

Rachel Anszelowicz

Men as Werewolves

i tell her that i am afraid of men
she says
Who Hurt You
to be a woman is synonymous with fear
i tell her
it is by design
it is secretaries as mistresses
daughters born to masters for a profit
no accident

but we know good ones too?
she pleads
the names of fathers, uncles, brothers evaporate from her lips
she who taught me the tales
of our seeds being sown
still had not learnt to run from the hum
of the tractor approaching

instead she warns of untended drinks
fears of her daughters leaving grocery stores alone at night
then reminds them
that when it comes to a woman
friendship is never what a man expects

come nightfall
she lets her own wolf free from his pen

it's a full moon
she whispers to no one in particular
it's what we have always done
so she'll lock up her daughters till sunrise
knowing she couldn't live with herself
if she let something happen
to her dear baby girls

Bat Mitzvah

Hine mah tov u-ma nayim
shevet achim gam ya-chad

each word escapes my lips
quickly peeking over it's shoulder to check on me before it leaves

i do not know what these words mean
i was taught the method not the trade

only important that we can perform well enough
to impress our ancestors and shul friends

i sung my torah portion so well
my grandfather had his first stroke

the words had been sewn to my tongue
sacred chords injected into my veins

i do not believe in god
i cannot remember the last time i believed in anything

thats the way we've always done it
the age old tale of the family of godless jews

my sister does not understand the point of it all
always ready to upgrade to the shiniest model

my brother is far more bothered with anything else
to care much at all

this too i fear
is a tale we've known since Jacob

when we are apart though
i find them in the tongue

of the words my mother learned in ulpan
forged her family with
and then forgot
once bricks building my home now the tornado

behold how good and how pleasing
for brothers to sit together in unity

for we are brothers simply in our stories shared

and the branches of a tree start to look a whole lot like roots
once the leaves fall

and then i remember
that i've known these words all along