

LANCE LARSEN

To Jouissance

To spell you is to drown in vowels, to pronounce you
 is to let guttural *joy* form in the back of my throat,
 then roll forth, like northern lights
 booming above a logging camp in Michigan.
 Disappointed in my metaphor? What did you expect
 from a man? If only I had an estrogen
 factory of my own. If only I could feel the fluttery,
 everywhere *she*-pleasure you bring to lucky
 women. I mean the buzz that overtakes
 a new mother nursing in a booth at Denny's, eyes
 blissing out, body serenely electric.
 I mean whatever state my cousin Erica falls
 into when someone braids her hair
 in the middle of church—retarded Erica who washes
 tables at McDonald's but can't read a menu.
 She knows enough to close her eyes and give
 pleasure more room, knows enough to let purrs
 bubble from her mouth, the liquid gold
 on her head dividing into glorious threes,
 my jealousy tripling. Do you sometimes make
 exceptions and visit not just the Ericas
 of the world, but the Erics? I'm thinking
 of the twenty-something kid last week who popped
 up from his seat and ran to the front of the bus.
That's my old man, he said, pointing
 to the cement truck stopped beside us at a red light.
Hey Dad, I'm over here, look, and Ernie,
 our glum undertaker of a driver, broke

the rules for once and swung open the door
at the intersection. Surely you must have blessed
that transaction: a grizzled duffer
all smiles like a governor running for re-election,
a tattooed boy leaning out of the bus,
part acrobat, part gargoyle on a New York
brownstone, air crackling between them.
The light turned green, the afternoon sped up,
and the old duffer said, *Hey Tommy, nice hat,*
you ready for bowling Saturday night?—take her easy.
Who can explain where the world ends and a son
begins, how molecules of desire map
the body? They waved, father and son,
like they'd never see each other again in this time zone.
And we watched: hungry, eavesdropping citizens
of the bus, remembering some ecstasy
we fell into once and didn't deserve, sitting
on our hands to keep from adding amens to the air.