

# BALTIC ELEGY

You think that you left behind  
the country that you had dreamed  
of escaping since you were twelve.  
You had lived different new lives  
in countries East and West of it . . .  
Some of the lives had been more  
complete and successful than others  
some—unfinished  
and not completely clear to the reader  
as well as to the writer herself.  
Some of the meanings cleared up much later,  
some continue haunting with unfinished threads  
hanging. . .  
However, the crooked streets  
must have been imprinted in your unconscious  
like Lorenz geese following the mother.  
In every foreign city you've been falling for the reminders  
of this strange Northern Baroque Gothic Classical  
provincial, sleepy and magical city  
whose cobblestones must be steeped in blood  
through so many upheavals and changes of government  
in one year, such as nineteen-eighteen, for example.  
What most of them had in common, though  
was that each one usually ended in a pogrom  
killing about a hundred or more Jews  
accused of shooting from a window  
or welcoming the previous government by the new one.

# POLITICALLY INCORRECT VERSES

Why do women on TV always run away from serial killers  
in high heels?

Why do Russians always create long lines at check-in counters  
in airports and elsewhere?

Why do women with long wavy hair most of the time have  
an abundant ass that goes with it?

Why do really nice guys live with crazy bitches  
most of the time?

Is an anorexic bitch better than a big fat one?

Why do Russians associate Poles with culture, like, say, Adam Mickiewicz  
and Andrzej Wajda,  
and Americans with jokes about dumb Poles unable to screw in a light bulb?

Why did our secretary Ann at the mental health clinic in Coney Island  
ask me if all Russians were Jewish?

Why did she and other clerical staff say "I aksed him " and "I says to him"?

Why did Mr. Torino who looked like a Soprano,  
have a secret room at the clinic, a former Torino Candy Factory?

Why did our director Bruce like to sit alone in his dark office and play tennis  
during business hours?

Why was his secretary Sylvie threatening to tell something to his wife,

and why did she belly dance at our Christmas parties?

Why did our maintenance guy, the handsome Vietnam vet Richard have to hold the doors shut during the Passover assistance so that the Russians did not break in?

Why did my fellow students in Hunter ask me if all Russians wore leather coats and shopped for caviar with food stamps?

Why did Russian patient look for dentures and orthopedists in a psychiatric clinic?

Why did Ksenia Petrovna, the literature teacher from Leningrad with two neurotic sons, one of whom used to masturbate to her topless picture taken by her late husband, tell Maria that Oedipal issues did not occur in her family?

Why did Sonia, as a Jew, feel guilty, about the Russian revolution and why did she develop symptoms of Freudian hysteria that our psychologists did not think existed any longer?

Why did my Italian patient keep running away from the mafia in the last five years after delivering a small package to the El Greco diner in Sheepshead Bay?

Why did his parents join him in his delusions in this folie-a-trois?

Why did I have a former narcotics detective with a gun strapped to his leg in my therapy group, and why did he and the cute Staten Island divorcée

start sleeping together after I told the group about boundaries?

Why did the owner of the Russian grocery store downstairs tell me of his wife having a bad headache during her period when I complained that I'd been waiting twenty minutes for my sandwich at the counter?

Why did our clinic psychiatrist Jean Paul hit on me and tell me of my soft European looks while being served subpoenas from his wife?

Why did my supervisor Doris tell me I would never make enough money in this field to support myself and my son and should marry a wealthy American?

Why did I work to become a clinic director instead?

Why did I think my job was great despite the four hour commute and miserable pay?

Why did my handsome American boyfriend tell me that if he lived in a project with a child and sick parents and commuted to work from Queens to Coney Island, he would jump out the window?

# PARIS-VITEBSK, 1930'S

This fall is generous.  
Pale gold Renaissance light  
is sliding down nineteenth century buildings  
lighting Moorish columns and windows  
on an unusually warm day in mid-November  
last kiss of this luxurious autumn  
that is leaving  
slowly dragging the train of her cape  
of green, ochre and bronze colored leaves.  
Chagall's Vitebsk  
violinists and rabbis flying over the shtetl  
scared Jews running away from pogroms  
Dvina flowing  
Mark and Bella  
with a gigantic blue fish  
like a zeppelin  
floating along.  
A crucified Jew  
his loin covered by a striped tallis  
looking down at the chosen to suffer  
chosen to move.