THE GOLDEN GOWN

—after Yehudit Arnon

CAROL DINE

Birkenau. The new woman pushed up beside me on the stone slab cries out in Hungarian in her sleep. I press my hand over her lips. Morning. Before the guard arrives, I show them how to unknot their bodies, stretch. Facing me, women in pajamas, striped birch trees.

Christmas Eve. They come for me. A large room, candles fluttering, the smell of beer and pine. Soldiers clap their big hands, they are shouting, "Dance for us." I stiffen, look down at my mismatched socks. "Nein." A soldier drags me outside to the yard. I grip the icy fence. Snow falls like a curtain. Snow covering my bare feet.

*

In the forest, I shiver in the soldier's coat and boots, stolen from the camp. Bent over, inch from tree to tree in the moonless dark. I look up at a single star, afraid to ask God for anything more.

*

On deck of the ship to Palestine, I gather the parentless children. We pretend to leap the rolling waves.

*

Karmiel, Israel. Center stage. My dancers watch from the wings. I bend my knees, extend the skirt of the golden gown across the floor until it is wide as a desert. The music swells. I lie down; the golden flecks are sand. On my bare skin, sun.

THE MAILER REVIEW, VOL. 8, NO. 1, FALL 2014. Copyright © 2014. The Norman Mailer Society. Published by The Norman Mailer Society.

Two Paintings
–after Nancy Spero

Male Bomb
I diffuse
half the male torso;
in light brown gouache,
a mushroom cloud.
Between the open legs,
his serpentine cock
erect,
carnage
spewing
from its mouth.
I work up
sheet after opaque sheet
until the paint of war
runs out.

Gunship
With impermanent black
I mark the horizon line.
The helicopter
hovers
over a village;
from the American eye
of the pilot,
from the apocryphal belly
of the beast,
jism, napalm
spills over a mother father child.
Their arms and spoons scatter,
their paper skin burns.

—Carol Dine