

2010

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Recommended Citation

O'Daly, William (2010) "Hotel Fargo and the Gift of Long Island," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 72 , Article 16.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss72/16>

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“HOTEL FARGO AND THE GIFT OF LONG ISLAND

WILLIAM O'DALY

“Love’s another departure.”

Gwendolyn Brooks

We are gathered here, family and friends,
beside this nuptial river that flows forever
between old Hotel Fargo and the gift of Long Island,
the proud and peeling murals of Gwendolyn’s mecca
and the operatic stars careening
over Hell’s Canyon and Manhattan,
the lightning that sends rabbits scurrying
for their dens and the thunder of horses’ hooves
chasing through Central Park – together we stand
among the kingdoms of the infernal kings of rippling wheat
and the lords of the steepled towers
of profit and loss, to celebrate this union
of heart and soul, joining ourselves and each other
on this vertical street, where the patient groom waits
in his summer suit, perspiring in awe,
and the elegant bride glides with perfect grace
from under the ancient banyan tree
to arrive at this makeshift altar. Today,
as keepers of the secret of changing light,
of the key to sustained improvisation between
the roots and the sky, all islands and the sistine seas,
we pray that steeping green leaves speak

of who maps the heart's country – we ask,
after the bells have resounded among the stapled hills,
why lovers must stand always
on opposite sides of the rain, casting a single shadow
across the sudden rim of the world;
so is it metaphysics or poppies
that make a good marriage last,
and why do the white lilacs whisper
when we, richer and poorer, curl in our beds
like a question mark? Perhaps we want to know,
or we may know and wail the truth in our sleep,
awaking to a child's cry, the day's work, the silence
gathering because we're different
and the same, made of earth and our names,
come to witness and hold to the other's lips
a ladle of purest water – it is then, lying side by side
in the radiant meadow, we greet with open arms
the angels come toward us,
and together learn the kiss
of this yes, yes, everything I have is yours.