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Downtown Brooklyn
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See the appendix of this issue for contributors’ bio notes and submission guidelines.

LIU encourages freedom of expression. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not of the editor, the English Department, or LIU.

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about the magazine

LIU Brooklyn is at the heart of the literary and artistic center of Brooklyn. The English Department is gratified that Downtown Brooklyn has become a campus institution consistently showcasing the best that LIU Brooklyn has to offer in the way of poetry, literary prose, and visual art.

The faculty and graduate students who founded Downtown Brooklyn in 1992 had a clear mission, which we maintain to this day: to publish the best creative work produced by anyone in the LIU Brooklyn community. The magazine continues to be edited by a Board recruited by the Editor and made up of some combination of full- and part-time English faculty and students of English (both graduate and undergraduate). Our founding documents show that Downtown Brooklyn has always been not only a showcase for student work—we seek out and publish as much high-quality student work as possible—but as a way for campus writers and artists to meet and learn from one another. In that regard, the magazine furthers the mission of LIU Brooklyn: “to awaken, enlighten and expand the minds of its students.” It is our firm conviction that Downtown Brooklyn is an excellent representation of the creative diversity of LIU and of Brooklyn.

Downtown Brooklyn is unique among university literary magazines in that it is open to the entire campus community, which we define broadly to include all of the many voices that make LIU Brooklyn a lively and vital place. We believe that this feeling of community, which so defines the campus, is uniquely exemplified by Downtown Brooklyn. Thus, we publish work not only from current students, faculty, staff, and administrators, but also from alumni and former colleagues, all of whom are invaluable as word-of-mouth promoters of the English Department and LIU. We also proudly open our pages to local artists and writers who visit LIU Brooklyn to exhibit or perform their work on campus, including the many photographers and painters who exhibit their work in campus galleries and the well-known writers who read in the Department’s Voices of the Rainbow reading series or the MFA Program’s Writers on Writing series. The English Department has been unanimous in the decision to include work by this wide variety of contributors because we know that it generates interest in the English Department’s programs and makes LIU Brooklyn that much more attractive overall.

For years, print copies of Downtown Brooklyn were distributed to members of the LIU Brooklyn community and to prospective students who expressed interest in our (undergraduate and graduate) degree programs. We gave away copies at Major Day and at LIU Day, important recruitment events for the Department, and Downtown Brooklyn always attracted attention from (prospective and current) students. For years, we were able to print enough copies to send them to other creative writing programs nationwide. We regularly received requests for interviews about our protocols and production processes from creative-writing students studying magazine editing at other schools. Further evidence of our good reputation in the wider literary world is the fact that the University of Wisconsin (Madison) Library holds a complete print run (through Issue 22) of Downtown Brooklyn in its prestigious Little Magazine Collection.

The English Department considers all of the above to be part of our ongoing effort to help promote the LIU brand; to recruit students for the Department’s programs, particularly the undergraduate major program in creative writing and the Creative-Writing MFA program; and to stimulate interest in the arts in general on our campus and in the surrounding community.

Unfortunately, recent budget cuts forced us to cut our print run in half and then in half again. In 2013, we compensated by making Issue 22 also available as an e-book. Since then, budgets have been cut even more. Therefore, this issue is available only in e-book form. The future of the magazine is uncertain.
dedications

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Wil Hallgren (1959-2013), Michael Hassan (1943-2014), Rosemary Mayer (1943-2014), and Orlando Warren (1956-2014), for their years of dedicated service to the English Department and to the students of LIU Brooklyn. Adjunct professors in the English Department for years, they were all enthusiastic supporters of Downtown Brooklyn.

Wil Hallgren contributed poems to issues 9-13 and 16 of Downtown Brooklyn, and he served on the editorial committee for issues 10-11. After leaving LIU, Wil taught English at Murry Bergtraum High School and the High School of Art and Design (both in Manhattan). An alumnus of Union College (BA, English), Wil was a founding editor of the National Poetry Magazine of the Lower East Side, and while doing graduate work at Brooklyn College (MFA, Creative Writing, 1999), he was an editor of Brooklyn Review. Wil is the author of the poetry collections Broken Film (Outskirts Press, 2007) and Where Three Roads Meet.

Michael Hassan held degrees from UCLA (BA, Classics), San Francisco State University (MA, Creative Writing) and SUNY Albany (Ph.D., English, 2000). His published works of fiction include Florida Dreams (2008) and Island Song (Cat’s Paw Press, 2009). He served on the Downtown Brooklyn editorial committee for issues 10-15, and he contributed fiction to issues 9-14, 21, and 22. A photo of Michael was used for the front cover of issue 12.

Rosemary Mayer studied classics at St. Joseph’s College and at the University of Iowa and art at the School of Visual Arts and the Brooklyn Museum Art School. She was most well-known for her sculptural work and installations in the 1970s and 1980s as well as her involvement in the feminist art movement. Her translation of the diary of the Italian Mannerist artist Jacopo da Pontormo, which included a catalogue of Mayer’s work, was published in 1979. Her most recent projects involved illustrating the epic stories of Beowulf and Gilgamesh and the history of the women of the Roman Empire. She received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Council on the Arts, and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. She had solo exhibitions at A.I.R Gallery, the Monique Knowlton Gallery, the Pam Adler Gallery, among many others. Rosemary created the cover for and contributed a portfolio of images to issue 16 of Downtown Brooklyn.

Orlando Warren was an LIU Brooklyn alumnus (MA, English/Creative Writing, 1997). His publications include a collection of poems, Mixed Bag (2011) and a collection of stories, Lynchings and Other American Pastimes (2009). Orlando contributed poetry and/or fiction to issues 5-9, 11-14, 18, 21, and this issue of Downtown Brooklyn; and he served on the editorial committee for issues 9 and 13-15.
downtown brooklyn
a journal of writing

number twenty-three / 2014

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Eduardo Chirinos (trans. G. J. Racz)
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JUST LIKE THE OCEAN

When she is calm I admire her
What discipline it must take to control such temer
When she is rough I get excited
Much power she displays, how graceful she makes it look
When she is low I step out to meet her
When she is deep in her moments, I tread carefully because I respect her
Wayne Berninger

 THERE’S A SENTENCE YOU DON’T HEAR EVERY DAY FOR A YEAR

FOUNDER

Sometimes it’s hard to understand
The workings of my hands
Sometimes it’s hard to face
The darkness of this place
Sometimes it’s hard to see
The love that’s surrounding me
I could fall, but I choose to conquer
This life and this work
Of which I am Founder.
For centuries people thought we were extinct. Distinguished zoologists assured the world we were a fossil species that had disappeared centuries before the dinosaurs. They didn’t take into account our ability to hide, to avoid fishermen and their tangle of nets. For centuries we swam out our ancient existence in the waters of the Indian Ocean from Ceylon to the Maldives, from Indonesia to the Moluccas. Until one of us fell. A South African fishing boat caught a fish of “a pale mauve blue, with iridescent silver markings” in his nets. What a stir this caused! It was a coelacanth—our most common name—but they called us Latimeria chalumnae in honor of a river and a lady who worked as a curator for some museum in London.
(Scarabaeus laticollis)

I know I have a bad reputation, but what am I supposed to do? Its smell attracts me like pollen does bees. Every day I manage to amass huge balls of dung and roll them into my underground nest, where I lay one or, at most, two eggs in them. In a few days these turn into larvae, then into thriving adults. The larvae receive their nutrients (as do we) from this waste. It’s the boon to our species, our *raison d’être*. I’ve inhabited this planet since ancient times. The Egyptians considered me a sacred bug. To them I symbolized the soul’s immortality, the eternal cycle of reincarnation.
Zoologists took a long time to realize that I’m actually a crustacean—a barnacle, to be exact. At first they mistook me for a fungus, even for a plant. If I continue to generate controversy, it’s because of my relationship to crabs. They’re my favorite hosts, but I should explain myself. I’m called Sacculina because of my shape: as an adult I turn into a soft sac, which is how I install myself in a crab’s belly and extend my roots throughout its body. Then I sterilize it. A good thing, too, for afterward the crab can focus its energies on looking for food and fattening up. All this to the benefit of my descendants and me. Do you understand now why they’re my favorite?
The ancients knew me very well but didn’t know how to define me. The “antlion” thing assumes a cross-breeding that many believed occurred. As my sire was a lion and my dam an ant, I couldn’t feed on meat (like my father) or on plants (like my mother), so went dying off. It’s in Eliphas and the Physiologus, too. But I’m not saying a word. I like to be called a lion, I, the smallest and humblest of ants! I’m really not an ant, though. Technically, I’m a larva of the order Neuroptera and look nothing at all like the adults of my species but for my enormous jaws. I live on the sand’s surface, where I dig funnel-shaped holes. My prey always fall into this trap, sliding down the slopes where I wait for them with my jaws wide open.
(Ixodes ricinus)

I’m deaf. Blind, too. I can survive by my sense of smell, though, as well as through my skin’s sensitivity to heat and light. When a male impregnates me, I drag myself to the end of a branch, where I wait as long as necessary. I’m patient, as time means nothing to me. I have only to be attentive to the butyric acid that warm-blooded creatures (including man) exhale. When I pick up this scent close by, I throw myself on the body of my victim and look for a spot that’s free of fur. Then the feast begins: I sink myself into its skin and suck to my heart’s content. Once I’m full, I let myself drop onto the grass: now I’m ready to lay my eggs and die.
(Struthio camelus)

Aristotle thought I was a cross between a sparrow and camel. What was I supposed to tell him? He was an “authority,” the voice of truth and knowledge, but I’ve been stuck with this name for centuries now. Religion and myth have done nothing to free me from this monstrous existence. I can’t blame them: I’m huge, unable to take flight, have cloven hoofs and a long, featherless neck. To top things off, I have eyelashes like quadrupeds. I lend myself, therefore, to the strangest misconceptions (that I eat burning steel, incubate my eggs in the sand and hide my head at the first sign of danger). Religion has been harder on me yet: when Job laments his misfortunes, he wails: “I am a brother to jackals, and a companion to ostriches.” Is there something dark or diabolical about me? Nowadays science is more neutral, if not more compassionate. Group: ratites. Meat: red and edible. Maximum height: nine feet.
(Macaca sylvanus)

How the heck did I end up here? Nobody knows. Some people say that, many years ago (during the Miocene Epoch, to be exact), my ancestors inhabited northern Europe and, little by little, became extinct. Others believe I’m the last surviving species of those monkeys that became too lazy to cross the strait and seek refuge in the Atlas Mountains. I’ve grown pretty accustomed to city life over time, even allowing myself to be sketched by tourists. As far as food goes, I have no worries: the British army takes care of that. A lot of people think the English brought me to the rock as a pet, but I was already here when they arrived. Others hold it was the Arabs, but I don’t believe it. The Koran never expressed much sympathy for me.
Cynthia Maris Dantzic

6 HA IKU COUNTING ON LOVE

1

Some1 1derful
1ce 1dered, "Can no1
have 1 my heart?"

2

It's 2 much 2 hope
there'd be one or 2 2day...
maybe 2morrow!

3

Bo3markable
and wor3membering too,
love's filled wi3wards.

4

It's been my 4tune
not to be 4gotten; so:
4ward, 4ever!

5

I5 loved before,
what i5 said it before:
this one time it's so!

6

6o sick of love;
metaphy6, mu6till...
these, my ba6 now!
SomeONE ONEderful
ONEce ONEdered, "Can noONE Have ONE my heart?"

It's TWO much TWO hope
There'd be one or TWO TWODay...
Maybe TWOMorrow!

BoTHREEmarkable
And worTHREEEremembering too,
Love's filled wiTHREEEwards

It's been my FOURtune
Not to be FOURgotten, so:
FOURward, FOURRever!

IFIVE loved before,
What iFIVE said it before:
This one time it's so!

SIXo sick of love;
MetaphySIX, muSIXtill...
These, my baSIX now!
Someone wonderful
Once wondered, "Can no one
Have won my heart?"

It's too much to hope
There'd be one or two today...
Maybe tomorrow!

Both remarkable
And worth remembering too,
Love's filled with rewards.

It's been my fortune
Not to be forgotten: so:
Forward, forever!

If I've loved before,
What if I've said it before:
This one time it's so!

Sick, so sick of love;
Metaphysics, music, still...
These, my basics now!
Some1 1derful
1ce 1dered, "Can no1
Have 1 my heart?"

It's 2 much 2 hope
There'd be 1 or 2 2day...
Maybe 2morrow!

Bo3markable
And wor3membering 2,
Love's filled wi3wards.

It's been my 4tune
Not 2 be 4gotten, so:
4ward, 4ever!

I5 loved be4,
What i5 said it be4:
This 1 time it's so!

6o sick of love!
Metaphy6, mu6till...
These, my ba6 now!
Joanna Gonzalez

TWO MORNINGS AGO

ready for the life
of a ride, barred
figure posture
naked
in sully stride
we, sweet and
merrily downsized –
apart with our
minds, wonder
how it all went
WINDED & FERMENTED

stagger here from afar stammer from here to then

won’t make a noise

it’s bottled in the head

won’t hear a breath

it raided the winds

& knocked rotten oaks like plagued bodies
SEEDLESS SUMMER

dark ferns
marsh on hair
salt in mouth
wrapped up, diluted
with a singular
trip of danger
not scared – merited
to leave like a
lost life for one

tomorrow bones hurt
depth
gradually but
bleached and clear
from five to
next noon, enticed
ready to play
Mary Kennan Herbert

IN A HUSHED, EMBARRASSED TONE

Old. Sagging tits and
skin cancer. Tremor.
What else is there to unlike?

My body is irrelevant.
Only words might endure.

You wish. Old hands
under water.
Students are bored by old

stories of skin or broken
bones or hearts.
What else can I share?

No longer sleek
as a seal or a song,
I need a new tale to tweak.

A mockingbird has decided
to stay and spend the winter
in our graying world.

A flash of white on his wings
gives a quick preview
of hope.
PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Age seven,
in an empty classroom,
practicing the Palmer method
to brush up my mastery
of handwriting--

I know, saith the Deity,
looking sharply at me.
I know WHO you are.
Loop those capital letters
carefully, across the page.

Steady as she goes.
It makes me nervous to write
for the Man Upstairs,
the woman on top.
Age seven, I’m not yet in Heaven.

I need to practice making I, I, I
again. Over and over,
until the person in the mirror
cracks a grin, a grimace,
a glimmer of approval.

Before the ink dries,
or the story ends--
behind my eyes, my face,
when I end I, I, I
and earn my A’s.
SATURDAY MATINEE

Skin is my silken sheet.  
Shit, it no longer is so sweet.

Basal cell carcinomas  
circled the cavalry.

John Wayne was there,  
you know he was, pilgrim.

Troopers raced across my cheek.  
“We’ll burn it off,” the good doc said.

Wait, skin cannot be fed  
into stories of flags and glory.

We bear these sears  
to a distant beach,

beyond the reach of an albatross  
hungry and unconcerned

about our loss.  O mores, o trivia.  
Skin cannot be fed into this story.
PITY

March 9, 2013

I pity the beautiful
the Barbies and their dishes
the Kens and their fast cars
dreaming of getting hot wishes

I pity the pretty boys
the Adonises and Apollos
with gorgeous rock bodies
and the groupies that follow

The arrogant and precious
the fifteen out of ten
the sexy Playboy bunnies
and movie star looking men

I pity the faded futures
so bloated, so mousy,
paunchy, broken, and empty
as their luck goes lousy

But I pity myself most of all
I asked the gods for your heart divine
And got such great beauty and grace
That I cannot see with your star’s bright shine
Josh LaMore

POEM #323

Air cold. She not yet
rose, bare naked above ground,
untouched by the storm.

Sailing mighty wings
on the broad daylight spectrum;
inverting worlds,
expounding nothing’s knowing.

“The overview’s lost
crooked roots, past trees’ rotting.
Thus,” Horizon spoke,

“She dare not claim home.
That requires miles
and she has no feet.”
DESERt FlIES

Laid over in Vegas. Plane; an hour behind. Eyes out the window, break down the city’s disguise. A plain desert with mountains - momentous drifts of ups and downs - places this roaming with the rest; in the valley, where no stability has ground.


Found running together; each time faster. Road curves follow mists of purple and pink. Water explodes. The performance repeats. We sit now together, nearby in the dark, concluding without reason that moments captured fall apart.
This year’s cover artist is Hilary Lorenz, a multidisciplinary artist whose practice, in the broadest sense, revolves around an exploration of the intersections of running, endurance activities, nature, and solitude.

Lorenz, a Fulbright Scholar and NEA Mid-Atlantic Fellow, has exhibited her work at galleries and museums internationally. Her current project, *Tracing Nature* (supported by Wave Hill, NY, and the Gallery at Pioneer Bluffs, KS), uses images associated with wilderness trekking to investigate the theme of rituals and rhythms that test physical and psychic boundaries. This exhibition of works on paper opens October 2014. Representing the United States, she ran atop Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla’s sculpture *Track and Field* in the American Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale, Italy.

Lorenz has been awarded many residencies including ARTSTasmania, Australia; C-Scape Winter Residency, MA; Frans MasereelCentrum, Belgium; The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Ox-Bow; Miskolc Museum of Contemporary Art, Hungary; and the Lower East Side Printshop, New York.

Her artwork has been reviewed in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Art in America*, *Art on Paper*, and others. Lorenz earned her MA and MFA from the University of Iowa. In 2014 she will receive an MS in Exercise Science from LIU Brooklyn. Lorenz is based in New York and New Mexico. She is an associate professor and chair of the Department of Visual Arts at LIU Brooklyn. Learn more about Hilary’s work at adventureartist.wordpress.com and hilarylorenz.com.

In addition to Hilary’s cover for this issue, we present eight of her linoleum-block prints, some of which also incorporate cut paper. These works appear on the following eight unnumbered pages.
Hilary Lorenz, “Abstract Landscape”, linoleum block print 6” x 8” 2013
Hilary Lorenz, “Collage #IV”, Linoleum block printed and cut paper, 20 x 28” 2013
Hilary Lorenz, “Collage #V”, Linoleum block printed and cut paper, 28 x 22” 2013
Hilary Lorenz, “Collage #1”, Linoleum block printed and cut paper, 18 x 16” 2013
Hilary Lorenz, “Self-portrait as a Dog”, linoleum block print 30 x 42” 2014
The joy of their airport reunion had melted into the kind of easy familiarity that requires no speech, so Berta let herself slouch in the backseat, her head angled to watch the cornfields pass under the brilliant canopy of afternoon. To think that less than forty-eight hours ago she had been celebrating the solstice in a city almost halfway around the world. How hard it had been to leave. How hard it had been to come back. How quickly everything had settled into its normal hum.

Everything but Berta.
Dad was driving, as usual, left hand on the wheel, right lying in Mom’s on the seat between them. Neither of her parents had stopped smiling since they saw her coming through the arrivals gate. They were still smiling, nearly two hours outside Minneapolis.

Bjørn sat next to her, texting back and forth with his new girlfriend, lost in his own secret smiles. Strange, but even Berta’s relationship with Bjørn seemed to have mellowed during the ten months she’d been overseas. Before she’d gone, last September, Bjørn had been his usual bratty self, full of commentary and brotherly ridicule, even on the day of the funeral.

“It is that really what you’re going to wear? That’s tacky. You look like you’re going square dancing.”

“What do you know? He loved this dress on me. It was his favorite. I’m wearing my black jacket over it, besides.”

“It’s mad tacky, Berta.”
But Bjørn had been the one who’d given her the longest hug at the arrivals gate, had even offered, apparently uncoached, to carry her suitcases, to boot. Dad and Mom could never have faked that level of surprise. Then again, Bjørn had just graduated high school and been accepted at Boston U. He would leave home in less than two months so he was probably scared as hell and eager to hear all about Berta’s experiences. Funny how he had never respected her during her first two years away at University of Minnesota. It took a year of study in Oslo for her to win his respect. Or was it what she’d had to overcome to get on the Norway-bound plane in the first place? That month of delay, when she’d been sure—had even hoped—that Universitet i Oslo would de-enroll her. But their deans had made an exception for her late start, had expressed their understanding of her difficult and unusual circumstances. So she went. Without Arne. Through the endless night of the Norwegian winter, the whole year long she’d worn the engagement ring he’d given her. Had never taken it off except to wash. Had slept wearing it. Had even told all the handsome young Norwegian men who asked her out that she was engaged.

“It’s just two carats, Berta, but I hope—”

“Arne! It’s beautiful! Don’t apologize for it! Geez!”

“Mormor helped me pick it out.”

“Then give her a kiss from me. It’s beautiful! Oh, my God!”

“Well, I didn’t want us going clear across the world without a ring on your finger saying you belong to me, so…”

“Oh, Arne!”

“We can get married next summer when we get back, before senior year. How’s that sound?”

“Your mormor’d love that! So would Mom and Dad!”

Now, in the car, with the memory of that night’s kisses flooding her mind, and with their cancelled wedding date looming ever nearer, Berta needed to squeeze her eyes shut tight to stifle tears. She could not allow Dad and Mom to see her cry. Not again, after so much time. No, nor Bjørn, no matter how reformed his character.

They rounded the wide curve and Dad made the left into their long gravel driveway. Berta turned and looked at the other long driveway, the one adjacent to theirs, across the rural ribbon of tar. Arne’s grandmother’s driveway.
“Stop the car,” Berta said.
Dad braked. “What’s the matter?”
“What happened to his house?” Berta asked, impossible to disguise the panic seeping into her voice. Mom sighed. Even Bjørn deferred, putting away his cell phone.
“Sweetheart, we’ve only met them two or three times since they moved in,” Dad commanded. “They’re real nice people.”
“They painted it. It looks like mustard. It’s horrible.” She opened her door and climbed out. Mom rolled down her window.
“Berta, it’s not good for you, honey. Get back in the car.”
“Why didn’t you tell me?”
Mom got out of the car. She tried to put an arm around Berta’s shoulders, but Berta shook it off.
“She had to sell, honey. She had no one. Arne’s funeral took everything.”
Dad and Bjørn hopped out of the car, too. This was just what Berta needed, a family spectacle so the new neighbors could witness her being dragged off screaming at the road’s edge. The very spot where Arne was struck by the Corvette full of stoned high schoolers.
Arne and Berta had only just announced their engagement to her family that night. Of course, Arne had spoken with Dad earlier, after Spring Finals, but Dad swore he hadn’t breathed a word to Mom the three months since. Still, Mom just happened to have a chocolate cake all ready for a celebration, along with extra glasses of milk for everybody. They set the date and, afterwards, Berta had walked Arne down to the end of their driveway. Their embrace was as deep and endless as the dome of stars above them. Arne’s last kiss was still moist on her lips when he went to cross the road. The crickets’ chorus had drowned out the whoosh of the speeding Corvette. Headlights veered around the curve not two seconds before impact. Brakes squealed, far too late. Arne flew off the hood, a rag doll turning somersaults in the air, bouncing in the grass where it verged on the cornfield.
Berta ran to him. “Arne!”
“I’m alright! Damn! Just a bump on the noggin. Had the wind knocked out of me, though! Ankle’s sprained, too. Pretty bad. But it’s not busted. You okay, Berta? Bet you look worse than I do!”
The kids from the Corvette helped Arne up out of the grass. Arne actually guffawed at them, wishing out loud for a mirror to show the kids how bug-eyed they were, even jokingly apologizing for being a buzz-kill. Berta walked Arne all the way up to his house, the hang-dog teens shadowing. Arne’s mormor was up on the porch, cursing at the high schoolers in Norwegian. She had heard the squealing brakes and the boom of the collision. Berta and Mormor wrapped Arne’s ankle tight and put him to bed, smothering his smiling face with little pecks.
Berta walked home that night, shaken but relieved. She fell into slumber as soon as her cheek touched the pillow.
At dawn the next day, just as the smells of coffee and frying butter wafted up from the kitchen, Berta’s eyes shot wide open on hearing the landline ring. Her heart sang little hallelujahs, because it sounded like Arne’s ring. No, wait. Almost like Arne’s. But something was odd about it. Just odd enough to give her pause. Funny thing was, during her pre-cell phone, pre-personalized ring tone days, before heading off to University, that is, Berta always knew when it was Arne calling on the house phone. She’d always recognized his ring, although to everyone else’s ear the old phone sounded the same as it always did.
So, that sweet late summer morning almost a year ago, having dismissed the telephone’s ring, Berta merely listened from beneath the cocoon of her quilt as Dad answered the call. A moment later, she heard Mom sobbing. Dad’s feet on the stairs. A soft knock at her bedroom door.
“Sweetheart…” There was no blood in Dad’s face. “I have terrible news.” His years of toiling in the sun had permanently reddened his skin but, in that moment, it was devoid of color. “Arne never woke up this morning.” Dad cleared his throat to steady his voice, but couldn’t. “Sweetheart, Arne’s dead.”
Berta jumped out of bed and leapt to her window. Even from half a mile away she could tell that the vehicle parked in Arne’s grandmother’s yard was an ambulance.

“No,” she muttered, shaking her head.

“It’s not true.” But already the ambulance was coming slowly back down the driveway, its red lights flashing, its sirens silent. It pulled into the road, carrying Arne away from her.

And now, not even a year later, his house was completely different. Its simple white had been painted over a heavy mustard. Its blue shutters, a chocolate brown. There was a mini cell phone tower mounted to the chimney, which explained how Bjørn got reception. Worst of all, the huge old mulberry that had shaded Arne’s front lawn was gone, with strangers’ children playing around its stump. Berta remembered how she and Arne and Bjørn used to play tag under that tree, even after the berries fell when they weren’t supposed to, when they’d come home with purple stains on their little knees and elbows and bare feet, to be greeted with a scorn that was only a veneer over their elders’ mirth.

Berta summoned control. It answered her quickly these days. “You guys, I just need a minute.” “Want us to wait in the car?” asked Bjørn. “No, no. Drive on up to the house. I’ll walk. I’ll be there in a minute.” “Ja, okey-dokey, then,” said Mom, doing her best to sound cheerful. “Come on, fellas.” She got back in the car.

“Think about what you want for dinner, Sweetheart,” said Dad, climbing back in behind the wheel. “You can have anything. Steaks, ribs, anything.” “I really don’t mind waiting,” offered Bjørn one last time. “Thanks, kiddo. I’m okay by myself. I wanna be alone.” Bjørn got in the car and it pulled away a second later, raising a thin cloud of gravel dust in its wake. Berta watched both car and dust recede as they approached the house. Her bedroom windows were open. Pale green curtains trying vainly to escape, dancing sinuously in the breeze to test their tethers.

She turned back to Arne’s house. The two little kids who were playing around the mulberry stump had stopped to look at her. From this distance, Berta couldn’t tell whether they were boys or girls, or one of each. At the same time, though, the kids each raised a shy hand to wave hello to Berta. She waved back and, as soon as she did, the kids went back to their game.

Berta walked up her parents’ driveway, kicking stones like she used to when she was a kid. The bright sky beating down on her head spurred memories of Oslo’s midnight sun two days ago. It gave her jetlag a dreamy, surreal edge. At least she would sleep well tonight.

But sleep was slow to come to Berta. Even after filling up on fried chicken and dinner rolls and apple pie with melted cheddar. Her own bed was a stranger to her. And her walls seemed to echo Arne’s voice.

“Will they hang around after the service for coffee and donuts?”

“Always, Arne. It’s their Sunday thing. We won’t get caught. Just don’t take your pants all the way off.”

Arne raised his head from between her legs, smirking wickedly. “If they do come home early, please remind me not to kiss your mother hello.”

Sleepless, Berta padded down to the dark living room and turned on the ancient television set. The only station broadcasting from Minneapolis at this hour was airing an *I Love Lucy* marathon. She edged up the volume so no one would hear her crying.

She awoke to the telephone ringing. On TV, Lucy and Ethel were concocting a scheme to sneak into Ricky’s show. Outside, dawn was just beginning to streak the sky with light. She answered the phone on the second ring but heard only empty air on the other end of the line. No voice. No dial tone, either.

But it was Arne’s ring that she had just answered. Undeniably Arne’s ring. She said hello again. She listened, hoping for… For what? The impossible? Still, there was nothing but hollowness.
She hung up. But the hollow air seemed to have moved from the phone right into the house. Not a sound of stirring from upstairs, although she had no idea how anyone could sleep through their ancient landline’s fire alarm clang. She looked around. Out the front window, down their long driveway, across the road. The porch light was still on over at Arne’s grandmother’s old house, making it an imperfect silhouette against the arching morning.

But there was something off with the way the house looked. Berta went outside and walked barefoot towards it, on the soft grass shoulder instead of the rough gravel driveway, clutching her nightgown closed with crossed arms. She reached the road. The corn was full of birdsong. She glanced up at Mormor’s house.

What had drawn her to it? What had compelled her, groggy and confused as she was, off the cozy couch and out into morning’s chill? What was so different about it? This was like those old joke books, the What’s Wrong with This Picture? brain-teasers. What was it?

The mulberry tree. It was there again, in full summer bloom. Irrefutably there. She must have been mistaken before. Starlings were winging in and out of its laden branches. She could even hear the gentle drop of its fruit. But how? That tree was a quarter of a mile away.

Then Berta looked at the house. It was white, like when Arne lived there, but a faded white, as if when Mormor had moved out after his death, no one had moved in and the house had simply remained there, deserted. One of the window shutters—all blue again—hung sadly askew off a single hinge. The lawn was overgrown with weeds.

As she looked, the porch light went off. The front door opened.

Arne came out.
Berta’s heart raced. She must be dreaming. This could not be.

Arne stepped off the porch and waved to Berta, beckoning her to come.

She crossed the road in shock and ran up Arne’s driveway, not caring about the coarse pebbles under foot. Arne was smiling at her, holding out his hand for her. She reached out. His hand was warm as he clasped hers. Real, solid flesh sending heat through her. With his free hand, he raised an admonishing index finger to his smile. “Ssshhh.”

He led her into the house. They went silently from room to room, holding hands the whole while, downstairs first, then up. Each room was empty, without furniture or curtains or rugs. Just weathered hardwood floors and chipped plaster walls. There was a sadness there, yet even that was counteracted by Arne’s comforting presence. They went down the back stairs into the kitchen. Arne, still grasping Berta’s hand, turned to face her. They stood looking at one another. She could see his chest rising and falling in breath. An awareness of their shared moment in his eyes.

“I don’t understand,” Berta said at last. “Aren’t you dead?”

Arne shrugged, ever smiling. “I guess so.”

“Then what are you doing here?”

“Ssshhh.” The finger at his lips again. It was Arne. She knew his every mouth set, each curve of his hands, every finger, by heart. He beckoned her again. He opened the back door and led her outside.

Everything was as it should be. Dawn was racing into day. The cornfield was green and timeless. And, like the dropping mulberries, Berta could somehow hear the corn growing. Only there was a path in it that she had never noticed before. A path she knew the fast-growing corn would soon obscure.

Arne pointed at the path.

“Where does it lead?” Berta whispered.

Arne grinned his way through another shrug.

Berta eyed the path, suddenly, utterly overwhelmed with an old sensation she didn’t recognize at first. It had been so long since she’d known excitement. She’d forgotten what it felt like zinging through her torso and limbs.

“I want to go see,” she said. And she would, taking Arne with her. Leading him by the hand. She knew it was possible. Anything was possible.
She turned, but Arne was already gone. She hadn’t even felt him release her hand.

“Arne?”

Berta tried the back door. It was locked.

“Arne?” She knocked on the door. Pressed her face against the musty screen to try to see inside. Peering into the darkness within, she knocked again.

Suddenly, she was in two places at once—at Arne’s mormor’s kitchen door and lying on her parents’ couch—then she was only on the couch, just opening her eyes, her knuckles knocking through air. The Farm Report had started on TV, flooding the living room with talk of planting and picking and weather. Bjørn was in Dad’s armchair, looking just like Dad in old photos, except for the cell phone, the texting. Mom and Dad’s standard morning dialogue and the smell of frying butter and coffee came drifting in from the kitchen. What a mish-mash of time.

“Hey,” said Bjørn, using a foot to push a steaming mug across the coffee table in her direction.

“Oh... Thanks.” Berta sat up.

She tried backtracking through her slumber, desperate to collect dream images like mementos for a scrapbook. Her dream had been so real, so linear, so unlike a dream, really. Nothing chaotic or fantastical. No flying over wide vistas, or objects appearing or disappearing or morphing into other objects. A constancy had been there instead, a lucidity. Still, it was only a dream, wasn’t it? Only a dream, the memory of which was slipping further and further away with each sip of coffee.

She was already on her second stack of buttery gooey blueberry pancakes, already thinking about what she’d need to pack for senior year, all the Facebook faces she’d get to see in flesh, when he parents’ landline rang. Berta only paused a second, though. It wasn’t Arne’s telephone ring, after all. Mom answered.

“Oh, hiya, Mrs. Engelgaard, how are ya? Yes, she is. Got home safe and sound yesterday. Boy, did we eat good last night.” Mom winked at Berta, gesturing for her to keep eating. “What, now? Well, isn’t that strange? Well, gee, of course not! You know kids’ imaginations! Gosh! …Alright, okey-dokey, then. You take care. Bye-bye, now.”

“What the heck was that about?” asked Dad, giving his newspaper a good snap.

“Oh, Mrs. Engelgaard across the way. Her kids told her they saw Berta and some boy roaming all around inside their house this morning. Isn’t that funny?”

Shock hit Berta. Like losing Arne again. Like she did every morning, as soon as her eyes opened. Every morning except this one. She pushed away from the table.

“Honey, what’s wrong? Oh, for God’s sake, you weren’t really snooping over there, were ya? Berta!”

“Now of course she wasn’t.” Dad’s paper snapped.

But Berta was already out on the porch, turning her engagement ring on her finger, staring at the hideous mustard paint of Mormor’s house, the chocolate shutters, the new cell phone tower, the mulberry stump. Only the birdsong remained unchanged.
A PRELUDE:

This is waving hello/
goodbye, the hand
is more akin to a salute
than waving an upright
figure, a morose expression
braced against the bright
orange midsummer’s heat
pale white hand gently swaying
from side to side, raised somber
like the flag of a sudden surrender
brutal battle is never-ending
wounds words removed
fluorescent-lit, mind-numbing,
obsessive indignities of studies,
subway stops & broken heart
parts furtive dirty glances
around stark white desks
& shelving units paving
the path where it wouldn’t change
for outpourings are spilling
anything else: messy messes
to be wiped & swept leaving
the world neat & orderly again
lost in a moment soft, yet devastating
spitting words without expression
leaving taste buds on the ground,
buds for seedlings to grow
little budding flowers growing,
budding, born from either screams
or silence the former is not
an option a gentleman never
makes a mess of his mourning,
MOMENTS

Hand love like handshake – buzz tangible
between fingers pressed against
cab door – studying vibrations – old engines – strung
together with dead things resurrected – searching
promise – forward movement – some true thing – expanse
of concrete – gray world washed clean – new starts –
triumphant first snowfalls – above 23rd street & below
us – road suddenly flares – widen & drop – a shock
of breath – window returns a ghost –

can one work in cardiology without wondering why the heart
works the way it does? –
the muscle is a watermelon colored sunrise
spreading careful tendrils in sky – take
a moment only lasts a moment of understanding –
surety of forward movement not needing to relive
any longer in open wounds – wounds don’t heal –
I grow around them sure as my heart – if I could
perforate memories out of it –
the sour way his mouth twists – would I? –

put sun rises in my chest – manifest twinges
of unrehearsed happiness – feeling
spring reeling into me – entire unfathomable weight
of early summer press cloudy wet against
my skin – enormity of appreciation –
those moments, those moments! –
I want them forever! – sunsets in fists following
to bottom of seas – rising triumphantly
on the other side – moments – can’t keep
living in open wounds reliving you – bodies
are only envelopes for thrumming heartbeats –
everybody leaves –
David Middendorf

SHORES

As I lay here
in defeat,
companioned only by
my dull heartbeat,
a great grey wave
breaks over me,
eroding all that
I long to be.

The sour air,
the sandy wind,
they sting my eyes
as I try and stand.
And scattered shards
of stale hopes
cut into my feet
leaving earth blood-soaked.

Soot and ash
fill my lungs,
wheezing a tragic song
too often sung.
And as I fall
To my knees once more
I wonder how long
I'll remain on these shores
Steve Newton

JAPANESE CLOUDS

There are times I want to walk into one of those old Japanese poems, one where the clouds are blowing across the mountains in the mist, and sit listening to the silence as I watch my wife come walking down the mountain road, the same road I walked coming into the poem, and the Japanese clouds.
THE FAWN LIVES ON

The traffic was heavy as I came home from work, driving on the road that takes me home. There in the center of the road was a fawn, stuck in traffic, unable to move. The deer had been hit by a car or truck, and the driver had not stopped, so the fawn was craning its head around, hurt in ways that didn’t show at first, but broken, and dying.

I pulled my truck over and got out to halt traffic as another truck stopped. The driver walked over to the young deer, and carried it to the roadside shoulder, where it lay, outstretched. The police were called. I didn’t know what to do, whether the deer would want to be touched. But I just started petting the fawn, stroking its breathing side, softly letting it know that someone was there, and it was not alone. I had been stroking the young deer for maybe twenty minutes when there was a very brief shake and the fawn stopped breathing, under my fingers and palm. It was a very sad moment. My hope is that it didn’t die in fear, as it would have where it was at first, paralyzed in traffic, with its new world shattered into unrecognizable parts. I know it’s not much, but at least I helped save it from that terror, its broken legs or spine holding it hostage to the cars filled with people who would not stop, even for this baby deer who needed help. I don’t know what to make of this, the people who wouldn’t stop, other than to say that I was shocked. But there is one more thing that I need to say.

The other car that did stop was a van from a local home for mentally challenged people, who live nearby. The driver and her partner were both used to taking care of folks who can’t take care of themselves. Out of all the people driving by they were the ones who stopped. The whole time I was petting the fawn, one of their clients was walking around, talking very loudly, and asking about the deer, whether it was dying, over and over, a woman who, like the fawn could not fend for herself. When the fawn died the women drove off into their lives. Now the fawn lives on, in a way, in this poem, staying in my memory as a baby deer stuck broken and helpless in traffic, and then, beautiful in its new fur, taking its last breaths in this world.
THE BURNING BARN

I have had emergencies
in recent years.

It was hard each
time to know
what was happening,

the way a horse
doesn’t know exactly
what is going on

when it is caught
in a burning barn.
IT WAS TIME

Now there were just the final steps,
untying ropes,
pushing off from shore.
EVERY LOVE STORY IS A GHOST STORY

You should have known. Everyone else did, but not you. You are a goddamn cliché, you are the last to know and you are writing this because if you do not, than maybe it didn’t happen. If it didn’t happen, than the you that was the you when all of this was your life didn’t exist. You don’t know many things for sure, but this you do: you really, really fucking loved the you you were when you met her and during. It’s the before and after you’re ashamed of

Though your father left you, Ma and a gaggle of sisters without even a kiss on the nose or a Big Lie (“I’ll be back soon” would have suffice and you would’ve even accept a “I’ll call you once I settle in” but that only happens in stories that aren’t yours), you didn’t give two shits about becoming the man of the house and instead were spoiled bad all the way until now. Back then, goddamn. You used to run all over Shirley Ave like you owned the place and Ma couldn’t say nothing to get you home before midnight. It’s a goddamn miracle that you graduate high school and Ma kicked you out so fast, you were still reeling from the imprint of her foot on your ass. Don’t come back, she said, unless it’s to visit. Now, you’re in college, still spoiled but also, safe, away from the Ave and the hard faced boys you grew up with, safe all around, and that’s where you would have stayed if not for your goddamn roommate.

It happens like it always does, something small that leads to something quite big, such an insufficient beginning that after all of it was done with, you still, to this day, lean back and shake your head, equal measures of disbelief and gratitude.

You’re coming back from someplace not important anymore and there’s something tied to the doorknob of your room and you, like a true college freshman, can’t help but mentally give your roommate props for scoring some so early in the year. And you think you should just head over to the party downtown but first, you get something to drink because the dorms are always hot, especially during the Indian summer.

You are a poor bastard and you are also your father’s son. When you walk into the student lounge, you smell a smell you know belong to a woman; something flowery, just a little sweaty, the scent of a fruit, this time, strawberry and underneath it all, the scent of a soft part inside of her that you would’ve love to eat.

She’s curled in the oldest armchair in the lounge, reading a book so old, there’s no words on the cover and when she looks at you, you feel the creation of something real happening inside of you. She’s like someone from the movies; eyes the color of the ocean on a good summer day and long hair that’s so blonde it’s almost white. You go up to her, feeling like a badass in your sagged jeans and t-shirt and her eyes widen when you grab a hold of her crossed ankle. Against her, your skin turns darker, like the milk in your coffee skin suddenly dries. You tilt your head at her so she can see your face from underneath your Celtics hat.

You’ve played this game enough time to know that everything depends on her believing that you are, truly, the badass everyone warned her about.

She tells you her name but before you could lay a smooth ass line on her, she curls a corner of her perfect mouth upward and says, “You sure about this?”

There was only two times you fuck up. Capital F, capital U.
1. She’s lying naked in your arms and your roommate’s spending the weekend at his parents’. The curtains are open to let in the moon. Her long hair wrap around your wrist and you’re crazy with the sight of her and maybe just a little crazy’s okay because when you call her “sweet Diana” you know she knows you’re invoking the moon goddess and not some ex. That alone almost makes your half-craziness became a full time thing.

With her eyes looking at you like that, with her kisses open and sweet, you just had to ask her, “What were you reading?”

And when she says, “You wouldn’t know it”, you shake your head and you puff out your chest.

“Are you calling me dumb?”
Now pause for a moment, dumb fuck. Look into her eyes and you would’ve seen enough to leave it alone but you don’t.

Here is where it gets a little difficult - she tells all her friends and some of your friends too so it eventually came straight back to you. She says you laughed at her and that’s why she left, taking her clothes and the smell of her with you. You’re a dumb, poor bastard and did not follow her.

You remember it more as she gets hysterical, punches your face and then left, taking her clothes, the smell of her and also, whatever weed you had in the drawer. You are a dumb, poor bastard and did not follow her.

Both are true.

2. After a month of begging, you and her make good after a while and you are almost resigned to full-time craziness. She was picking out your clothes for you and you were waiting for her after class every day just to say hi. Sundays are laundry days and she likes to make out while sitting on a dryer.

Just a day or two more and you would’ve been too goddamn crazy to care but it happens too when things like pride are still something important, though small and dying, but still important to you.

She reads through something you wrote and she says so evenly, it almost breaks you.

“Why don’t you keep writing?”

You joke with her, tell her you’re beautiful, let’s eat dinner at your mother’s this weekend but she’s all business that day, even though it was your birthday and all you want was to fuck her outside on the campus soccer field. Much more romantic than it sounds but she would not stop being all business.

During dinner, it may have been the wine or the joint both of you smoke on the way there or maybe even just the dim light against her hair, but you look at her and say, “I love you.” You mean it and that is not an easy thing for you.

And she looks right back and her eyes says it but her mouth says, “You need to write.” You throw back an angry why and she says,

“Because you can get better if you keep going” and pride busts out from somewhere you don’t even know still existed inside of you and you tell her to mind her own goddamn business though what you should have said was what you’re feeling; why don’t you think my writing is good enough?

And the fighting doesn’t stop, the words between you two becomes too many or too few until one day, she is gone.

No her. No words, no questions, no nothing, anywhere.

You rip up every single fucking thing she ever gave you and throw away all the clothes that she not only bought for you but also, the ones she said she loves best. You are so angry, you glare at one of your sisters and she falls, right there on the sidewalk, mid-step. You are so angry, your roommate actually gets into a relationship with some one so he could sleep at her dorm room and not yours.

You turn into a hurricane, smoking too much, sleeping too little and you systematically go through erasing her out of your life. The only time you cry was after you go through four pens to mess up every fucking page of the book so old that there were no words on the cover, it was the one book she said she loved. After you are done, you flip through the pages, just seeing darkness and that’s when you start crying because what the fuck, you scratch out the title and now you’ll never know what she was reading the day you felt something real inside of you.

You know at that moment that it’s your fault and also, she will never come back to you. The book in your hands wants to comfort you, the words are right there waiting but you were too angry and tried ignoring them, as if that would make you feel better.

It doesn’t.

Now, you’re always hungry, eating whatever anyone, Ma, one of your sisters, some girl you barely know cooks. It’s some next level sexist shit with you but you can’t eat nothing one of your boys makes, it just doesn’t taste the same. Not like the food isn’t there, you’re holding it in your hand and you can feel bite after bite in your mouth but what you need is a woman.
So you eat and eat, getting out of line if the cook behind the counter isn’t a woman, actively seeking places with open kitchens to make sure everything you put inside your body was touched, however briefly by a woman.

You’re always hungry and you read, in the weak light of the rising sun, something that should be so beautiful but instead, just gives you headaches but you keep doing it anyway. That’s how it is with you nowadays. You read late at night, even when your roommate’s boning some girl on the other side of the room or if you’re visiting home, you read late into the night and you can’t get up even if you want to because you have Ma’s feet in your lap and she’s snoring so loud even the cat is running out of there and that old motherfucker didn’t run even when you accidentally set its tail on fire when you were five and didn’t know nothing bout nothing.

So you read and read, some of it real good but most of the time, the words are just words and you’re getting hungrier and hungrier. You’re always licking your lips because you want more and even when more comes, it’s not enough.

You’re sleeping around again, girls in and out of your bed so much your roommate, who’s as much of a dick as you are, is pretty much liable to say shit like, “yo, calm the fuck down before you get AIDS” or “I didn’t even know this place had this many girls before” and in a way, you agree. It’s never the same girl more than twice and that’s the way you want it and you sometimes have to bite down on shoulders, or hands, or the soft spot on the back of her neck because you’re so hungry and you cannot let her know because she’s not the one who you want.

So you fuck and fuck and you find yourself drawing circles, intersecting circles on everything and the hunger is a constant, a hum in your ear, a second bounce in your step. You say the same things over and over again, some shit about “it’s not you, it’s me” and always ending with a “you know, I don’t even deserve you”, empty words that you repeat so often, there is a groove on your tongue where the words run.

And when it gets really bad, you walk in the grass on the left side of the train tracks and you think of the one you really want, you think of her with her blue eyes and blonde hair and your hunger catches in your throat and it’s noon, always noon when you go on a long walk without telling anyone though you know Ma knows by the way her eyes grow soft and sad each time you leave.

You walk until you reach when the sun is just a little behind a cloud and you walk as you fool yourself into thinking you are smelling traces of the sea when all that’s there is stale air and fading smoke, you walk until the hunger gives in and you can’t do anything else but.

You are writing and you are writing right now as the train to a big city somewhere rambles past, shaking your bones and you hope that she is on it, going somewhere better than here and also, you hope that she knows.

Because the words do, they always did and now, so do you.
Daniel Owen

A DREAM OF STRETCHING OUT TO SLEEP

selfishly clings to
wounds how
many
lives one lives
a twist of
the feet
terminal
understood the toes
in repose
sleep remakes
the shitty everyday
a rush forever
towards work
or play
in time to
stand meandering
and stow
outside the
glass theater
a full-on city
NOTE ON COMPARTMENTS

maybe you are in a room with many boxes
maybe you are the room the many boxes are in
maybe you are in one of the boxes in the room you are in that may be what you are
maybe you are in many of the boxes in the room you are in that may be what you are

maybe a box is crying in that room
maybe several boxes look up
maybe they are waiting
do you wait in the room that you are that you are in
do you wait for the boxes

maybe the room is a room of a palace
maybe the boxes are filled with stories
maybe the boxes are filled with a palace filled with stories
maybe a story of boxes
do you touch this palace
do you shuffle the boxes

maybe you are in the story touching a box in a room
maybe you are a story touching a box in a room with many effects
maybe many boxes touch you and produce the effect of a story
do you cry out the palace windows
do you shuffle the boxes
maybe you are in the story in many boxes in the room that you may be that you may box in
maybe a weeping box touches your room
maybe a weeping palace touches many boxes in your room
do you breathe in those boxes that you may be
maybe you are wincing

maybe you are a box in a story of weeping
maybe that box giggles
maybe that box placates
maybe you are the shuffle of those boxes in the room that you are in that you may be

maybe you are in a box with many rooms
maybe you are the box the many rooms are in
maybe you are in a room in the box you are in that may be what you are
maybe you are in none of the rooms in that box that you are in that may be what you are
Howard Pflanzer

SATIE IN THE SUBWAY

The tattooed accordionist with the long dark hair
Played the mournful Gnossienne
You said it almost could be a tango
LIGETI'S 100 METRONOMES

A cacophony of clicks
Uninterrupted entropy
Wound – waiting
Ready, set
Go
Ticking away madly
As they all ran down
Leaving one
Which could have clicked
Till the end of time
But didn’t.
LETTER TO A LADY

I thought to write you once before: the night a storm broke here, but just when I found paper, pen, the wind dragged down our hydro pole. I sat here then, in the kitchen.

My wife piled birch twigs in the grate; set some pine logs on for quicker heat. The rain beat down the shingles, made the chimney draft a tricky thing, and settled dampness in the pantry shelf. “The rain will last all night,” she said. A pine soul shrieked and shuddered in the stove; she went to bed.

Morning hung in spaces left by rain between the sparse firs along the house. It held one fisherman out on the beach; white ash clouded the grate.

The sun burned blue the lake mist, set violet shadow in the rocks, and left no sound but lichen eating at the mountain’s granite heart. Birds woke on the breeze. Black squirrels scuttered under the leaves, under our oak pile left for kindling. Inside, shadows wound back into crossbeam corners dark with smoke. The sun picked bloodroot from the windowsill. I want to say – what can I say?

The road I walked out into had turned all mud and potholes, its gravel waterflung away. The snow owl’s tree was split and pitched, defeated, toward the marsh.

I want to say, a heron rose from weed-thick channels near the other lake; gulls skimmed off the rising sun-struck fingerlings.
I want to say
duckweed tore loose from just outside our cove,
clumping over the pier in amber waves,
where my wife called to me.

I have to say
that when I went out to walk,
the loons danced all across the lake,
and the road was filled with children.
Abigail Sison

YOU START FROM THE BOTTOM; YOU RISE UP

This is death; now your spirit will rise.
You start to close your eyes.
It's near the end of your life.
Way past your prime;
Step Five.
You bite back; you've gotten this far. No time to fall.
The midlife crisis comes to bite you occasionally.
Are you happy with the way your life is?
You're halfway done with your time.
Step Four.
But the escalator doesn't stop, and neither can you.
The desire to go back to simpler times intensifies.
You've got paths: get a job, go to college, etc.
The gates open; you step in; they slam shut.
Step Three.
You're at the gate of adulthood.
More responsibilities, obligations…
Will you sink? Or learn to swim?
Adolescence; test the waters.
Step Two.
Never the less, you can't wait to grow up.
Nothing tucking in at night can't solve.
Innocence, carefree, happy. Free.
Here we are, infancy and childhood.
Step One.

(Please read starting from Step One and going up each line.)
This work appears on the following 21 unnumbered pages.


s u b m i s s i o n

To Wayne

d’être — la parole qui n’aura pas été prononcée, exultante, comportant elle aussi sa place — en avant de mots brièvement.

André du Bouchet, “Notes sur la traduction”, in Ici en deux (1986)

Michael Sohn
jubilation
Andrea Tirrell

IF YOU WERE A DREAM, WHAT WOULD YOU BE?

I would climb
through the window of
your eye,
and guide your ship
through the grey tumult
of the unconscious.
I would lend
a hand
when the garden of your mind needed
tending to,
or when the floor
needed sweeping.
I would push
past the faceless
projections of
old friends
and hold on tight
to your dendrites,
dangling my feet across
your synapse,
to the receptors
of your eternal being.
ON A ROOFTOP / SOMEWHERE UNFAMILIAR

I'm stuck,
suspended in the
guttural utterances of the city,
wide awake
with my hands behind my head.
Such deep vibrations
reverberate across millions,
their violet voices surrounding
our orgasmic delight.
With Brooklyn’s fingers wrapped
tightly
around my neck, I beg
for her mercy, and
ponder the name
of her first love.
Mike Traber

DOUBLE CONCERTO

On the road in spirit
on the floor in body,
leg lifts
on an exercise blanket
while listening to Mozart concertos
before breakfast.

On the road
from grey Vienna
to summertime Baden
where his wife
was taking the waters
in preparation for another delivery.
Birds darkened the sky,
white storks migrating
from Sweden to Egypt.
Mozart hummed their bodies
as if storks were flying notes.

The bassoon plays low
the dog in the apartment beyond
barks lower.
The bassoonist’s fingers seem to race
the dog yelps and yelps
and yelps again.

Field Marshall Winter came early
to stone cold Vienna.
Was it Rheumatic Fever, Kidney Failure
or the medicine of 1791
that bled a body
as if blood was a waste liquid.

The cat purrs
listening to Mozart’s clarinet concerto.
The clarinet is a cat’s tongue
leading an orchestra of mice to dinner.

No grave plot
for a commission-earning composer.
No memorial
for a non-noble.

Almost on the road
waiting for an elevator
while the dog barks
accappella.
NEAR WONDERLAND

Gust pushed walking  
through the tunnel  
beneath the foot bridge  

Like a two boned leaf  
staggering below  
the fence ringed playground  

Sitting yards before  
the statues of  
the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party  

Hearing, hearing, hearing  

In Central Park  
from child pink skin  
to brittle cane travel  

Now sitting is not  
not to move.  
Shouting, shouting, shouting  

Beyond the Tea Party  
Sailboat Lake was drained  
November through March  
no radio controlled sailboats sailed  
no migrating birds drank,  
We climbed from the Lake side path  
down to the Lake’s granite bottom.  

We threw footballs like darts  
unless girls came  
then we kicked Valentines.  

Sitting now  
there was no beginning  
Shouting, shouting, shouting.  

Playing then  
there is no ending.  
Hearing, hearing, hearing.  
There is only wind  
blowing being on.
1.

Altered.
I went to sleep one night and woke to find you near
I did not know you
How did you get in my home, in my bed?
First reaction
Scream
Next
What is your name?
You never told me.

2.

I hear you moving about
It is 4AM
What’s wrong?
You cannot sleep so you won’t let me
I cannot see your face
I have not seen it in days
Or has it been weeks
I am not so sure
But I am sure I’m afraid
Cannot see your face
Cannot see your face
To say this is everything is to say nothing,
And I’m even more afraid I might get used to it.
Is to say nothing
Is to say nothing
I would scream but I have swallowed
My throat.

3.

I’m in class.
The lesson seems to be going quite well,
And I’m quite pleased with myself.
There are times—magic lesson times I call them
When every word is not only ripe for the picking but sweet and tart at the same time
Alive with multiple meanings, and I feel this so much today
Yes, goddamn
The experience is splendid
And then and then
Nothing
What was I saying?
What, what did I mean?
What happened?
Where did I go?

4.

I reach for you my darling
With your stranger's breasts and shifting motions
There are so many waves to chart
How can I and still see you over the horizon?
I have loved you as I have loved love—
Inexplicably with an inexhaustible amount of awe
I struggle to hold you, hold onto you
You don't know me
Perhaps the stranger I always felt
Was always you

5.

I dreamed you were taking me by the hand and leading me down the highway
Of course it was dark
No, dear
Not as dark as I
Not in coloring, though we must admit as color goes I'm quite beautiful
And I had to strain for light
The strain was in my heart and head and both hurt to distraction
There are so many stories in my heart that my heart
Literally shakes in its shell from the telling retelling of it
The strain is much to bear, though
Not too much
Never too much

6.

Then came the burning
But there was no pain
But I need
I need to feel the pain
Because this numbing is so much worse
Altering the music of my limbs
So that it is not me in the here and now
The beauty that is inevitably me has no trace of beginning
So no trace of significance
It would not be long this life
But with you I could move like a boy
And dance the wind 'til the rain freed the sun
The pain once more than a trace
Informs me too much
I want to know less

7.

For several days I have been haunted,
Stalked by these spectres—
Call them dreams
I don’t know
They come night and day,
Seem to have no respect for time
But lately they visit in the morning during that quiet time between just conscious
And sudden awareness
I live here still in you
Your arms, your cinnamon gum still in the hair
I hang on for life
Not dear life
But you
You wake and reach for me
Find me
Though not for long.

8.

I am in class
It is the last day of the semester
The day is fair but there is an almost carnal brutality in the air
As if January were a rapist
My class has taken their final
Worked both hard and hardly
Done their best and nothing close to it
Has it been good for them—to them
Who the fuck knows?
What I do know is what I’m sure I don’t know—
Like most of the semester
It has escaped
Run out into the night like a thief.
I don’t even remember the final lesson
But I was there
I’m sure I was there
I have pictures.

9.

But somehow I know. Don’t ask me how I know—the lesson has taken care of itself. And taken care of my class.

About three quarters of the class wrote about phobias, fairly easy to write about—a straight narrative, if there is such a thing, broken into four parts, fairly easy to write as a first paper, and a pretty good start, written in 4-5 parts, a process paper
Interesting and something I could never fathom. As I was coming to the end of the semester, I was being slowly, completely removed from the entire process.

Interesting, while I was teaching in partnership with my students in the learning process, I was being slowly remade, more reassembled, a product of creation and negation. I was become a black slate, which is like a blank slate only far worse because with a black slate there was never the illusion that slate would ever carry meaning.

The less equal the darkness, the more equipped I was to rise above, counterbalance it.

We live to think of darkness as a simple patch over our eyes but never our hearts which is sometimes also the case, barrering our vision while also enhancing it. This is what we come to know and not know.

The cane, this cane—stick in “Young Goodman Brown”—represents force and yield. It cannot assail itself.
Lewis Warsh

PROMISE

I was holding back something I wanted to say.

It seemed like if I said it I might hurt someone’s feelings.

I’m not saying you shouldn’t say something for the fear it might cause someone pain.

Maybe I’m saying that you shouldn’t say something without taking the feelings of the person into account.

There’s no point in saying something about someone for the sake of saying it.

You say something to somebody and that person tells someone what you said.

You tell someone not to tell anyone what you’re telling them but they break the promise and tell everyone.

You can’t assume that anyone, even your closest friend, can keep a secret.

It was hard to tell anyone what you were feeling if you thought they would tell what you said to someone else.

“I promise I won’t tell anyone,” she said, but it was just a lie.

You can whisper something in someone’s ear and they might repeat it to someone else.

It’s not a secret if you tell someone so maybe it’s best not to say anything.

Best to keep everything locked inside, until it kills you.
Notes on a self you thought you knew
Are ever getting to know
Notes on a self occasionally consumed by thoughts
of another self
"how do you write on the train without it becoming a train poem"

I am aware I've said too much and this is just the tip of the iceberg
I said "I only know that..."
We are so much more concerned with physical and when you're scarred on the inside, people don’t stop and stare.

Dark glasses to hide a broken spirit.
Sometimes you find happiness in strange places
Sometimes a little boy wants to give his last dollar to a homeless man but his mother says no because "You can't do that on every train"

42nd street
bio notes

Matthew Augustus is working toward his BS in Nursing. / Wayne Berninger is an alumnus of Jacksonville University [Florida] (BS, English 1990), LIU Brooklyn (MA English/Creative Writing, 1992), and LIU Post (MS, Library and Information Science with a concentration in Rare Books and Special Collections, 2014). He works as an administrator in the English Department, where his responsibilities include advising all undergraduate majors; managing the website, blog, and social media; and teaching first-year composition and core literature courses. He co-founded Downtown Brooklyn in 1992 with Barbara Henning and Rudy Baron and has served as Editor since 1999. / Alexa Carter-Rodriguez is working toward her BA in English with minors in Psychology and Gender Studies. / Eduardo Chirinos (b. Lima, 1960) is professor of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures at the University of Montana—Missoula and the author of seventeen books of poetry. Two titles in English translated by G. J. Racz appeared in 2011: Reasons for Writing Poetry (Salt Publishing) and Written in Missoula (University of Montana Press). A third, The Smoke of Distant Fires (Open Letter Books), appeared in 2012. / Cynthia Maris Dantzic, Senior Professor of Art, has been a longtime contributor to Downtown Brooklyn. She and her students contributed art to issue 5 (1996), and since issue 12 (2003), she has contributed art, calligraphy, and/or poems to every issue. She is completing work on her ninth book, “100 New York Calligraphers,” and continues to show work in drawing, calligraphy and photography in a number of New York galleries. / Joanna Gonzalez is an LIU Brooklyn alumna (BA, 2014), with a double major in English/Creative Writing and Psychology and a minor in Art. Joanna served on the editorial committee for this issue. She has a short story in the inaugural issue of LIQUID magazine, and her work appears in issues 21-22 and this issue of Downtown Brooklyn. / Mary Kennan Herbert teaches literature and writing as an adjunct professor in the English Department at LIU Brooklyn. She is a widely published poet and serves as an Editorial Advisor for Downtown Brooklyn. / Jibarosoy is a professor at LIU whose work has no remote connection to poetry. He requests that the reader be kind. / Josh LaMore is an LIU Brooklyn alumnus (BA, English/Literature, 2014) and the 2014 LIU Brooklyn valedictorian. Over the summer of 2014, Josh was the first intern in Partners in the Parks, an outdoor experiential learning program sponsored by Southern Utah University and Cedar Breaks National Monument, in cooperation with the National Collegiate Honors Council. You can follow his adventures at joshl amore.wordpress.com. / Hilary Lorenz is Associate Professor of Art and Chair of the Department of Visual Arts at LIU Brooklyn. See her full bio on page 24 this issue. / Harry McEwan is working toward his MFA in Creative Writing and is a Teaching Fellow in the English Department. His stories have been published in Downtown Brooklyn and in Brooklyn Paramount. Other fiction has been published in NYU’s Dovetail as well as in the e-zine theoschatthis.com. He won Best Original Screenplay at the Rhode Island International Film Festival (2002) and has had stage plays produced in NYC, Chicago, Minneapolis, Mays Landing, NJ, Macon, GA, and Lynchburg, VA. / Jake Matkov is an alumnus (MA, English/Literature, 2013) of LIU Brooklyn, where he is now working toward his MFA in Creative Writing and teaching English 16 as a Teaching Fellow. / David Middendorf is working toward his BA in Journalism. / From 1992 to 1999, Steve Newton was an assistant professor in the English Department at LIU Brooklyn, where he also served as Director of the Writing Center. He is currently an associate professor of English at William Paterson University. / Kimarlee Nguyen was born and raised in Revere, Massachusetts to a family of Khmer Rouge survivors. Her family’s traumatic history, as well as her own experience of growing up in a traditional Cambodian household, has shaped the heart of her writing. A graduate of Vassar College (BA, English), she is currently pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing at LIU Brooklyn. She teaches English at Bushwick Leaders’ High School. Her fiction has previously appeared in Cha: An Asian Literary Journal and Drunken Boat. / An LIU Brooklyn alumnus (MFA, Creative Writing, 2014), Daniel Owen is the author of the chapbooks Authentic Other Landscape (Diez, 2013) and Up in the Empty Ferries (Third Floor Apartment Press, 2014). His writing has been published or is forthcoming in The Poetry Project Newsletter, Lana Turner, Where Eagles Dare, Clock, Lungful!, and elsewhere. He is a member of the Ugly
Duckling Presse editorial collective, and, along with Sarah Anne Wallen, he edits and publishes the magazine *Poems by Sunday*. / Formerly an adjunct professor in the English Department at LIU Brooklyn, Howard Pflanzer (MFA, Yale School of Drama) is a playwright, lyricist, and poet. *Luddite*, a new play, was recently read in the Jump/Start series at the Medicine Show Theatre. *Living With History: Camus, Sartre, De Beauvoir* premiered at Medicine Show in 2011, and *On the Border*, his play about Walter Benjamin, was also produced at Medicine Show, in 2007. Pflanzer was a Fulbright Scholar in theatre (2003) in India where he directed the world premiere of *The Terrorist* at the National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Mumbai, lectured, and conducted a playwrights’ workshop. He is the winner of a Play Commission in Jewish Theatre from NFJC (Jersey Nights at Medicine Show), a NYFA Playwriting Fellowship, two ASCAP Awards, and a Puffin Foundation grant; and he is co-winner of an NEA Media Arts grant for the opera *Dream Beach* (with Michael Sahil). His plays and musicals have been performed at La MaMa ETC., *(The House of Nancy Dunn* with Steve Weisberg and Andy Craft), Playwrights Horizons, Symphony Space, Medicine Show, Kraine Theater *(Cocaine Dreams)*, The Living Theatre, 2011 Malta International Theatre Festival *(Alien*, in collaboration with Teatr Palmera Eldritcha, invited to LaMaMa), and broadcast over WNYC and WBAI FM. Pflanzer has held playwriting residencies at Fundacion Valparaíso, VCCA, and the Ragdale Foundation. His poetry has appeared in many publications. *Dead Birds or Avian Blues* (excerpts from the manuscript of which appeared in issue 18 [2009] of *Downtown Brooklyn*) was published by Fly By Night Press in 2011. / G. J. Racz is Associate Professor and Chair of Foreign Languages and Literature at LIU Brooklyn, review editor for *Translation Review*, and past president of the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA). His translation of Eduardo Chirinos’s *The Smoke of Distant Fires* was short-listed for the 2013 PEN Award for Poetry in Translation. / P. J. Salber is a retired LIU Brooklyn librarian and associate professor. He has been an Assistant Dean and the Coordinator of User Services in the LIU Brooklyn library. His poems have appeared in several little magazines, and he has been a frequent contributor to *Downtown Brooklyn*. / Abigail Sison is working toward her bachelor’s degree, with a double major in Health Science and Psychology. She enjoys playing *League of Legends* in her spare time. / Michael Sohn has been teaching in the first-year Writing Program at the LIU Brooklyn English Department since 1997. His poems have appeared in *Downtown Brooklyn* and *Zen Monster*. / A native of Stonington, CT, Andrea Tirrell is working toward her bachelor’s degree in Journalism at LIU Brooklyn. / Mike Traber is an LIU Brooklyn alumnus (BA, English, 1974). His poems have appeared in many literary magazines, including *Downtown Brooklyn*. / An alumnus (MA, English/Creative Writing, 1997) of LIU Brooklyn, Orlando Warren (1956–2014) taught composition, literature, and humanities for many years as an Adjunct Professor of English. His work has appeared in *Downtown Brooklyn, Out of Brooklyn, New York Quarterly*, and *The Ledge*. He is the author of two collections: *Mixed Bag* (poetry), 2011; and *Lynching and Other American Pastimes* (fiction), 2008. / Lewis Warsh's most recent books are *One Foot Out the Door: Collected Stories* (2014), *A Place in the Sun* (2010) and *Inseparable: Poems 1995-2005* (2008). He is editor and publisher of United Artists Books and teaches in the MFA program at LIU Brooklyn. A new book of poems, *Alien Abduction*, is forthcoming in 2015. / Tejan Green Waszak is an alumna (2010) of LIU Brooklyn’s Creative Writing MFA program. While at LIU Brooklyn, she worked as a tutor in the Writing Center and then as a Graduate Teaching Fellow. She currently works as an English adjunct instructor and writing consultant at several universities in New York.
We accept submissions from students, faculty, & staff at LIU Brooklyn. This includes alumni, as well as persons formerly employed in any capacity at LIU Brooklyn.

Submissions are also welcome from Visiting Writers who have taught in the English Department’s Creative Writing MFA program & from writers who have presented their work in the Voices of the Rainbow Reading Series, which is sponsored by the English Department.

We accept submissions of poetry &/or fiction in a wide variety of forms, from the traditional to the more experimental. Our mission is not to promote any particular style but simply to showcase the best writing being created by members of the campus community.

Save your entire submission as one Word document (not a separate file for each piece) & e-mail that document as an attachment to wayne [dot] berninger [at] liu [dot] edu. The first page of your document should be a cover page with your name as you’d like it to appear should your work be accepted, your e-mail address, & a short bio statement.

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