The Land of the Patriarchs

Hara E. Person

*Deuteronomy 26:1-15*

In the land of the patriarchs

stones leak the dust of dried tears

and walls hang heavy with photographs of your ancestors

who in each generation picked up and moved again

speaking to their children always in accents.

At dusk on the kibbutz windows open

houses begins to breathe once again

the night air carries conversations like scent across distances

and the sweet-sour smell of the *refet* seeps into our skin.

You burrow into me

one on either side,

like kittens you curl and unfurl

in this unfamiliar bed,

looking for just the right spot against my arm, my hip, my chest, my neck.

In the day the white hot air sweeps into the valley,

hanging like a curtain over bushes trees, tractors, buildings.

Fans whir and click,

trying to break up the thick heat

but the air is too heavy with memory

too laden with stories,

and instead it falls with a thud over the houses,

wisps of scorching air trying to enter the shuttered windows

and curl under the shut doors.

It is a heat that slashes in its angry rage,

that suffocates with its jealous clasp.

The land of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and your father,

a land so rich in layers of history,

so overburdened with purpose and destiny

that the very earth crumbles to pieces in your fist

and swirls up in eddies as you run barefoot,

your feet slap slap slapping the ground

with your newly discovered un-Brooklyn freedom.

Tonight I am your mother land.

For now, you belong here against me

entwined around each other,

in the twisted, too-small sheets

that wind around your soft bodies as you dig into sleep.

For now I hold you tight and protected

safe and rooted in my embrace.