

AS STILL AS A BROOM

Love as still as a broom
leaning against a fireplace.

All the carpets swept,
all the ashes grated.

And the candles burned
down to the black wires.

And the windows frosted
starless, moonless.

No shoes under the bed,
no towel on the floor.

Only the crease in the pillow
and a smell I can't remember.

Stanley H. Barkan

From *The Blacklines Scrawls*
Cross-Cultural Communications
Post-a-Poem Series 1, Number 15
Copyright © 1976

BRIGHTON BEACH VEGETARIAN CAFETERIA
(for Celia—Tsivia—the best thing there!)

"I went back to Brighton Beach, to the vegetarian cafeteria I had never been to before, except in the memory of my childhood. When I stepped through the doorway, I was back in the Brooklyn of my bubbe, on the superline of food treasures. Trays linked along aluminum ledges--Russian and other East-European Jews stirring spoons in glasses, eating babka, sipping tea through sugar cubes bit tight between their teeth. Grandma, behind the counter, smiling: "What would you like?" I asked for one of the soups of the day: cabbage ... borscht ... potato. "... Vegetable," I decided; then mused about the pirogen, chopped herring, gefilte fish: "... And vegetable cutlet," I added. "That comes with two vegetables," said Grandma (I wanted to call her that). --Two vegetables with vegetable cutlet and vegetable soup!-- I selected what was featured on the marquee: creamed spinach. "And how about kashe varnishkes?" she offered. "Now you're talking!" I countered. Then she pointed at, picked up, and presented to me a challah-roll--fresh!--with real butter (margarine for everybody else). --Ess, ess mein kind!-- "What' to drink?" I asked. "First you eat," she said, "Then you drink." After I tasted my various vegetable delights, she said, "How's everything?" "Delicious," I replied. "Everything is wonderful. But you know what the best thing here is?" "What?" she smiled. "You!" I said. "Tell my boss!" she motioned her head to her left, towards a middle-aged man with a slight beard, wearing a small yarmulke. So I told him, and he said, "She's the boss." I turned back to her and wanted to say, Bubbe, what's your name? But, before I could utter my thoughts, she said: "Don't you know me? I'm *Celia*." --*Tsivia*! My grandma's name!-- She smiled, nodded her head knowingly (her silver and gold hair-in-a-bun a hazed aura), and said: "Zei gezunt, mein kind!" I left the restaurant but quickly turned back to look (for fear it might disappear). It was still there! I knew I *could* go home again.

BABALUCI
(in Sicily)

Gathering the stalks
of wild babaluci

sprouting out of the rim
of hills where temples

and amphitheatres
signify the ancient days

when simple people
climbed out of the valleys

to find the wind
to touch the source

Now we stand
like thistles amid the snails,

the conic shells
spiraling around the peaks,

wondering the how and why
of the rise and fall.

- Stanley H. Barkan

STREETLAMPS

Her marquee smiles—

Streetlamps gawking
in the alleyways

where blind cats
rummage in the dark.

Mirror eyes
reflect the souls
of passers-by

flashing in the neon smoke,

green cigarettes
in their glowing mouths.

Only the mannequin windows
mock her painted hips.

THE DREAMERS

You speak to me of rhymes,
The past, and glorifying times.
I nod my head
And wonder when you'll come to bed.

You lift your arm and cigarette
And breathe out from your nose.
You run your tongue along your lips
And make them wet.

I trace my fingers, just their tips,
Along the ridges of your spine
And linger in the line
Between your thigh and hips.

A little wine sits in the glass
Half off and on the chair,
And ashes spill upon the grass
Of carpet we bought last year.

You speak to me of rhymes
And turn your head.
I roll to my side of the bed
And dream of glorifying times
. . .of black olives and red wines.

CAFE KIEV

Cafe Kiev, I love you ...

I love the corner
(Second Avenue & Sixth Street)
where you beckon--
a beacon in the wilderness!--
thrust out between Ukrainians
& hippies panhandlers &
bag ladies cops &
robbers Korean fruitsellers &
poets

I love your greetings ...
from dreamy-eyed ingenues,
bushy-tailed Mid-western
coeds (bunked at NYU),
venders of *Der Forbits*,
44 Echo (~~Irish News~~), Screw ...

But, most of all, I love
your East Indian maitre d',
your fresh, peaches-&-cream
(just temporary) waitresses
sparkling at the thought
of serving me: ("Who is he?")

Borscht and pirogen
and apple fritters
and root beer floats
and challeh with fresh butter
tasting better than
bagels or bialies or
even fresh rye or pumpernickel

Better even than my bubbe
used to make.

day like today. Then, I've really got to watch myself. Soul is quicker than a wink. I'm hoping to last until mid- or late fall. After that, what's the difference anyway. Clouds all over the place; sleet and snow; not enough light for any respectable shadow. You should be helping me, you know. The moment Soul catches up with me, you're gone, wheter you like it or not. We'll all go into the ground together. So, how's it going, without me to back you up, so to speak?"

"Eh! What did you ever matter, anyway? As if you could have helped me out. Sure, you were always behind me (sometimes beside me), but the number of times you were up front with me, went first into the *tsuris* with me, I could count on one finger. A man's is always just alone. You and Soul didn't make a goddamn anyway. You were supposed to be a sign of what I am in the inside. What nonsense! As if there's anything in the inside but a stomach and a *smuck* and a hole. In one hole, out the other. That's the whole thing. What a man is on the outside, so, that's what he is inside. You don't need the eyes to mirror anything. And, as for you, Shadow, you're no Doppelgänger. You've been looking over my shoulder, reading too many stories."

"That's what you say. You should only know how many times I backed you up, guarded your rear. As for my illustrious German cousin, what would you know about literature or philosophy, for that matter? You were never interested in more than your stomach, your *puts*, and your *tochis*. "In one end and out the other" should have been your family motto." "Listen who's talking? What should you know but my *tochis*. You were always behind me. As for literature, philosophy--why don't you throw in art. All my life, I hate a poet, a philosopher, and a painter. Words and pictures! That's all. *vernicht mit gurnist!*"

"Well, I got to be going. A few more minutes and Soul will catch wind of our old argument. It's funny though; you're right about one thing: You never needed me. What does a shadow of a man need with a shadow?"

"Ah," Max, isn't it
a *shanda*? We still
don't get along, can't
see eye to eye (you
should excuse the expression).
All the time we were together,
I tried to convince you to see
things my way. So, what if it is
just for a little while ... your
journey in the flesh on the earth.
It's a cliché, I know, but no less true:
It's not the quantity but the quality.
How you live your life is much more
important than *how much* of it you get.
Anyway, I've got to look for Shadow.
Everytime the clouds come out, I think
I spot him. I thought I saw him over
there by the dunes. Just before the
large waves broke, and all the children
ran screaming. I better see. He may
frighten them. I'm off. See you when
you really want to talk ... and perhaps
then you'll see things my way--at last!"

II: SHADOW

I woke with a start.
Something was creeping up
behind me. I felt it slipping
along the nape of my neck.
"Nu, how's by you?" it said.
"Oh ... Shadow ... it's you.
What brings you back again?"
"I'm not back. Just hiding from
Soul. He's out there looking for
me between the dunes. I catch glistens
of him in the spume of the waves and
the children's laughter. It's all up,
you know--the game, I mean--if he finds
me. I'll have to go with him then. I'll
lose my identity. Then where would you
be? Just one more step, and you're in
the ground. I don't know. It's been too
short a time being on my own, at last.
Thirty days (and no nights) are barely
enough to compensate for a lifetime of
being just a shadow. Wherever you wanted
to go, I had to. Always just behind you.
The only time you got to even see me was
in the mirror or when the sun was really
high in the sky in the summer. As soon as
the stars came out--zip! Gone with the wind!
I like being on my own. Nobody notices me,
really. Except on a really bright summer

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

MEETING MY GHOST

In the time of your life, live.

--William Saroyan

I: GHOST

I met my ghost today,
sitting on the bench
on the boardwalk
in Brighton Beach.

He said: "How've you been?
How're you doing since I left?"

"Empty," I said.

"Well," he commiserated,
"it's only natural. I myself
feel a little spaced out."

I didn't answer. I just didn't
feel like talking. In fact, I
didn't feel like anything.

No appetite. No drive.

Everything just seemed to pass
like the wind. After a long
silence, my ghost said:

"You know, you don't look so good.

You need to get out more, mix a little.

You never would listen to me. While
you got the chance, I always told you,
live. *Ess un gedaink!* Now look at you!

Without me, you're nothing more than
a golem."

I remained silent.

"You really should have come with me,"
he continued. "Shadow left thirty days
before (in accordance with tradition).
Actually, he was supposed to return for
my departure; so we two could join, as
was *be'shert*. Now I have to search for him."

"So," I said, "go about your business.
Leave me alone!"

"But it really isn't any use without you.
No real substance. Still, I've been having
a real time of it. I get to go anyplace I
want, anytime. Hoo-boy! I'm telling you--
it's quite a feast for the eyes--you should
excuse the expression. Too bad, I really
don't get the chance to do more than that ...
that is, just look. It's a real shame. You
don't know what you're missing."

"You think so?" I said. "What's the difference?
Here today, gone tomorrow. You eat, you drink,
you *shtup* around a little--then, *drederon!*

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

ON READING MY OBITUARY
IN THE NEW YORK TIMES
--March 12, 1985

I didn't go
to my funeral today,
the day I died.

It was reported
in the papers,
The New York Times.

I felt, like Twain,
that "reports of my death
were greatly exaggerated."

I looked in the mirror;
I was still there.
I pinched myself and felt it.

I showed the obit to my wife:
She said: "What else is new?..."
I've been telling you that for years!"

I wonder what they had to say:
That I was a son of an ... immigrant
but the father of Americans.

That I worked
as a teacher--
but was really a poet.

I suppose my epitaph should be:
"Here lies one whose name
was writ on blackboards."

I wanted to go
just to know
what it'd be like.

It isn't everyday,
you understand,
you get to see yourself buried.

What a crowd there must have been!
Everybody coming to cry ..
but it was just some other guy--
with exactly the same name!

#

Copyright (c) 1985 by Stanley H. Barkan

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

PANHANDLER

" Roll down
your window,
Mister,
and don't you
be afraid--
don't you never
be afraid!
'Cause I'm always
polite, ain't I?
I take your nickel,
thank you,
and step
away
from your car. V

Note: A found poem

LINES

The black lines scrawl
along the corners of the night
tracing corridors in the caverned stillness—
graphs of grey shades to sable.

The reddened sun peers rays in umbered edges
waking the dark-light of evening's morning.

I'll slide my pen along the lane of my slant vision
and touch the colors vertical, outside. . .

But for the moment
I mark the stillness
with you alone
in a peopleless city.



Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

GRANDFATHER

"Giddy-yap!"
Grandfather
commanded
the horse
pulling the junk wagon,
black blinders
forcing a tunnel
vision--mouth bit
and halter--
reins to pull
to left or right.
"Giddy-yap,"
straight ahead
clip-clopping over
the cobblestones
to newer asphalt--
cold, as brittle
-cold as twigs
snapping after
snowfalls--
sprigs out
of the ice and coal-
black mornings.
I still see him
and feel the eyes
like small black coals
set against the snow
of all my street
gang as we went
horsey riding
carrying his auction
load--
Giddyapping through
the gutters of
East New York.
Still as a painting
in my mind.

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

TWO GRANDMAS

One grandma
I knew,
the other
I didn't.

This one shopped
on Belmont and
Blake Avenues
from pushcarts.
Took me with her
to the chicken market
where they plucked
and burned their feathers,
took out the whole eggs
and sometimes
~~the~~ eiyele
for the chicken soup
filled with necks
and legs
and onions and parsley.
Oh, the griebines
fried in the pan--
the scent floating
around the kitchen,
throughout the rooms
of our railroad flat
over the furniture store
on Sutter Avenue.

Grandma, forever cooking:
jarring blueberry jam,
boiling apples for sauce,
spicing herring,
chopping pike and carp
for gefilte fish.

We were always hungry,
anxious to devour
the scents,
the bits and pieces
of chicken with onions,
the shmaltz
on fresh rye bread.

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

TWO GRANDMAS (cont.)

Grandma stirred
and filled
our hunger.

Even now
as I remember
her shopping,
cooking, singing:
"Alein, alein--
alles far meine kinder."

#

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

THE AGUNAH
(after Enid Dame)

How could he leave me, his wife,
his ashes chayl, as he called me,
to fend for myself? Who will
teach my son Torah? How will
my daughter have a match without
a dowry? Now, what will become of us?

Yes, I know his soul burned
for the sins he imagined he committed.
Actually, he did nothing wrong; but sometimes
his face lost the light that sparked
when he danced and sang and studied
the sacred books; a shadow fell over
his countenance, and he would start
as from a dream--a journey into the dark
dwelling place of the yetzer harah,
where the Old Man would lead him and
hiss nonsense into his ear. So, I knew
that, one day, he would go off--not to
roll himself in the snow or to throw
himself into the thorns and thistles,
but to seek ... his shadow.

If I, a woman, would disappear for ten years,
he, a man, could choose another wife, instantly.
A get would be immediate. The Bet Din
wouldn't even have to consider. And so
he'd have another woman swifter than the fall
of a stone from a cliff to the water. But I,
a woman, must wait for the Moshiach before I
could consider him gone and take another.
What shall I do?

If I try to make a living, to ask a stranger
into my house, to taste my kugl or my varnishkes,
to fix his torn shirt or pants, maybe to clip
his beard--they'd all consider me a harlot,
a Jezebel. How then should I provide for my kinder?
What gates can I open, a woman deserted
by her husband, a husband I served so faithfully?

"Lilith, child of Lilith" is what the other women
will call me. They know their husbands' eyes
will wander over me, as if I were there for
the taking. The space emptied by his going,
they'd like to fill up in a minute.
Never mind that the Talmud says
that even an impure thought about
a woman, even to look at her little finger,
is as if a man had stripped her naked.

--more: no stanza break--



They all try to hide their faces;
they shade their eyes but not
the clouds of stormy thoughts gathering
over them, making them shake, shokeling
not with religious fervor but in mortal
combat: the yetzer hatov vs. the yetzer harah.

So, who will suffer an agunah in his house
or community, when this is how she affects
the husbands, the sons, the brothers--
luring them all like the children of Lilith,
all the hobgoblins and demons issued
from the seed she catches from the spilt
seed of Onan and the emissions at night
with thoughts of agunot?

It would have been better
to be Lilith, born separate, free to do
as I'd choose, at least not bound subservient
to Adam by his rib. No wonder Lilith ran
away, born herself of earth, like Adam,
equal to him, therefore, equal in choices,
free to utter her own thoughts, free to
pluck and taste of any fruit, free to wander
in the garden and even name a creature or two
herself: separate she could even brood her own
line of descendents, unlinked to the names
Adam conjured and noted as son-of.

So all the children of Eve, a second-choice wife
for Adam (even God makes mistakes!), are named
for him--not me!--and we--all of us--can never
howl free--be vildeh chayas, if we choose--in
the woods of our own way. His rib, indeed!

I must do what Lilith did,
go off on my own, children in hand;
I'll do my own naming, select my own place
and path, cast off my roles as ashes chayl
and agunah, and seek myself in the world
as Woman, woe-to-man, singer of the song
of myself--a person of my own choice.

#

Copyright (c) 1984 by Stanley H. Barkan

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Ick, NY 11566

COUNTING

I have counted
bricks on
a wall
opposite the window
of my ground-floor
apartment-house room
on Van Siclen Avenue,
East New York,
and wondered
at what I
could accomplish by
counting them.
What would I know?
And if I counted
all the leaves on
a tree, would I then
know the tree? Know
the wall of bricks?
Like the song,
if I counted "all the stars
in the midnight sky,
every wave and each
firefly,"
would I know
the sea, the creature's
of the land,
the sky?
When we map
sky into Zodiac,
as we have mapped
rivers and seas
and continents,
do we know
the world,
the universe?!

As a boy, I mapped and counted.

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

✓ *al*

HEELS-BEELS

Like a Dick Tracey
character,
I stilted my way
under the BMT "E1"
of East New York-
Brooklyn
borderline.
Elevated I looked
over the corner candy store,
Italian barber, florist,
upholsterer above which we lived--
long railroad flat where
Grandma, Grandpa,
Uncle Harold and Hymie
(just kids, then)
lived in the room
behind mine
looking over the roofs
where I wandered
surveying the little gardens
behind the walkups
on Snediker Avenue.

"Hey, Heels-Beels,
let's play!"

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

J

When he arrived in Arles,
he expected to find sunshine,
instead he found snow;
when I arrived in New York,
I expected to find snow,
instead I found a city of sunshine and light.

Thus it is with expectations:
when you expect the best,
you are tripped up by the gods;
when you expect the worst
--nothing at all!--
you are sometimes surprised
beyond your wildest expectations.

Great expectations!

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

STRINGS

I didn't collect
pieces of string

like a headbent
Maupasant character

but I looked down
at the ground often

seeking bottle caps
for playing skelly

lost baseball cards
"tickets" for bundles and knucks

marbles and filberts
to play banker broker

and ...oh, yes,
milk bottle wires

to string my tin cans
into telephone connections

over the rooftops
to ~~the~~ gang. /

It was only
a piece of wire. v

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

DREAMBOX

Where dreams are stored.

--Denise Levertov

Out of my blue locker,

my boyscout patches
and neckerchief slides

my certificates of merit
from junior high school

my foreign coins
and American stamps

my albums of photos
of cousins and aunts and uncles

my moths and butterflies
and beetles and rikermounts

and Yusel and Howie shouting,
"Heels! Come on out ^{to} ~~an~~ play!"

... the box where all
my dreams are stored.

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

PAYWACKET

Neighbors said
he crawled up
the driveway
after the car hit him

He lay there
black cat
on
black top

waited for me
to come home

as he used
to wait for me

to come home
from work
back arched
like a question mark

fur tinged brown
in the early summer sun

leaping over grass
and front-lawn fence

up and down
the trees
along
the sidewalks

where we would
jog together

He was a cat
you know

and he came home
to die.

#

Copyright (c) 1984 by Stanley H. Barkan

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

THE CATS OF JERUSALEM

They have
no allegiance to
Byzantine,
Crusader,
Saracen,
Armenian,
Ottoman, or
Judean.

Mindless
of sacred
earth, stones,
sanctum sanctorum,
they tread,

crawl,

paw

their earth,
their stones,
their passageways--
seeking nests
for kittens
born to
claw
and scamper
and meow
and howl
at muezzin,
shofars,
ululating Yemenites,
Falashas,
shokeling Hasidim.
Ears flattened
at perturbation--
the cats
know only
their own
way.

#

Copyright (c) 1984 by Stanley H. Barkan

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Herrick, NY 11566



THE FLEMISH VISITOR

She looked like
a Flemish painting--
her nose gnarled
as a tree in Arles
twisted with the subdued
light of the portrait's
reflection in her spectacles.
(Such spectacles!)

After the lights went out
and the people who dazed
their way through the corridors,
and the guard of the galleries
all swept out any inadvertent
lingerer (along with their shadows),
her imprint still remained,
etched on the glass frames
non-reflective surface--
caught as if van Gogh or
Rembrandt or Hals
had just stepped out of a corner
and decided to do one more
(posthumous)
likeness of yet another
Dutch or Flemish visitor.

after the van Gogh at Arles
exhibit at the Metropolitan
Museum/12/01/84

So
you've crossed
25 miles
of desert
in subtropical
heat with your
whole family and
all of their belongings
without food or water or shade
walking all the way

So
you've come all the
way from Romania
after hiding in cellars
for the whole of the war
without school and with
only scraps of food
and at the mercy
of your merciless
neighbors--everyone
looking for you
to punish you for
your similar difference

So
after the war
the liberators
hunted and hated you too
and worked you
and cursed you
and swore that
your difference
wouldn't matter
In the similitude
of comradeship

So
now you are here
as you say

So...?

IN OHRID
(Macedonia)

H. G. Wells
guides us,
our Virgil,
through the museum
of drydocked boats,
women with waterjars,
children with fishing rods.

In the center
of the panorama
of time
we enter;
the light
of the Byzantines
enters us
and we burn
with a blue flame.

The icons
fix us with their
direct stare
and we are
stilled.

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, New York 11566
(516) 868-5635

Bio note: Stanley H. Barkan, publisher/
editor of Cross-Cultural
Communications, a

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

MY LAST DUKE

She had
A heart--how shall I say?--too soon made glad.
--Robert Browning

You'd think that
smiling was a crime,
and what did I have to smile about?
A cold, drafty
palace ... who could
ever come here
and not wonder at
the things? But
him, my last duke,
caressing only his
objects--me ...
just another one of
them. It's little wonder
I could smile at
all. His 900-year-old name!
They'd all smile
if they knew how
little it meant
to be a duchess
for such a man
who possessed
but never gave,
whose every look
was cold flame.
Now I look out
of my frame
at visitors
he brings to
show me off
and brag about how
he asserted his authority,
planning for his next duchess.
Well ...
I'm still
smiling.

Copyright (c) 1984 by Stanley H. Barkan

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

x

INFERNO TREES

*Da che fatto fu poi di sangue bruno,
ricominciò a dir: "Perché mi scerpi?...
Uomini fummo, e or siam fatti sterpi:..."*

Like the trees
that bled
in Dante's *Inferno*,

these trees
in the Villa d'Adriana
seem as if
people were
torn out of them,

ripped from
the centers.

Parts of souls
still linger,

shimmer in
the night
of fireflies.

Stars echo
their coded flashes.

I, too, feel
like a soul
ripped out
of a tree.

#

Copyright (c) 1984 by Stanley H. Barkan

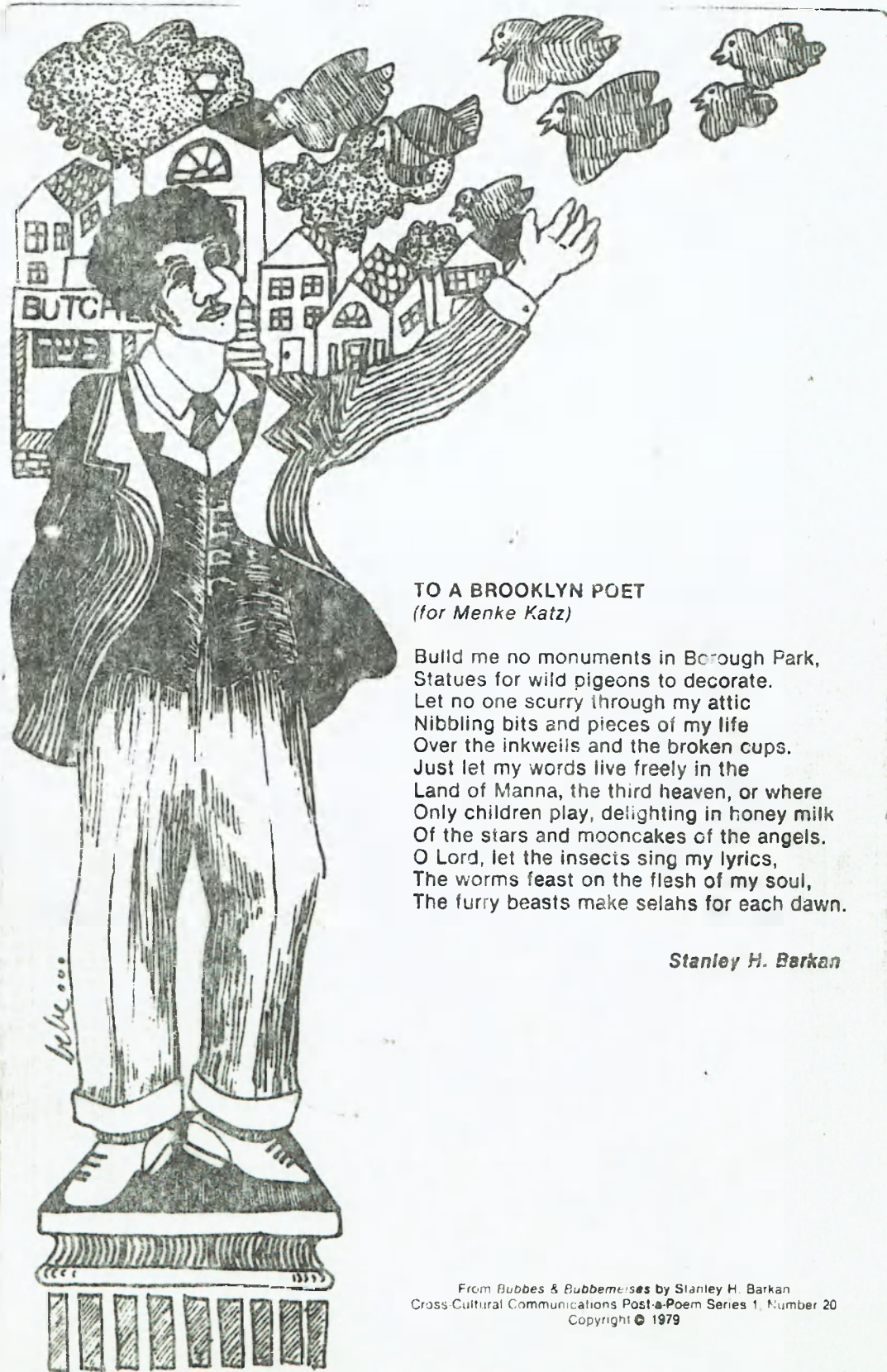
Note: When it had grown more dark with blood,
it asked again: "Why do you break me off?...
We were once men and now are arid stumps."

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

TO THE WALLS
(for Nat Scammacca)

So,
if there's no one
there,
I'll read
to the ceiling,
the windows and doors.
I'll declaim
to the chairs,
the books
on the shelves,
the empty glasses
on the tables.
At least
I'll be able
to read
what I want!

Copyright (c) 1984 by Stanley H. Barkan
Published in LIPS #8, Fall, 1984.



TO A BROOKLYN POET
(for Menke Katz)

Buld me no monuments in Borough Park,
Statues for wild pigeons to decorate.
Let no one scurry through my attic
Nibbling bits and pieces of my life
Over the inkweils and the broken cups.
Just let my words live freely in the
Land of Manna, the third heaven, or where
Only children play, delighting in honey milk
Of the stars and mooncakes of the angels.
O Lord, let the insects sing my lyrics,
The worms feast on the flesh of my soul,
The furry beasts make selahs for each dawn.

Stanley H. Barkan

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

CONSTELLATIONS

Constellations of paper

--Denise Levertov

Whole zodiacs
patterned on the sidewalk
blown over the puddles
the lakes of sails
triangled reflections
stringing out leaves of stars
one-winged comets
swooping upwards
down into the black holes
of sewer~~s~~ street corners
under the flash of stop and go.

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Terrick, NY 11566

LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW
... in remembrance of another
window lit.

--Yehuda Amichai

I remember
looking out the window
into the courtyard
within the brick of the
buildings where my neighbors
and I lived in old
East New York, Brooklyn.
Irises strung along
the corded rows:
Tulips, roses,
rainbows of flowers.
Over the rooftops:
lost punchballs,
softballs, hardballs--
all the circles of play.
Blackie racing wildly
over the tartops,
decorating the black
with brown.
In winter, the clean
white snow
covered all.

#

3/22/85

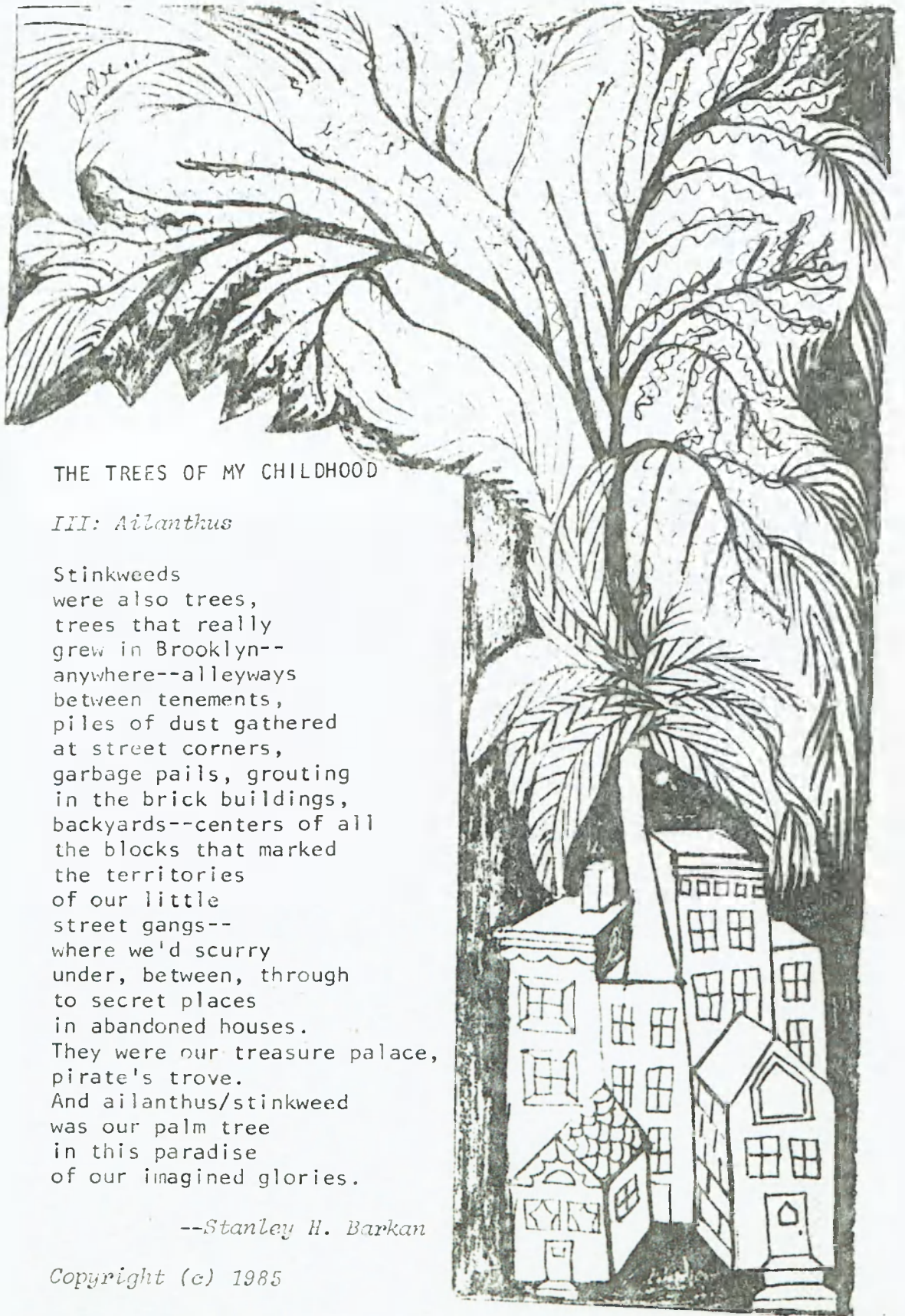
Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

THE TREES OF MY CHILDHOOD (cont.)

IV: Pines

Pines
were foreign trees
native to this soil
for older immigrants only.
We, the newer ones,
were the greenhorns.
When cold and ice
and sleet came--
piled high in
the blizzard of '47--
we built fortresses
of snow & ice--took
positions on either
side--used our orange-
crate rifles
and pistols--oil cloth strips
our bullets--snow-
balls our grenades.
We hurled our white
missiles of greeting,
flicked off the nails
our winter spinners--
all in our display
before the War God
of Christmas
pine trees.

#



THE TREES OF MY CHILDHOOD

III: Ailanthus

Stinkweeds
were also trees,
trees that really
grew in Brooklyn--
anywhere--alleyways
between tenements,
piles of dust gathered
at street corners,
garbage pails, grouting
in the brick buildings,
backyards--centers of all
the blocks that marked
the territories
of our little
street gangs--
where we'd scurry
under, between, through
to secret places
in abandoned houses.
They were our treasure palace,
pirate's trove.
And ailanthus/stinkweed
was our palm tree
in this paradise
of our imagined glories.

--Stanley H. Barkan

Copyright (c) 1985

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

THE TREES OF MY CHILDHOOD (cont.)

II: Maples

Maples
were also trees
in our shtetl
of Brooklyn, New York.
Their season was spring,
with pugnoses fluttering
like one-winged
butterflies, spiraling
all the way to the edge
of curb and gutter.
Tossed by small breezes,
hardy as weeds,
they nestled
into asphalt
~~and~~ forced
their way upwards
out of the cracks
of cement squares
where we played bundles
and checkers and nuts.
Pick it up, break
the wing and the center,
put both thumbnails
into the crack,
and spread--the seed
falls ~~unlocks~~ like a pearl
from a clam--
then pinch it on your nose--
Pugnose!

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

THE TREES OF MY CHILDHOOD
*... for the trees of one's childhood
are the touchstones of all later trees.*
--William Heyen

I: Sycamores

Trees
on my block
were all sycamores,
itchy balls dangling
in the early fall.
We'd gather them up
after they fell,
crush them into
bowls of wispy shreds
(mortared and pestled)
ready for pushing
down a girl's blouse
or other unlikely victim
trespassing on our territory:
Williams Avenue,
East New York,
Brooklyn.

IN THE BACK OF A GROCERY STORE

I, too, have sat in the back
of a grocery store
pondering the secrets
of the universe
eating pistachio nuts
from a broken machine--
cold in the dark Sunday mornings.

Fatty slices
of lox layered
on wax paper
topping thick cream cheese
overspread on salt bagels,
quarts of wax-carton milk
washing down the hungry bites.

The walls of boxes
packed and unpacked,
stacks of cans, soap, Brillo, ketchup--
deliveries to steam-hot hallways
tied high with last weekend's
newspapers, magazines, books,
cats meowing at the scent
in overpiled bags.

I, too, have yearned
in dark early mornings
for sweaters bursting
at the press of sweet young breasts,
the baseball smiles,
the Cheerios with apple slices,
the hard rolls and sugar-and-cream coffee.

I, too, mingle
my past moments
with clash of yortzeit candles.

- Stanley H. Barhan

ON THE MILKBOXES
(for Howard Strassman)

★
YES

On the milkboxes
in front of the old
grocery store

where junkmen
jangled:
"We cash clothes!"

and ices men
came with all
their foreign fruits
rainbowing
our appetites

and knish kings
rolled crisp
and hard-edged
squares of dough

and you and I
and all the huckleberry
gang played nuts
against chalk-scrawled walls

and Shimbo
incised deep shimmies
in the spring-warm asphalt

playing banker-broker
after the tossing
of bundles
of baseball tickets
and slide of soda caps
in the skelly square

and all the strings
of milk-wires
spread from room-to-room
house-to-house
along the rooftops
of our minds

and pigeons cooed
in their chicken-mesh coops
and stickball tosses
over the third level
of the great gas storage tank

and elevator ^{trains}
jostled their way
to old bathhouses

in the tired
cotton-candied days
of Coney & Playland

and the first bikes
rolled
their hooping wheels
all the way
to Canarsie

and the passing
of chow mein & chop suey trays
through inner-courtyard windows.

There we spoke of everything: #
"Ask me anything!" you defied...

On the milkboxes
in front of the old
grocery store.

lamento di cucciolo - gemito
 [dal mio cuore.
 ro trattenuto scoppiando nell'
 penetra nel silenzio mattutino
 cascate di Nespalem dove
 moni danzano il two-step sugli
 [arcobaleni.
 ca le mie lacrime; io canto
 bia dal Lago Owhi & io canto
 di tempi lontani io sono solo
 [tanto solo
 anco-amerikano mi rattrista
 ?
 il nonno) è morto
 nonna) è morta
 ri di guerra del campo di con-
 [centramento di Oklahoma
 orio nel nostro Paese
 morti
 sanguino
 fa male
 fa male
 fa male
 ne della loro vita, parte del mio
 [spirito
 argenti glaciali ai piedi della mon-
 [tagna
 re del mattino il mio cuore sor-
 [gerà
 fiume rosse e gialle danzeranno
 [sotto i pini
 ore tanto pesante finalmente si
 [sveglierà
 vivo
 Nemipu sono esseri umani che
 [respirano
 noi
 siamo
 vivi.
PHIL GEORGE
 (Nez Percé/Timshian)

NEPOLE DI SICILIA

per Phil George & Sal. S.

Casate di Nespalem
 leremo nespole d'oro
 cilia, dove,
 'passo felpato' va l'Indiano
 ve
 Siciliani tornando chissà da dove
 ari dalla Cina (*)
 avano la 'casa', la Sicilia
 dorso della Tartaruga
 ve ora finalmente cresceranno
 pole d'oro di Sicilia.

NAT SCAMMACCA

Vedi Seattle o T(h)rinacria
 (Bye Bye America)

POLVERE SI POSERÀ

nonna
 gevo a vederla seduta
 oggiata alla dura forza
 a roccia
 do la forza le è venuta meno.
 ne siamo arrivati
 onto?
 no poveri come la terra
 in mondo
 e lande pecore e canzoni
 ora c'incantano.
 dore polveroso dei
 teggi di Gallup sarà
 ricordo dei nostri figli.
 loro notti senza sogni
 ghi giorni di attesa.

2

RIPENSAMENTO

Cavalcando
 renne fantasma
 su alti precipizi
 nel canyon il fiume
 collana di torquato;
 il cuore in paura
 sente la morte,
 echi di mie grida
 implorando pietà
 cadono su tele di ragno
 e si attutiscono.
 Grida l'aquila
 e rimprovera
 il puma borbotta vendetta,
 il tuono romba lontano e vicino,
 fulmini a intermittenza
 colpiscono sporche coscienze.
 Scocco la freccia e
 inghiotto la gemma del Peyote
 sollevato, giuro:
 non ucciderò l'orso
 che a colpi di lingua
 sbatte i pesci sulla riva,
 perché egli è mio padre.
 Mio padre appartiene
 al clan dell'Orso.

LOUIS OLIVER/LITTLE COON
 - Piccolo Prcione -
 (Muskogee Yaqui)

da: «LA VIPERA CORNUTA»
 (Ed. Cross-Cultural Communications)

da: «IL FIGLIO DEL TRADUTTORE»
 (Ed. Cross-Cultural Communications)

IL FIGLIO DEL TRADUTTORE

I miei occhi costretti a guardare
 in due direzioni,
 divisi come quelli
 del pesce che nuota
 in superficie il suo sguardo a cogliere
 profondità di acqua e cielo.

Come il fagiano
 portato qui dagli Europei,
 io devo avere l'abilità di vivere tra
 i filari del Granturco
 o volare quando non ho
 più riparo.
 Una vecchia storia dice
 che le mani del Briccone
 una volta litigarono.

Una tirò fuori il coltello
 e colpì la sorella.
 Quelle sono cicatrici sul palmo della mia
 [mano.

JOSEPH BRUCHAC
 (Abenaki)

«Il figlio del traduttore» è un termine usa-
 to tra la tribù Lakota quando si vuol indi-
 care una persona di discendenza indiana
 mista con bianchi.

da: «NELLA NEBBIA SCURA»
 (Ed. Cross-Cultural Communications)



Se dovessi sentire
 una voce
 venire da
 una roccia
 saprei
 che sono le sue parole
 a scorrere in me
 come la luce
 quando qualcuno
 smuove le ceneri
 di un fuoco dormente
 di notte.

RAY YOUNG BEAR - Giovane Orso
 (Mesquakie)

CANZONE DELLA STIRPE

Non offendere
 il purosangue,
 non offendere
 i bianchi,
 stai lì
 al centro
 della strada
 maledetta
 e sarai colpito.

GOGISGI/CARROL ARNETT
 (Cherokee)

NEPOLE

(A Joe Bruchac, Kahionhes, Gogisgi, Li
 Coon, Lance Henson)
 Raccoglio nespole
 nel giardino
 di Nat Scammacca
 per gli amici indiani
 frutti di luce dell'arancio sole
 Frutti dolci
 nella coppa delle mie mani
 che bagnano le mie dita aperte
 intrecciate con corone
 di foglie e fiori
 mature gorgoglianti attraverso
 radici assetate sotto
 un cielo siciliano
 i semi come ciottoli marroni
 in una cesta piena, un legame
 tra l'isola Trinacria
 e la Terra Tartaruga.

STANLEY H. BARKAN
 (America)

CAMPEGGIO SULLA MONTAGNA PIOVOSA

«Non c'è confusione d'immagini nell'occhio
 ma una collina un albero o un uomo.»
 (N. Scott Momaday «House of Dawn»)

L'erba si piega: i suoi fili si rompono al
 [vento
 gli Indiani della Riserva dimenticano di
 [leggere

La montagna è snella nella luce
 c'è qualcosa di duro in questa terra
 ti rende cattivo nei sogni della notte;
 ti gonfi ma sai di avere un'anima.
 Perché ritrovi te stesso qui?
 Ti sei trovato in luoghi migliori, hai bevuto
 [birra
 e Yuma finché strade liquefatte trasudano

io sono la luce
 lo sono il cavallo az
 lo sono il pesce cl
 lo sono la luce ves
 lo sono l'aquila che
 lo sono un grappolo
 lo sono la stella pi
 lo sono il freddo c
 lo sono il crepitio
 lo sono il luccichio
 lo sono il lungoser
 lo sono fiamma di
 lo sono il cervo s
 lo sono campo di

lo sono il vertice

lo sono la fame d
 lo sono il sogno
 Vedete, io sono v
 lo ho un'ottima r
 lo ho un'ottima r
 lo ho un'ottima r

Vedete, io sono

POESIE PE VENUTO I

Pascoli di cervi
 si apposta nell
 Il salice del fiur

ai bambini che

Nelle loro cas

portatori della
 cantano le pre

Quando i cepp

cacciatori dal
 entreranno n

dormendo nel

attorno al lag
 si posano su
 Gli anziani h
 nuvole romb

accostano l'c
 sentono zoc
 tributì di ba
 il polso dell

da: TOI
 Storia

Alcuni bia

e lottaror

alcuni de

Richard
Kosfelonetz**Betsy Bardick****Stanley H. Barkan****Cosmopolitan Was Her Bible**

she was so kind to me
 my first day of work at the bank
 she took me to lunch
 told me all the gossip worth hearing
 was friendly off and on for months
 i had spent some of my time
 from high school up until now
 learning about men
 some of it was easy
 the rest wasn't
 but on a cold day in january
 in the ladies room on the second floor
 i got a crash course about women
 the conversation started out normally
 something about a sale on bras
 at bambergers
 and ended
 with her hand on my breast
 some panic
 and a whole lotta
 you've got to be kidding
 went through my mind
 i don't know if it was innocence
 or just ignorance
 but i stood there
 mouth opened wide
 brush in my hand
 laughing at her for minutes
 until she left
 a few months went by
 she moved up to personnel
 i was let go
 something about being emotionally unbalanced

Nespole

(for Joe Bruchac, Kahionhes, Gogisgi, Little Coon,
 Lance Henson)

i pick
 nespole
 offerings
 for my indian friends
 from ScammaccaNat's
 garden
 fruits of orange
 sunlight
 like nectarines
 overgrown
 berries
 sweet
 filling my cupped
 hands
 wetting my open
 fingers
 tangled with
 garlands
 of leaves and
 flowers
 ripe
 rainfall gurgling
 through thirsty
 roots
 under the Sicilian
 sky
 pits like brown
 pebbles
 a basketful
 to plant
 an earthbond
 between Trinacria
 and Turtle Island.

ScammaccaNat — found on an ancient Sicilian coin, thought to be
 the original name of Nat Scammacca, spokesman for the Sicilian
 Antigruppo (a literary-arts movement) and editor of the "Third
 Page" of Trapani Nuova, western Sicily's main weekly paper.
 Trinacria -- the ancient name for Sicily.
 Turtle Island -- the American Indian name for North America.

Monet's Garden

i sit
 in row boat
 cliffon embraces
 the softness
 of baby lotion
 and razor blades
 the hat i wear
 of woven straw
 hides from view
 my hair
 the hair
 that each
 night makes a
 pillow of satin
 for you my love to sleep on

COCKROACHES

(for David B. Axelrod)

-9-

It's all a plot--
They're there
Behind the walls.
Each of them
Is a bug
Listening, recording, reporting.
One day, after the long hours of dark,
We'll return
From the lamplit streets,
Step into the corridors,
Inch our way
Up the narrow stairwells,
Unlock the latch,
Slide through the doorway
Into the blackened room,
Flash on the lights--
And catch
All the cockroaches
Scattering
Across the walls,
Under the chairs & doors,
Out of the boxes,
Cans & bowls,
Across the tables,
Under the wall paper--
Exploding into our faces
With their Rorschach design
Moving,
 moving
Back
 behind
Away
 from our unlit
Consciousness...
But always there!

- Stanley H. Barkan

ISLIP poetry festival

14
26

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

CARESSING STARS

*... that caress of sky
and stars was unforgettable.*
--Chaim Potok

Reach up
for the light, radiance
gleaming out
of the depths (tohu bohu),
the other side (sitra achra).
All forms of light, emanations:
The light of understanding
before birth,
before the angel kisses
the knowledge from your eyes,
removes the flesh between nose
and mouth;
The light that burns
like a miracle in a cruse of
oil for eight days (with oil
enough for one):
NES GADOL HAYAH SHAM!
The branches of the menorah
blessing the Sabbath,
the festivals;
The Ner Tamid
ceaselessly illuminating
refracted prisms (chiaroscuro);
The candle ignited
instead of cursing the dark;
The first dawn--EN SOF
(white on black flame);
The kaleidoscope of rainbow
after forty rainy days
and nights;
The bridge flashing from eye to
object;
The yortzeit
for lost loved ones;
The bulb left on in your room
for fear of shadows;
The glare you dream you enter
through the gate of death;
The sephirot of Moon & Sun
(lesser and greater lights),
rays flowing over the Sea of Galilee
brushing your eyelids,
touching your cheeks and lips;
Your own fingers
--sparks in the dark--
caressing stars.

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

STENCL'S HEFTELE

I

Bits of light
of the Jewish moon
peek through
the perpetual drizzle
shrouding
the London twilight

lost voices
din between
the wide walks of Whitechapel
resisting diurnal whir

Stencl,
ghost of all the Yiddish poets,
last of London's diaspora,
still hawks his heftele
scrawls his lieder
on the scraps
of old end sheets
picked from floors
of broken galley boxes

where all the dead friends
stir in the pages
of second-hand bookshops
waiting ... waiting
to gather again
in East End cafes
to click spoons
in glasses of tea
and orate odes
to turn the world around.

II

But who will read
the Hasidic marks
he scratches on tissues,
listen to his anguished voice
yearning for the woman
who haunts the rooms
he memorializes on floors
below their past encounters?

Pushcart marketplace
once bustling
with hagglers,
passing travelers,
always on their way
to promised lands.

With no more tears to shed
for missing friends,
contenders,
lone-wolf voices
shrieking at the wallpaper--
setting trup above
the ancient calligraphs
where no speck of fly
permits on yellow space
around a word--
cartouches of names
of silenced singers
wailing for all
the lost children,
the great lovers,
scholars,
keepers of the secrets
of the universe,
the rolls and herring bones
the patching,
the mending.

Koyft a heftele!

NOTE: A. N. Stencl (b. 1897 near Sosnovice, Poland) has lived in London since 1934. This poem was written on the occasion of a meeting with the author in 1978 when Stencl was the last living Yiddish poet in London.
Heftele--little book.
Trup--cantillation symbols.
Koyft a heftele!--Buy a book!

Stanley H. Barkan
39 Wynsum Avenue
Arerrick, NY 11566

SAYING NOTHING

*Sometimes, when I talk to my mother
and she says nothing, I answer her anyway.*
--Hans van de Waarsenburg

She wanted to say something,
but she said nothing at all.
It was as always.
So I, too, said this kind of nothing,
and she answered: "Yes, that's true."
It was true that I had said nothing,
but she agreed with me anyway.
I know that the Talmud says:
"A word is worth a gulden;
silence is worth two."
So I continued with the preferred value:
two guildens for one.
Still my mother answered: "I agree."
Again I uttered nothing whatsoever,
but Mother insisted that I was right.
Was she trying to tell me something
more than the nothing I professed?
Nothing, like the hollow of an eggshell
with three pinpricks to suck out the yolk
"of nothing, nothing, nothing at all?"

Note: You can substitute "guilder(s)" for "gulden(s)"--
if you like in a Dutch translation.

tanley H. Barkan
39 Wynsum Avenue
errick, NY 11566

SAYING NOT WHAT I MEAN

*Some people suffer from a kind of aphasia
which causes them to say the opposite of what they mean.*
--Teneke & Leo Vroman

I wanted to say "cold,"
but, instead, I said "hot."
It's hot outside,
and so I must remove my coat,
my long pants, my shirt;
I must wear shorts and a T-shirt,
Indian moccasins, no hat.
I walk outside,
and it is snowing;
the frost makes long icicles
down the branches of the leafless trees.
The wind blows scarfs backwards,
and newspapers scatter
over the hard crust of white,
locking the cars in place,
fossilizing footsteps
tracked on the first layer
of flurries flating all the way
down the cirrus-cloud sky.
But I said hot,
and, therefore, perspiration
beads on my long nose,
trails down my cheeks,
gathers into pools
in the cleft of my chin.
I said "hot,"
and so I'm not cold.
Say what you don't mean--
and who knows?

THE WORM IN THE BOOK
(for Alfred Van Loen)

✓ NS

"The worm crawled in
on page one thousand and one
and left on page ten."

So it was written in pencil
on the top-left
of the title page
of the Book of Levi,
filled with fine line drawings
etched or engraved
on the pages of parchment
bound without glue.
The Dutch artist
of the continuous line
--like Brancusi's endless column--
pointed it out to me
as I held
with both hands
this incunabulum
of his family,
descendants of Moses,
whose stories had been passed down
from Sinai and Nebo
to all the children
descending to the valley of the Jordan,
crossing over in fulfillment of promises
--covenants made and broken--
told and retold,
inscribed and stitched together
--from time to time--
in books like this one.
But, somehow, always a worm in a page,
in an apple on a tree in a garden,
spoilng the linkages of millenia.

Let this epigraph be my epitaph:
"The worm crawled in ... and out again."

--Stanley H. Barkan

LITTLE THINGS
(after Nat Scammacca)

In the early morning,
dreams breezing
across my son's
unfurling brow.

The shades translucing
the first rays of sun
scattering
the night's last shadows.

My daughter's feet protruding
from her ruffled covers,
curled fetal position,
nuzzling her doll,
visioning tooth fairies.

Puzzles half finished,
chess pieces
fallen down around
the red & black squares.

Disordered clothes
hung over the doll chairs
overturned by books
opened to moon and stars

Twinkling out
of their
golden lives.
All the little things.

PUZZLES

Placing pieces
of the puzzles
on the table

my son
my daughter
a glass of water
the flower vase

musings about
the mystery of sunlight,
cereal & morning laughter

ribbons in
wild-braided hair
lost kits
yo-yos
strings & telephone cans

sister to brother
parent to child
rain to grass

what ties
one thing to another?

X

FATHER AND SON

*We are both old men and soon enough
I'll join you.*

--David Ignatow

As I grow older,
moving to "the best
that is to be,"
closer to the earth
from which we both
came, Father,

I grow to understand
your understanding
of me, your son,
I, father of my own son:

Forgiving everything,
forgetting nothing.

Oh, Father, how
you would smile
at me, a father,
forgiving and
understanding my son
--you and me in one.

Growing into myself,
the self that was you, Father,
that am I, Son,
that is your son to be
... that is us.

--Stanley H. Barkan

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566
U.S.A.

THE THING LEFT OUT

The thing left out
of the chair
was the rock-

ing back and forth
of Grandma sitting
looking out the window

{ for the kinder
who didn't write
who didn't call
who didn't come

{ waiting for the phone
to ring in the voices
that did not speak
until afterwards

{ until the placing
of pebbles on stones
in remembrance

{ of things left out.

From (forthcoming) Bubbes and Bubbemeises.
Copyright (c) 1983 by Stanley H. Barkan.

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

HEELS-BEELS

Like ^a Dick Tracey ^(X)
character

I stilted my way
under BMT "E1"
of East New York-
Brownsville,

Elevated I looked
over the corner candy store,
Italian barber, florist, ~~furniture~~ upholstery
store above which we lived -
long railroad flat ~~store~~

Grandma, Grandpa,
Uncle Harold and Hymie
(just kids, then)

living in the room
behind mine

looking over the roofs
where I wandered
surveying the little gardens
behind the walkups
on Snediker Avenue

"Hey, Heels-Beels,
Let's play!"

#

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

When he arrived in Arles,
he expected sunshine
but found only the snow;
when I arrived in New York,
I expected only snow
but found a city of sunshine and light.

Thus, it is with expectations:
when you expect the best,
you are tripped up by the gods;
when you expect the worst
(nothing at all),
you are sometimes surprised
beyond your wildest expectations.

Great expectations!

after visiting the Metropolitan
special Van Gogh at Arles
exhibit/12/01/84

Stanley H. Barkan
239 Wynsum Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

TALKING WITH FATHER

At times, I talk with Father.
He stares out at me from
the photos on the right side
of the bed with the rest of my family.
(My wife's family, on the left.)
He in his boxing shorts.
He in his World War One uniform
on his motor bike.
He in his wedding suit with my mother.
I say, "I'm sorry, Dad. I know
I hurt you. I didn't smooth your brow
when it was furrowing for the last time.
That time you fell asleep and never woke again."
He smiles, a smile still broad and forgiving.
I talk, he listens.
(I feel.)
He doesn't answer.
But I feel better
talking, talking, talking *[..now!]*
in the silence of my room *[]*
with walls covered with
photographs--still lifes.

#

3/22/85
After reading Amichai
GREAT TRANQUILLITY
"A Second Meeting with My
Father"

X

WORDS MY FATHER LEFT ME
(for Rabbi Jeremiah Wohlberg)

Words,
my father left me words,
words woven into stories.

Stories, as a boy, about Indians:
Chief Papaloochy and his sons--
Ug, Bug, and Gug.
Indians who trailed out
into the dark woods
on adventures with my brother,
my friends, and me.
Dangers lurking everywhere--
but the pathfinders were always there
to show us the way,
to save us from any real harm--
guides for our waking lives
after the dreams that followed
these bedtime stories.

Stories about the nails in the door
that doing wrong would cause
(Father hammering them reluctantly),
and how to remove the nails, ah ... but
the holes would still be there.
Mitzvot would remove the nails
but not the holes.

Stories about real adventures
along the cities of the Rhine:
Koblenz, Cologne, Mainz--
American Indians in the dark woods
running to the rescue: bayonets glinting,
bullets whistling in the blackness
of the blackest forest
of the nightmare world
over there where he fought the Great War
to make the world safe for Democracy.

Yes, he left me words,
only words, you understand,
words turned into stories
which I hear over and over again
before going to bed,
retelling them to my children,
--my son, my daughter--
before they go to bed.

A legacy far richer than all the gold
this waking world has to offer.

--Stanley H. Barkan

(a "found" peace song in process)

I

Radioactivity
Is high over Italy,
The dispatch from Rome
Said yesterday.

But the situation
Isn't dangerous,
That they all agree:

The situation gives
No cause for alarm.

REFRAIN

There is no cause for alarm,
There is no cause for alarm,
There's no need to worry
'Bout a thing.

(EVERYBODY SING!)

There is no cause for alarm,
There is no cause for alarm,
There's no need to worry
'Bout a thing.

II (original stanza, ca. 1971)

Kosygin talked to Johnson
In Glassboro City.
Discussed a non-proliferation
Treaty.

About the Arabs and the Jews,
They had nothin' to say,
And Vietnam must wait for another day.

The situation gives
No cause for alarm.

II (version sung in Sicily, Spring, 1982)

With CRUSE missiles
In Sicily
And British ships
In the Argentine sea

Picnics in El Salvador--
No need to worry
'Bout a brand new war.

The situation gives
No cause for alarm.

(This stanza is always in process.)

REFRAIN

There is no cause for alarm,
There is no cause for alarm,
There's no need to worry
'Bout a thing.

(EVERYBODY SING!)

There is no cause for alarm,
There is no cause for alarm,
There's no need to worry
'Bout a thing.

III

Now everybody's got
An Atom Bomb;
Now how can there be
Any harm
If everybody's got
An Atom Bomb?

They'll all be afraid
To throw one,
They know that'd be
The end:

The situation gives
No cause for alarm.

REFRAIN (funereal tone first two lines)

There is no cause for alarm,
There is no cause for alarm,

There's no need to worry (con brio)
'Bout a thing.

(EVERYBODY SING!)

There is no cause for alarm,
There is no cause for alarm,

There's no need to worry
'Bout a ... BOOM!

(Singer falls backwards on floor.)

#

Copyright (c) 1971 by Stanley H. Barkan

I

The rain came down, down, down
Upon the ground, ground, ground
And drowned, drowned, drowned
Everybody ...

For forty nights and days,
All our wicked ways,
Drowned, drowned, drowned
Everybody ...

II

Everybody better pray
That the rain don't come
No more
To stop that War
From startin';
Else
For forty million
Days and nights
With alpha/beta/gamma lights
The rain is gonna come
Down, down, down
Upon the ground, ground, ground
And drown, drown, drown
Everybody.

III

Chicken Little looked up high,
Everybody say, "Goodbye!"
The rain is goin' to fall.

But what good is there to cry
With no God up in the sky
To stop that rain
From comin'
Down, down, down
Upon the ground, ground ground
To drown, drown, drown
Everybody.

IV

Every Jack and every Jane,
Every mother and her child,
Must say these words
Of partin';
For the last,
I mean the final,
I mean THE JUDGMENT DAY,
Armageddon rain
Is a-startin'.

V

The rain came down, down, down
Upon the ground, ground, ground
And drowned, drowned, drowned
Everybody.

For forty nights and days,
All our wicked ways,
Drowned, drowned, drowned ...
Everybody!

#

Copyright (c) 1971 by Stanley H. Barkan

POETRY



HAUNTING THE AIR (for Adam Fisher)

when i am
petals of ashes
air-borne
flowering the shingled
surfaces of roofs
bereft of color
pitched to deflect
sunlight & shunt
rain downward

when i am
rain & tasteless
without essence
or shape, my most
terrible trait
& pellucidity which
cannot be justified
as some inborn
inherited quirk
but must be viewed
as inexcusable--a breach
of my promise to
always always be there

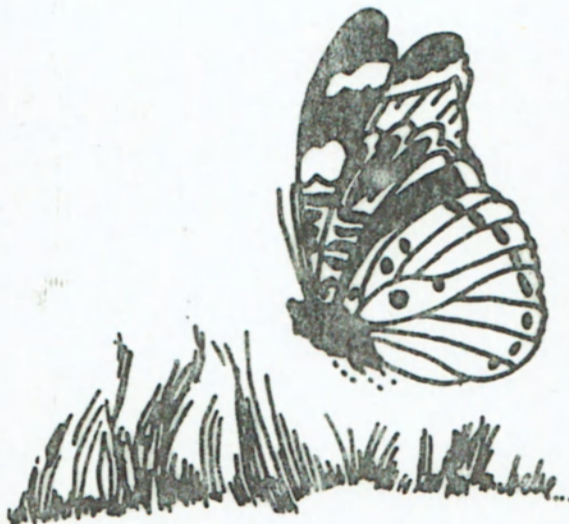
when i am borne away
finally by a liquid
that thickens only
when it freezes
to a place i envision
not in terms of space
but time
unpunctuated by motion
or light,
i will become than the very
hours of flowers
whose invisible flames
go haunting the air.

--J. C. Hand

ONE GRAY GULL (for Donald Jenkins)

One young gray gull braves
March gusts, standing in a tar
lot by the Peconic. Head cocked,
he eyes me as I throw bread crumbs
from my car, ten feet away.
His feathers--light gray of wing,
dappled white and black tail struts,
the brighter white of his breast
and head, whiter than snowflakes
in bursts, punctuating the afternoon--
assure me on this cold, damp day
that it is spring; that he is
the new crop, already wise to ways
he can get lunch, and I know,
as surely as the wind catches him
when he lofts the narrow river
on his way to some other soul
with bread crumbs, that I, too,
can survive until a better season.

--David B. Axelrod



Copyright (c) 1983 by the authors

BUTTERFLY DREAMS (for Melvin Goliger, the "Tug man" of Brooklyn.)

I have hunted
for cocoons
of cynthia moths
strung along
ailanthus trees
(stink-weeds)
between broken-down
apartment houses,
alleyways,
and across
the edge of beltways
on the rim
of dumplands
(Canarsie)
Brooklyn.

Sometimes cecropia
cocoon, larger,
heavier, worth more
(monkey food)
unless emptied
of pupae
by parasitic wasps,
eggs opening
into ravenous
maggots to feed
on the sleeping
worm.

Ah, to dream
as a crawling caterpillar,
to awaken a Morpho Agar!
(fit for riker mounts).
To nap while
so close and warm
and then unfold,
unfold wings,
iridescent blue leaves,
(metamorph)
out into the
gold & azure
light of air
floating upwards
towards
the crest of flowers,
trees, into
the rainbow of
the sky.

--Stanley E. Barkan

Poetry Editors' Note: As poets, we often wish we could see some of the poems written by the various editors to whom we submit our own work, so that we could better judge what they like to publish. Thus, we've begun our duties as poetry editors with some of our own poetry ... as well as with a poem by Stan Barkan of Cross-Cultural Communications. Poems for future issues of BROADSIDE may be mailed to 194 Soundview Drive, Rocky Point, NY 11778. Please include an SASE if you want your poems returned.
--D. B. Axelrod & J. C. Hand

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Send \$20 to:
BROADSIDE
P.O. Box 1464
New York, New York 10023

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____