

Agata Tuszynska

Final version

A Letter to Grigory Kanowicz

You write, Sir, that the memories
wouldn't fit in several
thousand pots fired
by Mendel Schwartz the potter
and Talmudic scholar

I have no memories
I'm studying the alphabet of stones
at cemeteries

Jews I once saw in a museum
at an exhibit
they were eating onions
as if they were never
to know the taste of ashes

there was a bustle there
like in heaven
on a market day
they were trading in dreams
and ears of herring
Daniel's grandmother was chatting with God
like with an old friend
someone turned into a bird
to save his wings

they were cutting chalah and pants
they were plucking feathers and hair
from their heads
they were mending shoes and the world

under the same sun
a yellow patch on a darned cloth

you write that death is a holiday
the end of toil
death is a Sabbath that never
ends

don't cry for us they say
don't cry on a holiday
it's forbidden
by the rabbinic
law

translated by
Regina Grol-Prokopczyk