

The New Criterion

Poems November 2005

A new poem

by Adam Kirsch

Once the first infant@s taken by the heel
And swung by laughing soldiers so his brain
Bursts like a fruit against the ghetto wall,
The name of the Father is not named again;
Then we demand the Judge, who may not save
But metes out the reward and punishment.
We stop petitioning when we observe
The peaceful old age of the commandant,
Teaching us that we must be satisfied
With a Recorder who lets nothing slip@
Till human bones that human teeth have chewed
Or throat-slit mummies in a frozen Alp
Resurface to remind us of the million
Victims that decompose for each preserved,
And that the mute Accuser is the one
God we might still believe in or deserve.

Adam Kirsch's latest book is *The Wounded Surgeon: Confession and Transformation in Six American Poets* (Norton).

Adam Kirsch's most recent poetry collection is *The Discarded Life* (Red Hen).

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