Survivor by Florence Weinberger

For Ted
He knows the depths of smokestacks,
from their bleak rims down
to the bone-bottom ground.
Once he could see under skin,
inside the body, where deprivation
thins the blood of all desire
except hunger.
For years he wanted to forget
everything. He knows it is possible
to live only at the surface,
it is possible to work,
to marry and have daughters.
But his daughters
look like people he once knew,
and he dreams them.
He dreams them opening doors,
sending letters. When he wakes,
he knows he has been dreaming.
This year, he will show his daughters
where he was born. He will show them
the chimney, the iron gate,
the deep oven where his mother baked bread.

Cast Out by Karen Gershon

Sometimes I think it would have been
easier for me to die
together with my parents than
to have been surrendered by
them to survive alone

Sometimes it does not seem that they
spared me the hardest Jewish fate
since by sending me away
they burdened me and cast me out
and none suggested that I should stay

When the Jews were branded there
was one number meant for me
that another had to bear
my perennial agony
Is the brunt of my despair

Sometimes I feel I am a ghost
adrift without identity
what as a child I valued most
for ever has escaped from me
I have been cast out and am lost

Noemi by Yala Korwin

In memory of Noemi “Stefania” Meisels

You hid behind a borrowed name,
bleached your raven crown,
but there was no dye
to cover the pigment of doom
in your eyes.

Night after night I see you
alone in that place
guarded by a killer-fence.
Night after night I am dying
All your deaths.

I didn’t follow you, sister.
Can I be ever forgiven
the blueness of my iris,
the paleness of hair---hues of
Slavic fields?

I escaped to be your witness,
to testify: you were.
I live to carve your name
in all the silent stones
of the world.
And that year
When the fires ceased
And the ovens were finally cool
A strange wind moved out
In slow, grief-laden eddies
And sooty swirls
Across Europe---
And even beyond.

And those with conscience
(And even those without)
Heard faint sounds from afar,
Echoes from an age-old abyss,
And sometimes these seemed to come
From inside one’s ear---
So tiny and yet so persistent,
Echoes of the anonymous cries
Of numbered millions.

And far from the ovens,
Far from the funeral fires,
This wind still carried
Wraiths of soot
Too fine to water the eye
Yet searing the heart.

That year the strange wind
Moved slowly across Europe---
And even beyond,
Now and then pausing
To eddy into the deepest corners
Of our minds
To remind us,
To stir us for an instant
From our dream of well-being.