

*David M. Katz*

## **A House with No Rooms**

Its emptiness precedes it. It's a hole  
Held in against the wind. We step right in  
To possibilities: carte blanche straight through  
From front to back, a soullessness for soul,  
Square on each side, the timbers leaning in  
To frame the chalet roof. There is no view  
Except the inward one of me through me,  
You through you, the house into itself.  
How could we split it up? We start to think.  
Where should the windows be? Inevitably,  
We load our dishes on a future shelf,  
Imagine water in a kitchen sink.  
But it would take a sacrifice of space  
To build the walls to renovate this place.

## My Unfinished Garden

*I want death to find me planting my cabbages, but careless of  
death, and still more of my unfinished garden.*

—Montaigne

Planting in the morning sun,  
I might keel over in the heat,  
Or in mid-conversation,

Careless in my weedy garden.  
I well might find the shadows sweet,  
Planting in the morning sun.

I might depart when nearly done,  
Alone at last with a single beet,  
Or in mid-conversation.

I surrender to my resignation.  
My nine bean rows are incomplete,  
Gaping in the morning sun.

First seizure, then cessation:  
The rotting cabbage leaf;  
The dangling conversation.

Late afternoon is fine, or dawn  
With shadows spreading at my feet,  
Planting in the morning sun,  
Or in mid-conversation.

## **A Limestone Jew**

In the fifties, when he wrote  
In “Amor Loci”  
The words “Jew Limestone,” the phrase  
Carried bitter hints  
Of anti-Semitism  
For Auden’s critics.  
For him, it was merely stone:  
His native landscape,

Which did not lack for its own  
Bitterness, or rue.  
True, the stone was soft and lost  
Its spine in water —  
Not the ground to hold him up  
Without a father.  
Love of landscape replaces  
An absence, a search,

A walk on a limestone moon.  
Local slang supplied  
An adjective for the kind  
Of rock he found there:  
Lodes of crinoids and corals,  
Fossiliferous  
Record of migrating earth  
Left by water: Jew.

Love of place, however, boils  
Down to one of thing,  
And thing at last to person.

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In Chester, Wistan  
Discovered a limestone Jew  
And wrote at Christmas,  
*As I think of Bethlehem,*  
*I now think of you.*