

## From a California Window

### I

There's a Sunday afternoon lull  
holding this street in a rare almost-silence.  
The Sycamore tree is mostly bare  
and shadows stain the north side of everything.

On days like this, I can easily lay one transparency  
upon another, take a shortcut back between  
tall hedgerows on unpaved but well-used paths,  
to a road from my past.

There, I follow the workers and pubgoers  
as they cut through St. Bart's church,  
harridedly or slump-shouldered across the graves,  
to their groceries or their drinks.

Outside *Silvio's Bakery and Coffee Shop*,  
I look to the third-floor window,  
stand in the same spot where a rare admirer  
once sought someone who used to be me.

On the other side of the glass, her sullied  
white apron cinches a short pink dress, stale  
with the smell of teacakes, coffee, and  
what she already knows without the use of words:

The young suitor below, blonde, pure of face,  
could never, even in a long-lived life,  
see her where she stood.

### II

She chose the other boy, who until he was 10,  
lived in hot, war-torn countries. In one desert spot,  
he was trapped in a minefield, soldiers inching  
hours across the distance to reach him.

He she understood—without knowing this story—  
as he understood her, without knowing  
the civil war she, too, was used to.

From the beginning there was the relief of being  
known—without the wearing down of explicit,  
careful explanation.

### III

I watch the descending sun begin to soften  
the south parts of everthing, time and distance  
returning.

Now we're middle-aged, both of us parents,  
each living in different countries from our birth.  
From time to time, across continent and ocean  
we fondly remember what image we each began with:

His dark eyes, narrowed against the sun, observing;  
my proud, stiff back, which he knows full well  
the pros and cons of . . .

—Theresa McCourt