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Ode to New York City

You are an island, a granite crust on a black platter of rivers,
You are the bus terminal of hope, you are a lost umbrella,
You exist as a landing field for helicopters.

You appeal to people who love water, people who want to fly,
People who want to show off and be bad, who get a kick
From Champagne. I am only looking for a toaster, and here

Two women stand behind a counter at the hardware store minding their cash registers
In their red apron uniforms. A points to B and says *You know*
What she did Saturday? She went skinny-dipping.

I have to ask where. B looks pleased with herself. *The Harlem River.* No fooling,
It's where showoff boys used to dive and we giggling girls used to watch
Those bad boys. Times do change. B says *I have to let my bad girl out sometimes.*



Art Information

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Alicia Ostriker's most recent book of poems is *The Old Woman, the Tulip, and the Dog*. Her most recent volume of critical essays is *Dancing at the Devil's Party: Poetry, Politics, and the Erotic*.

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