

## BRIOCHE

by Nicole Cox

I walked east on Chicago at 10 last Wednesday night  
and called my friend after class who was on his couch  
in his apartment behind the projects west of Lincoln Center

His voice cracked so I said *Is this a bad time* and he said  
*No, self-indulgence over!* and we laughed but he was really  
saying it to himself throwing off the throw sitting up and coming to

It was late July before I left and Chicago was eponymous –  
black graphite sky with carbon stars in the shape of buildings  
under a moon that would be full tomorrow then maybe never again

*I didn't learn as much as I thought I would* I said as Love's Bakery  
pumped brown sugar air as if on cue and filled the block like  
cartoon clouds to the hilltop intersection in the heart of River West

I waited for the Halsted bus and he boiled spaghetti while  
we kept talking like we were 13 after school with legs maybe  
up against the wall but now there were no cords or comfort really

We talked the whole ride north to George Street about persistence  
and he told me about a new French bakery on 10<sup>th</sup> that tried to pass off  
challah as brioche so he demanded a blueberry muffin instead because

*At least it tastes like something!* I laughed like a teenager on the late bus  
who doesn't care and I didn't even though I noticed my reflection  
in scratched Plexiglas and realized I was now also  
the shatter-resistant alternative to someone I'd once been.