

# Par Delicatesses

*by* Bill Yarrow

I.

Rimbaud said,  
"Par delicatesses  
j'ai perdu ma vie."  
In the delicatessen,  
I have lost my life.

I know what he meant.  
I also have wandered among the smoked  
fish, lean pastrami, marble rye, have  
stood by the wicked pickle barrel, have  
stared longingly at the crumbly halvah.

II.

Dante said one day he found himself  
in a delicatessen ("selva oscura")  
not knowing which aisle to walk down,  
not knowing which meat to choose.  
He too felt that he had lost his life.

I know what he meant.  
I too have suffered paralysis  
in a plethora of possibility:  
belly or Nova, herring or tongue, chub or sable,  
kreplach or kishke, kugel or blueberry blintz...

III.

Fitzgerald: "In the real dark night  
of the soul, it is always three

o'clock in the delicatessen."  
O lost! O lost! He lost his  
compass in the schmaltz.

I know what he meant.  
I've been in the 3 A.M. cream cheese.  
I've known the hole in the bagel.  
The potato knish is doughy. My life?  
A shmere in someone else's appetite.

