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Poem Ending on a Line of Celan

Carol Ann Davis

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CAROL ANN DAVIS

Poem Ending on a Line of Celan

For whom a prayer became
matter, ash.

Not ash, but
its tangled undercity.

If one's prayer is not unanswered,
but refuted by the same god,

god becomes
a sum of numbers,
a phrase rendered
in the surviving language. The living

do what they do: talk and forget,
as if both happen
in deference to the other.

Celan, giver of falsities,
does prayer reach us through language
only to reflect not up
but back into our mouths?

Is there no word which does not swim
in memory, does not corrupt
every good silence? That same problem
of understanding—

For whom a prayer became
an undone street, destroyed address:

'o none, o no-one, o you'