For Yette in a Red T-Shirt, Running

Jennifer Strauss

A day spent scratching civilisation’s sores —
Amnesty calls for Urgent Action;
a ministerial mouth, mean as a steel trap
shuts another deluded seeker of asylum
behind barbed wire; civil liberties
are spooked by terror; girl children
trafficked to sexual servitude —
and I’m spent too. Not even that trusty spur,
the great-grandmother of my children
dead in another camp, another winter, another story,
can prick this chilled indifference to bleed —
although my mind’s rubbed raw, my heart
is dry as yesterday’s crusts.

But then from pages listlessly turned
a photograph slips. Silhouette
against dazzling sun and sea, you run,
and blood, salt as the sea, red as your T-shirt,
runs, your summer’s gift, in my veins,
knowing you bear your Yiddish name with joy
untainted yet by Holocaust darkness,
knowing you knew that moment’s rapture,
of running, with open hands, towards a glittering world.