

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/4

Claudia Serea

Minestrone soup

Do you feel lonely
in the city of a thousand horns
and millions of feet?

Do you ask yourself what got you here?

And if you do, do you go by the water
where the East River meets the Hudson
and look out in the bay at the ships
and ferries, and choppy waves?

Do you see your reflection
with the fog and wind in the tall windows
among thousands of shadows
that passed through here?

Do you see Judas, Napoleon, and Stalin
marching through those windows?

Or, you go buy soup
from the Puerto Rican man
at Hale & Hearty

by the souvenir shop
where the American presidents
bob their heads
and nod at you,
approving:

Yes-yes-yes-yes-yes.

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I heart NY

1.

Welcome to the city
of hearts wrapped in tinfoil
and Plexiglas tongues.

You're one of them now,
a drop in the sea of insomniacs,
robocops and maniacs,
workaholics and SOBs.

Take this flashlight,
the Statue of Liberty said,
so you can find your way
through the asbestos streets.

You're free to buy grapes
from death's fruit stand.

You're on your own
in this city of curry and soy,

of severed heads
and sequined wings,

city of seven winds,

of haute couture
and missing teeth.

City of gluttons,
bon appétit.

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2.

But the lights are bright,
and the naked cowboy sings
to the old ladies.

And where else can you see
on the same corner
Mickey and Minnie,
and the American flag,
Batman and Buzz,
and the Cookie Monster
devouring the last crumb?

Where else can you quench your thirst
on stars and stripes,
and unicycle jugglers?

So, let's ride, darling,
on the backs of Ripley's bearded ladies
and let the city lick
our cotton candy hearts.

Let's go to Madame Tussauds
to hang out with the rich and famous.

Buy me a pixie dust smoothie,
and watch out for her hand
waving over our heads
the huge magic wand.

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One day when it rains

This is the time when the branches open
and bloom pink butterflies,
and then, the time when they take flight
one day when it rains.

I remember sunshine on a windowsill
where a small doll cooked in her kitchen
dandelion and grass,
and hummed a little song. This is the time
a spider came into the kitchen,
and no one else was home,
but a fruit fly,
and the fruit fly fought the spider,
and the spider won.

I think of all the years that flew away
in a blizzard of petals
over the face of a girl
who sat on the stairs of the music school
and cried
until a shadow towered over her
and called her little mouse,
took her into his classroom,
and played for her, with huge fat fingers,
Intermezzo on his violin.

This is the time when I see my mother's hands,
parched and cracked like the earth,
and she holds out to me ripe apples and plums,
the only apples and plums in the world.
And she makes doll dresses,
spends all night baking pies in her kitchen, singing,
and she's the only person I know
who's not afraid of spiders, snakes, or dogs.

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This is the time when I think of all the faces from long ago,
and all the stupid things I said or did,
and forgot.

Then the bus comes,
and we all go into the vortex.

The tunnel opens its mouth
and the city sucks us in,
chews us,
and blows us up,
petals into the wind.

We cling to each other,
pile on street corners,
and are washed away by rain.

This is the time when I think of you,
and why I do this,
and your little hungry bird mouth
looking for my breast.

You're all grown now.
Sunshine pours into the room
where the dolls chat on cell phones
and go on skype and youtube.

And you laugh with them:

the branches swell
and burst into clouds of white wings

that will fly away again
one day when it rains.

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From Brooklyn, with love

Each day, the cobweb bridge
weaves itself farther and farther away

into the city
inhabited only by spiders

where all of us hang from the tallest buildings
by a thread.

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Meanwhile, in Penn Station

The pussy willows bloom
in a plastic bucket
underground.