Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Zahava Sweet: "Der Meister"

Zahava Sweet · Thursday, April 26th, 2012

Zahava Sweet is the author of *The Return of Sound,* of which Robert Bly says: “I like the generosity of all these poems, but I particularly admire the difficult poems that take place at Ravensbruck concentration camp during the second world war. Poems of this sort require great tact and human centering. She has them.” “Der Meister” can be found in *The Return of Sound,* © 2005, Bombshelter Press.
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Der Meister

A slight man you were
with your freckled face
and brown cap.
You supervised our work
at the aviation factory,
we marched to each dawn
from Ravensbruck
concentration camp.
Beneath the table
where I worked
you let me wash
the only undergarment
I possessed,
warming the water
with a torch.
When the “Boots” came near
you tapped me lightly
with your foot
and I jumped up
to my place
at the table.
You brought tidbits
of cookie,
the forbidden chocolate candy,
a piece of banana.
I ate them in the bathroom

praying no one would find me.
You told me
The Gestapo would kill us all
before the war’s end.
Herr Meister,
you promised to hide me
in your cellar.
One day you disappeared
and in your place stood
a hard-mouthed man
who didn’t talk to me.
I worried, Herr Meister
you might have been punished
for your kindness.
For decades I looked
for your freckled face
and small hands
with that wart on your forefinger.

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