

Poetry

Observation

by Jane Yevgenia Muschenetz

After Alex Dimitrov

No one knows anyone in this city.
Let's not get existential, I'm talking
about the neighbors again,
the time-lapsed way
we've watched their children grow up
and dogs die out, forget watching
the same TV shows or reading
the same sources for the news.
It's probably for the best
The New York Times and The Atlantic
keep publishing the same story —
repetition feels comforting...
I will never get tired of Alex Dimitrov
telling me to go to parties (all his poems
are an invitation) I am almost on a plane
to New York, *emotionally speaking*.
Growing up in Soviet Ukraine, you couldn't choose
your party or a different TV show to watch.
We all knew our neighbors (some of us
watched them very closely) and mined
the same, controlled lexicon for truth.
I still remember the boy next door, who,
like Alex, is now a smoker and may possibly
also be gay and write poetry in taxis, and speak English
with an accent that Alex Dimitrov may or may not have —

I've only ever heard his poems in my own head.
I could probably find a recording online
and know *exactly* how he sounds.
This, I won't do.
It would ruin my ability to imagine
things differently...
I am, after all, also "Eastern European"
(it's in our nature to be contrary).
The boy next door could be alive and well,
he could have started a physical therapy practice
and left our hometown for New York long before the newspapers
remembered how to spell L'viv or Kyiv or —
for God's sake, stop doom scrolling!

You see, it's easier not knowing.

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