

Babel's Soft Typewriter

The sun breaks my Manhattan in half,
making silvery skyscrapers
look emptier than they are.
An accountant with a black hat
carries his black briefcase down
the platform's cement stairs. The soles
of his shoes are splintering.
Rush hour hasn't quite started,
but speech and sleep
are already impossible,
even if I tried. A hatless man
stops to unbutton his collar
and stares at the glaring Hudson.
He turns to a Cuban woman
and rants about the Mets,
falling stocks, interest on his house,
about which brother
should renew
mom's insurance policy--
her memory is worse,
Jersey is so far away,
the nursing home smells of urine,
and his kids never write.
Across the street a bikinied girl
doesn't notice the clouds gathering.
A Greek with Lemur eyes

(Cont)

("Babel's," cont., no break)

peeks around a building, searching
for the morning bus. A junky
tries to sell her a fake Cartier.
In my hands I try to rock to sleep
her naked daughter, legs at half-mast--
tears fall and she mumbles
POW's in wounded English.
I hang suspended
and rain forms over the bed.
Commuters begin to meet
at the El station, heads buried.
They stand still and rub hands
greyly in unison
like the Stonehedge Monuments.
A man protects his eyes
halfway down the stairs and trips
when he sees my running lover,
heading for work or home.
She misses the train.
I am one block away
with her keys and passport
and gasp for clean air
and stumble and realize
that she's never forgotten a thing.
In front of the blindman's news shop

(Cont.)`

("Babel's," cont., no break)

the Greek woman sits down,
eyes closing tight, gloved hands
together and pointed toward her mouth.
Her daughter, my lover, kneels:
"Kill the landlords; bury me in green."