

*The City is a Woman*

Said the man on Forest Avenue.  
He was holding his brown bag  
of fortune & his eyes were salt.  
Do you know she loves the body  
of a man even though he's beat  
her? All this as the gulls rose up  
over the black chimney towers  
and the trucks stomped & rolled  
into the Eastern Market district.  
To love a woman, I think, is to  
try out for size what it is to be  
a swollen watermelon. The heart  
is full of redness and dark seeds.  
There are stories & dark truths.  
Murder and mayhem and a laughter  
that is really a strange card game.  
We take our chances when we  
love someone until the end of it.  
The heart of a city, this one, is full  
of coughing & dead radiators,  
and men whose time is a lottery.  
The women in it grow dark & mute  
and hum songs to hanging laundry  
that is never fully cleaned off.  
The children in it are leaving it.  
We must remember that the city  
is a woman, he said.