

## Yartzheit<sup>1</sup>

by Lisa Oram

No flowers sprout in earth November cold  
but there are purple lilies on my dress, amid the stares,  
and garments black, rent with grief. Those who read  
me see the plastic, potted flowers of your life.  
In a garden built from scrap, you were rock

solid wife and mother, babies rocking  
in the night and on your shoulder in the cold,  
purple dawns. Selling fruit, endure the stares  
impatient as you slowly count out change. Life  
of old world left behind in story I will write or read.

The rabbi stands nearby and reads,  
then pounding on the thin wood, rock  
and dirt fall just above your face. Cold  
wind hits hard the hollow space your missing life  
leaves in my lungs and heart and stare.

A year is gone and now I stare  
at granite, left to mark your life.  
your name spelled out and yet you could not read.  
I'm searching for your face within in the rock,  
but you will never be there; stone is cold.

Memory fills me sudden, like flame in cold  
November moments pulsing. They read  
your name at shul<sup>2</sup>. I miss your voice. Staring  
at the fluttering Yartzheit<sup>1</sup> light shadows rock  
against my books, the bed, photos of our life.

Cold the rock stares bluish burning life;  
Read the lines your flame makes in my face.

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<sup>1</sup> Yartzheit (Yiddish)—the anniversary of a death, commemorated by lighting a candle that burns for 24 hours in the home and reciting a mourners' prayer in synagogue.

<sup>2</sup> shul (Yiddish)—synagogue