

## Debra David – Two Poems

### Genealogist

I dig to pull up vital statistics  
marriage certificates  
ship's passenger manifests  
files saved on fiche  
in archives here and there  
like Johnny Appleseed  
tumbling backward  
across hillocky realms  
tucking seeds into canvas satchel  
strapped across my shoulder

I reap what has been sown  
examining rootlets  
scrutinizing tubers  
shaking sediment from corms  
striding under heavy boughs  
in copses tight with trees.

Drawn through valleys  
I peer at hamlets  
darkened by the soot  
of countless fires  
in hearths, woodstoves  
and storefront cinders  
back to seashore, ports  
coal-stoked boilers  
in steerage-packed steamships  
my Atlantic transit.

Then tree trunks scarred  
by truncheons and bullets  
bleed sap from woody knots  
onto bony ground  
drawing metamorphic life  
through ribs that held  
my cousins' beating hearts  
until the brutal end.

## Reserving Joy

Reserving joy  
to stave off the cosmic evil eye  
we celebrate in quiet exhalation  
to know the positron emitting eye  
reveals no cancer mass  
after elongated weeks  
chasing down anomalies  
and hypotheses.

Up the north shore  
in Salem  
a witch defied the ordeal  
imposed by mob judgment  
and called for more weight  
until ribs collapsed  
under the slate sheets  
stacked atop his chest.

These days wizards in white coats  
regard our mortal flesh  
impose ordeals  
and flay us with their peeks  
beneath the skin.

Like fishers of the sea  
they catch innocent and malign  
in giant trawl  
and leave us panting  
like trash fish on slippery deck  
thrashing and gulping  
while longing for the salty sea  
where tears disappear in earth's brine.

**Debra David** arrived in Brookline in the early 1990s from Canada, where she was born and raised. She has fiddled with words for many years, getting her start as editor of her more prolific sister's prose. Formal and informal linguistic encounters with Yiddish, English, Hebrew, French, Latin, German, and Russian inform her linguistic sensibility. She explores her Ashkenazi-Jewish Haligonian-Canadian naturalized-American identity and family stories in her poetry."