

26 POETS  
26 POEMS



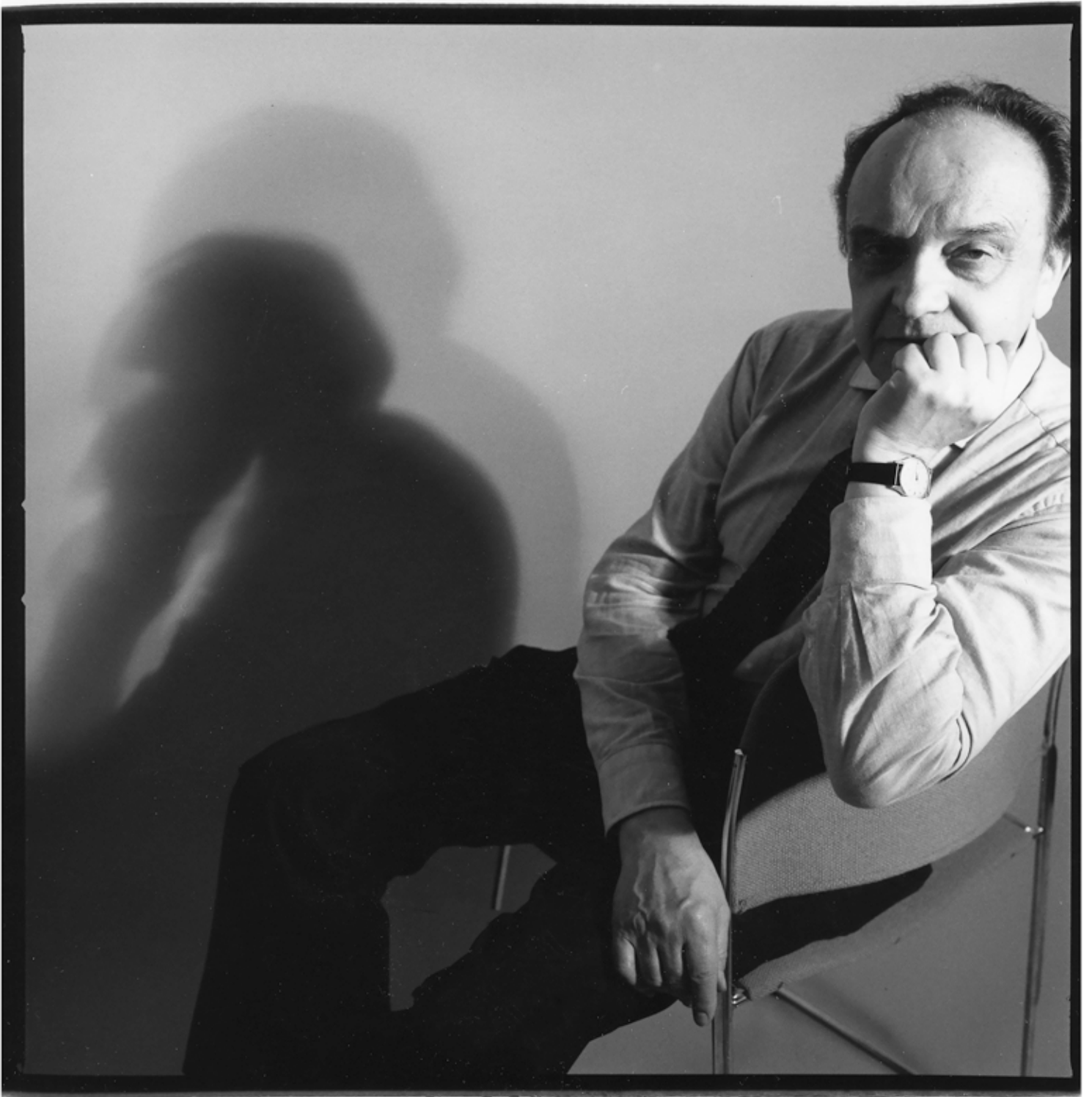
**Karen Alkalay-Gut, poet and writer**

The closer you get  
the less you see  
the more you become

The more you become me  
the less you are  
a lover

Keep your distance  
stay near

*Karen Alkalay-Gut*



**Julius Balbin, Poet and Professor of Linguistics.**

## **GHETTOES**

There were ghettoes  
    in Europe's Dark Ages  
and there are Ghettoes  
    in America's Promised Land.

But somewhere between the two  
    lurked a darkness  
        dimmer  
than any age:  
the ghettoes of Warsaw  
    Vilna  
    Lodz  
    Cracow . . .

Ah, the treacherous homonymy  
    of  
    our  
        imperfect  
        language!

*Julius Balbin*

translated from Esperanto by Charlz Rizzuto



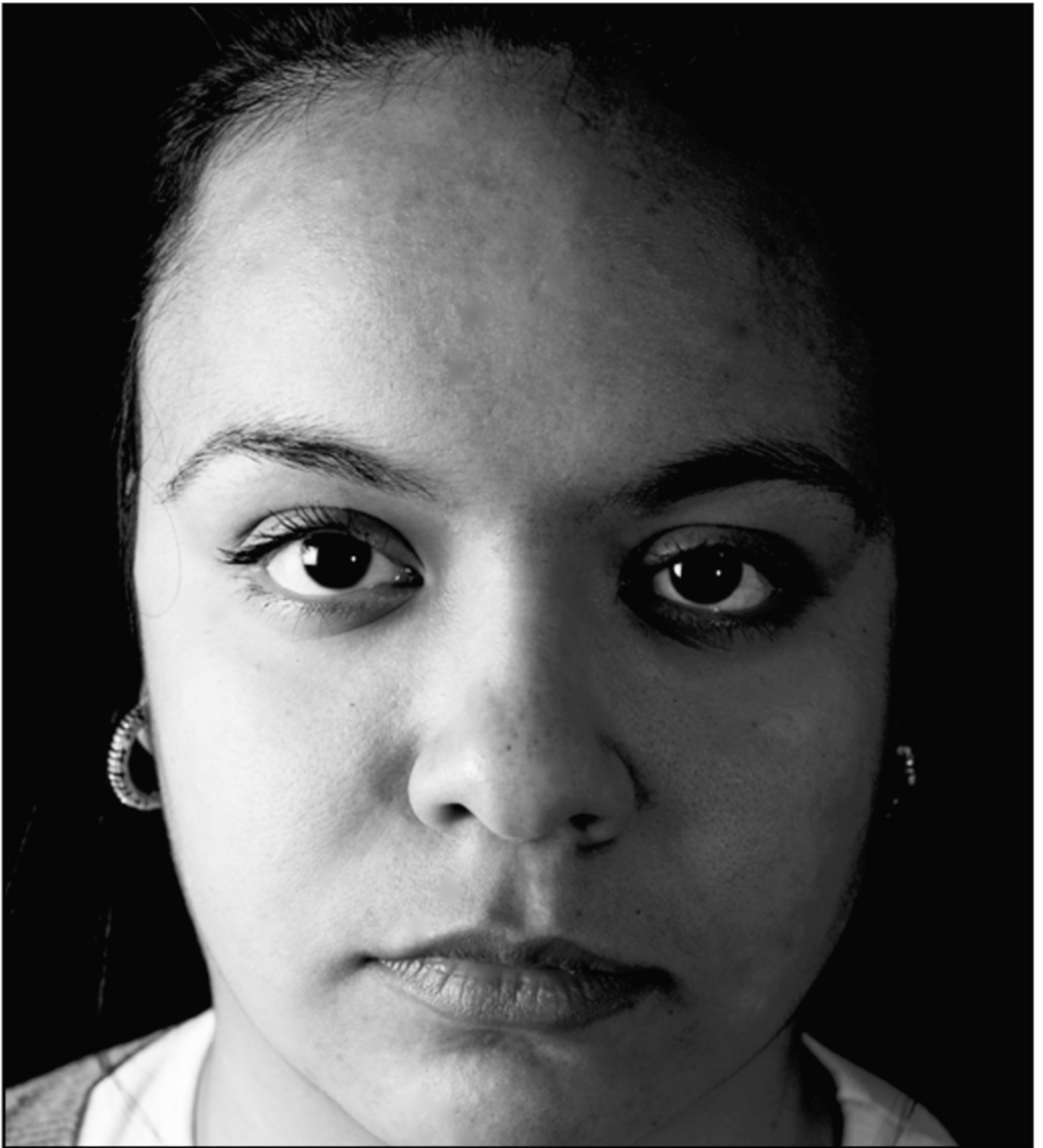
**Rachel Berghash, poet and writer**

## LIVING MOMENTS

After "Living Moments," On the Work of Michael Eigen

When it befalls me to have a living moment—  
to hear leaves vibrate to the breeze,  
when my kids are well in these turbulent times  
and my husband speaks tenderly to me  
as the sun blushes among grey clouds,  
when pain is gone,  
and calm settles in my bone,  
I stretch the arms of my soul  
and hug the world thrice,  
I am alive, I cry,  
and privileged in these tumultuous  
dawns and late nights  
to love you, and you, and you . . . and you.

*Rachel Berghash*



**Tzvia Berghash, poet and student**



Before the last breath

I want to know everything

I want to try to feel and to feel pain

before the last breath

I want my voice to be heard

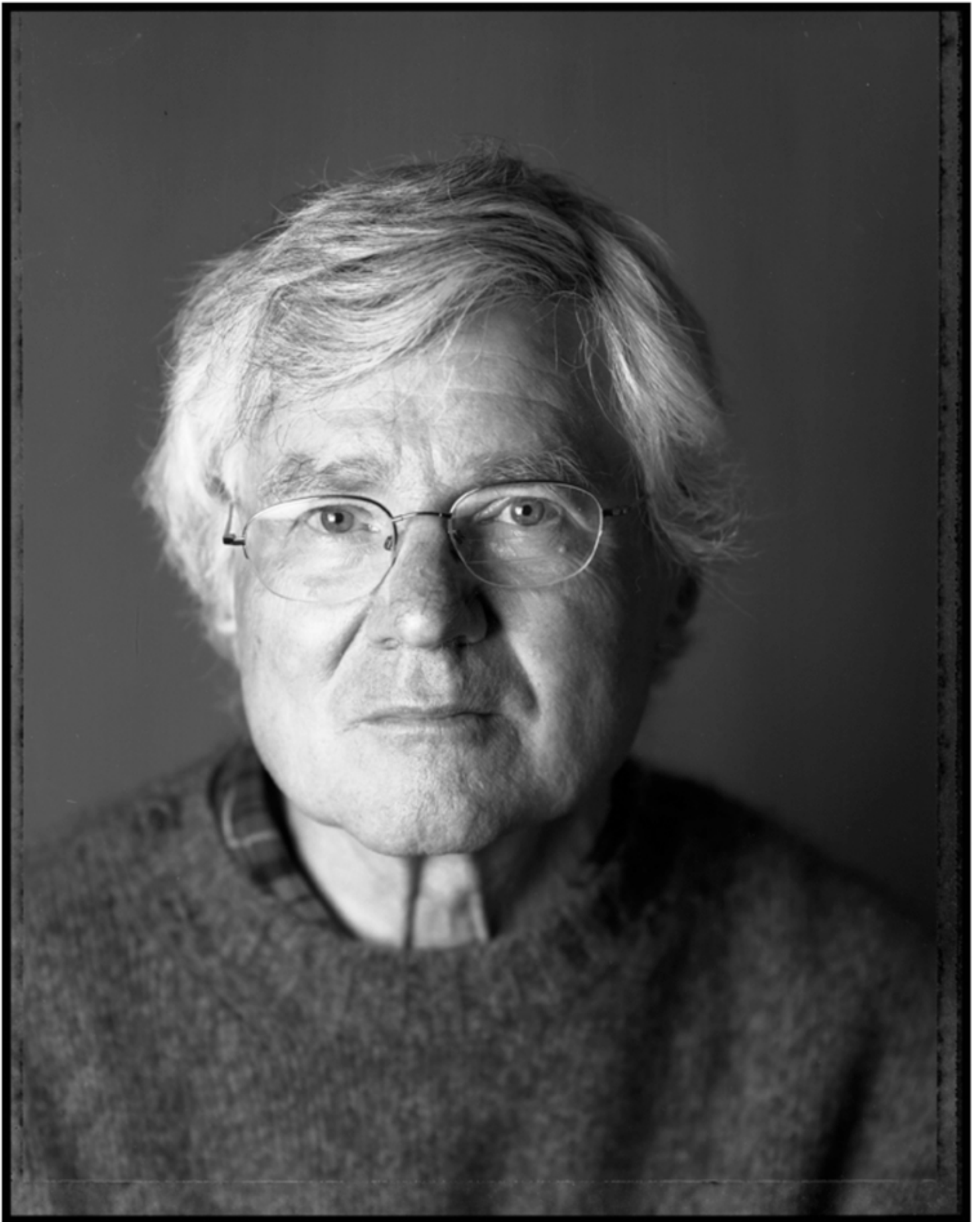
to love with meaning

in the meantime

no one promised me anything

*Tzvia Berghash*

translated from Hebrew by Rachel Berghash

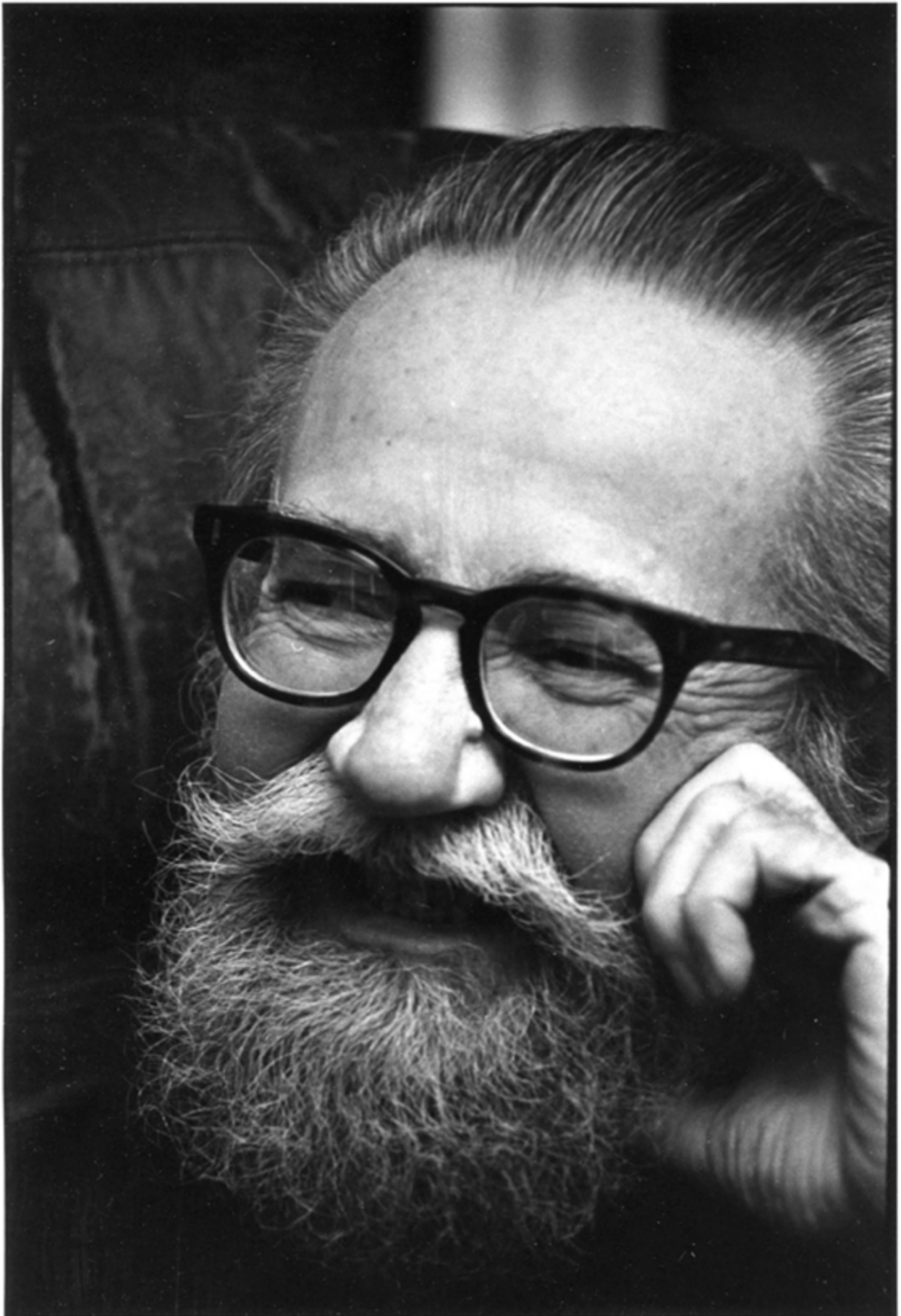


**Jon Brand, photographer, writer and poet**

## SUNDAY SUPPER.

"Daddy, is it uncomfortable to have a penis?"  
"Only if you have to go to the potty real bad."  
"And they're always hanging down, penises. So long, long noses on the fanny."  
Monika: "I think it's so nice to live in this town, you meet people you know. It's so nice, exchange a few words."  
"Would you like it if I was a boy? What would you call me if I was a boy?"  
"Pest," I say.  
"Henrik," says Mommy.  
"Are you naked when you're going to get a baby? With an undershirt on?"  
"With an undershirt."  
"On when you were gonna get a baby?"  
"Ja."  
"Did you have on underpants?"  
"It's not so easy. At least you can be sure the baby isn't going to land on the floor."  
"Do you remember when I was little and I didn't like it when anybody laughed at me? Do you remember? I started screaming."

*Jonathan Brand*



**Millen Brand, poet and novelist**

## Father and Son

At the inn tonight  
I go down to wash my clothes  
in the bathroom  
at a tap of warm water there.

It's a large bath to accommodate  
many men. Near me,  
as I work naked in the heat,  
is a heavy-set Japanese  
and his thin son. It's late. They are  
the only other ones here, the father  
washing his small son. First he takes him  
slantwise across his lap  
and washes his face, both he  
and the boy making sounds  
that are words but also definitely  
love sounds. The man stands the boy up  
and soaps him all over, head to foot,  
every part of him white with soap,  
then dips a pan of water  
from the communal tub  
and pours it over the boy.  
The boy takes another pan  
and pours water down his own back.  
He speaks through the water murmur,  
and again, the sound of love.

*Millen Brand*



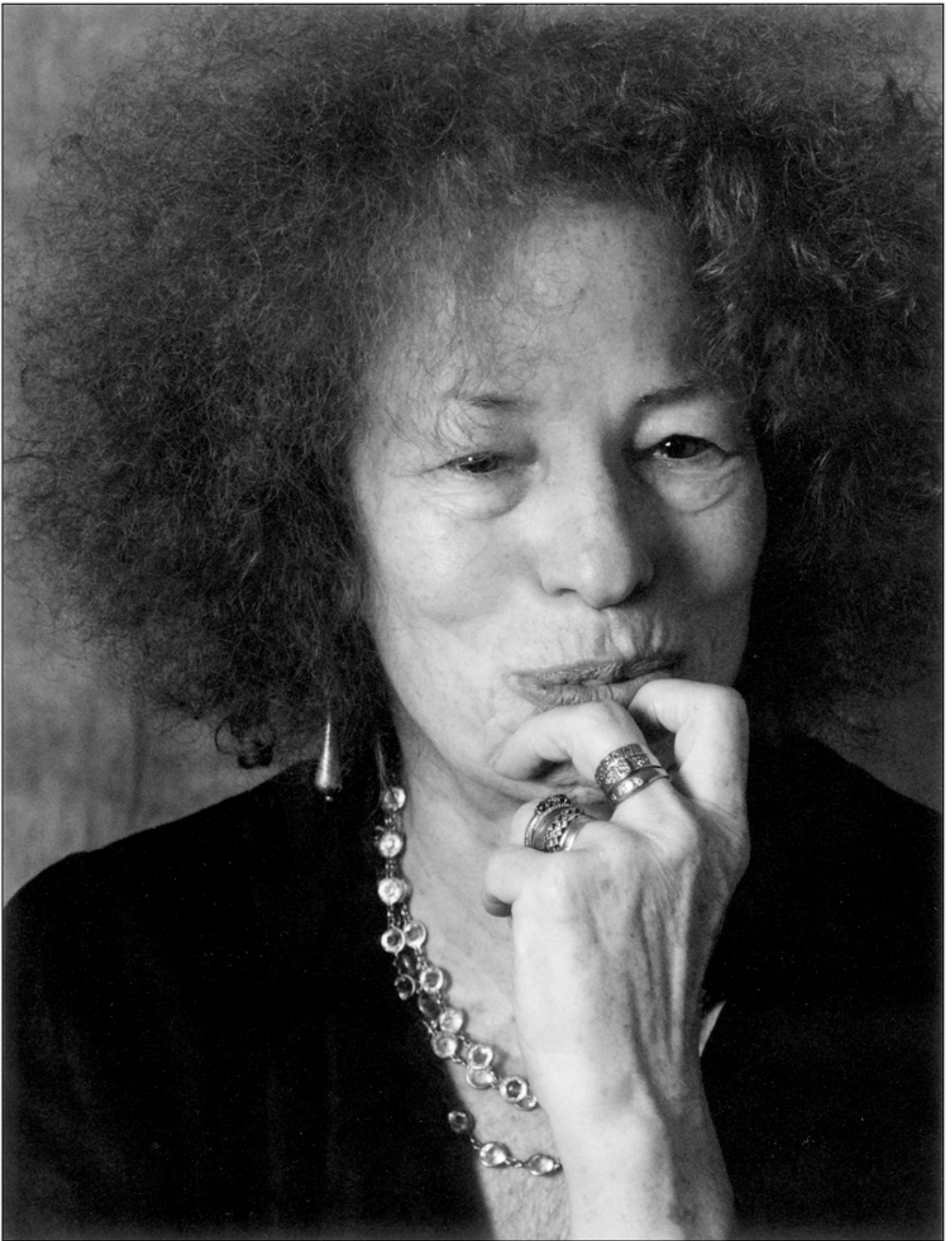
**Sharon Bray, poet and writer, with her partner Richard Hale**

## **After Years Together**

If you die first, will  
you still touch me? Your  
particles bump into me in the kitchen  
at supertime, in the  
henhouse early morning or along  
the gravel driveway watching deer  
and turkeys in the field.

Particle to particle, our atoms  
make mysterious shapes  
hard to find as blueberries  
spilled across a wide-board floor  
rolling, floating, being just  
out of the mind's reach.

*Sharon Bray*

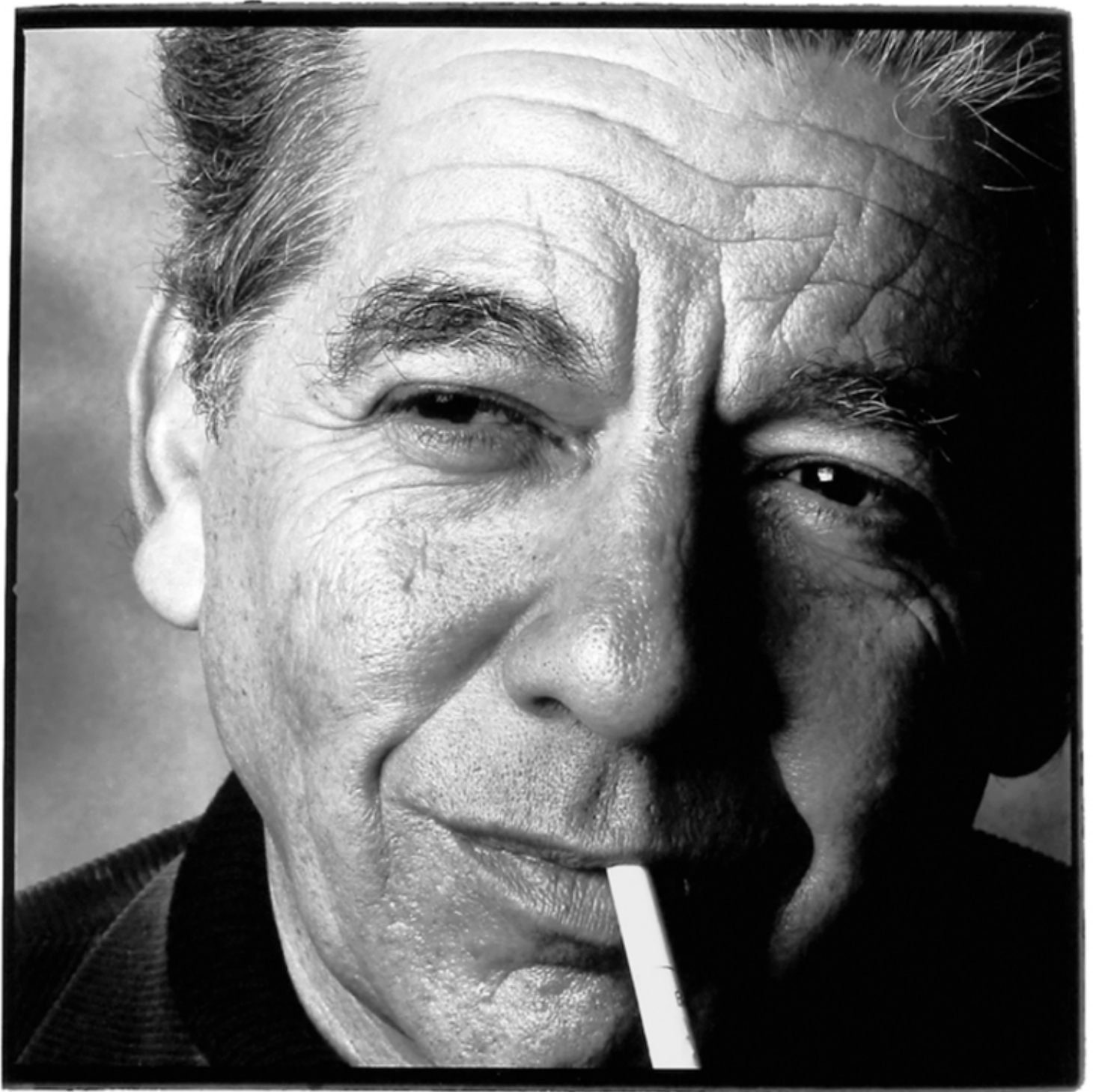


Esther Cohen, poet, activist & editor, photograph by 15 year old Khanyisile Ndaba



My therapist I hesitate to say  
He is a Wise Man (he is)  
asked me, a secular Jew,  
long married to a secular Armenian  
family comprised of everything  
he asked what I would like  
to say to god. No one  
even my Reconstructionist Bas Mitzvah rabbi  
asked me that question and I did not have  
an answer so I said let me  
think about that for a week and then  
yesterday he said do you have an answer  
and I told him I used one of my new notebooks  
to write down all the things I'd say  
and in the end,  
just thanks.

*Esther Cohen*



**T. Carmi, poet and translator**

## *The Condition*

First I'll sing. Later, perhaps, I'll speak.  
I'll repeat the words

Like someone memorizing his face at morning.  
I'll return to my silences

The way the moon wanes.  
In public I'll hoist the black fowl of sorrow

Like a boy drawing his sword on Purim.  
I'll court your closed hands

Like a lantern that is endlessly blackening.  
So, I'll return, keep silence, weep,

And I'll sing. First I'll sing. I'll wrap the words  
In paper bags, like pomegranates.

Later, perhaps, we'll speak.

*T. Carmi,*

translated by Peter Everwine and Shula Starkman



**Shirley Kaufman, poet and translator**

## *Wonders*

When it was late  
the Baal Shem Tov  
set a tree on fire  
to warm his friends  
so they could leave their wagon  
in the snow  
and say the evening prayers  
at the right time

merely by touching it.

Night will come on  
before we get to the next town.

We make a place  
for silence  
in the dark

and your arms reach out  
to hold me

for the small time  
we have  
by our own  
light.

*Shirley Kaufman*



**Jake Marmer, poet, performer and educator,**  
with his wife Shoshana

**the holy of holies**

there's a door inside my head

where my dead are

it opens only

when someone else

dies

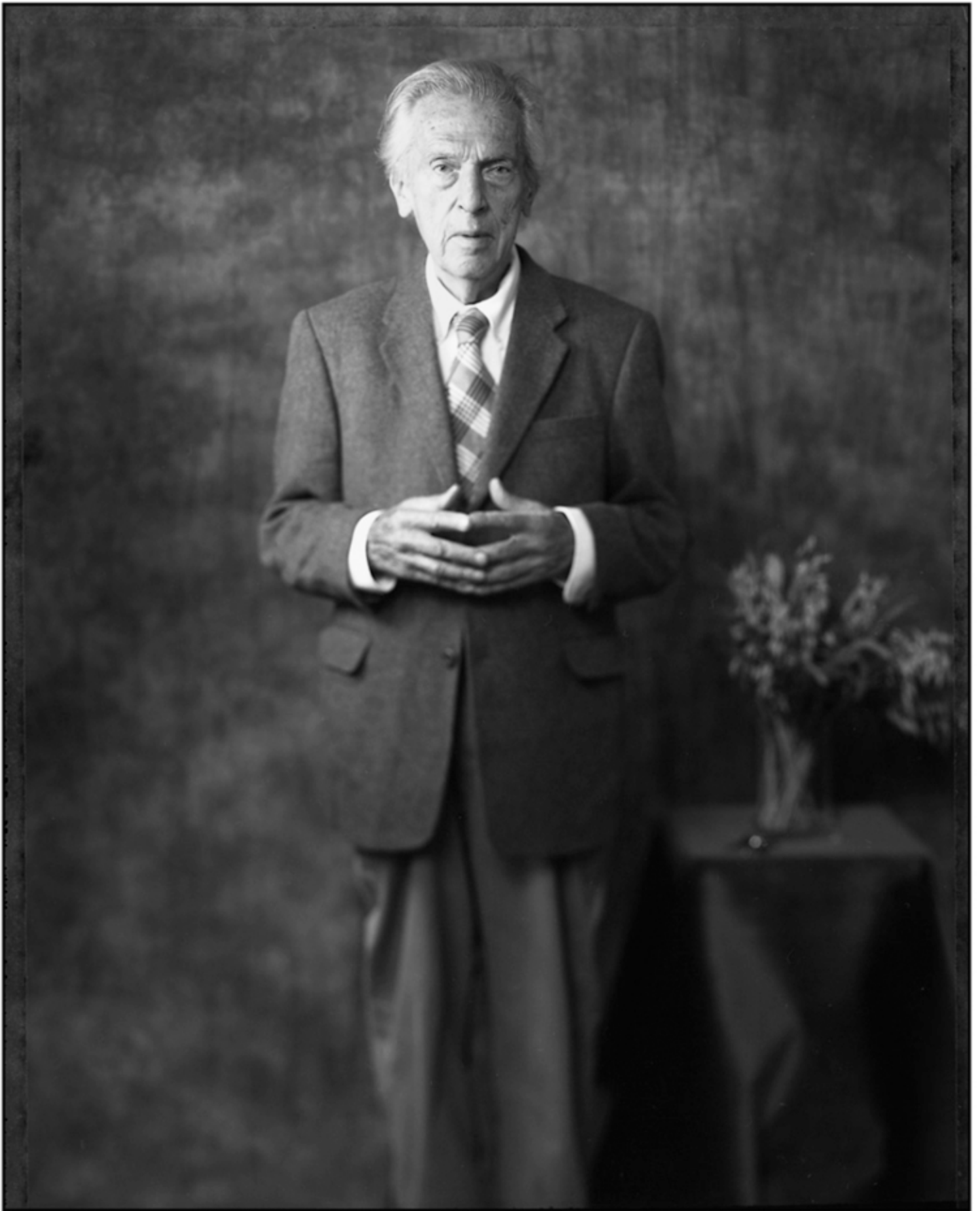
the pain and guilt and loss

open the door

and thru it i see all of them,

all of my dead

*Jake Marmer*



Samuel Menashe, poet



# Rue

For what I did  
And did not do  
And do without  
In my old age  
Rue, not rage  
Against that night  
We go into,  
Sets me straight  
On what to do  
Before I die—  
Sit in the shade,  
Look at the sky

*Samuel Menashe*



**Shoshana Olidort, poet, editor and translator  
with her husband Jake and son Lev**

your molten happiness

is only for special occasions

like a russian doll

in a twilight chamber

*Shoshana Olidort*



**Jeanne-Marie Osterman, poet and poetry editor**

## HE BRINGS FLOWERS

Every Saturday  
my big-boned man  
brings us a bag  
of fresh flowers.  
Closed up,  
they look like magic wands—  
the tiny green nub on top  
ready to explode  
and spread  
voodoo through our rooms.  
They remind me  
that I won't be here much longer—  
losing my hair, my mind, the art  
of holding myself upright.  
Odd, beauty.  
We *ooh* and *ahh*  
all the way to Friday.

*Jeanne-Marie Osterman*



**Dan Pagis, poet and professor of medieval Hebrew poetry**

## *The Last Ones*

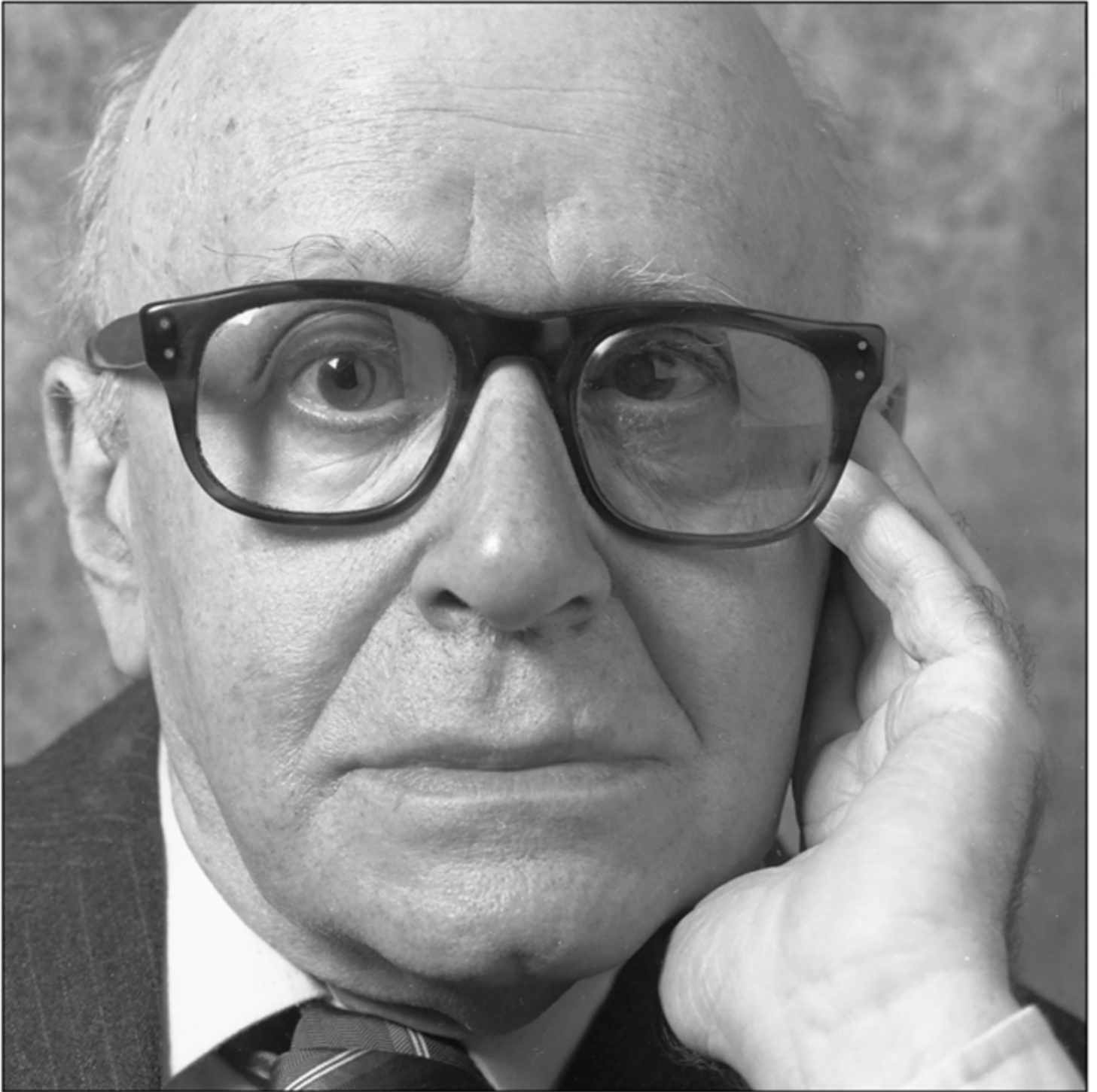
I am already quite scarce. For years  
I have appeared only here and there  
at the edges of this jungle. My graceless body  
is well camouflaged among the reeds and clings  
to the damp shadow around it.  
Had I been civilized,  
I would never have been able to hold out.  
I am tired. Only the great fires  
still drive me from hiding place to hiding place.

And what now? My fame is only in the rumors  
that from time to time  
and even from hour to hour  
I wane.  
But it is certain that at this moment  
someone is tracking me. Cautiously  
I prick all my ears and wait. The steps  
already rustle the dead leaves. Very close. Here.  
Is this it?

Am I it? I am.  
There is no time to explain.

*Dan Pagis,*

translated from Hebrew by Stephen Mitchel



**Gabriel Preil, poet**



# **BLOND SEASON**

**Now in the blond season  
I am still not blond, nor dark;  
bare from head to foot I am  
facing a wintriness, that stealthily  
passes on to me a salty taste burdensome  
with insolent snow.**

**In general, a nonrecurring season  
standing still  
inattentive, indifferent.  
Like a silent chessboard  
motionless.**

**I am the stubborn player  
who returns ready  
as a soldier, a horseman or a king -  
either vanquished or victor  
forever not indifferent.**

**Even speaking words of praise  
that fall like leaves  
off a solitary tree.**

*Gabriel Preil*

translated from Hebrew by Rachel Berghash

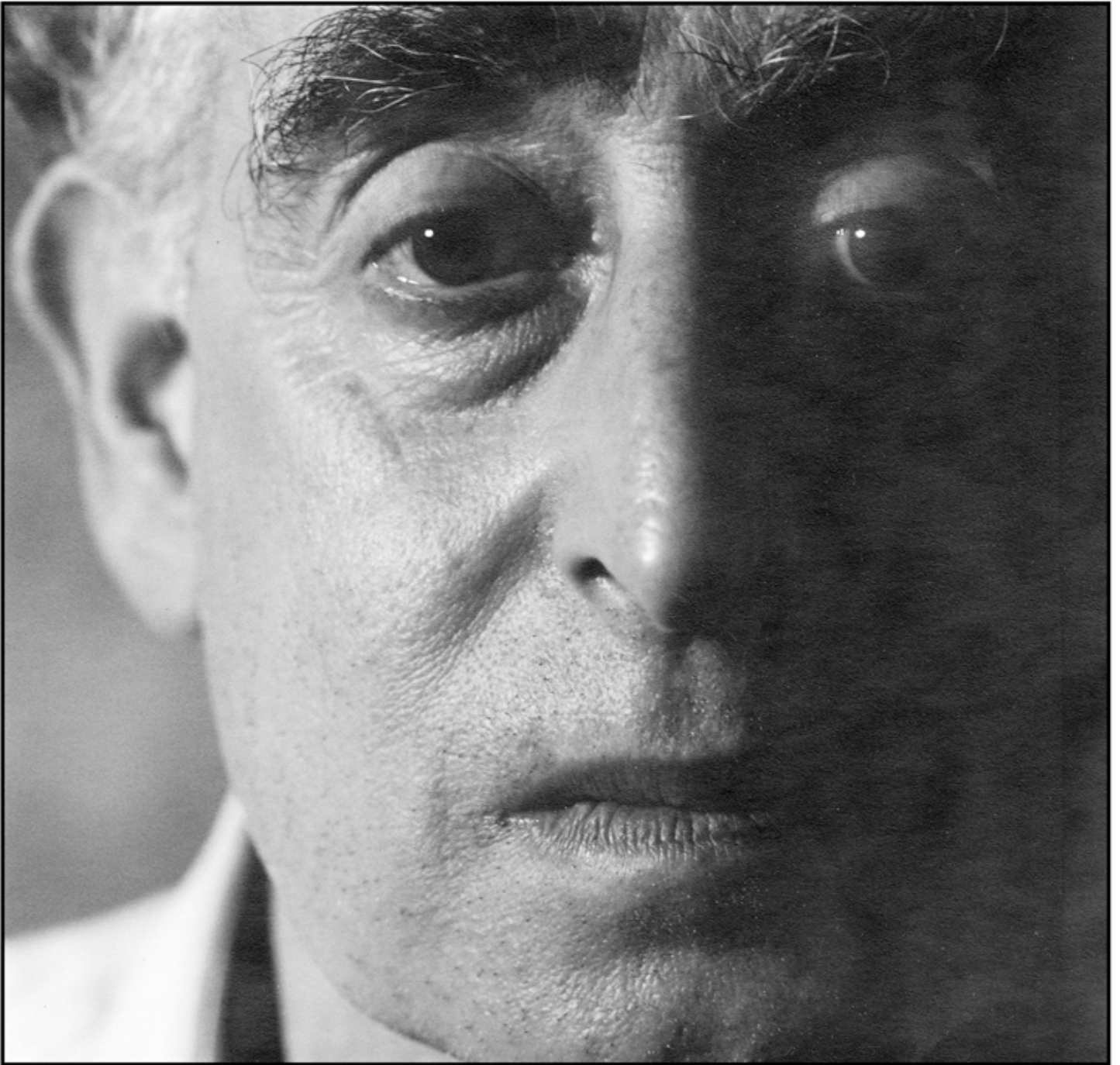


**Grace Sculman, poet and professor of English**

## *Names*

“This is ozone,” you said,  
staring at absolute air,  
startled by all things  
palpable, familiar;  
the less we know  
about a thing, the more  
names we give it.  
Nominal friend,  
I find you in rain,  
see you in waves that radiate  
rainbows,  
your voice in my quick  
ears, inventing  
hemlocks, rose-breasted  
grosbeaks. Even now,  
this weedy grove spins  
starflowers, *arbor*  
*vitae*, aspens  
and foamflowers  
(one word);  
from the bottom  
of your word-hoard,  
names govern the world.

*Grace Schulman*



**Dennis Silk, poet, playwright and translator**

# *Guide to Jerusalem*

*II*

## **No-Man's Land**

A house stands in the sinister land,  
its top floor a slanting staircase  
accepted as such by aspiring weeds,  
and outer walls by some personal will  
of stucco and of braced stone  
married as never Jerusalem.

Married but living in barrenness.  
Not even a stupid hen  
to lay thriftless eggs here, not  
an amorous cat.  
Weather is the tenant now.

*Dennis Silk*



Roni Somech, poet and teacher

SONNET OF THE AIR NARCISSUS

Night showers wash the asphalt dragons,  
water residues traced in puddles  
and at four in the morning the language of myth  
touches the edge of sidewalks.

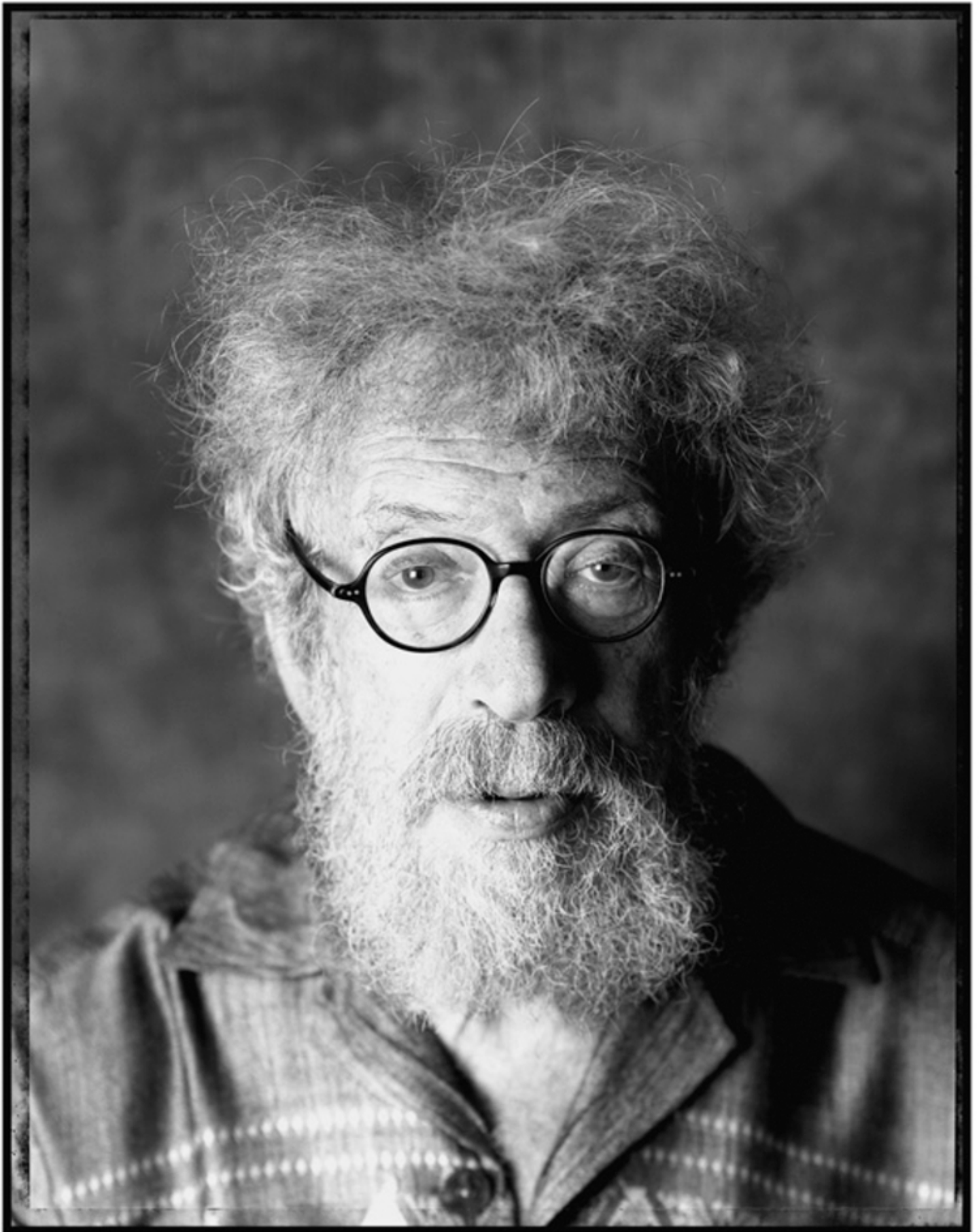
At this pace flames will soon erupt from the throat  
and street will turn against street.  
The red light will be the light of a paper lantern  
and nightingales will soar from Chinese legends to those of  
tomorrow.

Only, among the heart's rocks  
(of he who can fall in love  
with the spreading spot

between the nail's coastal plain and the fingers of a girl he  
barely knows) will  
the pink-frozen night of the air narcissus blossom.

© Translation: 2006, Gabriel Levin

*Roni Somech*



**Gerd Stern, multimedia artist and poet**



**Brevitas**

Faith

keep on doing

going, being

believing in

sew buttons

instead of

so what

*Gerd Stern*



**Marc Straus, poet, writer, oncologist**

## One Word

A man at the bus stop stooped  
to retrieve a dime rolling towards  
the drain. Looking at me, he said,  
No ordinary dime, mister. Really, I said,

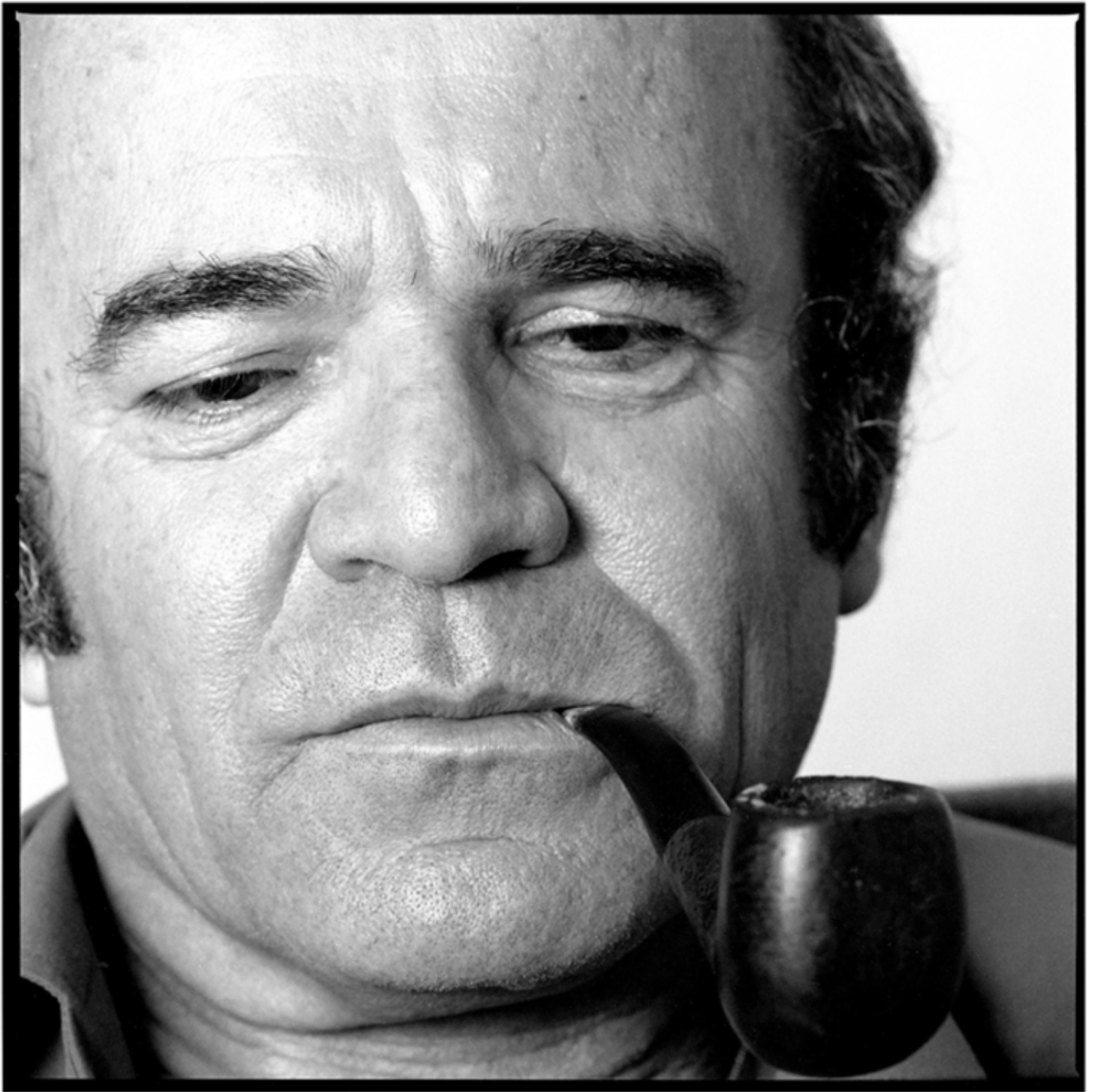
thinking how life is sometimes reduced  
to a single word, a reflex, a courtesy.  
Like the time I interviewed this young man  
for a job in my lab, my mind wandering,

not attached to the conversation,  
at best noticing his outdated tie.  
Perhaps in response to some statement,  
I said, Why? Then sensing the opportunity

he answered more eloquently and that changed  
everything. Like the time a woman walked  
into my medical office for one thing,  
and I put my fingers in the crevice of her neck,

the right side, and touched a fullness  
deep within, and I knew that moment  
I would say one word to her and nothing  
would ever be the same again.

*Marc J. Straus*



**Avner Treinin, Poet and Physical Chemist**

# HAMSIN IN THE VALLEY OF GEHINNOM

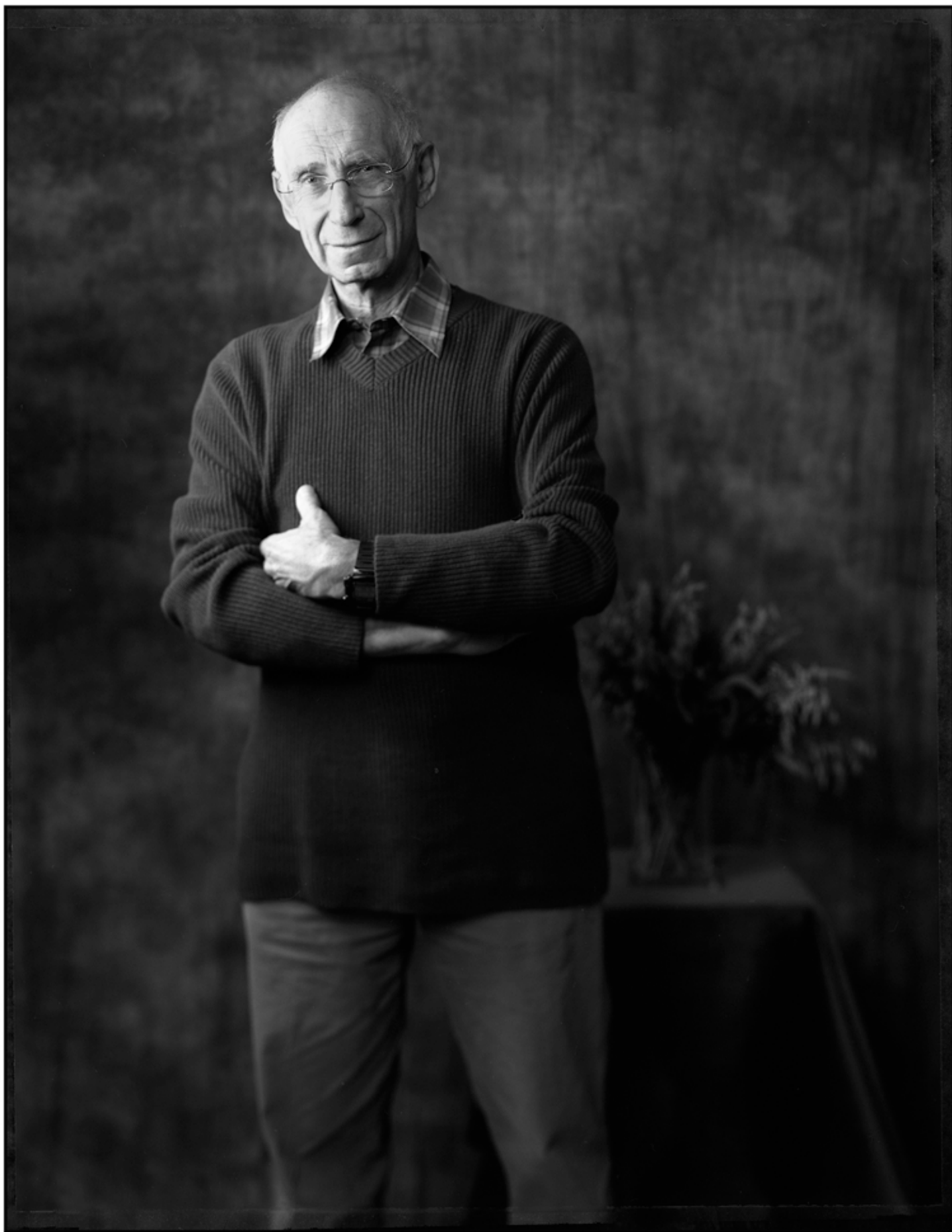
Onuphrios whose beard is long and white,  
from the Field of Blood, Tophet, Jerusalem -  
his profession is that of a monk. He complains  
about the times, the tourists, the heat,  
about Gehinnom in Jerusalem.

Hollow and heated. His hands like light -  
I see him from the sun's side of his cell -  
abstaining a little here and there.  
His teeth healthy, his sleep good,  
unlike our friend from Beit-Anyah.

Under a tree a fellah smokes  
his cigarette, burns thorns in a fire.  
A creator to his field:  
all my vines are true  
for they cleave to the valley.  
Rent that was weighed out in silver  
how full of blood our grapes.

*Avner Treinin*

translated from Hebrew by Rachel Berghash



**Shlomo Vinner, poet and professor of mathematics**

## THE TIRED LIGHT DESCENDS

The tired light descends and will descend further  
to the sea overflowing like a girl's  
breasts full  
of the desire to love  
soft as thighs  
offering no resistance  
like the sand  
into which we sink  
as into old pain  
and we are here  
for a few hours only  
on sand that can still be counted,  
and minutes later  
facing stars that cannot  
though it is hard to understand how  
the tired light descends  
and will descend  
further

*Shlomo Vinner*

translated from the Hebrew by  
Howard Schwartz and Laya Fiestone.



**"Yedida", Ariela Berghash, poet and reflexologist, with her husband Jonathan**



## TO DREAM

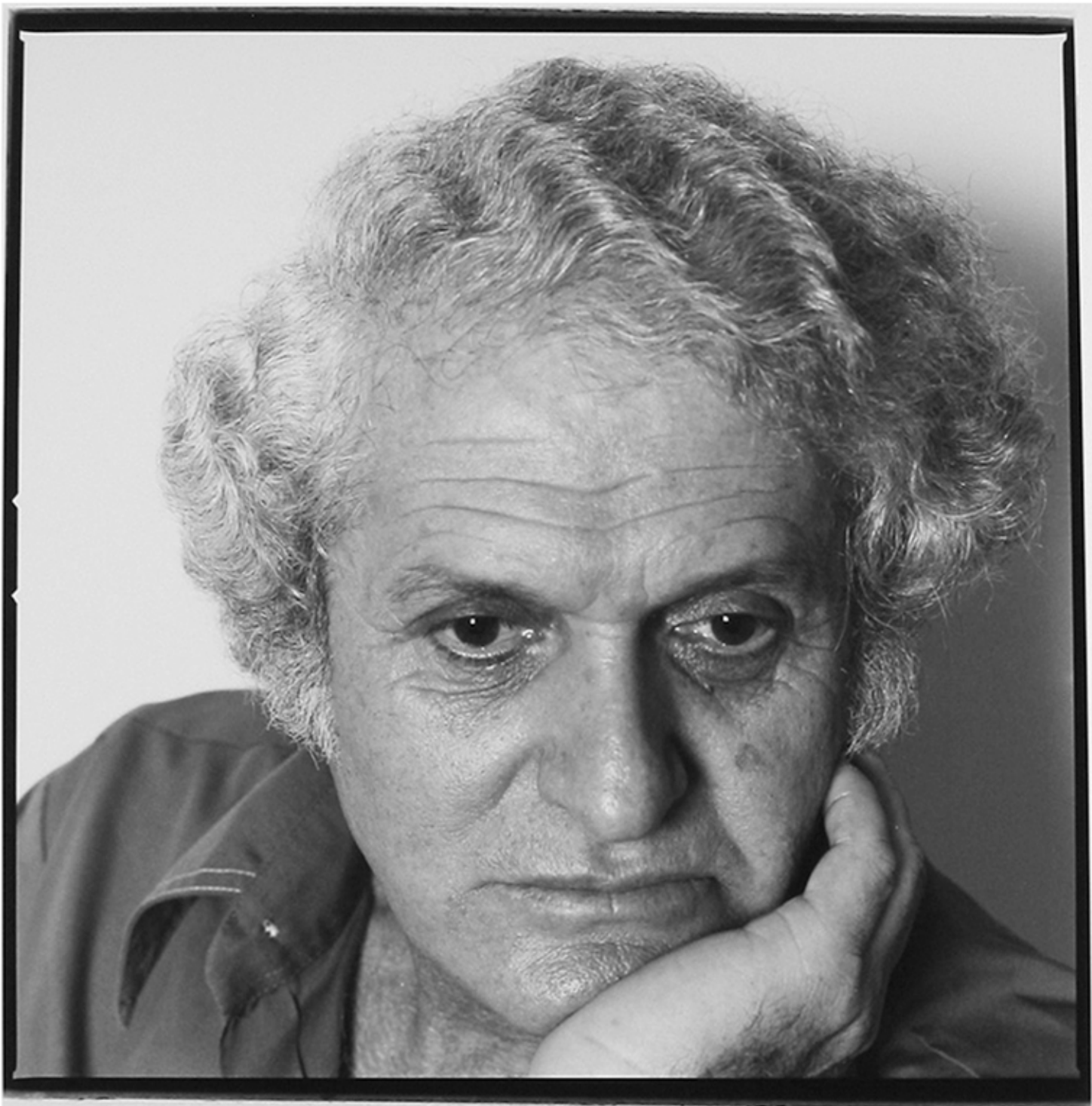
On the stars my dream crawled  
un-graspable.  
Softish.  
Glides from reality and towards it.

In my dream the rain  
is sent  
in waves of sound  
through strings' vibrations  
in the recording studio.

A dream of yesterday  
I roasted it like liver on the fire  
so that the blood will not spread

*Yedida, Ariela Berghash*

translated from Hebrew by Rachel Berghash



**Nathan Yonathan, poet and editor**

## Like A Ballad

If a crown of thorns torments  
That is what you love.  
I will go to the desert  
And learn there to hurt  
And if you loved poems  
Cut only in stone  
Among the crags I would live  
And write on rocks

And then, when we cover ourselves  
With the sands in the dark  
And the book of deeds  
Be covered by night  
Tell me the words  
More lovely than weeping and joy;  
He must have loved me  
This man.

*Nathan Yonathan,*

translated from Hebrew by Karen Alkalay-Gut



Zelda, poet, with Mark and Rachel

## UNTITLED

The white mountain's shadow  
covered my face and my hands  
and I thought that my soul was as free  
as the dead.

A sad shadow covered the house  
and the leaves of the vine  
yet when

a violin played  
in a strange country -  
my own street -

I went out toward the joy of a bridegroom and bride  
and I saw

that they were weaving  
a most delicate hope  
and I saw

that they were weaving  
a true hope

and so I secretly asked:  
creator of man -

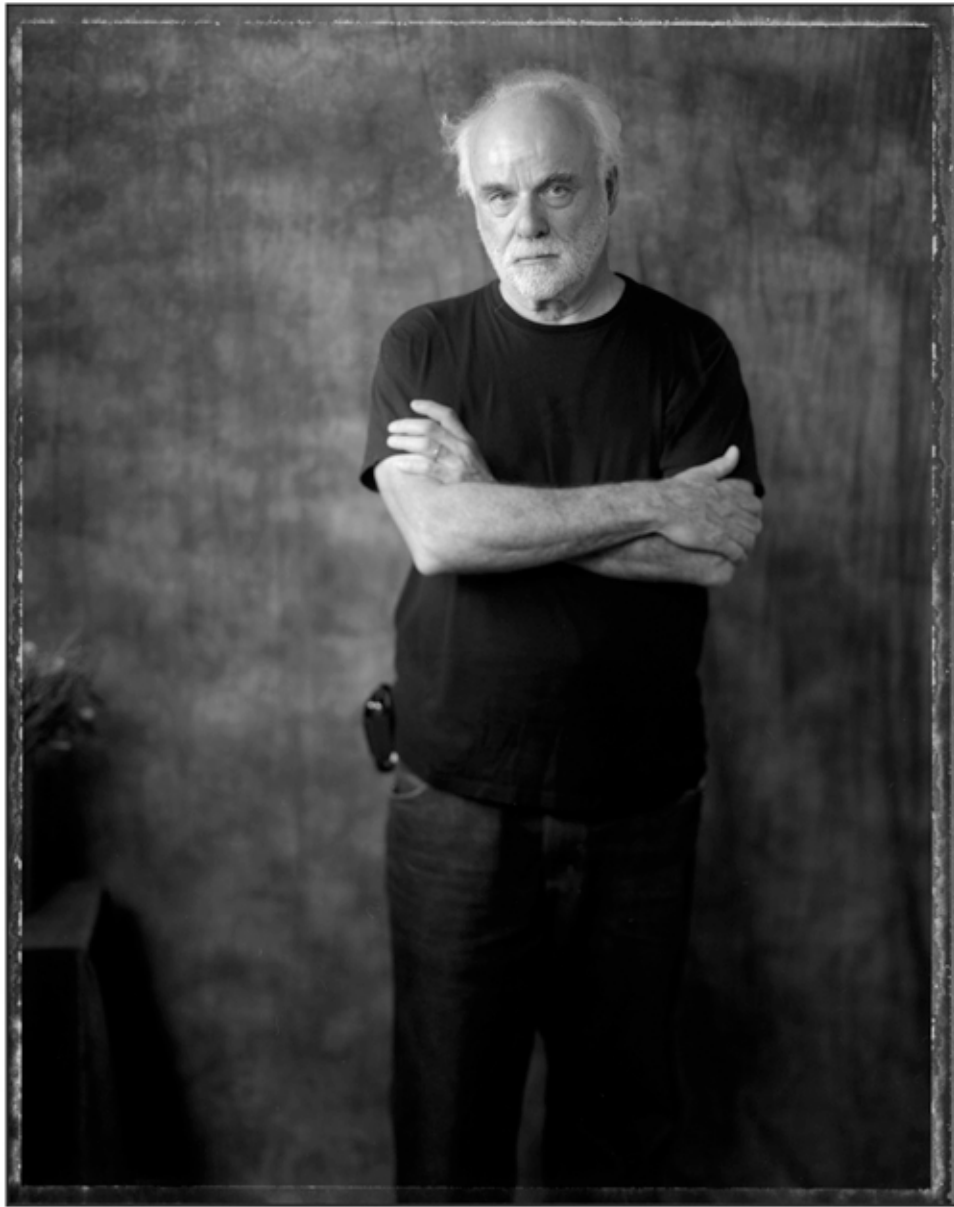
may demons and evil spirits not attack  
their imagination  
may their building  
be one built for ever.

My prayer caused  
green leaves to sprout.

I sat in the shade of the castor oil plant  
and I no longer knew  
the name of the station  
at which my life had arrived.

*Zelda*

translated from Hebrew by Rachel Berghash



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photographer, painter and graphic designer