*At the Close of Time*

On the Sabbath before Rosh Hashanah  
At the close of time  
Before it opens forth again  
Unsure  
We are immured in straits  
Dire as judgment, blind  
And absolute

On the Sabbath before Rosh Hashanah  
Not the Sabbath of Return, not “By your might”  
For of what use in your sight is all our striving  
If not to disclose these crimps of  
The soul, to recall them  
Like a dove that finds  
A moment’s respite in the cleft

On the Sabbath before Rosh Hashanah  
In this city clamped  
Like an ant-infested  
Orange rind  
Cast into the dust heap where the  
Cats of devastation prowl  
On the night of the mantled moon

On the Sabbath before Rosh Hashanah  
The city unfolds like the draper’s shop  
In creases of the shaded alleyways  
And the stairs we climbed to the rooftop  
When a tingling whiteness flowed  
From belfry towers  
So close to the sky

- Still our feet shall stand before you  
Unsounded polyglot of many faces,  
You who watch as we tread the flagstones,  
You to whom all words flow -  
Even the orange-vendor drawing near  
Breaks into smile  
Before the pen that  
Draws us both together  
If only for a moment  
In your alphabet

Shabbat before Rosh Hashana 2003

Translated from the Hebrew by: Betsy Rosenberg  
\*Translation sponsored by the "Museum On The seam", Jerusalem