

The Summer Outside Me

I'm in the city, with my windows open at night,
and that's okay
because I live on the fourth floor.
More sound comes into the apartment home
in the wet heat, the solemn descendant of spring.
Children's cackling, cracking, swearing, laughing voices
are clear and echo off the buildings.
Black people's booming, resonating voices hit everywhere around
my building and there is a man playing hand drums
out of the side of his parked white van.
Cats perched atwitter on window sills observe
the nights and the days, the birds and kids playing.
I lay in bed at dusky night with the window blackened
for my peace while my ears are always ringing,
but the white noise of traffic is less in my bed at home.
I hear bright red lawnmowers mowing
whole estates with beautiful lawns, golfcourses,
or perhaps yellowing scraps of green grass in the city.
It makes me happy to hear the humanity of summer.
Yellow days and heat-lamp nights
are made for barbeque and wine.
Shiny black grills are offered for sale
and they seem like magic in their resplendent newness, their virginity
to be sacrificed atop hot, greasy coals to serve
children cackling, oldsters rocking, blue-collar men
drinking their cold beers,
housewives on double shifts sighing, girls giggling and
possibly a dog on the sly.

Cracked cement tests the soft heels barefoot in the heat,
the soft wet heat that fills you with molasses.
Barefoot pavement is impossible.
The roads will glint and shimmer in the summer sun,
boasting of their prowess with
expanded asphalt and bright yellow stripes.
While I lay listening and resting in
the dark and peace of my bed,
if I get quiet enough, I know I will fall into luxurious sleep
to everlasting humming in calm electric fans
and dream of swimming pools and snow.