them on backwards so no one sees.*

In late hours of the century, *No one saw...*

light slanting off the barrels of our M-16's  
or heard the shrieks as villages vanished.  
No one smelled rotting cattle, burnt corn,  
or felt the smooth wood of unstained coffins  
surrendered to soil that grew only crosses.  
No one heard low voices settle on prices  
none could afford; no one saw faint desert  
traces, or, in Yuma, baffled faces scanning  
boxcars or a Greyhound passport they could  
not decipher. These extras never wore

sombreros on multi-purpose room stages.  
Now, in a century's young light, we see.  
Mrs. Richardson was right; *Yo soy El Salvador.*

— John O'Dell

## ONCE UPON A TIME

I bear with it to honor creation,  
still curious as to what is around  
the bend.

I bear with it to sanctify courage,  
to give it a stage to grapple  
with itself

I bear with it for the amazing wonder,  
the mind leaping probing deeply  
into the aethers

I bear with it most days trying hard  
as a man can, yet inside saving some  
for my soul

I bear with it to witness the arithmetic  
the literary history of my people  
through our myths

I bear with it in comprehension  
of the unseen, certain of the isolation  
of relations dreamed

I bear with it with deep empathy  
as the parade, the cortege, of the mortal coil  
passes by

I bear with it to build an arc of words  
a bridge that passes from here to there  
once upon a time

— Michael S. Morris

## A FAMILY RECIPE, AKRON

Latkes, fried potato pancakes with frayed  
edges from the onions Emma stirred in –  
derived from *latka*, Yiddish for patches made  
to clothes worn through, reworked, and worn again.  
Latkes for her family, whole at Thanksgiving  
since the children who had married out refused  
to come for Hanukkah. Meanwhile siblings  
renewed their childhood scraps, each one abused

in turn, as in-laws glared and children squirmed.  
Just eight, I noted what a ragged thing  
family gathered to give thanks could become,  
how bitter herbs were always blossoming,  
though not from Seders we also wouldn't share.  
Then latkes patched all squabbles till next year.

– Will Wells

## JOURNEYINGS

We were exiled from land to land, from one  
continent to another,  
And when we gathered in a place that was wretched  
compared to its past  
It was already inhabited and hostile.  
Although the wind blew on it from far off,  
We set up housekeeping there.

Now we are exiles in the guise of tourists:  
Two weeks in Patagonia, a few hours in the Louvre,  
Stuck in travel agencies,  
Spending the night in airports,  
Equipped with backpacks and suitcases packed to  
bursting  
Like a promise that there is somewhere to go back  
to.

And where  
Where are we going to, ascending and descending  
–

Near-experts at reading foreign signs –  
And again, where is the gate to our desired  
destination?

In the meantime,  
Like chameleons we suit ourselves to the  
background  
So as not to be caught in some definition that would  
commit us  
And cancel the exclusive group individuality we  
almost acquired  
On our most recent journeyings.

– Ruth Blumert  
from the Hebrew: E. Kam-Ron

## THE KINGDOM OF UNCERTAINTY

Lies one accidental quantum-event horizon  
Slightly north of the last book you've been reading.  
You may have heard it referred to cryptically  
By students of an arcane mathematical discipline  
In the hallways of certain secular institutions.  
Few people arrive there intentionally.  
You can't just jump in your car and get there overnight;  
There are no national or international flights;  
No street signs, Atlas Road Maps or GPS indicator  
Will get you to any fixed geographical coordinates.  
The metes and bounds are not recorded  
In your local courthouse. There are no gas stations,  
Libraries with sacred texts, or places of worship  
To hang your hat. There are no rail lines  
Running on Time through the boroughs or spanning  
The continent, bringing bankers, speculators  
And 21st century carpetbaggers looking to exploit  
Natural resources and take up residence  
In luxury hotels. And finally there is no veranda  
Where you can sit in your bathing suit  
Admiring the setting sun lighting up ice cubes  
In before dinner drinks, while you stare  
Mindlessly at the horizon which always appeared  
To circumscribe your whole idea of the beginning  
And end of everything.

What may happen to you is this: You'll wake-up  
One night in a cold sweat – that open book on the  
nightstand

Beside your bed, the windows and shutters will be rattling,  
The foundation of your heretofore ordinary safe house  
Will be rumbling – and you will say to yourself,  
"Where am I?" And, "How in the name of all that's holy  
Did I get here?" Relax. But be forewarned,  
You've just cleared customs, crossed  
A heavily guarded border into uncharted territory,  
Becoming the expatriate of a country  
Where you can never, ever return.

– Tom Chatburn

## BOUNDARIES

are set in the mind,  
 afraid to cross, because  
 of what you might find.  
 Standing at the water's edge,  
 you hedge.  
 The spirit is weak,  
 the wind begins to shriek.  
 You will not cross today.  
 Perhaps tomorrow  
 you will find a way.

— John F. Gruber

## SHADOWS

Obscure signs that have  
 been posted.  
 Their message hangs in the mist.  
 "No trespassing."  
 But you have inadvertently  
 stepped over the boundary.  
 No sirens blare, or searchlights glare.  
 You continue on,  
 knowing the night and you  
 Have much to share.

— John F. Gruber

## ULTIMA THULE

Before we discovered that continents slide about,  
 tethered to nothing, and the universe is  
 an infinite sphere  
 with its center everywhere,  
 ancient mariners worried about plunging  
 over the edge of the world, and  
 marked a point on their maps as  
 Ultima Thule, the exact spot  
 where you ran out of wind and fell  
 into a vast deep stillness.  
 Astonishing now to think once the world  
 was a tidy well-lighted room  
 sealed up tight  
 with an inside  
 and nothingness night outside.

And us, what of us?  
 carried out here in a dimensionless dark  
 with a defective compass  
 on a ship that reshapes itself  
 with the fluidity of its motion,  
 plotting our course by exploding stars  
 and the unsettled, momentary tracks  
 of seabirds.

Will there once again be  
 a room with walls we know by touch  
 in the dark,  
 a floor nailed down flat,  
 or the memory of a steady light,  
 fixed on rock  
 in a harbour that is still there  
 when we open our eyes?

— Stanley J. O'Connor

## THE HARBOR

"... O Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my  
 supplications in Your faithfulness, answer me in Your  
 righteousness." (Psalm 143:1)

There has to be a well-protected bay,  
 A harbor or a port which offers me  
 Some respite from a restless, endless sea;  
 There has to be a simpler, shorter way  
 To find a jetty than long routes that play  
 A game of hide-and-seek; there has to be  
 A docking-area for boats, a quay  
 Where ships can moor before they drift astray.

How long, my God, how long before I reach  
 The haven of Your shore? Suspicions haunt  
 The bowels of my craft; I want to bring  
 My vessel to Your islands' safest beach,  
 O Lord, I want to touch dry land, I want  
 To disembark, my Anchor and my King.

— Yakov Azriel

## THE SLIPPERY TERRAIN OF PROTECTION

1  
 For my friend, the painter,  
 it is now time to admire  
 the fuchsia tree so earthbound  
 and content, so totally untainted  
 by our own experience,  
 draping big satin leaf clusters  
 and pink flowers over the great  
 liquidity of the sea.

2  
 He prepares the canvas  
 by creating a barrier of gesso  
 between linen and pigment.  
 The tangibility of things  
 sways his mind with storms of logic:  
 Should he feel guilty building barriers,

boundaries, devices for the fuchsia tree  
which borrows so discreetly hues  
from the amenable sea?

3

Veil over veil of glazes,  
another shield, blocking façade,  
oils and thinners gnaw at cloth,  
sheath deep into weave and fibre;  
streaming skeins of paint  
form themselves into changing shapes –  
slippery nuances of colour swept across  
the body of canvas

nameless energy he understands  
as total perfection that if not contained  
will consume him like an arrow of fire.

– Gretti Izak

#### POET OR PRETENDER

*for Gwilym*

*Left or right.  
On or off.  
Nought or one.  
Tyranny of either/or.*

In your binary humility  
you call yourself a pretender,  
but you slalom  
the convoluted surface

of the space-time continuum,  
neither inside nor outside,  
ever curling back  
upon yourself

in constant quest  
of memory and future,  
unaware that both  
lack certainty and shape.

Toiling in thickets of meaning,  
poets are always in process,  
always becoming,  
like galaxies or gardens.

– David Olsen

#### TOWARD THAT WHICH DOES NOT STRICTLY COHERE

A noisy universe of disquiet voices.  
No drama in that life except the literary kind.  
A poet whose most inspired lines  
occur in fragmentary poems  
that would yield unprecedented beauty  
if there were only a way

to make them all fit together.  
His work stands, in its misfit glory,  
as various sized building blocks – some rough,  
others exquisitely fashioned –  
of an impossible but marvelous monument.  
Pessoa the master nonbuilder!

Or one could compare his oeuvre  
to a set of ruins. Like the temple complex  
of one or another acropolis, where  
only ghosts of gods take their solitary way  
through what remains, and Apollo's lyre  
barely twangs in the breeze.

Thinking of Pessoa's works in this way,  
as ruins, what one hears is not the sound  
of plucked strings but a seemingly incongruous,  
wistful progression of chords. From one  
of Chopin's Preludes, Opus 28. Twenty-four  
brief compositions that sound more like remnants

than beginnings; tonal improvisations  
that in their delicate hovering seem to exist in some  
mysterious, other-than-real realm – as on  
a heavenly Olympus above the earthly one –  
works realized to the point of divine perfection –  
after which they fall to the ground and break

into pieces, most of which are lost irretrievably.  
From the few exceedingly beautiful that remain –  
whispers that send us back to the source –  
we can discern something of that  
original splendor, for which we feel, as humans,  
a natural longing, an old affinity.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

## DREAM VOICE

Again she opens her mouth  
 Takes a deep, hopeful breath  
 Feels the air vibrate  
 Across her throat  
 Across a range of notes  
 Ready to grasp a mike  
 Then illusions drop away  
 Leaving one long, real sound  
 A sad sigh  
 No change  
 Just an ordinary voice  
 Where is the line she wonders  
 Where is the line between  
 A good and great voice.  
 Where is the line between  
 Personal Will and Divine help  
 She will try again tomorrow  
 And tomorrow  
 Waiting for the shift  
 For her dream voice to emerge

— Heather Gelb

gatekeepers

i turn  
 restless  
 longing for sleep  
 waiting  
 for the little folk  
 to appear  
 behind my eyes  
 tiny beings  
 eyelash high  
 arriving singly  
 erect with intention  
 moving in silence  
 in slow motion  
 forming a fence  
 around me  
 closing ranks  
 drawing closer  
 to one another  
 closer still  
 ever closer  
 lifting me from  
 my landscape  
 setting me down  
 in theirs

— miriam chaikin

## BOUNDARIES

Beached on the gritty sand of sleep  
 awareness only bubbles on the rim,  
 I hear voices call me  
 in the soft Yiddish accents of my childhood  
 that changed the vowels  
 of my name to sighs.

I am again the child  
 who chants herself to sleep  
 each night with the ancient rhythm  
 of *Shema Yisrael* . . .  
 and by day skims over glazed sidewalks  
 on crimson runners, the sled  
 attached firmly by a rope  
 to my mother's hands, her boots  
 tamping fresh snow before me  
 with the sound of certainty. In a world  
 as patterned as the six-pointed snow flakes  
 melting just now on my tongue,  
 I throw my arms wide to greet the day  
 rushing toward me on a stream of powdered air.

— Sheila Golburgh Johnson

## QUINTINA LENTE

When all the stars but one shine bright at last,  
 and cast their wan beams o' er the sleeping, lest  
 pure darkness shroud their pallid forms, the list  
 of souls forgotten grow, and leave the lost  
 to pine eternally in fruitless lust,

then wake the demons, rouse the walking lust  
 that baring long-old teeth that them outlast;  
 they wander blind, and even ever lost  
 they never can return to face light, lest  
 their figure drop a rung on quondam list,

their unsaid purpose only to enlist  
 those night-tossed human shapes for whom they lust,  
 and ring the mortals from their slumber, lest  
 their slender, empty husks the night don't last,  
 and wake up dead, the morn as life but lost.

And, never meeting, never getting lost,  
 the cohorts trundle down their ancient list,  
 white shadows in the night, until the last  
 gem winking starry eye sand-blinks the lust  
 from waking night, and gilds the sidewalks, lest

the purple velvet settles. Shuffling, lest  
the burning, rubbing eye catch sight of lost  
and homeless spirits, aching in their lust  
for respite, for the ragged, exed-out list,  
the shadow-figures hide themselves at last.

Ere the least of the midnight army's loosed  
liest asleep the lowest of the laced.

— Daniel Galef

## SANDPIPERS

Quick scurry-legs; so happy. Chasing foam  
to nibble newborn bubbles in the sand,  
investigating (is it edible?)

They live between the waves. And if their home  
requires frequent exits and dry land  
by way of refuge (up, if possible)

we're not so different; we do plenty of  
our own expectant perching. Watch them chase  
a crunchy sand-flea; you'll identify.

For just a second, zig-zagging above  
the inundation, they're oblivious,

and you're convinced they'll capsize. But one eye  
is always ready for the wall of foam,  
and so are we. Two species, beach-mad. Home.

— Kathryn Jacobs

## ONE MORE MILLENIUM

All of a sudden you look back  
how time has travelled . . . almost nothing  
is left. No more room, everything  
in little boxes, memory chips in jars  
with machines that record them. History, a playback

generations, like a talisman you wear  
on your neck, reminding yourself, pearls of wisdom  
that you carry around. Sitting on a park bench  
far away in time, repeating what each one tells  
what itched . . . you scratched, as sweat  
the size of worry beads, one more link in the chain.

That was a funny joke, you laughed, when  
it was fresh. Eyes follow the images  
the YouTube inside your head the doctor ordered.

It keeps you happy when you are down and  
out . . . one more prayer,  
one more reason to forgive. You smile

to survive here is to know  
the stuff you hold means something. There is a  
reason

for you to be, to keep what was there  
here and now forever.

— Zev Davis

## THE FERRIS WHEEL ON NAVY PIER

My childhood favorite when  
the carnival came to town  
with all the sound of gritty oil  
smoothing the turn of metal gears,  
the smell of carny sweat and cotton candy,  
the fake glitter that dazzled our excited eyes  
was this lift and swing through air  
and view of our flat landscape smoothed  
out clear to where the sky  
was pinned to earth, our 360° view.  
We thrilled to our daring,  
tipping dangerously at the top,  
frail metal scaffolding our only safety,  
and below, cabbagey heads were clumped,  
none marveling at us,  
all seeking their own dangers.  
When we decided to see Chicago  
from that giant wheel  
looking  
to lake and city both, it moved so slowly  
in its huge circle that we did not  
gasp once or even fear for our lives.  
He was too young to make such comparisons,  
but I decided, once and for all,  
that the creaky old imperfect things,  
the worn-to-nothing bathrobes,  
the small chattels of childhood,  
can never be surpassed  
by the awe-inspiring displays  
of our *biggers* and *bettters*. Never.

— Carol Hamilton

## BERNICE ABBOTT

WPA wasn't ideal  
but it was the happiest

day when I got a  
grant. I did New York,

the old tenement  
building. I'd take my

photos around, went  
to the Bowery. A man

said nice girls don't  
go to the Bowery. I

said, I'm not a nice girl,  
I'm a photographer,

I'm going anywhere

— Lyn Lifshin

## BARRIERS

I was about to say something  
but stopped  
against the window pane  
his face — his eyes  
stone grey met mine —  
no recognition  
in angry pain perhaps  
staring at his reflection  
I at mine or  
was it his  
overexcited  
behind the double glazing  
I shouted non-messages  
into echoing silence . . .

I wish,  
I wish that there had been  
an open window to let in  
the moon to catch  
the moment to hear  
the string quartet  
tuning up to clear  
the fog to see and touch . . .

But what if his eyes  
were dead and his hands  
on the strings  
were stone?

— Ruth Stern

## STONEWALLED

To the beat of your lifelong drum  
the height of your wall extends,

stone on hard cold stone. By the time  
I get home from work, you've slit

sweetness from daybreak's kiss,  
blocked your hold around my waist,

skin to skin, dogs nuzzling for warmth.  
This stonewalling sours the moment

our tongues taste succulent morels you've  
prepared for us with brandy and cream,

locks you in darkness when evening light  
invites us to wander under redbud's last

bloom. I see life recede through holes  
in your wall. I whisper *I love you*.

Crack filler splashes (and stings) my eye  
from the safety of your side of the wall.

— Molly O'Dell

## ENTICEMENT

Your mood is granite and your opinions do not give.  
You are the stone faces on Mt. Rushmore.  
Nothing flexes.  
Something might.  
But the backside of the moon is the reflection  
Of superstitious cheese.  
Settle for green?  
Why not?

You are as far away from enticement as temptation  
On the sly.  
I am trying to get into your reluctance,  
To be with you when you pull off your blanket.

— David Lawrence

## NO BOUNDARIES FOR THEM!

In that family there were no boundaries  
Particularly with language  
Everybody just leapt right in  
And said whatever they wanted  
And asked whatever they wanted.



It paid to be on guard, watch  
 What one said in case it came back twisted, bent into a  
     sharp  
 Tool that pricked the flesh and  
 Made it smart and opened old wounds with a new betrayal.

In that family there were no boundaries  
 Everyone chimed in and joined every private conversation  
 Turned every phone call into a conference call  
 And each piece of mail into an item of communal property.

A new friend underwent due diligence from three  
     generations  
 And might not be approved.  
 Yet over time even the rejected ones became family friends,  
     absorbed in the crowd.

Each courtship was in the public domain, with running  
     commentary about each intimacy observed, and  
     much debate about the prognosis, and all of this  
     was shared with friend, on phone, email, Skype and  
     Facebook.

Each illness gave permission to share and circulate the most  
     private workings of the failing flesh . . .  
 After all, everyone just wanted to help.

The small children winced, old enough to understand that  
     their secrets were being traded,  
 Like shares in a mutual fund.

And old age and end of life issues?  
 Well the welfare of the matriarch became a constant topic of  
     conversation  
 Within the family and beyond.  
 She had become a mascot  
 The survivor of the survivors  
 Yet for herself she kept some boundaries  
 Cultivating a veil of mystery which  
 She cherished till the very end.

— Ruth S. Sager

[untitled]

I didn't know that leaving was this hard

It came like a wave of forgotten soldiers lying in ambush.  
 It felt like a claw from a caged tiger.  
 It crawled on my senses stealing scratches by mercy.  
 I couldn't believe the way my stomach screamed.  
 It felt bloated beyond scarred fury.  
 It was a door closing from beyond.

— T. Anders Carson

## YOU ARE THE OTHER

You are the other, longing to receive him  
 Into the maze of mirrors  
 That waits at the door of wonder and suspicion  
 And inhibition in the presence of difference  
 A wish to go out into the expanses of the  
     other —  
 Who is not in doubt  
 Because no one understands his way; his court;  
     his occupation;  
 His thoughts; his difference  
 So who will take him to their heart? Their  
     circle?  
 To the hourglass that waits  
 For some consequential, general  
 Change in status to take place  
 Which will lead the individual and the  
     community  
 From impatience  
 To unconditional acceptance  
 And the other will be like you, his bread and  
     sustenance  
 And yours one and the same  
 Understanding his different world  
 For all is breath and vanity  
 And all have been mistaken in their grasp of  
 And their reservation from the other, the  
     different  
 Who is actually no different and no other  
 In the nape of accepting understanding

— Adelina Klein  
 From the Hebrew: E. Kam-Ron

## YES, BUT

The other is only I  
 And I am only the Other  
 Within the One

Down here there is difference  
 Yes and no  
 Public and private  
 Right and wrong  
 Sacred and profane  
 Friend and foe  
 Mine and thine

Down here is a pattern  
 Whose complex, articulate,  
 Differentiated, infinitely  
 Nuanced unity  
 Reflects the One  
 Go and study

— E. Kam-Ron

## YOU AND I

As you and I sat face to face  
 A wedge of ice came down.  
 I watched it come.  
 It was colorless and quite transparent:  
 Through it I saw you speak.  
 Widening it pried our chairs apart,  
 Pushed away my freezing cheek,  
 Tore from the planks a splitting screech,  
 Then it was gone.  
 The air in the room was enormous,  
 And we faced each other  
 From opposite walls, flat portraits  
 Pressed behind panes of glass.

— E. Kam-Ron, 1962

## 4037 CONNECTING THE SEVEN SEAS\*

In this our world of confrontations we do live,  
 slinging slogans of partisan "interests."  
 We build ourselves up to hardly understand others,  
 Hearing how to rebut and up-the-ante of our own.

Yet false images and short processes can change  
 even if, ironically, only the privileged ones can see.  
 Ultimately they will realize that their own good  
 lies beyond a sweet life towards a constructive one.

Our thoughts are straw thrown to the roaring wind  
 carrying wandering sparks that are hard to lit up.  
 Indeed, how to express them well in writing  
 if not slipping underground from us altogether?

Sometimes the cloud veils open up  
 and a light descends through the rain.  
 It'll create a prism able to reflect your own soul  
 by giving you the feeling of sheer existence.

Such clarity readies you to hear the whale song  
 As it is transmitted across the seven seas.  
 You'll know then of persons unknown, far away,  
 striving to endow authenticity from your heart.

— Hayim Abramson

\*This is a reaction to Esther Cameron's analysis of  
 her poem "You and I" ; in a newsletter to her friends  
 [Rosh Chodesh Av Menachem 5772].

Key words: confrontations, slogans, images,  
 processes, wind and whale song.  
 NOTTURNO

In dreams, when beauty meets the stranger,  
 when the created being sloughs its snake's skin  
 and is no longer wrinkled, no longer luster-

less, no longer a drab, work-a-day thing,  
 but rekindled, broken out afresh, released  
 from withered patterns; and yet, for all that,  
 true to itself and ancient as light — translucent,  
 unscarred, smooth as pared back bark —  
 newly-born, eager to greet the stranger emerging  
 from the limits of a dark wood — the otherness  
 no longer other — only these, these two, each  
                   reflecting  
 the other's face, while outside the destroying  
 minutes flow, while outside footsteps fall  
 into an ordinary day; but here, here where the two  
 are met, smooth rind, rondure, and leaf,  
 the heart born into the whole, open and received.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

## FINDING THE PLEIADES

"Do you see it?"

"I think so — no I don't — yes — almost —."

"You're trying too hard."

"There it is now. I have it."

"Well what do you think?"

"It doesn't look like much, does it? —  
 Now I've lost it again."

"Try not looking at it. Just look away.  
 Find yourself Orion.  
 Then presume the Pleiades in the quiet of your  
                   mind."

"You're not making sense."

"We're not here to make sense. We're here to find  
                   stars. —

Just gaze deep into the black sky  
 with its wide array of dotted presences.  
 Now, what do you see?"

"Ah yes. There it is again! Magnificent!"

Ending the evening by not peering directly  
 at what it is we're trying to see  
 — with some kind of understanding in our sights  
 and almost at our fingertips,  
 with wisdom in places we never expected —

Sometimes we find answers  
 before thoughts can form behind them.  
 Sometimes the sense of a thing drips directly  
 out of the chaos that surrounds it.

— Harry Youtt

#### IV. Self-Reflection

##### SWAY INCARNATE

*Yetza hora*, you late work-a-day  
Sway incarnate, be child's play.  
Putrid evil, poised as prey,  
Tender not our souls' dismay.

Abominable breath personified,  
Authentically, eternally alive,  
Grafting chaos, always contrives  
Loss, sorrow, or death's arrival.

Accumulated, toxic waste,  
Before, during, plus past your place.  
Dream destroyer, reason effacer,  
Dark memory, deep distaste.

Panic-keeper, master of slaughter,  
Fear shepherd, gaoler of order,  
Plodder, plotter, major marauder,  
Fisher of spirits, tester of borders.

Brutish sovereign, terrorist prince,  
Explosive, flammable evidencer,  
Changeling, world beater, media convincer,  
Void, null, creation incenser.

Speck of thunder, bolt of fire, realize  
Truth descends from regions higher!  
Not all light shall join your pyre  
Prayer, change, charity inspires.

Voices lift, persons bless,  
Wonders gild, great and less,  
When in service, holiness  
Maintains the small, keeps the rest.

In truth, you're everyone's servant, twained,  
To rule no one where sanctity stands.  
Again you're conquered, again you're restrained,  
Only righteous honor can dwell near The Name.

— KJ Hannah Greenberg

"GREED IS GOOD" . . .

"Greed is good," quoth Golden Gordon Gecko,  
The filmic leader of the broker clan,  
And up and down Wall and Main Street echoed  
The exalted Words of the great man.  
So far, so good, if you follow up his plan,  
But beware you do not become too bold,  
Take not what you deserve but what you can  
By any means including sale of soul.  
The ancients punished such with drafts of molten gold.

— Leonard Roller

##### THE LOOKING GLASS WAR

O evil twin, not brother, not myself,  
What wealth you've squandered on murderous  
intent.

I dissent. I gaze into the glass as dumb,  
Mumming terror distorts your bleary face  
& trace the crinkled lines that care has limned,  
& sin, & time, as we fret against their theft  
Bereft our Atlas burdens to stare together  
Whither once our blithened youth we shared,  
Bared in glory, like Solomon his scales,  
But tales of love, once-friend, die doomed to rage:  
Engaged in war, we lose the ones we claim,  
Framed within the flare before we go,  
O evil twin in my life has laid so low.

— Michael Baldwin

##### CAIN HUNTS

"If you do not turn to doing good, there is sin  
crouching at the entrance, and for you is its  
craving." Gen 4:7

I go to the river with an arrow  
to seek the innocence of a deer  
in the stillness when the sun sinks  
below the border of the world.

A stag comes on silver hoofs,  
sniffing an alien breeze. "Lay down  
your life," I sing, a reed to the wind,  
and string the loom of my bow

patterned with lions and gazelles.  
The buck's nostrils widen and lift.  
My arrow's shuttle flies and stops  
all weaving. Now the warp ends.

On my shoulders, blood stains me  
like the finest madder and kermes.  
Antlers beat the end of time  
loosely on the small of my back.

I light the pyre and smoke curls  
over the field that death has conquered.  
Out of the flames, the forked snake  
rises, burning my world away.

— Judith Werner

TELL ME

Hide it in my desk where I will find it.  
Show me the policy. Guide my digit  
down the arcane index, indicate.  
Give me the conditions. Spell it out.

Preach it to me. Teach me a ditty of it. Dictate a summary memo of it. Let further treatment expand to nothing but *ditto, ditto*, as was said, pronounced,

as something impossible to contradict.  
Give me verdict, sentence. Give it not  
in leaving benediction, but in judgment,

the parting shot before you abdicate.

Dedicated, addicted to it, late  
I wait. I can take it. Dish it out.

– John Milbury-Steen

## WILL

When I fall  
Short  
Before my goal,  
And all control  
Is out-of-hand,  
My soul  
Finds peace upon the sand —  
Yet when I hear,  
Beyond a hill,  
The sigh  
Of, still,  
What might remain,  
My will  
Encounters every grain.

– David Kiphen

## SELF REFLECTION

Smite smote smitten  
words find redemption  
even provide a mood  
for the doubtful and surreal  
the dreamers and the gloom  
but no syntactic legerdemain  
can explain  
how we hate those we hurt  
love those we help  
trust those we betray

Maybe reason can be read  
in the pitter patter of our DNA  
though I suspect our lineage was not a logical leap,  
linear and upright  
maybe a swirl like a shell  
a limpet, a damp barnacle  
with suction cup insecurities  
and our motives blurry  
far under the sea .

–Susan Oleferuk

[untitled]

I didn't think  
I was  
A brain open to all winds and wild spirits  
Seized with fears  
Struggling  
Constantly  
In a cell —  
A tattered skeleton —  
Cudgeling itself with subjects beyond the clouds

Sometimes with a kind of satisfying arrogance –  
 Sometimes with an understanding  
 That barely managed  
 To lay  
 An outsize egg  
 That would roll out of the nest

– Ruth Blumert  
from the Hebrew: E. Kam-Ron

## THOUGHTS FOR THE LONGEST NIGHT

I have had to face  
the terrible egotism  
at the core of all poetry

"Husks in the finite, expandable,  
in each  
another form in-grows, in-sticks "\*\*

Every intimation of wholeness  
contingent  
on some caesura.  
Some limitation.

So was/is Creation  
a showing-forth or  
a concealment

and do we do well  
to imitate it?

To live, I had  
to join words together  
hoping thereby  
to give life.  
Now, I'm not so sure.

Somewhere I cannot  
see  
hangs a scale.

In the one pan a plethora  
of poems,  
the odd good deed perhaps  
mixed in among them.

In the other the harms I have done.  
Some small.  
Some maybe not so small.  
And the waste.

And one pan, I cannot see,  
inclines.

— E. Kam-Ron

\* "Hüllen im Endlichen, dehnbar,/ in jeder/wächsteine  
andre Gestalt fest. " — Paul Celan, *Fadensonnen*

## LOST BETWEEN WINDWARD AND LEE

I Knife-ed ged dunes 'twixt wind ward & lee,  
Ranks in shadow & light ...  
A sea of sand, or a sandy sea  
That sets my heart a ffright.  
As far as any eye can see —  
Wastes of withering light!  
A tiny speck of nothing, me,  
Praying for cool of night.

II In this world 'twixt windward & lee,  
Awash in hapless plight ...  
Resolve, & hope, & decency,  
As well as will to fight,  
Succumb to foul despondency  
In wastes of hellish light.

III Even hubris abandons me  
As arid winds snarl & bite,  
And Sol climbs to ascendancy  
Gloating in grim delight,  
For I am struck with lethargy  
As life and strength take flight.

IV Once in Sol's grip he doth decree —  
"You'll never know respite.  
For though you pray with fervency  
To speed the Moon & night,  
Entreating her in urgency  
To shield you from my light,  
Her cold can kill as easily —  
The cold of desert-night."

V Adrift on the sands of a sandy sea,  
In night or broad daylight,  
I've lost what was and was to be  
And think in black-and-white . . .  
My infinite becomes finite  
As past and futures flee,  
For as I die of cold & heat  
I see what is, and is to be.

— Steven M. Sloan

## HELL ON EARTH

THE HOTTEST HELL IS HERE ON EARTH,  
 I THINK I'VE HEARD IT SAID, . . .  
 OR WAS IT SOMETHING THAT IN SCHOOL  
 I THINK I MIGHT HAVE READ?  
 PERHAPS 'T WAS SOMETHING DREAMT AT NIGHT  
 WHILE DEEP A SLEEP IN BED(?), . . .  
 THAT HELL RESIDES WITHIN THE HEART  
 FROM WHICH ALL HOPE HAS FLED.

— S.M. Sloan

## SCHIZOPHRENIA II

the paralyzing illness, leveler  
 of hopes and dreams, the shy boy  
 reclusive as a man, the stars  
 reflect in eyes of green.

The boy who should have grown to complete  
 manhood, toppled at the age of twenty,  
 circler of streets, the darkness  
 below his angry eyes,

the winds of time sound in the church bells,  
 old ogler of beautiful women, too  
 old and sick to do much, worn  
 out and without charm,

looking at the world through slits of guilt,  
 trying to wash himself clean of shame,  
 hidden in the dark of still rooms,  
 the smoke of disenchantment.

— Calvin Green

## IN THE DARK OF YOUR ROOM

I'm afraid of your hands  
 weaving threads of despair  
 into blankets of doom  
 in the dark of your room

I would pluck petals  
 toss them in air  
 infuse their perfume  
 in the dark of your room

I would offer a moonbow's  
 flash from the sky  
 interlaced on the loom  
 in the dark of your room

I would promise my shoulder  
 to cushion your head  
 eclipsing the gloom  
 in the dark of your room

I would wrap you in color  
 and dip you in scent  
 herald new bloom  
 in the dark of your room

— ellen

## THE JUST

"Happy is the man who has not walked in the  
 counsel of the wicked, nor stood in the path of  
 sinners, nor sat in the seat of scornors. But his  
 delight is in the Torah of the Lord, and in His  
 Torah does he meditate day and night."  
 (Psalm 1:1-2)

Happy is the climber who finds a way  
 To walk on jagged mountain cliffs, despite  
 The threat of blinding sleet and hail by night,  
 Despite the fear of falling rocks by day.  
 Happy is the sailor who learns a way  
 To stand and steer his ship on course, despite  
 Destructive typhoon winds and rains by night,  
 Despite vast surging tidal waves by day.

Happy is the weaver whose loom is blessed  
 With iridescent cloth his fingers weave  
 Both day and night, from multicolored threads;  
 With trembling hands, he sits and makes a vest  
 For climbers and for sailors who believe  
 In words he sews as yellows, blues and reds.

— Yakov Azriel

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#### IV. The Silent Channel

##### THE SILENT CHANNEL

On the radio I heard  
a poet talking about  
the "silent channel,"  
that hungry Muse  
who lives in all who  
refract being through  
self to show  
their truth.

Her truth was parents  
who passed through  
the valley of the shadow,  
all-determining event,  
dark beating chord,  
underlying  
our here and now,  
our place and time.

our dream was other,  
building, creation.

then that thing  
interrupted,  
deep dark,  
beyond imagination.

Will that thing so stamp us,  
that nothing else remains?  
In memorializing the unthinkable  
will we lose the dream?

— Michael E. Stone

##### THE GAME

"123 here I come!" I heard Tatte say in a stage whisper from the hallway. My five year old brother, Yankele, and I were hiding in the cupboard under the stairs under piles of *shmattes* Mama used back in the days when she still cleaned the floors. I heard the sounds of Tatte opening and shutting cupboard doors in the kitchen.

"Where are they?" he said, "Could they be in the larder? No — not in here."

Yankele giggled and I cupped my hand around his mouth.

"Shush Yankelush, he'll hear you," I whispered in my brother's ear.

"Are they under the bed?" My father's voice rang again, "No not under here. Maybe they're behind the cabinet? Wrong again. Where did those *kinderlach* disappear to?"

I marveled at how long it was taking for Tatte to find us. Had I have been playing this game with Zelda like I usually did, I have no doubt she would have found us by now. I heard Tatte's heavy footsteps approaching the cupboard door. His shadow blocked the chink of light that was seeping in from the space between the door and the floor.

"Hmm, the cleaning closet," came Tatte's voice again, "I wonder if they're hiding in there?"

Yankele could no longer suppress his excitement and he let a high-pitched laugh slip from his mouth. I instinctively covered his mouth with my hand again.

"What is this?" Tatte said, "The closet is laughing? Since when do closets laugh?"

Despite my restraining hand, Yankele erupted into fits of giggles. Tatte opened the closet door. "Aah, it isn't the closet that is laughing, it's the *shmattes*. I should have known!" He lifted the cloths high in the air and exposed our hiding place. By now Yankele was uncontrollable and grabbing on to me, squealing in delight. Tatte bent down and picked him up, hoisting him over his shoulder. I followed them into the sparse living room where Tatte plopped down into the battered armchair he so treasured. He held Yankele in his arms.

"Yankelush, your sister found you a good hiding place and you hid very nicely. Good boy." Tatte smiled and kissed Yankele's forehead. As he held my brother's face in his hands his smile disappeared and was replaced with the same look that Mama had when she heard *tzorres* about friends we knew. "I am proud you — both of you. But you know *zeesa kinderlach*, when we play the real game, you must remember not to laugh. If you make a sound, the Germans will find you and then you will lose the game."

— Deborah Danan

## ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF BABI YAR

I hear a poem about hope  
 read. I think of the men  
 rounded, 33,000 marched  
 to the edge of the ravine,  
 the blood turning leaves  
 and grass burgundy. I  
 think of my grandparents  
 packing in the night,  
 taking a samovar,  
 some wrinkled apples,  
 then running past straw  
 roofs on fire. Years  
 before, as if the wind of  
 dead roses let them  
 know something was  
 coming. I think of  
 weeks seasick in steerage,  
 weeks of fog and fog  
 horns, no words  
 to ask for what was  
 ahead. They pulled away,  
 arms waving, those  
 left with streamers tied  
 to the ones on the  
 boat until they snapped,  
 floated, rainbow  
 colors on the surface  
 until black water  
 ate them

— Lyn Lifshin

## DRILJ - ILZA; THE QUEEN'S TEARS

Bonfires burning crop residue  
 cast curls of smoke and scent into the cold air.  
 Red-gold maple and elm leaves bathed in bright sunlight  
 bower the approach road to my mother's shteitle, Drilj.

South of Radow I see the signpost in Polish, "Ilza."  
 Nestled in a green valley is the town, narrow winding streets  
 ancient leaning houses and in the distance medieval castle ruins  
 on the barg — the hill where my mother and her friends played.

Beyond the boundaries of time and place, I see her there.  
 Fearless girl, she defies a young sheygitz bullying  
 a heder child. Was it her fiery eyes or her fair girl-child face  
 that vanquished his Jew hatred for that instant?

In the here and now, I enter the village  
 to walk the cobbled streets of the Jewish quarter.  
 In Market Square Meir Provizor's house still stands.

On the wrought iron balcony of Sabah Meir's house,  
 Zev Jabotinsky joined Zionist meetings.  
 Like Herzl he looked out on the lands of exile  
 and said, "Here will be our tomb."

Unwind the hours. Between the red brick and wooden house fronts  
 peasants brandishing pitchforks storm the square.  
 Meir Provizor stands defiant, fists raised. He shouts,  
 "Townsfolk! Neighbors! What are you doing?"

My mother and her brothers and sisters huddle under the counter  
 of the family's fabric emporium. Yankel the eldest  
 runs out to the street to pull their father inside.  
 They push the counters forward to bar the wooden doors.

Imprisoned for Zionist incitement, when he is released  
 Sabah Meir orders the family to pack — Sifrei Kodesh  
 and what they can salvage from their lives, from their livelihood.

Temporary and enduring, transient and perpetual,  
 of the moment and unceasing,  
 beyond the boundaries of time and place,  
 I am with them on the perilous trek home to Eretz Israel.

## DRILJ

My brother and I would raise eyebrows at our Imma's longings  
 "for the sweet waters of Drilj,"  
 and how could a miserable shteitle be so charmed?

Beyond the measure of time and death, the transience of life,  
 I beg your forgiveness Imma, for here I am in the beautiful Ilza.

Pure spa waters course down the bright mountainside.  
 This is the wooden bridge over the "luskhki," a quiet stream  
 set in the green glen leading to the synagogue — no longer -  
 where the family took Shabbat afternoon shpatzirs.

Hourglass sands slide forward. It is 1946.  
 The survivors, Imma's childhood comrades  
 and Zionist shuleh classmates, now appear in her dreams.



After such a night, the phone will ring,  
 dear voices will call up from the street below,  
 "Pnina, Pninichka." In our small Bronx flat  
 the beloved faces of Imma's photo album take voice,

Night after night, I listen as they relive a shared childhood  
 — Drilj's bright waters, the happy times.  
 Mute cries tell of the Ilza German Slave Labor munitions camp,  
 of Jewish fingers bleeding from the corrosive burn of gunpowder.

Can human voice resonate such endless pain that a six year old  
 child  
 listening in her sleepless bed will forever call it her own?

#### 'ILZA; Queen Casimir's Tears

Did King Casimir's bride weep centuries of sweet waters  
 down the jagged hills of Ilza to mourn the destruction of her castle  
 or for the cruel fate of her shteitle's Jews?

— Shira Twersky-Cassel (Provizor)

#### CEREMONY AT THE TRAIN STATION BARDEJOV, SLOVAKIA MAY 15, 2012

The mayor reads his prepared speech  
 about the deportation and the war  
 while schoolchildren stand fidgeting

listening to stories  
 of something that happened  
 long before they were born

they blink at us  
 strangers and wonder  
 why we have come here

I look for you everywhere  
 in this heartbreaking beauty  
 I search for you in the cemetery

but the entire  
 row of your generation is missing  
 erased

I would have placed my hand on your cheek  
 played games with you as a child  
 ran after you in the square

sat on your lap in shul  
 if I had known you  
 grandfather

I would place a stone on your grave  
 but there is no grave  
 and not enough stones in the world.

— Dina Jehuda

#### YAD VASHEM

with The Book  
 in my hand  
 and The Name  
 on my lips  
 I cry  
 concrete corridors with displays of  
 death  
 schemes of blood and ashes

I must sit  
 I must breathe  
 return to the letters in The Book  
 black tears on melted white

I am blind, I say, take my hand

I will lead you  
 we will wade through  
 tools of hate  
 the cold, dark narrative  
 harsh forms  
 nightmares alive  
 the screams

I will pull you through  
 to the other side  
 into the sun  
 away from mourning  
 up from the deep gash  
 in the mountain

look — where the water trickles  
 from the rocks

smell — the fresh pine needles

hear — His whispers

now  
 we are cleansed.

— Mindy Aber Barad

## THE JEWS OF SAINT JOHN, N.B.

## I

The synagogue in Saint John, New Brunswick  
is for sale, the big sanctuary closed like a barn  
in winter.

The community center is a museum of past  
glory. Twenty families remain and only a few show  
at the chapel to carry on the tradition of the fathers.

## II

The congregation is so small it doesn't have a  
Rabbi. The rabbi comes in from Halifax, probably drives  
to Digby and takes the ferry or he drives all the way.

He has to arrive before *shabbat* or *yontiff*. He sleeps  
in the museum with the ghosts of the past. The wind howls  
a Holocaust melody and he can't sleep.

## III

Among the first Jews in Saint John was a Mr. Gales.  
His children married Christians because there were no  
other Jews.

They assimilated like the lost tribe or the English at  
Roanoke in the 1600's who created blue-eyed Indians. And  
will Saint John have circumcised Christians?

## IV

There were once over two hundred and fifty Jewish  
families in Saint John - fourteen hundred souls for  
God to watch.

Now who prays for justice and mercy? Where have  
all the Jews gone? Are there any left? Will there be a last  
Jew in Saint John?

— Zvi A. Sesling

## MIXED MEDIA OF SPRING

sanguine Spring in Newspeak:  
mass executions, muddied dead bodies  
butchered families, whole towns  
whatever happened to land renewed, and dew

once upon a Spring  
frosts mimicked death only  
while sustaining life —  
silent investment in the future  
am I the only one left  
who remembers buds?  
rustlings after a long dormancy?  
except for passed over door posts  
where once we sprinkled blood  
this does not resemble Spring at all.

— Mindy Aber Barad

## MY GRANDMOTHER'S SKIES

For years they dressed me  
in my grandmother's grey skies,  
in the oncoming rain  
of her winter memories.

For years spring was forbidden  
and the sun, when it came,  
burned a hole in my heart.

Despite all their precautions  
I jumped into the puddles of light  
and wore the summer sun  
in my hair like a ribbon.

I always knew my grandmother  
wept for the lost ones,  
especially for the children,  
yet even she still looked out at the light  
of each day with a welcome,  
thankful to be here.

Despite the irony of her dark forebodings,  
she burned the colors of good memories  
in her Shabbos candles,  
and dressed our futures  
in the hope of fortune and blue skies.

— Estelle Gershoren Novak

## SHULAMIT

Return, return, O Shulamit . . .

Song of Songs 7:1

Snow blacker than witches covers the camp.  
 Voices lower than whispers echo in the woods.  
 Pelting rain does not wash the ground clean.  
 There, your brush, and combs for your hair, Shulamit,  
 Your velvet purse, your patent-leather shoes.  
 There, an orchestra played, and the lines marched on.  
 Some hacked the snow; others shoveled ashes.  
 Curses darker than wizards' cover the camp.  
 Footsteps softer than foxes' echo far from forest paths.  
 Thunder storms do not drown out their sound.  
 There, liner for your almond-shaped eyes, Shulamit,  
 There, an image of your children, yet to be born.

On eagles' wings you returned to the mountain of  
 myrrh,  
 For blessings, like pearls of dew, cover our Land,  
 Shulamit.

— Ruth Fogelman

## TEACHER'S NOTE

There is a Jewish participant in my group

suffering as the daughters of Holocaust survivors  
 suffer,

who sat last night and said:

"The ghost of a nun has twice visited me in the dead of  
 night."  
 (We sleep in Montreal above a crypt, abandoned nuns  
 burned in the hundreds).

You can tell she is convinced this is true (and who am I  
 to say what is true?).

But listening to her account of these nocturnal visits

made it near impossible for me to write a picture book  
 for class, let alone sleep.

In Israel the monsters tend to approach lo aleinu in  
 broad daylight, and in public and to be

on the express lane to the Next World, not returning.

— Gila Green

VI. *The Journey Home*

## AT THEBES

We strain at ropes to drag great blocks of stone  
 Up winding ramps at Pharaoh's rising tomb,  
 A labor which has been the grueling doom  
 Of thousands since he first took up his throne.  
 We build for Pharaoh's afterlife alone,  
 To seal his mummy in a buried room  
 With all his treasure, ready to assume  
 His place among the magically reborn.

When we die we are cast into the sand,  
 Forgotten, vanished into nothingness.  
 It is an empty, hopeless destiny.  
 And yet we build more royal tombs to stand  
 Vast and lonely in the wilderness  
 As if no other kind of world could be.

— David Stephenson

## RETURN TO THE HOMELAND

You soft breezes! Herald of Italy!

And you with your poplars, beloved river!

You billowing mountain ranges! O all you  
 Sunny peaks, so it is you again?

You still place! In dreams you appeared distant  
 After a hopeless day to the yearning one,  
 And you my house, and you playmates,  
 Trees of the hill, you well-known!

How long is it, O how long! The child's peace  
 Is gone, and gone are youth and love and delight;  
 Yet you, my fatherland! you holy one —  
 Patient one! see, you are still here.

And because they are patient when you are patient,  
 rejoice

When you rejoice, rear you, dear one! your own also  
 And remind them in dreams, when they wander  
 Far away and stray, the disloyal.

And when in his fervid breast the self-mighty desires  
 Of the youth have been soothed  
 And are still before fate, then  
 The mellowed one more gladly gives himself to  
 you.

Farewell then, days of youth, you rose-lined path  
 Of love, and all you paths of the wanderer,  
 Farewell! And take and bless you my  
 Life, O heaven of my homeland, a gain!

— Friedrich Hölderlin  
 from the German: Robert Glen Deamer

## CLOSING TOWN

A twilight deeper than a summer dusk  
 Is lengthening the shadows of this town,  
 The mill is closed, the company moves on,  
 Whatever does not fall is taken down.  
 Rust-red tobacco barn, the general store,  
 No-longer-needed uproots built-to-last,  
 On dying streets, the people congregate,  
 Each, in their way, bids farewell to the past.  
 As cars crawl out beyond the Mobil sign,  
 The rotting bandstand echoes one last song;  
 Its chorus blares be gone, there's nothing here,  
 Its melody sighs, here's where you belong.  
 — John Grey

## THE DANCE OF THE DEER

In the meadow, the herd danced their dance of young  
 grass  
 the young males on the side, legs tucked under  
 well-brought up guards  
 the does in their Puritan brown  
 still demure in their leaps and stretched necks  
 their sameness the security of sisters  
 their joy for the end of the dark, bare bark and ice-held  
 ground  
 my joy too, but I was not welcome to the rich meadow  
 nor would I ever dance  
 in the kindness of my own kind.  
 — Susan Oleferuk

## ANOTHER MARTIAN SENDS A POSTCARD HOME

1  
 Tunes live on a saucer  
 that never flies

When slid into a closet,  
 they wake up

2  
 Rain turns sunflower leaves  
 into giving hands

3  
 Yellow scarves flail about  
 as if in wind, then  
 melt into a  
 shrinking  
 pool of  
 blood

Which grins like a cat  
 (curled in the hearth)  
 before disappearing

4  
 Pulleys close thin eyelids  
 against sun

5  
 Their child sleeps for six days  
 and rages the seventh

For comfort they rock it back and forth  
 by its arm

It gobbles tidbits from the floor

When its stomach fills,  
 they give it a new one

— Susan Richardson

A FAILED TEST OF EMUNAH: TOMORROW, I'LL  
EAT WATERMELON

Sparrows pick stale bread,  
 Before the makolet closes,  
 While children, hunger-activated, sigh,  
 Eyes wide open.

Elsewhere, "Kol Tov " to basil in clay pots,  
 To jarred jasmine,  
 Beneath a lavender sun.  
 Water drips on my merpesset.

Primeval acacias yet bind,  
 Ishmael's brood,  
 More than Avraham's heart:  
 Yitzhak's children await perfection.

The golden onion glowers;  
 Peril's become politicized.  
 Prayers for the Beit HaMikdash,  
 Barely appear in private papers.

In crowds, it's lonely,  
 Loitering for Moshiach,  
 Amongst wisdom-draped fringe,  
 Which sway, rise, and lean on stone.

Today, I woke Yerushalmi.  
 The Kotel was a bus away.  
 The sky was all Shemyim.  
 Tomorrow, I'll eat watermelon.

— KJ Hannah Greenberg

## SLICED BREAD

Preparing lunch, I discover  
that a slice of plain white bread,

when cut in half, is shaped like  
the two tablets of the law.

And even my son's leaving  
uneaten ends of bread

when rushing off to play  
suggests the corners of a field

and how these gleanings  
will sustain the poor.

— Steven Sher

## THE JOURNEY HOME

The road Beer-Sheva-Tel-Aviv  
is shorter than the same road south,  
being later, straighter, while the other  
follows the older curvy path.

Beside the new, a bush or two,  
a palm, are claimed as "landscaping,"  
while by the old, the eucalyptus  
trees, plenish the skyline, whispering

of silver olive leaves, of shedding  
snake skin bark, of dragonflies.  
I relish driving north, but oh —  
the journey home, the journey home.

-- Amiel Schotz

## IN QUEST OF EL DORADO

"He [God] calmed the sea's tempest, and the waves  
of the sea were stilled. Then they rejoiced because  
the waves were silenced; and He brought them to  
their desired haven." (Psalm 107:29-30)

Our ship has landed us upon this shore  
Beside a quiet bay. Beyond the sand  
There stretches out a vast, uncharted land  
Not one of us has ever seen before.

Dare I become a brave conquistador  
Who does not fear to seize the upper hand  
In search of fabled wealth and lead a band  
Of men across broad plains we must explore?

You've brought us to the continent of faith,  
My God, extending like a coral reef  
No diver has revealed. But I've been told  
That if we climb faith's mountain peaks and  
bathe  
In unpolluted rivers of belief,  
We might yet reach Jerusalem of Gold.

— Yakov Azriel

## WHERE KINGS ONCE WALKED

I'm not interested in planets  
speed of lights away  
want to know whether King David saw the same sky  
as me  
what Rachel wore to the wedding feast

Was the sky different three thousand years ago

In the harbor soft waves lap  
against the boardwalk  
fishermen cast poles  
where there's a restaurant  
a king once walked

— Lois Michal Unger

## JERUSALEM

In the beginning the Shechina was in a tent,  
Small-size in size-large in kedusha, very sacred.  
Our teacher Moshe awake or asleep alert  
could feel the rhythm of the divine voice speaking to him.

The skins covering the Mishkan/Tabernacle included Tachash,  
A mysterious animal that came around there and left.  
There were furs to cover this mini-palace  
Full of smoke, cloud and mystery of fiery angelical gold.

Listen Israel, now that we are in the ascendancy  
Joining the league of nations again.  
The voices tell us that there is a holiness in His place,  
As a flood of Berachot/blessings-running.

Now David wanted to crystallize his aspirations for the Temple,  
But God did not give the keys to build it directly to him.  
The next king, Shlomo does not need to fight and peace grows  
In the ascent of the full moon, he fills all its glory.

Why this privilege of the holy city Jerusalem?  
In your yesterday and in the morning you renew the present  
salvation.  
Here are physical boundaries that limit and infinite spiritual  
ones  
You the city which as a lung-heart breathes and beats in all of us.

In this point the universe began and expanded infinite  
Herein lies "the joy of truth" which is the key of language.  
In seventy languages everyone will come to visit and appreciate  
you  
Since the words coming out to the mind bring closer your truth  
divine.

— Hayim Abramson

Sources: The Deronda Review, Vol IV, No. 2 Winter-Spring 2012,  
Jerusalem.

Keywords: awake, voices. Waterfall, crystallize R. Lavett Smith, p.23;  
key, quarrel, E. Kam-Ron, p.23; breathing, the joy of truth, G. Izak  
p.27; boundaries; "words are a fence around the truth" S. Twersky-  
Cassel, p.26.

Tachash: Bamidbar 4:6 "They will put up a cover of leather tanned  
tachash, and it had a light blue cloth, and insert the rods" (which hold  
the Ark).

Gold Kruvim-angeles: They were made of gold, giving remembrance  
fire of Sinai. There are many secrets here, including that they had a  
connection to the throne of glory, See Sefer Siyune HaTorah to Parshas  
Terumah; Sifte Cohen Shemot 25:18 and others.

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Jerusalem: The Eye of the Universe, NCSY-  
OUJC, NY1976

## BLUSH FIELDS

I have seen  
the terraced fields  
blush pink  
at the sun's dawn wink

I have heard the birds  
In harmony  
With the bells of goats  
Despite the stony silence  
Of the camels

I have watched the fog creep  
And shrug shoulders around  
The boulders and trees  
Before it tugs itself away  
Into the day.

— Mindy Aber Barad

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## VII. The Mountain Says

## DOORS AND ARCHES

Some look for redemption  
in water  
or hurl over burning coals  
to test their ardor.

For me salvation lies  
through the doors and arches  
of a painting in the back room  
of a gallery on 5th Street.  
Weekly I visit the narrow picture  
as necessary as our summer  
pilgrimages to my Aunt Fanny in Brooklyn  
to pay our respects.

At the far end a small window opens  
on a stubble of grass.  
Thorns pierce the canvas, masquerading  
as flecks of paint on a vine  
that twists over slats of fence.  
Ghosts of huckleberries droop  
like the chins of schoolchildren.  
caught stealing penny candy.

You could arrest me as an intruder  
as I slink through the painting  
rooms off its hallway  
belonging to someone else  
but I take nothing, disturb no one.

Such devotion is rare in this city  
 where rosary beads break amid scandal  
 over the tiles of St. Vibiana's Cathedral  
 while in my box of family treasures .  
 the knots of my father's *tallis*  
 unravel even as we speak.

— Carol V. Davis

[*tallis*: Jewish prayer shawl]

## UNLESS

The spirit moves from wrong to wrong, from harm  
 to harm done others in a moral mess,  
 an aged man's a stick within a coat  
 of impotence of age and rage unless.

Unless exactly what? you may enquire.  
 Unless precisely what kind of a thing?  
 Unless restored by that refining fire.  
 Unless soul clap its hands, oh clap and sing.

So Yeats and Eliot say life is just  
 the same address, about six feet of dust,  
 more a burial than life unless  
 I can refine my scabs of flaking rust.

I will remain a stick six feet in height,  
 merely vertebral support for clothes,  
 unless soul clap its hands and get me done  
 serving the time I serve. Excuse me, those

spirit hands and my flesh will are un-  
 connected by a nerve, though I today  
 am connected wif to all lands.  
 How does one call up his spirit hands

and bid them clap and not hold back but clap  
 in some refining serious hurray  
 spring destickment into rising sap?  
 How to access a joy so far away?

— John Milbury-Steen

## MOMENTS OF GRACE

Where then are you, moments of grace,  
 when all becomes right,

all in a total confluence  
 into a singular whole,  
 like a flawless rock-crystal  
 in which the universe is incarnate and manifest,  
 like some unheard-of, inaudible music  
 that wafts down from the spheres.

Alas, the rock-crystal is flawed,  
 the music screeches,  
 and nothing is right any longer,  
 all is unwhole.

— Haim Schneider

## THE MOUNTAIN SAYS

How taciturn  
 the airless hours  
 are no longer mine  
 a pile of conjectures  
 besieged by distance  
 of a mute grey sky  
 exposing a snagged life  
 like Sisyphus  
 unable to rise  
 even from repetition  
 let alone reputation,  
 only believing  
 there were those  
 who heard poetry  
 from the ancients  
 in a voice on high.

— B.Z. Niditch

## AN EARLY ZIONIST

He grabbed a fistful of Israeli soil  
 a mixture of ancient dirt  
 and ashes settled on the ground from the skies of  
 Europe  
 and pointed his fist to the sky and cried  
 how could You?  
 Now help us or get out of the way!

— Drew Nacht

## A SECRET HOPE OF TEXTURES

It makes one tender and aligned / getting out of the car because of traffic / a hidden marsh by the base of some road / one hundred shades of green are wanted / bodies spread out in the thicket / sand slipping into very hip boots again / curly hair bobbing along ahead / clear above the salty brush line / it is a little patch of wilderness / the mire leads to the beach / the beach is part of the Sound / and the Sound connects to the ocean / where it all unites with the sky / knowing what lives in the distance / still believing in the swamp / squishing mud and grass underfoot / hoping that the world won't go / away and away forever / until the colors turn unrecognizable / lately thinking suffocation under so much oil/humpback whales that can't breathe / water is sick around the continent / go help wash the creatures' backs / liquid dish soap is so strange / it would make anyone cry to do / we have to cry its good to feel/and know what is really happening / but still to be so grateful for / one hundred shades of green / a bog plushy with wild flora / the best that has ever even been smelt / no sense to anything but tall grass / a companion to pass over land / so wide or miniature to size / it is large in our minds / in marsh as in a lover's bed / everything fits together just right / bodies spread out in the thicket / all is beautiful for a moment / still walking in the swamp / squishing mud and grass underfoot / it makes one tender and aligned / because on the surface there always lies / a secret hope of textures

— Alexis Wolf

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REVIVAL OF THE POETIC SELF

From the darkness there are yellow and orange rays of illumination.  
 Geese fly overhead murmuring muffled sounds in the sunrise over the lake.  
 Angel tears melt into the morning mist.  
 Searching for the poetic self takes time.  
 Our souls move slowly as we process our observations of the natural world.

Fast paced rhythms of time beat quicker each day depleting our energy.  
 Media and metal mini phones trump our solitude.  
 Noise and clutter drown out our ability to think with clarity.

Peaceful prayers heal our inner selves with tranquility.  
 The heavenly white light centers the well of being.  
 Retreat into trance states and restore the inner vision.  
 Music uplifts the spirit, so we can move beyond the present moment.

Set aside the traps of modern man.  
 Move into seclusion and create an orderly sacred space.  
 Our voices will speak out again.  
 Breathe new life and sustenance into the bones and sinews,  
 Nature beckons us to listen and learn.  
 Watching the waves wash in creates strength and wholeness again.  
 Hope awakens us to realize that the truth lives within.

--Shoshanah Weiss-Kost



## EVIDENCE OF THINGS UNSEEN

The difference between carnivores and those  
 who eat only plants is part of it. Empathy  
 is in the works even when spoken in whispers.  
 These things converse with trees, call them  
 from their wooden sleep to restart their green  
 machinery. They are in the dance going on  
 between the oceans and the moon, the way  
 wind moves from one space to another, in  
 the secret knowledge that helps salmon  
 return to their place of birth, dogs and cats  
 to cross entire continents just to return home.  
 The unseen are everywhere. Their evidence  
 is in what makes music possible and why art  
 has such a mind of its own. If none of this  
 convinces you, think of time. We do not see  
 it and do not know if we are traveling through  
 it or whether it is passing among us choosing  
 who will go to the right and who to the left.

— Fredrick Zydek

## THE BAAL-TESHUVAH

"The Lord knows the thoughts of man — that they are  
 vanity." (Psalm 94:11)

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

## BLESSING OF THE SUN

April 8, 2009

*Blessed are you who makes the work of creation.*  
 We make this blessing once every twenty-eight  
 years  
 on an early April morning to praise the creation  
 of the sun, on the fourth day, in its first position.

We make this blessing once every twenty-eight  
 years,  
 enough time to have moved along in our lives  
 like the sun in earth's day, in reversed position,  
 amazed at its travels across the sky.

Time is enough to move us along in our lives  
 even if we stay still as the sun  
 amazed at its travels across a sky  
 that does the work of turning while it burns.

Even if we stay still as the sun,  
 even without reference for our movement,  
 we do the work of turning while we burn  
 our gathered sugars in a gorgeous flame.

Even without reference for our movement,  
 our spheres of influence are each a planet.  
 We gather sugars till the gorgeous flames  
 of autumn burn and crumble into soil.

Our spheres of influence are each a planet  
 springing into life on one half only  
 as autumn burns the other to crumbs and soils  
 the green unfolding and the new life blazing.

Springing into life on one half only  
 makes you dizzy, like a child's spinning.  
 The green's unfolding and a new life's blazing,  
 evolving here to still another translation

that makes you dizzy, like a child's spinning  
 on an early April morning. To praise the  
 creation,  
 still evolving, here's another translation:  
*blessed you make the making of the beginning.*

— Courtney Druz

## THE RELAY

*for C.D.*

I hoped to write a poem about the sun  
 After the ceremony of the blessing,  
 Waited for a line but it did not come.  
 Another sign, I guess, of powers lessening.

Twice before, as a girl almost grown,  
 And later, as a woman just past prime,  
 I might have met that ray, had I but known;  
 Likely it will not find me here next time.

But now I've read the song I'd wished to write  
 In the voice of another, younger by one turn  
 Of that great wheel. Then let me bless G-d's might  
 By which the powers that leave with me return.

Bless G-d, there will be sky, there will be sun,  
 There will be song when my brief stave is done.

— E. Kam-Ron

## ELEANOR AND HICK

Yosemite, July 1934

High in the Sierras,  
 land of waterfalls and granite faces  
 reaching to a height of thirteen thousand feet  
 (that beauty captured in photography by Ansel  
 Adams),  
 here, two women camped and contemplated  
 their lives, their loves, and most of all  
 their destinies.

Here, too, famously, her Uncle Ted  
 had spent a night with one John Muir  
 beholding God's playground,  
 pledging to keep it safe  
 from the ravaging hand of greed.

But for Eleanor, it was a time to choose between  
 the private life she longed for  
 and the public life she had come to contemplate.

Hick, less athletic than the president's lady,  
 overweight, a smoker, panting at the height,  
 found she was reporter no longer, only a friend.

Attended by their guides,  
 they dodged reporters, fled the peering eyes  
 of celebrity hunters.

The president himself  
 was off somewhere in the Pacific,

Hawaii perhaps,  
 his letters following his mate's adventures.

Eleanor had borne him children, five still living.  
 Reluctant First Lady, Hick was later to call her,  
 sharing her memories of her famous friend.

Sleeping under a heaven full of stars  
 gives pause,  
 and when she came away, rejoining her husband in  
 San Francisco,  
 she knew.

The past — a wife and mother;  
 the present — deep depression and a nation's  
 poverty;  
 the future still to come —  
 a world at war, the rights of Negro children.  
 These were commitments she had yet to make.

"What should I have done, Hick?" she asked.

"I've been betrayed by my one true love."

"I know."

"I offered him divorce."

"Out of the question, for an ambitious man."

"We reconciled, and then the paralysis . . ."

"No one could fault you, Eleanor."

"I'm so pleased for him, but for myself . . ."

"It would be pleasant, just to disappear."

"Did you know that Alice always made fun of me?"

"Your cousin? I wouldn't doubt it."

"And Aunt Edith . . ."

"I've given up a career or two myself."

"Women will have to learn to stop bickering."

"Tell me about it."

"Hick, I've never had such a friend as you."

"I'll always be here for you."

"That's good to know."

And so their conversation might have gone,  
 or not.

Perhaps it needn't have been said at all.

Friends share sometimes in silence  
 what won't spill out in words.

At any rate,  
 she came down from the mountain  
 renewed, committed to a very public life,  
 reluctantly.

— Nancy M. Fisher

SN'EH

The morning bush awakes to the dry desert  
Does not guess that today it will burn in the fire and not  
be consumed  
What was in your future? Would you have been like  
tumbleweed before the wind  
A powder of dry twigs, to be reabsorbed into the  
elements?  
You were immortalized in words. You are not entitled  
to applause.  
You did not know your eternity, nor the revelation  
revealed by and in you.

A desert shrub, almost inanimate  
You put up no barriers, you could be a clear mirror  
You would have been consumed in a minute  
In you great mercy and fire are reconciled.

— Tziporah Lifshitz  
from the Hebrew: E. Kam-Ron

[sn'eh (Hebr.): bush]

\*\*\*\*\*

## ***A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT***

AMENDMENT 28  
*for the 28 dead of Newtown*

WHEREAS, the principle of freedom of speech  
Was meant to shelter conscience and debate,  
Not license spectacles and words that teach

Crimes against human persons, furnish hate  
With mental images a certain few  
In the large audience will imitate;

WHEREAS, it has been shown that crimes ensue  
When crimes are publicized in their detail  
And pictures and accounts of those who do

The crimes, are widely shown, or where the tale  
Of heinous acts can bring the felon gain;  
WHEREAS, such practices break down the pale

Of life, the foremost right, and thus make vain  
Pursuit of happiness, and liberty;  
And WHEREAS, harmful speech tends to restrain

Legitimate speech, from fear no longer free;  
THEREFORE, it is declared that governments,  
State, local, federal, have authority

To ban such works by law and ordinance,  
As breaches of the peace, whereby alleged  
Artistic merit shall be no defence,

Since to life's service all true art is pledged.

— E. Kam-Ron

[Note: The above will be posted, G-d willing, at  
[www.stopdeadlyspeech.org](http://www.stopdeadlyspeech.org).]

\*\*\*\*\*

## **12. The Wander Root Court**

In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on  
the first of the month, right here, right now,  
it has been long enough.

Turn and enter — whichever way you are facing,  
turn and enter.

What has already bloomed is old; the fruit in the  
unopened bud is what you will bring.

Come with me to the field where the trees are  
budding.

We will tend them as they flower, we will lodge  
in the villages, we will note the first fruits  
ripening there and designate them for God.

\*

Adorn them with ribbons, prepare the bowls.

Pare your own slice of the pebble moon and fill  
it.

Carry it on your shoulder as you translate your  
story.

\*

Come and build what you must build.

It is authorized to you.  
It is not too late.

— Courtney Druz

from her book *The Light and the Light* (2012)



Adrienne Rempel, *Ochre Form*/ oil on canvas / 18" x 23"/2012

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Know, reader, what the elder poets knew  
 and what the distant disk of Earth now tells us:  
 that all things have their limit and their term  
 and in that term and limit is their form,  
 their beauty, and the laws which give them life,  
 shaping the energy which otherwise  
 would lose itself in boundless dissipation.

– George Richter  
*The Consciousness of Earth*

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