

SOCIETY FOR THE LADIES OF THE HOUSE

There was a chapter in Poland before the war.
Now I'm a chapter of me. I study Escoffier,
the delicate art of simmering unclouded broth
courtesy of a *Chinoise*; from Rombauer
the method for rolling dough to the translucency
of a silk stocking. I polish stainless steel
with olive oil, scrub my fingertips with a lemon half
after mincing garlic. The piano waits at attention
for each evening's attempt at Schumann. I unfurl
the newspaper, place it next to the leather chair.
I bring the slippers, fancy ones, rimmed
with Alpine braid. Domesticity rises
through me till I flush like a safe and convenient
battery-powered candle. I read *Ladies' Home
Journal*, "Ten New Ways to Please your Man,"
and memorize each in pantomime. The house approves
of me. It parades the sky in its windows, admits
the opera of passing sirens, the swerving, rocking
ambulance with its brave young driver, determined
to reach the hospital in time to save the patient,
to let him heal and return home, tentative
but upright, to his one true love, the Lady of the House.

LO QUE HAY

I'm just learning about jazz having competing elements
or instruments that speak up for themselves
like strings of pearls, like a girl named Anita.

Also shooting apostrophes with my apostrophe gun
dragging them home to my poetry oasis
playing them my new favorite song
by Arturo Sandoval, "*Eso es lo que hay.*"

The question we ask about others: how
is (s)he taking it? For example a widow
part Cherokee married again but he wanted
Charleston she didn't now she has boyfriend very tall
Cubano-Spanish and daughters in twenties, jobs they don't like

but seem happy. The question about ourselves:
how do we get? Uninteresting spiritless
envy; also sense that thing
is not thing, but black-and-white jazz funeral,
we its blowsy handkerchiefs.

BOYFRIEND STORY

The man I had been dating
tossed small stems of narcissus
into a water glass. They looked good.

“That’s what you get
for having an artist
as a boyfriend,” he said.

Not all I got. Also, anger
For having “ignored” the photos
of his paintings posted on the frig.

I pointed out his lack of response
to pictures I’d emailed of my sister.
He said, “Who cares about that? An older
you, riding a horse.”

Cognitive dissonance
happens for a reason. Can make us

break up or down.
Design a glacier bedspread, with protective
scree pillows. Confiscate items
that announce themselves: TEA COZY,
JUDY’S NOTEBOOK, and so on; expunge
monograms, especially the satin appliques
on imperial bathrobes.

Be the sworn protector
of the names written with little stones in the desert,
of KEATS writ in water,

of his cemetery in Rome, so decrepit,
where shadowy cats
looll among the graves, brushing
the faint patronymics
with the gaud of their tails.