ADELE GRAF

SOREHENNA: AS HER, NONE

childhood flies home in dreams
to my grandmother’s cramped fragrant rooms
on sounds of synagogal melody

ne’er a nosh
   her meals brimmed with cool
pink summer borscht, chopped liver
toasted mounds, oblong braided bread
served in sun, her head held high

sane her, no?
   warming to grandchildren who
nimbly skipped from Yiddish tradition
she stuffed nuts and pears in Christmas
stockings hung on protruded knobs
of her broad split-level stove

an’ her nose
   prominent but eclipsed
by smiles, smelled blended scents in rooms
behind her store (paste wax, antimacassars
humid sills) that my nostrils still retrieve
from burnished wood when nights are warm

near shone
   her face, as now, when breezes
of remembrance flutter over her, ensconced
in flowered sunshine of some imagined later
home as full and pleasing as her own
hens are on!

Sundays her closed store—
sole space wide enough to welcome all—
transformed once guests who’d helped
to spread her narrow table circled round
for slow-roasted chicken dinners, children’s
gifts stitched from velvet ends

earn she? no!

as she waited for clients
in her passé milliner’s shop—
pink footstool near her window display
where her foot on the stool
then knee in the window brought hats within reach—
this footstool, later muted beige
talisman of a bygone world
now grants ease for my aged feet

ha, sneer on! or ah, no sneer! (you choose)

too late to tell her, I can soar
to where she hovers ever near my skin—
from her auburn hand-held mirror
my own old woman’s face stares at me
but after hugs and knocks of intervening years
Sorehenna’s joy runs through my veins