

HOT FOOD

Back in a then so long ago there was nothing to look back to
and the long ride to Charley's farm in Ontario was an adventure,
we were happy in the car, Mother singing songs of longing
that *she* looked back to from when she was a child in the war,
and the long, long roads a-winding pointed to the peace
we had now, there in the car, before the new war came on,
and Daddy happy driving, getting lost to see what he could see,
though we'd all beg him to go by the map, and my sister and I happy
to see them happy so we'd sing along, oh, *Keep the home fires*
burning, while our hearts are yearning, for the feeling,
not knowing yet what people longed for in long wars, but free,
on the road, and though I'd sometimes get car sick my mother
would give me a lemon to suck on and then I'd be okay, back then
I'd see road signs that called out, *Eat or Hot Food*, and because
we'd never stop, hot food seemed to me mysterious, particular,
food that I'd never eaten but naturally yearned for.

Later, in another time, driving through the night
to the City from Buffalo
with Gita Nonni in a four-door convertible in December
without a heater
and only a blanket over our laps to keep us warm and singing I can't
remember what but probably the lovely songs Susanne Bloch
sang to her lute, or songs the Wobblies sang, I learned that hot food
was open turkey sandwiches with mashed potatoes and delicious
flour gravy, hold the over-cooked peas. We'd had our own war by
then, and after that war came new hot foods, pizza, egg foo yung,
vegetables cooked right.
But it isn't the food I am trying to get at as much as time, time that
has carried me past so many shoals and rapids, so many songs and tears
and wrongs,
so many sweetesses and Look!-We-have-come-throughs
to this Now, lavish with the so-much-to-look-back-to.