Kaddish

David Axelrod
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for my father

After the gas tanks break
and wings fold back like swallows,
after the rain and flames,
father, lead me to the ark
of uncluttered light,
the black veins of your wounded throat.

Let me pray at last
in alsike and rye,
on this hillside north of Massillon,
where the Tuscarawus rises
and leeches wait at the shore
for me to slough my broken skin
and bob downstream
with the swift current and sludge.

Father, give me to the green
Jerusalem of grass,
where you sailed down
from an ignited sky, down
over the quailing maples.

Lead me back, father,
from the river's greased shore,
press my hands over your dark,
punctured neck, show me smuts
and molds where they grow
in the split hollows
of your wrists and ribs.
Give me to the green
shoots that hold us fast
in the thick, downward
whirling earth, the healed fault
where you fell,
the acres of uneroded grass.

David Axelrod