

FIVE FINGERS

When you exited your mother's cunt at a quarter to midnight
on *Shabbat*, the sun was about to set.

Your mother, who never had any rest,
prayed you would die immediately
since you had caused her enormous pain
during the months of pregnancy,
on her upper left arm,
where an unnecessary itch developed, just like you.

You exited straight into days
eaten out by beatings and a narrow room filled with cheap
cigarette smoke.

You did not understand why the city you were born into
was called The Entrance of Hope.

Someone should have taken charge,
should have given out Claritin to passers-by.

An allergy for a child could become an infectious disease.

Now you laugh,
giving birth to words pregnant with meaning, letting go.

For some time now you have
been wandering around,
five fingers dilated, cervix open wide.

DANCE STEPS

When Grandpa Pappo would break into a dance
on the ballroom floor in Holon
people would crowd around him, clapping and cheering.
Pappo would wave to the crowd with his fez,
a red felt hat with gold embroidery he brought from Istanbul
on a British ship that had known many conquests.
Grandpa Nathan, his hat the color of ashes, matching
his pinstripe suit
never danced
except for the dance on his lips
the day I was born.
He lost his dance steps down the tunnels of Ghetto Lvov
when he saw how others danced there
on blood.

MEMORY

My grandfather had a son of a bitch memory
that made it difficult for him to distribute ice
on the old streets of his neighbourhood.
He caught himself constantly remembering
the days before the war
that froze the chambers of his heart, arranged
in small, salty blocks of sadness,
and how he was once an esteemed orchard owner in Buczacz
before someone stood him in the corner of the world
with his back to God
and a gun to his back.

AIRCRAFT

You will never see my sagging stomach sinking under the weight of time

And the children I brought with another

Even though my breasts still erect as the

Twin towers before they crashed

My body is already floating with aircraft

Well called an act of terrorism for the rest of my youth years

Leaving behind thick dust and the smell of good years

Burned completely in the

Crematorium of life.

At the end of the day I will die

In the arms of this who always

Saved me from the burning fire.

CHANGING VARIATIONS

My mother appears as a number of complicated images,
like skeins of wool tangled in the paws of a kitten.
If knitted on a single needle, she could have been an image
in a frame, taking on a different shape,
like a knitted *kippa*, for example,
rounded simply, devoid of fringes and tiny holes,
close to God in a certain form
rather than to impressive hell.

My mother is a changing variation of alternate
mirror reflections on the faces of other women
who gave birth to good children
from nondescript husbands
in a meaningless life empty of content,
still angry at their ovaries
for choosing to lay eggs on the floor of the womb
like balls in a lottery
in changing combinations that lack logic.

In spite of what my mother thought,
the day she spun my birth
the announcer announced it
with a flourish:

13.7.19.57.11.45.

You just won

the universal

jackpot.

CHARACTER

When you die it will be inscribed next to your grave
On the hot sand "She was a great poet"
Children that pass by will wonder
About the size of your shoes, the length of your dress
And if you were tall
Those that loved you dearly, how few they were!
Will bury you with your legs open the way you liked it
Wearing a wide brim hat and light make-up
Youngsters passing by will wonder
How big was your house and how many rooms you had
And about the depth of your character
People that loathed you will blend as a group
will cross the road and stand on the other side
where the Sea of Galilee is only a serving of anger away
Adults without the slightest interest in asking about you
Only one man, older than time, leaning on his staff
Mumbles meaningless words about the happiness you never had

A Holocaust survivor raised me

machine poison was my primary food

The first thing I realized

when I grasped the power of forgetfulness

was that had she tattooed a number on my arm

it would have been

Zero