

Under Alien Skies by Yossel Birstein

My father's sweat

Translated by Beni Gothajner

My father's sweat is still wet upon my shirt
and his readiness to face the life he had to bear
I brought to this strange land, girt
round me like a prayer -

to resist with fierce commitment
the fake charm, the hollow admiration
and to guard myself
from being lost in isolation.

Misuse is not unwelcome though.
Put down, I can feel together
with my father's hard-tested sorrow;
the affection of my gentle mother.

I have been torn away from them –
they were wiped out in the killing.
But it still tastes sweet for me to say
once more: I am grown and I am willing.

For my life is like that of a sheep
and like a sheep I accept with grace
my little serve of joy – as every person can.
But my sorrow has a different face.

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and his readiness to face the life he had to bear
was brought to this strange land, girt
round me like a prayer.