



Bronfman at 36

# Where Are You ... Inside a Poem?

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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?

