

Under Alien Skies by Yossel Birstein

Under your terrible hand

Translated by Beni Gothajner

You have laid upon me your hand so terrible –
I am the shadow of a fire-scorched wall.

All trace of my father's final steps
is hidden by the silence of a snuffed-out song.

Hours pile on hours and shudder
to tell of my mother's moaning voice appealing

to dumb-hearted men of flesh.
While her hands hastily finished blessing

for one last time – the curly Jewish hair
of my little brother, seven years old.

You have laid upon me your hand so terrible –
I am the shadow of a fire-scorched wall.

Out of the night, now fading from the sky
I open to you a Jewish eye.

Now my life awakes from bemoaning
as a blade of grass squeezes its way through stone

and it manages once more to quicken
to the surging early morning sun;

to your terrible hand outstretched
in the shadow of the fire-scorched wall.