

I Love You More than All the Windows in New York City

The day turned into the city
and the city turned into the mind
and the moving trucks trumbled along
like loud worries speaking over
the bicycle's idea
which wove between
the more armored vehicles of expression
and over planks left by the construction workers
on a holiday morning when no work was being done
because no matter the day, we tend towards
remaking parts of it—what we said
or did, or how we looked—
and the buildings were like faces
lining the banks of a parade
obstructing and highlighting each other
defining height and width for each other
offsetting grace and function
like Audrey Hepburn from
Jesse Owens, and the hearty pigeons collaborate
with wrought iron fences
and become recurring choruses of memory
reassembling around benches
we sat in once, while seagulls wheel
like immigrating thoughts, and never-leaving
chickadees hop bared hedges and low trees
like commas and semi-colons, landing
where needed, separating
subjects from adjectives, stringing along
the long ideas, showing how the cage
has no door, and the lights changed
so the tide of sound ebbed and returned
like our own breath
and when I knew everything
was going to look the same as the mind
I stopped at a lively corner
where the signs themselves were like

perpendicular dialects in conversation and
I put both my feet on the ground
took the bag from the basket
so pleased it had not been crushed
by the mightiness of all else
that goes on and gave you the sentence inside.

My Eden Story

My great-grandparents were hounded out of their native lands; no streets were named after them in those lost-named Slavic towns where they left everything, nor in Argentina where the paternal pair tarried for the birth of the baby who became my grandmother, nor where they landed in Manhattan. And because anyone can make a wrong decision in a new country—or century—they bought a hardware store on the Lower East Side then swapped it for a farm upstate, in Monticello. On my grandmother's wedding day, a sub-zero December 25th, farmers arrived by horse and carriage sporting starched pink shirts and dogs in tow. The rabbi went missing, a blizzard compounded the confusion so that everyone stayed over, and the next day the kosher butcher was called in to officiate. When my grandmother circled my grandfather seven times, the farmers' hounds followed suit, nipping at her train. As time went on in America, the farm also became a hotel, the dining hall tiled like a massive black and white checkerboard, with my father, his brother and cousins the waiters, and to remake it a summer camp in mid-century my great uncle, shorter than a broom, got out the backhoe and dug a lake, a beach, outlined where the ball field would go, the bleachers, and placed stones so you could step over the stream to the meadow. That's where I came in, a five year-old exulting at each safe crossing, roaming alone among tiger lilies while cats emerged one paw at a time through the green latticework that hemmed the white cabins, and frogs eyes just showed from the lid of the pond. As in a good dream the place was dotted with ping pong tables, soda machines, aunts, uncles, cousins, my grandparents, my parents and my brothers. For a few days in the quiet infirmary—a high bedstead in the original farm house—I *became* contentment, propped with pillows next to a sunny window through which friends handed me a new watercolor set. On any day, I could enter the great kitchen,

fitting cleanly by my grandmother's side as I did
weekdays in her Brooklyn apartment, but here I helped
arrange melon slices, or replaced the juice glasses,
narrow as piano keys, to their long shelves. On any whim
I might repair to the walk-in cooler, its wooden door
planked like a treasure chest, its heavy silver handle
making the *kerthunk* of a heartbeat then opening onto rows
of chocolate milk cartons. Sometimes I went spying
for salamanders, lifting up ferns and stones after the rain,
because this was one way the children recognized
what life meant. Flushed from their own home,
the tiny-footed creatures flashed orange on green moss
and I see them as my first neon sign for happiness,
which is why I hope I let them go and live in peace.

Aubade

Thank goodness for the blackness of 5:30 a.m.
in November, trees coming into their limbs
then their branches, like an oak deepening
in the darkroom's wet photograph,
and how the pot shows up under the stove
light: a silver idea hit upon by the day's
first hunger; each shape being re-recognized, rectangular
window by crosshatched chain link,
and the radio's friendly voice from the still
unlit corner of the kitchen says tonight
might be snow, and the good fortune
of my containment in this house, barely
have I written to you about it who sleeps
across the country, darkness still tamping
down your blankets, when the autumn's
yellow shows up, and a color we have determined
as neutral fills in between everything it allows
to show off, and then pink shows, like
a tulle petticoat just below the hem
of sky, and the curved handles of the ladder
leading to a roof from an apartment's fire escape
across the yards—built so someone could pull
herself up and sit there to look out at all this—
arcs over all the colors like the gates to a city
whose civilization lasts these thirty minutes.

Ode to a Serrated Knife

Tipped on your back
you have
no powers
but your blade
looks like
the ocean
on a shiny day.
Whenever
I see you
the words
spare me
come to mind
even though
we know
you are the only one
with the
right touch
for a new
warm bread.
Yet
when you
separate a piece
from its
maternal loaf
it soon
turns
to ash and
bird food
without
our attentions.
Your handle
is as stocky
and sure
as a Bavarian
mountain woman's legs
in high black

socks
and I
wonder
your intent
in the narrow
stable of the
knife block
where you alone
wear a
flounce