

An Atonement

Above the table, to ward contagion off,
an onion dangled and balled a fist.
Like playground bullies, dangers clustered
round your house on Rhodes Avenue, where I
was condemned to dine with disaster.
Beets so purple they bruised the plate.
Bars of halvah like sweetened plaster.
Jarred gefilte fish bobbed in murky brine
like sheep brains in the biology lab.
Butter beans like bullets soaked in slime.
Thick as axle grease, your apple butter
made me wonder what darkness had festered
good apples into ghoulish gobs of goo.
Raised in a world of burgers and fries,
I gagged on every course, and palmed
what I could into my slacks.

Forgive me,
Grandma Emma, for all I pushed aside—
the banquet of exile you offered up,
the bloated sour cream floating on the soup.