

Two Springtime Poems

by [Norman Simms](#) (November 2017)



by Yossi Stern, Title Unknown

Yom Kippur 2017

Another year passes without our knowing when to fast
But not when to feel a deep sense of guilt and shame,
Aware that some time in this season the day will pass
And even if the evening prayer forgets my name
There is no way to stand with others when the blast
Of the ancient horn is blown—no one to blame
For this negligence, this silent blasphemy.

In my mind there is somewhere a chicken's neck
To twist and cast away misgivings, my
Little crumbs of lost belief, the wreck
Of memories from ancient nights when I
Stood next to my father, listened to the chant
Of a chazzan, felt the warmth of piety,
Unaware that this would be the last
Time we stood together man to man.

The Victory of Old Night

As if that weren't enough, with the celestial clashes
Causing havoc across the Milky Way, the jungle
Animals that had been tamed in circuses
Decided as of one accord to give out lashes
To anyone who thwarted their desires. Bungle
This, shouted the creator of the universe, once again
And all the starry girders will be retracted, all enacted
Legislation made null and void. No one listened.
No one understood. No one cared. The tangle
Of traffic, the snarl of pedagogy, and kids reacted
In obscene adult rage. Yet neither chaos
Ensued nor anarchy broke out in places
You would most expect, where snakes snuggle
Up to elephants or in kindergarten fortresses
Constructed out of Lincoln Logs. Happy faces
Lapsed into growling masks, and thus all traces
Of reason disappeared, like puppy faeces
After a lovely summer's rain, without a struggle.

Born in Brooklyn, NY in 1940, Norman Simms was educated in the United States, before moving to Canada in 1966. In 1970 he moved to New Zealand with his wife and two young children and taught for more than forty years at the University of Waikato

(New Zealand), with stints at the Nouvelle Sorbonne in Paris and Ben-Gurion University in Israel. He founded the interdisciplinary journal *Mentalities/Mentalités* in the early 1970s and saw it through nearly thirty years. In the two decades since retirement, he has published three long books on Alfred and Lucie Dreyfus and a two-volume study of studies of Jewish intellectuals and artists in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Western Europe, [*Jews in an Illusion of Paradise; Dust and Ashes, Comedians and Catastrophes, Volume I*](#), and his newest book, [*Jews in an Illusion of Paradise: Dust and Ashes, Falling Out of Place and Into History, Volume II*](#). Several further manuscripts in the same vein are currently being completed. Along with Nancy Hartvelt Kobrin, he is preparing a psychohistorical examination of why children terrorists kill children.

More by Norman Simms [here](#).

Please help [support](#) New English Review.