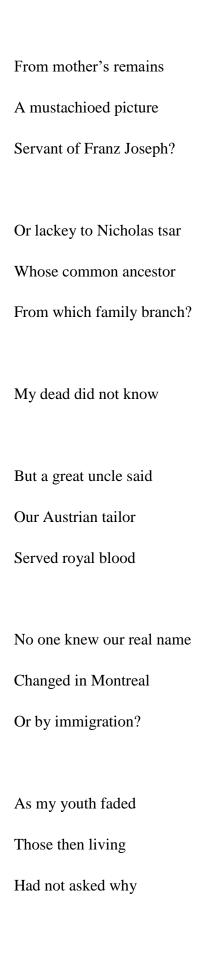
ANCESTRY, PROGENY, AND OTHER SHORT POEMS

1. ANCESTRY AND PROGENY

Locked in a safety box
These seven decades
Uncle's scribbled nightmare
To emaciated sacks
Of bones at Birkenau
Sinews barely alive
Raising questions
What of his uncles
Who stayed behind
Perhaps left at Katyn
Riddled with bullets
Or shtetl slaughtered
Their Pumpian no more now
Than etching on marble tablet
A Holocaust museum memorial



Not caring much
Of missed opportunity

To find out. more
Concern whether I
shall come to see

Longed for progeny
Of serial marriages
Grow to meet my aspirations

2. COMMON ANCESTOR

Loose white robe, approaching Berber in the desert blue turban, teeth missing grizzled skin, dark eternal withered from beating sun Shallow pool, shimmering trapped on bedrock in the desert alone in a sea of sand water not there tomorrow evanescent whimsy, parched death His survival, my crossing

drops of life in the desert

Berber hand grabs Jewish arm
teeth rotting, holey smile
he pushes, drink to life

A shofar laced in gleaming silver

once sounded in the desert

now silent antique on the wall

memorial to expulsion

lone Jew wanders through sands of time

Reach out, recoil from the Berber

halt vengeance in the desert

He grins, no sword in hand

and smiling skips away

no slaughter of infidel today.

Precious water wets my skin

from hidden stream in the desert

Life meets in dry creek bed

Berber shares a splash and moves on

still grinning, all in play

Perhaps he knows

We have a common ancestor

3. SEARCHING FOR REST AND RECREATION

Wandering the aisles
of the Ju Guang Express
searching, a footstep at a time
for faces, breasts, crotches
women laid in rows of seats
yellow thighs assuaging lonely years

Have they changed so much since Nam?

these girls no longer doomed to whoredom

Do they sense staring lust of sixties men?

Sprawled, sleeping through the journey

they hide no desire, nor contempt

in pretentious veils of shame

Was it so then, that
sex was such a living
and women tended to it?
No pimples in pubic gardens
Now no need nor memory
to indulge in times forgotten

But the man now so much older still wanders aisles of trains yearning through age-glazed eyes for that young mother unsatisfied wanting only to ignite passion embers teasing fifty years ago

4. MOTHER'S MESSAGE

Seasons passed as cumulus on windswept afternoons
Her image clouded by leagues and time
A long discarded placenta, mine from thine
Each journey over oceans void of knowing
Proclaimed veined hands across from mine
As did the gravel voice, she lay waiting ready
When age showed more than death, I could never see it
I still called from empty distance
Puzzled by cobwebs silken of her mind

Have you some message for me, not knowing what I meant She paused, a wisdom in her silence I cannot think of any, sigh spared memory When other mother, in-law-mother, in intensive care Wheezing, witch doctors watching, her eye Pierced heart thrice hung in blind white light Almost at that moment, instant of amusement Eternal knowing inchoate will of life Came the call of mother's passing Finite wisdom transmitted, she had one final time Made me choose whom to pay homage Dues to the dead or kneel to those alive

5. BLIND WRITER

Writer blinded by reality as fantasy
puts passion to pen, finding no words
How I wished, for want of will
to write the decades, old memories

Now without knowledge
or understanding to sustain
I whittle against hardwood
of life gnarled in setting sun

Lacking craft to carve drama failing memory today grasps vain hope to feed ego's urge to have others know that I live