
CHRISTINE POREBA

A Short History of Leavening

They say it began when Osiris decided
to lighten the weight of what we carry
from Earth to the Land of the Dead

and allowed a chance landing of wild yeast
on grain. Then, in ancient Palestine, people
threw bowls of leavening and water from houses

of mourning since the Angel of Death
was said to have left his sword inside
the potion that contained the property

of rising. Bakers in Pompeii ground millet
with must out of wine tubs and dried
the mixture in the sun, then kept it sealed

tightly in the dark. Settler fathers wrapped
pieces of previously risen dough to pass
down to marrying daughters. As I push

down the circle of dough that continues
to rise, I wonder how we learn when
to contain things, and when to let them grow.