

Midge Goldberg

Kaddish

“Corinne Goldberg.” I say your name and rise
to recite the prayer. Suddenly I can’t speak,
choked up, not, as the others must think, by grief,
but by your voice, loud in my head and full
of bile, mocking these people, hypocrisy.
I feel you like a thumb on my jugular,
trying to make me stop. But I will not.

“I don’t like you,” I think, *yitgadal*,
v’yitkadash, and list all the bad things
that happened to you — fear, abandonment.
Nothing excuses you, *sh’mei rabah*.

I used to save this prayer for those I loved.
I didn’t say it for you, *b’zman kariv*,
but standing silent is too loud for me,
seems childish, like holding my breath — like you
in a tantrum, screaming, chasing my father around
with a carving knife, *v’imiru amen*.

So I will say this prayer, not to remember
or to forget, but to make you ordinary,
part of the uttered story, told and retold, —
instead of silence — where a mother should be.
And so I say Kaddish in spite of you.

Midge Goldberg

Watering Can

O blue watering can,
bringer of water
from one side
of the house to the other,
handle for holding,
spout for pouring,
you are
a means of transportation,
carrying something amorphous,
unholdable,
ungraspable,
from here
to there, start
to finish — water that has no
shape, you shape
into your own likeness
for a little while,
the way this body
shapes the ungraspable
into a Midge-shape
for a while, here to
there, start to
finish.