

Poem by Rachel Hadas

Inspissation

Definitions. Density. Conundrum.
Condensation. Etymology.
Abstraction and the hissing as of air
escaping. And indeed, the atmosphere
becomes so thick that vision fogs
up like a windshield in the wet.
Socked in: was this what the word meant?
The bright and baggy world gone blank,
The world, capacious, starts to shrink:
tugging of tendrils, tightening
of texture, so our habitat,
already a snug fit, begins
to fold its wings, draw in and in.
Crisscross of kinships, instances,
recognitions and reunions,
coincidences, fertilizations
at an ever thickening pace,
blanket of fog and muffling mist,
crosshatching of the busy thin
but countless filaments scribbling
to chiaroscuro, then obscure,
almost opaque, unnumbered, slight
only if taken one by one,
but thickly strewn, oh I am caught,
the small world tighter, smaller, clasps me,
blinds me: inspissation.

Rachel Hadas, a Fellow of the American Academy since 1995, is professor of English at Rutgers University and the author of twelve books of poetry, essays, and translations. Her collections of poetry include "Mirrors of Astonishment" (1992), "The Empty Bed" (1995), "Halfway Down the Hall" (1998), and "Laws" (2004).

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