

# 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](http://www.jeffreyburghauser.com).

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](https://twitter.com/NERIconoclast)