

## Visiting the Iniquity Upon the Children, Unto the Third and Fourth Generation of Them

(in memory of Anita Silverman)

When he was a boy, my husband says,  
he devoured pears: skin, flesh, core, seeds.  
But not the stems, which he brought to his mother  
(whose leg was mangled by polio in a DP camp  
in Vienna, 1949) as a gift. *I think I hear her coming now!*

She was two when they left Debrecen by foot  
on Passover night. Her mother drugged her  
so she wouldn't ask the Four Questions. Her mother  
who had survived with Christian papers in a Beauty Parlor  
in Budapest, cutting the German soldiers' beards, dancing  
with the German soldiers' groping fingers, clapping feet.  
They assumed her cheeks were wet with pleasure  
but her tears were for Tokaj, for yellow muscats,  
for her mother – *I think I hear her coming now!* –

rotten on the vine. A boy, he didn't understand.  
But knew enough to try to make his mother glad.  
He offered her his stems and she held out her hand,  
again, again, wove stem with stem until they were the length  
of her lame leg. She leaned on that wobbly cane. She kept  
taking step after step after step. *I think I hear her coming now!*