

## 7. Yankev Glatshteyn

No. 14. Good night, world

Good night, wide world,  
big stinking world.  
Not you but I slam shut the gate.  
With a long gabardine,  
with a fiery yellow patch,  
with a proud stride,  
because I want to,  
I'm going back to the ghetto.  
Wipe away, stamp put every vestige of conversion.  
I roll around in your garbage -  
praise, praise, praise, -  
hunchbacked Jewish life.  
Damn your dirty culture, world.  
I wallow in your dust  
even though it's forsaken,  
sad Jewish life.  
German pig, cutthroat Pole,  
Romania, thief, land of drunkards and gluttons.  
Week-kneed democracy, with your cold  
sympathy-compresses.  
Good night, electrified arrogant world.  
Back to my kerosene, candle shadows,  
eternal October, candle stars,  
to my crooked streets, humped lanterns,  
my sacred pages, my Bible,  
my Gemorra, to my backbreaking  
studies, to the bright Yiddish prayerbook,  
to law, profundity, duty, justice, -  
world, I walk gladly towards quiet ghetto light.  
Good night. I'll make you, world, a gift of  
all my liberators.  
Take back your Jesus-Marxes, choke on their courage.  
Croak over a drop of our christianized blood.  
For I have hope, even if He is delaying,  
day by day my expectation rises.  
Green leaves will yet rustle  
on our sapless tree.  
I don't need any consolation.  
I'm going back to my very beginnings,  
from Wagner's pagan music to melody, to humming.  
I kiss you, disheveled Jewish life,  
I cry with the joy of coming back.

August 1938.

No. 14. is one of the most famous Yiddish poems.  
Its content (particularly the words about the Germans and the  
Poles) should,  
of course, be taken in the context of the time when it was  
written: in 1938.

(Translation by Ruth Whitman.)

No. 15. Mozart

I dreamed that  
the gentiles crucified Mozart  
and buried him in a pauper's grave.  
But the Jews made him a man of God  
and blessed his memory.

I, his apostle, ran all over the world,  
converting everyone I met,  
and whenever I caught a Christian  
I made him a Mozartean.

How wonderful is the musical testament  
of this divine man!  
How nailed through with song  
his shining hands!  
In his greatest need  
all the fingers of this crucified  
singer were laughing.  
And in his most crying grief  
he loved his neighbour's ear  
more than himself.

How poor and stingy -  
compared with Mozart's legacy -  
is the Sermon on the Mount.

(Translation by Ruth Whitman.).

No. 16. The Joy Of the Yiddish Word

O let me come close to the joy of the Yiddish word.  
Give me whole days and nights of it.  
Bind me, weave me into it,

strip me of all vanities.  
Let ravens feed me, I'll live on crumbs.  
A broken roof, a hard bed.  
But give me whole days and nights of it.  
Don't let me forget the Yiddish word  
for a single moment.

I'm becoming harsh and commanding,  
like the hand of my livelihood.  
Capons and champagne  
indigest my time.  
The Yiddish word lies garnered,  
but the key rusts in my hand.  
Logic steals away my understanding.

O sing, sing yourself towards naked austerity.  
The world becomes fat in your bed.  
There'll soon be no place for either of us.  
The Yiddish word, loyal, silent, is waiting for you.  
And you sigh in a burning dream:  
I'm coming, I'm coming.

(Translation by Ruth Whitman.).