

JOY HEWITT MANN

Expiring in Yiddish

Lying with her on the bed
 I breathed in Mother's voice
 full of her brilliantly false British accent
 waited for the catch in her voice, the quantum leap in years
 click her tongue caught on a consonant
 flashed like light through a vowel and the breath I took
 was pickled and spiced with alien sound.
 I sucked in to drown in the taste of her past
 while Aunt, clicking and flashing her needles by the bed
 stopped as fast as Mother travelled on:
 her bottom lip, hung over the memories
 like the shiny rim of a pewter jug,
 drew up in anger as she stood
 scattering her knitting, leaning over me
 to smother with her lilac mask.
 "Out!"
 and I watched as Mother's backward journey was aborted
 with pills placed gently
 on a white tongue.