Late fragments (a translation)

by Peter Cole

Late fragments
by Leah Goldberg

I.

In all we do there’s at least an eighth
of a part of death. It isn’t heavy.
What easy, secret grace we bear it with,
wherever we go. Through beautiful waking,
and walks, in lovers’ talk, and into
distraction, forgotten deep in our being—
it’s with us always. And isn’t heavy.

II.

The young poet grows silent suddenly
afraid that he might speak the truth.

The old poet goes still, fearing
the finest poem
is the most feigning.

III.

And the poem I didn’t write
when I wrote poems—
I remember it all,
every sound and turn of phrase.
And it won’t be written still.

If I’d written it then,
its truth would have been too bare.  
And were I to write it now,  
it would be pure fiction.

Come . . . come to me, Muse,  
and lean your whitening  
head against mine.

We’ll play with words—

how clear the world is  
in this new game—

no now, no then  
no truth, no fiction

the two pans of the scale  
rising and falling—

a rhythm.

—from the Hebrew by Peter Cole

Peter Cole’s new book of poems, Draw Me After, is forthcoming from Farrar, Straus & Giroux.