

11Apr78 in dialog with my "Evangelism" class was Avron Soyer,\* a beautiful human being with the humility and courage to describe himself as "a mess and muddle"--a profoundly religious, nontheistic humanist. Here is a poem he gifted me with at dinner just before the session--which then I read in the session: "The Beloved"\*\*

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1. Chorus

We are safe and secure, we are calm.  
Our totem protects us.  
It sends:  
Quick sex our achings to ease  
Pills to sooth us to sleep,  
Wine to raise hearts when they fail.

Beyond, in the distance,  
Move shapes and shadows,  
Flame: hiding, revealing:  
Rising then dying.

Our lives are encircled  
Our totem supports us;  
Womb, of our plastic, mother.

2. Beloved

I am stars, I am turning/  
High above wheatfields/  
Yellow and burning.

Scent of peonies  
Silken touch  
Of marsh grass,  
Flowing summer springs.

I enclose, I thrust inward,  
I am light, I am shadow,

Life cannot resist me,

I am stars, I am turning,  
Above wheatfields  
Yellow and burning:  
Curves, arabesques,  
After images of flight;  
I in your dreams am fire and light.

3. Chorus

A...We are frightened.  
Our walls are endangered.  
Our own hands will destroy them.  
We cower together.  
Our ghosts moved by music,  
Rise from our bodies  
Pace the encampment,  
There is fire within them.

Totem protect us 122 E.61st 10021  
Ravage all beauty, \*\*\*For Willis in  
Quench flame to ashes. Friendship,  
Avron  
'78"

B...Believe us  
Be frightened.  
This is no story.  
Into your ears  
Pour molten metal  
With knife and needle  
Put out your eyes.  
Blind to all beauty  
Deaf to all music,  
No light shall move you.

Drown inner fire  
Seek bitter water  
Leave not one ember;  
No nest for the phoenix.  
Still remain frightened  
The singer is cunning  
Kill all that moves.

4. Chorus

He is lost to us, we have left him  
bleeding.  
We quenched the flame.  
We killed the wind.  
Now, beyond hope, beyond consolation,  
We are lost, we are dead;  
We have left ourselves bleeding.

5. Beloved

Undying, unvanquished,  
I burn in your dreams.

---Avron's questions about religious authenticity: (1) "Is the person saying these [religious] things humanly concerned in a way we can see?" (2) "Has the person made it [his/her heredity, or chosen tradition] his[/her] own?" (3) Has his/her commitment been "purified from secular institutions?" (4) Is the person prepared to pay the cost: "Are they going to kill me for it?"...."I believe life and the world have meaning," and sometimes "meanings are disclosed to me."