

SUNY BROCKPORT



THE WRITERS FORUM



Karen Alkalay-Gut was born in London, England, and grew up in Rochester, New York. She completed her PhD in 1975 at the University of Rochester. Since 1972 she has been living in Israel, raising a family, writing, and teaching poetry at Tel Aviv University.

Alkalay-Gut chairs the *Israel Association of Writers in English*, is Vice Chair of the *Federation of Writers Unions in Israel*, and publishes the *Online Tel Aviv Journal*, detailing daily life in Israel today. She is also a coordinating editor of the *Jerusalem Review* and a trustee for the *Alsop Review*.

Her books include *The Love of Clothes and Nakedness* (Sivan, 1999), *In My Skin* (Sivan, 2000), *Ignorant Armies* (Cross-Cultural Communications, 1994), and *Mechitza* (Cross-Cultural Communications, 1986). Four books of her poems have appeared in Hebrew translation. Alkalay-Gut has also translated poems from Hebrew, Yiddish, German, and Arabic.

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BELLY DANCING – TEL AVIV MARCH 2002

1.

Hakim is singing and I am swinging my cane.

The coins around my hips jingle just
in the right places and deepen the beat

And I ignore for the moment the way
the chains on the Merchava tanks

going into Kalkilya

jingle just like me

2

Finally I've got that contraction right-

it's a split second thing you barely notice

but takes forever for a klutz like me to learn

especially when I see from the studio window

some guy skim down the stairs

and I'm not sure whether he's holding

dance gear or an M-16

How easy the other becomes the foe:

The closer he is, the more dangerous.

3.

Pay attention, I tell myself

as my cane slips from the crown of my head,

clatters to the floor,

and the whole class

stops the dance

to look at me.

Control what you need for balance:

Make the rest free.