

“Women’s Songs”

By Kadya Molodovsky

Section VI

For poor brides who were servant girls,
Mother Sarah draws forth from dim barrels
Pitchers of sparkling wine.
To those so destined, Mother Sarah
Carries a full pitcher with both hands.
And for those so destined, Mother Sarah’s
Tears fall into the tiny goblet.
And for streetwalkers
Dreaming of white wedding shoes,
Mother Sarah bears pure honey
In small saucers
To their tired mouths.
For high-born brides now poor,
Who blush to bring patched underclothes
Before their mother-in-law,
Mother Rebecca leads camels
Laden with white linen.
And when darkness spreads before their feet,
And all camels kneel on the ground to rest,
Mother Rebecca measures linen ell by ell
From her rings to her golden bracelet.
For those whose eyes are tired
From watching the neighborhood children,
And whose hands are thin from yearning
For a small, soft body
And for the rocking of a cradle,
Mother Rachel brings healing leaves
Discovered on distant mountains,
And comforts them with a quiet word:
At any hour, God may open the sealed womb.
To those who cry at night in solitary beds,
And have no one to share their sorrow,
Who talk to themselves with parched lips,
to them comes Mother Leah quietly,
Shielding both eyes with her pale hands.

Translated by Kathryn Hellerstein