



# The God of Loneliness: Selected and New Poems

By Philip Schultz

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*The God of Loneliness*, a major collection of Schultz's work, includes poems from his five books (*Like Wings*, *Deep Within the Ravine*, *The Holy Worm of Praise*, *Living in the Past*, *Failure*) and fourteen new poems. It is a volume to cherish, from "one of the least affected of American poets, and one of the fiercest" (Tony Hoagland), and it will be an essential addition to the history of American poetry.

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## The God of Loneliness: Selected and New Poems By Philip Schultz Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

About the Author

PHILIP SCHULTZ won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for his book of poems, *Failure*. His poetry and fiction have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, and the *Paris Review*, among other magazines. In addition, he is the founder and director of the Writers Studio in New York.

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For the Wandering Jews

This room is reserved for wandering Jews.  
Around me, in other rooms, suitcases whine  
like animals shut up for the night.

My guardian angel, Stein, fears sleeping twice  
in the same bed. Constancy brings Cossacks in the dark, he thinks.  
You don't explain fear to fear. Despair has no ears, but teeth.

In the next room I hear a woman's laughter  
& press my hand to the wall. Car lights burn  
my flesh to a glass transparency.

My father was born in Novo-Nikolayevka, Ekaterinoslav Guberniya.  
Like him, I wear my forehead high, have quick eyes, a belly laugh.  
Miles unfold in the palm of my hand.

Across some thousand backyards his stone  
roots him to the earth like a stake. Alone in bed,  
I feel his blood wander through my veins.

As a boy I would spend whole nights at the fair  
running up the fun house's spinning barrel toward its magical top,  
where I believed I would be beyond harm, at last.

How I would break my body to be free of it,  
night after night, all summer long, this boy climbing  
the sky's turning side, against all odds,

as though to be one with time,  
going always somewhere where no one had been before,  
my arms banging at my sides like wings.

The Artist & His Mother: After Arshile Gorky

Such statuesque immobility; here we have it:  
the world of form. Colors muted, a quality  
of masks with fine high brows. Light & its absence.  
Alchemy. The hands are unfinished. But what  
could they hold? The transitory bliss  
of enduring wonder? Mother, Mother & Son;  
here we have it: consanguinity. The darkness  
inside color. Space. In the beginning there was space.  
It held nothing. What could it hold? Time?  
The continuum? Mother & Son, forms suspended  
in color. Silence. Her apron a cloud  
of stillness swallowing her whole. Her eyes  
roots of a darker dimension. Absence. Here we have it:  
the world of absence. Light holds them in place.  
The pulse of time is felt under the flesh,  
the flesh of color. Continuum. You feel  
such immensity. The anger of form. The woman  
locked in the Mother; the man in the Son; the Son  
in the Mother. Their hands do not touch. What  
could they touch? Here we have it: the world  
of gift. The gift too terrible to return. But  
how could it be returned? In the beginning  
there was anger. Mother & Son. The islands of time.  
The passion to continue. Such statuesque immobility.  
The hands, the hands cannot be finished.

#### The Stranger in Old Photos

You see him over my uncle Al's left shoulder  
eating corn at a Sunday picnic & that's him  
behind my parents on a boardwalk in Atlantic City

smiling out of focus like a rejected suitor  
& he's the milkman slouched frozen crossing our old street  
ten years before color & his is the face above mine in Times Square

blurring into the crowd like a movie extra's  
& a darkness in his eyes as if he knew his face would outlast him  
& he's tired of living on the periphery of our occasions.

These strangers at bus stops, sleepwalkers  
caught forever turning a corner - I always wondered who they were  
between photos when they weren't posing & if they mattered.

It's three this morning, a traffic light blinks yellow yellow  
& in my window my face slips into the emptiness between glares.  
We are strangers in our own photos. Our strangeness has no source.

Letter from Jake: August 1964

Never mind that uncle business my name is Jake.  
In college they try every thing there is this girl  
at Wegmans supermarket who is to busy to join  
protests who is right takes more than me  
to figure out. Cohen died last Monday. He owned  
the deli on Joseph Ave. The democrat running  
for supervisor is a Puerto Rican. Don't ask me why.

You are young and have to take things  
as they come. Some day you will find your  
real niche. I wrote poetry to but this July  
I'm a stagehand 40 years. I've seen every movie  
Paramount made believe me. Now theres a union  
but I remember when you was happy just to work.  
Meantime have a ball. Yrs truly now has kidney  
trouble plus diabetic condition, heart murmur,  
cataract in rt eye. Yr mother Lillian is well to.  
Cohen was just 58. We went to school together. Loews  
is closing in October. If you ask me the last  
five rows was no good for cinemascope.  
Yrs truly,  
Jake

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#### **Robert Penrose:**

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