

THE UBIQUITOUS YOU

*Most of the time, the 'you' in a poem,
otherwise known as the 'ubiquitous you,'
is the addressee who signifies a lover.*

—Thomas Lux

When I try to explain love to a new lover, I find no disguises this time, and instead something catches

in my throat. All I can return to is how love isn't an emotional sparkplug jammed into my heart, not the parentheses of arms, not

the shadows interlocked and undulant as bedclothes in song, but instead when a woman is closing the bar on her first night.

The place is shadowed as an insomniac's eye. And all of the patrons have left their debris: swizzle sticks, crumpled dollar bills,

drained martini glasses like the eye of a recovered addict staring out at a blank desert. And the woman is rubbing her temples as she tries

to add up the register tape and all the sums keep coming up wrong. She keeps trying to add and trying to add, and trying to separate

the money of the night into the designated categories: food tax, drinks, the total, the tips payout, and feels a moth

in the light bulb of her heart. She can't do numbers. Only words, and tonight, there are none that can save her.

And the man sitting at the bar has a shy white grin, a frayed tawny cowboy hat. He leans over,

takes the calculator. Adds up the nighttime tallies, then shows her a trick to ensure the amount's accurate.

Then he slips the hat off his head, and puts it on hers. Now, as I try to explain how until I had a moment like that, I only

knew what love is like, then return to the scene of us that I've tried so hard to step outside of and examine critically, even as I say it,

I realize the only way in this world to love is to acknowledge simply that you were there, that I missed you,

that you just skimmed my face. Love doesn't need to be examined. But still, I return. Even when trying to talk

to another lover, to myself, to a friend, still I talk to you. I've acquired a new concept: when broken down, the heart

like any other muscle develops a new strength. Beyond that, I've learned to listen to that persistent, raw place that won't let me

turn away, that place hasn't finished listening, that place hasn't left that bar that day. Even though we ourselves, have long left.

He's still showing her what is so simple; I can't believe she doesn't see it—