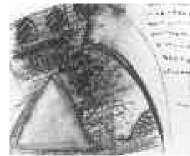
THE BURNING WORD

THE BURNING WORD

A Christian Encounter with Jewish Midrash



Judith M. Kunst

Paraclete Press

2006 First Printing

Copyright © 2006 by Judith M. Kunst
ISBN 1-55725-426-5

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. NIV.* Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations designated RSV are taken from the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, copyright 1952 [2nd edition, 1971] by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations designated KJV are taken from the King James Version.

Scripture quotations designated NRSV are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations designated NJPS are reprinted from *TANAKH: The Holy Scriptures,* copyright 1985, published by The Jewish Publication Society, with the permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
The burning word : a Christian encounter with Jewish midrash / by Judith M. Kunst.
p. cm.
ISBN 1-55725-426-5
1. Midrash—History and criticism. 2. Bibile—Meditations. 3. Spiritual life—Christianity. 4. Kunst, Judith M. (Judith McCune)—Religion. I. Title.
BM514.K865 2006
242'.5—dc22 2005035726

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in an electronic retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published by Paraclete Press
Brewster, Massachusetts
www.paracletepress.com
Printed in the United States of America.

For my husband and my parents

"Delightful country has fallen to my lot…"
Psalm 16:6, NJPS

Table of Contents

Author's Note ix

1 Intimacy: Turn & Return 1

2 Reverence: The Word Is Real 15

3 Curiosity: The Word Is Burning 27

4 Community: To Argue Is To Love 39

5 Suffering: The Yeast of Exile 51

6 Attention: To Study Is To Play 63

7 Imagination: Bring the Whole Tithe 75

8 Repetition: The Mirrored Voice 87

9 Truth: Freedom in the Rough 99

10 Creation: A Fire in the Belly 113

11 Revelation: Word Without End 125

Acknowledgments 135

Notes 137

Glossary 149

Author's Note

As an aid to readers who may wish to incorporate elements of Jewish Midrash into their own scripture reading, brief exercises labeled "Toward A Personal Practice" are included in each chapter of this book. These exercises are not drawn from specifically Jewish techniques; rather, they suggest simple actions that aim to help non-Jewish readers usefully translate Jewish ideas into their own faith language and practice.

Many of the exercises contain questions for reflection that can be read, briefly pondered, and put away. Since midrash is at base a conversation with Scripture, however, I invite you to use the questions as a springboard to dialogue, either with a journal or with a trusted friend or group.

1
INTIMACY
Turn & Return

y encounters with Jewish Midrash began when my writing teacher said to me, "You are reading the Hebrew Bible—but are you reading it with Hebrew eyes?" This teacher was not a rabbi; he was not a priest or even a Biblical scholar. He was a writer interested in how language intersects with religion—in other words, how language can shape our experience of, our relationship with, a God we have never seen with our eyes or touched with our hands or talked with face to face.

My teacher did not expect me to answer his question: He knew I was not reading with Hebrew eyes because he knew I was a Christian, as he himself was. But he wanted to suggest to me that the tradition behind my own tradition—Judaism—had something vital to offer me as a writer and reader and seeker after God. This book attempts to describe and share that "something vital" I discovered as I began to explore what it might mean to read the Bible in a different way—a Jewish way.

Perhaps not surprisingly, as I set out to encounter this different tradition, I found myself obliged to honestly and continually encounter my own; I couldn't learn to read in a Jewish way without also clearly defining the way a Christian (at least, this Christian) reads. Two vivid images and two short texts, culled both from my initial experience as a Christian and from my subsequent explorations of Judaism, may help explain what I mean.

The first image is a 1970s style portrait of Jesus, cheaply produced yet lifelike and compelling, which hung in my room throughout my childhood. This Jesus had a friendly face with brown skin, unkempt hippy-like hair, and eyes I could gaze at for hours. Gazing at Jesus never failed to fill me with a mixture of feelings—joy and pain, peace and conflict, life and more life—that I felt nowhere else. Standing in front of that picture was my way of making real the text of an old hymn with which my mother used to sing me to sleep: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, / And the things of earth will grow strangely dim / In the light of His glory and grace." As I turned my face toward those kind, brown eyes on the wall, the particulars of my young life fuzzed and faded away. In those moments the things of earth did indeed grow dim, and at the time this seemed not only strange, but wonderful.

My experience of reading the Bible back then, and for many years as an adult, often had a similar kind of "gazing" quality. I would pull the book from the shelf or the pew or the bedside table, open it up either at random

or at the thick middle section of Psalms, and flip the pages until I found something that struck me either as familiar or somehow relevant to my own life. Then I would read, sometimes a tiny passage and sometimes a chapter or two. Sometimes I was bored, reading just enough to be able to say I'd done it—fulfilled the mysteriously compelling obligation that evangelical churches had drummed into me since childhood. But sometimes I was far from bored; I was enchanted, pulled into that mysterious space I had come to recognize as uniquely God-filled.

Later, as an adult, I would learn that the ancient Christian name for this kind of Bible reading is *lectio divina*, a form of meditation that allows everything extraneous to leave the mind and heart as the reader gazes on a single verse or word of scripture. But by then I wasn't interested in reading that took me away from what the old hymn called "the things of earth." I wanted a Bible that would not dim or deny but rather sharpen and welcome the particulars of the world I was coming to know, a world of blooming trees and shifting skies, a husband and a child, novels and poems and cancer and war, oceans, mountains, what's for supper, Wall Street, Washington, the lie I told last night. I wanted to embrace these things, and wrestle them into words.

Eventually, I would find in the Jewish tradition a way of reading that vigorously welcomes both language and the world to the arena of scripture study. It's called *midrash*, a Hebrew word meaning "to search out." The Holy Scriptures abound with gaps, abrupt shifts, and odd

syntax that puzzles, even confounds, any reader of scripture. Jewish Midrash views these troubling irregularities not as accidents or errors or cultural disparities to be passed over, but rather as deliberate invitations to grapple with God's revealed word—and by extension, to grapple with God himself.

Midrash reads the Hebrew Bible not for what is familiar but for what is unfamiliar, not for what's clear but for what's unclear, and then wrestles with the text, passionately, playfully, and reverently. Midrash views the Bible as one side of a conversation, started by God, containing an implicit invitation, even command, to keep the conversation—argument, story, poem, prayer—going.

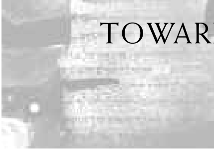
Early in my encounters with Midrash, I came across a second image of God to set beside the dreamy-eyed Jesus of my youth. I found it not in a picture on the wall but in the pages of a book: the Talmud, the twenty-volume collection of laws, legends, folktales, and Bible commentary that the Jewish tradition reveres as the vibrant record of its millennia-long conversation with God.

The Talmud says that God himself studies the Bible every day. It says God is sitting in the *bet midrash,* the study house, wearing a round black cap and holding an open Bible, arguing and wrestling his own text right alongside learned rabbis throughout the ages. Here was a God who not only sanctioned my newly daring, honest dialogue with scripture—he wanted to join me.

"Turn it and turn it again," the Talmud says of the scriptures, "for everything is contained therein." This

short but potent proverb was written not long after Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 CE, when Jews were scattered abroad and could no longer worship at the Temple, God's dwelling place. A group of surviving rabbis during this upheaval managed to safeguard the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, dictated to Moses and given to Israel on Mount Sinai. They recognized that while the Temple and all its practices were gone, the ancient Book that defined the shape of Jewish life was present, potent, and portable. These rabbis, and later many others who joined them, revered Torah as the place where God had taken refuge, had made a new home. They set about the ingenious and daunting task of reinterpreting its words to help them make sense of a life in exile.

If the Holy One, blessed be he, lives in the scriptures, then no part of its text, no matter how confusing, can be devoid of meaning. Every word, every letter of the text has been put there by divine purpose. Moreover, the tradition assumes, there is no problem or circumstance that cannot be solved by faithful study of Torah. "Turn it and turn it again, for *everything* is contained therein." Anchored in Israel's painful history, the vibrant study practice called midrash puts human imagination to work to illuminate the hidden, holy meanings of scripture, meanings that even today help us make sense of our own confusing, contemporary world.



TOWARD A PERSONAL PRACTICE

Study, imagination, conversation with a hidden God—each of these can be helped along with pen and paper in hand. The ancient records of Jewish Midrash could be most simply described as huge communal journals, wherein small sections of the Bible were written out and reflected upon by many readers. Physically writing or typing out a verse that troubles or excites you, leaving plenty of blank margins around the words, is a good way to begin a midrashic conversation with scripture.

If the meaning of scripture is hidden in the text, then language and the tools of language become very important. I sensed this dimly even before I learned about midrash, for after college, without knowing precisely why, I rejected a long-held dream of entering a Christian seminary and enrolled instead in a graduate program to study creative writing. Just a few months before I met the teacher who pointed me toward the Hebrew tradition, I was startled by another teacher's observation.

In class one day this professor handed out excerpts from three different poems: We were to choose one and write our own rhythmically exact imitation. Suddenly she looked at me and said, "Be sure you don't choose the poem from the book of Job." To my quizzical stare she said, "Don't you know you already write in the rhythms of the Bible?" Rhythms. Bible. My writing. How was it that without my awareness the music and pulse of

ancient Hebrew psalms and stories had reverberated through my reading, into my writing, and out to someone else's ear? I was hungry to know more. Could that mysterious "God-filled space," that powerful swirl of feelings I'd found in a childhood painting of Jesus, be entered more deliberately, explored more concretely, with language?

I started reading my Bible again, not for its comforting, familiar passages, but rather for its language: rhythm, imagery, juxtaposition, all the tools I was experimenting with as a writer. There in my Bible I found writing stranger and more beautiful than anything I myself could hope to compose—and in all that strangeness I found the Creator hiding. *Imagine the branch of an almond tree,* God says to the prophet Jeremiah; *Imagine a broken bowl.* To the prophet Ezekiel he says, *Lie on your side for a hundred days,* and to the prophet Hosea, *Marry your wife three times.* To King David he calls out, *Write me a hundred poems,* and to the exiles Shadrach and Meshach, *Sing me a hymn of fire.* To all Israel God says, *If you seek me, you will ever surely find me,* and then insists: *I will be found by you.*

From the Hebrew Scriptures I moved to a fresh reading of the Greek scriptures—and though I'd been reading them my whole life, I was looking now for strangeness and beauty, reading as a lover of words. "In the beginning was the Word," declares the Gospel writer John, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . [T]he Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This image, written roughly around the same time that the ancient rabbis began reinterpreting the Torah, makes an

intriguing connection between Judaism and Jesus. Jesus, in John's view, *is* God's language, is in fact God's most ancient and most intimate utterance to us.

The more I learn about midrash, seeking to read the Bible with Jewish eyes, the more the dividing lines start to blur between John's Gospel image, my mother's lullaby hymn, and that early rabbi's Talmudic proverb. These days, to "turn my eyes upon Jesus" can't be separated from turning my eyes upon the words of God's other precious utterance, the Bible—to take *all* its words and turn them, again and again, in my mouth and in my mind and on the blank page before me.

This way of reading does not require technical or scholarly expertise, though such knowledge can richly add to our conversation with the Bible. What midrash does require is close attention, playful imagination, deep reverence, and the courage to continually turn toward the words that trouble us.

What does this mean in actual practice? What does it mean to make midrash?

Summed up simply, making midrash involves four steps: Choose a text. Find in its language a problem or a question. Draw an answer out of your imagination that solves the problem or in some way illuminates new meaning in the text. Then find someone to argue with your interpretation, expand upon it, or propose a different answer altogether.

How to choose a text for midrash? The Jewish practice, like many in the Christian tradition, relies on a long-established calendar of scripture readings: You study

the text that is assigned to the particular week in which you find yourself. Some of the oldest Midrash texts, or *Midrashim,* are organized around whole books of the Bible: rabbis interpreting and arguing each successive verse of Genesis or Exodus, etc. Classic rabbinic Midrashim always originated in a verse from Torah—but many people today apply the method more loosely, choosing a text from the Bhagavad-Gita or the Christian Bible, or a poem or passage from a novel.

Though as an adult I married into the Catholic Church, I was raised an evangelical; the latter is a tradition that does not use a calendar of scripture, so my first instinct when making midrash is to choose an already-familiar verse to look at in a new way. Here, for example, is a tiny part of the apostle Paul's prayer in the third chapter of his letter to the Ephesians: *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory.*

A text has been chosen. Where does its language pose a problem or raise a question? This text presents a prayer of praise—"to him be glory"—and also a description of power: This God can act in ways that far exceed our own abilities or perceptions. Why then, I wonder, is the word "immeasurably" tacked onto that description? Doesn't the vivid phrase "more than all we ask or imagine" sufficiently describe God's power?

If I were not seeking to read this text with Jewish eyes, I might dismiss the question as insignificant: Paul just wants to gush about God. But midrash insists that every word of Scripture is there for a purpose; every

word holds, or hides, meaning. And so I proceed to the third step, calling on the imagination to suggest a reason why that word "immeasurably" is vitally necessary to a deeper understanding of this text.

What does it mean to call on the imagination? It might mean brainstorming, conjuring up a long list of answers, some of which are crazy, some coherent. It can mean making up your own story or new descriptive word. It can also mean opening up one's own mental files of stories, parables, and poems gleaned from the Bible and a host of books and movies and anecdotes, and pulling out one that might shed light on the problem at hand. Whatever the specific approach, imagination always involves some kind of mental leap—often playful, occasionally profound.

Jews of every stripe who sit in a synagogue listening to a sermon may not know it, but often what they're listening to is spoken Midrash. How would a rabbi, then, explain the necessity of the word "immeasurably," in our text? He might start with a story, like this one from the Talmud tractate Seder Eliyahu Zuta, Chapter 2:

> There was a king of flesh and blood who had two servants and loved them both with a perfect love. He gave each of them a measure of wheat and each a bundle of flax. What did the wise servant do? He took the flax and spun a cloth. He took the wheat and made flour. He cleaned the flour and ground, kneaded and baked it, and set it on top of the table. Then he spread the cloth over it and left it until the king would come.

> The foolish servant, however, did nothing at all. After some time, the king returned from a journey and came into his house. He said to his servants: my sons, bring me what I gave you. One servant showed the wheat still in the box with the bundle of flax upon it. Alas for his shame, alas for his disgrace!
>
> When the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel, he gave it only in the form of wheat—for us to make flour from it, and flax—to spin a garment from it.

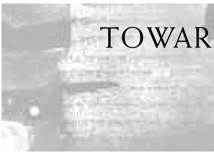
This story makes clear the crucial difference between merely safeguarding and actively *using* the gifts of God. It brings to light something hidden in the text we started with: How is God able to do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine?" Not by divine might alone, says Paul, but by "his power that is at work within *us*." Only through human effort does the gift of flax become cloth and the gift of flour become bread. To refuse that effort is to refuse the invitation to collaborate with the Creator in the ongoing work of creation.

The king in the Talmud story does not dictate to the servants *how* they should use the gifts they are given. The wise servant could have sold the flax and invested the money for profit, or planted it and reaped more flax for the king. To the wise servant, the possibilities for using the king's gifts are limitless—immeasurable, even.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory. Hidden in the strange wording of this Biblical prayer of praise to God lies an essential statement about

our relationship to that God, and about our own immeasurably creative responsibility and power. I've come full circle with this midrash, answered the question I started with, and gained new insight along the way.

In the Christian tradition the need to make use of God's gifts is one of the Bible's clear teachings, but in rabbinic Judaism, especially as it evolved in the six centuries after the destruction of Jerusalem's Temple in 70 CE, it is the *central* teaching, applied specifically and radically to the act of reading scripture. Bible study has replaced temple worship as the main expression of Jewish religious devotion and communal identity. The word Torah has thus come to be used both as a noun—the content of the scroll found in any synagogue—and as a verb—the entire revelation and the entire activity of Jewish study throughout the generations.



TOWARD A PERSONAL PRACTICE

Find the eighth chapter of Nehemiah in your Bible, and read it out loud. Then consider three questions: What in the language seems strange to you? How might God be hiding in these words? If the verse is imagined to be the first comment in a two-way (or more) conversation, what response from you will keep it going?

"Turn it, and turn it again, for everything is contained therein." As a child I thought that turning my eyes upon Jesus called for nothing more than an unblinking gaze

and an open heart. Now I see that it requires something more: The wise man took the flax and spun a cloth. He took the wheat and made flour. The ancient rabbis knew what any writer knows, that language must be worked and turned to make something new.

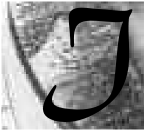
Jewish Midrash asks: What happens when, for hundreds of years, we turn the eyes of our imagination again and again upon a single, holy text? One answer is intimacy—intimacy with the Author of Torah, a God who is at once writer and reader and word, a God who in some sense has given us the Bible for the same reason anyone shares a book with a friend: to start a conversation, to start something new.

Midrash is elusive; no fully accurate and encompassing definition exists, nor have collected translations of the many rabbinic conversations with the text become widely available. There are as many ways to make midrash as there are midrashim. This book, therefore, is not a formal introduction. It is an attempt to capture something of the essential flavor of how Jews read the Bible. Here are a few strands of Biblical flax spun into cloth; here is a handful of wheat ground, kneaded, baked, and set on the cloth.

2

REVERENCE

The Word Is Real



was nineteen years old before it dawned on me that the Twenty-third Psalm was not written in English. Of course I had known for many years that the books my tradition called the Old Testament were written in Hebrew and the books we called the New Testament were written in Greek. But it wasn't until I was in college that a little window opened in my mind, and I suddenly encountered the fundamental otherness of my Bible's language. The psalmist was not a late-twentieth-century American. The psalmist was not a young girl lying on her rubber-lined mattress in a college dorm room, grieving the betrayal of a high school boyfriend and searching for some comfort among the words of a poem she had known since childhood.

You anoint my head with oil, the psalm declared, *my cup overflows.* Suddenly the Bible's foreignness overwhelmed me. The book I held in my hand had come to me down many twisting trails and through many transmogrifications of

language. It was a miracle. It was an oracle. It was mine and not mine, all at once.

My realization that the psalm was written in an ancient tongue, I see now, *was* the comfort I was seeking. For when I tucked that suddenly strange text under my arm and walked outside with an inexplicable need to get moving, I felt the trees and the very sidewalks holding me up, felt them as created things that were a bodied part of God's tapestry, God's text. The language of the Bible was real. The sidewalks were real. My broken heart was real, but I had not fallen through the world. I didn't have to know why this had happened or how it fit into some larger cosmic plan. I just had to know that God's word and world were real.

This sense of the "realness" of the Bible, I've discovered, is fundamentally Jewish in nature. It's why Orthodox Jewish women still sometimes lean into the aisle to kiss the Torah scroll as it's carried to the front of the synagogue. It's why the first act of young boys beginning their studies in medieval yeshivas was to lick smeared honey off chalk slates inscribed with Bible verses. It's why the Torah is never thrown out or given away even when worn beyond repair, but rather is buried in a *genizah*, a special cemetery for scripture.

My family and the evangelical churches I grew up in put great emphasis on the Bible: its authority, its centrality. My parents joined our church not because the people were friendly or the sermons were good but because the congregation grounded its identity explicitly in the Bible. Each member of my family had his or her

own Bible, given as a special birthday or Christmas gift, and we packed the small volumes in our suitcases for trips as automatically as we packed our underwear and toothbrushes.

Yet as much as we loved the Bible, we didn't sacralize it. Though we treated our leather-bound books with the utmost care, it would never have occurred to us to revere the physical text itself, to locate God's actual transforming presence in the crinkly pages, the twin columns of text, the word "In" which opens the first chapter of Genesis or the words "Hallelu Ya" that end the Psalms. It didn't matter to us whether we read the Bible in translation or in its original languages, read it together or alone, read it on the page or recited it from memory, read it with or without a ritual prayer.

When we read the Bible, we located God's power outside the words that named and described it. We called each piece of scripture a "passage," and our aim in reading it was precisely that: We passed through the words on the page to get to the spiritual truth to which they were pointing. I sometimes paused to marvel at the beauty or complexity or strangeness of a passage, but dwelling on such specifics of language always felt a little indulgent somehow, a distraction. My religious tradition was more about *movement.* The primary task of our Bible reading was traveling, through the trusted medium of Holy Scripture, toward a perfection of knowing and doing that was somewhere out there, beyond words.

The Jewish way of reading, I am learning, is less about progressing than about digging in, holding on—

not passing through words but dwelling in them and on them, under and around them. Torah, like the ancient Temple, is a place to enter, experience, and revere. Holy words are things to be savored, and to study scripture is to digest the words into the body, like food. Jews in fact refer to each piece of scripture not as a "passage" but as a *parsha,* or "portion."

In Judaism, scripture is not a signpost pointing to truth but a portion of the truth itself—not just a promise to be fulfilled or a commandment to be obeyed, but a real-time serving of scriptural food to be tasted, chewed, and digested into the body, mind, heart, and soul.

The Bible is full of references to language as food. *When your words came, I ate them,* the prophet Jeremiah says to the God whose voice he hears. *Eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it,* God says to the prophet Ezekiel, and to the nation of Israel entire: *Listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.* Much later, the Gospel writer John, ever seeking to connect Hebrew with Greek, Jewish with Christian, would call Jesus both the Word of God and the Bread of Life. "The scriptures teach us how to read the scriptures," says Biblical scholar Donald Akenson, and the verses quoted above seem to me now a wonderful set of clues about how to begin: to take God's words into our mouths with the same hunger and attention we bring to the food we eat.

TOWARD A PERSONAL PRACTICE

Mothers tell their children to chew their food slowly. It is good to approach scripture with a similar tactic: Find the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah in your Bible, and read all of it out loud. Say the words while moving around the room—a walking meditation. Say them while writing them out one by one. When you reach verse eight, say the words with an intentional pause in between each one; do the same, if you wish, with verse eleven. Savor and revere even tiny words like "the" as holy things. To eat scripture in this way is to make it real.

When in my twenties I fell in love with poetry, took out some big loans, packed up my small red Mazda hatchback with everything I owned and drove from Denver to New York to start graduate school, it never occurred to me that I was searching for a new way to read the Bible. I wanted language, and language alone. I wanted to bend grammar, curse freely, invite illogical leaps of association and unjustifiable juxtapositions to dine at my mental table, and none of that seemed compatible with my faith tradition. I was bowled over by the power of language in the novels and poems I was reading, but I had not yet recognized that such power might be rooted in, connected with, the God and the ancient scriptures I had studied in youth groups and college Bible studies.

It is not easy to write powerful words on one's own, I quickly discovered. I may have declared myself to be a

writer, may have given up on evangelical religion and that early plan to go to Christian seminary, yet I found I could not so easily detach from my tradition's drive to pass through language toward an always intangible spiritual reality: Ideas had always mattered so much more than the words that conveyed them.

Now I wandered the campus at night, lonely, broke, staring up at the sky with what felt like a writerly intensity, muttering under my breath, "The moon! The moon!" I wanted to capture on paper the moon's very soul—but it took me a while to figure out that first I had to learn how to make a body of words that could house that soul. I had to learn that language, in the poet Mary Oliver's words, is "rich, and malleable. It is a living, vibrant material, and every part works in conjunction with every other part—the content, the pace, the diction, the rhythm, the tone—as well as the very sliding, floating, thumping, rapping sounds of it."

Slowly, I began to work with words. My thumbs turned gray from paging through *Merriam-Webster's Rhyming Dictionary* and *Roget's Thesaurus*. Those (still) lonely nights now found me muttering *satellite, luminary, Lurga the goddess . . . moonfaced, moonlighting, moonshine, moonstruck . . . monastery, money, monkey business, murk*. Each sound played out in my mouth and on the page; with words I fashioned bone, skin, sinew—and I could feel whole pages starting to move.

In my second year of graduate school, I met weekly with nine other students and a professor for a two-hour poetry workshop. We passed out copies of new poems