

## LOST

*Sophie Wadsworth*

If you've taken stock –  
food, knife, matches,  
fuel – if you've backtracked  
and map checked and every tree  
looks alike, the mind may start  
its manic talk of broken ankles  
and electrical storms.

Try to still that voice.  
Listen for the ripple of birdsong,  
synchronizing your breath  
with the canopy's rise and fall.

Make your way deeper in;  
let the compass swing  
with abandon from your pack.  
Refuse the desire for a houselight  
or the drone of a search plane  
until you've walked  
too far to double back.

When being lost grows familiar  
you'll see the fallen pine  
not as a sign that you're going  
in circles, but simply as itself –  
with its deeply fissured bark  
and stubborn knots of sap.

At dusk you can gather the wrecked limbs  
into a hut, using your map to light a fire.  
Sit then, sharpening the story  
of how you came to this clearing  
you weren't seeking, and settled in.

## MORNING COMMUTE THROUGH HIGH HOLY DAYS

*Alexander Levering Kern*

September's come again in gray.  
The morning opens its cat eye and peers  
quietly through my windshield.  
From the rumble & groan of my stereo  
the ghost of Blind Willie Johnson is singing  
*Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground*,  
except he's not really singing at all.  
There are no words, only a low moan,  
a hiss & a holler, that's all.  
Snake eyes & jaw bones  
scratching across a weathered six-string:  
an incantation of the sanctified mind.

And maybe he couldn't hear nobody pray.  
No call, no response, no moonlight  
only a cry from the field at night  
only the whipping post  
only the threshing floor  
only the strange fruit  
only the Spanish moss  
only the trickster stick  
only the crooked cross.  
Behind the shaky *shhhh shhhh*  
of that old 78 lurks a blues so deep  
the words won't do.

And now along Waverly Street  
west of Boston, it's High Holy Days.  
Days of awe, hours of return.  
The men walk quietly  
eschewing cars, two by two  
through the rush of morning —  
their certain footsteps playing  
a soft *shhhh shhhh*  
in the first wet leaves of fall.

## ROSH HASHANAH

*Peg Duthie*

She smooths the holiday over her face,  
its emollients absorbing her tiredness.  
She decants its hopefulness over her arms,  
rinsing away the crusts and crumbs of cynicism  
collected while she'd tried to embrace  
every thing the past year had presented  
no matter its shape, be it sponge or scalpel.

Across the synagogue – its sea of tallitot  
white and blue, with sometimes a blur  
of silver, here and there a flash of green –  
women wearing silk and organza shawls,  
with matching beads and filigree in their hair –

across the service,  
like light through a curtain,  
she tastes each fresh-caught prayer on her tongue –  
each one an indirect blessing,  
each one a waiting glass of wine.

*NOTE: Tallitot are prayer shawls.*

Becoming Fire

## GRANDPA'S LAST RIDE

*Deane Lindsey Kern*

*For my son Loki*

I'm young. Five, six maybe. Grandpa's come to Washington for a visit. I'm scared of him, especially the wart on his eyelid, but I'm waiting for my share of the stale Three Musketeers bar. Perhaps taking the name too literally, he takes the candy bar from his pocket and divides it into three parts, one for each of my two brothers and me. It's a special treat. Grandpa put the Quaker simplicity principle into direct practice; he was the cheapest man I ever knew. No doubt about it.

Grandpa claimed to spend only 14 cents a day on food. He lived off applesauce, powdered milk past its expiration date, and 50-pound bags of grain that he milled and boiled up into what his grandkids called Grandpa's gruel. You could wallpaper a room with the stuff. Grandpa was into austere living. He was born in a log cabin in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, without much luxury. In fact, except for the bounty of the natural world, he didn't believe in luxury at all. And he looked like it too, in his faded overalls and scruffy coat. Below that farmer's cap, Grandpa's long face was immobile as a medieval saint's. As a small child, hiding in my mother's skirts, I saw in that lean, sun-worn body another man I didn't know and didn't want to be.

For an apple and cherry farmer, Grandpa was a restless, curious person. Traveling was the only passion we had in common. He'd never admit it, but that was his one luxury. Grandpa *loved* road trips. On road trips, he'd go hog-wild and leave the gruel behind. He'd settle for apples, stale bread, and tap water. He didn't eat for pleasure, he ate for fuel, because for him that highway was a pilgrimage, and the yellow lines were footprints he was called to follow. Legend says that he flipped the odometer on one of his cars, the Plymouth Valiant, three times before it was retired to the car graveyard.

My cousin Michael tells a story of a late night trip along Virginia's Route 100 sometime in the Seventies. Grandpa was trying to pass by an eighteen-wheeler. The Valiant didn't have enough power, however, to do this swiftly. As the rusted old car summoned the strength, Michael realized that another eighteen-wheeler was barreling toward them in the left lane, blowing its horn and flashing its lights.

Instead of braking and returning to his own lane, Grandpa removed his scratched pocket watch from his overalls and stared at it intently. The seconds flickered by, the truck driver leaned on the horn, the Valiant groaned. At the last possible moment, Grandpa swerved back into the right lane, barely clearing the other truck, bringing all involved within inches of death. Twenty-odd years later, Michael still punctuates the story with a dramatic shiver.

"I think the reason Grandpa did it," Michael says, "is that he simply couldn't deal with a potentially disastrous ending. So in light of the oncoming danger, he conducted a scientific experiment. He couldn't have looked up without stopping."

Grandpa said nothing to Michael about what happened on that dark highway, or to anyone else, ever. He could confuse you like that. And he'd never bother to explain.

I wish I could write that he inspired me and taught me how to live a morally upright life. Or that he taught me to love God and appreciate the deep spiritual insights of Quakerism. Or that he was an example of perfect love. Or even that I knew with any certainty that he loved me. But I can't. Mostly what I know of Grandpa's greatness is hearsay and speculation.

What I do know is that he graded his children and grandchildren like he graded fruit on the machine in the back of the packhouse, the one with the complicated levers and revolving rubber belts that divided apples and peaches according to their various qualities, or lack thereof. I know that I didn't meet Grandpa's critical standards, and that, like an apple destined for the cider press, I possessed limited usefulness.

Grandpa suffered from curvature of the spine so much by the end of his life that when he drove, he watched the highway

through the space between the wheel and the dashboard. On my last road trip with Grandpa, we traveled up Interstate 81 from the orchard straight north through the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. I was done picking fruit on the orchard for the summer, and Grandpa's thinly veiled excuse for this trip was a pomology conference in upstate New York he wanted to attend.

After a harrowing ride down Snake Creek Road to the highway, I insisted on taking the wheel. We didn't talk much. He was half-deaf and his presence, as usual, made me half-mute. But seven hours to Washington was a long drive, and as the minutes ticked by, the silence embarrassed me. Grandpa also seemed a bit lost, as if he'd noticed my existence for the first time. There was something about his diminishment, both in authority and physical stature, that made me soften and try to work up a conversation.

As we turned onto Interstate 81, afternoon sun glancing off the hot August highway, I prompted Grandpa, asking "What's the name of that mountain?"

"What's that?" he said, "I believe that one's got a few names."

Surprisingly, he spoke at some length about local history and geological formations. He related how Virginia was formed through the collision of continents; he discussed climbing Mount Rogers, the area's highest elevation. He ruminated about the Commonwealth's six distinct climatic zones, and explained why Virginia is moving an inch west per year. Driving up Interstate 81 with this man who I'd spent my whole life barely knowing, I listened as he identified the name of every plant and flower growing by the side of the road for nearly fifteen miles.

"How do you know all the names?" I asked, still tentative at this unprecedented interaction.

"After my father was injured in the mines of West Virginia," Grandpa said, "he came back to the orchard and lay in his bedroom for over a year, reading the Bible and memorizing the wildflowers that grew on the orchard."

He smiled, at the memory I suppose.

"Father taught me about them," Grandpa said.

The trillium, the wild blue iris, the delicate lady slippers.

measure, pressed down, shaken together, brimming over, will be poured out for you.

Of course, this doesn't come easily. Taizé brothers must commit to a lifetime of shared possessions and service to humanity. Such challenging commitment cannot be based on the feelings of a particular moment. But only such a challenge can open a person to the rewards of a life that seeks Christ above all. And only such a challenge can compel a person to reach out into the world, rather than constantly inward to the recesses of one's own emotional life. The lifetime challenge of Taizé involves its community in the mystery of "the face that reveals every other face for us," in the words of theologian Olivier Clément. There is no "choice" between liturgical practices that speak to God's transcendence and God's immanence—between tradition and relevance. The face of Christ reveals both.

Gen X Christians are not the first generation to grope blindly after the face of Christ. Even the church buildings in which we must discover our own paths reflect previous debates between tradition and relevance. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Americans flocked to Europe to encounter the grand, old cathedrals of Chartres, Notre Dame, and Saint Denis for themselves. One of these travelers, the Anglo-Catholic Ralph Adams Cram, is the architect largely responsible for the Neo-Gothic revival in America. Cram converted to Christianity at a midnight Mass when the bells rang, the church burst into song, incense rose, and the Body and Blood were sacrificed. At this point, as he later wrote, "I did not understand all of this with my mind, but I *understood*." The noncognitive, awe-inspiring dimension of worship had inspired Cram to genuine faith, leading him to propagate an architectural style that, for many, revived piety with the best of traditional aesthetics.

But though many have been led deeper into faith through the soaring ceilings of Cram's monuments, Neo-Gothicism was an elitist movement. Rather than rising out of the common needs and labors of a community like the best of medieval Gothicism, America's Gothic revival arose out of the vision, funds, and egos of a few wealthy elite. Perhaps this is why one

feels not only awe-struck, but rather insignificant before the priest and altar, not to mention the sculpture and stained glass that soars above. Gothic aesthetics clearly took precedence over the movement of real people throughout the building.

Enter Ed Sovik, the 1970's architect of the need-based church movement. Throw out your high-brow ecclesial concepts along with the communion rails, argued Sovik. From now on, define the building according to the functions of the space and the actions of the people. This is where God does the work. The ideal building will be without deceit, illusion, or manipulation. It will not make reference to the convention of any historical style, including modernism, and will not even have the appearance of newness or age. The sanctuary of this "non-church" will be conceived of as a "centrum," the altar in the "genus of the dining table," and the pews will be replaced by moveable chairs.

The concept of functional space was refreshing enough that it took hold in various forms across the country and in every denomination. People clearly wanted to feel themselves move and think again, to take responsibility for the action of worship rather than lining up like so many gargoyles before the high altar. But this experiment also brought to the fore the necessity of drawing from the age-old aesthetics that had inspired Cram. People realized that they missed some kind of continuity with Christians that have gone before us, as well as some awe-inspiring reference to One larger than themselves. The failure of centnums to bring this sense of tradition has infuriated many in recent years, leading to a backlash exemplified by Michael Rose's *Ugly as Sin: Why They Changed Our Churches from Sacred Places to Meeting Spaces and How We Can Change Them Back Again*.

Though we are usually stuck with the architectural shells left by these debates, our liturgical practices must steer a middle way between the elitist traditionalism of Cram and the functional banality of Solik. Simply draping a symbol of ancient aura across our centnums or replacing the pews in our cathedrals with non-elitist moveable chairs will not do. Like the Taizé brothers, we must be oriented towards Christ in order to experience our traditions as genuine expressions of our faith, and vice versa. In the wisdom of Cram, in the wisdom of the awe-inspiring face of

Christ upon an icon or cross, this means making explicit reference to the grounding we seek in God. And in the wisdom of Sovik, we must all—every one of us—come to understand, personally appropriate, and be challenged by the symbols we use.

Gen X Christians do not need another civic club or art gallery, but explicitly Christian churches that speak to us. We want our faith to have something to do not only with our own private quest among liturgical options, but the spiritual companionship of ages past. The accumulated wisdom contained in a single icon of the face of Christ, for example, is the result of generations upon generations reflecting upon, honing, and being formed by a particular vision. Christians today have no corner on the spiritual market that should compel us to scrap such a vision in favor of more so-called seeker-friendly aesthetics. In fact, it may be due in part to the deep, mysterious, partially *inaccessible* nature of age-old symbols that those very seekers will be compelled to stay, learn more, and listen for God.

In order for traditional forms and practices to provide this depth, we Christians must become open to the challenge that God sets forth through them. This means taking the time to learn from the Eucharist, cross, or chants, before rushing to creatively—or naively—appropriate them. Do we know what an icon truly is before we rush to weave it onto banners or splice it into our bulletins? Perhaps such weaving and splicing denigrates the nature of the icon, and with it the opportunity for us to be challenged to see something other than ourselves in the face of Christ. Do we know who Mary is *to us* before we drape her picture across our churches or jewelry? She can be portrayed in a myriad of ways, as queen, servant, mother, and young girl. Perhaps we are propagating an image of her that does not reflect or enrich our faith.

A simple rule of thumb may guide churches today towards the authentic appropriation of ancient traditions. Before attempting to alter any traditional form or practice, use it in its inherited form for at least several months. Listen to God before (or in) it. Assume that it is impregnated with the wisdom of thousands of people over hundreds of years and see what it has to teach you. Only after this trial period, and only in conjunction with the

entire community, evaluate its relevance. Ask whether it needs to be creatively appropriated in order to be genuinely integrated into the faith and practices of the community—or whether the faith and practices of the community themselves are being called in a new direction.

An integral aspect of listening to ancient traditions in their inherited form is catechesis. Many people seem to have the mistaken assumption that everything we need to know spiritually is either within our own soul or on the face value of any traditional practice or object. But Christians have always apprenticed themselves to spiritual masters in order to enter more deeply into the mysteries of liturgy, art, and devotion. Seeing, hearing, and praying the Christian faith are all learned activities, and should be treated as such. If the tradition thrives primarily in a denomination other than your own, Catholicism's rosary or Orthodoxy's icon, for example, find a suitable spokesperson to catechize yourself or your community.

Above all, Christians seek the face of God. If our ancient traditions are authentic and enduring, if we are able to absorb them into who we are even as we let them form us into children of God, relevance will follow. And since learning to see the one Holy Face makes Christians into servants of every face, all people will be included in the vision. This is the path of tradition that will endure.

## THEOLOGICAL GROWING PAINS: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

*Or N. Rose*

*For James Carroll:*

*“Then Avram journeyed on, continually...”*

GENESIS 12:9

As a teacher in a rabbinical seminary, I have the privilege of engaging in ongoing theological conversation with my students and colleagues. While in certain respects our curriculum is similar to that of other graduate programs in Judaic Studies, there is a conscious effort in our community to explore the kinds of personal religious questions that are considered taboo in the academy. It is precisely in these thornier discussions that I experience most deeply moments of genuine connection, moments that the great German Jewish thinker, Martin Buber, referred to as “I-Thou” experiences.

In the course of many such conversations, I have come to a deeper understanding of the delicate interplay of theology and biography, the complicated ways in which our beliefs about God and reality emerge out of the dynamic interaction of text, ritual, gender, class, race, and family. This may sound like an obvious point, but one could think otherwise reading the classic works of Jewish thought—Maimonides, Isaac Luria, or even Buber himself. Most theologians speak in elaborate detail about God and the world, while discussing very little about themselves or their religious development. Even the mystics in our tradition, those spiritual virtuosos who insist on the need to seek out the Divine in the midst of life, are reticent about speaking in the first person, sharing with us how they found or lost God, the influence of their parents, friends, and teachers, and what life is like for them between peak religious experiences.

It seems that most Jewish theologians consider their own biographies relatively unimportant, attempting to locate themselves within larger paradigms of Jewish experience—Exodus, Sinai,

and the destruction of the Temple. While I certainly understand the power of linking one's spiritual search to those of our ancestors, creating continuity across space and time, I also think it is important to examine carefully the ways in which the specificity of our lives serves as the ground for our beliefs. In fact, I would assert that the Bible's narrative form—with all of its mundane detail about family and relationships—invites us not only to emulate figures like Abraham and Sarah, but also to recognize our own personal narratives as sacred texts.

It is in this spirit that I offer the following reflection on my own theological development. I do so with the hope that in reading this brief account, those who view theology as a worthwhile endeavor might be moved to engage in similar processes, continuing to clarify their beliefs, wishes, doubts, and fears in light of their unfolding life experiences. I also hope that others who have abandoned theological discourse might reconsider how such conversation can be useful in constructing meaning in their lives.

*THE GOD OF MY CHILDHOOD:*

*THE MAN WITH THE LONG WHITE BEARD (WHO ELSE!)*

Like many people I have met in religious contexts, I developed a powerful relationship with God as a child. Who was this God?—"the man with the long white beard," of course; a father figure who was my confidant, protector, and assurance; a God who was particularly important to me in moments of sadness, disappointment, and fear. I have no doubt that I was able to cultivate my belief in such a personal God, in part, because of the relative stability of my childhood. I did not suffer the kind of loss—the death of a loved one or physical or emotional abuse—that caused me to ask where God was in moments of darkness. Ironically, the most significant personal loss I have suffered to date is that of the God of my youth.

So what happened to this God? He certainly did not disappear overnight; it would be more accurate to say that he eroded slowly over time. It all began in yeshiva... (Yeshiva University [YU] that is), where, as an undergraduate living away from home for the first time, I began to wrestle with issues of Jewish observance. Raised in a progressive religious home, I now struggled to

find my place in an Orthodox Jewish community. How observant did I want or need to be? Should I pray three times a day? Eat only in kosher restaurants? Bring my *tefilin*<sup>1</sup> with me when I slept over at my girlfriend's apartment? How was I to distinguish among the cacophonous voices of my parents, teachers, self, and God?

*SINAI: EVENT OR MYTH*

In time, I came to understand that much of this struggle was not about the details of my religious practice, but about larger questions concerning the origin and nature of Jewish law. What was the basis for my ritual life? Did God care if I observed the do's and don'ts of *Shabbat*<sup>2</sup> or, more importantly, if I had premarital sex? The most pressing theological question for me as a late adolescent was about the revelation at Sinai. I thought that if I could unravel the mystery of this hallowed event—whether or not God actually revealed the Torah to the Children of Israel in the wilderness, as my rabbis insisted—I could better understand my relationship to Jewish law and practice.

With the encouragement of friends and family at Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary (located just 60 blocks from YU, but worlds apart intellectually), I began reading not only the classic writings of rabbinic and medieval commentators on this subject, but also the works of such modern Jewish thinkers as Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Abraham Joshua Heschel. I was particularly drawn to Heschel because of the beauty of his writing: the eloquence with which he described the religious life and his unabashed expressions of love for God (the “G” word, unfortunately, was not used much at YU). When I learned of his work as a social activist, he became an instant hero—a spiritual renaissance man who wove together the threads of his religious life with integrity and grace.

For a time, I also found Heschel's approach to the Sinai question helpful. He claimed that God did, in fact, reveal the Torah to Israel as is claimed in the Bible. However, the moment human beings took hold of the Torah it necessarily lost its perfect divine form. Therefore, the text we have in our possession today is not the Torah of God, but a noble human attempt at interpreting the divine word. Nonetheless, Heschel also insisted

that this is the closest approximation of God's will on earth, and therefore, it is incumbent upon us to heed its call and follow its rulings. This response allowed me, temporarily, to maintain a traditional basis for my religious practice without requiring of me a literal reading of the accounts of revelation in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

However, the more I was exposed to biblical criticism and the historical study of religion, the more I came to realize that Heschel's answer on this issue was not my own. Rather than attempting to preserve the truth of Sinai as an *event*, I came to see it and the Bible as a whole as myth—the crystallization of generations of human spiritual search and/or encounter told in dramatic story form. Nonetheless, reading sacred texts through a mythical lens was painful and disorienting for me. I felt as if I was suddenly standing on shaky existential ground. If the Bible was not “true,” and the writings of the rabbis were equally fallible, on what basis could I justify my religious commitments?

MORDECAI KAPLAN:

*MY THEOLOGY UNDERGOES RECONSTRUCTION*

In my various attempts to reorganize my religious life, the writings of Mordecai Kaplan (a fellow graduate of the YU educational system) were helpful, although at first very jarring. Kaplan spoke unapologetically of Judaism as an evolving “civilization” that has grown and changed over the centuries through its interaction with other cultures. He did not believe in the literal truth of the Bible nor did he feel that one was duty bound to live within a traditional Jewish legal framework. Rather, he asserted that individual Jewish communities should decide together how to organize their religious lives, giving *halakhah*<sup>3</sup> “a vote, but not a veto.”

While Kaplan was certainly not the first radical theologian in Jewish history (Abraham has that distinction), he was a particularly important role model for me because he was a modern American man, who like me, had spent significant time in an Orthodox environment, left that world, but remained deeply engaged in Jewish religious life. Rather than try and play clever

exegetical games or offer up unconvincing apologetics, he spoke with brutal honesty, knowing that he risked being branded a heretic by the Jewish establishment (as he was by leaders of the Orthodox rabbinate, who publicly burned his *Sabbath Prayer Book* in 1945). If he could find his way religiously, then perhaps so could I.

While Kaplan's dynamic vision of Jewish life was very exciting to me, his understanding of God, which served as the foundation for his Reconstructionism, only intensified my questioning. For Kaplan, God was not a being—neither a father nor a mother—but an impersonal power. He argued that the world is an essentially hospitable realm for the development of human life—despite the realities of natural disasters and human evils—and God is the spiritual force (parallel to natural forces) that makes for meaning and fulfillment.

Reading Kaplan on God led me to a new level of self-awareness: I realized that my “Sinai crisis” was not actually about the authenticity of the biblical account of revelation or even about Jewish law for that matter; it was at root about the nature of God. Is God a personal being, an impersonal force, or a figment of my imagination? Were my conversations with God in childhood real or age-appropriate fantasy? What about my prayer life—those experiences of intense longing, searching, and catharsis? Am I communicating with an “Other” when I *daven* (pray), or simply crying out without a specific address?

#### KABBALAH: MYSTERY & PRESENCE

Interestingly, I began exploring Kaplan's work at roughly the same time that I discovered the literature of *Kabbalah*.<sup>4</sup> Although Kaplan prided himself on the rationality of his thought, it seemed to me that he shared something important in common with the mystics. While these pre-modern figures often spoke of God in personal terms, they also referred to God (or dimensions of the Godhead) as “breath” “vitality,” and “presence.” I found the language of the Kabbalists particularly attractive because, like Heschel (scion of a distinguished Hasidic<sup>5</sup> family), they spoke in rich poetic terms about the religious life, drawing me in both intellectually and emotionally. I also deeply appreciated the mys-

tics' respect for mystery—their recognition that even as they sought to develop complex theological systems, God would, in one way or another, always transcend their thoughts and imaginings.

Reading both Kaplan and the *Kabbalah*, I was simultaneously attracted to this more abstract language and terrified by the suggestion that God might not be a person. Viewing God as an impersonal force is particularly persuasive in light of the horrific violence and destruction of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when talk of theodicy<sup>6</sup> can often feel ludicrous. However, this God is not the God of the Hebrew Bible or of Jewish liturgy—"the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"—the God who is "in search of man" (Heschel), the God who comforted me as a child.

Having struggled with this question for several years now, the current focus of my theological reflection is about teleology.<sup>7</sup> Now that I live much of my life within a pantheistic<sup>8</sup> framework, experiencing God as an impersonal reality, is it still possible to speak of life as having an ultimate purpose? If God is not the traditional Creator-figure of the Bible, but a creative force, does this Force act with consciousness, will, or desire? Is our existence part of a larger, cosmic design or is it the result of the random collision of galactic matter? Are my I-Thou experiences—at prayer, in nature, or with friends and family—"signals of transcendence" (as the sociologist of religion Peter Berger calls them) or moments that I spiritualize through my religious eyes?

#### WHY I CONTINUE TO THEOLOGIZE

There are, of course, no answers to these questions. I choose to live most of my life "as if"—believing that despite my fragmented vision of reality, there is a "meaning beyond mystery," as Heschel teaches. And sometimes—particularly when praying—I even catch a glimpse of the God of my childhood. But there are also many moments of doubt, moments in which I feel the skeptical presence of figures like Nietzsche and Camus taking hold of me, demanding that I grow up and finally put God aside so that I can get on with the business of life—a life that only I can make meaningful in a cold and unfeeling universe.

What keeps me engaged in theological conversation is my visceral sense that it serves as an important context in which to

explore the big questions of life. In fact, to me it feels like the ultimate context for this exploration—the widest possible lens through which to refract questions of meaning. My God-wrestling is not simply about the presence or absence of a divine being, but also about the reasons for my existence and how I am to live my life. For me, these two levels of inquiry are inseparable.

While I would certainly welcome answers, I do not expect them any time soon. As a student of mysticism, I am learning to live in the questions, holding life's great paradoxes, knowing that as I continue to grow, God will grow with me.

### NOTES

1. *Tefilin*: black leather boxes containing selected biblical verses worn on the head and arm (with straps) during the weekday morning prayer service.
2. *Shabbat*: the Hebrew word for the “Sabbath”; traditionally celebrated by Jews from sundown on Friday night to sundown on Saturday night.
3. *Halakhah*: “the way,” the Hebrew term for Jewish law.
4. *Kabbalah*: “that which is received” or “the receiving”; the Hebrew term for the Jewish mystical tradition.
5. *Hasidism*: an eighteenth-century Jewish mystical revival movement that began in Eastern Europe and continues to flourish in Israel and the United States today.
6. *Theodicy*: the attempt to reconcile the existence of an omnipotent and benevolent God with the existence of evil; derived from the Greek word *theos*, “God,” and *dike*, “justice.”
7. *Teleology*: the purpose of life, derived from the Greek terms *telos*, “end,” and *logos*, “discourse.” This doctrine is based on the proposition that the universe has design and purpose.
8. *Pantheism*: everything is divine, derived from the Greek terms *pan*, “everything,” and *theos*, “God.” This term is based on the proposition that God is wholly immanent and does not exist outside of the natural world.

## A GENERATION GAP

*Nancy Tupper Ling*

I'm the me first,  
up yours, hand it over,  
self deserving, bonus time,  
easy riding, sports driven,  
alibiing, gourmet dining,  
bed hopping, wife swapping,  
move over, that's mine,  
don't touch, faith-denying,  
debt-ridden, who's counting?  
generation.

No war will harm me.  
Famine starve me.  
God disarm me.

I'm sailing coolly,  
smoothly blind  
into a revelation.

## GONE CREATIVITY

*Desne Crossley*

My girl up and left me,  
just plain quit me 'cause  
I couldn't do right.

She figured me  
for a stone fool, hanging  
with a wrong crowd,

thinking I got duped and  
left out God knows where. And my girl  
turned her back on hope

I'd ever come home. Before  
she even left, I'd ditched her.  
Can't blame her for sneaking

away. I really should've kept  
myself up, clean and strong,  
singing, dancing, no matter what. I can't

play congas anymore. No,  
I didn't do much to keep her,  
and she went quietly pissed, but more

to the point, broken hearted.  
How could she wait for me if  
I wouldn't do right – not even for her,

the girl  
in me who makes art  
with her way-out ideas and magic.