

The Place Where We Are Right

Yehuda Amichai

From the place where we are right

flowers will never grow

in the spring.

The place where we are right

is hard and trampled

like a yard.

But doubts and loves

dig up the world

like a mole, a plow.

And a whisper will be heard in the place

where the ruined

house once stood.

Soloing

Phillip Levine

My mother tells me she dreamed

of John Coltrane, a young Trane

playing his music with such joy
and contained energy and rage
she could not hold back her tears.
And sitting, awake now, her hands
crossed in her lap, the tears start
in her blind eyes. The TV set
behind her is gray, expressionless.
It is late, the neighbors quiet,
even the city –Los Angeles- quiet,
I have driven for hours down 99,
over the Grapevine into heaven
to be here. I place my left hand
on her shoulder, and she smiles.
What a world, a mother and her son
finding solace in California
just where we were told it would
be, among the palms and all-
night super markets pushing orange
back-lighted oranges at 2 A.M.
“He was alone,” she says, and does
not say, just as I am, “soloing.”
What a world, a great man half
Her age comes to my mother
in sleep to give her the gift
of song, which- shaking the tears

away- she passes on to me, for now
I can hear the music of the world
In the silence and that word:
soloing. What a world- when I
arrived the great bowl of mountains
was hidden in a cloud of exhaust,
the sea spread out like a carpet
of oil, the roses I had brought
from Fresno browned on the seat
beside me, and I could have
turned back and lost the music.

Jonah 4: 1-4

Jonah was greatly displeased and angry, and he prayed to the Lord: "This, O Lord, is what I feared when I was in my own country, and to forestall it I tried to escape to Tarshish; I knew that thou art "a god gracious and compassionate, long-suffering and ever constant, and always willing to repent of the disaster". And now, Lord, take my life; I should be better dead than alive.' 'Are you so angry?' said the Lord.