

## Brother Salvage: a *genizah*

(Hebrew) meaning “hiding place”; any depository where old and/or, worn-out secular, holy & heretical books and scrolls are kept inviolate. Attics, basements, ceilings, closets, walls, under the tiles of roofs. Even buried in cemeteries. *Genizot* serve the twin purpose of protecting what they contain and preventing their more dangerous contents from causing harm.

*Oxford English Dictionary*

### *I. Scene from a Failed Documentary*

Slow as the sepia swirls of chocolate  
on the bottom of a plate can be smeared  
by fork then finger into a mouth, he drops

a dollop of cherry compote into your mug  
of steaming hot black tea and stirs, the red  
Cyclops' eye of a rented camcorder blinking:

Out of film. It's midnight, and six hours  
have passed since the retired physician opened  
his door to you. The last time, twenty years ago,

he appeared in a white frock, stethoscope,  
black hair—now silver-gray yet thick, pomaded,  
and raked back, a high widow's peak.

His voice wavers like a squeaky piano lid.  
Imagine the pause before an aria. You think of  
the time he pushed his sleeves up past the elbow

to give you an allergy shot, and you first saw  
the green number on his forearm and asked  
him what it was, and he told you what it was

directly: a prisoner tattoo from Auschwitz-  
Birkenau. A quick chill shook through your spine.  
And rattles still. You begin snaking a black patch

cord around your forearm in figure eights, mortified  
for keeping the man up so late, when he says:  
“Won’t you please take your seat? I’ve one more

thing to tell you, something strange.” *Strange?*  
But there is something in the old man’s voice  
—a cooling salve, that spreads across your dread.