

ROBIN TODD

Regarding My Father

he is taking a trip
(six weeks in Greece)
and will be on foot
as much as possible

the hills of Guelph
have become his training ground,
striding towards the church
perched high above the city

he climbs dreaming
of weightlessness
but for the necessities
filling his pack—

a Goretex rainsuit (on average
rain falls from the skies
seven to nine days
in the cruelest month)

a flashlight
(top of the line
Mountain Equipment
which will illuminate

entire monastic frescoes
yet weighs less
than the rain
that will sit upon his brow)

extra layers
to shield against the cold
as Athens' sun drops
out of the sky—

the pack has been trimmed
down
to nineteen pounds
my father reports victoriously

lifting it with ease
from the bathroom scales,
he too has become
a project for reduction

with his hair shaved
to military length
leaving him, at turns,
boyish and severe

in his first call home,
with words that hesitate
in the spaces of the wire,
he tells us he has fallen

while hiking to a ruin—
Icarus brought earthward
the swelling of his knee
revealing his weightiness

yet he has remained
on schedule
hiking all day
on fragile limb

a wingless figure
carved away to self
guided by hieroglyphics
of his own design