

WHAT IS DOUBLED

ALSO BY PETER COLE

POETRY

Rift
Hymns & Qualms

TRANSLATION

Selected Poems of Shmuel HaNagid
Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol
Love & Selected Poems of Aharon Shabtai
From Island to Island by Harold Schimmel
Qasida by Harold Schimmel
Never Mind: Twenty Poems and a Story by Taha Muhammad Ali
(with Yahya Hijazi and Gabriel Levin)
The Heart is Katmandu by Yoel Hoffmann
Collected Poems of Avraham Ben Yitzhak
The Shunra and the Schmetterling by Yoel Hoffmann
J'Accuse by Aharon Shabtai
The Dream of the Poem:
Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain (forthcoming)

WHAT IS DOUBLED

POEMS 1981 - 1998

Peter Cole

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*“Perhaps one day cynic and lyric will meet
and make me a balanced style.”*

— *Keith Douglas*
Tel Aviv, 1943

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RIFT

for Eli Gottlieb

2

SUITE FOR CHEATERS

1.

Each moment overly
taut
defines its equivalent
in pain.

Now what?

2.

Pulling the
present through
the eye

of its needle

is also preliminary.

3.

The moment
 turned
inside
out

opens

onto an eternity
of being there.

Time excuses a
 heart

its thickness.

T O R C H E S

A night the letters fell from the wall

like startled minnows, shimmering;
their suddenly tumbling into the dark square between

shoulder and spine, shudder, and recognition of
a moment's reeling itself out onto the seam: knowing.
Rust on his tongue. A dream. Someone mumbling

of letting him under the wire he heard.
They led him in along the fine line he claimed,

where the nerve kept, exposed, a syllable-reef

of anything possible focused
there, in the shapes—

a blue spark and glow, and alien sense, like an eel.

A W L

1.

Augury

sky

the ab-
stract unfolding

scattered
flocks
moving
inside
their shudder
and strain

and tremulous
sweep
and shattered
circle and hover

the assertion
adjustment—
and a-
symmetrical
pressure
of when

the one
bird
 slows
 and slips
 out
 of an order
aligned by absence—

one small tangential
 integer
fluttering
there on the flank's
 edge

for access

 swift loops
in mass
and twice
or five times until the one
struggling bird returns
 its part of—

its track—
 chipped
 group
and pass

 and twice
or five
times and noise

until their light's
depletion—

indigo
quiet
and stars

then simply morning
broken
and hunger—

bright air
and wander—

day's
mane
through a
sifting
time
and ab-
stract unfolding
back
on itself

waiting
shattered
moving
inside our
shudder
and strain—

tremulous sweep and scattered
circling and hover—

adjustment—
the mind's

startle of when
a one slows and slips
out of its

huge swoop
 amassed

and twice or five
 times the light
 is opened—

 quiet
 and stars

 taut air
 and wonder

 day's
 nerve
 and why its
 surged
 hope
 and swath

though eyes
our thread towards
 edge and sky—

 and the one
 small, adjacent

 clue-like bird

2.

Dusk birds turned in the silver
currents, white, before dark
—small sparks
barely
skittering
through us—

their shattered
flocks
scoring
the torn
route
through autumn's
seam
and moon-
decline

of something sure
and through
us
the ripened
women
slumped—
young
trees in the bittering
wind and reaching

through the brittle
season's sepal and leaves
split and scatter in this
the wind is
bread is

through us again
and again the body
builds
its fort
of mettle
and hide
this wind
is siege
is bread for
blood of the
pride's
hovel
and sty

through Noah's
robes
and choice
this wind was
food for his
hope was
blood of that first

bird's flowing out and through as
blackly
once
as river
of maybe
never
resuming
this
is flesh
of that unknowing rushing
through

us the pulse
 of guest
 and styptic
 shawl
crystal
stress and awl of

brightness through us
 broken
 open to
 only—
 to each,
 to when
 and every
 speck

of if and whether through
us and how—

like hunger,
 wine—

 once
I climbed a tone's
hill
 and saw
 a spire
pitched to praise
and twice I knew
 its axis—

and now I
walk
where the
daylord
dies—

and clouds
are burning

on his lidless
opaline eye

3.

Starling

clouds launched
and twisting
the air
in their thousand
beaks:

hearts
tugged
black
on their tracks
through knowing—

flowering vines
destroying
the pines
they struggle—

time and its birds
peeling
the blue
back inside us,
paring
its hue

to the empty
center
of ever

beside us—
 what a name
 enfolds,
 what the hour
 burns

 from its wound
 towards—

the flaying—

 and the iron
curve
through a soul
 slashing
 back on its life

—heart's
throttle and
braid through time
 after

...

the instruction,
the risk—

 the refusal
to deny the obsession
to winnow the passion

 the illusion
buckled
into a world

the heart acquired
by trial
only—

clues—

as the spirit
burrows

where the word
withdrew—
where the clear night
echoed its stars

against that abstraction—

against all that built us
songward—

against all that
breaks

this ground

KNOWING IS

a noun

as well as brick

as bike

as bus

is a

buzz

in an old bone we

fear what

hears us

—what owns

age

opens

on-

to a meadow

of presage

words

turn in the

pliant air
above it their light
riding

a wind

and filling

the green
and ready grass we're
known in

we near what steers us

what hones