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I love the way this city remakes
itself over and over, throwing memory
to the wind of the glass and steel
canyons, an organism of noise
replicating itself higher and higher,
one makeshift elevator after another.

And I love the unremarkable history
scattered in glass pavement tiles, light let
into underground cafes where Melville
and Whitman drank, now sitting beneath
scaffolding, beneath the Italianate facades
of development.

Nothing like Rome-The-Eternal,
that hands-on-museum of civilization, nor
like Sepino where the Roman theater gave
up gracefully to medieval houses, a
spontaneous architecture on the stones of
conquerors. Children of Samnites, children
of goats of Samnites, together in big beds
in dark rooms that skipped a Renaissance
of humanity and light.

We walked there when everything was new
for us, your hands smoothing la porta
Benevento, your eyes reviving the water mill,
the oil vats, the thermal baths.

Wandering the silent reticulated walls, you
were dark in Molise, back-town Italy,
while here you translate to me the throb
of machinery, the electricity of the sidewalk
generators dotting the streets that feed you,
here where newness is our very first name and
our last, the latest invention of repetition.