The Golden Record [1]

May 8, 2017   Featured Poetry [2]
Borders [3]
Illness [4]

Two Poems by Chana Bloch

A Quid for a Quo

That sickroom smelling of cancer.

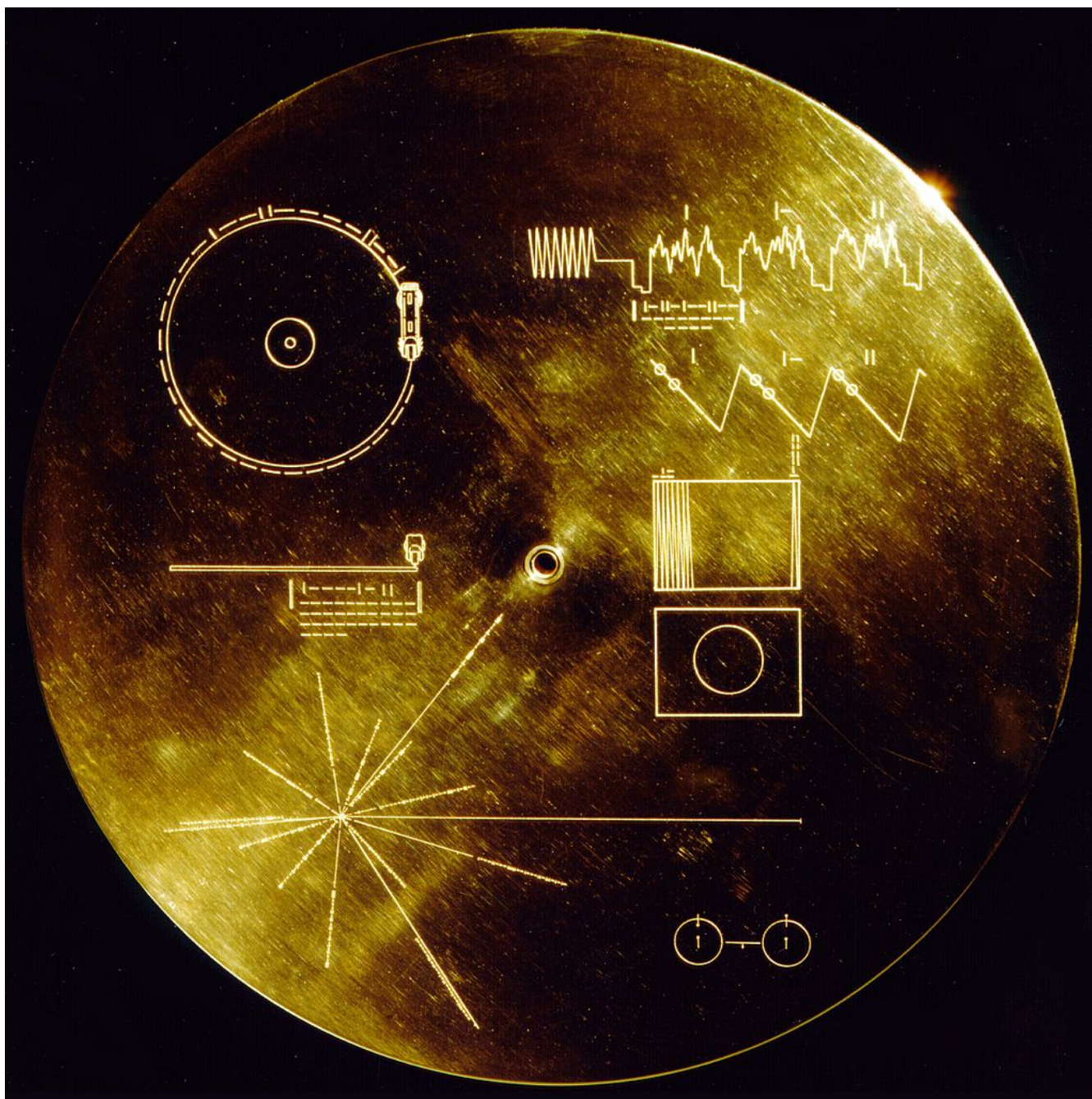Sonya's mother was dying, she told me
on the way home from school.
"Dying," she said, and broke into a run.

"So unfair! God, take my grandma instead,"
I wrote in my diary
—a human sacrifice

to the Lord of the Flaring Nostrils
who speaks Leviathan,
a language with twenty words for *sacrifice*.

All that year I kept watch on God
and on Grandma, gathering dust
at the Daughters of Jacob Old Age Home

where we'd find her each Friday
troubled by kidney stones and time,
mumbling, "God will provide."

Bequest

The Golden Record aboard Voyager, 1977

We wanted to make a good impression. Maybe even to launch a conversation.

Bonjour in fifty-five languages—some, like Sumerian and Akkadian, long dead.

Bach, Beethoven, Chuck Berry, the *tap-tap* of Morse code, birdsong and whale song.

The silhouette of a naked man and woman made the final cut, but no nude photographs. Taxpayers were adamant. Not even a naked baby.

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o),
m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-
analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

And no photos of war or nuclear explosions. They might get ideas.

A billion years from now, when the earth is a charred cinder, our Voyager may land on some friendly galactic shore. And with it, the Golden Record, our calling card.

To Whom It May Concern: We just wanted to drop by and say, *Hello, how are you? We were fine.*

Art Information

- "The Eye of God [5]" taken by the Hubble Telescope; public domain.
- "The Sounds of Earth Record Cover [6]" © NASA; public domain.

UPDATED (June 10, 2017): *Chana Bloch passed away on May 19, 2017. She will be dearly missed.*

Chana Bloch's *Swimming in the Rain: New and Selected Poems* was published by Autumn House Press in 2015. Bloch co-translated *The Song of Songs*, *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* and his *Open Closed Open*, as well as Dahlia Ravikovitch's *Hovering at a Low Altitude: The Collected Poetry*.

Bloch's new collection, *The Moon Is Almost Full*, will be published posthumously by Autumn House Press in September 2017, including these two poems in *Talking Writing*. Other poems from the book will appear or have been published in the *New Yorker*, *Field*, *Poet Lore*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and elsewhere.

For more information, visit Chana Bloch's website. [7]

Source URL: https://www.talkingwriting.com/golden-record

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[7] http://www.chanabloch.com

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