*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
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