

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