

# The Deronda Review

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Coots in the Agmon HaHula, 2011, colored pencils, 9" X 6", by Helen Bar-Lev

## LISTEN TO THE BIRDS

*Dedicated to the memory of two dreamers:  
Les Osband and Rabbi Zvi Faier*

You ask why I live where I do  
between the Arava and Hula Valleys  
along the seismic Afro-Syrian rift  
where buntings, larks and pipits, snipes and warblers  
nestle down in winter chill  
rehearsing tunes first learnt from David's lyre,  
the sounds inscribed in Solomon's lyrics,  
perched on olive, carob and pomegranate trees.

They too inhale the mist that veils the hills  
and shiver when the boughs resist harsh winds.  
For they, like me, are migrants come from far  
to fill the land with warbled notes of joy – some day

when sounds of songbirds and turtledoves  
restore the calm.

– Leah LJ Gottesman

## *In this issue:*

- I. Chill, Thaw** 3
- II. Marathon** 4
- III. This Kinship** 11
- IV. A Letter In My Hand** 21
- V. Right to Left** 28
- VI. Help** 37

– Leah LJ Gottesman



## PATHETIC FALLACY

I was another brown wisp in this desert,  
 a bit of life clinging,  
 my shallow roots wedged under some rocks.  
 The days were always hot and the nights freezing.  
 When a bird wing passed over me its momentary  
 shade

I could see for miles in the empty air,  
 I could see the desperate grazing places far below.

One day, from there, sheep turned to me, and a man.  
 They approached; I thought that they would graze  
 but they stopped short  
 as in the heat a fire burst, white light,  
 a voice swallowed me, an angel crushed my chest.

The man is now long gone to lead his sheep.  
 The sand is blown from under the wind-smoothed  
 rocks;

my roots touch air —  
 I burn and burn and burn and am not consumed.

— Courtney Druz

## DAVID'S NIGHTWATCH

His thoughts strayed, though cold bit through  
 the flattened shearling, worn from years  
 of older brothers, all tall and proved,  
 he long from either — twelve, stringy,  
 not good with much but sheep. He could  
 make the leather whistle — no real strength,  
 just leverage — but his eye was true.

Shivering, he watched beyond the firelight  
 for eyes he knew would come; had his aim  
 proved unlikely as the rest of him,  
 he'd be home and warm now. He lived for summer —  
 harp-weather — just a shepherd's harp,  
 perhaps, a castoff — but people sometimes  
 asked his playing, boy or no.  
 For the rest, most were glad if he was there  
 to leave behind, as now, on a frigid  
 hill with this outland uncle's sudden  
 body and a fire to balk the dogs till morning.

Why had the rabbi called him marked —  
 the thought had clung, but it made no sense —  
 if any, his gifts were puny. What matter  
 if now his brothers mostly listened  
 when he played? Unthinking leather sang  
 above his head; well within the dark

that lapped the firelight, yellow eyes  
 flashed off aside from a smooth,  
 round river stone, probably  
 too late. In the morning he might learn.

— Stephen Malin

## ONE STREAM

The stream flowed freshly  
 a source of life  
 from the Mount of Olives  
 from the Temple's height.

A runnel from the crest,  
 a brook on both the slopes.  
 a river rushing, clear  
 down to the seas  
 east and west.

Eden's rivers,  
 one source, four streams,  
 divide the earth.

Zion's river straddles  
 east and west.  
 one stream,  
 one land,  
 one world.

—Michael E. Stone

SONG WITHOUT MELODY  
(for two singers)

I hear a siren.	(A bird is singing.)
I run for shelter.	(I walk in the field.)
I see a plane.	(The crops are thirsty.)
It drops a bomb.	(I pray for rain.)
A child is killed.	(The crops will ripen.)

I hear a siren.	(The bird is singing.)
I see a plane.	(The crops are thirsty.)
They want to spill my blood.	(I walk in the field of tomorrow.)

I hear a siren...	(The crops are thirsty...)
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— Theone