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.