

My Holocaust Flowers

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Although I didn't realize it then,
The seeds of my Holocaust poems
Had already been "german-ating"
In Imagination's beds

Long before their first roots burrowed down,
And shoots, undernourished and brown-edged,
Thrust upwards through loose dirt
And budded open into doom-blooms.

Now, it's been nearly a decade
Since those fleurs du mal--
The earliest resembled erika, begonias,
Impatiens, violets, and crotons,
Profuse in their tightly-bunched clumps
Like sarcomatous lump in a pumping lung--
Began appropriating plots
I'd tilled to fill with other designs;
Still, I don't know who planted those seeds,

Whether or not a kind of divine Fancy
Had been behind the original idea,
Or why I, a tribal scribe
Bent on recording gentler colors and signs,
Should have been chosen
To tend such an adventitious creation.
But O, the hours I've spent
Hoing, weeding, pruning,

Fertilizing with hallucinatory oracles!
If, in the beginning, I'd only known
Those flowers would require a lifetime
To keep them from dying out,
I'd never have allowed them to grow
Or made bouquets, taken them into my house,
Placed them in crystal vases
And misted them daily,
Obsessed with seeing how long they'd survive.
But, how could a poet know

That being "Chosen" was really no honor,
Instead, an obligation
By default of God, Himself,
A vocation he'd not be able to refuse?
Even now, each early a.m.,
I go outside my dreams, pace the bed--
They're as large as Versailles' rococo gardens--
And try to decide which flowers I'll pick
To place on my grave that day.