

Psalm for Mirza Mihdi

TERRY OFNER

You fall.
This means something to us—
this gesture not unlike our own.

We who are prone to losing ourselves
in ourselves. We who turn to the right
and to the left, examining the merchandise.

It would be easy to over-interpret this,
like a lover lost in his lover's eyes.
Sunlight, too, falls through the skylight.

But misery awaits in the packing crates
below. No attention held will hold you,
though I hold my breath long enough

to write this poem, long enough to open
a cell of silence that might buoy somehow.
Still, you fall from one light

to another. The prison gates open
as well as close.

Mirza Mihdi was a son of Bahá'u'lláh and younger brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. One summer evening in 1870, while pacing on the prison rooftop deep in prayer, as was his custom, Mírzá Mihdí failed to notice an open skylight and fell onto a wooden crate that pierced his chest. A physician was called to the prison, but he died the next day, 23 June. As he lay dying, Mirza Mihdi requested that his death might be accepted as a sacrifice so that those who sought to visit Bahá'u'lláh might be allowed into the prison