Chana Bloch: Two Poems [1]

December 17, 2014 Featured Poetry [2]

Don't miss "Chana Bloch: The Poem Begins to Shape You," [3] a recent TW interview in which Bloch talks about these poems.

At the Border

for Nina

My hand slips past the guardrail
of the hospital bed,

date of birth on my wristband,
date of death postponed.

By the grace
of a scalpel blade

I have made it across
the border just

in time. My blessing hand rests
on Nina's great naked belly,

Liliana treading water,
headed for land,

her millions of eggs
already alive inside.

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The Innocents

I warned my son about strangers
and candy, as a mother should,
but at four he was baffled:
“I didn’t know grown-ups be bad.”

At his wedding I lifted a glass
and prayed like a mother
for all the naked unknowing
under his three-piece suit.

And his bride in a satin
like moon on snow.

Listen, God:
You might have thought twice
before talking tough to Eve
—a motherless child,
and what’s more, a new bride.

I mean, to be innocent is to fall
for snake talk, a language
it takes skill and damage to learn.

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Art Information

- "Bee's Jubiliee" © Marie Viljoen, from "Clematis—Going Up" [5] on her blog *66 Square Feet (Plus)*, August 30, 2013; used by permission.



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

Chana Bloch was the author of award-winning books of poetry, translation, and scholarship. She was a professor emerita of English at Mills College, where she directed the Creative Writing Program. From 2007 to 2012, she served as the first poetry editor of Persimmon Tree, *[6]* an online journal of the arts by women over sixty.

Bloch's work was widely published in *the New Yorker, Atlantic Monthly,* and other journals as well as in *Best American Poetry* and other anthologies. Her book awards included the Poetry Society of America's Alice Fay di Castagnola Award for *Blood Honey* (Autumn House Press, 2009), selected by Jane Hirshfield; the Felix Pollak Prize in Poetry for *Mrs. Dumpty* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), selected by Donald Hall; and the PEN Award for Poetry in Translation, together with Chana Kronfeld, for Yehuda Amichai's *Open Closed Open* (Harcourt, 2000).

Her book Swimming in the Rain: New and Selected Poems, 1980-2015 *[7]* was published by Autumn House Press in 2015.

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[3] http://talkingwriting.com/chana-bloch-%E2%80%9C-poem-begins-shape-you%E2%80%9D#overlay-context=chana-bloch-two-poems
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