

## Résumé

Somehow I was born, though my parents could never explain it –  
Either I stepped off a train from Cracow or a conveyor belt in a milk  
processing plant in urban Queens –  
Cried, eructed, and was generally happy.  
I was weaned on borscht  
Did not discover the chickpea till way past puberty

I started school with the mandatory tears  
In those years the world was still flat  
Till a fourth-grade class trip threw me off balance racing round the Rawson  
street subway stop landing me in a field of breasts –  
And so began my higher education

I wandered from the echo under the El to the Hayden Planetarium to weigh  
myself on the moon or Venus or anywhere but Queens  
I closed my bedroom door in search of natural history  
Discovering my arms were long enough

And I began to read –  
Road maps, exit signs, Masters & Johnson  
I began to love the smoldering kiss of the horizon  
Love the silence of the dark A.M. hours  
Love myself to sleep

And when I wake facing an ancient tomorrow  
When my head is a compass that can find no north  
And I try to retrace my wandering steps these last 40 years in search of a  
wilderness  
From when I first walked the earth belly to belly  
From when I first craned to stare back at the stars and mistook God for warm  
milk or the voice behind rough hands  
Knowing it is not good that man should be alone  
That he should compose love songs only for his own two ears  
Leave the bark uninscribed  
Have no smile or scent or oasis of jewelry to dislocate his sleep  
It is not good to coax the apple out of the tree and not know the blessing  
of another's mouth  
Having the heart beat only against itself

*Mark Elber*