

A YAHRZEITCANDLE LIT AT HOME

The yahrzeit candle is different
announcing neither Sabbath nor festival.
No benediction recited
No song sung
No psalm mandated.

Before this unlit candle
without a quorum, I stand alone
An unstruck match in my hand.

It is less distant now
the remembrance ritual of parents deceased
For I am older now
closer to their age than before .
. I am older now
feel their aches in my body
their white hairs beneath my shaved skin
their wrinkles creased into my face.

It is less distant now·
this ritual or remembrance
once the candle made me think of them
now it makes me think of me.
Once it recalled my relations to them
now it ponders on my children's relation to me.
Once I wondered what it is I remember of them
now I ask what will my children remember of me.
What memories they'll have of me
what smile or grimace
What stories they will tell their children of me.

It is less, distant now.
How would I be remembered
How would I be mourned
Will they come to the synagogue
light a candle
recite the Kaddish.
It is less distant now
Once Yahrzeit was about parents deceased
Now it is of children alive
Once it was about a distant past
now it is about tomorrow.

- *Harold M. Schulweis*