

LYNN MELNICK

*And All Around Me, A Voice Was Sounding*

A man on Court Street  
says he wants to take me home  
and bed me proper  
and I think  
I will teach my daughter  
about dignity  
and not react at all although  
I've been experimenting  
with platitude,  
like what I surrendered  
to the woman who cuts my hair:  
Opinions on politics.  
Tips on parenting.  
My best love advice.  
I'd asked for the usual,  
long enough to wear pinned up  
but seductive when loosened  
from its top knot.  
Jackhammers soundtrack  
Court Street because, I guess,  
progress, while another man  
calls out *Kill all women!*  
and we are alarmed  
but he's just smiling wide.  
*You have beautiful hair!* he adds.  
Which is also something  
my daughter learns.

*Let Us Rejoice*

I like to wear my great-grandmother's fur at home  
and look goddamn glamorous even though

I gave up smoking and haven't brushed my hair.  
Some people call me a disappointment.

I call it February. I love New York  
because this morning the accordion player

who plants himself in the tunnel  
between 5th and 6th avenues

plays *Hava Nagila* instead  
of the theme from *the Godfather*

and I feel both annoyed and grateful.  
The man giving away newspapers wishes me

a happy Friday and I wish it back.  
*Awake my brothers with a happy heart.*

You see it, right? It's always the same. The man  
inside my building teases me for being cold.

It's below freezing.  
I've been coughing so hard my breasts burn.

I fondle them in the elevator.  
The cleanup of Times Square skipped my body.

The messiah will come  
if every Jew observes the Sabbath

says the woman who accosts me  
with a candlestick. *Back off*, I say

when *no, thank you* doesn't work. Little is more  
grotesque than being saved but, my god,

I will acknowledge me, in this coat, in this candlelight:  
astonishing.