



Image from Pixelstock

## Brooklyn in the Rain

Jonah Raskin

Cinco de Mayo Brooklyn New York

Tree-lined streets & slick sidewalks

Spring blossoms stirring

memories of vagabond  
grandpa Aaron  
fled from tsar's army  
rambled the world, gifted  
me coins he gathered  
Europe, Asia, Africa, then  
depressed during Depression.  
Romanian grandmother Ida  
survived pogrom saved  
Argentina cousins who landed

Ellis Island, vanished  
beyond Mississippi.  
She spoke only Yiddish, sent me to  
buy *Italyenish challah* at corner store.  
These crumbs from the past I carried  
in my backpack, from college  
campus to redbrick apartment house  
East 96<sup>th</sup> Street where dowager aunts  
dwelled first & second floors.  
Only my mother escaped the borough  
of broken dreams; my uncle Hyman,  
bookstore owner Manhattan,  
bedridden with  
Lou Gehrig's disease, a.k.a. ALS,  
taught me before he died  
pushups & sit-ups  
to protect me from paralysis.  
I inherited his *Ulysses*, a first  
edition, met stately plump  
Buck Mulligan, Stephen Daedalus,  
Leopold Bloom and yes wife Molly too,  
my Irish family.

O Brooklyn of my boyhood, so much sadness  
surfacing now as I walk this  
Sunday in the rain. Upstairs at twilight:  
cheese tacos, rice, beans, salsa, with friends  
near hospital where my mother gave birth to me.

---

Jonah Raskin is a co-editor of *Caveat Lector*, a retired professor of communication, and author of eight poetry chapbooks, including *The Thief of Yellow Roses* (Regent Press, 2023); *American Scream*, a study of Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* and the birth of the Beat Generation; and other books. He grew up reading the poetry of Oscar Wilde, Walt Whitman, and Allen Ginsberg; these days, he's likely to be reading Emily Dickinson, Anna Akhmatova, and Rainer Maria Rilke.