

Under Alien Skies by Yossel Birstein

And my mother is close by

Translated by Helen Coles-Beer (2007)

My mother's heart gave up its beat
from longing for a tune
to tell her sorrows, that lifelong
she had left unspoken.

I drew them down into myself,
her longing and her pain -
and bearing in me her twin gifts
to poetry I came.

Now of poetry I enquired:
where is the melody
that tells her sadness, that she kept
silent, her life long.

This is how poetry answered me:
oh, sing your mother's sorrow
to the quiet song of faith
preserved by our people.

I heeded what poetry did say
and together with my people,
in our wandering I sing
the sorrow of my mother.