

Souvenir de Paris

I did not comprehend a single word
back then—unless you count *boucoup*,
merci, or *oui*. And yet
I wandered, often, through
your magic streets (perhaps these lines
should speak of them as *boulevards*
et rues?) reading signs like “*Nettoyage*,”
“*Prête-à-Porter*,” “*Boulangerie*,” too timid
in this foreign land to enter any door
and find out, thus, for sure
what such a strange exotic world
might hold in store. But oh
how my imagination wandered too.
And it took time, therefore, to learn
what words meant, simply, “Cleaners,”
“Ready-to-Wear” “Bakery,” and thus
discover how a wondrous universe
becomes transformed to the mundane.

Grateful I was then, of course,
and still remain
for language skills acquired.
And yet at times I wonder why
we are, so frequently, required
to mourn our loss—
while marking what is gained.

Steve Bloom
April 1998/October 2009