

Two Poems

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (May 2019)



The Doll's House, Sir William Rothenstein, 1899

A Threnody for My Grandfather

Zalman Yaacov ben Leah

Uncles remember I would, a provoked tambourine,
Clumsily run to my grandfather with the delight
Typically stirred by a festival scene.

This was (his eulogist softly submits)
Fitting, since grandpa's refined-as-rosettes,
Special proximity outlined a festival site.

There is a city established & peopled on my
Substance's fruitful interior named after you,
Which in turn tenders its name to nearby
Wadis, a species of cyclamen, and
Grandly the battle securing the land
That would accommodate later the city's debut.

Also named after the city that's named after you,
Certain peculiar folkways, including the cool,
Levantine tenor inflecting the blue
Cast of the curtain protecting the ark,
Down to the humidly spherical, dark
Melodies used to address the Creator of All.

Custom has rendered it utterly tasteless to brace
Newborns with names of relations who live. But a glade?
Butterfly? Chemical process? A place?
Puzzled with mourning, I saunter the street,
Taken to visit, adore the discrete
Travertine cornerstone laid on the day I was made.

Townsmen, however, uncoiled in groves where the ewe
Sleeps under fig trees that made a disgrace out of me,
Hadn't a clue that they hadn't a clue,
Lounging where carob sprays grade into blue
(Certain not even their gravediggers knew)
As to what part of speech "threnody" might even be.



On Bouguereau's *Pietà*

Linen gowns put me in mind of a subtle grey dust
Blown shyly into an atrium so that one might
See a particular shaft of hypothesized light.
Sin isn't some designation that, lasting as rust,
Fastens to wastefulness taken beyond what is "right".

Sin is committed when people on nothing's behalf
Sacrifice even an eyelash on meaningless things.
Women surrendering necklaces, brooches & rings,
Fervid to furnish with substance the cast of a calf,
Moon-lumened, had the right lute strung with all the right
strings.

But an elusive un-rightness subverted the sense,
Just as this painting's effect is elusively fine:
Panoply-Grace in maternity's form. My benign,
Newly-washed minivan glimmers past dumbly immense
Churches whose names are like those of convenience store wine.

Jeffrey Burghauser is a teacher in Columbus, OH. He was educated at SUNY-Buffalo and the University of Leeds. He currently studies the five-string banjo with a focus on pre-WWII picking styles. A former artist-in-residence at the Arad Arts Project (Israel), his poems have appeared (or are forthcoming) in *Appalachian Journal*, *Fearsome Critters*, *Iceview*, *Lehrhaus*, and *New English Review*. Jeffrey's book-length collection, *Real Poems*, is available on Amazon and his website is www.jeffreyburghauser.com.

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