

# Two Springtime Poems

by [Norman Simms](#) (November 2017)



by Yossi Stern, Title Unknown

## Yom Kippur 2017

Another year passes without our knowing when to fast  
But not when to feel a deep sense of guilt and shame,  
Aware that some time in this season the day will pass  
And even if the evening prayer forgets my name  
There is no way to stand with others when the blast  
Of the ancient horn is blown—no one to blame  
For this negligence, this silent blasphemy.

In my mind there is somewhere a chicken's neck  
To twist and cast away misgivings, my  
Little crumbs of lost belief, the wreck  
Of memories from ancient nights when I  
Stood next to my father, listened to the chant  
Of a chazzan, felt the warmth of piety,  
Unaware that this would be the last  
Time we stood together man to man.

### The Victory of Old Night

As if that weren't enough, with the celestial clashes  
Causing havoc across the Milky Way, the jungle  
Animals that had been tamed in circuses  
Decided as of one accord to give out lashes  
To anyone who thwarted their desires. Bungle  
This, shouted the creator of the universe, once again  
And all the starry girders will be retracted, all enacted  
Legislation made null and void. No one listened.  
No one understood. No one cared. The tangle  
Of traffic, the snarl of pedagogy, and kids reacted  
In obscene adult rage. Yet neither chaos  
Ensued nor anarchy broke out in places  
You would most expect, where snakes snuggle  
Up to elephants or in kindergarten fortresses  
Constructed out of Lincoln Logs. Happy faces  
Lapsed into growling masks, and thus all traces  
Of reason disappeared, like puppy faeces  
After a lovely summer's rain, without a struggle.

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Born in Brooklyn, NY in 1940, Norman Simms was educated in the United States, before moving to Canada in 1966. In 1970 he moved to New Zealand with his wife and two young children and taught for more than forty years at the University of Waikato

(New Zealand), with stints at the Nouvelle Sorbonne in Paris and Ben-Gurion University in Israel. He founded the interdisciplinary journal *Mentalities/Mentalités* in the early 1970s and saw it through nearly thirty years. In the two decades since retirement, he has published three long books on Alfred and Lucie Dreyfus and a two-volume study of studies of Jewish intellectuals and artists in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Western Europe, [\*Jews in an Illusion of Paradise; Dust and Ashes, Comedians and Catastrophes, Volume I\*](#), and his newest book, [\*Jews in an Illusion of Paradise: Dust and Ashes, Falling Out of Place and Into History, Volume II\*](#). Several further manuscripts in the same vein are currently being completed. Along with Nancy Hartvelt Kobrin, he is preparing a psychohistorical examination of why children terrorists kill children.

More by Norman Simms [here](#).

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