

# The Old Direction of Heaven

POEMS BY JENNIFER ROSE



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*for my grandmother, Blanche Seelmann,  
and for Holly Hickler*

*in memory of Beatrice Hawley*

A HUMAN LIFE, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth, for the labors men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all neighbors, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood. At five years old, mortals are not prepared to be citizens of the world, to be stimulated by abstract nouns, to soar above preference into impartiality; and that prejudice in favor of milk with which we blindly begin, is a type of the way body and soul must get nourished at least for a time. The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead.

—GEORGE ELIOT, *Daniel Deronda*

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# Acknowledgments

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# Notes

## *At Dachau with a German Lover*

The inscription above the main entrance gate to Dachau concentration camp reads *Arbeit Macht Frei*: "Work makes you free."

Identification patches were given to all prisoners according to their classification. For example, Jews were given yellow stars; political prisoners were assigned red triangles; homosexuals received pink triangles. Dual classification was also possible, e.g., Jewish political prisoners wore stars made from a red and a yellow triangle.

## *The Italian Rose Garden*

The Nazis disguised their gas chambers as showers in order to calm their victims. Cement soap cakes were part of this deception.

## *Saratoga Journal Entries (1)*

A *calender* is a paper-smoothing machine.

## *Eastham Sonnets (4)*

During World War II, British soldiers surrounded at Dunkirk on the coast of France were rescued by a flotilla of small pleasure and fishing boats after Churchill called on private citizens to volunteer their aid.

## *About the Author*

JENNIFER ROSE was born in Evanston, Illinois, in 1959 and has lived in Massachusetts since 1971. She has been a “Discovery”/*The Nation* winner and is the recipient of awards and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Astraea Lesbian Writers Fund, and the Poetry Society of America, among others. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *Antioch Review*, *Ploughshares*, and elsewhere. This collection was a finalist for the T. S. Eliot Prize for Poetry. She works as a city planner specializing in downtown revitalization.



## *About the Artist*

EDNA AMIT (Lilly Bobasch) was born on October 20, 1927, in Czechoslovakia. She was deported to Terezin on June 26, 1942. On October 4, 1944, she was deported from Terezin to Auschwitz. From there she was transferred to Freiberg and then to the concentration camp in Mauthausen, from which she was liberated in May 1945. She now lives in Israel, where she is retired from a career as a teacher of handicrafts. Her painting is part of a collection of children's drawings from Terezin preserved in the Jewish Museum in Prague.