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## Bakery

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*Richie Hofmann*

## Bakery

I kneaded a mass of dough against a wooden table  
I bundled the lettuces of south Germany  
I wrapped flowers in yesterday's newspaper  
for a Jewish widow      I started a bakery

at Johannesstraße 13      The building  
built as a convent for nuns  
The man that lived there before I did  
painted the insides of the dome

working in the studio of Herr Schraudolph  
to make paintings "in the late  
Nazarene style" for the King  
who came himself to see them finished

First I saw the cathedral  
over the wall      Later in engravings  
Once full color 4 x 6  
on a postcard

I helped the painter wash his brushes  
Colors diffused in a jar:  
goldenrod, pink      The bristles unstiffened  
with chemicals      I washed my hands

I spoke the same language as the emperor  
though once I could not read it  
It seems distant now  
though I reach from time to time

for a word that feels proper  
I hear two women speaking the language I learned first  
How do you say it?  
How is it pronounced?

Fat babies had their heads touched  
with water every Sunday  
That immense font separated the diocese  
from the people    People ate

my bread    I decorated cakes for them  
when their children were baptized  
I brushed pastries with egg  
before anyone else was awake

My name was recorded  
in the book    There are names  
going back to 1654  
Jakob is there    August too

Melchior is not  
Either he was not 62  
when he died or he was not baptized like the others  
Maybe he was born to parents

in another village as I was  
In the 1950s they removed  
the man's paintings to reveal  
the original architecture

I saw the insides of the dome  
bare again    I returned by way of Johannesstraße  
I wiped the wooden table clean  
I set the dough to rise in the buttered bowl