

DEATH COMES TO TOWN

*And behold,
I saw a pale rider in a Penske truck –
packed with bedrooms, boxes, a kitchen.
The driver's dirge harmonized with a diesel whine;
the mount ferried its cargo across the river Chenango
to the afterlife – a better life – in Virginia
Carolina
Georgia.*

Death first comes to Binghamton in 1993.
IBM is the killer, makes the front page
obituary by announcing it will close, move
South. Workers will relocate. The body count
rises: Endicott-Johnson, builder of two villages,
friend to NYC immigrants who asked “which way E-J.”
Bankrupt. Link Simulators announces a new focus –
undersea vehicles, not fighter planes. Lockheed
merges with Martin-Marietta. In five years
the Triple Cities lose all of its native sons. Industry
becomes a foreign word.

This city never got over those days. It still mourns the dead,
the corpse-less caskets on Watson Boulevard,
Helen and Glendale Drives.
Lightless factories and razed lots dream of Reagan,
Roosevelt. Bare feet and military contracts. The sound
of punch cards recording time.

This is too dramatic. I will be blunt:
To understand the Front Street Massacre,
you need backstory. We get no AP write-ups. Locals
are the people who care the most.
You need this piece of information: Binghamton knows murder,
but only as metaphor.