

Suitcase

If you want to lift the lid off this life,
inspect what is carried across the border:
do not assume there will be photographs,
consecutive linen, presents or order.

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Belongings are the business of crossings:
disproportionate references to Jews,
and overlooked subjects such as shoes -
taking away what they wanted to take.

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Emptiness though smart is suspicious too:
it suggests a smaller suitcase inside,
or confederates beyond the gate
with smuggled papers to make up the weight.

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Think of the negative spaces too,
the dustless outline left in the attic;
or how it attended loyal as a dog
while arms performed a final embrace.

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It could be dizziness caused by a wall,
the sudden jolt of a knock at the door
or the dog left barking down the hall,
caused him to grab what he did from the drawer,

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Crossing comes closest to being at home,
the society of question and answer -
detained because of misunderstanding,
the poet forgets what she wants to declare.

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Some cases we still talk about include:
the man who dragged a luggage of stones,
the son who transported yesterday's papers
and said he knew nothing about the bones.

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Beware of families who come bearing gifts,
compacted stray leaves that crumble to ash,
leaving a smell of decay on your gloves
and the golden dust successfully escaping.

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Remember their association with trains,
departure with the theatre of platforms:
I leave mine behind and run very fast,
the inspectors arrive to blow up my past.

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The magician strips back the sequined cloth,
grave robbers leverage the out of sight:
when the hasp flicks back and the seal is broken,
our dream is to find the dark filled with light.

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Sectioned with suitcase – lest her belongings
should stain his conscience – each day at first light
washing the clothes that have bled through the night:
fifty years on she awaits recollection;

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the angel fashions out of her faith a throne,
where she will sit to receive His coming -
a hidden hand pushes aside the stone,
but the Roman soldiers stay fast asleep.

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They return from the Underworld like dread.
Reversing migration they approach us -
like sheep to the slaughter the bags fall out;
the ones unclaimed belong to the dead.

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Paul Carter (extrait de Boundaries)