

Secret of Life  
by Diana Der-Hovanessian

Once during the war  
on a bus going to Portsmouth  
a navy yard worker  
told me the secret of life.

The secret of life, he said,  
can never be passed down  
one generation to the other.

The secret of life, he said,  
is hunger. It makes an open hand.

The secret of life is money.  
But only the small coins.

The secret of life, he said,  
is love. You become what you lose.

The secret of life, he said,  
is water. The world will end  
in flood.

The secret of life, he said,  
is circumstance.

If you catch the right bus  
at the right time  
you will sit next  
to the secret teller

who will whisper it  
in your ear.