

Ever-guarded walls sing

By Yisroel Stern (1939)

Translated by Arnie Goldman

1

How much world and wind

How much world and wind ascend
Onto a single countenance?
Not much. Like one tear after another.

And what is sun?
A little light.
No more.

And yet –
Do you see, all of you in the streets,
The person, the prince,
Who goes and rules
Between cloud and footpath?

What could be holier?
What more beautiful?

But inside our chambers
The days flap by
On despairing wings,
Like trussed chickens.

2

Twigs

Our nights are broken up,
Like twigs from a pine
For whom the horror is strange
Of blooming, dying.

3

Emptied

Let's send out messengers
To the big state fairs
And gather all our steps
--Our earlier steps...

On golden coins of sunshine,
Under air-kisses of the wind;
Our earlier steps,
Where have they all gone?

Now we are emptied out,
Like a sleeping child who sees
Purple summits of mountains
Sail on rivers of milk
Under chocolate bridges.

But a cat crept in,
Clawed out the child's eyes.