1974

Versions

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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.