



PREFACE

Resurgent Philadelphia is cinched with light. The sun smacked up against the Drake. The eyebrow of the moon on the Schuylkill River. An argente dawn lifting lonesome hawks. Scatterings of gold.

Credit the illuminators of bridges, buildings, signs. Thank the restorers of lost or crumbled things. Consider the permutations of the new: Rafael Viñoly's Kimmel Center, Cesar Pelli's Cira Centre, Robert A. M. Stern's Comcast Center, Pei Cobb Freed's National Constitution Center, James Polshek's National Museum of American Jewish History, Norman Foster's rising Comcast Innovation and Technology Center. Walk the walk over the Schuylkill River, watch the city greenways grow, pop in to the pop-ups, make room for the cyclists, tally the famous and infamous architectural uprisings across the city campuses and health complexes. Congratulate the restaurateurs for their embrace of spill—onto sidewalks, into back gardens.

This is Philadelphia now. More than its icons, bigger than its tagline, our Quaker City has acquired something of a European glow. It has become—despite its notorious, impudent self, despite

Excerpt • Temple University Press

its recent sullen sulk, despite all that time when city razing was part and parcel of city planning, despite buildings that fall calamitously down, despite the ongoing struggle to serve the kids who call the city home—a place of new beginnings. The proof lies in the young careerists choosing Philly over New York, Boston, D.C. In the empty nesters, newly returned from their suburban exodus. In the eastward surge of the University of Pennsylvania and the artists of East Kensington and the hip-hop kids of West Philly and the plans made by a Pope. Recession or no recession, politics or not, notable broken things still broken, and sauciness sunk inside our DNA, something inexorable stirs.

I am interested in that stirring. I am chastened by dreamers. I advocate for hope. I see—in the restoration of rivers, in a cemetery preserve, in the interior sanctuaries of working artists, in the clang and in the quietude, in the eruptive public spaces, in the fringes Philadelphians retreat to or come from—rescue and story. For years, I've put Philadelphia inside the heart of my books—*Ghosts in the Garden*, *Flow: The Life and Times of Philadelphia's Schuylkill River*, *Dangerous Neighbors*, *Dr. Radway's Sarsaparilla Resolvent*, *One Thing Stolen*. For a while I wrote Philadelphia into the pages of magazines. Beginning in the summer of 2012, I began to catalog my wanderings for the "Currents" section of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. I lifted my camera and snapped. By choosing to pay a new kind of attention, I saw far more than I had.

Love: A Philadelphia Affair is about the intersection of memory and place. It's about how I've seen and what I've hoped for, what "home" has come to mean to me. It's about train rides, rough stones, brave birds, rule breakers, resurrectionists, unguided and mostly solo meanderings. It is experiential, not encyclopedic. Reflective, not comprehensive. Highly personal, which is to say idiosyncratic, which is to say that my journey through Philadelphia is not over, that even now, as this book goes to press, I am walking and writing this city—remembering the hours spent with my son among the big bones at the Academy of Natural Sciences, a morning alone in the Magic Gardens, the sweet reprieve of Independence Mall during a

Excerpt • Temple University Press

downpour, my obsession with the town of Wayne. I'm remembering the black cat prowling near the Italian Market biscotti and the striped cats at the Philadelphia Zoo. I'm remembering the boy who sat on his grandmother's lap on the second tier at Verizon Hall in the Kimmel Center—three years old, maybe, and utterly alive as the Soweto Gospel Choir sang a reverberatory "Amazing Grace." I'm thinking of all I have yet to write whole—Passyunk Avenue, Grays Ferry, Mount Airy, the Barnes, the Navy Yard, Fort Mifflin, the food trucks, and every other corridor, institution, neighborhood, figment that you have claimed as your own.

Claim them as your own.

There is no *complete*. There is no *finished*. The city is alive, and I'm alive with it. It is old and it is new in me.