

Patria

by Jeffrey Burghauser



For Israeli Independence Day, 2021

Maneuvering through disarray & heat,
I neared the Hammurabi-grey,
Disheveled *Tahana HaMerkazit**
To catch the bus to Haifa Bay.

Back then, the Second Intifada bound
The town to measures none begrudged:
As I approached the entryway, I found
A soldier placed amid a smudged,
Unplanned cement geometry.

Serenely stoned on all the fumes of spring,
On youth, on being near the source
Of sentimental songs (of everything),
He tossed me a contented, hoarse
Fraternal sigh. And having sung the crass
Refrain of Clio's lullaby
("Are you a Jew?"), permitted me to pass
Sans further question after I
Responded jauntily: "Of course!"

So many years ago! One hopes the boy
Has prospered, having sired heirs

Prepared, not just to *take*, but to *enjoy*
Possession of his Kevlar prayers
And psalm-shaped shells. The Truly Wise demand,
Though softly: Let a people be
A PEOPLE. Scholars cannot understand,
For it's a simple poetry:
The poetry of *MINE* & *THEIRS*.

* Central Station