

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.