

CAROL V. DAVIS

Pilgrimage

For over a year I've passed this makeshift shrine.
Carnations, always fresh, though their number varies,
unlike in Russia where even numbers are for the dead,
odd for the living. You have to count the stems of flowers
carefully before each purchase.

I've memorized that face, his photo pinned to the tree.
Could pick it out in a lineup: dark gelled hair,
tawny skin, mischievous smile.
With only a headshot, I don't know his height,
can only guess his age at early twenties.

This road I drive weekly.
Beige apartment buildings crowd together like sentries.
Too embarrassed to stop to read the sign propped against
the flower bucket, the saint's candle in front of a city
magnolia.

The worry about my youngest living in a hillside yurt,
so forgetful she drives without a license.
My mother died before Rosh Hashanah.
I wonder if she looks over the yearly list: who shall live
and who shall die.
Surely she could have rejected that young man's name,
pleaded to give him more years.
And his mother who survived him, renewing
the red and yellow carnations as cars speed by to catch
that flight
to take them far away from this city of palms and waves.

Carol V. Davis is the author of *Because I Cannot Leave This Body* (2017), *Between Storms* (2012), and won the 2007 T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry for *Into the Arms of Pushkin: Poems of St. Petersburg*. Her first full-length collection, *It's Time to Talk About...* was published in a bilingual Russian/English edition in Russia (1997). Twice a Fulbright scholar in Russia, she will teach in Ulan-Ude, Siberia, winter 2017 and teaches at Santa Monica College and Antioch Univ. Los Angeles. She is poetry editor of the Los Angeles newspaper *The Jewish Journal*.

IAN WING

Roundabout in Santa Cruz, 2017
Watercolor and gouache, 6 x 6 in



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