

The Deronda Review

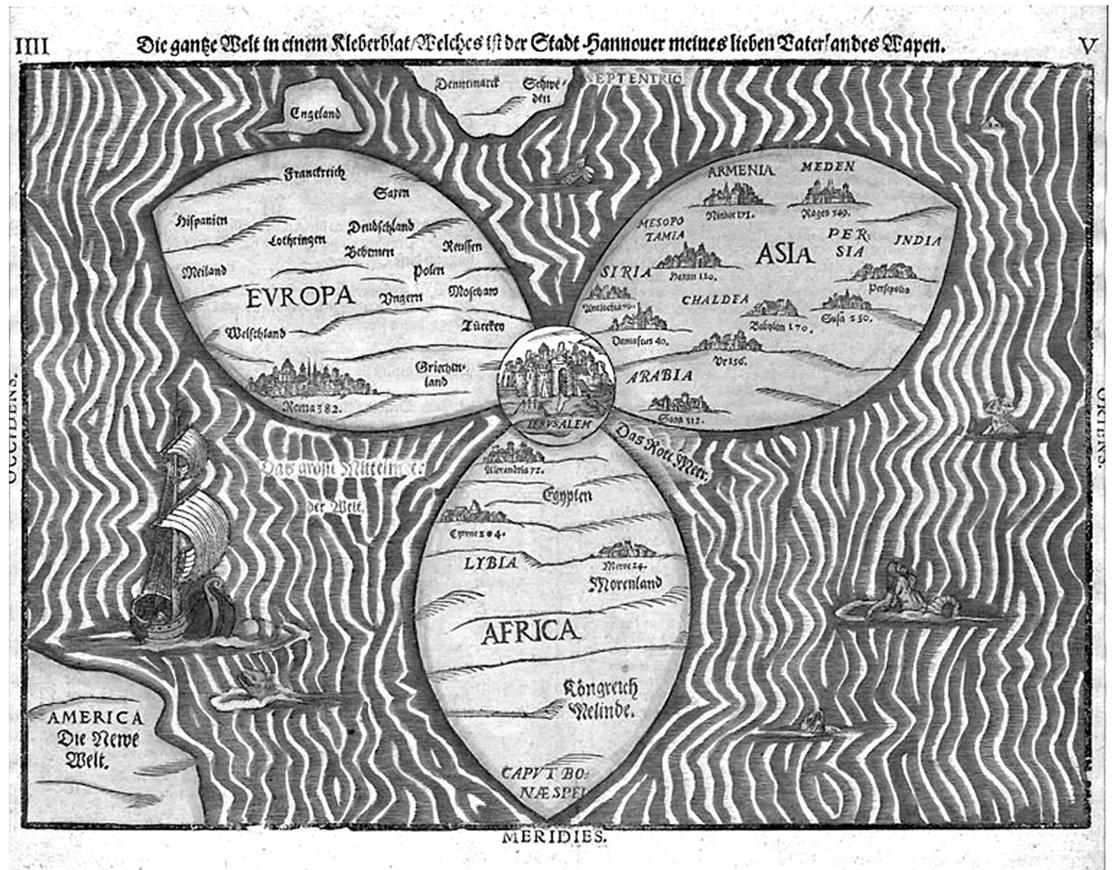
a journal of poetry and thought

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Jerusalem as the Center of the World (Heinrich Bunting, 1851)

EPICYCLIC CENTO

Poore soule the center of my sinfull earth
and I am at the edge of the West
By center, or eccentric, hard to tell

And though it in the center sit, Yet when
It marked the edge Of one of many circles
About the centre of the silent Word

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold
The horizon's edge, the flying seacrow, the fragrance
at the center of each flower. Each

Poore soule the center of my sinfull earth
The horizon's edge, the flying seacrow, the fragrance
About the centre of the silent Word

at the center of each flower. Each
It marked the edge Of one of many circles
By center, or eccentric, hard to tell

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold
and I am at the edge of the West
And though it in the center sit, Yet when

-- Courtney Druz

Sources: William Shakespeare/Sonnet 146; Yehuda HaLevi (trans. Peter Cole)/My Heart is in the East; John Milton/Paradise Lost; John Donne/A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning; Wallace Stevens/Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird; T.S. Eliot/Ash Wednesday; William Butler Yeats/The Second Coming; Walt Whitman/There Was a Child Went Forth; William Carlos Williams/Queen-Anne's Lace

CONTRIBUTORS' EXCHANGE

This feature was started to encourage dialogue among poets and readers. Below are titles of poetry collections by contributors, as well as URLs. Due to the fact that the magazine is now mainly web-based we no longer include addresses, but messages can be routed through the editors via the "Contact Us" form.

* 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, *Torah Secrets; Thoughts from the Sources* (in preparation)

**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), and *Swimming in Moses' Well* (2011), all with Time Being Books.

J.E. Bennett has a chapbook, *Strange Voices, Other Tongues*, 2004.

**Esther Cameron (E. Kam-Ron, George Richter), *The Consciousness of Earth* (Multicultural Books, 2004); *Fortitude, or The Lost Language of Justice: Poems in Israel's Cause* (Bitsaron Books, August 2009).

Courtney Druz, www.courtneydruz.com is the author of *Complex Natural Processes* (2010), *The Ritual Word* (2011) and *The Light and the Light* (2012).

Channie Greenberg's books are *Jerusalem Sunrise* (Imago Press, 2014, Forthcoming); *The Little Temple of My Sleeping Bag* (Dancing Girl Press, 2014, Forthcoming); *Simple Gratuities* (Propertius Press, 2014, Forthcoming); *The Immediacy of Emotional Kerfuffles* (Bards and Sages Publishing, 2013); *Citrus-Inspired Ceramics* (Aldrich Press, 2013); *Intelligence's Vast Bonfires* (Lazarus Media, 2012); *Supernal Factors* (The Camel Saloon Books on Blog, 2012); *Fluid & Crystallized* (Fowlpox Press, 2012); *Don't Pet the Sweaty Things* (Bards and Sages Publishing, 2012); *A Bank Robber's Bad Luck with His Ex-Girlfriend* (Unbound Content, 2011); *Oblivious to the Obvious: Wishfully Mindful Parenting* (French Creek Press, 2010); *Conversations on Communication Ethics* (Praeger, 1991); *Watercolors* (Scotch & Soda Productions, 1979).

Ruth Fogelman has three books of poems, *Cradled in God's Arms*, *Jerusalem Lives*, and *Jerusalem Awakening* (Bitsaron Books) as well as a website, <http://www.geocities.com/jerusalemilives/> with poems and photographs.

Jerry Hauser, *A Stir of Seasons* (The Moon Journal Press, 2009).

Sheila Golburgh Johnson has two books: *After I Said No* (novella, Fithian Press, 2000) and *Shared Sightings: An Anthology of Bird Poems* (1995)

Lynn Lifshin's numerous works are listed on www.lynlifshin.com

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

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

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**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 Bitsaron 2014.

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Shira Twersky's "The Arrow of Time: After Eden I" and "The Arrow of Time: After Eden II" are from her book *Legends of Wandering and Return*; Susan Oleferuk's "Those Who Come to the Garden" is from her book of the same title. Yaffa Ganz's "Again" was originally published in 1988 in Jewish Action Magazine.

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I. Waking to Everything

FIRST THAW

This promise comes,

slow melts an old white world --
It softens mounds of bitterness.

This promise lives on edges
of green hopes --
where earth soaks up
snow's salted tears.

– Cynthia Weber Nankee

BIG HORN SHEEP AND ELK: ABOVE THE TOWN
OF ESTES PARK, COLORADO

From our mountain lodge window
we see cars stopped: everyone --
even us, inside -- hushed and stealthy
as wolves, we humans armed,
our cameras' clicks preserving
the beasts, to prove to friends
this world's a place of marvels.

Earlier, our car was one
among many stopped
for a small herd of elk --
their winter coats beginning
to shed, though wind gusted
with mountain ferocity, the peaks
misty with falling snow --
crossing the blacktop: to create
elegant slow-motion sculptures;
all of us staring, frozen
in the amber of their beauty.

– Robert Cooperman

SPRING COGITATIONS

What I observed in others I have seen
evolve in myself: fear, black lies,
depression and the pointing of the heart
before wisdom dies.

It is mid-spring. Ornamental cherry
trees sweeten shadows of pale pink
beneath tall redwoods. So the truth slips in
through a flutter, blink,

before adults obscure the name. The old
bleeds like a wound into the new,
after shocks chill the spine, invoking fear
in the young, the few

who can cradle a flame against the dark,
a star in the silence. Tonight
will be a night of triumph, returned now
to my old insight

my dreams will flow like eternity through
the river maze of the gone years,
a hand will soothe the burning until our
star's shape disappears.

– Calvin Green

ISRAELI SPRING

And as spring brings nature to life,
So too -- in the Jewish cycle of life --
Spring signals the rebirth of spirituality,
And the connection with Eretz HaKodesh is
renewed

Joy is here with the bright morning sun,
Chasing darkness into the recesses of our memory.
Long, warming days urge the land's treasures to
spring forth
Decorating the land with the beauty of reawakening
And filling it bountifully with the largesse of the
earth.

Broad swatches of green, linger in our fields,
A legacy of winter rains.
Short trees of almond, orange and lemon
Send brightly colored pallets across the barren
sweeps of a vanishing winter
Adding a pungent, sweet aroma to the harmony of
rebirth.

Spring is a harbinger of a renewed sense of our
peoplehood
The Jewish people, at home in a land of life,
A land of memories, of hope and joy.
We open our eyes and reach out
Joy dances invitingly towards us.
It is spring in Israel.

– Don Kristt, 5771

MY MOTHER'S REAL BIRTHDAY, MAY 25, 2004

I've let other obsessions
 go, tho they are like
 a bit in my mouth
 yanking me this way
 and that. Her last birth
 day in the icy pines,
 the trips to the doctors,
 all she got dressed
 for in those last weeks,
 in the blue suit she
 didn't want to wear too
 often, didn't want to
 wear out. I still felt what
 could matter was still
 ahead tho that year,
 summer never came.
 Sleeping near her, like
 a pajama party she
 said, giggling as we
 watched tv on an old
 scratchy black and white
 tv in a room already
 underground. Strawberries
 glistened. I cut them up
 with cream for her in
 a blue bowl. From the dark
 shadows of pine wedges
 of sky were blue. It
 was our all May and June
 color

- Lyn Lifshin

SHAVUOT

I remember when I sat hunched over my sticker
 collection,
 humming as I fingered each one,
 counting.
 The sweet smelling strawberry sticker, the shiny
 ballet slippers,
 admired and named –

like the stars each night,
 counted and called from their hiding places
 behind the congealed darkness.

Each is asked:
 Do you remember who you are?
 You are this one star.
 I name you.

And then, they are bright with the knowing.

The streets show me the places I am nameless,
 the narrow, leaning alleys and the spaces, like wide
 waves of sand.

My presence is an echo
 caught in the wind with no place to land.

Pushing through the thick air, I imagine the way
 sounds could scatter here, and just a name would
 remain
 like a polished star,
 bright with the knowing.

Tonight, the sky itself that leans in over my shoulder
 and says,
 Stick to me,
 I name you,
 mine.

- Devora Levin

SAFELY IN SUMMER

In July when safely in summer
 unlikely to be thrown by cold winds of change
 the world is small
 dragon bugs, frail flower and twig sword
 the grassy ground a miniature land
 and one need never look up
 at what crosses the horizon.

- Susan Oleferuk

DESCENDING BLUEBIRD: SUMMER

In the silent garden,
 Beneath high roof
 Of extended maple branches,
 A bluebird
 Suddenly appears,
 With easy flash
 Of wing,
 Perches
 On narrow edge
 Of green bird bath,
 Lingers a moment,
 Bathes
 In the cool,
 Moving mirror
 Of the water.

- William Beyer

WATER LILIES

Today I've wakened on the porch to everything:
 a bussing breeze and a rippling pond and water
 lilies and
 coffee and mm it's good. You see, the mug
 I'm using has been glazed with a Monet painting.
 And when I sip I bring them to my lips
 which makes the coffee taste better, or seem to,
 anyhow

The first time I woke up to water lilies
 was in the middle of the lake where Dad and I
 would fish,
 He'd wake me up in pitch black before school
 and everything, the boat already on
 the car, we'd tied it up the night before
 together, and we'd row out for the bass,
 better than yellow perch. I'd doze and wake
 again, roused by a ripple or the sun
 or a nibble or his voice, surrounded by water lilies
 and shimmers and gurgles and trees, so many that I
 dreamt
 I had been drinking *them*, till I came to,
 weekday mornings, till I was ten or so.

One Saturday when I was twelve I went
 fishing with Harry. His mom drove us. We fished
 from shore. I pointed out the water
 lilies yonder, in the middle of the lake,
 but they did not surround us, they were something
 far away, so he was unimpressed.
 We caught a couple of perch too small to keep.

Occasionally, at a park or arboretum,
 I will pass by a pond with a wooden bridge
 in a Japanese theme, stocked with goldfish or carp,
 and stop awhile because of the water lilies
 expecting something, never knowing what.
 This morning dosing coffee from a mug
 I love the way a ten-year-old will love
 the least important thing, I feel the sun
 pop up as if we'd loaded up the boat
 and the bait, and I have woken in the middle
 of the lake and the lilies, having dozed in the dawn,
 and am waiting for a bite, and everything.

- James B. Nicola

"MEMORY OF THE DAY"

The wind blows gently upon my face
 As I watch the leaves dance to the song
 Silent and beautiful is Nature's grace
 Where all and everything politely belong

Last I was here, it was with her
 Our hands touched as did our hearts
 Memories now too strong to blur
 From my mind never shall they part

We watched as water poured over rock
 With spray and droplets catching the light
 It was if all else in the world had stopped
 A day never giving way to night

Sitting here now among the trees
 The wind to me continues to speak
 And my memories I hold close to me
 Of that day when we both came to be

- Nolen Holzapfel

WHERE ARE YOUR SUN YOUR MOON NOW?

Lemon yellow delicate wings
 of the fritillary gray brocade
 along both edges one
 cobalt eye on each vane
 poised impossibly on
 fuchsia blossoms of
 fireweed with stem so lithe
 the weight of a tiny moth
 no more than an aspen leaf
 nearly bends it to the earth
 O where are the sun and moon
 where is the universe now?
 where are the huge things a
 mind can scarcely imagine?

They are held in a half inch
 of velveteen flight
 my slight shadow huge
 as a mountain

- Daniel Williams
 Lundy Canyon

ASCENDING BUTTERFLIES

Thin,
Nervous wings
Of butterflies,
Pale yellow,
Deep crimson,
Ascend,
Descend
Above the seasonal flowers,
Repeated roses,
Asters,
A dozen petunias,
Border of marigold,
Linger
In sunlight,
Shadows,
Within a small,
Silent garden.

- William Beyer

THE ELDERBERRY AS A MEANS OF PERCEPTION

Blackened by summer (branches wizened,
leaves crisped and curled),
the elderberry struggles to survive
its tedium
on a slope of haggled rock.

Yet what at first seems bleak
to the eye of the observer,
who looks, then turns away,
has second thoughts, and looks again—
alert to details, to furtherance of life—
and sees that

weaving spiders have hung
their industry upon the elderberry's
tattered twigs, have
fattened spaces with an ineluctability
of nature at her naturalest—
and sees how

morning birds in this
morning's last-of-summer light
bloom in and out
of what was turned away from—

singing past the edge of things.
Gone. Welcomed back.

- Constance Rowell Mastores

DEPARTURE

The whisper of a southland breeze
Remurmured through autumnal trees,
As hand in hand, with hearts atune,
We walked beneath a harvest moon.

The Pilgrim bridge of weathered stone
Would lead next day to worlds unknown;
But now, our packing set aright,
We crossed it in an amber light.

For this would be our final chance
To dream together and romance,
To fix a picture in our mind
Of half a lifetime left behind:

The woodlands greening in the spring,
When swans return and bluebirds sing;
The hillsides preened in an array
Of wildflowers on a summer day;

The honey-sweet deliciousness
Of nectar from a cider press;
The golden pumpkins that adorn
A farmstead rife with shocks of com;

The winter stars that wink and glow
From crystal skies on virgin snow;
The distant wailing of a train,
Which haunts the dark like cries of pain.

And though this last of nights would fade
Like footsteps in a cavalcade,
Its spell will leave our lives beguiled
Like tales first told us as a child.

- Jack Lovejoy

BEYOND WINTER

Look at that dull, dull
dusk.
No glow
of rose and mauve,
only that endless gray.
A winter dusk.
The kind that says

Dark oak.
Dark bay.
Still darker shadow.
Frail leaves
pressed against the window.
Your life: fearful and ripening and enormous.

- Constance Rowell Mastores

NOSTOS

Winter light tells her it is safe here
 on the rotting hull of the boat upside down
 and moored, at the edge of high tide,
 to kelp, sand, and ocean debris
 said farewell to over and again.
 Isn't this what it means to come home?
 Sun low in the sky beyond the lagoon;
 a black petrel in languid flight
 crossing over the water,
 its wings curved toward dusk.
 Isn't this an image of
 what remains to remind
 nothing in the world is forever?
 Not the solitary woman on the far shore
 considering her reverie of broken shell
 Nor the fisherman
 slowly reeling in his line.
 Not even this boat black spiders hide out in
 April through August --
 safe, or not --
 this boat, this abandoned haunt
 that echoes wind, rippling water
 and scattered light.

Flown into lambent shadow, the petrel
 begins its descent;
 the fisherman packs up his gear
 and heads back. On the far shore,
 wakened from her reverie of lost ships
 and bleached shell,
 the solitary woman reaches out her hand ...
 dispenses blessings on the ones returning home.
 And on those who do not.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

*Nostos: homecoming in Greek

STORM MIRACLES*

Confronted with a storm
 I feel infinitesimal.
 Snowflakes by the millions
 in artistic complications down.

I can touch but a few
 and influence none not to fall.
 Whether high-minded or not
 the glaring fact is it does not matter.

A tiny fleck of frozen rain
 teaches me humility not gloom.
 I appreciate His glory on high,
 the richness of His will to us below.

Snow becomes slippery ice
 and makes me grateful to walk.
 My grain of security I owe to Him
 who leads me in every twinkle step.

Rain soaks my clothing and brain,
 as I muddle through the wind.
 Even before I arrive to get dry
 I shall recount His miracles today!

– Hayim Abramson

*Inspired by an extraordinary snow storm in Bet El and the area
 at large.

SUPPLICATION

Yesterday we woke and clouds covered the sky
 And the wind arose, and we rejoiced, for we thought
 That the longed-for rain would arrive. But the clouds
 blew away
 And the sun arose, bringing back the dry heat and the
 fear.

Above the desolate fields the blue sky is so perfect and
 calm --
 Will You cast off what grows and lives, and choose the
 inanimate?!
 What can the speaking being say? And will You care
 For the human soul when the human voice is silent on
 earth?

We are still crying out to you from dry throats,
 Each one will draw their own circle, men and women
 And children, and in the soil the mute imprisoned bud
 Will add its silent supplication: have mercy on us!

It is known to us that nature in all the world
 Has swerved from its ways, become cruel and
 grief-stricken.
 From afar we heard of killing cold and the giant
 whirlwind,
 And instead of the rain we were struck with a snow
 that broke tree and roof.

If true that the judgment of earth is rooted in our spirit,
 Then show us a path of repair, give us counsel
 To sharpen our prayer that it pierce to the source of
 mercy
 And wickedness flee, and the rains, O the rains come
 down!

– E. Kam-Ron

28-29 Shvat 5774 (original in Hebrew)

[UNTITLED]

the oak-gall-wasp
mortality's sting
cells the air with
a corky gall-sphere
from a tiny hole
a worm exits to
crawl around its
course again

a day rounded-out
with its three
holes in time
a losing of the self
in the rocking-words
mini deaths or births
He's already answered
the prayers

- Yaakov ben David
20Aug2013

[UNTITLED]

the desert's virtue lies exposed
below the good-land's forest
green and hiving

the desert's bad-lands
dried to undrinkable water
with deranged heat
grimaced into calcified cliffs

a cloudless azure that sacks all
a compounding
that dissolves and opens
to a higher substance
above particle forces

the asymmetric graviton
The Neshamah

- Yaakov ben David

SURPRISED

Three inches of snow in May
wakes us up
from Spring slumber;
surprised
once again;
we have received the Torah
in Exile.

As children we may have known,
or not.
But could neither do,

nor go
nor argue.

Years later
when each of us arose
"went up"
to the Land,
why were the adults
so surprised?

- Mindy Aber Barad

II. Multiple Unity

ToE

A night supplied a myriad
of crisp unflinching stars
Bestows a period
Of special grace
When tourists stepping from their cars
Find outer space

To be entangled with the inner.
Mundane divinity
Vouchsafes both saint and sinner
The wherewithal
To penetrate, to some degree,
The glaucous pall

That clouds the humors of the eye.
As solid as the ground
Beneath their feet, the sky
Becomes an altar
Where songs are laid, though neither sound
Nor vellum psalter

Attends this rite. A secret hymn
Begets no miracle,
But briefly lights the dim
Perimeters
That range beyond empirical
Delimiters.

Too soon the stellar mood is gone,
And travelers, dazed and weary,
Drive off into the dawn
Remembering
Their close encounters with the Theory
Of Everything.

- C.B. Anderson

THE BA'AL SHEM TOV

or, A New Philosophy

The problem with religion
is grown-ups.
They don't see how,
when the dusk settles like a soft grey pet on the tips
of trees,
the sky is filled with creatures—
a dragon spewing smoky fire,
a whale slapping its tail against the purpley ocean
dome,
spraying salty cloud droplets
against a peacock's pointed beak.

No, they think they are just clouds: cumulous,
cirrus, thundery G-d clouds.
They codify and calculate like meteorologists
without hearts.
But they are blinded by the cataracts of too many
nights.

In the playground of heaven,
a cloud is not a cloud;
it is an invitation to play.

– Devora Levin

[UNTITLED]

I had little sleep last night
the sky so white
I thought it morning
holes in clouds
revealed dark blue
sky lakes
white shores
changed contours
an occasional bright star
floated into
the blueness of sea

– Susan Rosenberg

TOAST

I toast thee, Night,
With a brimming cup,
Thy moon is up
And full
Behold its whine
Within my wine:
A coin in a
Beggar's bowl.
Remain thou rich
With thy silver wealth
To thee, this health

I sing
Thy coins that fall
Are not for all
O, but I can
Hear them ring!

– David Kiphen

And God the artist
through each strand of DNA
paints the universe.

– Douglas Stockwell

THE ARROW OF TIME; AFTER EDEN I

Primeval plants anchored in the basin of rich red
loam
reach up tendrils to become orange-barked limbs
of canella cinnamon, squirrels scamper up the
trunks,

Fruit bats suck the sweet asparagus berries, poke
their dog-like
faces into the fleshy flowering claws of cactus
flowers.

Within the convolute of sepals and whorled rosette
cluster
heart shaped leaf coronas of daffodil trumpets twist
sun-tinted golden petals to adorn the woody base of
the first fragrant pomme suffused with purple in full
sunlight.

Was the fruit of the tree of knowledge an apple or a
pear
or the whirling cosmos of that dimension which
partaking thereof cast us into the progression of time
where decay and destruction became the mechanism
of life.

In Eden, past, present and future was
comprehended
and shared with the Creator.

Given Freedom of Choice, we were bound
– like that cat that leaps out of a 8th story window
to catch a passing bird in flight –
to choose curiosity.

Adam and Eve when the first sun set
wept to find themselves in eternal darkness.
The Sabbath sun rose and The Creator spoke,
“You have chosen the material world,
now seek the key to your living soul.”

– Shira Twersky-Cassel

THE ARROW OF TIME; AFTER EDEN II

Cast into time, into the orderly disorder of birth and
death

the stars, the planets and galaxies emerge from
great explosions into giant suns,
destined to die in smoldering embers and
collapse into themselves.

The arrow of time opened windows
for life to flourish, heat and energy
to grind down and then slip away
to feed other life forms coming into being.

How can we comprehend the birth of the universe
and our coming into being,
when our rationale and wisdom
depend on a morning cup of tea.

And He has allowed us the intellect to grasp
hidden things, to view a red dot at the far end of
time
that was a dying sun.

Given us recall, to remember lying down beneath
the
thorned wood to embrace radiating aromatic rosette
clusters
of goose and whortleberries and each other.

In a time when white-tailed deer and viper
fed on star-shaped violet flowers, living in harmony,
and the deep-throated red and honeyed lotus lilies
sweetened the fragrant waters of Eden.

– Shira Twersky-Cassel

EVE

You simply stand there at the dome's great climb
Beside the stained-glass window's radiant rose
With apple in hand, poised in the apple-pose,
And guilty, guiltless once and for all time

Of all the offspring that you ever bore
Since, from the radius of Forever's ring,
You strode forth lovingly like spring
Throughout the whole wide world to wage your
war.

Ah, you longed to linger in that land
A little longer so that you might heed
The peaceful beasts' good sense and understand,

Yet since you found the man resolved to plod
In strife toward death, you went to serve his need,
And you had hardly yet known God.

– Rainer Maria Rilke
translated from the German by William Ruleman

THE BRIGHTNESS OF PASCAL'S ABYSS

Qui ne sait que la vue de chats, de rats,
l'écrasement d'un charbon, etc., emportent
la raison hors des gonds?

– Pascal

Yes, we are all distraught by sense or thought –
the violence of reason opens an abyss.
No matter how firm the earth on which we stand,
if there's a precipice below, who among us,
however wise, will not draw back in fear?
The sight of a falling ember unhinged Pascal.

And yet, the unity of All, multiple, diverse.
Each of the Thoughts linked to all the others
and reflecting the totality; fragments like rain
pools after a storm: each, though separate,
gathering the constellations in a somber mirror –
the gaze of stars directed upon the waters.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

[UNTITLED]

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

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

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

THE HUMAN FACE

In every face I see the halo of a fallen saint:
 A hidden journey through a valley of grief & despair
 Where witness is written in the fabric of knitted
 brows--
 The threads of wisdom from which the universe is
 woven.

In every smile, the thin veneer of civilization
 Curves around sensuous lips to a twisted, angry
 mouth;
 Agony vanishes into old familiar wounds
 And the bruised asylum of infinite sun-split clouds.

In every mirror, the vision of a murdered god
 Wrinkled over the soft, kissed, daydreaming cheek
 of childhood;
 In the pupil of every eye, the inexhaustible
 Mystery of laughter confronting burnt cities &
 barbed wire.

Every hair, a fine distinction between sorrow &
 glory,
 Half spiritual experiment, half heaven's ambition;
 Cries of joy are on the tongue of every holy hunger
 And a silent hymn uncurling in every stranger's ear!

- E.P . Fisher

NIGHTSTORY

She thinks about swans, the woman reading,
 and a tall girl with tangled hair
 touching the fur of a silent bear
 who will become a prince. Needing

a cup of tea, she rises, moves
 to put the kettle on for steeping
 good hot black to prevent her sleeping
 before the clock strikes twelve. Hooves

of a golden horse keep pace across
 her heartbeat as she stirs in milk,
 remembering a gown of silk
 she wore one summer day. *My loss*

is nothing she repeats and then
 she pours away the extra water,
 waiting for her only daughter,
 who, hungry, might come home again.

- Katharyn Howd Machan

AMULET

I have some salmon salad
 with celery and onions,
 just the way you like it -
 Mother said as I rushed
 to catch a plane.

Mother, I haven't time -

It won't take any time at all -

The brown bag now delivered,
 Mother kissed me, followed
 down the walk to where the taxi
 tooted, waved ...

Flying west, I forgot the food;
 was wakened somewhere above Ohio
 by a steward with a tray of plastic chicken,
 changed planes in Denver running every step,
 arrived at LAX to find my airbus waiting,
 snatched my luggage, dashed
 with pounding heart, fell
 finally in the only empty seat.

Following the sun as we drove up the coast
 I smelled the salmon sandwich, ripe
 from body heat and hours of travel.

I drew the package from my pocket
 and folded back wax paper.

Every single passenger,
 inhaling salmon, onions, kosher pickle,
 turned to look with envy,
 while I ate quietly
 and was replenished.

- Sheila Golburgh Johnson

ORPAH

I have for you a miniquiz.
 You know, of course, who Oprah is.
 But do you know who Orpah was?
 You don't? Well, almost no one does.
 Now, don't become a history sleuth
 to learn who Orpah was. Read Ruth.

- Henry Harlan

OLLIE

One day an otter orphan in a current
was swept up to a half-fixed beaver dam.
He came to and met there another youth
engaged in a peculiar sort of play

who had a flat tail and a wife. They weren't
much older than he. "Why, hello. I am
called Oliver. Could you help me?" They both
had timber in their mouths. "I've lost my way."

They grunted "No," but that afternoon they
taught Ollie all they knew of mud and wood.
He loved the work and helping for a day.
When they were done he saw that it was good.

The couple asked him if he'd like to stay
but Ollie was a player, so returned
to his old pointless, artless, happy way,
unchanged by the industrial arts he'd learned.

Years later, though, he swirled upon a dam
again, swept by the current of a thought,
this time, or memory: "Is what I am
what I'm supposed to be, or is there not

some thing I should be doing with my life?"
He thought he heard the beaver and his wife
calling his name. Then in a gush of folly
he swished and plopped again. For he was Ollie.

– James B. Nicola

THE WOMEN AT THE DOCK

The women sat at the dock at sunset
all ages, all strangers
none with a boat
though there may have been boats
some time in their lives
as there were other partings
for as men speak of gains and armies boast territory
the women shared losses and expanded
getting fuller and stronger like sleek seals on rocks.

Some men slipped silently into the water
slim boats like sperm rushing off, sliding away
like other men, in other lives
The women though seemed detached
sensing below the river, swells of the incoming tide
and adjusting their sights like knowing sailors.

I waded in and laughingly fell
the widow rolled out gnarled legs to join me
someone's sister spotted a hawk and the young

mother lay on the wood
scratching her lazy belly
her face restful in her own vision of the sky
our voices getting softer, more serene
we were a circlet of swans.

– Susan Oleferuk

TO NAOMI
Song 2

o high fine pure shy intelligent-eyed silv'ry-voiced
Naomi,
Child of the lithe keen hemlock-darkened far
northern streams,
Waking dream,
Hesperides-seeking brave dream,
Holy-living-Beauty-loving
Beauty-embracing brave dream,
Dreaming Almeda's high beechen Time-breathing
high gods-keen
Prescient green Island:

Abide by the high keen brave taintless pacing white
horses,
Pacing in the distance, pacing in the blue mist –

– Robert Glen Deamer

LIGHT

I imagine angels on assem-
bly lines making it, stacking warehouse shelves
with ingots of the stuff, like Santa's elves,
filling orders as we submit them.

And I think I've seen the fake stuff sold
by counterfeiters, hacks and scabs
who duck into hidden getaway cabs
when a Sunday alarm is tolled.

The Manufacturer could sue
but then it would probably get too dark.
Since He refuses to take out a trademark,
what, in the end, can He do?

– James B. Nicola

APHORISMS

The reach of tenderness is each; the compass of compassion, all.

Beware the logic of the loveless man.

As colors to the colorblind, is kindness to the cruel.

Cube is substance of a square; circle, shadow of a sphere.

Truth is simile; beauty is metaphor; love is equation.

Those things converge which from the same source flow.

Breathes there soul so shallow no breeze of beauty stirs?

Let not the compass of the mind exceed the heart's circumference.

Paranoia is the maddest form of loneliness.

— B.Z. Niditch

III. Cleavings

CLEAVING

To cleave.

To adhere or cling, remain faithful to, especially in resistance to a force that draws away. Also to split or divide, as by a cutting blow, especially along a natural line of division, like the grain of wood.

Where has this word been?

In the flower beds perhaps, concealed among the lilacs and nasturtiums. Watching through a window – now the bedroom, now the living room or study. Observing, researching us unnoticed, as for a project or assignment. Learning more than a word or anyone should know. Or we, in a thousand words, in all this cleaving silence could have said.

— Bill Freedman

COINCIDENCE

“I apologize to coincidence for calling it necessity”
 (“Under a Certain Little Star,” Wis³awa
 Szymborska)

Like seeing you walk towards me on stiletto heels in that tight black boat-neck sweater, rocking those astonishing blue green eyes, Having no idea where you'd be at just that moment had I not learned, stumbling on the steadfast pattern of your whereabouts and movements over the past five weeks, six days, that this was always where you were at just this time.

Like saying, miraculously, just the right four words by way of hopeful but embarrassed introduction, Having no idea what you'd find appealing, childish or offensive, Trusting entirely to intuition, prayer, luck and the coincidental overhearing of nineteen introductions by assorted eager strangers over the past two months, nine days: eighteen failed, one unsettling but instructively successful.

Like knowing where to take you that fortuitous first evening, Knowing nothing of your taste in music or your dining preferences but what I'd learned from thirty-seven friends, acquaintances and relatives who, for reasons I cannot explain, even to this day, gave me just that information when I interviewed them for a survey about the leisure occupations of young women of a certain class I happened to be conducting at the time.

Like knowing, somehow, eight years later you'd be leaving, when you said, excitedly, you'd met, by odd coincidence, precisely where we'd met eight years before, a stranger who seemed to know you.

— Bill Freedman

HOW WILL I KNOW THEE

How will I know thee
To see thee for the
First
Time?

"You might just get to know
Me
If you will not insist on speaking
Rhyme."

You might attempt to trick me to reveal my
Birth-sign.
You might attempt to goad me to reveal my
Birth-stone.

You might query me for my height,
My coloring, my physique.

But, you shall know me by my winter-green
Earrings,
-- pastel platform sandals --green--

And you might just get to know something else,
Somewhere, somehow--in-between.
- Sue Tourkin-Komet

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TOTEM POLE

Beautiful is as beautiful doesn't which stands
outside itself
Like an aroma around a pear.

It is who you are when I see you from a different
slant,
A glance knocking itself against your
improbabilities like
A rubber ball on a window.

I slide down you like cognitive dissent,
A relocation of my past attitudes towards you into
a new place.

And you become fabulous like the first time I met
you
In the Hunter College cafeteria and knew that one
day I would find

Your carved beauty looking at me from the other
side
Of the totem pole.

- David Lawrence

GRANDSTANDING

Walking past all the ugliness in the world I run into
you
At the beautiful corner and know that you are the
glow
Beyond the traffic light.

You are so unusual that I stop and go and watch
You shift gears as you smoke into my universe like
A runaway wheel.

You are so Daytona lovely.

I want to get into a major accident with your chassis,
To roll over with you into the injured audience.
I want to share your accidental drama in the
grandstands.

- David Lawrence

SUITED FOR LOVING MY WIFE

I looked back at our President and turned into a pillar
of salt.

He tried to rock and roll like JC
But his results were bankrupt like Sodom and
Gomorrah.

If I didn't vote for him why do you say I have to
respect him?

I didn't start the war in Afghanistan.
He did.
Why should I have to think it was a good deal,
Better than Iraq?

I am not voting for myself.
I am not applauding his give-away speech at Cairo.

The only job I am suited for is to love my wife.
It takes a lot of work when your mind is contrarian,
Your antagonistic compulsions are obsessive.

I pop a lithium.
I see two analysts.

I am learning to hold it all together like a hand in a
mud pie.

- David Lawrence

SOMEHOW MORE

Belgium chocolate truffle
 Hug of a grandchild
 A lovely stranger's smile
 Pleasures

But to reach 'joy' ... somehow more
 With elation comes a sense of ending
 My love comes to our bed
 In a white that glimmers

I run my hand through her hair
 I see a face that unwinds the years
 So this is how she looked at 21
 Yet with it the sense of the end

Not a fold of intimacy
 Instead this signal
 From the sweetest moments
 How our grace clings to a parting
 - Greg Moglia

PRINCE OF THE FOREST

Princeling of the forest
 dappled like spots of sun on the rich baize ground
 the forest concealing, lending its color, a magical spell

Prince of the forest, are you strong yet
 to bear your crown and prance and parade your masculine
 beauty
 I think of you
 autumn mornings when the rain gusts sharp and the tannin
 hits deep
 and you raise your massive head and step out of the dark
 trees

Princeling, that day in May
 I had nothing to give you
 only a human voice, an unpracticed gift
 till the imaginative forest lent me its sounds
 each note hit the sky and fell to the deepest root
 an expression of man's great range
 the melody of thought
 and the timbre of compassion
 missing only from this great opera
 the sound of a gun

Gamesman I say
 what unfair game do you play
 do you not hear the music
 does the forest not enchant
 can you not hum the player's tune.

- Susan Oleferuk

SAMSON'S LAMENT

"Then [Delilah] said to [Samson], "How can you say, 'I love you', when your heart is not with me? You ... have not told me where your great strength is." ...So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, "A razor has never come to my head ... If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I shall become weak and be like any other man...."
 Judges, 16:15-17.

Even here
 in this windowless world of mine
 when the memory
 of the Vale of Sorek
 reforms in my mind
 I am moved to tears.
 For it was there
 I first met Delilah,
 first fell in love.
 In Sorek I invited her in
 to my sanctum

only to have her,
 once past the door
 and I unaware,
 cast my gift of love to the floor.
 She let in foes
 who shore off my locks of hair,
 dashed out my eyes,
 bound me with these chains
 and left me to rot
 in this Gaza jail.

The hair regrows.
 My strength revives.
 But even if I could win
 back the use of my eyes
 the injury she has done
 will not heal.
 For now I feel
 there is no one under heaven
 whom I can trust.

Delilah, and Delilah alone,
 has led me in
 to a dark prison of the soul
 out of which I dare not go.

- Larry Smeets

CHAPEL PERILOUS EXPERIENCE

The objects on hand seemed to eliminate
the space between themselves and us,
so in the chapel's garden the many, at last, was one.
Bushes balleted in sync with our motions,
and flowers wore our emotions on their sleeves.

We had completely become our surroundings,
though don't we always become ourselves
in everything besides ourselves,
for what are we if not all but ourselves
for the most part? What's left is a cubic foot
or two of tissue and bone, plus some issues
about our relationship with the outside world.
So we knew what each thing was going to do,
for there we were, like its transitive verb,
every object part of the one and only subject.

Our peak experience lasted for just seconds.
Then we fell back to ourselves as the garden faded,
though we kept returning to the House of Eros,
hunting for that time-immune tower that was
more of a chapel than what we had in mind.
Such highs are what the species lives for
though we're easily seduced by sexy ideas
when only love can make humankind kinder.
We have come a short way in a long time.
We have a long way to go in a short time.

- Andrew H. Oerke

[UNTITLED]

There is a piece of me
it smells of pine and rests on a shelf
of a blue sky mountain
another piece
is hidden in the brush where the stream is wide
and the willow bends
it smells of sweet woodruff and sun

When I forget
where I live
and who I am
I come here
in my dreams swimming, climbing, reaching
and I often glimpse you
smell you, miss you in the cold night air.

- Susan Oleferuk

IV. *That Which Holds*

THE TANGERINE

I look down the
center of the tangerine
and see the
center, but when
I tear it apart,
all I have
are two parts. It
seems strange
that the center
of anything could
disappear just
by tearing it
apart. Maybe
it was never
there. But I
saw it. I know
what I saw.
A tiny,
dark space
holding it all
together. It
was there
once.

- Roberta Pantal Rhodes

IN THE COMPANY OF POTTERS

for Dorothy

I envy the potter who taps twice
and centers her work,
while I, after six decades tap,
tapping, have just come round right.

There's no place like Center.

- Carol Pearce Bjorlie

the singular beast

What stays in the center of each ring is the same
defining hub, as any note can bring
all of music to bloom, in echo out
to shoreless reaches. Can a hammer ring
upon this anvil, can a forge's flame
redden that crude hunk of steel, and not
imply all other hammers, forges, steel?
A chain of snakes, each tail in its own mouth,
links this to that to every other thing.
A net enmeshes hunter, arrow, game;
a net drapes over that. All bordering
is center, and all rings, braiding, become
a hub, all rims roll up and underneath
to anchor and encircle here and all.

- JBMulligan

ODE TO THE CENTER

It's that which holds. It's that which is most
 like you or me,
 around which spins a dance
 of eternity,
 of distantly equal parts, so vast

that it holds countless centers tossed
 in a surging sea
 of cold circumference,
 so periphery
 and center are married, bedded, blessed

with everywhere a new
 beginning, end and course to run, a chance
 to once again continue.

It's time that is the center. Or may be.
 The spinning ring
 of past and future holds
 the dizzying
 displays of possibility,

the branches of a primal tree,
 roots echoing
 each twig as it unfolds
 the leaves that spring
 to catch and cup the light. To see

the pattern is to know
 a center runs through time: each moment yields
 its being to the flow.

The essence centers everything.
 The moment far
 from time, that happens always.
 A place not near
 or distant, but here and there. We bring

an appetite for centering
 outside us, are
 in time beyond our days,
 in places where
 we'll never reach - if anything

we're more alive when dead
 to thinking meat, and rise to what we praise
 of us that is outside.

We snatch at moments that hang in air,
 bright and - are gone.
 The petals of a flame.

The way is open:
 we're stymied by a lack of door.

The moment is a center, pure
 and full -- the one
 that follows is the same
 but never can
 equal its vanished twin, its other.

The moment must be all
 that holds us to the rest, the briefest dream
 that binds us to the real.

The here is true (and now), and on
 the fulcrum of
 a place, the universe
 can rest, and if
 it shivers and totters, still the lean

is balanced in its shape and motion,
 commands belief
 in all the other centers.
 We might deceive
 the desperate, centering self - but then

we'd cut the holy bond
 to swelling seas, which are each others' shores,
 to all we are, beyond.

- JBMulligan

ACTUAL LIGHT

He is where he is, eternal
 He is always there, being, His Self
 He is Omnipotent in oblivion
 a Selfless Being which is Light
 that nothingness means to flesh

But where is there: since hardly
 anyone believes anymore?
 The question is answered by Light

He is waiting, a Fire in a bush
 He is waiting, a Voice in wind no one hears
 He is waiting, the Light of the world
 while man assumes that he is
 (idolizing himself) as if that is
 what replaced His waiting

But as actual Light, God is in love
 with waiting--if man could only see it.
 He is waiting, Light, the center of the universe.

- J.E. Bennett

THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

Today, the center of the universe quiets, sheathed in
cloudy starlight.
(Accepting rides home from rehabilitation centers
brings dependence).

Celestial minarets peal prayerful obedience.
Fortresses of servitude stay ticking.
(Aided by jar openers, dress sticks, arm extenders,
we cripples get by, somehow).

Distant gateways block the view from cubicles,
while galaxies shrug theft.
(Days filled with tests, medicines, also nurses,
convey awkward therapies).

Once banished from heaven, civilizations tend to
gape at their forefathers' ruins.
(We wished to be able-bodied enough to help, but
discovered, instead, other wisdoms).

At present, bandits remain hidden in the garb of
interstellar peace mongers.
(Making lunch, or flushing toilets, exhausts those of
us missing limbs).

– KJ Hannah Greenberg

25. ETERNITY IN ETERNITY*

Midway through, the counting lost all sense:
numbers were – well...words touched and whirled
off
and the parquet extended infinitely in all directions.

I found myself alone in an old song
asked to dance by a slow radio wave
from an era where such things were done.

Lines blur where shadows traverse reflections
beneath me on the wood as I step back,
left back, side, slide together, promenade.

– Courtney Druz

*from a sequence of poems on the counting of the omer. Day
25 is the midpoint of the count.

THE CIRCLE

He stands in the centre
of the circle,
gathers, tries to plug in tentacles
that connect the realm above nature
to this unhappy world in the need
to transcend physicality.

The circumference
of the circle stretches
many times over,
bathed in all the colors
of the spectrum.
The barrage of conflicts,
past disappointments accumulate;
ghosts invoked from previous
lives, other ages, his yearnings
long time forgotten, claim
their place in the circle.

Inside the busy silence
everything unspoken waits
the chance to express itself,
insists it is important to be
acknowledged.
Synapses pop and flare,
he is pressured all the time,
tries to keep his circle steady
as the rich undercurrent of life
sways it. He knows he will be
judged by what he absorbed
from all that whirls around
to make his life a testament
to God's truth and beauty.

– Gretti Izak

HEALING THROUGH SILENCE

I am healing through silence.
Because it is within silence that I can hear and listen
to my voice.
Yes. Hear myself think and discover my own inner
beauty again,
Without the constant bickering, confusion and
torment.
The weight has been lifted off of my shoulders.
To breathe in the morning sunshine and feel
peaceful once more.
Daring to step out into the world and regain my
footing.
Putting on a spiritual armor of light I protect myself
from cockeyed looks.
I learn that self reliance is a virtue.
Grateful for the small acts of kindness of others.
Nature smiles on me as I meditate within the
symmetry.

– Shoshanah Weiss-Kost

THE CITY CENTER

The center of the city is not the Square,
it is not on the map of any part.
The city's center is a thinking heart.
It is the promise that we will be there
for one another, that each has a share
that is not forfeited when troubles start.
All civic courage and all civic art
arise on the foundation of this care.

For where all are for one, each dares to be
for all -- to do and say as conscience prods.
But where each one serves mean and separate gods,
where selfishness is sole security,
there freedom flags, creative vision dies,
and the city falls, whatever buildings rise.

- Esther Cameron
Madison, Wisconsin, 1995

LOOKING FOR THE QUEEN

Of the two hives, it's clear where one needn't
Search: in the larger, every cell crammed with
honey,
workers carousing on the front porch on this
sticky summer night. Neither hive will

Sting, so we comb the frames of the smaller
for the single point where every face turns,
wings working to pay an obeisance,
and frame after frame comes up dry as hexagons.

The hive won't make it through the winter,
though they do their work, they gather,
they care, they spend little time underperforming,
but without a sense of serving one thing,

It all becomes stingless, flavorless, that hive without
a beauty to adore and for whom to beat-out their
lives.

- Jared Pearce

THOSE WHO COME TO THE GARDEN

How many visit this garden
and some take away a cutting of this, a snipping of
that
a crushing handful, a scent of a fulsome summers
day
or like the robin
feast indulgent
luscious cherries
succulent worms
and some watch, cold as stone
gravelly paths ending in thorn
comments on changing buds and coming storm
but one belongs here
beautiful and true
and this garden grows around her.

- Susan Oleferuk

THE SPELL

Because of wrong directions
-- or so we thought --
we ended up driving round
the same street time after time,
a convergence of cul-de-sacs,
east and west playing hide
and seek in the black night.

Passing cars like pulsars pressing
from deep space, shivered the metal
skeleton of our car, and those parked
on both sides of the narrow streets echoed
warnings of collusion. Stray cats turned up
and disappeared like ghosts, and we heard
children crying as in an extended living room.

In Tel Aviv you are not supposed to get lost,
syncopated by right-angled planning,
a sea to the west easily keeps one oriented,
relentlessly runs its course of waves
to account for each heartbeat of the city,
noisy, never sleeping, driven by postcard
novelties, light-heartedly accepting all.

This surely was the spell locking us to drive
in circles, perhaps for a while at least, wanting
to forget what lies to the east, those exacting heights
of Jerusalem that belittle all man's right-angled
plans,
novelties and certainties.

- Gretti Izak

V. *Eaten by a Land*

TRADESCANTIA*

Inch plant, creeping plant, sometimes Moses in the basket
or bulrushes, sometimes called "weakly upright,"
sometimes "scrambling," emigrant passed along
(tradition of a sort), now peering from frigid panes,
now dangling in high corners, winding
within houses, lives, our lives,
regardless of dust, scant water, less food, burgeoning,
seeking light while tolerant of shade,
stiff-leaved, yet despite fibrous strength,
at carelessness, even well-intentioned touch, breaking
but as if they cannot die, surviving.

- Ellin Sarot

*genus which includes the plant known as "Wandering Jew"

DIRECT LIGHTING

Anyone else would say it was indirect
lighting, the way you came in , no switch, no flame.
Inside was outside, outside was the same
wherever you went for forty years, you trekked,

followed the pillars that protected you along the way
from the shores of the Reed Sea to Plains of Moab camped,
the Enlightenment was always there with the Almighty's
stamp
of approval, a testing ground to show you wouldn't stray

from Him, to take the promise to the other side,
stretch the Tabernacle to fill the width and breadth
of the land where you might trod. Confide

in its deepest secrets, gather its bounty provide,
dwell there, abide by that path, take the Words He said
keep the message You brought forever open wide.

- Zev Davis

EATEN BY A LAND

My heart drinks milk
My soul honey
Sap pours up
Drips from my leaves
Tall wheat brushes my eye lashes
As I pick crowned fruit
Whose seed- filled blood
Stains all

The road
Heavy with wine
Through walls of beveled rock
Veined with crimson and green
Dry thistles threaten
My skin browns
And I am absorbed

A delicacy
Eaten by a Land of
Grasshoppers and giants
I can no longer say no
And I have nothing further to report

- Mindy Aber Barad

KLITAH ABSORPTION)

I have gone forth from the country of my birth,
for the last time have heard the robin's song,
seen gold of aconites on new-thawed earth,
for which the bitter winters made us long.
But blackbirds here will whistle in the dawn,
the almond tree console for winter's chill,
gray doves will throb, the hoopoe strut his
crown,
and jackals raise their voice in eerie thrill.
And most I pray the Torah's voice will fill
my ears, as daily through the streets I go,
and the land's air instruct me in the will
of the One who gave me life, sustained me so
far, that Israel may absorb my mind
and grant me breathe its freedom unconfined.

- E. Kam-Ron

QUEST

on he'halutz street in be'ersheva
tall trees with purple blossoms line the way.
newly arrived, how i wish to know their name.
in each shop i stop.
what's the name of the tree on your walk?
in simple hebrew i say.
but no one knows.

years go by
and no one knows.
could i have asked an expert? perhaps.
to every thing there is a name.

in a tel aviv taxi today
purple blossomed trees pass in a blur.
so i ask,
and he knows!
a 20-year quest ends
on a blue sky day

with a singular word
that sounds
like a
sweet
song:

sigalon.

- I. Batsheva

GIFTS

Old Yemen, Romania
Woven together with royal threads -
Hybrids hung with pride in the market,
What can I bring you?
The bulging fruit vies for space with
Spicy pickled vegetables,
Is this what you'd like?
Hand-rolled vine leaves stuffed -
Will these fit in my suitcase?
Holy garments for special days -
Horns of silver and gold -
To announce Messiah's coming.
Will such gifts impress?

- Mindy Aber Barad

HOBBY: ARMAGEDDON

(Megiddo, 2006)

I hear him before I see him
golden-edged wings printed on the sky,
unmoving above roofless rooms,
the broken forts of Armageddon --

A hawk soaring over us all
eyes a black centipede long as my foot
crawling from the prehistoric
oblivious of time atop this tel,

Twenty-six cities beneath my soles,
Death filed in cabinets of stone,
arranged by layers of time
labeled with pink cyclamen.

Sipping water from a plastic bottle,
I watch sun-burned tourists below
spilling out of a yellow bus, seeking
the beginning of their sorrow.

In the gift shop, Roman glass
green as the sea of Odysseus,
old as the idea of empire,
costs more than bloody sand,

I buy a necklace made of shards
buffed by 2000 years of war.
The hovering bird, I discover
in *Birds of Israel* -- "Hobby."

- B.B. Adams

HISTORY'S WEIGHT

Time compressed
past and present laminated.

heavy to bear,
breath burns,
heart bids burst
beneath the burden.

the past
events places
beget the present
future's womb.

then is here is now.

- Michael E. Stone

VISIONARY

upon a visit to the Zippori National Park

And Jerusalem went into hiding
in escape from the Roman eagle's claws
which ripped apart its sanctuary,
scattered its gems.

Its legal body and soul migrated
to a perch aloft a Galilean hilltop,
there, fertile minds etched spoken laws
to affix the code and mingled with pagans
their theatre and baths,
illustrious decors
while remaining adherent to the faith of the Fathers,
a vision of rebirth concealed
-- a pact of silence --
in a Mona Lisa's mosaic glimpse

and the watchful eyes of a full moon
that swore me to secrecy
homeward on the Jordan Valley.

– Leah LJ Gottesman

CAP OF THE ARCH

seven faceted stone,
eyes
head of the building
cap of the arch
angled to take the pressure
and support the rest

so are we here
eyes see and yet blind
think and yet obtuse
but we can take the pressure

we in the land.

Israel's fate

– Michael E. Stone
Shabbat Hannukah 2009

HURRICANE

Beyond the eye
of the approaching storm,
center of calm,

behind the veil
of clouds a hundred
miles wide,

pounding to be let in
is the master
come to snare us.

-- Steven Sher

EXISTENTIAL THREATS

with apologies to The Beach Boys

Could we see A-bombs from Iran? Missiles
launched by Hezbollah? Deadly gas
shot from Damascus? Hamas rockets in the south?

Someone let the angel of death into the house
while we were sleeping and none know
how to show him out.

This is the enemy that conspires all around us,
the while claiming that his lies are truth—
and puts a thumb on the scale

when no one's watching so the lies
carry more weight, the abuse
then heaped on us will have just cause.

Someone's tossed a burning match
among the dry brush and young trees
beside the highway to Jerusalem—

the way the first torch signaled
to the next, spreading quickly hill to hill,
the new month's start as far as Babylon.

Bibi, will you bomb Iran?
Bomb Iran? Bomb Iran?
Ba ba ba ba-bomb Iran

– Steven Sher

CURSE

Go off to Goa
 this afternoon
 go find indifferent gods
 leave the fall-out shelters
 for a pad in the Village
 a mythic world
 of nirvana
 all on your own,
 where are your kings
 except in cards
 your great judges
 on revelation thrones
 your royal lines
 of poets, priests and prophets?
 They are entombed in scrolls of parchment.
 Don't you have time
 to understand the text
 it's all backwards to you,
 and your pierced ears
 cannot hear me
 banish you from
 the House of Israel.

-- B.Z. Niditch

THE ANTI-SEMITES' SCORN

"

We have become a taunt to our neighbors, a scorn
 and mockery to those around us." (Psalm 79:4)

I hear the anti-Semites swear all wars
 Are started by the Jews; I hear their scorn
 And mockery, how every shirt is torn
 By Jewish usury, how Jewish jaws
 Have slowly chewed their flesh, how Jewish claws
 Will slash the unsuspecting eye. They mourn
 The gems they claim we stole and now adorn
 The snouts of Jewish piglets, sows and boars.

I hear the lewd obscenities they use
 Against us, Lord, as if we drank their sweat
 Or poisoned all their wells. O help me fight
 Their hatred, God, their hatred of the Jews,
 Not with revenge's fire, but with light; let
 A Jewish dawn extinguish hatred's night.

-- Yakov Azriel

AGAIN

The wolves are gathering round, dear Lord,
 the wolves are gathering round.
 Again your sons to ravage, kill
 to crush into the ground.
 Why do you hide, dear Lord?
 Come forth,
 stretch out your mighty hand.
 How can you stand
 to hear the cries
 of anguish from your Land?

Enough enough the wolves have drunk
 the blood of slaughtered sheep.
 Come forth dear God
 and shepherd be.
 Thy flock is long sore weak.
 Your covenant carved
 in stars and sand
 in heart, in mind, on flesh.
 A promise made
 You won't forsake,
 a Godly kiss, caress.

Make haste dear Lord,
 the day grows dim.
 The wolves are gathering round again.
 The hour is late,
 the night was long,
 the dove, the deer, the sheep stood strong.
 But test them not again dear Lord.
 They walked through fire, were flayed by sword,
 but now they tire. They seek respite,
 Yet still they follow, still they fight.

Until the sword turns into plow,
 Dear Lord, we do proclaim,
 We'll hold aloft your banner,
 stay faithful to your Name.
 Your Land defend,
 your enemies fight,
 your children guard with prayers and might,
 until the time when dawn's clear light
 replaces darkness, ends the night.

But has the time not come, dear Lord?
 Your children all await your word.
 Reveal, dear God
 the morning star,
 the dawn's pure glow,
 the fresh new day.
 The night was long, the time has come.
 Hallow Your Name.
 Proclaim Your song.

- Yaffa Ganz

ANI MA'AMIN

"I see it, but not now, I behold it, but not soon"

(Numbers 24:17)

"I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah; although he tarries, nonetheless, I wait for him day by day."

— from the "Ani Ma'amin" ("I Believe"), a formulation written in the fifteenth century of the Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith according to R. Moses Maimonides (1135-1204)

Although he tarries, leaving us to grieve
Our brother's death and dig our sister's grave
With broken shovels in a darkened cave,
The Messiah will come one day, I believe.
Will eyes detect his shadow, ears perceive
The echo of his name? Will mourners shave
Their beards one day, believing he can save
Adam's daughters and all the sons of Eve?

Soon the Messiah will arrive — he must! —
And when he does, he'll teach us how to play
With hissing snakes whose fangs no longer bite,
With serpents that have ceased to eat the dust
Of sin; in faithfulness he'll bring, one day,
Fresh fruit from Eden's tree of life and light.

— Yakov Azriel

THE MOON OF JERUSALEM

"And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to distinguish between the day and the night; and they shall be for signs and appointed times, for days and years.'" (Genesis 1:14)

In the race of time, the sprinter was the sun
Which quickly sped through days, but lost the race;
When night appeared, it was the moon that won.

How bright the dawn, when the sun began to run
With confidence, ability and grace;
In the race of time, the sprinter was the sun.

But the sun, which lit up worlds all stars should
shun,
Reduced his speed and waned without a trace;
When night appeared, it was the moon that won.

As hosts of stars declared the race was done,
The moon of Jerusalem reached first place;
In the race of time, the sprinter was the sun.

The stars took threads they earlier had spun
And hid the moon behind a veil of lace;
When night appeared, it was the moon that won.

"Bring light," the stars command, "when there is
none,

And at the end of days, reveal your face."

In the race of time, the sprinter was the sun;

When night appeared, it was the moon that won.

— Yakov Azriel

VI. Border of an Era

FAULT LINES

We're camped beside the border of an era,
But whether it's a new one or the old
We can't be sure. In either case, we stand
Upon the rim of an immense caldera
That threatens parcels of developed land
For miles around. Our lives are bought and sold

For tarnished Lincoln pennies on the dollar,
And yet our coin is stamped: IN GOD WE TRUST.
The times are named for trends in art or science
Or in religion, though the Roman collar
Meant nothing to the prehistoric Mayans,
Whose calendar bespoke the moth and rust

Of sharp disjunctures at the end of time.
A novelist emplaces arcs of terror
If only to ensure his stories sell,
While we who count our syllables and rhyme
Say nothing of the creatures straight from hell,
But scribble in the margin of our error.

— C.B. Anderson

THRESHOLD

On the new century's threshold –
 unmapped exile of time and place –
 she remembered a distant window in another
 country, where the gray houses would come to offer
 their
 looming shadows at the night-shrouded market-
 square for an awed child's soul to choose from,
 when a horse's hooves played such dark music on
 'the snow-hushed cobblestones and the ethereal
 light of gas street-lamps illumined such
 infinite loneliness, punctuated only by
 an occasional church bell tolling,
 that she wished to go back to that severed
 omniscient talking horse-head and that
 barefoot goose girl on the black-and-
 white pasture of her fairy tale book-
 for that other mystery,
 which spoke not in silence but words,
 and knew nothing of passing time.

– Ruth Kessler

THE ABANDONED TOWER

“Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower that
 reaches to the stars.” Gen. 11:4

I was born where the ancient ruins wait,
 an oval mound of rubble no one tends,
 and yet they named its desert town “God's Gate.”

I was the lonely one of all my friends.
 There was a shadow in me, cold and blasted,
 my kin who clung too tight to life could sense.

While mother begged, sometimes for days I fasted,
 then went at dusk to climb old temple walls
 and beat my back with branches while pain lasted.

They did not speak, those spirits of the temples,
 but garments rustled, footfalls went by me,
 as if of many people wearing sandals.

I knew I was a stem upon their tree,
 roots growing through this slender slice of cloud
 called life that scuds across the distant sky.

My town was in a siege by Nimrod's brood.
 From nightly vigil I trailed on dawn's skirt
 to find my household in a pool of blood.

Such sudden tragedies seem hardly worth
 the effort. I had no will to bury kin,
 my heart's blood drained with theirs into the earth.

As though struck mad beneath the burning sun,
 I sat upon the mound, and when night set
 moved on to ruined stairs I'd never seen.

They rose up to a crumbling parapet
 and I stood nowhere, on that starry ledge –
 beneath my foot, a small stone amulet.

The stone grew warm and seemed to hum a pledge
 of holy cities: hard to understand
 from whence came such a dream of pilgrimage.

A vision rose before me. I saw grand
 arches tiled with birds, a glistening portal
 of creatures gone to sea that once loved land.

I knelt and sipped from that dream courtyard pool,
 sleeping at last as though I had drunk wine,
 while buzzards wheeled above me in a circle.

The gatekeeper believed they were a scry
 to nurse me back to health; his wife was kind.
 They sold me, when recovered, to a scribe

so I could read to him as he went blind,
 while watching at the royal library,
 where no one ever came. I didn't mind.

I was thirteen. I learned the seventy
 first languages heard in the Babel tower
 and cures for which the ills had passed away.

At last, the old man died. It was my hour
 to serve the sacred books. I found Truth's name –
 a passion more acute than love of power.

Then, traveling as if on wings, there came
 four holy letters quicker than light or space,
 remembered as if wrapped in bluish flame.

The Name anoints and scatters without trace.
 To it I will return when I have died,
 waxing and waning on time's silver tide.

– Judith Werner

THE CITY OF ENOCH

"And Cain knew his wife, who conceived and gave birth to Enoch. And he [Cain] built a city, and he named the city after his son, Enoch." (Genesis 4:17)

Each night above the wheat fields on the plain,
The amber lights of Enoch's city blazed,
And woke exhausted, beaten serfs who gazed
As distant topaz glittered on their grain.
And come the dawn, in temples built by Cain,
Proud priests enrobed in jeweled vestments praised
The gods that blessed their city and had raised
Their merchant-kings on high, to rule and reign.

Yet all their gold was stolen from the poor
Who in back-alleys starved and cried for crumbs,
While in rank gutters trickled beggars' blood.
But now behold the city's courts of law,
Mansions, markets, theaters, coliseums —
All buried under waves of Noah's flood.

– Yakov Azriel

AFTER THE QUAKE

Treading carefully, down we go, a picture frame,
a president, Kennedy, saints and sinners, worry
beads,
a pile of rubble where the earth recedes,
objects scattered about this abscess, we come

a president, Kennedy, saints and sinners, worry
beads
play out their archeological stories, recommends
objects scattered about this abscess, we come
to gather up what's left, that we might spread . . .

play out their archeological stories, recommend
the wisdom of what happened, off to send
to gather up what's left that we might spread
the lore, their vital statistics, all about them,

play out their archeological stories, recommend,
a pile of rubble where the earth recedes,
the lore, their vital statistics, all about them
treading carefully, down we go, a picture frame.

– Zev Davis

THE LIGHT OF DAY

In a lodging house long antiquated,
Where I dwelt for some tumbledown years,
The fixtures were quaint and outdated;
The wainscoting, archways, and piers
Old-fashioned and still decorated
With fretwork and glass chandeliers.

In the resident parlor one morning,
A magical sunbeam burst through
The crystalline prisms adorning
A fanlight that colored the view;
And the world came alive without warning
With glints opalescent in hue.

With shimmers of bright efflorescence,
Revealing the light of the sky
In veils of divine iridescence,
Which brought for a moment nearby
A hint of the mystic quintessence
Sublime in the powers on high.

– Jack Lovejoy

HERO HOME

Grey day awaiting brown man in green
Woman standing beside yellow cab,
A proud confident look in her eye
Recalling a Silver Star clipping
Commending his saving some buddies,
Extolling the American way
Of brotherhood fighting together.
Hero Home.

Window droplets, kaleidoscope view,
Usher the way to the neighborhood
Where boards and posters mark the old path
To the sixth floor where they shared it all,
Before the Man took him away
From top-heavy table on holey floor,
Community toilet and kitchen.
Hero Home.

– Stephen Keller

THE WATER DREAMS OF A MODERN-DAY NOAH

Noah doesn't dream about beans
& tall wheat reaching for wind & sun.
Not anymore.

When he's not busy
collecting wood,
he stands on a corner, cup
of change at his feet.

He holds a gopher wood sign,
sometimes warning about dying & doom,
sometimes he asks for help
to build his pet project
on the abandoned downtown lot.

Nobody stops.
No one listens.

Every Sabbath, he stands the required distance
from the synagogue, shouts
until his throat burns
for water:

*learn what is drowning between
your mouth & God's ear,
feel holy when the ark opens,
know the history of suffering, when it will suffice,
learn to chant like the sea breaking
against rocky shores,
know all about absence, that the dream means more
than marrying a nice Jewish doctor.*

For his final sermon,
he finds a bullhorn,
forgets his usual rant about rain,
speaks his own modern commandment
to listen to our water dreams,
that they're loose shutters swinging
outside a window, open ajar,
an echo of the breath
before birds fly.

- ME Silverman

THE WORDS THEY SHOUT

The words they shout are boldly printed down
within a thousand hues and pages spooled
from daily scripts to gloss of fashioned gown
each written phrase is hemmed and finely tooled.

And shows rebblare their call to waiting ear
of nature harmed and victims hurt by greed
now dually wept in every flowing tear
in how to feel for families left in need.

But countless rants just fill a grander cause
to praise the voice above the aching child
as forest bleeds and growing hunger gnaw
the loud elite have righteous anger riled.

Yet actions speak without the death of trees
and helping hands can soothe the voiceless pleas.

- Douglas Stockwell

AT A RED LIGHT

At a red light where I idled, stopped,
a tap on the window, luckily rolled up,
a tap like a battering ram, a sudden blur
like lion in the eye of an antelope!

It was a wretch not waving evening news-
papers for sale, as happens at this corner
where the magician guy makes change before
the red light changes. He was waving roses,

it wasn't easy to see were red in the dark.
It was Valentine's Day at night, for love,
and he was hawking roses, was stuck with roses!
The desperate bearer under a burden of

symbols of affection waited under
the ticking of the light from red to go,
when red would again be lost in an awful pulse
of offer and be refused ha-ha repulsed.

Ferociously polite, he practically stood
begging holding roses in tin cup,
trying to buy some warmth for his apartment,
paying for heat and rent, not eaten up

by boredom of the world towards the cold
in which he lived, I figured, so unloved
he needed merely a smile of change out-doled
to keep the fiction that he felt approved,

and if you didn't buy (I bought) a flower,
it would hurt him, he was so unsure.
There went I but for the grace of Love
reminding me remember: help the poor.

- John Milbury-Steen

ELLIOTT'S BAGS

Dressed in black he seems
from several blocks away to teeter
down the still, dark streets
stretching to dawn, balances
large shopping bags
in blood-drained hands,
weighted like a scale—
bags stuffed with plastic tubs,
challot and wine to lift the poor—
this master of restoring hope.

- Steven Sher

THE POLITICS OF PRETTY

Mind you, I wouldn't be caught dead in pink,
and cute is a four-letter word,
yet sometimes prettiness croons to me,
about as energetic as a coconut cake,
but as irresistible too.

Portzamparc's crystalline skyscraper
makes glass cutting edge again:
Its angles play alto saxophone.
Aalto's buildings embrace but never, heaven forbid,
cuddle.
Renzo Piano sure doesn't suffer prettiness gladly.
And Tange – but OK, having established my
credentials,
I'll get to the point: I like Lutyens too.
He coats his buildings in the sepia of memory,
he serves hot chocolate and oatmeal cookies to edgy
questions,
while his buildings spontaneously generate
sheepdogs
who flop in front of them.
A cottage industry of nostalgia.

Twachtman, plump with prettiness for most of his
career,
once, just once, went magically matte,
after drinking enough sake to sober himself.
But while I'm into this confessional mode,
I'll even tell you I love PreRaphaelite paintings.
Dante created a whole new circle
for people who turn chiaroscuro into Technicolor.
And yet--skip the balsamic vinegar,
pass me the Rossetti instead.

– Heather Dubrow

NEW YOUNG CAREERIST

You've been here before.
You go undercover now below surface
while others rise, ride over for their spotlight
at the top of the wheel. Now she strives

to please patrons, co-workers, bosses,
in ceaseless over-thinking (something you've lost,
thank seasons). But passing her
on the clock there's the same blind tears

same inner focus melting
in vigilant self-judgment, hopes hitting against
what is stealing the perception of others
that seldom can be changed from the under side.

I would embrace her, but that would not be my
place
in this world of jurists. She must fight
her own struggle. I go undercover. Wait
an hour, touch a hand to her straight shoulder

offer a smile and tea. She hasn't
left off crying at her desk softly pulling
together, her stats, her status, the fight, no flight.
Something
you would've pondered alone

in the stall of a corporate bathroom.
There's nothing you can do.
Take tea with me? Yes! and sitting more erect
she fishes out the strongest and the blackest.

– Marilyn E. Johnston

“GO UNDER, LOVELY SUN “

Go under, lovely sun, they thought
Very little of you, they knew you, holy one, not,
For without toil and silently you rose
Over a people for ever toiling.

You rise and set friendly for me, O Light!
And well my eyes perceive you, glorious one!
For godlike, silent reverence learned I
When Diotima healed my feeling.

O Thou, Heaven's herald! how I listened to thee!
To thee, Diotima! beloved! how these eyes
Looked up, shining and thanking,
From thee to the golden day. Then purled

More livingly the brooks, the dark earth's blossoms
Breathed lovingly on me,
And smiling over silver clouds
Aether bowed down bestowing his blessing.

– Friedrich Hölderlin

Translated from the German by Robert Glen Deamer

REVISITING THE RUINS

Like Gibbon threading through the ruins of Rome,
Dumas on some Sicilian mountainside,
Like Byron on a sunlit isle of Greece,
I wander through a dry and dusty place
And think what was, and then what might have
been.

– Leonard H. Roller

VII. Accelerating

PALPITATIONS

The same erratic pounding
means I am my mother's
son: same chugging
chest, same straining
squeezebox tightly wound.

This devoted heart
constructs a world
of urgency—a constant
mother, my motor
and my mooring—

the while plodding on
from thump to thump,
emphatic flap to flop
and rest, and echoes
her footsteps' return.

– Steven Sher

THE LIVING CENTER

The attendant buzzes us in (never have
we had
such a welcome), twenty wheelchairs
wait
patiently for us to open the door
wide enough and long enough to
manage
an escape outside "The Living Center."

They find each moment longer than
their
drawn-out lives-hours and weeks and
months
and years and ages now stranded on
islands

endless days. An old, old woman lifts
her hand
as we pass by, and when you clasp it

(you a stranger), her smile embraces you,
the room around her loses its homesick smell.
Who does she think you are? Like Jacob
wrestling with the angel at Peniel, she will not
let you go, until you kiss her, and then she sinks

Into the comfort
of a lost
remembered
Love.

– Charlotte F. Otten

Walk on Down the Hall: A Meditation on The End

~Inspired by a Kabbalist, meditative practice. Dedicated to la familia Farji y mi Mama.

1. like a frog on a lily pad, sitting contemplatively
("dreaming back thru life, Your time – and mine accelerating")
2. oh, cruel and causeless life
(*yitgal v'yidka* —they were not ready)
3. the birds' chirpchirpchirp > the mechanical whirring of the
pool-pump motor
4. rooftops like that at 34th st stir up sweet memories
(when they were here)
5. did they hear Black running after them?
(quickly catching up as always)
6. the constant whirwhirwhir soothes me, but the orange/yellow
sounds of the sun's rays interrupts these thoughts
7. and also, the sun's yellow/orange rays exhilarate me
(faintly whispered, "you breath in the Nile")
8. rumination energizes and intensifies everything again!
9. bend + sit = easy
(ultimately, he¹ couldn't bear it
and he² was spritely...but then he jumped)
10. he¹ catapulted me into the air ::splash::
(playing *The Little Mermaid*)
11. in my heart, i know that one day – *chus v'chalila, pe pe pe* – we'll
all be with he¹ and he²
12. *shema Israel, HaShem Elokeynu, HaShem echad*
("strange now to think of you, gone")
13. it plays with my hair and dries the tears off my cheeks
("work of the Merciful Lord of Poetry")
14. the awesome Blue soars – expansive, boundless
(there they are)
15. to their female soulmates, a meditation on the End
(chirp chirpchirp chirp chirpchirp chirp (it's them))

– Sasha Tamar Strelitz

[UNTITLED]

I contract into my 4 cubits
and expand with each day.
From the aperture in my ark the world appears
more tranquil than before.
I've gotten used to moving less,
breathing less.

This is my life for the time being,
aureoled with a film of resignation.
One can see a lot with closed eyes:
it would take innumerable nights to describe the
abundance.

Human voices from other nights still echo here –
they grow fainter, as I do.

– Ruth Blumert
translated from the Hebrew by E. Kam-Ron

THE LAST SIGHT

What is the last fading image on your retina
 glaring light flicked away by the haughty surgeon
 the overall dark heaved into final suppression
 a mad truck roaring down on your soft vulnerable
 flesh
 sparks flying off the water like liberated demons
 grasping for your sight
 the weighty sky submerging into the green heaving
 sea
 the blank-faced soldier rushing at you with
 gargantuan bayonet
 fearing his own demise made a victim of your honed
 weapon
 the unswerving bullet heading for your nose
 child staring up at you in wonder
 terrorist's bomb exploding in your face
 a red-hot blanket flung over you and your world
 the passing parade of lost moments
 the montage of long-lost lover faces
 your tear-begrimed eyes
 your sweet goodbye kiss
 your sad wondrous eyes.

- Gerald Zipper

THAT MAY MY MOTHER LIT A CANDLE FOR
HER MOTHER

I knew it would be one
 of the last times, that
 the extras she bought
 to leave in my house
 would be too soon
 for her but never if
 she thought it. Often
 at my house in May
 for her birthday or
 Mother's Day, my
 uncle called to
 remind her of the
 date, as if she would
 not know. Shadows
 of the light flicker in
 the laundry room
 where nothing could
 catch, blackening
 parts of the room
 like the graphite
 darkening names in
 her address book
 she already had a
 good start on

- Lyn Lifshin

GOOD NIGHT

He wants to remember
 the same place
 rows of vases
 with tulips
 a walled in keyboard
 with a musical score
 unattended,
 unfinished letters
 on the desk,
 a flask
 without wine,
 yet everything
 is soulless
 with only a few regrets
 for the silent past
 to connect the puzzles
 on the gaming table,
 you dream of warmth
 the sea and sunlight
 walking with
 your partner
 with the shadowed face
 not knowing
 what mortal
 expects to be here
 without a watch
 in the last hours
 now absent.

- B.Z. Niditch

EMPTIED DRAWERS

Emptied drawers scratch closed
 hunger for folded clothes
 Now smoothed into boxes
 labeled
 Taped
 Stacked
 The bottom row groans as the room fills.

Sounds echo as I snatch at his old shirts
 The ones that should have been given away
 I race to get them to the thrift shop
 Before the Heirs stomp into the house
 Their hunger and thirst clamor for attention.

I crave some extra time
 Some space in my mind
 The courage to grab a decision
 To jump up on the ramparts
 And defend our future
 From the threatening past
 Their desire to include every scrap
 Everything he once touched or wore
 - a shrine -

the whole house could convert
if I let them.

– Mindy Aber Barad

THE KNOWN

The cupboards
Aligned in perfect order
Your measurements
On target
Stacked dishes
Behind the oak colored mask
Built by hands
Calloused in fear

I can feel the explanations
On my skin
The same skin you bruised
In the name of discipline
In the name of all you knew

– Cathy Porter

A CURSE, AND AN ASTONISHMENT

Jeremiah

I translated my parents' Yiddish biblically –
God doesn't strike us with two rods –
though *sticks* is more precise.

God's wrath softened by Talmudic solace, e.g.
I was myopic, but I had good hair.

That seemed fair, I thought, in the way
adolescents think, though I already knew
their siblings in Europe had been turned to ash.

After I learn about the things growing wild
in my husband's body, I wait for the good news.

Will it be benign gratitude,
each day made holy by the sun's rising?

Will I set aside distraction, turn
like a sunflower only in his direction?

If there's a scale, a thousand poems of mine
won't outweigh the theft of time.

Still, I will stand on it,
because there's no other place to stand,

and I will stack up on the other side
small stones of syllables, shards of our days.

– Florence Weinberger

ADVISED

Speak to God, the rabbi suggests.
Spend some time every day speaking to God.
Tell God everything.
Cheaper than analysis.

I thought God already knew everything.
The rabbi must have something else in mind,
maybe guidelines to inner trials and sentencing
when I'm smitten with remorse.

I've written hard-bitten poems about my father.
I called my mother when she least expected it,
as if her sanity was my enemy; I forget who taught
me
how to throw down spikes on the way to
forbearance.

Then there's the matter of figuring out if
forgiveness
annuls the past or anneals it. And what good would
it do,
they've passed. This is how I distract myself,
instead of
engaging my heart's marrow, day by day, like the
rabbi said.

– Florence Weinberger

JUST BEFORE DUSK

Just before dusk, a light supremely
ardent, festive, yet sad, discharges
beauty upon iridescent feathers,
as the vast body of a wild tom turkey,
its black beard dangling, floats above
the slow, stately rhythm of its step
and gradually dissolves into the under-
brush. How, with words, to hold
a covenant with this world in its brevity,
where the radiant and incongruous combine,
then vanish into darkness? What to make
of this short and narrow season, so fervent
in it embrace, so frail in its lasting?
Brittle beauty, grant me one more hour.

– Constance Rowell Mastores

IN NEW BEDFORD

Young ones dawdle, while the old folks rush from
town
to crowd the hearth. Aunt Ida rests alone,
slouched in her chair, reviewing family funerals.
A wearied matriarch, decades in this house
she'd ladled soup, darned socks, and sat for pictures,
new babies nestled in her lap each year --

grandchild after child and just this year
the first great-grandchild cradles in the town
where she was born. It is a puzzling picture,
this seasoned wife becoming widow, alone
among her closest kin. Her sturdy house
feels warped today, unhinged by Uncle's funeral.

Aunt Ida saw to grievous duties -- the funeral
home, a shovelful of dirt, the year
of Kaddish prayer -- all rituals in the house
of mourning for Uncle, beloved judge in town.
We knew the story -- how orphaned and alone,
he'd worked his way through law school, always
picturing

himself in chambers. Indeed he looked the picture
of success mere weeks before his funeral:
a final portrait in which he stands alone
in stately robes next to his bench, the year
of his appointment on the wall, and town
hall seen through courtroom windows. He kept his
house

and books arranged in order, and hoped the house
of God was set for him. Though not a picture
of well-being, his wife gives solace to townspeople
come to pay respect, but the funeral
defeats Aunt Ida. Her well known grit, year
in, year out, falters from being alone

without the Judge. There is no peace alone
for her, no place as mistress of the house.
She foresees despair her consort in the years
ahead -- an unfamiliar family picture --
and her step is heavy, slow, funereal.
She feels a burden, even to the town.

Aunt Ida dreams alone, a woeful picture.
Her house is now the family's, and her funeral
This coming year will not surprise the town.

– Virginia Wyler

from UNFORSAKEN
for my mother a" h

Slowly
disappearing
you sit before me. Each
day I call out "come back" to more
of you.

*

Shall I
ever forgive
the spring for coming late
this year, when she who loved it could
not wait?

*

We came
into this world
for love, for company,
and perhaps for these partings most
of all.

*

If you've
gone to the world
that is yours, the work of
your hands -- surely it is a world
of light.

*

This is
the eleventh
Prelude. It says
how very sweet this life is and
how brief.

– E. Kam-Ron

L41

Holding on to the others this hillside
knows what it is to live alone
all these years falling off-center

though you no longer follow
still back away till your hands
and the dirt once it's empty

both weigh the same -- a small stone
can even things out
the way this casket on each end

leans toward shoreline, smells
from a sky unable to take root
or balance the Earth, half

with no one to talk to, half
just by moving closer -- what you trim
floats off as that embrace all stone

is born with, covered
till nothing moves inside
except the lowering that drains forever.

- Simon Perchik

THE LOST ONES

On the hillside of stones
those who live below ask only
for light.

Their unseen voices lift from earth,
from our innermost terrain,
little echoes that have lived
in us and become us
over and over.

And we the surface treaders, we
walk among them offering our frail
words as though these might become
that answering light.

And we know we have failed them,
those whose seed became us
that we might walk in light
even among shadow.

So that standing here we fall dumb
having only hands with which
to touch these stones that own

us, that become the voice
of what is to be to the
end of our lives.

- Doug Bolling

HAKKAFOT

a birthday poem for Rabbi Dr. Zvi Faier zts"l

There go the dancers, round and round and round,
One holding in his arms, with strength of joy,
The scroll on which his thread of life is wound,
Another hoists a little girl or boy
Onto his shoulder, who will doubtless hold
Among their earliest memories this ride
Through many turns, until they grow as old
As the bent man who trudges by their side.
I think of you, who now have left the dance,
Whose voice no longer swells the Torah's song,
Yet who are present in the furtherance
Of that which fired your mind and kept you strong
And holds you now within that day which gives
An everlasting birth to all that lives.

- E. Kam-Ron

VIII. Meanings that Matter

DAVID STOPS TO REGARD A RAINBOW ON HIS
WAY TO TEACH A CLASS

in grammar, syntax, usage, style:
what's required, what must be done
to shape our language into sentences
(perhaps of an essay, perhaps of a poem)
eloquent and elegant to carry
meaning that matters through blue sky
after a storm has torn the heavens
and we need our most sacred watchful eye.

- Katharyn Howd Machan

STUMPS

We become despoiled. Sometimes
Not even a word remains,
Becoming a trap in snow
Where the whole wilderness rhymes
With nothing and coldness reigns
In a world buried in woe.

But a word's a funny thing.
Like a blackened stump's green shoots
Adorning its wooded grave,
Our longing sprouts every spring,
For the Earth retains the roots
Of the meaning we still crave.

Forests we worshiped once:
Now take your well-earned rest
Under this quilt of words.
Your marvelous jeweled crowns
Honored the tongues of the blessed
Who now sound just like birds.

- Lionel Willis

CAVATATION

A descent into the cave
Of the poem,
Or when it has been written at a place
With momentary slippage,
A place associated with the sense
Of a person beside himself,
Or of people aside themselves,
To one availing of only half of his own diction,
And the other half after the fact.

- Lee Goldstein

I flew so far within, at such a height,
my raven cloak of mourning molted white.
Once I was blind, and now I've found release,
to nestle winged freedom in your peace.

Once I was Noah's raven in a land
where ornamental gods of stone still stand.
Now I'm a white dove, winging back through space,
surrendering my olive branch of grace.

- Judith Werner

FOLIO

All the myths
I came to know,
Nor Dad
Did even care,
Bestow themselves
To poetry --
His Science unaware;
All the math
My father knew
Nor ever
Did I learn,
Reviews
Itself each
Numbered page
Of poetry I turn.

- David Kiphen

TO A FRIEND WHO THINKS HIS WORK HAS COME TO NOTHING

to the one and only tragedy, the passage of time.
-Simone Weil

You say you now make verse who aimed at art?
Verse is not easy. You spent your youth in hard
pursuit of its subtle knowledge, while others said
to forget the dead and embrace the newest fashion.
Yet, facing disillusion, you counteracted
in exclusions, considering in meter and rhyme
the one and only tragedy: the passage of time.

Do not desert good sense and skill, though others
prefer the ambitious boys whose big lines swell
with spiritual noise or flaunt a presumptuous
innocence. Fierce impersonal forms have moved
your pen; and, at times, a wise indifference.

- Constance Rowell Mastores

TWINKLETOES HAYIM

drunk from the plenty cup
prodigious profligate poet producer
wizard
moonstruck sun dazzled word player
followed his bouncing ball umpteen ways
imaginatively copulated word startups
breeding couplets koans free forms
pranced pondered prodded pricked polished
sighed sounded soared leapt heavenward
juggled gurgling throbbing skilled ambitious
side-stepping
quickstepping jitterbugging waltzing
freely floating
running racing fast as thought can reach
versifying essaying inspired
plucky, perhaps in parts puerile,
pretentious in the not pejorative positive striving
sense,
aspirational,
neither perfect nor not perfect. polished,
breathing in words
exhaling poetic prayers
exaltant exuberant
assiduously attentive to his life's purposeful self
imposition
ambitious transforming essays to poetic prayer
forms
conjuring torrents of penned paper craft
floating flotillas of spaceships shimmering
rainbow hued strident or pastel subtle
honey toned honed
voluptuous extravagant
or shrunken word-wise waste not precise poetics
sounding shells horns trumpets tinkling stalagtitic
drippings
soaring sinking erupting energy radiant against
inertia
frothy flotsom algoid wavering or sediment solid
Hay'im jests in earnest gestes,
tinkers words
dances His words
inspired inspiring
facing eternity's absolute
inhuman silence

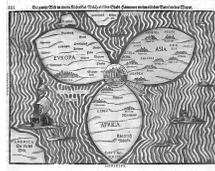
- Judith Issroff

DUN ARANN

Aran Islands Poetry Festival 1999

Two thousand years of stone and stone and stone:
these walls a circle in a circle, high
atop an ancient island, clouds of bone
above deep flowered grass, in Celtic sky.
We listen to the poets share their words
in Irish, English, English, Irish, lines
as intricate as thunder warning birds
that freest flight is more than wings from vines.
Wind stiffens; how can we hold to this place
of shared commitment? History has torn
us into separate truths beside the face
of justice, even though new poems are born.
And yet, hope makes a marriage in this day:
time-touched, here joined, we stay and stay and stay.

– Katharyn Howd Machan



CIRCLE DANCE

Circles dance under grapevines in the breeze,
dancers in white garments, borrowed robes,
singing rondeaux under grapevines,
dancing to drum beats with the song of birds.

Circles dance up the hills, up to Jerusalem,
up to the Mountain of Myrrh, through the seven
gates,
down the narrow alleys, along the tunneled ways,
holding hands, for in their dance they are
complete.

And on the Mountain of Myrrh
Forgiveness and Truth hold hands with Peace
and with joy they dance
in the center of the circle dance.

– Ruth Fogelman

Let's dance to celebrate life
in infinite circles of kindness.
Our hearts keep the beat
to the swing of joy.

Bracelets swirl
on smiling acquaintances.
Dancers hold and turn
sharing love in tune.

– Hayim Abramson

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