

JILL BIALOSKY
They Came

*For the families of the deceased buried in Jewish Cemeteries desecrated
since January of 2017*

They came with small rocks
and pebbles to place on the holy ground
where gravestones had been turned over and desecrated.
They came with their relatives' plot numbers
scribbled on scraps of paper.
They came with tears in their eyes,
they came with their memories and
grief unfurling like the sails of a ship
meeting the wind of the never-to-be-forgotten.
They came to see
what the destroyers had done,
granite and marble slabs with
the names and dates of the beloved
toppled as if the gravestones were bodies
with faces thrust into the mud.
They came to see whether there
was blood on the stones from
the hands of the destroyers.
They came and they remembered:
the hieroglyphics
of Hebrew; the red blossoms
of shame. They came
with fear in their eyes,
and horror in their throats.
They came with the foreknowledge
of evil dictators spewing caustic
rhetoric, red swastikas on the navy sleeves
of lieutenants, the sound of shrill
whistles, climbing wildflowers creeping up barbed wire,

Jewish stars cut from yellow fabric sewn
over the hearts of tattered coats.
They came to mourn
the Anniversary of the Apocalypse.
The sound of the nightingales, the scrolls
unwinding. They came to never forget
the possibility of extinction, the power
of a regime, the cowering of a populace.
They came and they
remembered, too, the collapse of
towers, the scouring of the pit,
the terrible blue skies,
the day in which the innocent
were forsaken.