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Nechama Sara Gila Nadborny-Burgeman: Passing through the 50th Gate of Binah

In this issue:

I This Earthly Star 1 II Strange Surroundings 7 III The Sight of the Heart 11 IV Beyond Sight 13
V To Live Again 20 VI A Stranger World Arrives 23 VII A Stretch of Road 28 VIII Whatever It Is 30

CONTRIBUTOR EXCHANGE

Below are titles of poetry collections in English by contributors, as well as URLs. ** means the poet has a page in the Hexagon Forum section of www.pointandcircumference.com. For a complete listing, including books in Hebrew, see derondareview.org/contribex.htm.

L. Ward Abel, *The Width of Here* (Silver Bow, 2021), *American Bruise* (Parallel Press, 2012), *Green Shoulders: New and Selected Poems 2003–2023* (Silver Bow, 2023)

Ed Ahern's latest is *Sideways Glances* (Cyberwit.net, 2023).

Simcha Angel, *Voice of My Heart: A Love Story in Poetry*, 2023.

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

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

Hamutal Bar Yosef's many works are listed on hamutalbaryosef.co.il. She has two bilingual poetry collections: *Night, Morning* Syracuse University Press, 2008, and *The Ladder*, Sheep Meadow Press, 2014.

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

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

**Esther Cameron, *The Consciousness of Earth* (Multicultural Books, 2004); *Fortitude, or The Lost Language of Justice: Poems in Israel's Cause* (Bitsaron Books, August 2009); Collected Works (6 vols.), Of the Essence Press 2016; www.pointandcircumference.com.

Emily Bilman, *La rivière de soi* (Slatkine & Cie, 2010) in Geneva. *A Woman by A Well* (2015), *Resilience* (2015), *The Threshold of Broken Waters* (2018), *Apperception* (2020), *The Undertow* (2023) were published by Troubadour Books, UK.

Amichai Chasson, <https://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/29459/>

Roberta Chester, *Light Years* (Puckerbush Press, 1983); *A New Song: Poems Inspired by the Weekly Torah Portion* (Mazo, 2023).

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

Louis Efron, *The Unempty Spaces Between* (Cathexis Northwest Press, 2023)

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

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

Michael Favala Goldman, *Slow Phoenix; If you were here you would feel at home; Small Sovereign; This May Sound Familiar; Someday All of This Will Be Yours; Who has time for this?; What Minimal Joy*.

Paula Goodman, *The Great Canopy, Late Love* (2020)

Carole Greenfield, *Weathering Agents*, Beltway Editions, 2023.

John Grey, *Covert, Memory Outside the Head, Guest of Myself*, all published by cyberwit.net

Kevin Hart, several books listed on Amazon author page, http://amazon.com/author/kevin_hart333

DB Jonas' *Tarantula Season* is forthcoming with Finishing Line Press.

Paul Hostovsky's newest book of poems is *Pitching for the Apostates* (forthcoming, Kelsay Books)

John P. Kneal, *Everyday Poems* (2017). www.JohnPKneal.com

Katharyn Howd Machan's *Dark Matter* (2017) and *Selected Poems* (2018) are both available on Kindle. The latest of her 39 books of poetry are *A Slow Bottle of Wine* (Comstock Writers Group, 2020) and *Dark Side of the Spoon* (Moonstone Press in 2022)

Mike Maggio, *Let's Call It Paradise*, San Francisco Bay Press, 2022. My web site is www.mikemaggio.net.

**Constance Rowell Mastores, *A Deep But Dazzling Darkness*, Blue Light Press (2013), *Dusk* (Sugartown Publishing, 2017).

Irene Mitchell, *Fever* (Dos Madres Press, 2019), *Equal Parts Sun and Shade: An Almanac of Precarious Days* (Aldrich Press, 2017), *Minding the Spectrum's Business* (FutureCycle Press, 2015), *A Study of Extremes in Six Suites* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2012), *Sea Wind on the White Pillow* (Axes Mundi Press, 2009). Selected Poems (FutureCycle Press, 2021), *My Report from the Uwharries*, (Dos Madres, 2022).

Mark J. Mitchell's full-length collections include *Lent* (Leaf Garden Press, 1999) *Starting from Tu Fu* (Encircle Publications), *Roshi, San Francisco* (Norfolk Press), *Something to Be: Poems for the Workday* (Pski's Porch, 2023). Chapbooks: *Three Visitors* (Negative Capability Press, 2010), *Artifacts and Relics* (Folded Word Press,) 2015, and *Fishing in the Knife Drawer* (Fowlpox Press, 2020).

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

James B. Nicola's latest three (of eight) poetry collections are *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense* (Shanti Arts, 2021), *Turns & Twists* (Cyberwit.net, 2022), and *Natural Tendencies* (Cervena Barva Press, 2023).

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

Andrew Oram, <https://www.praxagora.com/>

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

Nolo Secondo, *The Enormity of Existence* [2020]; *Of Ether and Earth* [2021]; and *Soul Songs* [2022], all published by cyberwit.net.

Harvey Steinberg, *Agitations and Allelujas* (Ragged Sky Press, 2022).

Christopher Stewart, *The Walmart Republic* (2014, with Quraysh Ali Lansana), Mongrel Empire Press. *What Came After* (upcoming, 2024), The Calliope Group.

E.M. Schorb, *Once Upon Each Time: Collected Poems*, Hill House New York, 2020.

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

Wally Swist's latest of many books is a translation of Giuseppe Ungaretti's *L'Allegria* (Shanti Arts, 2023). See online entry at derondareview.org/contribex.htm.

Jean Varda, *She Was Attached to Symmetry* (Sacred Feather Press, 2014), *Oracle* (Sacred Feather Press, 2023)

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

Robert Witmer, *Finding a Way* (Cyberwit.net, 2016), *Serendipity* (Cyberwit.net, 2023)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

DB Jonas' "Luftmenschen" appeared in *The Decadent Review*. Harvey Steinberg's "Of Emily Dickinson" appeared in his book, *Agitations and Alleluias*. Emily Bilman's "The Warrants" appeared in *The Undertow*. Herzl Hakak's "Ballad to Kinorit" is taken from his book *Ana Bekoach, Ana Beshir (We Beg for Strength, We Beg with Song)*. The two poems by Sara Friedland ben Arza are from her book *Veharei HaNer (And Behold the Flame)*. A different version of Sharon Lask Munson's "Immigrant" appeared in *Alimentum*.

I. *This Earthly Star*

THE FRAME AROUND A THING

Through this window I can bear
the birds that dart and disappear,
and clouds and mist that drift like smoke
and pass from sight, beyond the scope
of my window to contain.

A crow takes refuge from the rain
to pause a moment on the sill,
then caws and gives a screech goodbye
before flapping off into the sky.
Emerald and violet in waning light,
a hummingbird's helicopter flight
shimmers a second and is gone.
The day's now night and night is dawn.
A bat flits blindly through the dark
on nightmare wings.

Hark!

Dove 's calling dove as the night wind sings.
Three stars have appeared to crown the moon
and night is already afternoon.
Trembling in the rain, the leaves
are turning and turning in the breeze
And morning comes again so soon.
And evening comes so soon.

Out in the world the world 's so huge
that like a closed fist my thoughts refuse
to grasp at such enormity.
My mind has room just enough for me.
The window, though, sets Creation apart
a sufficient distance from my heart,
so as I have my coffee and gaze
at birds and leaves and clouds, the maze
of questions gets under control.
I have my cup, my home, my role.
Birds can flutter and disappear.
I don 't have to follow.

I 'm here.

It 's the frame around a thing
that makes it visible.

Oh, too glorious and vast, the mysteries
as my years sail past! I 'll sit and seize
one by one by one,
the parade of minutes beneath the sun,
and hold and behold until I die
all the world with my small eye.

—Sarah Shapiro

CLIMBING

I like to go
sometimes
up the quiet mountain.

I climb over rocks
scattered before me
like huge, white stepping stones.

I grapple their smooth, elusive grip.
I scale hungry chasms
stumble past towering trees

woven tightly like thatch.
They disorient me
obscure my vision

entice me with their endless gentle green.
I hasten on
refuse the lure to linger.

On my way
a river confronts me
severs my path.

I stare into it boldly
see my drawn reflection
in its clear, sparkling sheen.

I drink.
Then, defiant, I ford
the angry waters

I reach a snow-covered valley.
It slopes gently
up the rugged cliffs

that stand between me
and the essence
of my obscure desire.

The cold provokes me
the wind warns.
I press on through the deep blinding snow.

Sometimes
I reach the top --
when I can --

sometimes

because the sky calls
because the sun warms my soul
because the light lifts me beyond my trodden shadow

—Mike Maggio

WOVEN BIRDS

A dozen separate strings of fat white birds
cats-cradled overhead not touching, tiers
that occupied their layer of the sky

like it was easy, like they never heard
of bumps or gaps – like no one disappeared
and left a hole in your formation. I

was just an earth-bound human gaping, and
since I was driving, I could only glance
up sideways at the white sheets flattening

like newspapers do, squeezed. So to me
what should have looked like choreography

just looked impossible, as if their strands
passed through each other, as if happenstance
were all it took, and the whole universe
slipped deftly edgewise under V-shaped strings

of fat white birds, in layers. Unraveling –

—Kathryn Jacobs

LINGUISTICS

Bird, you don't disappoint
you call a mighty morning
in your motley dress of Robin
announcing the arrival of shy stepping dawn

In the evening, swallows write scrolls of cursive verse
philosophers all
their mantras to touch air, see sky, read the dark spots
written
on a page of light blue and splotched dark cloud

Wind, you don't disappoint
you soothe with songs of mountains you swirled
and forest tops
you rubbed to carry their essence far into the night

I hear not well, but I sense what comes from below
my heart beats not so wildly as an earlier self
I listen but I speak in a different language
I live now in a different land.

—Susan Oleferuk

THE BIRDS BEGIN AT FOUR

I have heard them

where she lies

the brook's secret murmur

the blissful sigh
of yestereve's cricket

when she breathes

the stars whisper

when she smiles

the sky is a field
of ancient poppies

swaying in the moonlight

praying in the moonlight

I have heard the birds sing

where she lies

listen

to your soul

let life's mysteries fill you with song

in the deep cool morning

where she lies

where she lies

—Mike Maggio

DAWN

I am the ever-coming Prince of my Mother, this Earthly Star —

You would fill with fear if my schedule by some cosmic cataclysm was delayed,
 you would be dulled by monotony if I arrived at each day 's same exact moment,
 you would be bored if every morning my light appeared to be at full capacity,
 you would never forgive me if my light cast ever-dwindling shadows,
 you would love me if I was the main attraction for every morning 's wake-up show.

I am —

the constant worldwide seed that bursts into myriads of shapes and shades of abundance,
 the sole note that nudges night from inert silence to reveal day 's reverberating voice,
 the burst that drives animals and plants to perform their nearly infinite routines,
 the fulcrum where ignorance slowly yields to the often-shrouded beacon of truth,
 the jolt that changes thick, heavy failure into gleaming chains of wisdom,
 the shift that vaults one from a muddle into a new view of what lies ahead,
 the train that delivers to all living things nourishment and hope,
 the bridge, endlessly suspended between what is and what is yet to be.

Yes, I am the never-departing Prince of my Mother, this Earthly Star.

—John P. Kneal

THE WARRANTS

I will return to the Aegean, the sea
 Of my youth where dolphins raced after
 Our departing ship in swathes of light
 Breaching, jumping, leaping into silver arcs.

The Aegean hides its carnage of flesh
 Below the surface yet, deep sea-currents
 Diminish the virulence of the viruses
 That tatter our wounded world. I will

Commune with the cerulean waves
 Of the Aegean as they mingle with the gleam
 Of that navy-blue and teal mother-sea
 Where ripples and tides swell the billows

And a plankton-filled potency conducts the currents
 Through recurrent sun-cycles, our earth 's warrants.

—Emily Bilman

KEEPER OF MEMORIES, EARTH SPEAKS

Keeper of memories, Earth speaks in Seasons,
 Tells of roots with Holdfast in Stardust,
 Of seeds, reaching from sleep
 For the heat of a unseen sun.

Earth surrenders secret bones,
 Dinosaur footprints from clay matrix
 Changed to stone.

A persistence of wind
 Lifts the fine dust of sifting time.
 Water finds a way
 To carve through layered history.

Impulsive Primitive roar of exultation,
 As first fame seekers and treasure hunters
 Hold aloft like war clubs
 Fossil thigh bones.

Heedless excavation all around!
 They crated up the Great Bones
 As they tore the ancient stories
 From the ground.

—Margaret Fox

ALMA

She burst into the world in the midst of the Day
of Atonement: got through the tunnel, opened the
gate, opened her eyes, found the breast.

I gazed at my daughter:
reflection within reflection.

On an upper floor of the hospital
my wife and my daughter were getting acquainted. I
went down
for Neilah, wrapped in a prayer shawl
and a medical mask. From the depths of prayer the
voice
of the cantor arose: *Be 'alma divrah kir 'utei*

In the world He created according to His will
I walk, giving thanks.

— Amichai Chasson
tr. EC

DON 'T

Flashing schools
of Humboldt squid
deeply inform the dark.

Coupling cuttlefish
proclaim their designs
as dermal marquees.

The amoeboid octopus
tastes and broadcasts
with the tips of its skin.

Yet coleoids, like
dogs and pigs and people,
are off limits.

God forbids us
from swallowing
brilliant treyf.

— Donald Mender

WINTER LIGHT

God scrubs up, aims her beam sharp and low:
Everything looks magnified, pinned down tight
On a white board - all her squirming specimens,
Shining bright.

The sun, sticking to the inner lanes -
I skim my life 's condensed version
Through the leafless windowpanes,
Already time for day again.

A starving fire in the west,
Cinders shrinking into ash -
These shorter days make darkness bolder.
Its shadows stretch, touch my shoulder.

— Ed Brickell

A WINTER WALK

I walk out into the winter twilight,
the cold slowly numbing my face.
Someone has swept all the clouds
towards the dying sun,
and they rest in piles,
tangerine and lavender,
waiting to be incinerated.

Over my shoulder, the moon hangs,
luminous, above a large sycamore
whose ivory bones are emerging
from its tattered bark.

Cars hurry by.
The sunset is captured in a puddle.
I turn home,
watch the inscrutable moon
through her veil of locust branches.

— Rosalie Hendon

LIGHT PUZZLE

Morning light in forest,
I never know if it 's
intention or accident.
Why illuminate small stones
and shade great oaks.
Better at beaches,
rising, falling on the waves
that drop a little on the sand they lick
while pulling back to sea with more.
The windows owe all shine
to architects:

bedroom facing east,
 enough brightness to
 nibble on sleep
 but not indulge the dream.
 Meanwhile, you 're talking up
 some spiritual beacon,
 how, when your morals and
 your faith align,
 your soul does enough beaming
 for the both of you.
 I drive to work
 and the sun 's dazzling my eye
 to the point
 where I can 't see the road.
 Maybe that 's what the light is up to.
 It wants to be the road.

—John Grey

ON CUE

When will you come, my felicitous passion-
 flowered trellis, my riotous carnival
 of peonies, my clematis, bastion
 of reliable roses? Without you, the pall
 of bowing daffodils cannot be erased
 by the wholly declared chanticleer
 pear tree in the front yard, the rapid pace
 of the blustering lake, this early fair
 spring morning — the clouds so low, leaving
 a white band of sky above the horizon
 on the dark blue. And the birdhouse, waiting
 for the red light of cardinals, the season
 of blue jays, common robins. And soon, the cue
 for the French tulips. And will you open true?

—Paula Goldman

POEM ON THE RISE

Today the nasturtium flowers are blooming like crazy
 on the porch, the same way my heart yearns for love.
 They open in yellow, orange, colors no one
 has recorded yet in any chart or book and
 they lead me to think we can all become new again
 without any plan or extra razzle-dazzle, opening
 as they are utterly in a desert world of light and rain.
 Before this, all they did was grow leaves bountifully,
 small green sweet-hearted shaped leaves in abundance,
 so I stopped watering them for a few days
 day after day as if less was an elixir, a touch of earth.
 That 's when the first flower opened with hundreds to
 follow.
 And for now, I think they will stay this way, always
 blooming,

hope inside the limited universe of flowers, trying
 to break free and I know more will come,
 impossible as it all seems in troubled times
 like these. Awash in inexplicable yellow, full of the urge
 to come back again, more, the bloom, the rise.

— Charlene Langfur

BUOYANCY

Our feelings, bittersweet,
 We observe them, those who walk on air,
 Laughing as they pass us on the street
 Buoyant and weightless as feathers,
 Blissfully unaware of the ground
 beneath their feet.

We once knew, all too well,
 The physics of their world —
 That glorious reprieve from gravity
 When we floated carefree on a current of air,
 All our substance, nothing but light,
 Elevated and flying high
 above those ordinary folk
 weighted down upon the concrete.

But I learned it isn 't only love that can fill you
 full of helium till you rise into the sky.
 A field of lupines with pink and purple spires,
 Birdsong in early morning,
 A small child 's hand in yours.
 Can lift your heart in flight.

Besides, I heard we walk on
 Whole ball fields of empty space
 Some charms and quarks but mostly nothing there.
 Which makes it clear —
 That quality of life that is so enviable
 Is something, in or out of love,
 we all of us can share.

—Roberta Chester

GARDENER

The way lettuce seedlings cling to the earth
 with their tiny rosettes as if there were nothing
 but success, potential, days of sun and rain
 ahead, a world tilting on its axis just the right
 distance from the sun, gently coaxing growth
 from the center, up and down, anchored and
 blooming, acquainting with nerves, sinews,
 breezes and dust. This is what I am nursing.
 This is what I make of soil and intention.

—Michael Favala Goldman

WOODLAND CHORUS

As white pine frantically
 Stretches her lower branches
 Toward the hardened earth
 Hoping for maybe one small
 Drop of moisture, she is
 Once again disappointed

Heartbroken, she listens to
 The saddened sighs of the others
 Sees their futile attempts to find
 Even the tiniest amount of water
 But with no rain, and low humidity
 Morning dew has also deserted them

Then, suddenly, a loud crack
 Breaks the stifling silence
 And, as if on cue, much needed
 Rain begins to fall, softly, quietly
 Then building to a grand crescendo
 Of the life-giving sustenance

One by one, white pine 's branches
 Lift, reaching for the darkened sky
 As she celebrates this wondrous gift
 While around her oak and maple
 Rejoice as well and, in exultation,
 The forest begins to sing

—Dawn McCormack

MAGIC DOG

The day finally came
 when cottonwood flew
 in downy wings on a June breeze
 mirrored by an angelic sky

My Black Lab and I took to the trail
 with me catching as many wish-wings as I could
 to send wishes to all I knew
 those who could use a soft touch in a hard hour or two

My black dog walked sedately past three stunned deer
 then swam among the goslings
 she pointed a concerned nose at a turtle very slow
 and sniffed at all the woods fragrances

I lifted my walking stick and had cottonwood like a wand
 meanwhile my black dog was covered with white down
 I put a long catkin on her like a crown
 and she promptly ate it

I was tempted to eat the will-o-wisp in my hand
 for who wouldn 't want dog magic?

—Susan Oleferuk

MAGIC ISLE

The clump of reeds drifted on the pond
 making an island
 an Avalon
 for those who dreamed
 landless but with roots reaching deep
 it drifted
 till my inquisitive companion dove and visited
 a noble princess wearing a filigree of green slime
 my enchanted dog
 always bringing me
 what I left behind.

—Susan Oleferuk

A MATTER OF PROPORTION

Along the path are small stones, crumbs of rock
 Petals of a flower, scattered by someone who was asking
 a question
 A convoy of ants absorbed in the only world they have
 And above all these very far away
 Hangs one moon that shines on each piece
 Its searchlight of sadness or its luminary of tranquility

—Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehory
 tr. EC

SENTIENCE

Tevis asks me if the large insect
 on the asphalt encircling
 the track is a grasshopper,
 and I tell her that it isn 't,
 that it is a green leaf insect,
 designed to look just like

a green leaf that seems attached
 to it, while we lap the track
 another time, until we find it
 in the same place, and it occurs
 to me that it has stuck to
 the asphalt in the heat

of the early morning sun,
 which gives me the impetus
 to take out my pocket notebook
 and carefully slide it beneath
 its legs, which I do, so that
 I can carry it into the shade

behind the metal bleachers
and into the cool dewy grass.
Holding its spindly legs
in my cupped palms, it decides
that 's too precarious a ride,
and it descends down to

cling to the wales of one
of my corduroyed pant legs
where it is intent on looking
right into me as I look down,
making sure it doesn't fall off
while I step towards

the shade. It has fastened
itself, it trusts me. Its eyes
deeply sentient. My soul
and its soul are one,
in the moment, connected
in an instant of grace.

Katydid, you repeat your name
and your ears are located
at your knees, which you rub
together to say it over and over
again. I have failed to make peace
with many people, but I have

intuited and felt a bond with you,
however tenuous ours might be,
we have shared an ostensible
sentience and camaraderie,
how upon placing you down
in the shadows of the dewy grass

we lost you to your own nature,
as we need to keep practicing
how we must work to continue
to find our own with one another
and with ourselves, —
our sentience seemingly wavering

and fading out, until perhaps
we can realize that we not only have
one another, and there is also
really so little time, but if we focus
on that, that maybe then, miraculously
we will be able to see each other again.

— Wally Swist

II. *Strange Surroundings*

THE MORNING NEWS

A blue wedge
of sky
and the year 's
first fly
only momentarily
distract me
from the story
of a child
murdered
and my coffee
and the time

— Robert Witmer

FRATERNAL ORDER

The Fraternal Order of Police issued a statement
supporting the decision, which covers all narcotics
offenses, thefts, burglary, vandalism, prostitution,
stolen cars, economic crimes, such as bad checks and
fraud, and any existing bench warrants.

Here, in the city
of brotherly love

we are ill. We have broken
too many hearts.

We march. We break
windows. We cry out

in each darkest night.
In this time of dis
ease we empty out
our prisons (we cannot

let their population die.)
And we step away

just a little from filling
them again. And I am

afraid. Even of my
neighbor. Even on my

own street.

— Kelley Jean White

THE LAST SUPPER

By the time our cholent came to a boil,
 the gas-baked ice shelves up north
 had already dribbled away,
 a saltless Gulf Stream
 had dispersed past the Bermuda Triangle,
 Neptune rising from Biscayne Bay
 had reclaimed Eden Roc,
 December hurricanes
 had doused every lamp in Borough Park,
 the arc of Gaia 's expiration
 had given the finger to Noah 's rainbow,
 and, just as Zayde cleared his throat to make Hamotzi,
 the canary in the coal mine
 began to gnaw on carrion,
 scales fell from
 the flanks of whitefish,
 the calf
 tolerated lactose,
 ceased its reflux,
 healed its clefts,
 and
 wrapped its scars in gold leaf,
 one paltry ounce of which
 might buy our vanishing heirs
 a hechsher for Soylen Green.

— Donald Mender

THERE 'S NEVER BEEN A MORE BEAUTIFUL PRISON

There 's never been a more beautiful prison
 Ancient lush green
 Forests
 Rivulets
 Placed by G-d Himself
 To capture hearts pumping on trains
 Oceans caressing beaches
 What don 't they have here?!

Television hosts
 Their new spiritual leaders
 Encourage the downtrodden
 All are downtrodden
 Arise!
 Do a good deed
 Listen to a voice
 Other than yours
 Learn from the masters
 Of cooking
 The weather

Sports
 Authorities on all subjects
 Trained in good looks
 Cosmetics
 That magnetic smile

They teach
 Pray
 From screens
 On screens
 The cameras in control
 Equal opportunity
 Training all
 To be zombies
 Anyone can
 They have the right!

—Mindy Aber Barad

SURVIVAL

Just before Havdalah
 some distant planet
 orbiting a red sun
 imploded
 yet was not completely
 consumed.
 Ostjuden,
 simmering with resentment,
 had lit the fuse.
 Here on earth,
 a pig-pated villain
 licked his chops,
 joined the
 Hair Club for Thugs,
 and awaited the
 green glowing ashes.

"Great Jovian ghost!"
 exclaimed
 Mr. Kohen Gadol,
 stunned by an
 unexpected eyeful
 through
 his cub reporter 's
 telephoto lens.
 Sadly, the hobbled press
 kept in stock
 only an unforwarded
 White Paper.

One pasty-faced
 metropolitan

inspector,
discerning no foul play
in the goldilocks zone
of that faraway world,
shrugged under his umbrella.
The State Department
turned back three
limping vessels
just beyond Pluto.

But back on the farm,
Ma and Pa,
deftly tweaking channels,
spirited a humanoid
kindertransport
to the gentle couple's
safe hearth.
ScoopU, Inc.
bought the franchise.
Digital graphics
fed the pupating
mesomorph.
The golem grew.

— Donald Mender

STRANGE SURROUNDINGS

I have always lived
in alien enclaves.
never taking root
no matter how long I stayed
in one place
long enough to belong,
my distance from others
engraved in my soul,
that for some reason,
cause, curse, inheritance,
coincidental as existence
I am as temporary
as a gust of wind,
though I move slowly enough
that I don't blow away,
in an instant.

I began
like so many others
without knowledge, experience,
just need
urgent appetite
to be fed, held, soothed
in the strange new world,
having been abruptly removed
from conception chamber
where all needs
were gratified

without thought, question,
everything flowed
as I wanted,
warm, comfortable, secure.

Then disruption.
Demands to vacate the premises
I resisted with all my might,
not wanting to leave
home.
Intrusive hands
forced me out,
yanked me into the cold,
wrapped me in garments,
but it wasn't the same,
put me on someone's warmth
but it wasn't the same,
There was nothing else
and for the moment
my ordeal was over.
I slept.

For many years
I worked and gave of my soul
to homeless families with children,
most of them surgically removed
from the rest of society,
placed in isolated hotels
in unwelcoming neighborhoods,
identities horribly subtracted
by callous government agencies,
abandoned by those who should help
who escape responsibility
because the homeless are transformed
into non-citizens,
arbitrarily deprived of their rights,
more vulnerable than most of us,
and the children feel the disconnect
between them and humanity

— Gary Beck

WATCHING JORDAN'S FALL

... God, I hate November
All the hope I had hoped
Against hope for Jordan.

Dad beat Jordan, to
Straighten him out, to show
Jordan, to silence him.

My brother lived until the next
Season, onto the next winter,
Very quiet like a fallen leaf.

— Allison Whittenberg

unfree will

Its weight worth less than pennies. Fireworks over hill crown, erupt, then happen. What is washed
 up in today 's
 tide, drifted accumulation of still life deceptions. Iron flower work on a balcony opening on
 a room the color of
 New Orleans. Read the answers before checking just one. Right or not, the choice, they say,
 is yours.

never the more

Never being sorry is one way. As anonymous as mailboxes. Then, becoming abrasive, bubbles.
 Walking a plank with
 two ends, one shallow, one not as deep. The heads, bowed, of gladiolas. Remote as satellites,
 once were,
 the weather in filibuster. Writing home because the address stays the same, but people don 't.

bloom storm

They governed lies that way, by unnatural consent. Fleas, rehabilitated in legion. Spring
 in the winter garden.

— Philip Kobylarz

 $\sqrt{-613}$

The top Israelite,
 his arms raised, loaded,
 and aching for down time,
 disciplines his conscience
 to dazzle all comers and
 leave the bloodied alien host
 agog,
 disoriented by an
 incandescent span of arrows
 across the dry austerity
 of the Argand plane.

The leader asks a wise son:
 How many rays
 might it take to fuse
 Sinai 's gritty sandstorms
 into a perimeter of
 glass?
 How many mitzvot
 will be needed to
 square our specular
 justifications?

The wise guy replies:
 a few drops of wine
 on this here plate
 should cool things
 back down again.

— Donald Mender

WISDOM

The stream of wisdom running low
 Dark spots of the human heredity show.
 Greed oozes out, the dykes give way,
 The Deadly Sins in full display
 Become the governors of the land.
 Conscience no more holds back the hand.
 A few seize fruits of many 's toil;
 Tillers wage war against the soil;
 Ideologies hollow out the arts;
 Rulers probe for disloyal hearts.
 To restore the stream of wisdom 's flow,
 A country needs Ulysses ' bow
 That can fell the princes riding high
 Who give no preference to truth over lie.

— Henry Summerfield

Hmm

my grandson sings his little song
 as he 's waking out of sleep
 a little song with little words
 that we don 't know, that we can 't speak
 he 's just turned two, he smiles (to himself)
 he sings a little singing sound
 nobody knows the song he sings
 he smiles/ we smile but we can 't sleep
 wondering at his lullaby
 for lullabies sometimes creep
 into dark places in our minds
 oh little one, please wake and speak

— Kelley Jean White

Hebephrenic

The island said:

my breath catches in iron
beneath trees of broken glass

pull my hand from the vise
beneath the halogen lamps

we 'll toss buds
that will never unfold

they fall beneath rusted street lamps
reflected in crackled ice

I am darker than the wind
I am colder than your tiny heart

—Kelley Jean White

"ONCE I WAS YOUNG"

The rabbis claim ten plagues, or forty,
two hundred, or more.
I killed a locust myself in the kitchen,
wondering what it meant. Did the locust come
to protect me or am I the one cursed?
We are walking out of Egypt now
and the dough cooked without rising.
Five stacked boxes of matzo sit
on the curb the day after Passover.
No one wants them.
We step through His parted sea
onto dry land and we wander
forty years before seeing the flowers in our garden.
I sit outside by a lemon tree and I know
I forgot already how many drowned.
My brother stayed behind and we never spoke again.
He said freedom will forsake me
and my children will beg for bread
And now I am old.
I could have stayed with him,
but He cursed me always to roam away,
on a wild hunt for something less than slavery
and something more than bread.

—Suzanne Musin

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

When the replenishments aren't there?
When love is way too rare?
When passion diminishes like a whisper?
Each day the planet wobbles
and bombs fall on the Ukraine
while the blue sky sets again.
We watch for what we can't imagine
about the fate of the earth at the same time
as we cannot stop driving cars around
for even a day or two, destroying what we know.
And the prices are rising and the seas are getting
warmer
and politicians are quibbling over
what they want while people go hungry
as if it is not all that simple in the end,
that uttering it is too complicated to fix,
too mixed up to straighten out will do.
Even old people hide from each other now,
stay inside, keep poems hidden in drawers
where no one sees them or hears the way they are,
under wraps, keeping the feelings in, all the life within.
I take to less is the only way I know how to help now.
I make sure the sunflowers out front survive,
stand up to the big winds on cold night,
walk under the sweet new moon,
remembering what love was like once,
counting the stars one by one.

—Charlene Langfur

III. The Sight of the Heart**POEM**

Close to me, hidden in me day and night...
—Wallace Stevens

Then this is Love — *the wish has made it so* —
Subterranean as a bulb buried
In the full earth with room to accept still
Another offering, completely
Enveloped, content in its perfect
Whole. Dormant, yet alive, a thing in itself
Planted within, not entirely unknown
to the inspirer, for that mild spring
when it will show itself in color.

— Paula Goldman

THE SIGHT OF THE HEART

Ever since you arose in my thought
 You have been saying to me from a distance:
 Your face is the face of a seraph
 And you are one of the riders in the Chariot

We loved together in aimless motion
 We lived together in a place of punishment
 Those who go there are entwined, their soul goes out
 Those who go there do not return.

Blue rivers then were of fire
 You were a queen in beauty
 I was a king in majesty
 And we both loved according to the word.

Never forget:
 We ascended from all the abysses and the breakings
 We saw much happiness, also pain,
 But we were on the highest height of all:
 We had sight of the heart.

—Balfour Hakak

SONG FOR HER DEEP SOUL
For JJ

*I 've been swimming so long,
 I don 't know I 'm swimming:*

Her eyes will never drown me —
 it 's not her tidal eyes. She sees
 me bare, cool. She offers a sea
 where I will swim so long.

To say her touch — her touch cures,
 That 's true — but now, her skin and nerves
 are a current so soft, so pure
 I don 't know I 'm swimming.

Her voice? Who 'd forget that voice —
 rocking, steady as a buoy
 calling sailors? There 's no choice
 but to swim for so long

I come in range of her soul —
 A perfect pilgrim that knows
 all of me. Like a bell, she tolls —
 I keep swimming in her direction
 and I never know that I 'm swimming.

—Mark J. Mitchell

AS A WALL

My soul rose as a wall without a Top
 which used to dematerialize as Yous
 drew near, who didn 't have to go around
 but passed right through it. But the wall, liquid

as life, would harden and not melt when you
 were you: till you became, that is, the you
 that warmed and generated enough heat
 to vaporize stone and diamond. Which you have.

And all that 's left of who I was, it seems,
 fallen from our instant 's consummate conflagration,
 is this feather-shard of lost Me, these curled words
 upon it, sashayed by each whimsy 's breath.

The ascendant wall that my soul was is now
 a bottomless well of light, and yours, and gone.

—James B. Nicola

ENTANGLEMENT

What 's mine is yours
 even when you don 't want it

What 's yours is mine
 even when I don 't want it.

The soreness in your shoulders
 is from carrying my hurt

The pain in my back
 is from bearing your sadness.

You have good days and bad days
 I have good days and bad days.

Some days you blame me
 Some days you blame yourself

Some days I blame you
 Some days I blame myself.

Where you end I begin
 Where I end you begin

I find the way to me through you
 You find the way to you through me.

—Michael Favala Goldman

ROSH HODESH ELUL

The curvature I anticipate in your entrance, tentative as I
am,
augurs the newness to be born of me one day
in a cataclysmic expulsion, sounding out around the
cosmos.

Unfounded planar as you are,
you are not surrounded by doubt,
your hills rise through shadow,
peeking through the curtain toward the earth—
how round and proud you will be!

And how I worry sick about
The seed deep within me waiting to emerge.

You and I will elide, embrace, enfold again next month,
next year,
and will flow regularly,
and ebb in order to flow again.

Because our children never fully mature.
— Andrew Oram

RAIN RIDERS

after Edna St. Vincent Millay

Ghosts glide in on the rain,
they ride the night
softly, sighing their once-familiar sigh,
urging me to explain
why I took flight,
murmuring calls for confessions I cannot supply.

Some are now dead, some lost,
vanished along
yesterday's trails that today I cannot follow;
restless they rise from the past
still singing the song
of unforeseeing youth that fears no tomorrow.

Ghosts long forgotten by day
in the hubbub of light
people I loved long ago (but even love fades
and lovers continue their way)
return in the night
when the wind whispers and rustles the window
shades.

— Judy Koren

AFTER CANCER

(Cherry County, Nebraska)

Hillsides painted in fan strokes of autumn
bluestem and Indian grass. At dusk, shadows
crawl through the shallow valleys.
We were left with sloping giants
under a lantern of Orion and a setting Venus.
A coyote howls.

On the way up, I lit a candle at St. Alselm's
(the marquee says "The Cathedral of the Sandhills!")
in memory of memory.

We never touched, though we embraced.
You said, "the hills have the last word."
A whisper, unheard by time.
Satin symphony of light and shadow.
Something eternal came true.

— Christopher Stewart

IV. Beyond Sight

GO SLOW

Slower than you thought
could be good
for anything
as if you had
no goal
no destination
as if death
were the destination
so why rush
when right now
exists.

— Michael Favala Goldman

SOUVENIR

a broken piano
the size of a mouse
on the dusty mantelpiece
the music of memory
tuned to the dark
each key too small
for my fingers

— Robert Witmer

I wonder

Everybody
loses something —
keys
and
coins
and
letters
from
old lovers
It takes
nearly
a lifetime
to lose
these things
for good -
So
what is
the soul
allowed
to keep
I wonder

—Pat Raia

THIS IS WHAT I WANT TO TAKE

This is what I want to take
the silhouette of a deer amongst the trees
generations stately and silent
so I have never felt alone on this earth
Two young boys ' heads bowed as I knighted them
solemn in the splendor of summer flowers in a small
backyard
The sea, the demanding sea, with its pounding fists
Pink and white striped flowers in a tub in a dusty
forsaken lot
and the late May flax against the red poppy, like the sky
dabbing hurting blood
Your hair and laugh and the sound of you coming home
and words, so many words to keep hold of
I want them all
this is what I want to take with me to eternity
but if someone asks
I'd probably not answer at all.

—Susan Oleferuk

A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER

The age of anxiety isn't an historical age, but an
individual one, an age to be repeated constantly
through history.

John Koethe, *The Age of Anxiety*

An eight-pound weight has been lifted,
restoring clarity.
Now to put the day right
according to its splendors and woes.
Is this truly the mercurial twenty-third year
of the millennium?

Still present am I, far-vision excellent except
for a flow of unwanted (damned) flashes
of light entering the camera;
still alert to undercurrents and wind currents;
still resolved to explore more.

Lately, though it is the world which may be mellowing,
it seems that I, too, am bending,
easing up on scrutiny and analysis
to focus on plain (but first-rate) ideas,
wanting to be all-inclusive toward the end.
May it be not a momentous end
but an individual one, like a sudden (silent) change
in the weather.

—Irene Mitchell

THE SOUND OF WATER

A broad valley, rich land, wide water
serene with smoothed generations of shells
bright like stars on land
I count the waves
like many others
breathe into each rise
pulse catches each fall
heartbeat timed to tides ' turns and tempests
heartbreak the wail of the wind under peering dark skies
the thoughts same as all who stood on this land
whys and who and ends and where and when
all buried in this deep sand
sleeping to the sound of water.

—Susan Oleferuk

BETWEEN STONE WALLS

I walk between the living and the dead
 a boundary like the stone walls rising in the fog
 gray wavering lines like soldiers
 their arms draped on the shoulders of the soldier in front
 jostling steps metal-shined in the fog
 to advance
 or retreat
 the fog pushes one loss into another loss until they are
 all gray in memory
 and descend into a besmirched present shamed with
 agony and anger and weeping too

Now this meadow
 is it a field where a battalion slept
 waiting for a clearing dawn to come to decide one's fate
 was it a poor farm of stubborn rocks yielding starvation
 a hunter's hideaway for a desperate deer
 the stone walls stayed the divide
 so this morning when the sun dries the silver armored
 fog off the grass and fern
 when I breathe life from the simple sun and walk my
 way between the stone walls
 I am one step from falling.

—Susan Oleferuk

CONSUMMATION

A shriveled plum accepts its pit.
 Mouse in a glue trap, why resist?
 Phantoms burn; limbs toss and turn;
 face mind's mirror: who exists?

Silence is also communication.
 Expect nothing at all from death.
 God hasn't sent you a postcard;
 Answer it! Answer it!

Nature's unsigned letter is enough?
 Advanced age lacks consolation?
 It's never too late to meditate;
 What joy it is to finally give up!

—Thomas Dorsett

HOMEGOING

And what if dying is like
 that time I got out of school early
 because I had an appointment
 and I pushed open the heavy doors
 and walked out into the day
 and it was a beautiful spring day
 or a late winter day that smelled like spring
 and if it was fall it was early fall
 when it's all but technically summer
 and there was a whole world going on out there
 and it had been going on out there the whole time
 that I was stuck inside with time
 and teachers and rules and equations and parsed
 sentences
 but now here I was among the tribe
 of the free and I could go this way or I could go that way
 or I could just sit down right here on this bench
 and look around at all the freedom
 that was mine and also the work crew's
 breaking for lunch beneath their ladders and also the
 woman's
 pushing her stroller along the sidewalk and also the man
 's
 walking his small dog and smoking a cigarette
 and it belonged to the cars whooshing by with a sound
 like
 the wind in the trees and the wind in my hair
 and the wind all around me and inside me
 and also above me chasing the clouds running free
 and suddenly there was my mother
 looking somehow a little different
 in all her freedom and all my freedom
 until she roled down her window and waved
 to come--now--hurry
 because I had an appointment
 which felt like a real buzzkill
 and I briefly considered turning around
 and walking away from her
 and going off on my own somewhere
 to be alone and free for a little longer
 or maybe for forever
 but then I realized there was nowhere for me to go
 except home

—Paul Hostovsky

LIFE AFTER DEATH

adapted from a lecture, "Life after Death," by Simon Jacobson

Beyond repair, the broken refrigerator calls out to its
electricity,
"Where do you go when they pull out the plug?"

The electricity replies,
"What do you mean? You 're just a box that refrigerates
food.

For a short while, you contained me and used my
energy.

Now I return to where I always was
Beyond space and time as you know it."

— Ilana Attia

ON A THEME FROM LORCA TO A TUNE BY KEATS

Sería el guardian que en la noche de mi tránsito
Prohibier en absolute la entrada a la luna
(It would be the guard who on the night of my death
Would block the entrance absolutely of the moon)

— Federico Garcia Lorca

Casida of the Impossible Hand (The Tamarit Divan)

No one was home the night he died. Unlocked
windows may not invite cats but no moon
could scare them off. No one came up the walk
to edge his door wide. He lay there — no wound
showed on his cold form. Those empty eyes stared
to his left. An old picture — black and white —
he saw that last: A woman 's silvered face.
The man, stiff-backed, at her side. They can 't care
for him now. A breeze down the long hall might
close some cabinet, but this empty night
won 't hear. He 's still under moonlight. Erased.

— Mark J. Mitchell

Voice from above: "You are always welcome in my
home, my child."

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Mac Autocorrect: gone/home

gone home
home gone
any place you hang your IV is home?

When I walked past my apartment building,
the doormen, displayed in the white gloves they display,
and fellow residents greeted me.

Right here right now

I am greeted and tested by a different kind of resident,
white-coated, stethoscoped.

My mother's home became her hospice,
and then she and home were gone.

"Doctor, can't I be discharged and go home? "

"You are always welcome" —

but is that the doctor
speaking from behind his mask--
or a voice from above
behind His Arial typefont
calling to my soul?

Listen: I wrote "atheist" under Religion
on the Admissions Room form.

Listen?

Will that lyrical voice get itself gone
and stay home stay gone
from this lyric?

Or will I listen to it?

In a heartbeat I would trade
this indigestible hospital food
for even those indigestible Thanksgiving relatives.
But it's my heartbeat that landed me here
and may discharge me to

where whom and
and when ?

— Heather Dubrow

PASSAGE

As a bargain for her life, bridled by demons
 she conjured, others she indulged, and all we
 bore witness to, I prayed only that my mother
 be accorded comfort and dignity in her death.
 She received neither. When they called for paddles,
 I left the room.

In the fifty-three minutes she lived
 after the surgery my mother raged. Refused.
 Blood ran down my brother's arm as she tore
 at her IVs. Restraints were ordered. Nurses harried
 to stanch the catheter wounds in her legs. Technicians
 ministered whizzing pumps like mechanics trying
 to unchoke a seizing engine amid a cacophony
 of electronic alerts and urgent orders.

She cried out for dead people as if they were
 huddled there in the corner of the room hoping
 not to be seen. She quieted when she had their attention.
 Things were said. Some unspeakable things.
 She spoke them.

The compressions were violent, atavistic. Her body
 buckled. Ribs cracked like reedy bone being torn apart
 by a larger animal in a forest field. The cardiologist's eyes
 said *thank you* when my sister called an end to it.

A milquetoast chaplain arrived at the bedside and read
 a generic poem for the dead from his iPhone. My sister
 dismissed him. I quarried what I could from Psalm 23
 from memory, searching the room for clues.
 Through a slit window, two tugs drew a cargo ship
 into Long Beach Harbor. *To still waters he leads me.*

There was no nimbus in the HEPA-filtered, re-circulated air.
 No ether hovering in the ballast of the fluorescents.
 No index of an accouchement of a soul released.
 No thread from which we could stitch hopeful revisions
 in the narrative of the fifty-three minutes bookending
 my mother's life. Whatever it was, she would not share it.

Willingly at least. The thin, plastered smirk she wore
 most of her waking years was missing. My mother
 died with her mouth open. For a woman
 whose life was scraping of flint against ragged rock,
 here it was: a perfect oval. The shape of wonder
 at what only she could see.

—Christopher Stewart

follow the veins

on the back of my hands
 they are my mother's
 trace past the forearms,
 the elbows, the neck,
 kiss the little indent
 beneath her locket
 lift up your cheek, press
 it into the shoulder
 take one finger and trace
 along the eyebrow
 touch your own thumb
 wet your pinky and dab
 just behind the ear
 its there you might hear
 her heart calling

—Kelley Jean White

LEGACY

My mother and I bruise easily, our skin holding
 the imprints of pain, our hearts even longer.
 Encounters that went poorly, all the scolding
 replayed in our brains, wishing we'd been stronger.

She has more courage. She looked fear
 in the face each time she got on a plane;
 I came up with excuses not to fly, made it clear
 I hadn't what it took to slip free from the chain.

The skin beneath my eyes looks like fingers
 pressed in and held, a legacy from her side
 of the family, along with memory that lingers
 and stuns with its recall. We have tried

and failed to forget the names of unkind
 former friends, ones who closed the door,
 walked away, never once looking behind
 to see the harm inflicted, souls left sore.

On a cassette tape there's a lullaby
 and bedtime stories she recorded
 for my sister and me, to help us try
 to fall asleep without the comfort afforded

by her presence. It was a thing so rare
 for her to be away a whole night long, we could not
 imagine her not there;
 it made our entire world feel wrong.

What we leave behind, the loving touch
 on cheek or chin, the stroking of the head
 when we were young and thought there was so much
 time before us, before the pages of our book were read.

—Carole Greenfield

SPAN OF EARTH

I heard an old friend passed away
 the dried leaves in the walkway need sweeping
 I remember our many talks
 it 's time to clean the branches off the grass after the
 winter snows

We sometimes flirted, sometimes sparred
 the garden sere and gray is like the seconds before sleep
 This friend was very witty
 there is always laundry to do
 but if I put my hand and sift in the dirt
 I will reach where it is moving and moist
 I can swipe my brow in a dark symbol of remorse
 to salute the span of earth we never know.

—Susan Oleferuk

UNRAVELING

Your favorite team was winning, so I watched
 although I 'm not a fan in general;
 it 's just a voice I cling to. Lost so young,
 you never left too many footprints, and

the tides erase what 's left until I cling
 to teams, hair, T-shirts, any accident
 the moths of time neglect. I dream of you,
 but then you die there too -- repeatedly,

my one great failure -- whereas lucky me,
 I go on living. And I 'm eager to,
 except at times like this, when living still
 feels more like habit, and the years unroll,

years that you had no part in, till my soul,
 only my *soul* says no.

—Kathryn Jacobs

LAG

When you realize,
Please return the library books
They 're on the table
 As her last words
 Balances every *I love you* she 'd given

Instead of goodbye
 The incessant, familiarity of instruction
 the sum

of my mother

—Allison Whittenberg

IM ABENDROT

Near dusk, near a path, near a creek,
 we stopped, I in disquiet and dismay
 for the sudden death of a friend,
 the doe in her always incipient terror.

All that moved was her pivoting ear
 that the reddening sun shining through
 transformed into a carnate rose
 that made the world more beautiful.

Nothing else stirred, not a leaf,
 not the air, until she startled and bolted
 away from me into the crackling brush.

That part of pain which lies less deep
 clung to her and fled; the rest,
 in the silence of the late light, stayed.

—Constance Rowell Mastores

"MOVEMENT"

But she does not look anything like you.
 I catalogue each feature as she stands
 My mind doesn 't provide a single clue.

Her face is different from the one I knew
 Her hair. Her voice. Her form. My mind expands
 to search, but there is nothing quite like you.

Your face. Your smile. Your form. Your laughter too
 All move beyond the undiscovered lands
 and sit before me, living. Just like you.

She lifts a coffee cup. And now I knew
 It all came from the movement of her hands.
 She raised a fork and somehow summoned you.

Just like your hands, they moved as yours would do.
 Pouring a drink. My mind now understands.
 Lifting the water glass. It 's you. It 's you.

And I must gravely question and pursue:
 When did I store the memory of your hands?
 The years of family meals compounded to
 your living far beyond the end of you.

—Suzanne Musin

REQUIEM WITHOUT A SCORE

Below black umbrellas

Beating the worn shoes of

Those *grieving* on hallowed dirt

With the rain

Dyed roses wait

To *again* be beautiful, *true*

Behind a stone marker

Scored just for *us*

A purpose searching endlessly

For a title

Like a lone note longing for its

Song

In a world without *inked lines*

Our lives relinquished

Air flows freely through

All vessels equally

Petals color the earth

A *sweet* jazz composition

Boundaryless

A place where no keys go

Unplayed

—Louis Efron

SHORE ROCKS AT COREA

from "Earthwake"

Pegmatites. Over this edge:
ice-cataracts, then as now
unheard.

Under our feet,
exposed, the granules,
the quartzes, the feldspars, grown to eye-size,
stopped against sight. Sea urchins '
bequeathed fragilities, gull-strewn,
blanched from their patterns. The tide-pools:
green algae glares to the cloud.

Tidings, O tiny
far-traveled tsunami, here
curl to simile, die in the unrecorded
surf-gardens: a mind,
stranded and stemmed against absence,
beats in itself.

Cross-currents, there, the times
race through each other, *kanntet*
ihr mich –

—Esther Cameron
summer 1970

VISITATION IN AUTUMN

Through you things unforeseen and unregarded
are touched with speech. Of a sudden it is not
the dark rainwater shuddering in the roadbed
between the rusting rails, but you who say
I am here. You have become a patron of embankments,
of older ways still slanting through the grid
we travel on. Of momentary freedoms,
glimpses not possessory but of that
which still can wrest itself out of our grip
and free us, for that instant, from ourselves –
never more. What remains cannot name itself
except in the recollection of an image,
say, of rainwater riffling between rails,
that is, again, no more than what it was.

—Esther Cameron
1991 (?)

THE VISION

I saw you a few days ago.
 I was making dinner.
 The boys were sprawled on the floor
 playing with Legos and arguing mildly.
 You were there in the corner
 watching your own children,
 my mother and uncles,
 and also watching mine.
 We were watching them all
 together.

— Louise Kantro

MAMA

Strong coffee and the
 Faint scent of rose perfume
 Signs that you are near
 That quickly vanish
 Into the beckoning ether
 Yet, remain just long enough
 To let me know
 That somewhere, somehow
 Your essence still exists
 And will never be truly gone

— Dawn McCormack

BALLOON RELEASE

A birthday —
 remembering one
 who is gone.

The synthetic-rubber
 ovals are released,
 float aloft.

They look identical,
 but one moves
 skyward more slowly.

Set off from its peers,
 it is the last to skew
 beyond sight.

— Tony Reevey

V. To Live Again

TO LIVE AGAIN

Was it that you survived, a refugee
 who had lost his world, utterly alone,
 the bloodied earth crying out from burnt flesh and bone,
 banished columns of smoke, orphaned pyres of
 humanity,

not knowing how to begin to live again
 in a whirlwind of pain, in the absence that grew,
 carrying a stone of losses, all whom you
 loved — parents you could never hold again?

The earth torn asunder, a gaping mass grave — where
 could you live?

How did you rise from killing fields, heart-stricken
 ruins,
 death-ridden ravines, furnaces fired by flesh and bone —
 let go of columns of smoke filled with all whom you
 grieved?

Did you ever feel part of the earth again
 rising from its ashes — from undying pain?

— Amos Neufeld

TO GIVE THE BREATH OF LIFE

(for my mother, Charlotte)

To have known monstrous places: Birkenau 's
 shock of flames piercing the heavens ' darkened sky,
 infants torn from mothers, flung into death 's throes,
 a blonde master deciding who would die.

Skeletal, shorn, terrified young women
 lined up in the dark, illumined by crematory fires,
 starved, spent, hopeless gray faces. Those frozen,
 who 'd taken flight on wings of despair caught by
 barbwire.

Bombs falling, the earth trembling. Lying in a ditch
 waiting to die. Running through a field on fire
 holding hands, Iren screaming at the bloodied stretch
 of earth. Twisted bodies, severed arms, legs — death
 everywhere.

To have borne unbridled brutality, known unbounded
 grief —
 despite earth 's fires you blew into me the breath of life.

— Amos Neufeld

THE OLIVE TREE: A PAEAN OF SURVIVAL

(Am Yisroel: A metaphor)

Late spring.
 Walking in a valley
 That I have often crossed,
 Brushing shoulders
 With its ancient denizens,
 I seem aware of them
 For the first time:
 A small grove of olive trees.
 A distinct presence
 Among the newly grown
 Tall grasses,
 And finely crafted
 Meadow flowers.
 But the trees themselves:
 Knurled,
 The trunk
 Often split,
 Deep into its core,
 Branches randomly,
 Broken away,
 Can they survive?
 Like this?
 No other tree has.
 Yet, these do.
 Year after year,
 Generation after generation.
 A monument of survival,
 Unimaginable;
 No other living thing,
 No human creation
 Could endure thus.
 I muse for a moment;
 Through all this,
 Its grasp on life,
 To its own continuity,
 Is steadfast.
 Truly a miracle,
 To reflect upon,
 And be inspired.

—Don Kristt
 5783

IN MEMORY OF (FOR RINA AND MAYA D.)

Two flowers were plucked, before full bloom,
 Before the rains of Spring had ceased
 Before the first sharav, the relentless desert winds,
 On the eastern road, the murderer ambushed, aimed to
 kill,

In death, as in life, they were not parted,
 Out of the dust, their golden songs will rise,
 The sweet blossoms of almond trees will bloom again
 Like rivulets hidden in the desert, their silent song will
 echo
 In the hills of Judea

—Brenda Appelbaum-Golani
 April 2023

Tears
 Rain
 Doleful
 Mournful
 Morning
 Night

Soulful
 Oblivious
 Mindful
 Unwilling
 Woeful
 Numb

Agony
 Despair
 Hopeless
 Nightmare
 Sleepless
 Impaired

Subtracted
 Contracted
 Dissolved
 Descended
 Darkened
 Lonely

Endless
 Meaningless
 Confused
 Haggard
 Ragged
 Enraged

Apathy
 Rage
 Breathless
 Nevermore
 Resigned
 Forever

Buried

—Mindy Aber Barad

And as we were singing
Lekha Dodi
 Leah came in
 She spoke a good word
 To each one
 Then hid herself
 In the light of the candles

Come O Queen

— Esther Cameron
 April 2023

Lekha Dodi – hymn sung at the inauguration of the Sabbath

A LAND OF SONG AND TEARS

Thanksgiving and remorse
 dance together in the same heart.
 Lips utter song; eyes, drops of pain.
 Perhaps it is madness.
 Are we all really sane?

Haunted by death,
 enveloped by exultation;
 Joy and sadness collide.
 The seesaw of life,
 compressed into two intense days.
 One never recedes completely
 before it is overtaken by its antithesis.

A life of paradox:
 A struggle of opposites,
 clashing of emotions
 creates the energy to live.
 The friction of opposites
 rubbing together
 generates a spark;
 it ignites us
 To fulfill our demand:
 a meaningful life,
 continuation in our land.

Where do we find this will?
 Why can't we remain still.
 We are driven to endure,
 basic instincts to be sure,
 life pulses in our heart,
 rejuvenation in our hand.
 Living forces
 joining us to our land.

Perhaps beyond reason,
 we heard the sound,
 a brief, soft call
 but reverberating
 through each season,

across the ages,
 its power,
 its drawing force,
 perplexing a world's sages.
 It was our land
 crying out to us:
 Come to me
 my children;
 my people.

Come to our land!
 Hear songs of triumph
 echoing from our hills
 flowing in wadis
 in the sand.
 The songs have roots in the land,
 watered by tears
 that the struggle brings.
 The songs we sing
 and the tears we shed,
 intertwining,
 empowering a vision.
 It is a belief in ourselves,
 a firm decision,
 giving us strength
 to pursue
 life as a people,
 together,
 In this land.

— Don Kristt
 Yom HaAtzmaut (Israel Independence Day) 5771/83

"ONE VOICE" (Yom Hashoah 2023)

I stand still
 motionless at my window
 silently
 in the face of the shrieking siren
 thinking of the grandfather I never knew
 the grandmother who never held me
 both converted to ashes by inhuman terror

Their pure untouchable souls
 remain eternal
 with a tribe of descendants
 I among many
 their lives were not in vain

— Esthermalka Fein

after

we are stretched out in the empty room
 we cry a salt ocean
 we rest heads against hands and heads against
 shoulders
 like a raft with alternating timbers
 the current plays against
 it moves with no effort
 silence except for water on wood
 a deep rumble starts among us
 one of us hauls laughter back to our broken syntax
 a rumble echoes back from our bellies
 it travels to our chests
 when we laugh
 we cannot stop
 the joke is on us
 we are still alive
 we are together

we get up
 wobble on our sea legs
 we hold hands
 blood pumps the message beneath the glove of skin

evenings
 we gather in the empty room
 where we weave in and out of shock waves
 it is not true they are gone
 repeats and repeats
 we wear old, soft clothes
 free from the need to suit up
 work
 and reassure others we are fine
 we cry
 we laugh at our wicked gallows humor
 gifts appear
 butter pecan ice cream
 a recording of Four Seasons
 a mysterious invitation to pack an overnight bag
 for an unscheduled trip to the lakeshore

we travel in and out of this circle
 the circle grows and splits off and rejoins
 there are new husbands and wives
 babies carry our missing ones' names
 sometimes a familiar light in their eyes
 a flash of smile
 a certain expression in their speech startles us

there is always a baby
 in my lap
 on my shoulder
 I whisper secrets to the intricate folds of their silken
 skin
 you are loved

our house bursts with babies
 they have their favorite corners
 when these babies grow and marry
 will they return?
 heading through the door with infants in their arms
 they say:
 we never left

we buy the new babies a painted carousel horse
 it does not rock or glide
 but it is tall
 they have to hold tight to its silver reins
 to ride wild flights to grand destinations
 they come back glazed
 they blink to clear the image
 of other worlds

sometimes we resume our tight dance
 we move in close to fill the gaps
 but our missing ones press between us
 and we leap higher and faster
 than we knew we could

—Judy Belsky

PRECIOUS CITY

My precious city, you enthrall me
 you captivate, inspire and uplift me
 Jerusalem, my spirit is bound in yours.
 Beloved city, you beckon me
 to enter your gates, you embrace me
 Jerusalem, you hold my soul in yours.

—Ruth Fogelman

VI. A Stranger World Arrives

READING POETRY

They are reading poetry
 aloud

igniting the magic

trying to work the
 miracle

and sometimes
 a moment takes off!

And sometimes
 The day grows wings

And hovers over
 The date

— Sabina Messeg (tr. EC)

ENTER THE WORLD

Remove your personal self from the work
and enter the world like a continent.
Ted Hughes, *Letter to Olwyn Hughes*

As a prelude to the actual entrance,
neither a skip nor a hop
will get one any closer.
A scramble, though it may provide
the needed element of rush,
will not be sufficient either.
To gain full entry into the world
as guardian of place and tribe,
crash and bang at the door
crying that there is so much more
to the sojourn, which is immanent.

Such a method is also reliable
if distance is what one is after, distance
being the dominant consideration
by which a thought is cast into the universe.

An extra heartbeat here, a word murmured there —
until the entry fee climbs.
Who among us has not felt a bolt of lightning
aimed right at the psyche
once it is understood that mortality has its limits
and age does its utmost to antagonize
one who has already entered the world,
one whose arrival was a rare jubilee,
one who interprets that life is more than an unrefined
spin with a trickle of substance.

Accompanied by the bold music
of trembling stars and charged auroras,
enter the searing glamor of the stratosphere.
Mind not to hurry the music along before the light
changes
and a stranger world arrives in its contrary way.

— Irene Mitchell

ONE OF THE THIRTY-SIX

He comes to me from time to time. Dragging through
the streets
A shopping cart full of books. His clothes give off
a smell of chlorine and latrines. Always hungry,
emaciated like a refugee. Refuses handouts
of food or other items. Rings the doorbell furiously,
demands
new poems, craves long cycles (when desperate settles for
drafts and scraps). I don't know
where he sleeps, where he spends stormy days and
rainy nights.

I don't have a single fresh sentence
To feed him tonight, maybe
Two or three words. Now
He is roaring in the stairwell, pounding
On the banister, terrifying my wife, waking my children.
With his bare hands he slaughters book bindings on the
threshold,
tosses pages. Keys are turning in locks, shouts
are heard, neighbors are gathering, threatening to call
the police.

I let him in.
He breathes heavily down my neck, gurgling, salivating,
I hastily write on the kitchen table, not
bothering with details, hoping he finds this poem
tasty. In this city live many sick
writers, poets —
I send him to persecute others.

— Amichai Chasson (tr. EC)

WHEN I TURNED SIXTEEN

I found the demon in the temple
my grandmother, snoring, now deceased,
had warned me about in her hard dreams
although she resented my existence
as evidence of her daughter's marriage
to a man who loved music more.

It grinned. It spat out my name
as though I were a cunning word
someone playing Scrabble might find
in a lucky deal of small pale squares
laid out hidden from a rival
who needed to prove themselves *more*.

I stroked the marble of the walls.
I gazed into its purple eyes.
I knew who I was but it
still tried to seep into my soul.
I write poems I firmly claimed.
How dare you ask for More?

— Katharyn Howd Machan

SOON THE MOON WILL SLIP FROM ITS MOORING,
RIDE THE RIVER OF NIGHT ALONE*

except for me, day's sun in my pocket,
hiding warm light from the stars
that would steal it, swallow it,
lick hungrily at all its edges
to feed their cores' black dust.
I'm a trickster, a traveler
known for my shenanigans
wherever a bell rings a little too loud
or three kids are born to a nanny.
Storytellers think they know my name
but—aha!—I keep changing its sound.
I exist to fool the wise and laugh
up my thrice-folded sleeve. No, not the devil,
not a coyote or spider or fox with full tail.
I've been alone since the dragon bellowed.
Watch me now as I climb and grab
that rope of light that swings down.
I'm faster than a sacred rat,
and I was born to sail.

—Katharyn Howd Machan

(*This title is gratefully borrowed from the last line of
"Residency," a poem by Barbara Crooker in her collection from
Pittsburgh University Press, *Some Glad Morning*.)

TURKEY

A king's son is naked under the table, clutching
a turkey leg, gnawing it to the bone, throwing scraps
of skin on the floor, spitting feathers in his father's face,
in the face of the crown, wallowing in sawdust.

He calls loudly:
Cockadoodledoo!
I'm not an actor!
This is not a pipe!
This is not a table!

— Amichai Chasson (tr. EC)

BALLAD TO KINNORIT

An opening in the sound of a dream

I have been trying to write for weeks
And days.
And there is no spirit in me
And there is no light in me
As if the world
Were lost. As if the world were waiting.
As if slowly
The days.

From the depths
At the end of the day I remembered her spirit.
At the end of the dream, as if air.

What is the goal.
What will her light
Bring, what discovery:
I clothed her in skin, gave her being
bone, flung away
life. Gave it to
her. Songs I scattered soul
from her mouth. Sang new life,
new creation.

The cause of causes, the source of degrees.
The goal of the inspiration she acquired.

And on that day
I called her.

And an aura: enchantment.
Coal of dawn.
I gave her
Her name.

Kinnorit.*

—Herzl Hakak (tr. EC)

*A new word, perhaps a feminine diminutive of *kinnor*
(harp).

Poetry #I
Reading and Writing

I

Dream
 of
Being

In
 your
World

And
 of you
In mine

Since you
 are
Here

I
 am
There

And so
 like
The dream

But more
 than
A dream

Suddenly

We

Are

—James B. Nicola

IN MEMORY OF ZBIGNIEW HERBERT

In his late teens,
he fights in the underground resistance.
He witnesses with a calm, clear eye.
His poetry becomes lucid,
impervious to cant —
angel with a fiery sword
fighting against a huge spider
that spins its web over Poland.

Toward the end of the 70s,
among the American literati,
“Mr. Cogito” surfaces as the *dernier cri*.
Students go to classes
murmuring fragments of his verse.
He has broken through to the other side.

With the inexorable passing of years
his count of friends shrinks.
They go off in pairs, in groups, one by one.
Some, pale like wafers
lose earthly dimensions,
then suddenly or gradually
emigrate to the sky.
He sticks around.
Continues to write in his fervent, dry,
whispering, breathless speech;
his diction dignified, ironic,
compassionate, reserved.
He is a classicist at heart.
He is idiosyncratic.

A perennial Nobel bridesmaid,
he becomes a poet once removed,
twice removed.
An Elegy for the Departure.
The academy is bothered by his austerity.
By his poem “Why The Classics.”
By his refusal to cave in.

In his final years, in Warsaw, he lives
with his cat in a one-room apartment—
kitchenette off to one side,
rudimentary bathroom. He lives in the company
of cold skulls, in the company
of ancestors: Gilgamesh. Hector. Roland.

—Constance Rowell Mastores

ALT-RAP

(A response to Amanda Gordon 's "The Hill We Climb,"
delivered at President Joe Biden 's inauguration, January 2021)

I'm the youth of today and I 'm here to say
That poetry 's totally relevant.
You bloodless scholars are rakin' the dollars
But when it comes to rhyme and beatin' the time
You're completely outta your element.

I ain't woke or PC
But even *I* can see
That rhythm and rhyme are the name of the game.
The Nobel Prize is only *one* kind of fame.
In your ivory tower, mangle prose by the hour
And call it "poetry. "
Yeah, chop it in fragments, go off on tangents,
Never makin' sense, all a pretense,
A hamster wheel, a decadent spiel.
Trashin' tradition, the modern affliction,
Declarin' rhyme and form passé.
From my presidential inaugural podium
I'll tell you what's what, chum -
O say can you see?
MFA don't hold a candle to NYC.

You demote it to rap, but it's for *me* they clap,
Not your latest reader-less chap-book.
Small press or indie, you're always so windy,
Spewin' discontent, constant dissent,
America's got talent, but I'll tell you pal - it
Ain't you.

You doomers and gloomers, corrupted old Boomers,
Okay.

You deconstructed it, po-mo'ed and mucked it
All into a semiotic game.

Destroyed the family, created calamity,
No truth, no gender, all spun in a blender,
You struck us bereft, but still something's left:

The fact of the embodied mind.

The pact of the expected rhyme.

We're all built for beat, for emotional heat,
The presence of story, inclination for glory,
Not line-break obsessions or workshop pretensions.
We wanna be swept on a whirlwind of sound.
We wanna get the point the first time around.
That's where the hope for America lies.
Remembrin' our nature will restore our stature.
Your degenerate theories will cease to degrade us
As we acknowledge our essence, the way that G-d made us.

—Shaindy Gold

LONE PILGRIM

Young sunlight laid like silk across the lake;
The deformed images of seraphim
That hurl the mind to God; and those dark nights

Spent quietly hovering before a verse
That trembles on the page. But silence fell:
The glossy ibis splashed into the water

Beside the toothache grass and looked around;
My breathing clouded all my whispered words,
The hungry paper made me turn a page.

There was a time when all that silence far
Beyond the stars would shyly come to us
And let us hold it, kiss it, drink it down;

Our bodies were all sleek with wisdom then,
Our eyes were clear, the entire world was smooth
As sweet bay leaves when mist has all burnt off

And morning spreads its wings. But silence fell
And pinched the tongue and kept it hard and dry
Whenever love would venture tender names.

They came in time, but with some others too,
Rough ones that make us snatch at sticks and stones,
Or have us fall in love just with ourselves,

And silence went to hide, between two words;
And always, lost to thought, the dirty sound,
Still echoing, of some tremendous "No!"

Like darkness settling as the day slows down,
An ibis grunting as it flies back home,
A frog's head hanging from its long sharp bill.

—Kevin Hart

I scratch at the layers

search through sheaves
dig for my last stanza
in the hopes it will prompt a new one

but the backlog of two years
stacks against me
leaves of frail volumes stick together
blue black veins stain parchment
text escapes transparent vellum

the pandemic misfires the code of his kidneys
 quarantine arrests my pancreas
 we dance in jagged rhythm

the ragged edges of pages
 one for each friend who died
 demand a line:
 when will his when will mine
 be ripped from the tablet
 will someone gather them

bury them like geniza
 fragments of sacred text
 impossible to read
 too holy to burn

—Judy Belsky

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

the poem that begins my son dies wins first place
 what will I say at the award reading?

my tablet slips from my hand
 and crashes face down on the floor
 the screen is shattered
 ghostly lines hover over everything I write

when I run my finger over the weird calligraphy
 a crystal shard pierces me
 when I try to extract the glass
 I gouge a piece of skin
 I peer into the pulsating mouth of an abandoned cave

it stings
 but does not electrify me
 it does not alter my circuitry
 it stings
 but nothing like the torch of live wire
 that shakes me awake when I did not know I was
 sleeping
 or the gale winds that hurl me to distant planets
 where the grid that anchors syntax collapses
 and words fall through

of the poem I will say
 it was not death
 it was not my son

—Judy Belsky

VII. Stretch of Road

IMMIGRANT

First he was a peddler;
 notions, dry goods, secondhand clothes,
 learning English along the way.

He traveled unknown roads,
 through small towns,
 taking pictures, making a living.

He headed south.
 Wandering through a small Georgia town,
 he rested for a moment to get his bearings.

The silk of his skullcap
 shimmered in the setting sun.
 He heard a voice calling, *Landsman?*

It was Friday, almost sundown
 when the stranger approached,
 a warm welcome, Sabbath dinner, a day of rest.

He never went farther.
 He felt the call of a glimmer of candles,
 a head bowed in prayer.

—Sharon Lask Munson

THE SCHOLAR UNBOUND

Beyond the cobblestones of journeys past
 Of twisted roads and rusted railroad tracks
 An old Ford station wagon was your car
 Of choice. You still retained a monkish air
 Your former name was Brother Francis X
 But we always called you just plain Harry
 No last name, no known family relations
 Rumor had it that you had a brother
 In Oregon (or was it New Zealand?)
 Perhaps you went to live with him. Or not.
 One day you were gone, no note, no fanfare,
 As quietly as you lived among us.
 No one could equal your erudite love for
 Latin, Hebrew, Syriac, ancient Greek,
 Did you find your home? Belonging elsewhere
 You left us a lesson in humbleness

—Brenda Appelbaum-Golani
 March 2022

AMINADAV TO AVIGDOR

The Philosopher in Search of an Audience

I'd hoped you wouldn't mind a little company today,
my friend, along this empty stretch of road.
I was humming to myself back there, as ever,
when I spied you up ahead, or truth be told,
when the jangling of your strange festoonings
reached my ear, and I picked up the pace
until this swaying armature of yours at last
danced sparkling into view like a ghostly ship.

I'm a little out of breath just now, perhaps,
but nothing seems to curb my endless prattle
unless it be some mumbling thought
or murmured melody that silences the words,
yet stirs this constant melismatic noise I seem to be,
so please don't hesitate to give some sign or sound
you'd rather walk alone in silence now,
and rest assured I'll presently be moving on.

Yes? No? It's good to have at least the genial jingle
of these wares of yours for company, this lofty tree
of companionable pots and tools and furnishings
that flashes, swings and lurches in the narrow lane,
and feel free to say if you'd prefer this reticence
to the language of men, perhaps, or that you're content
with this music of the cart-track, the whispering air,
the clattering pots, the shuffle of your threadbare soles.

So I was just thinking as I walked along back there,
if by any chance you'd care to hear, that these roads
we're on all seem to lead us outward from the living noise
of speech and fear, this vivid world of urgent purposes
and needs, pressing forward into the beating heart
of the inanimate, the pulsing breath of what is not alive
and never was, toward what the world calls death,
but which I envision as the oceanic grandeur
and soulless pulsing element of all things living.

And that all these roads are bridges, I was thinking,
and that every shuffling life that hurries in the lane
is itself a bridge as well, into the vast inanimate,
and that the business of the traveler, his only real job,
is to witness all the bright collisions that bind us
to this vast unfeeling world, invite the chisel to the stone,
unlock the crystal's light, and call down flashing plasmas
to emblazon, be it briefly, the turbid, basculant air.

Your silence seems to indicate I may have lost you, friend,
with these mad meanderings of mine, so I'll be moving on
along this senseless, never-ending path of ours, and choose
to understand your reticence as tacit validation, and listen,

as I hurry on ahead, for the happy disappearing tune that
copper,
brass and potmetal makes, your armillary's arbitrary music,
a melody like starlight, brighter than speech, clearer than
thought,
this insensate jingling matter set to rocking with your step.

— DB Jonas

LUFTMENSCHN

*Our lives we do not weep / Are like wild cigarettes
That on a stormy day / Men light against the wind
Malcolm Lowry, Men with coats thrashing*

We are the people of another country,
Encountered (never on the way to any place)
in every darvish-dance of foil and cellophane
that sweeps the sidewalk's stricken face.

You've sensed us hunched in doorways,
cowled and billowed as a bellied sail,
glimpsed a match-lit cheekbone in a hollow hand
and recognized your hunger's lambent shell.

Indigent of agenda, our incandescent ash
weaves a feeble torchlight through the town
to cast peculiar glamour in the glistening street
once all the midnight revelers have gone.

We drift among the waste-heat exhalations
of the city, the emanations of a subway stair,
elisions from the stream of jostling bodies,
abstractions you may never know are there.

And lest the startling emptiness alarm you,
rest assured that we're not here to harm you,
since we don't seek what you possess or want,
idling in the passageways your dark desires haunt.

— DB Jonas

VIII. *Whatever It Is*

Thank you for asking the soul to speak: it is
constantly whispering its secrets, asking to love and be
loved and wondering if anyone is listening.

James McGrath

POEM

To see the soul
is to see the shadow
that connects us to the stones,
to the wind, to the wrinkled poems
in the bark of a tree,
to the whispers of who has left us
and who is to come.

It dances our dance.

It sleeps with us when we sleep.

The soul holds the light of the moon
and the warmth of the sun
when we are alone.

—James McGrath

THE SOUL

--for Esther Cameron

Everything is nothing to a star
Not to little you or me

With it we thrive
Without it we flail

Even Leonardos nod
It's not in the pineal gland

With it we rise
Without it we fall

Martin Buber was right
Between us *almost* nothing yeasts

Despite lean and angry years
We're still at it

Whatever it is
It is

—Thomas Dorsett

TOWARDS A UNIFIED THEORY

It's all round to me
What's here is there
All at the same time
In this doppelgänger
World of mirrors

I peer through
At the opposite
While I see me
Looking back at
Myself but from
The outside and
Not able to get in.

Such is the backyard
Is the region is the
Half of the earth that
I just passed through
On the way to the
Other one.

—L. Ward Abel

CLINICAL, PART III

Behind each eye is another eye.
The space within a cranial bulb
can't be described in dimensions:
Sinuous hills of grey, mottled
with knotweed and scrub pine
moored by a silted sky. Not dark,
not light. Nor day, nor night.

There was an incident
when I was a boy, followed
by a thousand more, as present
as the crow perched outside
my window. He calls
warnings to the house finches
gossiping around the feeder.
A Cooper's Hawk circles above.

A lifetime of humiliations hoarded
in the hippocampus. Some in
neat rows, some in sweaty piles.
The soul's claustral attic.
Everyone eyes the man,
few can see the ghost.

—Christopher Stewart

THE SOULS

Outside on a green lawn a giant water-oak conducts a sunset.
 Some unsteady hum has summoned us out of our houses.
 My ancient lady friend, who lives nearby, is jawing now, and wears
 an awed-holy expression as she says they are souls, yes sir.
 And they are everywhere, they wade the dusky clouds, they are
 giant black-winged fruits hanging, falling, bouncing. The green
 is black with them. And neighbors stare; they worry for their

cars and pickups. If they get into the red berries, it 's hell on
 paint. Shoot them. No, they are beautiful. They are a menace.
 Look out below! They rise and wheel, kaleidoscopic, inside rings
 of themselves. They set themselves against the sky, black on blue.
 They caw. They are telling themselves, or us, something.

They caw and caw, and what is it they are saying, so
 earpiercingly, holes through your eardrums, through your brain,

as if lasered? Then they settle again, like a black blizzard
 of huge coal flakes. The souls come back to visit us, to tell
 us that they know everything now. Now their sharp yellow beaks
 pierce the lawn. They are busier than worms, in a feast
 of famishment, an ecstasy of appetite. Now, she says,
 the nonagenarian, I 'll soon be with them, and then
 it 's always now for me like them. The souls have found their

bodies. I don 't know which is which, but somewhere, there,
 is everyone who died, all the loved ones, and even the others,
 the ones that nobody loved, they are all there now, she says.

I stare as deep as I can see. They are every blessed
 place – on roofs, looking down, in trees, on bushes, under,
 over, and around. Some seem to be waiting, some tug
 at the turning-emerald lawn in the lowering light: and now

how do they know to rise suddenly, and become one wide
 black wing? How do they know to circle and circle in unison,
 one boomerang black wing composed of so many blood-beating,
 sky-rowing black wings? How do they know when it 's time
 to fly along a horizon, rimmed with rising red? The souls,
 they know, they know! I think it must be out of some distant
 folklore that the old lady speaks, eyes fixed, waving them goodbye.

– E.M. Schorb

GREATER THAN THEY

There are days
 When a man and his room fill a room
 In the heart
 Of something greater than they

When his story does not end with "life"
 When his heart is not summed up by the word "pump"
 When nothing is summed up

– Sabina Messag (tr. EC)

BROOK AND THUNDER

When I reach
 this deep inside
 I come to a stone
 wedged between
 brook and thunder.

At times
 I bear the roar
 at times
 forge the gap
 that quakes like a stealthy fault.

Can we not smooth this path?
 Can we not bridge the torrents
 burnish the jagged spans
 until we shine like golden rays?

Now
 unfolded
 I seek the sun
 now
 cowered in darkness
 I escape the sinewy storm.

When will this stone dislodge?
 When like Icarus will I ascend
 fearless and proud
 eclipse the furious sun
 wax gently across the sky
 and conquer the inevitable, perilous fall?

– Mike Maggio

WHEEL

Consider the wheel
 Spinning with endless speed
 Standing in place
 Like a spherical movement of the soul
 And in the inner kernel an abyss of light is
 revealed
 From which it will ascend

– Ruth Netzer
 tr. EC

A QUESTION AND A QUESTION

Speaking of the soul, I ask, why is it never defined? You say, how can one define the infinite? Instead, focus on what fills the soul. Earth. Pull the soil into your fists. This is the blood. The center that pulls us back. It is not the Earth that fills, I say, but the air. the white spaces between the letters are also counted. You ask, lips parted, eyes opened, head turned, What is spirit? *from the Latin, esprit, meaning "breath,"* I think, but I say instead, Connection. Feel the smile pull back your aching cheeks, the stomach-pull of breathless laughter, your loved ones surrounding you. This fills the soul more than the air around it. You say, the soul is the driver. It's the battery that brings light. It has no switch. I am the switch, I say. You are the switch. Purpose drives the switch. My own, I know, is reaching out. An open hand. A questioning mind. A child, in tears. An answer and another answer. I pour from my hands. I am a giver and it reveals my soul. Often I pour so much, I am empty. an ocean held, heavy and thick. grab and snap the depths until the ink stains the page. This too, fills the soul.

Once, in class, a student had a sentence. A proper sentence, right in line. And then, to everyone's confusion, a noun. It was a feathery thing, with bright eyes, webbed feet, and fishy breath. Everybody laughed. The student, I thought, missed the assignment. lost words, too, fill the soul.

— Alana Schwartz

DREAM ANGEL

What was explained to me
was that we were washing the stones

beside the reeds
in the pool along the river

because they didn't just represent
but actually were moments of our lives.

How she showed me
the way to cleanse the crystals,

precisely how to immerse our hands
into the swirling flow of the current,

the various colors of the jewels
sparkling in the water, as we rinsed

and rinsed them again, our hands
catching them in the streaming flow

of the river, a brisk wind
blowing the cattails we crouched amid,

rocking them stiffly above our heads.
What was instilled in me

was her kindness, how eloquent
her nonverbal language was, how

efficient she was in her teaching me to
tend to the process, that it was something

to persevere in coming to know,
her hair wound in a bun above her tunic,

how everything about her emanated
tenderness in her acts of devotion, how

that was transferred to me through her,
washing and washing the precious stones

beneath the rippling water of the pool,
as we focused our eyes downward

in performing the work at hand,
although somehow seeing everything

around us at the same time, not once
ever revealing the beauty of her face,

which may have been too radiant for me
to be able to see without shielding my eyes.

— Wally Swist

IN THE BLUE OF TWILIGHT

From the balcony of my dwelling
I look out at the stone alleyways.
A bluish gate stands facing me.

Before it pass gray silhouettes,
Breaking forgotten moments of light,
Grazing at the edge of the street.

Midway between us,
Pairs of feet, unfeeling and unfelt,
Wear out their hands toward haughty ivory towers.
In the black of their eyes
The horizon gutters out at the bottom of the road

In my twilight time

The tree of the word
Embraces a window-arch that is open wide.
Petals whirl in a dance of longing
For the radiant sunset
Of a tomorrow
That seems likely to arrive.

A quiet wind winds its way from my table
To the space between the walls,
Whispers in the branches of the thicket.
An easterly echo plays with the tips of the leaves,
Yellows on the walls of the indefinite.

The wind falls silent —

Flat words iron out
Voices from the depth of the earth.
Withered leaves,
Falling with a sorrowful scraping sound,
Carry on their backs
Tongue-tied letters,
Closed off by the shutters of the graying blue

At the side of the gate,
Clutched in the hands of a fleshy cactus,
A rusting urn of flowered oil
Looks toward me up the stairway.

In the white of my pupils
Silvery waters collect
To the sounds of the song of the road stones.
They set their feet on the way
To drawn hearts
In the blue of twilight.

— Tzadok Yehuda
tr. EC

SUBSTANTIATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

In the ear
a ringing
as of hammers.

In the past
the always present
regret.

In the nostril
the acrid voice
of flame.

In her eye
the intimations
of neglect.

In shadow
the whispered prospect
of silence.

In her voice
a distant memory
of blue light.

In the blue
the disappearance
of Truth.

Through the air
ashfall
quiet as snow.

— DB Jonas

[from *The Book of Hours: The Book of The Monastic Life*]

I am, you fearful one.
Do you not hear me burn against you
with all my senses? My feelings that found
wings encircle your knowing face.
And don't you see my soul standing before you
in a dress of silence?
And isn't my spring prayer ripening
inside you like fruit on a tree?

If you're the dreamer, I'm the dream.
But if you want to wake up, I am your will
and powerful in all glory
and round me like a starry stillness
over the whimsical city of time.

— Rainer Maria Rilke

— translated from the German by Wally Swist

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY PRAYERS

each one a child's hand reaching.
If they had mouths how would they speak
if they had eyes what would they see?

One hundred and fifty prayers delicate
and sparkling in the wind,
each one a separate leaf,
fluttering, waving,
sending its pure wish of hope
out on the air.

Who will cover them gently at night
when it grows dark?
Who will kneel at one hundred and fifty
bedsides and place their hands
together pointing upward,

each wave of the sea
each drop of rain
another prayer.

One hundred and fifty eyes
holy and quiet,
seeking the prayers that
scatter like butterflies
and hummingbirds
too delicate to hold.

— Jean Varda (Greenberg)

ROUTE

Everyone is sleeping, below.

On deck, alert,
the helmsman and I.

He, watching the needle, master
of the bodies, with their keys
thrown out. I, my eyes
on the infinite, driving
the open treasures of the souls.

— Juan Ramón Jiménez
translated from the Spanish by Wally Swist

JOURNEY

For love of soul, I delve into the sea
of whitewashed waves, or farther out...the sails.
And where is mine? The boat that secrets it
has only touched the surface as I go.
I must prepare to delve to get to know,
to seek and find these shells I know are there.
And cradled in the quiet deep beneath,
I'll search between the currents rise and fall.
The hourglass of sand keeps sifting on.
It's breakable, as all is tossed and turned
within the longing waves before the shore.
I'm sailing in my thoughts to find the words
a poet may stir up within the flow.
I've found my sail. Look! Isn't that the strand?

— Lucia Haase

OF EMILY DICKINSON

A flower poked its face at me —
tiny as it was,
it magnified my wonderment
more than learning does.

A teacher poked his face at me —
craggy as it seemed,
it showed me bridges I must cross
to ways I had not dreamed.

A spirit poked its face at me —
features I could not tell,
that put to question what I was
in this corporeal shell.

— Harvey Steinberg

AN IMPARTATION TO CUT CLASS

In the dusty shade of a college classroom
 there 's a row of young women
 and the dizzying smell of their hair
 straight and in umber,
 auburn, honey tangle.
 Soil and breath. Yarn and flower.
 A quickened step in the grass
 and early violet.

Spring. The tulip 's throat and the sun-warmed earth
 breathing. Strands are still. Breathing,
 the strands sway.
 Robins laugh in the pine.

Somewhere a waterfall is changing
 as a girl, hair streaming, enters the air
 and lives for seconds above the pool
 held for centuries by stone.

We are finite
 forever

now.

—Shaun Anthony McMichael

A BIRD MAKES ITSELF KNOWN TO ME

Stretch out my hand to her and touch her mouth
 Speak soul speak
 And I have no words to put in her mouth
 Only, hear
 The bulbul bird in me beating its wings in me
 Wanting to say and not knowing what
 Only while this is yet speaking another comes
 Stop pounding on the bars they will fall with the fear
 Stop screaming stop improvising stop lying stop
 divorcing me this once
 I step on the earth and it makes itself known to me
 Behold it cannot speak
 and it is ancient and it is anguish and it is tightness
 sitting on a thin branch inside me
 waving in the wind a string of King Saul playing sorrow

—Tirtsa Posklinsky-Shehory
 tr. EC

AS GRAVITY BUILDS BONE

As gravitation braids the straining fiber
 upward through the humid dark
 and builds the muscling bone

as daylight beckons into being
 each tender gathering leaf
 and glazes every searching eye

while dark aromas excavate
 each eager nostril in reply
 to what 's no longer there

and all the wild cochlea blossom
 in reply to whorling melodies
 that startle the awakened air

just so each body that we are each life
 is fashioned of the world entire
 as scar investiture or mute response

to all that lies outside of us a world
 outside the will before the self
 each sinew of our provenance.

—DB Jonas

TALE OF A SELF-PORTRAIT

Standing in front of the mirror
 My face a blank.

Above my head an eagle soars
 Its wings glide slowly, slowly down to become my
 eyebrows.
 Out of a whirlwind, thin leaves gather to settle as hair on
 my head.

Somewhere in the background a Shabbat candle is lit.
 The wax drips to form a nose which awaits the smell of
 fruit.

I grab a pomegranate.
 Red spouts from my mouth and my bells chime.
 They awaken smooth stones from a far off stream.
 The stones skip and roll in a dance of the righteous and
 the forefathers.
 In a moment they are the wellsprings of my eyes.

And in the mirror is the reflection of a complete face.
 This is me.
 All the colors, all the generations, all the worlds.

—Deborah Mantzur

JOHANN'S CANON

You open your eyes to Pachelbel's progression
 His bass line is fixed like your beauty
 And the two lines of the violins in the right and left
 hands
 Which you wave vigorously, involuntarily. Taking care
 not to fall
 The huge tuba pulls you in to a maternal belly
 Great conduits of weeping from the womb of the earth
 in seat number 13 row 7 of the concert hall
 In the presence of all a wondrous aura
 Is being woven and interlaced round your body
 And the conductor with his brush pierces drips of blood
 of memory
 Was it in Berlin, was in in the cattle car?
 In the monastery of young priests,
 Or in other incarnations?
 Pachelbel's progression is three heads of the complete
 crown and the hidden wisdom
 And there is a wisdom that can make connections with
 the creatures
 The sounds rise and gather might
 Wisdom and kindnesses you hear-see harmonies
 From your hearing aid and progressive glaucoma you
 hear-see symphonies
 The thousand voices of your thousand years
 Yesterday everyone went to the aspiring bonfire
 And a hymn with a lachrymose melody
 You went and entered into the presence of Rabbi
 Shimon. After the bed was ignited it rose in the
 air and fire
 Blazing before it and they heard a voice Gather and
 come to the celebration for the dead
 Peace will come they will rest in peace
 And the conductor has a song a psalm dum dum dum
 As the canon finishes in the beauty of the hands. To life!
 And Pachelbel and you my father in the seventh heaven
 Are lying in the melodic-harmonic bed and kindness
 and severity become beauty. The middle and
 two lines.
 Violins violas cello flute drum tuba saxophone and the
 conductor over organ-pipes
 And notes and letters are dancing
 Lines and points
 You become a line and a point
 Your inwardness is lined with line and point
 And afterwards when we again totter in the sunlight
 A fellow citizen approaches
 Bless me. He bows his head like the others who used to
 approach you everywhere
 Bless me bless me and you mutter to him
 And I mutter to myself in the sound box
 He is a line and a point
 He is a note and a point

— Chana Kremer (tr. EC)

ANIMA VITAE

My soul is not my essence,
 nor that which I try to be,
 nor what I see reflected
 in my observers' eyes.
 It's just a scabby glowworm
 with colors overdreaded by
 badly living for myself
 and choices made for me,
 and I will never live to see
 the chrysalis as it splits
 and spills out the rays
 of unimagined shades.

—Ed Ahern

SOLE IS NOT SOUL

Heart beats are different as my aging
 organ seems tired of so many decades
 of pumping. The 'me' has accumulated
 memories unique, creativity, sense of purpose,
 children's giggles, connections and
 sharing, pleasure watching a tulip pop from
 snow-covered soil. I am not a pronoun, nor
 a duplicate of anyone else. My body is
 wearing out, but 'me' still grows representing
 who I am and how I've moved through life;
 maybe that is "soul". Where it will be
 stays secret for a little longer, and, perhaps
 what it will send to loved ones will linger during
 their time on earth.

—Lois Greene Stone

SHADOW GAMES

Have you ever tried to race your own
 shadow? she asked no one in particular
 or chase your shadow on the thick green
 banks bordering the icy wintry stream
 rushing past water lilies, kelp-like leaves,
 and fast swimming fresh water fish, silvery
 and cold, indifferent, blind to our shadows,
 fish, fish, not on a dish, minding their own
 business, voiceless, journeying to sea and back
 again to that same stream, to spawn and die.
 Don't eat the rhubarb leaves! exclaimed Auntie G.
 But you may partake of the wild green
 Onions that leave no shadow in the grey
 winter sun. O, O, Ophelia, O!

—Brenda Appelbaum-Golani
 January 2023

FOR THE SOUL

For the soul is
my little sister
in my lap, on the grass
sitting for a moment, laughing,
wants to play, makes me angry,
wants to bother me
doesn't sleep.

For the soul is my sister
who never rests.
She can't manage alone.

—Hamutal Bar-Yosef (tr. EC)

TO YOUR HANDS I ENTRUST MY SPIRIT

To Your hands I entrust my spirit
seized with bewilderment
like the eyes of a toad
sticky and breathing from the belly
sometimes puffed up, sometimes deflated
in the firefly darkness suddenly caught up
between the palms of a child
who holds his beating heart
before the eyes of his horrified mother.

—Hamutal Bar-Yosef (tr. EC)

FORGETTING

"The one who has a kind eye will be blessed, for he
has given of his bread to the poor."
Proverbs 22:9

This is what I forgot
And will not regret again
Everything lost and vanished
In order to soothe the pain.

But in my throat is the pain of forgetting
Whenever I awake
From the drunkenness of being
That surrounds the pit agape.

Then the memory of another forgetting
Shakes off oblivion's sleep
And more and more come to join the dance
A wild revel they keep

In nothingness the body will find
From its grief a refuge sure,
But where are the spirit's wings, the blessing
Of the eye that gives bread to the poor?

—Eva Rotenberg (tr. EC)

SHORTFALL

I wish certain things were possible and real
but from thought to matter they will not congeal.
With my imperfections, that likely is best
for otherwise my spirit would fail the test.

—John P. Kneal

THE BAY

"... be gracious unto me and hear my prayer." (Psalm
4:2)

The bay! I'm searching for the happiness
That I had known when I was younger, blessed
By simple faith and firm belief, caressed
By ocean waves. I hope to repossess
The beach on which it never rained unless
I prayed for rain, the sand on which I pressed
My fingerprints, and shells that luminesced
A lunar white no night would dare suppress.

How was it possible to lose a bay,
A beach, translucent shells and ocean waves?
I ask if there's a possibility,
O God of tides, that I might find a way
Of going back, of leaving desert caves
Behind me and returning to the sea?

--Yakov Azriel

THE SERPENT, AFTER EDEN

"O Lord, in Your anger do not rebuke me, in Your
wrath do not afflict me. Have pity on me, for I am
miserable, heal me, O Lord, for my bones are
troubled." (Psalm 6:2-3)

How difficult to speak, devoid of voice,
Unable to request a second chance,
Or to admit I made a wretched choice
Dictated by my pride and arrogance.

How difficult to write, devoid of arms,
Of fingers and of hands that hold a pen,
And scrolls on which I'd copy fervent psalms
Expressing how I wouldn't err again.

How difficult to pray, devoid of soul,
That inner arm which pulls away from wrong,
That inner voice which teaches self-control
And whispers in the dark, half-cry, half-song.

I slither, soulless, limbless, mute and thin;
How poor a diet is the dust of sin.

—Yakov Azriel

I MUST HAVE BEEN ASLEEP

"The Lord will be a high tower for the oppressed, a high tower in times of trouble. And they who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You." (Psalm 9:10-11)

I must have been asleep, O Lord, at least
A thousand years, I must have been asleep
When You revealed the field where outcasts reap
Rich grain You planted for their Sabbath feast.
I must have been asleep when You released
All lepers from disease and those who weep
Were freed from nightmares which they used to keep
Beneath their pillows of a creeping beast.

I surely must have been asleep, for how
Can I explain the fact, my King, that though
You set up signposts to Your throne — the throne
I should have sought — I never came. But now
I am awake, thank God, and seek to know
The knowledge of Your name I should have known.

--Yakov Azriel

RECOVERY

In the depths we so rarely care to see or feel
but where we tossed memories that once tore at our core
drowsy dragons still spit fire and snort smoke,
but when we finally shine our inner beacon on them
they are minuscule and mushy in our hands
and leave our land and mindscape smoother than ever
before.

—John P. Kneal

76.

Between effect and cause
We hang a heavy chain
And try to climb across.

Between before and after
We plot a dotted line,
Attempting to control.

Too many abstract models
Reduce the human soul;
Mere parts without a whole.

—David Weiser

172.

Silver chains of wisdom,
Descending link by link,
Have reached my outstretched arms.

I strain to grasp the handles
To elevate myself,
But something drags me down.

The quicksand of my folly,
The swamp of vanity,
Is where my soul will drown.

—David Weiser

460.

The soul has empty spaces
Like a flag with bullet holes
That flutters through the war;

Like wide and fertile fields
With spots of stubborn sand
Where crops cannot be grown.

The world has vacant lots
Where something should be built,
Where seeds of hope are sown.

—David Weiser

THE LEAP

I was half-mad with despair,
Hopeless in love and life,
At the end of my rope--
so I chose to drown,
To cease all pain in
Sweet oblivion, to be
No more, to be gone....

And when I flung my
Young and strong body
Into that swollen river,
I thought that 's what
Awaited me — nothing!
But oh I was so wrong,
For my agnostic mind
Could not foresee the
Awaiting vast blackness,
The pain beyond pain,
And the utter aloneness —
No other souls, none
But my bodiless mind
That had spurned God
And love as well, and
Now roiled in torment,

Until I called out to Him
And was released
From hell to return
To the world I had
So recently spurned.

Some will discount
This as the ravings
Of a young man
Breaking apart –
It's only fear, just
Imagined terrors,
Be brave they say,
Neither heaven nor
Hell awaits us, our
Only fate, extinction.

I might wish them
To be right, but
They are deluded –
As I once was, for
Now I know there
Is no way out, no
Escape from oneself,
From one's mind,
From one's soul....

– Nolo Segundo

[untitled]

This is the dark night of the soul
this is the silence that presses in
from every direction and steals
the breath, this is the quiet at
3 AM that ticks like a clock
that has no mercy and the pale
blue shadows that fall beneath
the trees of winter,
quiet still and frozen.
This is the night the soul awakens
and finds nobody there but
darkness unfurling in every direction.
This is the dark night of the calm soul
that rocks in the stillness of winter
and looks up to a sky broken
with stars, wrapped in the winds
that would save it.

– Jean Varda (Greenberg)

AUGENBLICK

Rühmen, das ist!

RM Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus I,7

Requiring of me
no intention
it's nothing but
the issue

of each
moment past
the exhalation 's
far extremity

where what I am
escapes into
a summoning
proximity

to disappear
in the gathering
breath of every
not-this

of each not-me
this voice unheard
unspoken this
unintended hymn

this stammering
reluctance this
noisy instant
of silent praise I am.

– DB Jonas

LIVING SOUL

Not I who makes this heart to beat in perfect time,
nor I who placed these eyes into this face of mine!
and all these tubes and pipes and hormones given
to do their marvelled works in perfect rhythm!
not I who set these pulled muscles in their place
so I can move myself through time and space,
nor did I bestow this whirling state of mind
to comprehend the wonders that I find,
but quite Another Artist Engineer and Friend
who for His purpose all these things did lend,
that I might only choose to do that which is right,
and do not wicked evil in His sight!

– Elhanan ben-Avraham

ARE YOU WITH ME?

Are You with me
Dear Lord
as I seek to follow
Your ways?

I ask with faith
that the answer is 'Yes'
but only when
I do Your will.

Will harmony
with myself come
by being together
with You?

Only when two
walk together
on the same path
as one.

Bless the Lord
O my soul.

—Simcha Angel

MIXTURE

Toward the end of a sleepless night
defeated unto forgiveness
unto myself
to taste from the manger of submission
a mixed fodder of thoughts
I am a servant, and pure
as sapphires
all my stories
a soiled garment covering my light

—Araleh Admanit (tr. EC)

Light

Dawn 's silky light, velvety light of dusk
sparkling on lakes, caressing hills --
wrap me in your gentle arms
light, brush my smiling lips.
In my deep blue eyes
radiant light
that reflects
my white
soul.

—Ruth Fogelman

A Prayer

*As a deer yearns for water, so my soul yearns for You, O God....
Why are you downcast, my soul...?
Psalm 42:2, 6, 12*

untangle my tongue so i may speak
return my speech from exile 's clasp
that i may find the right words
to express the yearning
of my downcast soul
for You in love
exalted
Father
King

—Ruth Fogelman

The House of Love

When you walk in, you know that someone
has been waiting, waiting for you.
When you leave, you know someone
is going to miss you.
You, too, will miss them.
You walked in lost -
later you
walk out
found.

—Ruth Fogelman

DAYS OF REPENTANCE

as I learned from the sermon in "Shem Shmuel" for
the second day of Rosh HaShanah in the year 5677

Thorn after thorn to cut down with song
Depth within depth to sift with dance
a rim of gold around
to court
the virgin kernel of the heart

—Sara Friedland Ben-Arza (tr. EC)

"There is a small place/ in which the heart dwells
with itself" - Haviva Pedaya

I,
who was an ark,
who was shipwrecked,
I, a shipwrecked ark,
testify:
indeed, there is that small place,
for we still exist—
my countenance and my G-d

—Sara Friedland Ben-Arza (tr. EC)

from KERNELS OF POEMS

With my soul I have desired Thee in the night (Isaiah)
 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the
 uttermost parts of the sea (Psalm 139)

In the night I grow
 The darkness of my body fills with stars
 A whale in the lap of mighty waters

*

To launch the soul on the river of night
 On paths of water
 A sun-fish whose camp is heavy with gold

*

In the dark the kernel
 Of the soul opens
 Stamens of gold, thin

*

The soul 's calyx opens
 Gradually
 Droplets of night collect

— Naamah Shaked (tr. EC)

EYELASHES OF LIGHT

Eyelashes of light
 Signs in the world
 Supernal hue

*

Eyelash of G-d
 That dropped toward me in the rain
 Is it not a precious stone
 Inlaid
 In the breastplate of my heart

*

In the open door I will lie down
 In my soul you will see dwelling-places.
 Pomegranates of darkness

— Ruth Netzer
 tr. EC

THE ANGEL

Then the angel came and touched our forehead
 And we awoke
 And were
 For he had touched us with the scepter of light
 And the light shone
 Around us
 Drawing a circle —
 A palace

All that was in the desert
 The dew fell
 Green things sprouted
 His deserts grow mightier
 And a voice of singing, the smallest of the small,
 Like bells of silence
 Rose around us
 And was

Yes, we are waiting for Him to make His voice heard,
 For our soul thirsts for the living G-d.

— Ruth Netzer
 tr. EC

AS THEN SO EVER

The stars come shyly late, as long ago
 In childhood days.
 The plane-tree tops in sunset's afterglow
 So purely blaze
 As if to take no stain, as then not ever.
 The sea, a green bronze on the shore ashiver
 As then gives praise:
 How full of grace the flowering moments flow.

My soul, you have not sinned! As full and strong
 In childhood days
 Your moments' naked wonder pulsed along,
 That pulse now says
 That it can take no stain, as then not ever.
 See that black bird at the horizon hover:
 At dawn she'll raise
 Your muted wonders in revealing song.

Simon Halkin (tr. EC)

*L. Ward Abel 30 Araleh Admanit 40 Ed Ahern 36
 Simcha Angel 40 Brenda Appelbaum-Golani 21, 28,
 36 Ilana Attia 16 YakovAzriel 37, 38 Mindy Aber
 Barad 8, 21 Hamutal Bar-Yosef 37 Gary Beck 9
 Judy Belsky 23, 27, 28 Elhanan ben-Avraham 39
 Sara Friedland Ben-Arza 40 Emily Bilman 3 Ed
 Brickell 4 Esther Cameron 19, 22 Amichai Chasson
 4, 24, 25 Roberta Chester 5 Thomas Dorsett 15, 30
 Heather Dubrow 16 Louis Efron 19 Esthermalka Fein
 22 Ruth Fogelman 23, 40 Margaret Fox 3 Shaindy
 Gold 27 Michael Favala Goldman 5, 12, 13 Paula
 Goldman 5, 11 Carole Greenfield 17 John Grey 4
 Lucia Haase 34 Balfour Hakak 12 Herzl Hakak 25
 Simon Halkin 41 Kevin Hart 27 Rosalie Hendon 4
 Paul Hostovsky 15 Kathryn Jacobs 2, 18 Juan Ramón
 Jiménez 34 DB Jonas 29, 33, 35, 39 Louise Kantro 20
 John P. Kneal 3, 37, 38 Philip Kobylarz 10 Judy
 Koren 13 Chana Kremer 36 Don Kristt 21, 22
 Charlene Langfur 5, 11 Tziporah Faiga Lifshitz 42
 Katharyn Howd Machan 24, 25 Mike Maggio 1, 2, 31
 Deborah Mantzur 35 Constance Rowell Mastores 18,
 26 Dawn McCormack 6, 20 James McGrath 30
 Shaun Anthony McMichael 35 Donald Mender 4, 8,
 10 Sabina Messeg 23, 31 Irene Mitchell 14, 24
 Mark J. Mitchell 12, 16 Sharon Lask Munson 28
 Suzanne Musin 11, 18 Ruth Netzer 31, 41 Amos
 Neufeld 20 James B. Nicola 12, 26 Susan Oleferuk
 2, 6, 14, 15, 18 Andrew Oram 13 Tirtsa Posklinsky-
 Shehory 6, 35 Pat Raia 14 Tony Reevy 20 Rainer
 Maria Rilke 34 Eva Rotenberg 37 E.M. Schorb 31
 Alana Schwartz 32 Nolo Segundo 38 Naamah
 Shaked 41 Sarah Shapiro 1 Harvey Steinberg 34
 Christopher Stewart 13, 17, 30 Lois Greene Stone 36
 Henry Summerfield 10 Wally Swist 6, 32, 34 Jean
 Varda (Greenfield) 34, 39 David Weiser 38 Kelley
 Jean White 7, 10, 11, 17 Allison Whittenberg 9, 18
 Robert Witmer 7, 13 Tzadok Yehuda 33*

TWO POEMS

The rebellion that is in me
 I will strew on the seven seas,
 The fear
 I will palpate gently
 I will give it voice
 The silence
 I will make speak,
 To the emptiness
 I will give weight,
 The G-d within me
 I will proclaim.

*

Initiative of light
 within the chaos
 that is also the work of your hands.

It will begin from there
 It will make time for itself
 It will incline an ear
 It will take a long look
 at what was always there
 what you discovered just this minute
 Look
 It is taking shape
 taking on color
 Look
 It is growing wings
 Look
 It is
 changing
 the
 world.

—Tziporah Faiga Lifshitz