

THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 3 | 1994

After A Fast, Walking In A Field Of Germinated Wheat

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AFTER A FAST, WALKING IN A FIELD OF GERMINATED WHEAT

Seeing so much green, incipient wheat, I'm hungry for all the bread I've ever eaten, and all the loaves yet to be proofed, kneaded, raised, baked, and gobbled up while still warm and steamy. I don't mean those gooey white slices that constipate aristocrats, but black, molasses-rich, democratic loaves torn open by comrades, thick chunks smeared with garlic-butter or cream cheese, washed down with pints of beer. Beer is bread in one of its two liquid forms, the other being sourdough starter (stinking, fermented snot of mules, the pioneer's yeast of grim necessity), which, when stirred in its earthenware crock, bubbles up and sighs with gas. In each loaf, biscuit, or flapjack is the memory of emigration. And it's the emigrant's poverty and abandonment that are also the essential ingredients in *matzos*, the bread of affliction Bubbe let me gnaw to keep me quiet as an infant. O Bubbe, who smelled of rye bread, her flesh the scent of toasted caraway, who filled the entire house each dawn with an aroma of warm bread that asked, *What kinda Prencee ees theese, vhat lies een bed vwhile others verk?* It's time to break the fast with a common loaf—fresh, flat, yeasted, or stale, it makes no difference to me, especially today, at the dim end of November, the snowline lowering from the ridges into the valley, brittle weeds scraping the wind's disenchantment. It's time to break the fast, as everything that's going to endure winter, turns inward, resolute as the wheat's taproots tendrilling into rich red volcanic ash, ash that in dry months is dust. Ashes and dust, familiar sum of all our becomings. But at either end of these thousand acre fields, mile-long rows of inch-high seedlings converge where the grain hopper turned, rows swirling together now like a mist of green foxfire, lovers at climax whose bodies diffuse into one, the globe of vital spirit the master directs along a vast curve back to "the elixir chamber" below the lungs. How alive our bodies are! The ache is lasting and wonderful!