

This place exists outside of time

by Lillian Ann Slugoeki

Some days I blamed the vast spectacle, the otherworldly diversity, the hysteria, the chaos of New York City because you pay a high price to live here. You do. And if you don't live here, then you cannot possibly understand what this means. And if you're a woman, you can double the price tag. But I cannot describe the thrill of wandering the darkened streets after midnight; West Broadway, White Street, Grand, Varick, Ludlow, Essex: Its two o'clock in the morning, and I'm slightly drunk and smoking a joint with a couple of strangers. The thrill of hailing a cab on Houston, alone, unfettered in New York City. I cannot describe it. I cannot explain how addictive it was, heady, this alone the price of admission. I didn't want a boyfriend. I didn't want someone at home waiting for me! He: *Where were you? I was worried sick.* God, no. I only wanted autonomy. Was that so bad? Was that so fucking stupid. Apparently it was. I'm Icarus in Brueghel's painting. My wings as it turned out were made of wax. Mothers, tell your daughters this truth. You cannot fly so close to the sun. Because the day comes when you find yourself walking on West 177th Street, or New Jersey, trying to find a cheaper apartment. And you are not younger, you are older, much older.

And all those nights you spent running to the bars on Hudson Street, the restaurants and clubs on Gansevoort, the theater company on Broadway, crashing a holiday party at the top of the World Trade Towers, the floor canting a bit, already in danger of exploding--- for all of those days of that mythical girl, who was so fucking sure of herself, *it will come to this. Your wings will melt.* You will fall to earth. Yes, but is it necessary and is it my fault? Perhaps it's my mother's fault. She prepared me to be a wife and mother, not a scholar, not a writer, not independent.

In any event, it's a battle I believe I have won, but only provisionally. I've won simply in the sense of *I'm still here*. Or *I haven't given up*. Even if my wings have melted, I still believe that self actualization is the holy grail of life. Some have argued this is a particularly American idea. I would disagree. It's universal, earthbound or not. Living here, in Brooklyn, south of Atlantic, north of Montague, is my reward, it is my *succès d'estime* for having the courage to re-create myself whenever necessary, and the wisdom to sometimes say, *fuck it*. Because everything I have ever done, and everything I have ever said, in anger or in love, every page I've written, every person I've ever fallen in love with, every theatrical production, every little one night stand, every single night as an autonomous beautiful woman, every step I've taken, every trip to the emergency room, every book I've ever read, has led me here. To the third floor of a brownstone, eastern exposure. From the windows, Silver Linden trees, the trees that grow in Brooklyn. I live next to them. I live in them. Just like that book I read. Do you know this place? This place exists outside of time.

