

Mark Elber

Beard

My grandfather's beard smothered his chin, his cheeks, his eyes burning
above his chiseled face
one photograph survives
cropped from a family portrait when the world feigned innocence
weeds wild on the sloped plains
collars buttoned closed with a tie

This is the man who lives on in my son's gaze
the laugh he allowed himself now amplified behind closed doors
a fourteen year-old singing to himself
lyrics that sprint down the stairs, dance dizzy in a loose bathrobe

My grandfather's beard never scratched my flesh, never leaned down to bless me
with a whisper
in an accent concocted from broken borders, forded rivers, the uprooted
a continent at war with itself, the shudder of artillery

he bore the uniform of the Austro-Hungarian army
that would gut him the next war around
had the Germans not got there first

hate is a zealous god

Mark Elber was born and raised in NYC and lives in Fall River, Massachusetts. He has published numerous poems in the following journals among others: *The Jerusalem Review* #9, *The Minetta Review*, *Home Planet News*, *The Sierra Nevada College Review*, *Mudfish* (#'s 5, 6, 9, 20), *arc* 8, *Borders and Boundaries Anthology*, *Newtown Literary*, *Poetica*, *Slow Motion Magazine* and *Voices Israel*. He is the author of *The Everything Kabbalah Book* and *The Sacred Now*.