



Bronfman at 36

Where Are You ... Inside a Poem?

Jake Marmer

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From “Coming to Life”
by Joy Ladin

Where the waters of death empty
Into waters of life
The grass grows higher than your head.
The soil between your toes is damp.
You lost your shoes some ways back.
This is holy ground, the waters said
Or a voice you took
For the voice of waters
Pulling you under
Time and again. You were trying
To learn to walk
When you needed to learn to swim. You part
The grass that whispers
Through the waters that sing in your ears.
You can't make out the question
So you answer Yes.

Questions for discussion:

What do you imagine the “question” is—the one that the narrator can't hear? What about the question the narrator chooses to answer?

Where is the narrator? What is this “place,” at the intersection of “waters of death” and “waters of life?”

Do you ever use this sort of liturgical/biblical/mythic language to describe and explain your own life? When are you compelled to do so?



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The Shofar Place By Paul Celan, tr. by John Felstiner

The shofar place
deep in the glowing
empty-text,
at torch height,
in the timehole:

hear deep in
with your mouth.

Questions for discussion:

Celan's poem is cryptic and mysterious, and more accessible through sensory free association than direct interpretation. What do you imagine this "shofar place" is, and how does one get there?

Do you have imaginary/symbolic/abstract places you find yourself returning to at different points in your life? What are some of them like?

