

Aza Zvi

THE FATHER STILL SITS

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Translated from Hebrew by Gabriel Levine.

In a place from which rises a rock-bottom music and within it pure gold, wrung gold that shines towards you the melted wax and pondering wood, the shuddering of the fathers gaze at us, the dead who are most alive, where all is filled with their thoughts.

The gold they produced in their lives continues to exist, not in coins or bars, but in the bowing of the head, in the bending of the back and the broken wing which the father innocent-with-God left behind. His strength is in one thing – in one act and one love. Who is the man overtaken by age that cramps his stomach and crushes his thigh, even as he forges ahead heroically with his narrow chest, his swollen stomach and fallen thigh?

Is he one of the people of Pompeii, covered in a flash in ash and lava, was he once a Roman senator who sat in front of his desk, stern as a law-maker – a desk-playpen, or might it have been a balcony where he leaned on the parapet with its ancient bars? Not a parapet, not a staircase banister, perhaps a grid around a burial cave with a niche for a candle. Numerous undeciphered structures draw around its heroes.

In everyday life the hero drank tea, wore a robe which resembled a toga, and sometimes played chess against himself.

The sternness that recalled the sternness of a Roman senator, spread over the face because of its thinness, rested on the closed mouth that tightened the jaws firmly in order not to break down. He then appeared like a huge boulder in which the features of presidents are carved.

Afterwards, the doctors built scaffolds over the same body, and the body didn't respond to them; tracings of those same scaffolds exist in the poles behind the head.

The head bowed and the wing broken.

The mystery of the metamorphoses, when the child is the father of man, the father is the son, and the son is the father – each gazes at the other, each

extends a hand to the other, not really hands, but hands in thought, hands in emotion, the father towards the slaughtering knife and the son towards mercy.

Av-ra-ham, don't go there...the live man plays against his spirit; his ghost.

A person opens his eyes and finds himself in Egypt. Egypt of the dead and mute witnesses. Gigantic heads carved in the mountains. Abu-Simbel.

The young-looking witness on his one side, mummified and toothless...

And the father sits. My father sits says the son. There is great fondness in these words.

My father still sits. The world still follows its course, if he can sit on his chair.

But now he is being seated, for he is hard put to die – on a throne that is the throne of death.

The heavy head is observed with a heavy heart from the thigh and not from the shoulders. Death has already pitted the body with holes, a net of holes in the embroidery of tissue; lumps of nose and lips still invade the face.

Death pries open the jaw that was so firmly shut and wrecks havoc in the limbs.

The legs, mere slender shaft-bones, are crossed over each other.

Like a killing field: bone shod with black shoe erect behind a skull which doesn't belong anywhere.

The world seen from behind, its back hollow and fleshless –

And the man wanders, his soul wanders between straits, there the monsters have stamped on their faces his transgressions and remorse; his flesh is reduced to dust – decaying and liquefied, and the water has already turned into an abstract fire, and the fire melts in the air.

And the son leads the father's journey from material being onward, through the thundering elements. When he wishes he will construct the journey backward. The materials he transformed into nothing will again reassemble to become a father in his love.

