*Nocturnal Landscapes*

[Commencement]
Jerusalem’s fate. Then, at night.
Desired and abandoned, gripped by her kissers’ hands
drunk with desire, they desert
as lust abates
gripped with revulsion, their mouths full of spittle and contempt
again they fall blindly groping in her dirt.

[First Watch]
The rain washed Jerusalem all night.
Finally. After she waited so. Months.
In a blinding dust that shrouded her eyes,
her mind swooning from longing.

The rain erupted. Its fingers twirling droplets in her hair,
The river-streets streaming to their source,
and in moist caves of calcite sediments
in veins of dust, ancient travelers’ bones
crawl anew
drifting with the rain into the mountain’s belly.

[Second Watch]
So said Jerusalem: “That night things were done to me
whose tides are dipped in violet and red.
Winged embryos fluttered
a shower of blind stones was shot in the horizon and spattered
then, as the gorge reawakened.”

And an echo responded: “Then, that night, a day with no night –
so bright was the wheel of the moon shining in its depths,

a mute rootlet of green turmoil
groped the gleaming phosphoric screen of the frozen twilight.

It was dusk. Hour of concealment
when only the memory of belief – not the hymn – beat bat-like on the womb’s membrane.”

[Third Watch]
Concealment it was. All night.
The body said so. Warm and cold. Washed in sweat and gripped with chill.
As though feet danced around the home’s walls.
Circles of ancestral fathers in white robes
tiptoeing between the watches,
Erected from the parchments, from the letters,
raising high their wives,
they, the mute, the head-scarved,
they, whose voices even I refused to listen to,
because their wail did not cry out in the streets.

At night they came out. They and the head-scarved women
rising from amidst the tombstones on the hillside
which I visited in the heat of day
drenched in sweat and olive myrtle fragrance in my hair.

[Last Watch]
The city sang anew:
“O, lemon trees with jasmine ascending amidst your buds,
O, rain droplets that covered your foliage at dawn –
sing your song to the night, as it is short, as it is long
sing the fragrance of your blessing to the gaze
that set for a moment on the spark as morning came.

O, lemon blossom, a moment’s droplet
that will shine till sundown
this is the dawn rising from the heart of darkness –
to which obscurity points,
this is the teaching of the depths in force
this is a shimmer of the turquoise gaping in their abyss.”

[(Daybreak]
No measure has the dawn, no limits
Opening from a body which devoted itself like rain to the darkness
rising like the miracle of an answered prayer,
cracking with Jerusalem’s laughing voice

“Deep is the gold of sunrise
soaked in my night of love.”
Blessed are they who knew the secret of the waters’ gates
blessed
those who came to dust.”

Translated by Rachel-Shlomit Brezis