

FOR THE GATHERING

Rona had ordered the fish, so that
was done. J said he'd get cheese—
mozzarella, some dripping-fresh,
some smoky and old—leaving
me the olives, tomatoes, nuts.
I wasn't up for people, places, things,
couldn't bear Fairway, so went
to the farmers, where everything
was just plucked.

The grape tomatoes were gone:
what was I thinking? (I wasn't.)
But I found Macouns, soon
to be gone, too, and grapes,
real grapes, Concord, impossible
to resist, even now, *especially*
now, their fragrance saying
take me home! take me to your
friends! take me to your father,
your brother, whomever,
take me! I didn't think,
couldn't, bought them
brought them, put them in a bowl
on a table, with an empty bowl beside
(for pits, for stems, for leavings).

And J, my beloved, loved them,
the way they popped in his mouth,
overripe, just shy of too much,
sending him running to Keats
and palates fine, and away
from death and loss for a moment,
forgetting melancholy
even while in its thrall.

—Rita Sherman