

Lea Goldberg  
SELECTED POETRY  
AND DRAMA

POETRY SELECTED, TRANSLATED  
AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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Part I:  
*Selected Poems*

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I saw my God in the café.  
He was revealed in the cigarette smoke.  
Depressed, sorry and slack  
he hinted: "One can live still!"

He was nothing like the one I love:  
nearer than he—and downcast,  
like the transparent shadow of starlight  
he did not fill the emptiness.

By the light of a pale and reddish dusk,  
like one confessing his sins before death,  
he knelt down to kiss man's feet  
and to beg his forgiveness.



## There Are Many Like Me

There are many like me: lonely and sad,  
one writes poems, another sells her body,  
a third convalesces in Davos,  
and all of us drink thirstily from the bitter cup.

And all of us know:

    in the wilting rays of autumn-morning  
the dream of a kiss becomes vapor and rises... not toward us.

And all of us see

    the world's warmth in the mothers' eyes,  
    and no child is ours.

And all of us meet dark and cold wastelands  
in the doorways of abandoned rooms.

And it's one and the same—

    to renounce body or spirit,  
or to die slowly in the sanitariums of Davos—  
so vast is this cup  
so abundant its polluted drink,  
and from the love of life and its loneliness  
there is no escape.

## To a Portrait of My Mother

Your portrait is so peaceful. You are other:  
a bit proud and embarrassed at being—my mother.  
Accompanying me with a yielding smile and a tear  
and never asking: “Who?”

You never wondered, never raged, when I came  
daily demanding: “Give me!”  
With your own hands you brought me everything  
only because I am—me.

And today you remember, more than I do,  
my childhood sorrows, then you already understood:  
when your grown daughter would come to you,  
she would bring her grief that has grown too.

Yes. I’ll come broken and not ask how you are.  
I’ll not cry in your arms, not whisper: “Mama!”  
You’ll know:

    He who left me was dearer to me than you are,  
and you won’t ask: “Who?”

## Pietà

Once again distances...and the blood of falling leaves  
on earth's wounds.

The skeletal arm of a tree stretches  
toward the blind horizon.

Once again Heaven's sorrow weeps  
over the corpse of autumn land.

Like a Madonna who is kneeling  
over the body of the crucified.

*Pietà*—whispers the forest,  
*Pietà*—autumn answers,  
and silence opens a gate  
toward peace of the Father's realm.

Only the wind sobs bitterly—  
Judas weeping for his sin,  
he kisses the feet of his beloved  
begging the dead to forgive.

## Childhood

### I. Opening

Like stars that find their way to every window,  
like day peeking into every opened eye,  
like light,  
fingers that touched the dream's last thread  
and stirred joy, and fear faded  
and song arose.

So simple,  
so full and simple,  
like a green meadow embracing the lost trail  
and dew  
    and daisy  
        and dove.