

THE WORLD-CHANGING BUSINESS

“When I asked her if she feels she sacrificed her life to the Communist Party . . . (s)he says: “Sacrificed my life! Of course not. Hon, we were in the world-changing business. You can’t get much better than that.”

—VIVIAN GORNICK (interviewing Maggie McConnel),
The Romance of American Communism

The world-changing business
was the family business. My father
took me to the storefront at the edge of history,
saying one day all this will be yours.
But our store was the world and it wasn’t
supposed to belong to anyone
or it was supposed to belong to all of us.
I didn’t understand it either.
For the world already was that way
when I was a child. The way of owning nothing.
I thought the business was to make us all
children one day. Yet childhood
was disappointing. The first time
my father said we were going to a demo
I expected to see wrecking balls
spoon brick and stone. But people just stood,
or walked, or spoke, sometimes of wrecking things —
though no one ever did. My father often spoke
about the world that could be.
Should be. Would be.
I was to inherit this business
of not yet and now and always.
We lived in the future I would build one day,
though I wanted more to be a garbage man.
My father would have preferred that
to what I am doing right now.