

**Yaseen Kader**

## **“In Nature There Are Few Sharp Lines”**

*You don't come to live here [Manhattan] unless the delusion of a reality  
shaped around your own desires isn't a strong aspect of your personality.*

*—Zadie Smith, October 2014*

Manhattan's built on blocks because they planned it out like that  
(You don't get perpendiculars in nature, after all).  
The streets of London slalom like your childhood's playroom mat,  
And Rome and Paris too have roads that swerve and rise and fall,  
So why does New York City from the heavens look so flat?

And why do all the names sound like a robot filled them in?  
The avenues just run as 'First' to 'Tenth' from right to left.  
Milan and Barcelona and Vienna and Berlin  
All give their greatest streets and plazas names that have a little heft.  
To name your best street simply 'Fifth' must surely be a sin.

Maybe the new New Yorkers were just simply overcome;  
This thirteen-and-a-half mile Eden seemed to be divine.  
And so they thought of what two-day-old Adam must have done:  
Alone in brand new Paradise with infinite-ish time.  
And so they split their Garden up in perfectly straight lines,  
And chose a brand new name to give to every single one.