

Human Rights

Across the Street

I see the other side of the street from the corner
of my eye. My heart beats a little faster as I walk.
We were brought from 'paradise' and promised a land;
to land, to set foot, and huddled as we disembarked became
thin dark streams in the winter snow: the pale summer air,
a one-room world, a gas fire, a timid little sun, weak
from its climb. My skin won't let the goodness in, but
you can see the tree is not far away from me.

From across the street I am drawn to others aghast
at my being here. I don't need to hear your mutters,
your shouts - they are the same. I am grateful to breathe,
to have bread, to have supported a corner of your empire.
Don't rush to thank me; I will be starved by slow motion.
Let me sweep up in the dark, cog your factory wheels;
my blood is red too and came out in distant wars.
Walk by if you can without staring, without comparing

our outwardness; see the refinement that squeezed the sugar
from my veins and saved me from savage designs.
Be nice with your scraps, your condescension, I am building
for my children's future. For I am but blue bricks at the
base supporting hope and looking to a higher level.
Across the street - where many crossed to - my grandchildren
will play in a summer they are used to. And they will see me
in little black and white rectangles - on the other side.