

No War

Amidst the rush at Lincoln-Center, I settled
in, checking my shoes, then untying one
as I lifted up its hot mouth to my face,
trying to locate whatever odor was about
if not from me then perhaps my chair
refusing to give up its former occupant,
the others beside me oblivious to what began
derailing the afternoon, the dis-smell
I could not put out of mind until I noticed
the double-handled Duane Read bag
bulging out with all its owner seemingly
owned—crosswords torn from the *Times*,
scavenged gloves, scarves—his body
glazed with whatever might attach itself
to the sides of a city dumpster—nose
dripping down to mud-encrusted shoes
sopped with soiled sleeves—no choice now
but to move, the way a rush-hour subway car
is sometimes vacant but for two slumped
faceless forms who get to keep the car
all to themselves, not asking, just being
who they are even as we lounge on a chaise
in the Belmont Room at the Opera House,
having flashed our membership card to gain
admission into that chandeliered salon
held spellbound in a cloud of perfume
just off the Grand Tier, the two of us
huddled in jeans, hardly ever in jacket or tie,
you having come straight from work
in a sweat, shouldering your backpack
with “No War” stickers plastered over it,
both of us willing to stare down anyone
who wonders what right we have to be here.