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## How Jewish

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HOW JEWISH

Friday morning I got to hear the word  
holocaust mean a day too hot to bear  
from two teen-age girls in pink lip-  
gloss as they walked off the bus.  
As in            My God  
it's a holocaust out here.  
That's what they said.  
Every time I tell somebody I am Jewish  
they say        sorry  
as if there is something to be sorry about.  
But you don't look Jewish  
they chime, as if it is  
a compliment.  
Mom saves sugar packets, keeps  
rings and pearls in her purse, waits weeks  
to toss out scrap paper or tissues  
half-used. She learned this  
from Abraham and Anna  
who left Auschwitz and Dachau behind  
to start a new life in New York City.  
Is that not Jewish enough for you?  
Tell me what you need me to do—  
Repeat the *mi shebeirach* over  
Shabbat candles? Bless my meat  
before I consume its nutrients  
for my own good? What, should  
my nose stick out just an inch  
more? How Jewish do I have to be  
for you to no longer feel  
the need to be sorry?