

The Stones of Jerusalem

by Thomas Ország-Land (December 2016)



Hungarian Jews about to be gassed at Auschwitz

1.

THE SURVIVOR

—In memoriam

György Timár

Oblivious to his grandson – a gift! –

absorbed in a birthday book,

my timorous brother lifted his eyes
to the Mediterranean sky.

The stench of burning human flesh
eternally clung to his own.

Persistent hunger whipped him crazy.
The death he'd escaped filled his life.

He clenched and raised his fist towards
a distant, friendly sky:

*For Your own sake, my Lord, I take,
I take... You do not exist.*

2.

HEIRLOOM

My father taught me to die,
when I must, like a human being.
My mother taught me to trust

and sing like a human being.

And a boy and a king, alone
with a stone, a sling and a harp
has left me the chutzpah to try

to hone and sharpen and fling
each thought and word and line
beyond the confines of time
that bind a human being.

3.

A FEAST IN THE GARDEN

– For George Konrád

Worried, what with his women and walls and wealth,
poor Solomon wisely bade a scribe to describe
the lofty lifting – like the sun – of depression.
A bestseller from the past!... well worth a review.

A wretched start: *There's nothing new under the sun.*

The women are fickle. The flowers bow to every wind.

The men are tyrants or servants or fools, and even

I might die – outrageously under the sun.

...Even the women will, and the flowers, and you.

These walls might crumble in time. We must return

into being dust or rain or woodland or thunder,


whatever our desires under the sun.

How dreadful. *But this hour is mine, while it lasts,*

enough to complete my poem among the flowers

rejoicing in my loves and our never recurring

lives as human beings under the sun.

 **THOMAS ORSZÁG-LAND** is an award-winning poet and foreign correspondent who writes for *New English Review* from Jerusalem, London and his native Budapest. His last book was [*Reading for Rush Hour: A Pamphlet in Praise of Passion*](#) (Snakeskin/England, 2016).

To comment on this poem or to share on social media, please click