

Fall 2012

To Fanny Mendelssohn

Laura Donnelly

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Donnelly, Laura (2012) "To Fanny Mendelssohn," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 77 , Article 34.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss77/34>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

TO FANNY MENDELSSOHN

In the low egg yolk morning she is trying
to dissolve the barlines,
mathematical placements
with which she is told she lives

too much in her mind. She wants this
to feel like song, possibility become
effortless. A field.
The robin's chitter.

But each morning the family's piano-forte
slides further out of tune
(she hears it).

Each morning in the picture window the rhythm of
practice-room, strangle-hold.

(But no—was that me? What she feels,
how to say?) I imagine
an opaque window, sunlight

through waxy paper. Someone says these distinctions
dissolve, but I'm not so sure.

• • •

Her brother visits from Vienna. She paints watercolors.
Pale spring hills, the lake valley,
beside her the water jar
clouds over blue, aqua, gold, the brush shaken clean

between colors. It is not a bad life.
Her brother's *Songs Without Words*,
of which many are hers,
are publishable with his name.

Queen Victoria's favorite, "Italy," is Fanny's own.

She gives concerts at home,
notes echoing over marble like
neat, heeled footsteps I hear through my college's corridors.

• • •

So many writers on hands: *Her small neat hands.*
Her white hands.
Her marble hands. He fell out of love
because her hands appeared larger (no lie).

I'm beginning to think the mechanics
mean little. I sit in the heat of August
watching how hands work.
Science of the smallest joints

that do or do not do my bidding by rote. In the end
it only works when you learn to forget.

• • •

And what if not remembered, not written, not graphed
on the music staff's bars like those leaps once
charting my own heart's beat? (Even
as a child I knew something was wrong, lying on the bed

while the EKG jolted off
rhythm, off kilter, what kept me on edge—)
What if in sleep, in first waking,
in those colors of the water jar blurred,

the lake's depths and murmurs,
its blue eye merging
towards grey still swirling
around the brush bristles I shake? What if, so worried

(then) to get it right,
scale after skeleton scale and so far from the flesh
of the piece—I only begin
to know what it was I heard—