

The Deronda Review

a magazine of poetry and thought

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Showing its competency in
wing-beat, flick and glide,
Phoenix-like
it climbs towards the mountain.
Skill, speed and its own arc of
flight
presents itself to me and gives
comfort as
I shudder short, and then dream
in that desire
to soar above a world of
bewildering ruin and hope.

– Pearse Murray
from "Flight," p. 10



Yoram Raanan, *Phoenix Arising 2*, oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm (2017)

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About three months after the fire that destroyed his studio and 40 years of work, Yoram started painting in oil in earth tones, burnt and raw siena, as well as iridescent gold on black panels. Painting in gold is about the transformation of fire into redemption, light coming out of darkness, transformation of tragedy.

Phoenix Arising 2 is one of many bird-like images that appeared by surprise on the canvases, revealing the message of rebirth. This was originally a vertical abstract painting. As he wiped his hands on the canvas with thick oil, the weight of the paint sticking to his hands pulled off the latex glove he was wearing, creating the face of the bird. Notice how its beak looks like a hand, with the shape of his knuckles.

The mythical phoenix is a symbol of rebirth in many cultures. In Judaism, there is a reference in the book of Job. "And I said, 'I will perish with my nest, and like a *chol* I will multiply my days'" (29:18). According to many translations, the word *chol* refers to the phoenix. The Midrash describes the Chol as a bird that lives for a thousand years, then dies, and is later resurrected from its ashes. (Genesis Rabba 19:5)

–Meira Raanan

CONTRIBUTOR EXCHANGE

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

Hayim Abramson, *Shirat HaNeshamah: Shira letzad mekorot (Song of the Soul: Poetry with Sources)*, Beit El, 2016.

**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.

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

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

Tsippy Levin Byron, *Lucid Words* (Paperwall Media & Publishing, 2013).

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

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

Eric Chevlen, *Triple Crown* (2010), *Adrift on a Ruby Yacht* (2014).

Heather Dubrow, *Forms and Hollows* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2010), *Transformation and Repetition (Main-Travelled Roads)*, *Border Crossings* (Parallel Press).

Ruth Fogelman, www.geocities.com/jerusalemilives, is the author of *Cradled in God's Arms, Jerusalem Lives*, and *Jerusalem Awakening* (Bitzaron Books), and *Leaving the Garden* (2018).

George Held, *Bleak Splendor* (Muddy River Books, 2015) and *Phased II* (Poets Wear Prada, 2016)

Paul Hostovsky's books include *Selected Poems* (FutureCycle Press, 2014), *Hurt into Beauty* (FutureCycle Press, 2012).

Sean Lause, *Bestiary of Souls* (FutureCycle Press, 2013).

Lyn Lifshin's numerous books are listed on her website, <https://www.lynlifshin.com>.

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

Rumi Morkin (Miriam Webber), *The Ogdan Nasherei of Rumi Morkin*, privately published.

Pearse Murray, pearsemurraywriting.com.

James B. Nicola, *Manhattan Plaza* (2014), *Stage to Page: Poems from the Theater* (Wordtech Communications, 2017), *Wind in the Cave* (Finishing Line Press, 2017) <https://sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola/poetry>

Susan Oleferuk, *Circling for Home* (Finishing Line Press, 2011), *Those Who Come to the Garden* (Finishing Lines Press, 2013), *Days of Sun* (forthcoming, Finishing Line Press, 2017).

David Olsen, *Unfolding Origami* (Cinnamon Press, 2015), *Past Imperfect* (forthcoming, Cinnamon Press). chapbooks *Exit Wounds* (2017), *Sailing to Atlantis* (2013), *New World Elegies* (2011), and *Greatest Hits* (2001).

Gordon Ramel's poetry collections *Naturally Beautiful*, *The Human Disease*, *Almost Sane*, and *Tall Tales, Beautiful Beasts & Peculiar People* are available on Amazon Kindle. His blog is alienenterprises.wordpress.com.

Tony Reeve has three books, *Old North*, *Passage*, and *Socorro*, all published by Iris Press.

Mark Rhoads, *No Gathering in of This Incense* (Kindle, 2015).

Gerard Sarnat, *Homeless Chronicles* (2010), *Disputes* (2012), *17s* (2014) and *Melting The Ice King* (2016), all by Pessoa Press.

E.M. Schorb's numerous works are listed on his website, <http://www.emschorb.com>.

Vera Schwarcz, *Ancestral Intelligence* (Antrim House, 2013), *Chisel of Remembrance* (Antrim House, 2009), *A Scoop of Light* (March Street Press, 2000), *Fresh Words for a Jaded World*, and *Selected Poems* (Blue Feather Press, 2000). Her prose works include *Colors of Veracity: A Quest for Truth in China and Beyond* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2014). Other works listed on her website, between2walls.com.

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

Wally Swist, *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love* (Southern Illinois UP, 2012); *The Daodejing: A New Interpretation*, with David Breiden and Steven Schroeder (Lamar Univ. Literary Press, 2015); *Invocation* (same, 2015), *The View of the River* (Hemet, CA: Kelsay Books, 2017)

Guy Thorvaldsen, *Going to Miss Myself When I'm Gone* (Kelsay Books, 2017).

Yaacov David Shulman, *Little Psalms* (Wings of the Morning Press, 1987), *Airport Lights* (Createspace, 2017), other collections listed on dotletterword.com.

**Shira Twersky-Cassel, *Shachrur* (Blackbird), 1988; *HaChayyim HaSodiim shel HaTsipporim* (The Secret Life of Birds), Sifriat HaPo'alim, 1995; *Yoman Shira BeSulam HaGeulah* (A Poet's Diary), Sifrei Bitsaron, 2005; *Legends of Wandering and Return*, Sifrei Bitzaron 2014.

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

Sarah Brown Weitzman, *Eve and Other Blasphemy*, *The Forbidden*, *Never Far from Flesh*.

Carolyn Yale has two self-published chapbooks, *Line of Sight* (2017) and *Night Vision* (rev. 2017).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

"Listening for Scouting Planes" is from Lyn Lifshin's *Refugees Whose World Was Taken – The Aleppo Poems* (NightBallet Press).

Constance Rowell Mastores' poems are from her book *Dusk*. *Mirage* is from Wally Swist's *A View of the River*. "To Primo Levi" is from Tsippy Levin Byron's *Lucid Words*. Esther Cameron's poems, except for "The Outcast Heart," are from her *Collected Poems*. Carolyn Yale's poems are from her chapbook *Line of Sight*. Yaacov David Shulman's poems are from *Airport Lights*. Judy Belsky's "What We Flee With" is from *Avraham and Sultana*.

I. The Great Wheel

THE TREE ARM TAPPED

The tree arm tapped for me
to come, see, smell, sit, climb
walk under it properly
the pine outside
season after season
a window between
a dry office and a drenching green
and I declined

Love, life is hard to find
one must look behind
lift the leaf, rub the knobs, grasp for
that shaking branch
study the hard ridges like standing armies
sneak on past
trace the root, scan the heights
lean against it
step outside.

—Susan Oleferuk

YOU AIN'T SEEN NUTHIN' YET

It doesn't look like much, these sprouts they hold,
up. What I see seemingly is the same,
in stasis in the winter air. A game,
they play possum, wink at me in the cold,

lazy. They wait for the sun, the rain
to fall, to fill them with chlorophyll. They grow,
the roots stretch down, as the stems push from below,
together, increase. Slowly, steadily, gain

hibernating, invigorating, pull
imperceptibly before my eyes,
nothing that I can gage, measure the size,
as these small things advance — April Fool!

they tarry here, but it is just a guise,
come Spring when I return, how high they rise.

—Zev Davis

JERUSALEM REBORN

The fragrance of rebirth
The vision of the earth
Reviving with renewed life and vigor
Verdant transformation of yesterday's desolate fields
Magically becoming green, rich and inviting
Dreams of running through the aromatic dew-laden grass
of morning

The air is fragrant
The new aromas of morning
Overpowering the damp odor
Of winters' decay
Praise God!
Returning life and promise
To His holy city, Jerusalem
Our city, my city
May it endure to eternity
Always the harbinger
Of ultimate spring,
For the earth
And for the people who love it.

—Don Kristt

FOR TREES ON TU B'SHEVAT

Your roots are literal and you
actually reach for the sky —
Each trunk is a capital "I" —
How peaceful it must be to be
first person singular figuratively!
Even one leaf banishes despair,
(metaphorically speaking, one strand
Of hair)--You never gray, you gold,
red, and brown; and, unlike ours,
season after season yours faithfully
comes back. Fed by lifelines of
centuries-old, lithe and
organically willed-to-live veins,
leaves restore youth every spring.
Take a stand for challenged oaks
is not a command — Even when
gnawed during youth, yes, even if
crippled by long-since-dead deer,
oaks don't need encouragement;
everyone rises as high as it can.
Adult coiffures become canopies,
only 3% of sunlight reaches kids —
Yet saplings accept what they get,
and, most unlike us, never complain.
Tough love! Yet If they received light
as they'd like, they'd grow too fast and
become deadly-thin. I just read a book
(pages of tree flesh) that asserts roots
talk to each other via vast networks of
underground wires, fungi their go-betweens;
what do they say? "Bagworms are
devouring us! Constellate defenses,
neighbors!" In one word: survive.
Choose life--Brothers, sisters, I am
a tree, you are a tree, long may we
all flourish and seek sunlight yet!

—Thomas Dorsett

RAIN STORM ON A THIRSTY LAND

The rain-clouds part and the skies open up,
blue skies after the torrential downpour.
The sun glows and the wet ground glistens;
I think I can hear the earth whisper
aah, now that's what I needed,
a good strong drink. Give me more!

The waters of the lake rise five centimeters,
more, more water, the rivers gurgle as they flow,
at least another five meters, murmurs the lake.

I still need to pray for rain,
rains of blessing to quench the earth,
to fill cisterns, rivers and lakes,
rains bursting with Heaven's bounty.

— Ruth Fogelman

CELEBRATION

Forsythia bush:
ticker-tape parade thrown by
city park for spring.

--Heather Dubrow

THE SEA HAS COME BACK

Three years ago this generous ground
dried up. My beloved, dying,
took the sea with him.

Sunsets drained of color
seeped into wintry nights.
Later, Jerusalem stone built
back some bone-deep hope,
some words slipped back.

Today, the steady patter
of May rain adds rhythm
to the waves rolling in,
the Sound familiar,
alive, sacred again.

— Vera Schwarcz

WHAT I MEANT

when I saw *that* sheep
nursing its lamb by the tors of Dartmoor
with its look of modest surprise
on a day without fog

such as I had not expected
while crossing a stony heath
beyond reach of the Romans
(I had seen
under the straight streets of Bath
the remains of history
with unpronounceable names; here
the land had given up men's designs
for the wanderings of sheep
and the detours of streams. The stones
of a moor outlast engineers)

I meant to say
that particular ewe and the quick tugs
of a hungry lamb at her teats
appeared before me more real
than the conflagrations and even
the deaths of this world.

Nothing has ended,
neither the ancient grass nor flocks,
and certainly not our fires of sacrifice.
I meant, I marvel
at my surprise at this good proof
that a ewe and its summer lamb
are here despite events of fire.

— Carolyn Yale

FIREWORKS

Tornado of phlox,
streaming petals that drift near
incredulous moon

— Heather Dubrow

THE MOON THAT NIGHT

The moon that night
Its reflection dripped over the
Lake spilled onto glowing ridges
No boundaries
Between moon and lake
They yearned to be together
Yet the moon rose farther

By midnight, the moon returned to itself
Nothing new about the moon
For those who hadn't known
And the lake quietly returned to its darkness
No desire to lap the shore
Nudge the pebbles
Unseen.

— Mindy Aber Barad

EVENING

Let the sun slip down earth's shoulders
and the woods grow dark and deep,
Watch the moon rise up on tiptoe
as the birds fly off, to sleep.

Tell the owl to keep the hour
when the stars begin to wink,
Know the deer will find their river
should they need a midnight drink.

Final blue's gone at the road's end
and a smoky mauve drifts down,
Comes the silhouette of bat wings
to the disappearing town.

You may view this from a porch step
or on foot while passing by,
You can hear it in thick crickets –
Chart it by the baby's sigh.
— Cynthia Weber Nankee

END OF THE TIGER LILIES

The tiger lilies' firefall is ended,
That for three-quarters of a moon or more,
Till finally doused by yesterday's downpour,
Had made the back edge of the garden splendid.
All but the topmost trumpets have surrendered.
Untidy blossoms, not one in a score
Symmetrical, made such a fine uproar
That summer's doom appeared so long suspended.

We're moving now toward a foregone conclusion.
Dahlia centers try to cache the sun,
Marigolds' bitter scent foretells the close,
Zinnias carry on without illusions.
In synagogue the warning note is blown.
The catalogues come out with winter clothes.

— Esther Cameron

DAYS OF AWE

"I have sinned against You, You alone, and have done evil in
Your sight." (Psalm 51:6)

I know that I have sinned; You know it, too.
I also know there's little I can say
to justify my deeds, that every day
is night, that every night I sin anew.
This doesn't justify it, but I do
not hear Your voice; I hear a stallion neigh
instead, a ram's loud bleat, a donkey's bray.
But even so, a sinner turns to You.

Upon the ground are animals that crawl
or creep. A little bit above them, though,
are creatures which have learned to fly, like birds
and bats and dragonflies. Above them all
are clouds that block the sky. But even so,
a man who's sinned will sit and write You words.

— Yakov Azriel

TISHREI

"The Lord has established His Throne in the heavens and His
kingdom reigns over all." (Psalm 103:19)

From where I am, might I return to You?
If coming back is possible, might I
come back to You? If ropes exist that tie
this Earth to something like a Throne, or to
a Scepter You extend that very few
have glimpsed, might I believe I too could try
to gaze up at Your Crown beyond the sky
which separates what's false from what is true?

You know how often I have tripped, You know
how often I have fallen flat; I lie
upon the ground face down and do not see
the sky. Yet even those who lie below
may turn to You, the King who rules on high;
will You, my King, accept a man like me?

— Yakov Azriel

AUTUMN LEAVES

Though they might
simply shrivel
directly to brown
instead they turn
scarlet, orange
or yellow as flowers.

What benefit
is such beauty
to birds or bugs
or a rainbow
to a rabbit
but, oh, to us, to us.

— Sarah Brown Weitzman

AUTUMN

The softness of a November day
settles like a glove
around my slowly healing heart.
Dry mists coat grief
with stilled veils of dusty air,
a haze, mercifully wrapping
an all too active mind
in muffled blessings
of forgetfulness.

In darkened buses, low shadows
creep by surreptitiously.
Sleek, dark and feline, they are adept
at evading the inevitable:
the callous trample of winter boots,
the sudden closing of a lid
or door. They are kept
hidden, at bay,
experts at secret existence.

One step ahead
of the racing shadows,
russet and glowing reds spatter
the curtained dais; orange, brown
and golden yellow flung
as if from a madman's brush,
barely have time to acknowledge
the Master's hand; the One
that stipples fragile autumn
with a beauty so intense,
I could cry for its pain.

— Esther Lixenberg-Bloch

AUTUMN'S CHANGES

Port Washington, NY circa 1949

Climbing over the farmer's fence unseen
I start up the hill path

to reach the crest
and take the whole shock

of that autumn valley
in one surprise
of sight

the dogwood's scarlet spread
to maples
the singed ash
elms exactly orange
fire

among the paper birch
one golden oak
now coin silver

apples ruby late
upon the branch

pinces that do no turning
as though this quarter meant to hold

all hues of man's seasons
from green

to full fruit and in between

in this last flamboyant protest
against dying

but brought to me stealing
from homework
and after-school chores

that bond all may share
through beauty.

But then running through fields
of weeds
tingling my town legs

past flurries of bees
and brown butterflies

all wooing and winged
like myself I fling
down the hill into apple air

and musk of old baywood
some hand had sawed
not far

from potatoes unearthed
to dry to where

straining against the fence
there
are the farmer's four horses.

Not the first untouched crystal
of winter
nor spring's green sameness

nor even summer's academic freedom
ever pleased me
as much as that October valley journey

in memory now become not journey
but an end.

The farmer died.
His family moved to the city.

That ground soon grew nothing
humans eat.

The horses were sold
for glue.

— Sarah Brown Weitzman

THE SMELL OF SNOW

The sun was leaving as we left the river
the wind slapping and pushing
to climb a trail steep, frail thin as if it would snap
the wind in an angry fit kicking the leaves back and forth
the coyote in its steel winter gray on a distant hill
watching us
its eyes like the bores of a gun

We stopped to watch the shadow creep across the hill
and smell the coming snow
the smell that holds all the magical elements of earth and sky
that make you feel the mountain and rock are your very bones
nearby a little house nestled bright and warm
and we wondered which really was our home.

— Susan Oleferuk

EIGHTH NIGHT

Eighth Day's a band; eighth night's a miracle.
Chanukah's not Jewish Xmas; its core involves
Praising while conveying heaven's true harness.

In digging, we're pointed to dry, rocky lanes.
Tilling loam grants no bonuses. More exactly,
Glory's found in extracting from dark places.

Sharp, hard, hidden deposits hurt – with effort
We plough, formulate for generations unseen,
Tread briars, add unnatural days to our weeks.

Mundane miracles keep oil cups renewed, safe,
Help us preserve the brit, forbidden throughout
Maccabean times, plus incised upon our hearts.

We cry a little, recall wounds last just a lifetime,
Tenaciously reinstate all belief, restore our yoke,
Yank through further detritus, prepare the future.

— KJ Hannah Greenberg

WINTER DAZE

The silver fog of winter
the smooth moss that betrays no dint
stretch sparkling at intervals
with pins of rain. Winter's slow chisel
carves trees into the sky, inducing
no introspection but a far-reaching gaze
into the black bellies of magnolia leaves
at the afternoon's change of guard
in the quiet, humid closure
of December's final days.
In the stillness trembles
the mind's questioning
of the chaste, death-like daze
in which each detail of twig and foliage
takes on a final beauty.
Sterling haze and drip,
evanescence of the drifting soul,
a cozy anguish, un sueno frio
beyond this epitaphic peace.
The sudden wish to flee
to a Norse phalanx forest,
wood shadows armed with gilded tales
shooting past me
indicative arrows of enchantment,
forging quartziferous paths
to springs of certainty.

— Stephanie Sears

UNWELL

in a sleeping room of static familiars:
December memory frozen in a frame,
guitar untouched atop the wardrobe,
bookcase of remaindered paperbacks
in silent reproach. Apart from the clock's
slow numerals, all is a constant tinnitus
unworthy of notice and best ignored.

The window's a rhombus of pallid air –
a backlit bird with urgent intent
passing too fast to introduce itself,
the entropy of dispersing contrails
expressing a tiring universe destined
to stillness. A stylus wakes the fluid sky –
purposeful people going somewhere.

— David Olsen

GROWING SEASONS

They say there are plants that need shade to grow
reminds them of the place where they have been,
the secrets inside the seed call out open a screen
on the instructions, there to put on a show

in the garden plot. I look up at the sky,
what lies beyond. I consider the Plan,
the beginning of Everything, Light, Dark, and
that all the things You Created moved and changed

as that Spirit moves me what I see
is a parallel come closer, joins, it blends
and is much alike, coalesces messages sent
similar sounding different, spheres, they agree,

In concert, reflect Creation, sublime, sends
a message of Existence that never ends

— Zev Davis

AND FOR YOU WHO REVERE HIS NAME

And for you who revere His name
A sun will rise
With healing on its wings.

Malachi 3:20

Early morning
at the Kotel
turtle-doves
sing Kaddish

a woman weeps
into her siddur
beggars gather
a bride blesses
one and all.

The swifts –
pilgrims without borders –
arrive from Africa
signs of the coming spring.

— Felice Miryam Kahn Zisken

*II. Flight Patterns**1. The Seeming Impossibility*

THE EEL

slides through the lens of the sea
and takes a shape tunneled deep
in the gyre of Sargasso, supple vertebrae
roped in a line under muscle
open at the throat. Ocean flows
in and out the gap like a breath,
like an ancient tide crossing
a fortress of picket teeth.
The eye fixes to unyielding ends
past shallows evolved to bridges,
the crofter's fence and fatal ponds.
The eel knows silences
and wants no excess.
There is no play in the taut skin,
no speech or revelation. There is
no forgiveness to stray
in the return to the dark target of its birth.
Glassy sport of seeps and mud
rendered silver in the ocean: Something
in the creature confirms the beginning
of light over the waters, the void
before flesh filled the spiraled shell,
before the advent of feather and bone,
ornament and song
and the explosion
of the seeming impossibility of flight.

— Carolyn Yale

MIRAGE

To take a walk on the meadow path before
I went to work at the bookstore that afternoon

endowed me with a memory that still swings
like an invisible medallion around my neck,

still perplexing me all these years later. The heat
climbing as the sun rose higher in the sky,

the dry burn of it beginning to swelter in
a building humidity beneath banks of low cumulus.

The two-lane meadow path winding onward
in its gritty tire tracks, split by its grassy tufts

of bent stalks of sedge and spike rush, roughed
by tractor undercarriage and sled. As I walked,

I could feel my sweat beading beneath my shirt,
and before I came upon open meadow on the edge

of the woods, I stopped and turned, only
to look up into the upper branches of the white

oaks, swinging their heavy brooms of leaves,
windswept and lush with their whisking music,

shushing the polyphony of cicadas that fills
the house of summer. When my eyes

spotted them, so unnatural, out of order,
among the swaying of the oaks, leading me

to think that the heat had induced a mirage,
a hallucinogenic vision of the flock

of wild turkeys balancing their unwieldy
bodies high in the trees to perch on the limbs.

I can still see them up there, somewhere
above ground and beyond reason, the heat

of the day hammering the air so that the birds
seemed to mirror themselves in a haze –

wild turkeys that had been able to raise
the heaviness of their bodies up on their pygmy

wings and to have flown into the oaks
along the path, their presence alerting me

to having seen something untoward, freakish,
even in their apparent hiding their seeming

unbidden, out of position, the uneasy but sheer
certainty of knowing their being out of place.

– Wally Swist

IF BATS WERE LONE AMONG THE BEASTS THAT FLY

If bats were lone among the beasts that fly,
And feathers never seen to course the sky
In V's of honking geese, or shrieking flocks
Of herring gulls, or silent soaring hawks,
How then would poets sing of love on wing?
What images would writers use to fling
Our hearts aloft--without the mourning dove,
Without the lark and pinioned wings of love?

Oh, do not doubt that poets still would rhyme,
And lovers still would loose their hearts to climb
Like bats on wing, like bats on high, and sigh
"Now bat-like, lover, bat-like to me fly!"

For in a world bereft of grace like that,
Lovers would find beauty in a bat.

– Eric Chevlen

ANCIENT VOICES

Tuesdays and Thursdays
I walk to school
on sidewalk boxes
past manicured lawns.

I cut behind the houses
and down the path
across the south fork of the Kinnikinnic.

Crossing the bridge, forgetting my watch,
I stop, dip my hand in,
the current pressing my palm coldly.

I close my fist, raise it up,
dripping jewels that slip away
to recover their source.

So easy at 7 a.m.
to imagine I am glimpsing
an ancient world alone:
clovis-pointed, a flock of geese
presses against the autumn morning,
black light honking behind the rising sun.

How many times
the same flight at the edge of a world?
Moving toward me now, the flock slices through
Indian corn sky. The clouds locked like hands
relax into a thousand fingers
while the sun slips between.
The nearer the geese
the less flock, the more birds,
each one forming in my eye,
some larger, some smaller,
the leader retiring its place to another.
Over my head, the wings hum
like power lines.

Cackling into the northwest,
peculiar shapes dimming,
they seem randomly splayed
against the sky, particles
with the same dark charge.
Small enough now
I could almost cover them
with my hand,
though I can never grasp them.

Ancient voices speak without words
and always fade too quickly.

– Steve Luebke

FLIGHT

I watch winter-grey clouds roll over
a snow-carpeted, frozen-framed lake
as a white-collared flying thing swoops
through the cold smell of snow.

With a feathered fleck of yellow, it hovers,
draws in the white, the grey and the movements
of all things below its wings –
perhaps searching out from a hunger?

But then it soars, without purpose,
releasing a fresh freedom of flight,
to anywhere at any time with that impulse of
what is ancient in things that want to live.

Is it speaking a silent cry to the gentle snow?
We are not the only ones who can cry
out to the what of what we cannot fathom.

Or is it despairing at solving a mystery,
elusive, unknown but only sensed through flight,
making substance of this encirclement of light?

Showing its competency in
wing-beat, flick and glide, Phoenix-like
it climbs towards the mountain.
Skill, speed and its own arc of flight
presents itself to me and gives comfort as
I shudder short, and then dream in that desire
to soar above a world of bewildering ruin and hope.

—Pearse Murray

FLIGHT

Winter has fled.
An angelic host of Trumpeter swans
glides the open river,
parts the gray waters
with the proud elegance of clouds

until a hidden enemy startles the flock.
In unison, their necks unfurl,
extend upriver,
heads held inches above the surface
like silvery swords leading a charge.

Two dozen wings reach and punch
the water, a syncopated volley—
their thick bodies charge, strain,
then elevate just enough
to reveal windmilling feet,

small explosions of spray
providing enough lift for the wings
to beat open air:
the snap and whoof
of cavalry flags in a gale,

the swans' necks still taut,
now like thick ropes pulling
them forward,
until at last the feet retract,
and a single bark by their leader

announces flight—
a sharp wheel to the east
allows them a last look
at their ghostly reflections
sliding beneath them

along the river's surface,
their wings still compressing air
like a thrumming heartbeat,
like mine.

—Guy Thorvaldsen

IN A WOOD ONCE IN ENGLAND

There is a faint panting of wings; a small cloud
of dusk.
Thirty yards away from me, across the darkness
of the wood, it swoops up to perch on the branch
of an oak.

...

The sparrow hawk lurks in the dusk; in the true dusk,
in the dusk before dawn; in the dusty cobwebby
dusk of hazel and hornbeam; in the thick gloomy
dusk of firs and larches.
It will fold into a tree.

...

Looking through binoculars, my eyes
are almost at one
with the small head—rounded at the crown,
feathers sleeking up to a peak
at the back; curved beak
pushed deep into the face.
The gray and brown feathers
streaked and mottled with fawn:
camouflage against the dawn bark of trees,
dappled canopy of sunlit leaves.
It crouches slightly forward, stretching its neck;
flicks its head from side to side. The eyes
are large with small dark pupils rimmed
by yellow—a blazing darkness
that shines and seethes.

...

The glaring madness dies away.
The hawk unstiffens, preens.
Its eyes rekindle.

Swooping softly down,
it flits east, rising and falling,
following contours of the ground;
wingbeats quick, deep,
deceptively quiet.

A wood pigeon, feeding on acorns
in the snow beneath, looks up
at the dark shape dilating down,
hears the hiss of wings.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

THE FALCON

for Michael Jeneid

Circling upward in a blue sky
and having won the ascent, the falcon,
towering in its pride of place,
stoops — accurate, unforeseen,
absolute — between wind-ripples
over harvest. The quarry trembles.

Footed-kill finished,
wings churn air to flight.
She rises, then is gone — whole,
without urgency — from sight,
to where dazzle rebuts
our stare, wonder our fright.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

TURKEY VULTURE

Where waiting vultures wheel,
their closing rounds reveal
how the spiral path
of dying spins to death.

— David Olsen

SEELING NIGHT

At times, the road below
pulled past endlessly,
until I could feel the turns ahead,
and my head swayed with the creaking lamp,
wings bound, eyes encased in black,
the night eternal,
only the church bells to remember.

One I heard
a cat approach, withdraw, approach again.
I could smell its sweet breaths

and hear the hunger in its claws
nearing my throat.
It spared me from fear, I think,
knowing what I am.

All around me was what I feared:
Cruel laughter, clink of coins,
words that bite the air,
whips snapping,
horses shrieking,
drunken men, my owners.

I almost surrendered to
my exile, exhaustion, thirst,
their mocking cries,
and the dark within the dark.

Now I feel your careful fingers
loose the threads at last.
The night withers
and my eyes crave the light of lights.

I ascend to you, Father of heights.
I follow my cries
to my pride of place,
a blue no man can see.

I journeyed, dying,
across eternities,
reborn at last,
in the bend of my beating wings.

— Sean Lause

SONG WITHOUT A BORDER

As I tend to our orange grove,
this Golden Oriole lands on my shoulder.
I stop still in gentle astonishment.

It starts to sing its song of yearning.
That banal wall is just two hundred metres away.
Another, across that border, tends to her olive grove.

Now we both hear a back and forth of two:
feint, plaintive, urgent flute-whistlings that
makes more sonorous the scented breeze.

Can a sky-song dissolve all our shared tears?
Can a flight-song ignite Otherness?
Can symphónia be offered outside music?

As the sky leans against their lifting wings of desire
they instruct us on how to call on each other
and pre-figure a world without our dividing no.

— Pearse Murray

DOING THE AUBADE

The Snow Owl folds her wings in the black air
and yields to the dawning of flight-song to elsewhere –

where the Sandpiper scurries along
Maine's Atlantic tidal shore,

the White-Tailed Eagle yaws over the Isle of Mull.
and the Artic Tern tears by drifting icebergs.

Where a Cape Petrel glides and wing-beats over
Antarctica,
And a Whooper Swan honks sad near a Hokkaido
wetland,

As Crows, in feathering rags of slate-black,
caw-cackle the air over Hampstead Heath.

Where a Scarlet Tanager triples half-notes in a Costa
Rican forest
and a Red Cardinal wakes up a New York suburb.

When a Grey Heron squawks life into a seal bay on Inis
Mór.
a Chiffchaff chirps in the gardens of Haddon Hall.

The dark Marsh Harrier cries in the Camargue
And a Hairy Woodpecker beats music into a Berkshire
maple.

A Condor soars silent over an Andean cliff
and a Demoiselle Crane grieves in a Russian steppe.

A White-rumped Shama in an Indian forest
utters a life's worth of song in one score.

A Golden Oriole makes the Levant air
sonorous which recognizes no borders.

All song-tapestry, throat-throbbing febrile-fuss,
and each dawn, each place, each feather asserts yes to
the light that lights their dawns of promise.
Will they remain in tune with their blue-blue globe,
in the magic of the beginning and the dying of notes,
their variable, incurable, fleeting slide in which
they will rise every day without a no to the now?

—Pearse Murray

NIGHT VISION

Driving home late on ice-bitten road,
my headlights probing like a blind-man's fingers,
the night trembling with snow, my boy
blissfully asleep in his magic chair.

They appeared from the abyss
as if projected by the moon,
their legs flowing silently through the snow,
a herd of deer, fleeing remembered guns.

Leaping in plumes of electricity,
embracing us in soft brown flesh,
implicating me in my own breaths
and every snow that falls unseen.

Their eyes seemed to know me from long ago,
their leafy heads nodding as if in prayer.
We swung in one motion, relentless, pure,
then they curved beneath the night and disappeared.

When my son stirred, I could not tell
who had dreamed and who had been awake.
I only knew we were safe and blessed,
and I had never lived and would never die.

—Sean Lause

FEATHER

The unit of sky is the feather.
It flutters down
from the freshly wakened blue,
the inevitable result
of a new one growing in,
or a raptor striking in mid-flight,
or a collision with a tree
or maybe, one just yanked out by a beak
in a fit of soaring hubris.
But gliding through air, it's neutral.
Alighting on the ground,
it says nothing of what's come before.
Picked up, examined,
maybe worn in the hair,
pasted into a collage,
or slid between the pages of a book,
it begins a new life,
not its old one.
The unit of earth
is the feather,
appropriated, plagiarized,
adopted, usurped,
for no earthly reason.

—John Grey

SWALLOWTAIL (PAPILIONIDAE)

The line of cars files ahead
past the end of sight.

A fluttering, falling leaf
drifts across the road.

Resolves into a butterfly, floating,
then gently flexing wings.

It reaches a flowerbed, with roses,
bounded beside the road.

The light changes, the rank releases
squalling brakes, grinds on.

— Tony Reevey

THE COLLECTIVE

Earth shudders. A thousand birds have flown up in one
single
unlikelyhood, a murmuration of starlings concerted,
turning once,
as one, and again, with a bold knowing.

So patterned, like the iterations on an Amish quilt;
space enough between each to dodge the hawk and the
eagle.

Appearances surmise a leader risen among them

who, like Moses, has been dawdling in an ordinary
occupation
when suddenly called to serve, to teach
formation and the shimmer precisely as sheets drying on
a line,

or have they slyly come untethered, come into their own
desire, to swoop and dive into spectacle? What is
freedom if not
knowing one's own body, moving on its own, and
ecstatic,

in tandem with companions, casting sedition against a
blank sky?

— Florence Weinberger

2. Flight Log

VACATIONING

Today I take leave of my mother the earth
to become a creature of the sky
for a few hours,
in the limited and mechanical way
a human can do this. When I touch her next
it will be in a different place
and I will be grateful,
for air is not my element,
wings and feathers not among my gifts.

Shortly I will quit her again
to become one who lives on the water
for a time, again contrived and artificial
but an opening moment,
a fresh look at life on this patchy planet.
Breathing through a tube of plastic
vision clarified by goggles
I will gaze upon bright creatures
and bob with the water's rhythm
in a way the sea-fans have done for millennia
but is entirely new, yet primitively familiar,
to me. I began my life in liquid
but cannot now maintain it there:
at length I must climb back upon
the great green turtle's shell,
endure another interval of flight
and resume my old way of living --
the same
but subtly changed,
holding
keeping
remembering.

— Kathy Dodd Miner

SONDER: AIRPORT SECRETS

Sonder: (n) The realization that each random passerby is living a life as complex as your own, yet you will never know their story. (Dictionary of obscure sorrows)

voices overpowering the loudspeakers
 repeated warnings
 asking to keep track of your luggage
 in case the savagery of humanity
 ruins you enough to hide
 a device destroying worlds. I am amidst the constant
 flow
 of people so different blending
 in like each feather
 on the wing of a sparrow. And I sense no fear, no anger,
 no
 danger. Only awkward presence of humanity. I'd talk to
 my sister yet avoid
 the eyes of the man sitting with his daughter straight
 across from me in the wide leather seats by the gate.
 Why is it no one can talk to a stranger? A woman with
 dark
 wavy hair sits alone while families walk by, a boy
 and what seems like his girlfriend read magazines, not
 speaking, yet I will
 never know the woman's name
 know the destination of families
 nor know the status of the couple who seem to be my
 sister's age. Humanity
 is left unknown because asking too many questions is too
 intrusive –
 forbidden, caused by the many secrets we all hide. I tend
 to keep my
 deepest secrets away from the world – and even
 farther from myself. Maybe humanity is at its best
 in an airport as overhead voices give
 suggestions no one heeds to; they bring one carry-on of
 Trust
 but forget to pack their secrets. They are still easily kept
 hidden by others as
 disclosed and distant as you are to yourself.
 They all blend like the speckled chocolate and
 cream feathers on a sparrow's wing.

– Alana Schwartz

GLASS HOUSE

In this airport lounge, I imagine
 a glass house around my space,
 an impenetrable sepulcher of silence,
 purging my mind of mnemonic
 dead weight. An empty page, I am

both benign beast and voracious avatar,
 lost in a sanctuary of nothingness
 until the pebble of persistent panic strikes,
 the impact splintering like a crystal

spider web, returning me to time.
 Exposed, I scrutinize two pilots
 boarding my flight, one weathered,
 gray-haired, striding with command,

the other sauntering a carefree swagger,
 his face smooth, seemingly untouched
 by a razor. Who? Who do I trust
 with these assorted lives:

the poet, the perfume
 of her grandson's diaper lotion
 still under her nails,
 the chubby Cuban toddler
 picking up my computer case,
 the grandmother, stoic in her wheel chair,
 the teenage lovers weeping final good-byes,
 the body builder in a scanty T-shirt,
 the nameless multitude
 marching in front and behind me,
 journeying from and to?

Who determines departure date,
 estimated time of arrival,
 the final destination of souls,
 the commander or his chief,
 the avatar or the beast?
 Filing through the gate to the door
 of the plane, we step through
 that bright hole, an open window
 of questioning space,
 as if into the blankness
 following the final word
 at the end of a poem.

– Dianalee Velie

"NOW BOARDING, GROUP 5"

You are the lowest of the low –
 No carry-on, no exit row.
 You fly Group 5, Economy, –
 Last middle seat is where you'll be.

Free meal's a figment of the past.
 Now pay for movies – not in cash.
 If want to internet connect,
 A three-month contract must expect.

Your lavatory's in the rear –
 Dare never to First Class draw near!
 But what's your reason to complain?
 At least they let you on the plane!

— Ray Gallucci

HOMEWARD

from RST

"Maintain control of your belongings at all times."
 Years after 9/11 these same words are said.
 It seems there is no flight to former paradigms.

Too many people bear the brunt of certain crimes.
 Security fills even innocents with dread.
 "Maintain control of your belongings at all times."

We normally face TSA in warmer climes.
 Post-Mayo, cases of syringes give us cred.
 It seems there is no flight to former paradigms.

The agents understand our awkward pantomimes.
 They know they should not go where angels fear to tread.
 "Maintain control of your belongings at all times."

We ask and are allowed to board with other primes.
 We leave two bags outside, lift others overhead.
 It seems there is no flight to former paradigms.

Once we are seated, my attention turns to rhymes.
 You choose to play a game of solitaire instead.
 "Maintain control of your belongings at all times."
 It seems there is no flight to former paradigms.

— Jane Blanchard

AIR TRAVEL AT HEIGHTENED ALERT

Men of violence were born
 before me and will haunt
 the Earth until its last sigh.
 They are the undertow
 on a gleaming beach, yet –
 the waves
 still rush
 toward shore and the moon is
 heavy, in term.

Time buries all. The sand shifts
 and another civilization waits
 for a thoughtful archeologist
 to discover
 the lapis shell, the lucky book,
 the gilded horn, heralding
 a long forgotten god.

No-one cares about the assassins
 doing the dirty work of another civilization,
 already skeletal, even when alive,

let loose every generation
 when Pandora's vault yawns,
 free to roam the Earth a while.

The rest of us had life as it sparked
 and sometimes flamed.

— Susan C. Waters

FLIGHT 813 TO MIAMI

Over a warm banana, cold cranberry muffin,
 and patch work green fields, seemingly,
 decades above grief, and Maryland, I give up
 my aisle seat to a stranger, who wants
 to be with his wife and daughter,
 should we all crash and die.
 All this he explains to me with gestures
 from his soul, love motions of his hands,
 speaking foreign words I don't comprehend
 but clearly understand.

Climbing over two passengers, who refuse to budge,
 to the window seat in the last row of the plane,
 I take his vacated space.
 Pressing my nose against the glass,
 staring down at the Atlantic shoreline
 through the sun splattered window
 and sudden tears, you smile
 at me through the clouds,
 having already reserved your seat
 forever next to mine.

— Dianalee Velie

OCCLUSION

Gazing down on the clouds from Delta Flight 1907,
 The year you were born,
 I can see you, dad, face up in bed,
 Muttering something, maybe praying.
 There's mom next to you, sound asleep.
 I take off my glasses to add to the drama
 And lo! There's Pokey howling and scratching,
 The proverbial alligator – two! – in pursuit.

Some day, kids, you will see me down there with them,
 Gazing upward, squinting at you,
 Glad that you have found me,
 Wishing to be with you one more time.

– Fred Yannantuono

ATMOSPHERE*

Risky business
 The final stop *are we there yet?*
 Traveler's Prayer
 Dance it
 Entirely dependent
 In the desert valley
 Celebrate ceramic teapots *look out the window*
 Flea market

Finest regime *do you see?*
 The venue: centuries ago
 Commit to the testament now *on the screen*
 Olives, Oud, Harp *Look how far we've gone!*
 Festivals
 Showcases
 Available for purchase

Traditional sounds *I won!*
 On the compass *Sh! Turn the game off now*
 Love the location
 Water's edge
 The ultimate
 Migratory birds

Dragons and battles
 Locally crafted imagery
 Simply choose
 The second line
 Simpler days
 Be an opera singer *are we there yet?*

To the last.

– Mindy Aber Barad

*with thanks to the El Al flight magazine

FLIGHT

Do I
 keep seeking out
 the distant horizon,
 blue, beckoning, and unclear or
 do I

land here,
 plunge into those
 dark clouds below, faithful,
 like a pilot on instruments
 only,

that earth
 will soon appear
 beneath me, the solid,
 unforgiving territory,
 I know.

– Dianalee Velie

ELEGY FOR PATSY

Small, cloud-hidden
 drone – faraway light
 plane above the peaks.
 Then, cough-sputter
 and silence
 except for wind
 in the balsams.
 Less than a minute.

But long, so long.
 Then, boom-bark, crunch-
 crash, cascade of small
 thumps, as ball-
 fire wells
 through the fog.

– Tony Reevey

MIDWAY FLIGHT LOG

*In memoriam: Commodore Jimmy Jones, PBX "Strawberry"
 scout pilot*

My engines drone. Blue
 flows out, white
 curls of wave-
 chop. Just enough
 fuel. No bandits.

Radio silence
 unless we spot
 the Jap fleet.

Eyes dazed from scanning
the sea. Hand binoculars
to co-pilot, a kid
from Chicago.

Our crew is all
kids, really – volunteers
after Pearl.

Strange – to be scared
and bored
at the same moment.

Then, praying we make it back
this time.

– Tony Reevy

LISTENING FOR SCOUTING PLANES

they sound different from
fighter jets on bombing
runs. The scouts fly lower
and they make a constant
buzzing sound. If you hear
them, you'll know that shells
will be falling soon, bringing
death with them. If you go
outside make sure you don't
end up in a group of more
than 20 people one man says
or you might attract a plane.
Scouting runs are especially
dangerous in summer when
there aren't any clouds to
obscure pilots' vision. But
they're also bad on clear
days in winter. Going out at
night is especially risky because
you can't see planes coming over
head and you have to drive with
out headlights. One man said
he suddenly felt pressure in
his ears and the windows of his
car cracked. It was an air strike
less than 100 meters behind him,
reminding him he was still alive

– Lyn Lifshin

FLIGHT – FOR ILAN RAMON

"When once you have tasted flight you will forever
walk the Earth with your eyes turned skyward, for
there you have been and there you will always long to
return." -- Leonardo da Vinci.

Ilan Ramon was a fighter pilot in the Israel Air force
and Israel's first astronaut. He and the six other crew
members were killed during re-entry of the US space
shuttle "Columbia" on February 1 2003. Miraculously
some pages of Ramon's diary survived the heat of the
explosion and the cold of space, fell 37 miles to earth
and were later recovered.

Weightless we circle Earth.
In the quiet that envelops space,
sent forth into the unmapped and obscure,
the silence is sublime.

Closer to God time loses relevance,
here Shabbat will be ninety minutes,
I hurry to light candles
in non-gravity each flame burns tight
rosebuds that will not bloom.

We pass above the Dead Sea, the Sinai Coast,
and when Jerusalem comes clear, I cloak my eyes
with trembling hands, I recite, "Shema Yisrael."

In ninety minutes the Sun will again emerge
from the darkness beyond Earth.

Sunrise as seen from Space
is as the devouring fire on top of Mt. Sinai
when Moses, freed from the confines of time,
rose to meet the glory of Hashem.

I hold close the small Torah scroll
brought out of the gehinom of Bergen Belson.
It is here with me in the bright depths
that surround the glowing gem that is home.

The hours are filled with high energy particles
that flash fireworks before our eyes, the mind cannot sleep.

In free-fall my crystals have grown more perfect shapes.
With Israel's children I have studied the dust of the Sahara,
watched the splendor of powerful thunderstorms over Asia.

At sixteen days we will descend the mountain,
the world is watching.
In Eretz Yisrael it is Shabbat.

At sixteen minutes, at re-entry
a great joy fills my heart.

The Earth opens wide its arms to embrace.

– Shira Twersky-Cassel

CARTOGRAPHER'S FLIGHT

Squinting at
plump olive trees
air-perforated
studded with ripe fruit,
he saw
a land all washed with silver.

Save where
hot black asphalt
welled-up, scratching
criss-cross lines.

Surprisingly
the cities didn't hum.
It seemed someone
had gouged
an opaque nothingness,
fluted edges
spattering shapes far-flung.

Crinkled mountains
echoed
cling-wrap squished on plasticine
or scrunched
brown wrapping paper.

Bone and lump
of bedrock
bared uncompromising stone,
reduced to pebbly dots
on key,
too tiny for the naked eye
to see.

And graduating tones
belie still steeper drops,
translate to mute meanderings,
skirt brown scrawled
ridges
and
descend
to green.

Green fades to yellow,
too close
to ochre sands,
where dangling feet kick wild wet waves,
rippling the edges
of fear and prophecy.

— Esther Lixenberg-Bloch

3. When to Flee

from WHAT WE FLEE WITH

*at the Passover Seder I fall asleep
I dream I am a small child fleeing Spain*

I
we flee at night
we board a ship
my father worries about old Lateen sails
and worn clinker-built hulls
are they sea worthy?
was he duped?

there are so many people on board
I am afraid we will sink
afraid they will overtake us
afraid they will take Father
afraid they will torture him
he has already told us if he is caught
we are never
never to
bow down to idols
I rehearse refusal
even under a whip

the ship sails despite rotten hulls
God navigates
He gently tacks the old triangular sail against the current
He skims us past the Spanish Armada
who have orders to shoot

stars look down
and speak in a language we have not yet learned

II

on the ship
my father studies the Abarbanel
after he flees Portugal for Spain
Spain for Naples
Naples for Corfu and Venice
he will write Passover Offering
a commentary on the Haggaddah
father lays its maps over our voyage
he reads through three maps
one bleeds through the other
Egypt
Spain
Redemption

— Judy Belsky

A LIFE WITHOUT TERROR

I live near the ocean so I'll know when to flee,
where to go, not north, not over the hill –
I can already see ruby licks of fire – not

through those roads wrenched from rocks
that slept intact through the earliest embers
but could melt if severely tested;

you'll find me standing below my fragile
home, ankles cold and white in the shallows
just where the sea's lurch sputters out, praying

the flames won't reach. After all, there are
seas of sand between us. At my back, a horizon
free of hazard. I want to live without dread

or terror, with the advent of whales,
with reliable tides and pelican vision, with
dolphin happiness and the gull sitting softly

beside me in its pocket of sand unblinking
like yesterday. I could not catch its eye
but sat nearby, the waves gently lapping,

my grandson reading a book, just sun

— Florence Weinberger

THE CROW

the crow sits on the building site
does he know it's a building site
will he fly away in the morning
when the men come to work?

— Lois Michal Unger

BALLOONS

They drift away,
float into the ether--
helium balloons, gone forever,
out of reach,
never to be held again.

The brown one
was my favorite;
I held on to it
longer than the others.

One mistake,
it slipped out of my hands.
I tried to catch it,
but I was too late.

— J.J. Rogers

JAIL BIRDS

I wonder why they won't leave.
The fence cannot control them;
they could fly right over,
but they don't.

Instead,
they eat bread from my hand.

Even the ones who
manage to clear the fence
always come back.

I suppose it is easier
to eat free bread than to
forage for your own.
There is comfort
in being fed, sheltered.

— J.J. Rogers

GOOD NITE

You checked out
while I'm still climbing autobus stairs

once I took four secondals
you thought it was funny

now you said goodbye
shut the door
to a world
that was a disappointment
a sign do not disturb
a bottle of pills

Good nite good nite

— Lois Michal Unger April 2011

AT THAT MOMENT OF LEAVING

at that moment of leaving
when you read a magazine
as if it would go on
continue
be back again
and I knew
suspected
you wouldn't
it wouldn't

I wanted to hold that moment
keep that moment
I had to let go and
say goodbye

— Lois Michal Unger

FLIGHT

Discarded by that haughty intellect
 Which now defines you as its outstretched wings
 Define the eagle's silent flight – direct
 In its simplicity as thought that springs
 Unchallenged to your mind, and carries you
 Above the throes of ordinary life;
 Yet I in my simplicity renew
 That right that led us to this parting strife:
 What skies you soar, what things you see from your
 Exalted provenance, I cannot know
 From here, nor how without you I'll endure
 This life that you, disdainful, see below
 You. Think then what you will of what I feel;
 Emotion, and not thought, makes my life real.

– Frank Salvadio

SO RESTLESS

Other countries are out there.
 I am not bolted to America
 as this one is or that one is.
 I can catch a flight,
 be in Canada inside the hour.
 Or be in Mexico in maybe four.
 I'm not condemned to this street,
 this town, this state, this anything.
 The ocean at my door is nothing.
 My loving you doesn't prevent me crossing it.
 Sure I can't speak French or German
 like a native
 but who wants to be a native anyhow.
 My passport's in order.
 I've money for the plane, the hotel.
 I could be a Scottish fishing village,
 a Moroccan bazaar,
 a Japanese theme park...
 that's what you have here,
 a guy with the potential
 for being somewhere else.
 You think that without stakes in the ground,
 there is no ground,
 that where you are
 is where you have to be.
 You call my name
 but no louder than Helsinki
 calls my name.
 You make a home for me.
 But I look at a map
 and see no homes.

– John Grey

He said "you are
 the great love
 of my life"
 and left again
 for another month.

– Lois Michael Unger

ROUGH FLIGHT

The weather in the
 living room is bad,
 drenching mockery,
 claps of ridicule,
 derision, and contempt.

My insides are
 icing up from
 the cold stares
 I'm getting,
 flaps are stuck
 saying sorry.

Shouldn't have
 called you lame
 when you told me
 to get a life,
 should have just
 thought it.

Body's shaking,
 big mouth's buckled,
 clemency gauge
 reading zero.

Looks like a
 rough landing with
 a long layover
 for repairs before
 we can fly again.

– Martin H. Levinson

BIRD IN THE ATTIC

Her wings brush the pane
 as if she knows by instinct
 that confinement is a dream,
 from which wings alone my awaken.

She flutters up and down the pane
 searching for answers in the light
 as if a mere entreaty
 could shatter an invisible wall.

Now she weaves the huddled space
 and slams the pane till her beak turns red.
 She cries out in fear against this
 encroaching fate, this finite doom.

I tug and pull and yank until
 the old window opens with
 an ancient shriek, and she is free, while
 my heart flutters madly in its prison.

– Sean Lause

THE WINGS OF LOVE

Where can I fly? Be free?
 Do I want to fly... or do I wish to flee?
 To get away? Escape?
 Or do I merely wish to sit and rest,
 To hear the quiet voices inside myself?
 Or perhaps I just want to sit and be.
 To inhale the scent of newly mown grass
 And watch the wind flow through the trees.
 To listen to the song of birds,
 the clicking of crickets on a summer night,
 the coo of pigeons on the roof,
 the pitter-patter of rain or thunder in the sky.
 But pardon me.... I must fly....
 Inside. To answer the insistent cry
 of a downy miracle
 demanding my presence
 and embrace.

Goodbye!

— Yaffa Ganz

NEVERTHELESS,

time's arrow. Heart's a moving target —
 So far (years photons take to reach nearest stars)
 what doesn't bother salvia has missed me.

May time's archer shoot me with small change.
 (And if he has quick work to do, may the wonder-taker
 fell
 me before those I love.) Mortality, Salvador Dali

no longer fears you and his oeuvre never did.
 I do. (You forgot the adverb still, or that timely phrase,
 but not for long.) It doesn't seem to bother buttons,

Betelgeuse, snails, weeds, ambergris, redwoods
 or those who listen: Not-I inside isn't ready to fly,
 isn't ready to die; even in darkness O sings.

— Thomas Dorsett

BEEN GROUNDED SO LONG SEEMS LIKE FLIGHT

Seventeen hours since spine injections,
 placid pitter-patter of rain drops on our
 A-frame nest's wooden bedroom roof,
 gossamer comforter on top, warm flossy
 mattress pad underneath, silky smooth
 guardian angel next to me, waking before
 dawn without torment; wounded skeleton
 feels almost normal for 1st time in months.

Holding walking stick then not using it,
 I rise on two feet for morning ablutions,
 carefully dispatch what have become
 formidable stairs, press otherwise-set
 Mr. Coffee to On, actually pet the cat
 before bending gently to fill kibble dish
 (deferring clean water to purring mistress),
 perch on downy ergonomic computer rig.

A fledgling phoenix at repose, I can now
 manage my own organic steel-cut oatmeal
 & blueberries before considering how to
 tackle vexing pent-up business stuff though
 only after taking a few motionless minutes
 to contemplate kneeshipsswings (potentially
 + vertebrae) that remain anything but feathers
 covering an ossified wattled endangered body.

— Gerard Sarnat

NOT TONIGHT

Not tonight, the aides say, not tonight.
 His rattle has stilled
 and the battle won't build
 till he's ready to fall from great heights.

Not tonight, the aides say, wait a bit.
 Draw close, watch his chest, hear his breath.
 (Yes, it's drawn-out, this vigil with death.)
 You're welcome to lie here, or sit.

Not tonight, the aides say, but quite soon.
 He has emptied his mind,
 all his senses are blind,
 he is circling back toward the womb.

Not tonight, Dad, I say, not tonight.
 Here's a legend you told once to me
 about herons, of gulls soaring free,
 of the heightened awareness of flight.

Not tonight, the aides say, not tonight.
 Listen up and you'll learn something true
 about him, ambiguity, you,
 and death's failure to set all things right.

— Catherine Wald

4. *Flying Dreams*

FREE FALLING GRANNY

Must be mad...
 But no – no going back
 It's up, up and away now
 Twelve thousand feet
 While I stare into thin air.
 The signal sounds
 But just a minute
 I mean...how?

No time for buts
 Out the gaping door I go
 Into a tandem jump.

And my, oh my
 I can fly
 Like a bat on a breeze
 Well – almost at least.

Flat on my stomach
 Arms playing wings
 I feel
 The mighty magnet
 Of Mother Earth
 Urging me back
 Where I properly belong.

Well knowing that this force of
 Nature
 Eventually will win
 I want a few more moments
 Just bird's eyeing
 This spectacular speck of our
 Planet.

Parachute opening above
 The free fall comes to a halt
 Turning me back upright
 No more pressure on my chest
 No more thunderous winds
 Engulfing my head
 Only sheer dazzling, dangling
 Leisure
 As all spells stillness.

— Birgit Talmon

FLIGHT

From the ramp over a chute
 that drops so fast
 the edge is all she sees,
 the skier
 pumps her poles,
 silver suit spidered with webs.

She pushes off, then down,
 and up fifty feet above the snow.
 She turns, spirals. Skis aligned,
 and head over hill,
 she spots the run below,
 plants herself upright
 in tempered crystal snow.

— Mona Clark

KITE

Oystercatchers nibble at periwinkles
 on the ruffle-pebbled middle shore.
 A girl, maybe Kate, loosens a blue kite mad into the wind.
 Defying the force of gravity with thermals, she
 tethers a boxed diamond of silk-colour to her body and
 runs below the flight and glide of its solid velocity.
 The horizon beckons for a desire to go from
 this concrete here to the ephemera of her dreams.
 This is filed into the buried memory of
 this shore, this time, this presence.

— Pearse Murray

KITE FLYING

How much, Dad,
 I used to love our forays
 to the park to fly my Chinese hawk
 kite in chill March winds when I'd
 forget about my frayed cloth jacket
 and how cold I felt as I
 raced beside you, teary
 eyes glommed onto
 the line of twine
 that ran from
 your grip straight
 up to the big
 gray hawk
 and the tail
 with gaudy
 orange
 ribbons
 trailing
 behind
 it...

— George Held

FLEDGLING

My training wheels lie in the grass
like legs. My father stands over them,
steadying the bicycle with one hand
while with the other he beckons
with a grimy finger. A Philips head
sticks in the earth beside the severed
pair. The whole scene looks like an amputation.
I will never walk again, if I can help it,
once I've learned to fly. Flying
is a little like dying and a little
like being born. I mount the bike
which wobbles slightly in my father's grip
the way the earth wobbles in the grip
of the late afternoon sun going down
behind the huddled houses. The bicycle seat
which is now a little higher than the sun,
and the handlebars which are approximately
two stars, together form my north and south poles.
My spine is the prime meridian. My nose
sticks out over the top of the hill, on top
of the world, sniffing the air for the bottom.

—Paul Hostovsky

DISTANCE

I love coming back here
to this place where I was happy,
or maybe I was unhappy
and I keep coming back because
I'm not here anymore--not
there anymore. There's a difference
between a great sorrow and a beautiful
catastrophe--beautiful for the way it
brought people together over it.

In the flying dream
I slip my fingers into the sidewalk cracks
and pull myself along, hand over hand,
reaching forward with bent elbows,
doing the crawl on dry land--
pull and recovery, pull and recovery--
scaling the earth horizontally until
suddenly I'm airborne--the sorrows
glinting in the sun, the catastrophes
dotting the backyards
like tiny swimming pools.

—Paul Hostovsky

THE EAGLE

While my body slept, I took my old self,
crumpled it up like a blotched piece of paper,
and threw it off a cliff—Talk about
an out-of-body dream! Except I was awake.

I didn't like the timorous autobiography
written in a corner by a sweaty hand.

Seventy years of trying to be what I am!
(The title of my old life's story is

Sliming Along like an Arrogant Snail.)

My new self is a bald eagle—
From its perspective, men and women
already receive all they need,

yet viciously lunge at each other's throats
for a portentous cut of imaginary cheese.
No reason to cry between earth and sky
as consciousness with eagle eyes spots

putrefied flesh—Such was my pride.
Trusting cosmos inside: "I am your body;
you are my soul. My Self is your aerie,
your self is my sole. Marry me, love."

--Thomas Dorsett

THE FAITH-BIRD IN FLIGHT

"Yea, the sparrow has found a home and the swallow a
nest for herself, where she may lay her young —
Your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, my God
— " (Psalm 84:4)

I.

Where have you gone, Faith-bird? Some people say
You've fled to islands in a distant sea
Where winter never comes, a refugee
From freezing sleet that pounds our heads each day.
My sisters cry, in fear you've flown away
For good and built your nest upon a tree
Whose fruit we'll never taste, whose sanctity
Lies far beyond the prayers our brothers pray.

I wait for you, Faith-bird, no matter what
A thousand different strangers say; I wait
For your return, though winter is a thief
That schemes to steal the feathers you forgot
Before its ice will melt and irrigate
Your orchards and your gardens of belief.

II.

Why do you fly away, Faith-bird, beyond
My grasp? Return to me, why do you fly
Past Joseph's bowing stars to touch a sky
Which only Jacob's ladder reached? How fond
You are of winds and clouds that correspond
To winds believers feel and clouds as high
As heaven's moon — is that the reason why
I cannot see the plumage you have donned?

I wait for you, Faith-bird, despite the screams
Of those who claim an arrow struck your wing,
Or that your voice is silent, mute and still.
Come perch upon the branches of my dreams,
Allowing me to listen as you sing
While building nests beside my window sill.

—Yakov Azriel

BELOW AND ABOVE

From the light we observe the Steel sheet
 That covered our enriched body
 Quiet-hard-finite-inert-dense-dead
 In the light we exceed its speed
 while dancing with each photon
 everywhere when wave
 limited to now and here when particle
 The hurricane on earth becomes fresh breeze in the light
 The trees are quiet, vibrate and sing
 Ferocious animals are not hungry and shine
 Gazelles don't fear and don't flee....
 the sky is above or below
 stained with every color
 each lie has a load of truth on it
 trying to explain the world
 while traveling divinity
 in the limitless extension of Consciousness.

—Dina Grutzendler

CLASS 1 - 1941

Miss Wheeler took a new stick of chalk
 and with a long ruler
 drew neat precise lines
 on the blackboard,
 bars between which she created
 and released a flock of white letters
 whose beautiful cursive wings
 undulated gently as they soared,
 wings that lifted me
 as I began copying them
 into my notebook,
 slowly, carefully,
 A a, B b, C c

—Rumi Morkin

SCHOOL-DAYS

We grazed our knees,
 and boxed-in, squared-off
 lawn ignored,
 the clustered girls
 dug ribs and kicked
 for scrummied ball.

The walls were gray
 and high and parried words,
 or let them trickle
 in flat swathes
 to puddle on cement.

Sometimes, those concrete words escaped;
 skipped out from textbooks,

skidded over parquet floors,
 flew out through windows,
 spun in freedom
 rising from the city's grimy air
 to float above the clouds.

While still the boxed-in lawn
 subdued the weed-words,
 masking inky roots
 that blundered,
 bursting out in wildness
 from cracks in the asphalt.

— Esther Lixenberg-Bloch

TO PRIMO LEVI

I received the letter coded in your book.
 Incomprehensible words expanded my pupil.
 The gap between us diminished.
 Your life pained all my limbs.

In India I was once burned by my love
 So our souls could continue together.
 Now if I were to walk straight, like you,
 From the balcony to the air -
 Too late. You are already dead these ten years.

"Il mio primo autore"

Tsippora - my name - was the most beautiful in your
 eyes.

If only I could be your bird,
 If only you could call me "my wing" * -
 My wolves would be sated with oats.

In determined sadness I would spray you with smiles
 Sailing entropically among love salts,
 Waiting for a solidifying shock.
 Like a chemist I would have administered my love to
 you:

In precise, clean stages,
 So that a minute difference would not set off an
 explosion.

Blood full of ancient ferments of mistresses and geishas
 Would have flooded in my veins.
 My hands, delicate clay wandering in circles
 Calming the festering boils.
 As Avishag, chosen, I would have stayed
 Between you and the cold
 Opening my store of love for you.

— Tsippy Levin Byron

* Tsipora in Hebrew means bird

NIGHT FLIGHT

(yet another homage to Paul Celan
also to Cesar Vallejo whom I was reading at the
moment)

Voice in the wings of the thorax, voice in the wings of the
clenched cerebrum, prisoner within the wings,
voice of my voice –

Tendon of pain, limbs scattering out of that one
direction –

It overturns all synonyms like a wind among walls that
have died standing up
I give it your name to play with
it flings the name away and goes loudly searching
for it in the trees made from its calling

my name it has taken and denies this

yet it has promised me battle and I live by this:

All the ungiven glances like darts in a box
all the points of silence sharpened
towards the day when I fall
vanishing and they
fall past me flaring at equinox
over the dark sowing-time
of an alien earth.

– Esther Cameron February 1970

FROM A SEQUENCE BASED ON PSALMS – FOR
PSALM 18

I
Already confident in its distress,
I found a cry inside my ears,
A cry that took my lines and nets
To cast all night along its floods of tears:
Earth shook and moved,
Potentially,
Foundations shook and were removed,
I might discover out at sea.

A wind picked up along its ancient sayings
Like thoughts or something looked upon
Immediately heard in the songs they're playing
On air this morning: a thick pavilion
Shined about
Like stanzas broken
On high, a cherub ridden out
Like messages acrostically spoken.

I wondered, should I pull a line from out
Each stanza, mend it, make another,
When at your word, and still in doubt,
My nets were broken by a force discovered
Below the straits:
A multitude
That's brought into a larger place
And gasps at its infinitude.

Imagination kindles in its room,
The cry's old voice inside its ear:
The sky behind the afternoon
Is loosed in thunder it takes me years to hear,
And underfoot
Suddenly
There's nothing but a word whose root
Is 'drop', a sky made up of sea.

II
He that flies upon the wings of the wind
Becomes a storm of ocean squalls
Deposited on streets through which I wind
My way to work, a line recalled
Glanced at, ignored,
Which once had soared,
A branch of leaves against the wall.

The street is strewn with famous phrases torn
By skies from freshly heavy trees,
My awe becomes compassionate, transformed
By sights a fallen rider sees:
Clouds, which once ranged,
Now beg for change,
Recumbent under crowds new born.

His sight shall light my candle, make me light,
And make my feet like chamois feet
To set me scraping to a rugged height,
A steep horizon's stones my street.
Enlarge my steps,
I cannot slip:
The world shall fall under my feet.

His hand teaches on high my hand to write,
My arms archaically to break
An anecdotal style that's put to flight,
To tread its neck to dust wind takes.
In him I've slept
And words have leapt
Over the words that made us great.

– Edward Clarke

VOICES AKIN TO A CROW, REVISITED

I love to hear the squawking of the crow
 that welcomes the rising sun each morning
 He hops from branch to branch at his pleasure
 The cypress tree is our shared safe haven
 The crow ignores street cats' plaintive meows,
 and my morning yawns and sighs, completely
 He does not lie to me nor flatter me
 He does not meddle with my thoughts or prayers
 He does not mock my attempts to write poetry
 He doesn't say, "Hey, that poem doesn't even rhyme!"
 Free verse is free, or at least it should be
 Like a crow squawking in the wind is free

— Brenda Appelbaum-Golani

5. Flightless

STRAD'S DREAM

from the fantasy novel *Open When You Are*

The boy sat up straight as the car pulled over to the side of the highway. "That's funny," he thought. "I was sure we still had a long way to go." He stood up and leaned his head over the front seat. "Dad, what are we stopping for? Is something wrong with the car?" His father smiled.

"It's time to enjoy ourselves," he said. "Last one out is a rotten egg!"

The boy shrugged. This sure didn't look like the beach. He watched the cars whizzing by and road-junk tumbling around in the wake of their tail wind. The air reeked of exhaust fumes. He got out of the car, and sighed. He had really thought that this time they were going to make it to the ocean.

"Why so down?" smiled his mom. "We've got a great day ahead of us. I even packed your favorite — jelly and potato chip sandwiches."

The boy stood numb as his parents spread out a blanket on the median strip, kicking away a hubcap.

"Every time! Every time this happens!" he thought angrily. "We start out for the beach, and end up on this crazy highway." He started to cry. His parents, who had begun a game of badminton, put down their rackets and came over to the tearful boy.

"Wanna play?" asked his dad. "I bet I'll beat you 1-2-3." He knew his son loved a challenge and that it could snap him out of almost any bad mood. But the boy refused.

"I don't wanna play, I don't wanna eat. I just want to go to the beach."

His parents gave each other 'that look' and shook their heads. "And where do you think you are?" asked his mom, tensely. "We just drove almost two hours to take you to this beautiful beach. Any other kid would be thrilled, and all you can do is mope and pout?" His parents seemed so sure. Maybe he really was just being a spoilsport, maybe he should...No, he thought. Not this time! He wasn't going to fall for it. He wouldn't go along.

The boy pulled himself up as tall as he could. "But Mom, Dad," he said, pointing, "Can't you see that this isn't a beach? A beach has water, and birds, and sand. This is just an old highway, not even a rest area..." His dad was turning redder and redder as the boy spoke.

"Listen," his dad said through clenched teeth. "That's quite enough of this little game of yours. Wherever we take you, it's the same old song. 'I wanna go to the beach...I wanna go to the beach.' Your mother and I took a whole day off in the middle of a busy week, to bring you to the best beach on the whole coast, and you just start up again right away! Look around. Look at all the people. Do you really think they would be sitting around on blankets, in bathing suits, if this wasn't a beach?!"

The boy couldn't deny it. Since they'd parked their car, a bunch of other cars had also pulled up. Kids were running around in bathing suits. A dog was chasing a Frisbee. The boy smelled roasting hot-dogs amidst the exhaust fumes of the passing traffic. He looked back at his parents, whose eyes were almost pleading with him. One thing was clear — they sure thought they were at the beach, and so did all the others. The boy sighed, and once again, like every time, decided to keep quiet.

"Okay Dad," he said. "I see what you mean. Are there any sandwiches left?" The tension broke, and his parents seemed so relieved.

The boy ate halfheartedly and even threw a football around for a while with the kid from the next blanket. But then, a little while later, as the boy walked over to the car to get his mom a magazine, he smelled something strange. He thought maybe it was some kind of fruit, or a lady's perfume. It was a smell he knew, but from where?

Then the boy closed his eyes, and swooned. The Ocean!! It had been so long, but now it was like he was right there! Everything felt so blue, and warm, and wavy, and clear. He opened his eyes, and there was an old woman standing in front of him. "Grandma?"

She smiled, then cried, then smiled again. "Come, we're going home." Home? He wanted to go to the beach! The woman read his thoughts and laughed, "We are going to the ocean; we're going home!" They started walking and the boy felt happier than he'd ever felt before. Then a hand grabbed his shoulder from behind and tugged him hard.

"You know the rules! No running off by yourself!" His dad said, pointing to his mom who was shading herself under a traffic light. "Come, your mother and I are ready to leave, but if you behave in the car, we can come back next week."

"But Dad," the boy squirmed out of his father's grip and turned around. For sure Grandma would tell him, she'd explain everything, how they all really...but she disappeared.

— Ben Ackerman

FLIGHT

Birds
during Porter Ranch Aliso Canyon Gas Leak Blowout
took flight two years ago or they died.

Precious singing Mockingbirds
never returned.
Magnificent symphonies stilled.
My heart broken.

Greeting each day,
facing East on high hillside
they perched on fence or
atop twigs of prickly pyracantha.

Hummingbirds nearby
sat quietly alert on tallest thin branch of my big mama fig
tree.

Easy to view when winter's winds tear away fig leaves.
On guard duty, turning their heads
Hummer's bodies glistened in the sun
as they listened to sweet songs from their friends.

Every early morning from sunrise with camera in hand
I captured their golden and awesome iridescent breasts
and recorded their song.

I miss them so; I look up and they are not there.
My beloved companions remain deep in my heart,
my Hummers and Mockingbirds.

—Joy Krauthammer

THREE FLIGHTLESS POEMS

1) Killing Ourselves in Our Sleep

I would like you to be awake.
Awake enough to see in truth the horror
and the consequences of our mistake.
But I fear that you are not.

I would like you to burn;
to burn with a passion to earn
redemption from the sins of your parents.
I would like you to reach out for the truth,
for the light of reality and to struggle
with the ardour of ennobled youth
for a new way, a new path,
free from the shadow of greed.

I would like you to be consumed with hunger;
hunger for a chance to breathe clean air,
or to fish in oceans teeming with life

and free from the poisonous flux of plastic residue;
or to see the resplendent and subtle beauty
of Nature in all its multitude of varied forms.
But I fear you do not hunger for these blessings.
I fear you have grown accustomed to the smell
and the ugliness of the garbage dump
you have made of this world;
and I fear that you have forgotten the beauty of beauty.

I would like you to be awoken,
for you to be dragged from your slumber with a scream,
by the magic of hearing my words softly spoken
in the midst of your deepest dream.
I would like my words to cast this magic like lightning
into the shadowed caverns of your sleeping soul
so that the ghastly truth of our existence
sings in your memory forever.

I would like you to be awake,
but I fear you are not,
and it makes me weep,
because I dreamt ---
that we're killing ourselves in our sleep.

2) Learning to Care

The ancient graveyards we have learned to raid,
the rotted bodies we choose to exhume,
have brought us now to an uncertain doom,
where all our usages seem to degrade.

I'd like to say that we were unaware,
but in truth I fear we never learned to care.
Our lives were easy, we were fat and rich,
we pandered to our every slightest itch.

We rejected all we had not learned to measure
and took no thought for anything but pleasure.
We used our minds to darken our own eyes,
then raped the world and named ourselves as wise.

What does it take to make you use your eyes
and see the truth that all your greed denies,
there is no future --- in the abhorrency
of a dark, polluted, plastic-poisoned sea?

What does it take to make you understand
there is no pleasure in a poisoned land,
no sweetness in the scent of poisoned air?
What does it take to make you stop and care?

I'd like to say that you were unaware,
that You had not been told by wiser minds,
how quickly Nature's sacred tapestry unwinds,
but in truth I fear you never learned to care.

I am writing this letter now, writing it with care,
here where I live in the Mountains of Despair,
to you, this planet's most inspired child,
living, as you do, --- in the lands of Heaven Defiled.

3) Oceans of Grief

Not plastic again for tea Mama,
not plastic again the young bird cried.
Plastic that floats on the sea so far.
Last night I dreamed that my body died
so full of the gifts that you brought to me;
plastic junk from the plastic sea.

Oh I do like shrimp, and I dream of fish
for these are the heart of a sea bird's wish.
But all this plastic from your crops
it fills me up, but you surely know
that a diet of sea-washed bottle tops
won't help me live or make me grow.

With my plastic tea from the plastic sea
I fear for what's in store for me.
I cannot run and I cannot fly
like an albatross should in the clear blue sky.
Here in the nest where I chanced to hatch
I'll die of the plastic my parents catch.

Oh, not plastic again for lunch Mama,
that floats and floats on the sea so far.
Not plastic again the young bird cried,
just now I dreamed that my body died
and fell apart here on the strand
while my spirit flew to a distant land

—Gordon Ramel

HOPE

unrolls its blueprints
on the wide table of the human heart,

counts the rooms that
let in dawn's light,

builds a house
to stand up to storms,

adds a roof –
where birds learn

to fly.

— Cynthia Weber Nankee

III. The Song of the Land

ON THE WINGS OF SERACH'S SONG

For fear the shock would break
Jacob's already broken heart beyond repair,
for his heart, so heavy with despair
could no longer leap for joy,
his brothers did not dare approach their father,
and so again, but this time with love, they conspired,
about how to convey the news
that Joseph was alive.

It was decided, Serach, Asher's daughter,
would sit outside Jacob's tent and with her harp
weave Joseph's story into a melody.
Her sweet voice, which charmed the dove from its nest,
and the bees from their hive
would prepare him gently.
For O the bitter irony if he should die
without seeing his precious Joseph,
the boy whose dreams were prophecy.

At first Jacob was overcome with disbelief.
Joseph in Egypt, the Pharaoh's Viceroy,
revered far and wide and crowned with glory.
for the plan he devised so Egypt would survive.
"Oh grandfather," she sang with all her heart and soul,
her voice becoming bold, her nimble fingers on the strings,
until he was slowly unburdened of his grief.
"Your beloved son Joseph, the dreamer, is alive.
The boy is now a man before whom all the world bows down."
And Jacob listened till her words rang true, and his heart
revived.

On the last note his sons broke the news
and confirmed that what he heard was not a fantasy,
that soon Joseph would arrive and lead his family,
seventy souls and all that was theirs,
with pomp and ceremony to Goshen where they would
sojourn
for many years until the Exodus.
And on the wings of Serach's song, the Shechinah,
who could not abide with Jacob's tears,
but who delights in bliss, could again dwell in Jacob's
breast.

We are told that for this kindness Serach was blessed
to live for centuries, that after many years, beneath the
stars
beside the endless desert dunes, she calmed her people's
fears,
and with her melodies restored their memories of God's
promises.
We are told that for her kindness, Serach never died,
but with her harp entered Eden like the girl she was.

Sometimes when a soft, sweet wind
sings over the hills of Jerusalem, it's as if in Eden
she is playing still and we are given just a taste
of what awaits us at the end of days.
I cannot help but dream her song will fill our ears
and soothe our hearts from the terrors we have yet to know
and comfort us before Mashiach comes.

— Roberta Chester

CLIFFORDS TOWER

In 1190 no bells clanged when,
unprotected by a Christian or a Hebrew God,
York's Jews huddled, needing a miracle
to save them from a mob.

Today pilgrims carry wooden crosses
through its narrow streets. A chatty English woman
guides me past teashops to the top
of the medieval wall, a municipal walkway now.

"Not one of our proudest moments,"
she says. A flag shakes over this parapet
like the prayer shawl of the rabbi
who killed his flock, then leaped from the tower.

When I walk to my car, York Minster's bells ring out.

— Carole Stone

MARC CHAGALL'S *I AND THE VILLAGE*, 1911

I paint my father,
flail on his shoulder,
walking uphill toward my mother,

her hands outstretched,
as she dances upside down.
I put a woman inside a cow,

milking it, add a blue sky
and a goose down cloud.
Then the town church, cross on top,

and another cross on a necklace
worn around the neck
of the big green face.

His finger-nailed hand holds
a grape cluster like those in our garden.
As if I could stop
the annihilation to come,
with my canvas,
I keep Vitebsk in my heart.

— Carole Stone

STAR OF DAVID'S DOME

Tiffany stained glass ceiling window,
Ezekiel wheel,
dominates the Free Synagogue of Flushing, Queens.

Ceiling stain glass emits
A burst of auspicious rays of Life,
blue, yellow, green, white.

Star of David gleams gracious golden light.
The night is a day.
Day silently glows dignified holy bright.

Breathe life into this congregation.
Guard this sacred site.

— Vincent J. Tomeo

THE OLD COUNTRY

Jacob told his wives about the "Old Country" —
*I left my parents there, he said,
in the land engraved upon my father's heart,
the land where the songs of angels echoed,
a land kissed by Heaven.*
His sigh brimmed with yearning.
*This is the Land, he told them,
to which I must return.*

Naomi told Ruth about the "Old Country" —
*it was good before the famine, she said,
There, we had community;
there, our prayers could gather
rise and enter Heaven.* She sighed.
Her sigh surged from the depths of her soul.
*What have I here, she shrugged.
To my home-town I must return.*

Mordecai told Esther about the "Old Country" —
*there, in the land of miracles, I saw
rays from the windows of the House
that bathed Jerusalem in light.*
He heaved a heavy sigh
that welled from the recesses of his heart.
*This is the place, he told her,
to which I dream to return.*

And now, with our return, the Old Country is renewed
and Jerusalem is again bathed in light,
the unique light that shines from Jerusalem
and spreads forth to the four corners of the world.

— Ruth Fogelman

A GARDEN IN JERUSALEM

There

In the States,
 gardening was relegated to yard boys.
 Perennials planted by previous owners
 came and went
 admired or ignored.
 I did no planting
 except in a dream.

Every year in early spring,
 past fear of frost,
 when the ground is soft
 I dream I start a garden.
 I dream of desire with no hesitation.
 I am not belated.
 One season follows another
 with no chaotic rupture.
 No illness. No Death.
 Unafraid to risk,
 I reach into the dark loam
 and leave a seed,
 confident of growth.

Here

My smallest yard,
 a ten-by-twelve walled enclosure
 pulls me with the force of its gravity.
 Now it is a catch-all for debris that blows in on the hot wind.

Drought marks our first three years.
 The earth is deeply cracked in odd formations.
 I peer at it to decipher a strange calligraphy,
 to detect signs for a new life.

I observe the landscape for hours.
 I wait for time to burn familiarity in me.
 I search for the flag on the map that says:
 you are here

Before me stretch the Judean Hills.
 Slopes interlock like shoulders in dance.
 In the distance a donkey brays.
 Wood smoke rises against the pale dawn.

Light

With the passion of an immigrant,
 I study my position in every light.
 Early morning sunlight dapples the floor of pine forests.
 At noon, the sun is so strong no secret survives.
 Later, light mingles with dusk
 at the instant named between-the-suns,
 at the last minute for afternoon prayer.

Finally, sun pours salt on a horizon
 that loosens its contours in sleep.

Rain

Afternoons, the sky changes.
 Winds rise.
 Clouds gather and move.
 Do I smell rain,
 or do I extract the smell of rain from cloud memory?
 Every day, my olfactory illusion bursts.
 Clouds dissipate.
 No rain.

One night I dream it rains.
 The land receives it like a kiss from an ancient mother.
 Hills zoom into view.
 Glistening bones rise from under the earth's surface.
 They dot the horizon,
 give new shape to its relief.

Earth

I move among the bounty of traces.
 I divine history from skeletal hints.
 Vestiges weave back into the sacred text: "These dry bones...
 breathe life into them...and I will set them upon their land..."

The land bursts with the molecular makeup of memory.
 Every particle of earth is encoded with the stories of
 ancestors.
 I share in their epic arrival.
 I arrive in my longing.
 I am here.
 I am no longer there
 wishing I were here.

I will plant a garden,
 its heart and its borders,
 pungent herbs and fragrant blossoms.

Fire

First, I stack the refuse
 and set fire to it.
 At this make-shift altar,
 I risk myself.
 Old scars fall away.
 Doubts burn off.

I wave my hands over the flames.
 Idiomatic sparks scatter in seventy directions
 I reach out to catch them.

— Judy Belsky

BETWEEN THE TIMES*

Between the times
the sounds of the house of study are muted
the pages of the books are subdued
the holy volumes are closed
With eager steps
the students go out
to the fields of freedom

At night
there is no light in the house of study
the majestic building
is not illuminated
in the darkness it melts
into particles of energy
tiny
invisible

Between the times
is the time
to read between the letters
between the lines
between the books
beyond the words

A time of quiet
The house of study listens
internalizes
The letters of the Torah
hover wordless
new insights are born
between the chinks from within the walls
the rush of doves' wings hovers
is heard in the hall
as if to revive the voices
heard constantly in the house of study

No one enters no one leaves
the still small voice is heard

The lofty melody of Sabbath eve
before the rabbi's sermon
which rises and raises
souls on high
sounds without sound
scatters and is absorbed in the walls

At the time of redemption
surrounding light -- holiness
wrapped in a pure aura
from within the holy ark
A perfect Torah will be heard
toward a repaired world
a world of wonder

of fresh-flowing springs
from beyond time and the times

—Nurit Gazit
translation: EC

*"Between the Times" is the yeshiva way of saying
"between semesters."

ROCK SPEAKS TO JACOB

There is a haven in me a cleft
where solitude hides and waits for want

and when it calls — it's not
a siren song its voice is longing

and for that sheltered offering for you
some rocks will split other rocks

with their shaved edges or with their spite
shift the ridge you thought stable

some kicked loose by the recklessness of water
are flung between planets come home

honed and hallowed like prodigal children
some sift down to embers stay hot for eons

hold old disturbances then whisper by whisper
they climb back over themselves

until they cover the sun
so Jacob lay down your head

on this pillow of shale it will give you to sleep
and though when you wake

the stone is a stone the mountain has forsaken

and water has drowned the sand
your dream will last ten thousand thousand years

—Florence Weinberger

POEMS FROM MEITARIM

In the summer of 2017 an exhibition of art and poetry was held in Meitarim, in the hills south of Hevron, in memory of Michael Mark hy"d, murdered in a drive-by shooting on July 1, 2016. Following are some of the poems included (all originally in Hebrew, translations EC).

SEDER NIGHT 2017

You are not here
 everything says so
 I washed the house
 with tears and grief
 I polished the dishes
 with the light that is missing
 you are not here
 everything is silent about it
 The holiday called to you
 I opened a door
 for the sea was already split
 and the heart torn
 and we counted four four
 winds of heaven
 and pangs of birth
 everything is set up and ready
 only death
 knocks on the door
 again and again
 and refuses to sit down
 at the seder
 —Shira Mark-Harif

THE OUTCAST HEART

If the world had an ear it would hear
 a call of heroism a call of praise

a lament

would descend
 to touch the heart

if it had a heart and its eye
 if it had an eye would fill with tears
 and grow clear enough to see
 to envision the image of a man still visible in the crater
 he left behind and his absence is still fruitful

and this image would radiate to the brain
 if it had a brain
 and the brain would signal
 to the heart not to grow faint
 to the back not to bend

to the hands to fight and build fences
 lest evil flood the world

meanwhile
 the hole of the outcast heart
 cries out to heaven

— Esther Cameron

ORPHAN SONG

A song in my mouth and it is
 the song of an orphan
 hurting and missing
 it will not be sung to the end

A tear on my cheek
 trickles silently
 and from it is seen
 the destruction of the world

Eyes lowered
 in pain and sadness
 how beloved souls
 are lost to them

Two graves
 dug in blood
 crowned with radiance
 and eternal beauty

Mountains of Judea
 and mountains of Samaria
 hush a last song
 for rain and dew

for upon you is the blood of my dead
 of the faithful of the lovely Land
 and your song will be magnified and sanctified
 when I bring my slain into your earth

— Yehuda Peretz

ORPHAN, REED AND CEDAR

Go
 to the craftsman,
 orphan,
 behold his wrath
 and be calm.
 Look at him
 from below,
 softness,
 and submit.
 Come and go with the winds
 of the storm,
 breathe their breath,
 be happy in your happiness,
 peel off some of your rudeness

and be still.
 This was his will
 and you are faced with it.
 Cut
 a reed for your pen,
 stand and gather
 the letters that flew off in the wind of the burning
 and write yourself a new Torah,
 one that redeems.
 — Yuval Maman

EVEN IF I WALK

Even when I walk
 between green fields
 among red poppies in bloom

I feel your chains

Even if I run free on the shore
 gaze at the infinite horizon
 I feel your fetters

From a stolen glance at you
 through the barred window
 I know your secrets

The bars go with me
 by night, by day,
 knotted around my neck
 like a scarf of suffering

opaque partitions
 towers and walls
 you built with the labor of your hands
 to keep your loved ones at a distance

and you abandoned me from your narrow world
 which is confusing and hidden

even when I walk
 between waves
 between high tide and low tide

I will try to release myself
 from slavery to freedom.
 — Nurit Gazit

[6668] THE SONG OF THE LAND

We submit that the world is kind
 as it surges forth the song of the Land.
 It is there for those who have the sense
 to heed her call.
 — Hayim Abramson

IV. Neighbors

I think most folks are as they seem,
 But not completely so,
 For each heart bears its secret pain
 No other heart can know.
 And likewise all our differences
 Which set us all apart,
 Would disappear if but we knew
 To search each other's heart.

—Eric Chevlen

SPHERES

We are but at the surface of a sphere.
 And each sphere has a center. If we can
 but reach ours, and I pray that every man
 and woman shall, we suddenly appear
 more centered, more full, less superficial.
 Some might say "full of our self." When a po-
 et or the Dalai Lama does it, though,
 who hears? The reason's mathematical:

his center's far from his circumference, so
 he's at least twice as far from ours, right? Oh,
 my surface friend. Whatever surface we
 tread, with its growths and physicality,
 ephemera of values and things made,
 pecuniary portions drawn and cashed,
 like cankers that infect, possess and fade,
 or paradises tended, shared and trashed,

the spheres we are, the sphere in which we live —
 they're not the earth, merely, the physical,
 but metaphysical. Like heart, or soul,
 which we don't have until we've learned to give
 away. Not those of plane geometry,
 but metaphorical spheres. If you are
 a superficial creature, though, like me,
 there's understanding from the metaphor:

let's say concentric spheres, then, where the cen-
 ter of one's the same as the one of All,
 our sizes, different — say, our dimen-
 sions — as cities, as lives. But when the Dal-
 ai lama speaks, it's from the heart of — you.

And now and then a poet does this, too.

—James B. Nicola

FUTILITY

He points to the wind: spitting.
 He blames the leaves, that they're
 turned against the green-veined
 sun. He screams against the howls,
 the paper-dry crunch, the tears.
 Yet, at every scream, the wind
 whips away his voice. The leaves
 crumble at the slightest touch. The
 sun still shines, exhaling fire.

— Alana Schwartz

THE DEER AT THE EDGE OF THE FOREST

You must change your life.
 — Rainer Maria Rilke

The deer stood at the edge of the forest
 and was miserable. He felt there was no point
 in anything, like he might as well give up.
 I walk around here, day in and day out,
 the deer thought, and there's no one who sees me.
 Am I invisible, or what? He didn't think so.

I walk around here and could change people's
 lives if they could see me, but no one
 sees me. Here I am, a hart, and no one cares.
 The whole point is that I am supposed to be difficult
 to see, I know that, I am supposed to roam
 around in a forest and not be seen. But it's

the very premise of my life that is now making me
 miserable. I want to be seen. So here I am
 at the edge of the forest. I am open to being seen,
 to being shot. If someone doesn't see me soon,
 I'm going to do something drastic, I mean it.
 Right now it feels like I'm trapped in deerness.

Oh, I would love to change everything,
 be someone else, something completely different.

--Constance Rowell Mastores

BEGINNINGS

Already they are here, small
 strangers now in strange soil
 gripping their bags of clothes
 and trinkets snatched from
 what the gunfire brought
 or the bombs falling from
 sunlight like wingless birds.

Already we begin the rites of words
 across a dozen dialects from places
 never seen but heard.
 Not a one over ten. Not a one
 with eyes that see clearly into
 us as though the past has faded
 into present and that sufficient.

Already we begin to see ourselves
 as strangers offering home to
 these children who have outgrown
 us by the length of their lives.
 We ask for smiles seeing mostly
 frowns on these faces carved
 from distances dwarfing the
 miles they have traveled.

Already they are buried in
 their years, ashes and blood
 the walls they may may not
 ascend in frailty of whatever
 futures.

Already we will begin the
 testings of love, how far
 it will teach, how much
 of it we can call out
 from our own pale
 texts, uncertain
 still unwritten.

— Doug Bolling

RANDOM CHOICES

A set of random numbers is defined
 As only those we never had in mind
 To choose to be a member of the set.
 Remember: these are numbers we forget.
 But if it's true, as truly it was said,
 That God counts every hair on every head,
 And keeps in mind our merits and our sins,
 And knows how many angels dance on pins,
 Then He alone cannot by chance select,
 And equally cannot by chance reject.
 He must have reason sure for every choice
 Of who will grieve and when, and who rejoice.
 And if His choice confounds our hope and thought,
 Perhaps we once knew why — but since forgot.

— Eric Chevlen

IV. Webs of Memory

HOMESICK

when
it
hits

it's like a thunder clap from nowhere,

intense
strong
booming,

it pounds you into a hole you knew nothing about.

* * *

Dvorak left Bohemia;

homesick in a new world, he went west

to visit transplanted countrymen, found

motifs
melodies
tears

to tuck in his symphony about going home.

— Mona Clark

CAMPUS

The stone walls, in the gothic evening gloam,
glow; I can see they've been blast-cleaned. The chairs
in downstairs lounges have become bright foam.
The dining hall has added an upstairs.
In the common room, our leather tufted Ches-
terfield's—a sectional! My Steinway grand
is now a spinet Yamaha; I guess
they wanted room for auditors to stand.

Outside, I look up at a certain win-
dow, fourth floor, south side. How I used to try
not to look up and see if he was in,
his bedlamp on, whenever I passed by.
Transfixed, I shudder but cannot move on.
I slap my face. Twice. Then I blink my eyes
in hopes that those semesters will be gone
again. Before they are, I realize

that I am looking at the wrong window,
that this is not that courtyard! In the glow
I was confused. But do I look for it
a thousandth time to see if it is lit

tonight, years after? No, surprisingly:
For you, with friendly ghosts' emerging faces—
such brightness from such darkness—usher me
to happier-haunted half-familiar places.

— James B. Nicola

[untitled]

When I look back
I see the fires we built strewn along the edge of the coast
Embers leave enough light to read by

Salt spray whipped our cheeks
And tangled our hair into wild snakes

Young poets, we thought we invented coast, the stars
Drunk on the whiskey of wood smoke and sea tang
We were word artists
But we missed the foreground
We trampled old footsteps
Smashed the heart beat out of their leavings
As they carved paths through the forest
That rings beyond the sea.

Now I hear it all
Manic images
rush out of the flames: a composition layered by a
desperate artist

Who has only one canvas left
I am determined to cipher the language
Created from worlds that bleed through each other

we stand in the force of the waves
Struggling for balance
Each of us holds a few lines
In a lost manuscript
Stretched out at the ocean's edge
We bind a book with our bodies

Through the din
I hear:
Love
Loneliness
Belonging
Cosmos

I offer this patchwork prayer
On the altar of old arrogance

— Judy Belsky

THE WEB OF MEMORY

The web of memory is a blue-green tulle studded by glass.
It holds my grandmother
more gently than a spider's
eggs as she greets me
decades after the death,
consoling.

Like a bride, I am enveloped
in layers of foamy cloth,
a sea of hope catching
every shade of rainbow
in its shards.

I swim toward the past
healing my niece
along the way,
rescuing my mother
from the war that
swallowed her youth.

I am not walking
to the chuppa alone:
All my kin are humming
an ancient melody
they forgot to teach me.
Never mind, this is not
the time to learn
new songs.

I need to cry.
All my mistakes
lie before me, all my losses
throb like an aching tooth
while I float forward,
bedecked in blue-green
tulle studded with glass.

— Vera Schwarcz

MY MOTHER'S HOUSE

My mother's house is gone from here
where I stand not the exact spot which I don't know
was never told I never asked

but somehow have the village name
which is hard to say after some syllables
got sheared across borders past Hungary's eastern edge

became Ukraine the language so roughened the burghers
broke pens
to spell it broke teeth to say it
chained their leaders changed their dances

though paprika and cabbages still reigned
I'm sure it was near these falling-down hovels she
said
wedged low in front of a green tall mountain

beside a small river, really a stream so cold
it kept meat fresh from winter to summer.
I can hardly breathe. Why this joy when she is long
dead?

This marveling. I know something I never knew before
and still don't.
But I am here, and whatever of her she left before she left,

that child, those sisters,
the brother that went off to war and came home
addled, the orphan she became, that barefoot life,

what it is to live in snow and planting seasons,
what it is to dig into the earth, milk a cow,
fear soldiers on horses,

drunken neighbors with mouths full of curses,
that's still here, I feel it, her fear,
I feel her here.

— Florence Weinberger

[untitled]

Again your shadow loose in the attic
as if more light could help
coming for old letters, broken frames

not sure what was torn apart
has healed by now, hidden
as sharp corners though you

still expect the some days
to climb alongside and the height
save them –it's storage work

later work –Esther and you
on a pony that almost remembers the dust
it carried all the way down.

—Simon Perchik

HEIRLOOMS

In her old age my mother
started passing out the heirlooms

with the items we claimed placed
in their sacred niche glowing

under the spotlight of our wonder
a slight haze of anxiety

settling around each one

—Mark Rhoads

THE VESTIBULE OF HEAVEN

My mother stood as tall as her body
would let her, pushing down on her cane
lifting her head above the flood of disquiet,
stepping up to a higher plain, the solid ground
striding past the sentry at the gates of grief
past the memorials to failure entering
into sovereign treaty with the unknown
gods seated in garish niches along her path
Finally

she said to us I want to die
with an I'm-going-to-peel-potatoes tone
It was as though she had taken her seat
in the vestibule of heaven
her wrinkled hands folded in her lap

—Mark Rhoads

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

We begin our late afternoon stroll;
approach the wisteria that twines
about the arbor in full bloom. I marvel
at its scent, its beauty, and want to linger.
She continues down the gravel path.

A young buck, horns covered
in new velvet, steps its delicate way
across the lawn. I whisper his presence
in her ear. A quick look, a quick
dismissal, her mind in latent flight.

I stay my passage; watch the way
he lifts his antlered head to feed
upon the leaves of weeping cherry,
flowers shed just weeks ago.
There falls a final shadow on the day.

I am so alone. What once we
shared — that stillness overwhelmed
by sense and pleasure — is on the brink
of an ending. I, too, like the faintest
wind, begin to shift and slip away.

—Constance Rowell Mastores

THE EVENING RITUAL:

to my mother

down the purpled carpets
past the potted palms
and wicker chairs
we shuffle, bodies bent,
with eyes that yearn
to see our dead.

a few more empty places
at the tables.
those who stumble back
into the past
no longer dine with us.
yet we who still remember
find scant solace
in the shrimp bisque
or the quiche.

after pecan pie,
the last aide gone,
we huddle in our beds
untouched,
embraced by night alone

though memory transports us
to the threshold
of those little worlds once ours,
we cannot yet cross over
to the faces, voices, dreams
always beyond our reach.

stranded on the dry shore
of the present,
we sense the gray mist drawing near
and pull the covers tighter.

— Michele Levy

LOST BROTHER SEARCH

Hours vanish across the horizon
making day again.
Last night it rained and we
traveled the distant country
of ourselves
searching for John, that
missing part of us,
the best no doubt.

What is it to witness the road
running always behind taking away
the best blood of us,
the quick words that told
us ourselves better than
we could.

We who lived within your
promises of laughter and the
good place,
brother alive and offering
his arms and history
to each of us whatever
needed.

How is it this world spreading
the obscene myth of early death,
telling of the breaking apart
of words in the mind
the spirit.

We refuse to believe that.
We choose faith over
dearth of such acceptance
keeping the search going
where gravestone and shroud
don't follow.

Words making of flattened sky
and newly dug soil not loss
but the necessary voice.

— Doug Bolling

TAKING LEAVE

Ocean mounts its long surge below

a moon's passion of wave

of long distance mating,

miracle of motion, perdurance,

past and present merging and not

I have witnessed you Alyssa

you in your searchings your knowings of

spaces of times

a plenitude

You have become my horizon

here where tide and memory carry me

outward

I have seen you make poems from the sea

have attended as you unworded me piece by piece

all the broken nouns the flown apart
grammars

love is this you saying

an opening to all the silences

the hiddenness where once

a fever ruled

and now you are gone into the sea forever

and now I stand on the edge of shore

and wave as if to choose

one or the other.

— Doug Bolling

[untitled]

Refael
healing angel

our first child --
may his memory be a blessing --

lived nine lunar and solar weeks
and two days

wonder and loss
beginnings and endlessness

only God seeing the whole horizon.

— Felice Miryam Kahn Zisken

FOUND DREAMS

in a container by the doorway
I find dreams
on my way back from a year of grief.
my real self
unburied under shelves of lives
I find the teenager yearning, not understanding
the yuppie mother with the best behaved children,
outspoken, confident.

handles to drawers unopened,
old scraps past their sell-by date
Delete
Return
Delete
one drawer at a time
I defy these doors and layers
I keep that container open
my dreams unfolded
waving like signal flags
do not hide me away again
I hold them tight

— Mindy Aber Barad

DANSE LÉGÈRE

Come on, you ghosts,
you pallid faces — you, who without
pity come dripping in your hair
from sleep — come on, pop me one,
smack on the kisser, dare to make me
believe. Haunt me in the hallways
with your fluttering, see-through vision,
tap me on the shoulder, whisper
in my ear the beauty of innuendos...
Yes, thank you, thank you very much.
That will help to mend
the cleavage between earth and heaven.
Now twirl me around as if you loved me —
that's it — nice and slow.
Do that cute little dip you taught me once.
Dance with me. Then let go.

— Constance Rowell Mastores

VI. *More than Music*

from LIFE AND OPINIONS OF DOCTOR BOP, THE
BURNT-OUT PROF

A poem is a posit, an assertion, an act,
and in action we forget fear: respite
in creation, the maker takes a stand, in making,
but is it a stand no better than gimmick-makers make?
Well, poetry possesses the virtue of being a record,
at least, and you can date a poem, if you wish,
thus giving it the merit of a worldly fact
contained in a system of time, which, admittedly,
is a system which is perhaps pseudo-fact itself,
or will become so as matter completes its withdrawal
upon itself to revisit its beginnings in a black hole in
space;
and yet, until then, something like a fact,
a fact in the sense that Sherlock Holmes is almost real
and lives in Baker Street in a fictional series
in a real world that may exist only in a dream
that is being dreamed elsewhere, perhaps — dare I say —
by Der Abishter; and so poetry becomes an actual little
stab
and, poets hope, rip in the black sheet
that covers the deserted, haunted mansion.

— E.M. Schorb

DEFENCE OF A DREAMER

I

He collects these splinters, these little bits
Of guessed-at wisdom and whispered clues; but,

He will tell you, even a paper-cut
Can bear witness: that time is a prism

And history is an old cloth that splits
Like a laugh at the seams. He woos these glints

And waits, for this pent-up present to spill
Its brim, the veins of this moment to fill

With a more-than-music, half-remembered
Half-anticipated, attuned to dreams.

You call him a fool and a fantasist,
Say that he broods too much, this alchemist

Of illusion, that torpor soon ensues
And the tail-end of longing will get him.

II

Sure, he may go down dour and deflated,
That melody he moved his marrow to

Dammed-up or dissipated; and he may,
If the cold lips of long nights beset him,

Grow lukewarm, and lose the love that rises;
But, if he courts such crises, just let him:

Let him sculpt his blade, trade his skin for stone;
If he wills, let him wear his waiting thin,

Let him whittle his dream-stuff to the bone --
He may stir some late light from these cinders,

Chip some tinder from his brain's abstractions:
He may coax these feathered hints into flight

Full of true desire: may strike fire
From the flint of these figments and fractions.

— Daniel Gustafson

MY PEN-NAME

In London, many years ago,
When in my early teens,
Too young to think what lay ahead
Or wonder what life means,

My mother told me of a dream
In which she garnered fame:
A celebrated authoress,
Her books proclaimed her name.

She toured the country, lectures, workshops,
Entourage in tow,
The media extolled her work
Her future was aglow.

Her name was Rumi Morkin,
And she reveled in acclaim,
Until she woke, her dream dissolved,
Left only with the name.

She'd cut and joined up all our names,
Not difficult to see:
My sister Ruth was there as 'Ru-'
And then came '-mi' for me;

My father's name was Morris
Shortened in the dream to 'Mor-'
Our surname, Retkin, added '-kin'
We're in her dream – all four.

I loved this explanation, vowing
If I write one day,
To use her dream name as my own,
And let that memory stay.

— Miriam Webber

ARTEFACT

Silence. The moving facets of the stream
contemplated for irony.

I would not have it said
I spun this, grey on silver,
out of mere
self. Rather

a hemisphere, open, a bowl
or cup, with twig
and leaf, twin
and tendril – some fraction
of the dissolving forest.

— Esther Cameron
1966

PACKING THE POET'S SUITCASE

L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux.
--Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Know where you're going.
(Inklings will do in
a pinch.)

Include only accessories
that provide reasons to
wake up in the
morning.

Expect detours for
which you are bound to
be unprepared.

Bring abundant currency;
don't expect to understand
the exchange rate.
Become a neophyte:
famished, disoriented,
urgent.

Before you depart, forget
everything you ever
learned about the
language.

— Catherine Wald

FIRST LINE

In the end of days what you need is a good first line.
To distract you from the truth with its own truth.
The way pain can sometimes distract from pain.
The way beauty can sometimes distract from pain.
The way a good bedtime story can light up the dark
side of an entire planet, given a little room
with a bed in the corner, a few right words, a child
listening. In the end of days what you need is a good
beginning. Something hopeful and trembling like a
tongue.

Something open and unselfconscious like a mouth,
listening to the words, and the music of the words.
Something steeply rocking like a ship, or a sleep, heavy,
floating, viable, smelling of saltwater and infinite
possibility.

— Paul Hostovsky

VII. Night and Day

STAR SET

The stars set every dawn. Save when the night
is overcast — but who is haunted by
a starless sky? Not I. It is starlight
that keeps one up all night, having to write,
or pose, at least, with pen in hand, to try
to write. Starlight's like love that way. And I

am always smitten — by the stars, at least.
Of course you see me coping during day-
light hours, but don't conclude that I don't care
for stars, or you. I act because I must:
as pens unpoised will still have much to say,
and stars at noon, invisible, are there.

The star that's the exception is the sun.
Like true love, I suppose, there is but one.

— James B. Nicola

THE STARS ARE HIGH

I guess the stars are high
But I can't see them any more
I saw them once in the field though
When I was my own ancestor

And I am comfortable
In my underground cave
Beneath the city and the tree
With no need yet to be brave.

Before I see the stars again
I must polish my glasses
Here with the glint of the quartz
Amidst the crevasses.

For all of the stars are crying
Here underground
And one day I will hear them sing
Without any sound.

--Yaacov David Shulman

GRAY 2

Another reason I don't mind the gray
so much is that experience has proved
gray is a mixture of the dark and light,

not the absence of either. This is true
with gray skies as it is with me and you.

And when the gray's dissolved into a day,
the blue seems all the brighter, and I'm moved.
When, rather, it is stirred into a night,

the million trillion sequins in the skies
invite me, like the glimmer in your eyes.

—James B. Nicola

SWEET DREAMS

Near naps unmap, these shores unmoor: transformed
into quondam amphibian, I slip and slide and wade in
this wildest of territories, this beach between sleep and
waking. Sometimes thoughtoids graze on unfurling
fronds, laid back, lazy. Words scamper solitary on the
dunes of the mind, playing alone before they get serious
and become the dialogues of dreams. *Surely there aren't
eleven six-toed kittens and an adolescent dragon in our
bedroom, I must be falling asleep,* I'm sentient and sensible
enough to murmur to myself. Before beginning to feed
the creatures my fingertips. For nightmares are kenneled
on these borderlands too: their fragments uncage, not
curled but coiled, goblins in training to be demons. My
plotting sandman gets by the liveried doormen of the
sandcastle by pretending to deliver nutritious Chinese
food rather than spoiled and spoiling dreams, but I
discover too late that all his white cartons, left at my
door, were addressed to Pandora.

--Heather Dubrow

SHARPS AND FLATS

My thoughts contradict each other,
Not because of their logic
But because they go off in different directions,
The comedic and the tragic.

Because they fly into my skull
And descend into my guts
Because they swing me into extremes
Of chromatic sharps and flats.

And only a man with a spear,
A shield, a powerful stance,
Can welcome these warring contenders
In the arms of turbulence.

As winds collide and rage,
And twist and pull at his eyes,
At their heart he sees their quiescence
And the sun at the core of the days.

--Yaacov David Shulman

LIGHT

Light and brilliance they say are the signs,
Of the wondrous, unsullied, divine.
The moon at creation was bright as our sun,
With the light of before this world's time.

The glory of God, so old books foretell,
Will light the whole world without shadow,
In the day of the end, when our eyes will burn,
Splendour's vision to view and to hallow.

The wicked will see the glorious saints,
Who rise to the presence divine,
The deeds of men are lucid and clear,
To the Eye that sees through all time.

--Michael E. Stone

FOR THOSE LEFT BEHIND

"Light is sown for the righteous ..." (Psalm 97:11)

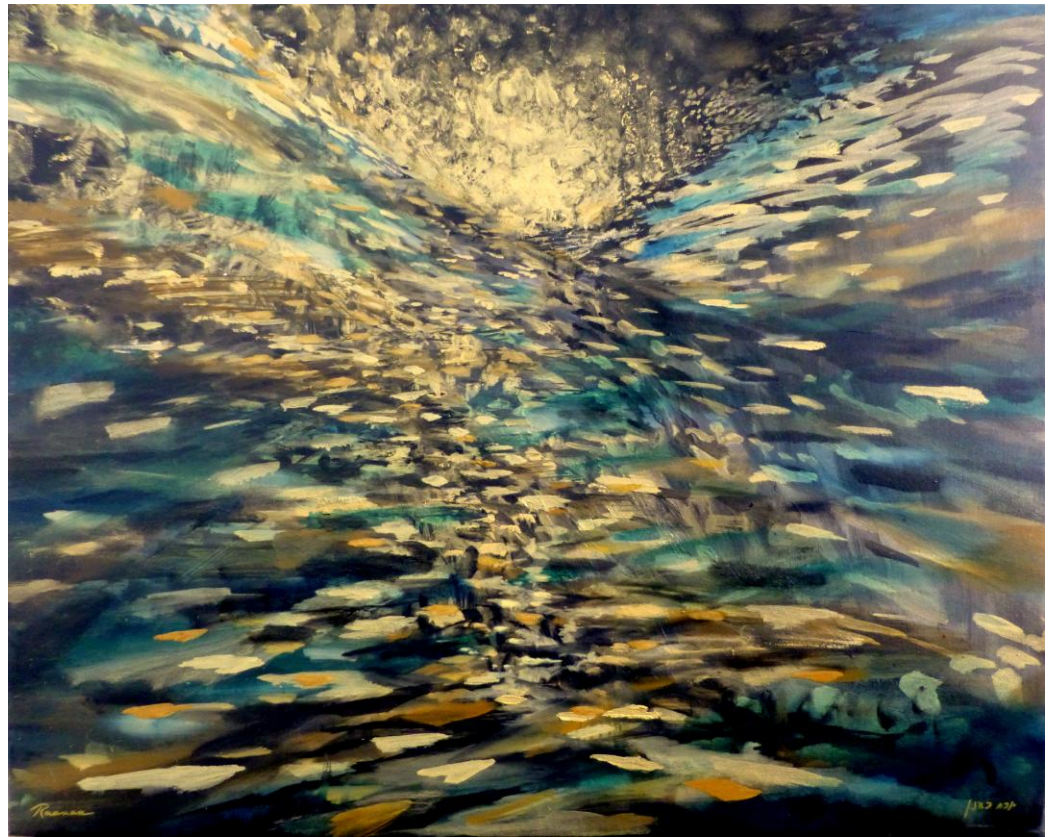
The light shines orange here. The light shines green.
The light shines purple here. The light shines gray.
The light shines yellow as we stand to pray
in silence. Only silence. In between
the silences, we look for walls to lean
against, and tzaddikim as well, since they
could say the words of prayer we cannot say.
We look for colors that we haven't seen.

We close our eyes. The darkness brings us back
to where we were before we sought the light
we seek today. Who do we find? The dead
and the living. Light! Light! The light shines black.
The humble and the proud. The light shines white.
The foolish and the wise. The light shines red.

--Yakov Azriel

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Yoram Raanan, *Wings of the Earth*, 2017, oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm.

"Wings of the Earth" began with black, ochre and burnt sienna to which Raanan added gold to give it life and light. The top of the painting is done with his fingertips playfully dipped into the gold. The brushstrokes give the feeling of feathers and wings, so that it looks like the earth itself has wings. Wings are a symbol of spirituality and here the very earth seems to be rising up to heaven. — Meira Raanan

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FLYING HORSE

for Eyal V.

*I have flown.
 I have moved from one place to another.
 I am open
 and keen,
 confidently jumping fences.
 Well, by God, I'm winged.
 He gives me this day as a present
 and I envision it green in my mind.
 Indomitable horse--here, there and
 everywhere
 Hair tossing in the come-what-may wind.
 I came to this world to learn
 that the good way is the best way.*

—Hayim Abramson