

City Quotas

I

Shade

Go to the toe

I'll meet you there at the edge of Eighth and Prospect Park
Fighting it tooth or nail as something that needs to be retarded in its natural growth

the turnline within the teeth and its sharp tine standing on the lip,
hardening

You are a bruise, drinking the night before, with set mouth,
wearing a turtleneck in 60 degree weather,

taking it off.

Palaces erupt and the tunic worn only by Madames
floats back and forth

in front of the open window,
unused

II

Bowie

I have listened to Aladdin Sane more times than I can count and the songs are amazing and still heartbreakingly new and bring back a time when I was insecure and didn't speak French and was visiting my first boyfriend in a town 40 miles south of Paris. I wasn't allowed to touch the stereo because I was a girl but I did anyway just to listen to that album because I wouldn't have gotten through that month without it. I remember what it was like to think everything was going to turn out like that, crazy and poorly mixed but brilliant. I want that energy back, even the misery, because it was real and uncool and unrehearsed, unlike the things I say to people now to explain being upset or down or depressed. I wasn't intact and impermeable then.

III

Stove Mitt

And this all there is to tell—The hooded man falling from the tree, pajamas on
and trucks in the grass like homing agents waiting to get back—There is no back between
hood and forward and there is no trunk in the saddle of his new car and there is no wife in his
blow-up doll kitchen and there is no nothing in between his legs and his toes and he in the end
generalizes it all out in quotients and potions $x = 4z^2$

and it harms him fully but never warms him.

IV

Protein Chain

Skin repels from inside to create newer and newer boundaries and warts and tumors are growths like any other measured by distance and scale. The row of skin rolls back like a ladder as you come.

Protein delineates action from reaction in the cradling of head to head, groin to groin, image to magic and back again through the forest.

Light counsels the aftermath of numbers as partners pretend to rebuff the broken toenail dust flying off the trees. The shuddering callouses created by counting with an abacus.

(IN A BOOMING VOICE): I am talking about edges—ridges, valleys, and pools. I am specifically referring to the mood *between*. The toe, the foot, the sleep—the part of your body you call sleep. The furnace, your body heat, how warm your arm was when I touched it last night, the bully from third grade, the guy you had a crush on, the seminar you took one summer on suffering, American style: These are all plural. Dense pluralities made of the same singular material used to make shoes and lamps although in parallel histories of which you've been a part, they found ways to make things out of skin.

V

The Map of the Sea of Galilee (Kinneret)

We are made of the same stuff, bone and blood and water, and the numbers carved into our limbs. And within it all, that edge beating. You pretend not to notice, your mouth open and counting.

There is no place for this. But we'll make one, like the place for electricity, telephones, glass, and concrete. Typical inventions—like 19th-century rectangular red brick and radio. No radio silence. How to count numbers, fingers, and toes. How to shatter the listening booth around the old record player and watch the glass turn into something else.

What is made is made and made over again, melted by intense temperatures into an unrecognizable shape. Soon figures will emerge, bony, then fleshy, pale, and pink with blood. We will make something tangible that wasn't. We will lick around the edges, moving our tongues slowly around the borders of newly formed tectonic plates, pushing them together, making new water.

VI

Park Slope

I was walking in the park one day and the trees opened onto a wide, concrete path down to a lake's edge. There were dozens of birds, mallards, herons, gulls, and in the trees, smaller songbirds whose names I didn't know. This was when Brooklyn was new and it was exciting to walk a different route through the park every day and I found new things past the baseball fields and signs in the shape of arrows and paths which gave way to busy streets and shopping mall neon.

There is no meeting of Eighth and Prospect Park. The pigeons all gather to distribute lunch, and in the spring, the new soldiers patrol the short brick wall around the park with borough-issue pistols.

Dusk. Play.

Theater. Opening night. July.

plates in the door are overwhelming,
and tunnels laid deep—

names, pull cords, and curtain rods

hassle the remote into being

*as if curtains were the hidden bridle
which would make the air obey.*

(dressing-room shadows hide the worst of it)

You do not know this. & furthermore, the welts
are not your own.

you should be ashamed of yourself.

The room opened like a begonia, and music played, starchy, sticky,
no one believed it like a gun. —

the orchestra maneuvered to play like Einstein, the atoms broke apart
like rain over the audience

Act II

Weather in flight is fine this time of year and paralyzes the crowd eating jerky and drinking
vermouth. Yes. hubcaps, parallel time, smooth light
sparking off the wheels.

again, wind folding like leaves the fuss, the pulse
is ever-reaching

and the messenger is sad, but killed anyway and heartache

is a walk in the country with a gutted house and a match

goddesses are cruelly swinging from hanging, snow-covered
chairs and the opera begins, losing

a few of the chorus are left, straggling, waterless—

“gleaming, the gloaming, mulch
pretending the twilight march
the night upon us open
the death march of the stars”

every thing comes to an end ; a rope, a tether, follower, piecemeal light

coordinated with action

hunting the glossy climax, a straw-filled swimsuit with fake blood
and the hero's lesson ; sword, shield, matted hair—body wiry with death, face
covered in blood, and even though it was fake,

the gossamer and rubber protruded and the nettles trapped—never

again to forget the piece

screw cloth remnant caught fleshy part of the arm, palm,

prosthetic knee—dragged for miles, under

the screaming truck

wedding

weddings, a pull on the cord

at dusk

and bones playing

a return to courage and

factories; lion-taming

and fruit-caress

powderpuff suit, noon limping

a hair at the bottom of your neck
scratching

lesser than, more than

pie in the face
of ignorance, pancake said, pulled blinds

flash at the water's edge

and then

nothing

you have not found him.

You have not baked the loss of one into the other.

*She is gone: the weather confirms it, and no amount
of storm will raise her up, of clay.*

Watering hole

Watering, watering...don't know pound, still...watering

be still. Coven of sounds.

Never altere----d. a pound of flesh.

—for the salt, reaching grounds

(of beef and of coffee and of limeney lemon solid things)

shoved up his gourd so loud, it's hard

nothing imagined there, between pewt and stone—

a language of misery, fortitude included in absence of

category, fiction— because, so unknown, this felting of light;

pleading with him, with her, with here...a part in four letters. No plan, the deepest

action.

oh, she liked her, solitude, by the way, a stoned contemplate

plaque overshadowing, overhearing the junket—

overthrowing the moonlit corns on her feet. Studded hat

and the fusing of burnt reflection:

Deception

"Ah, the trick's bones undone,
renewed

the beauty of your black lace dress,
studied

The sun setting, blue, into coast."

The beautiful thing:
prizes, controls, shiny things, patterned things,
darkened things, powdered objects sitting closely
to the window.

Curtains drawn, like horse-drawn carriages,
like crayon-drawn pictures of two grown

men dancing. They are drinking beer—*Anselm Light*—written
painstakingly onto the brown, hazy bottles

in a child's hand. They were brothers at one time, soul mates.
Now torn apart at the seam of the waist,

by a woman. The woman had stopped long ago
to care about what men thought of her

yet joints loosened and buildings fell down around her
where she went.

"*What* was it you said: holes in beauty
buttons, drawn forward, connecting

pieces of unlike fabric, two sides of a shirt, hidden
by a dark purple tie. All shirts *undo*."

His insufficiency adored her, with the make of his car,
the cruel length of shadow seats

on a long train, what is the stuff that remains
walking, when all the light has gone.

The truest sign a great silence followed
by coal.