home is a loaded word

by Eve Goldberg

Fragmentation. Leaving. Separation from people, separation from place. Pieces of myself that I have left behind as I explore an ever-expanding emotional and physical landscape. Surveying this geography is a way to begin to put these pieces together.

1. rootlessness seems to come easily to me as a Jew
granddaughter and great-granddaughter of Jews who left the shtetls of Poland, Ukraine, Russia;
who themselves were most likely grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Jews who left someplace else to arrive there
some stayed behind
to meet
another fate
known to me only
in the tiniest pieces,
I grieve their absence

2. home is loaded word.
someone
must have come from Israel
at some point
Israel.
home?
a land
occupied by other peoples now
where invading armies
claim their land in my name
can I call such a place
home?

we land
here
this turtle island
of north america
home?
a land stolen
from other peoples
littered with broken promises
made in my name
can I call such a place
home?

3. two sides with many sides
immigrants/
jews/religious/agnostic/atheist
working-class/communists/
bigots/intellectuals/
cantors/pharmacists/
educators/linoleum cutters/housewives/
fighters/musicians/
4. Some separations occupy so much space that I cannot remember what must have been before them.

5. I have left a lot of places.

Something that I was must be back there too.
I am going back to find

This is me
This is me
That is me
This is me, too
And this is me.

Eve Goldberg is an American Jewish activist and musician.

These photographs were originally part of an exhibit called "Lifelines: Recovering Family and Community History," organized by The Moment Project of the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice in Toronto, May 1993, coordinated by Anne Pyke.