Birthright

JOSHUA WEINER

What’s over is always under
you never know it’s there
you keep scratching scratching in the dirt
you think it might be there
you need a sharper shovel honey
what’s foul is also fair

Stop looking in the attic
as if that were somewhere
that’s just a place to store old stuff
you need to go somewhere
somewhere where it’s never over
it’s never under the stair

Underneath the carpet
is just some homemade dirt
underneath the cover sweets
is another kind of hurt
in the antique armoire
hangs a single dry-cleaned shirt
What's over is always under
dig it up with care
lay it out under the moon
tangling your hair
you're tangled in the ties that bind
you're bound for the station there

I'll pick you up when you get there
you may wonder who I am
yeah you'll wonder who I am
even though we share a name
I'm underneath the overgrowth
I'm over it all the same

About the Author

Joshua Weiner is the author of three books of poetry, most recently, The Figure of a Man Being Swallowed by a Fish, and the editor of At the Barriers: On the Poetry of Thom Gunn (all from Chicago). Berlin Notebook, reporting about the refugee crisis in Germany, was published by Los Angeles Review of Books in 2016. His translation of Nelly Sachs's Flight & Metamorphosis was published by Farrar Straus Giroux in 2022. The recipient of Whiting, Rome Prize, and Guggenheim fellowships, he teaches at University of Maryland and lives in Washington D.C.

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