

1974

Versions

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VERSIONS

1. 1913 (*Anna Akhmatova*)

Black road like a corkscrew,
drizzling rain,
somebody asked me
to walk with him part way.
I went, but forgot
to look at him.
Later it felt so strange
remembering that road—
mist curled around us like incense
from a thousand churches,
he wouldn't stop humming a song
that hurt me.
Suddenly at the end of the road we reached the dark gates
and he whispered "Forgive . . ."
and gave me an old crucifix
the way my brother did.
I hear the melody of a song
shepherds sing in the hills,
I feel at home and I don't feel at home,
I cry, I'm sad . . .
whoever you are
I need you, answer me,
I keep looking for you.

2. *The Tearing of the Mind* (*Uri Zvi Greenberg*)

Everybody cries Money! even the bums
whose lives go on forever.
The uniformed shitheads who used to police
the Temple are dead,
it's a dump of rotting stones,
people with small eyes use it for a church.
My family's here, donkeys are here,
sheep dung and man dung are here.
Not one prophet sings
in the caves about his vision, only

the radio and the worker speak.
This is a Jewish city.
This is the courtyard of the prison
where the lion that could tell the future
was locked in and eaten by his own fire.
When did it happen? Ask.
Ask the man who pisses against this wall.
This is the blocked Gate of Mercy,
timed to split open
stone by stone
when God comes down and faces it
and beats His fists
on the doors until they bleed.
But I won't see Him coming. Here
on the mountain where olives shade the dust,
their sap flowing down into the valley up the
other mountainside, across from me,
I'll be crumbling bones.
Nothing cools the searing of the mind,
the conscience blazing until
I can't move.
My legs won't hold up my body
and take me away from here,
camels groan, everybody slips money
back and forth, their hands are full of it
one minute, empty the next.
My whole family does it.