

Schenectady

it sounds like a sneeze, she'd say, and then she would sneeze it:

Schenectady! and all the time, Schenectady! Schenectady!

as if she needed us to know where she caught her cold,

from Schenectady! where kids grow up too fast

and end up in a place like this but only if they're lucky.

i thought maya was weird but i still sat with her

in our room (we were roommates for a time)

on the floor (we were not allowed on the same bed)

and listened to her talk about her hometown and read her poems

that weren't very good but did not tell her i thought that,

and she told me of the fox who followed her around and how it spoke

to her sometimes but did not have a name and seemed very real

and so she sneezed Schenectady! and i said Bless you. Bless you.