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– Introduction –

I came to *n+1* the week after I graduated from college. I started as an intern at the second Brooklyn office, otherwise known as the Prospect Heights apartment of two of the founding editors, Chad Harbach and Keith Gessen. The apartment was also known, in emails, as ‘headquarters’. This was June 2005, about the time that Christian Lorentzen’s account of the magazine’s beginning in the previous *n+1* anthology ends. The editors were working on the third issue, we were trying to figure out how to store subscriber information and put submissions in file folders, and the third roommate at the apartment, Brian, was sometimes doing push-ups in the next room.

It wasn’t exactly what I had expected, but then again I didn’t know what to expect. I had come across the first issue at St. Mark’s Bookshop in the East Village, admired its spare, combative style, and sent an email to an address that I found on the magazine’s at the time rudimentary website. This was a moment when small magazines seemed to make themselves very small and mostly only published fiction. I mostly wanted to read fiction but was thrilled by the possibility of a magazine that spoke plainly about the misery

of contemporary politics, that knew how and why to condemn the recent turn toward literary preciousness, and whose writers believed their own lives were part of all this and worthy of deep and dispassionate observation.

During the next few months, Allison Lorentzen, the magazine's first managing editor (and Christian's sister), came by after her day job and talked to us about submissions. Sometimes Christian, an old friend of the editors who proofread and wrote film reviews, showed up and thought of terrible insults for the stories we were reading. On Bastille Day there was the first benefit party, at the Pink Pony in the East Village, and the interns were allowed to come for dessert. That summer was a time when I drank a lot of orange juice, which Keith and Chad constantly, somewhat guiltily offered us as we worked at their apartment for free. Probably the worst thing they did was go for a run and lock us out of the office. Probably the worst thing I did was accidentally create a Google Group, basically a reply-all, that included some large proportion of our subscribers. (I feel less bad in retrospect, as I look this up in email and realize how few subscribers we had that summer.)

The founding editors' project was beginning to include more people. Most notably, new writers were approaching the magazine's early preoccupations from entirely different perspectives. The fourth issue included four pieces about politics, nine essays on American

writing, and multiple works by four fiction writers, as well as founding editor Mark Greif's *sui generis* 'Afternoon of the Sex Children' and Philip Connors's 'My Life and Times in American Journalism'. In total, the issue ran more than seventy pages longer than it was supposed to. One way of looking at this is that new pieces kept coming in and the issue kept not getting done; another is that the magazine wanted to become more expansive.

Connors's essay, which concludes this volume, is the exemplar. An account of a brief career in journalism, from the *Fargo Forum* to the *Wall Street Journal*, it describes the ideas and sensibilities out of which *n+1* emerged: that is, the dominant East Coast political and cultural climate in the years just before and after September 11, 2001. But because Connors had recently arrived from the Midwest, and also because of his training as a newspaper writer, he describes the excesses and losses of those years with a powerful sense of estrangement. Connors introduced a particular story to the magazine, one that has since been told several times over, about a young writer being educated at a large corporation. Five years later, Alice Gregory described writing catalog copy for contemporary works at Sotheby's. Gregory's piece opens with Sotheby's record-shattering Damien Hirst sale on September 16, 2008, the same day Lehman Brothers went bankrupt.

Subsequent issues saw more writers, who tended toward the idiosyncratic, treat the evolving realities

of the magazine's founding preoccupations. A. S. Hamrah, formerly an editor of *Hermeneut*, a defunct little magazine out of Boston, came on as our film editor and spent two months in 2007 watching thirty-six films about the war on terror. Hamrah's default mode is a deadpan moral scrutiny, and he seems to have hated almost every minute of it, but a few films made the difference. 'Iraq in Fragments is so good,' he wrote, 'I'm surprised people even recognize it as a movie.' Molly Young, who came to *n+1* as an intern, and with a gift for tactile description, described taking Adderall so candidly and viscerally she made anyone who hadn't want to try it. Young's piece marked the arrival of a slightly later generation, who had taken different drugs, started out writing online, and in subsequent years surprised us by seeing *n+1* — when they arrived as readers or writers or volunteers, or started their own magazines — as part of the literary establishment.

Nikil Saval was one of the interns on the first day in Prospect Heights, but on the second day we heard he had quit for a full-time job as an editorial assistant in the book business. The next time I saw him he was bartending the third-issue party; he was going to find a way to help out at *n+1* after all (and not only by bartending). A day job with a corporate publisher turned out to be a poor substitute for the work he had been willing to do for free. Still Nikil kept going to the office, and then another office, and then another, and as he wrote in his first piece for the magazine, when

you spend most of your time in an office, you also spend an extraordinary amount of time thinking about them. ‘Birth of the Office’ describes how architects’ and designers’ best attempts at liberating white-collar workers from the physical strictures of their offices are undone by the actual corporate restraints that define most American workplaces. The essay (the basis for a book Nikil recently finished, which will appear next year) suggests what a person might find to save himself in a collective enterprise like a small magazine: ‘the ability to produce and control our own work, in lines with the ends of a community we support and love’.

In early 2006, we moved the *n+1* office out of Brooklyn and into half a room in a warehouse building on Chrystie and Stanton. This was in an area that at the time had not been claimed by the Lower East Side, Chinatown, or Soho, that had a nightclub and a liquor warehouse, but that now also has the New Museum and generally is considered part of the Lower East Side. We were subletting our half of the room from the person on the other side of a makeshift wall, Mark Weinberg. Mark designs album covers. He had drawn the logo for Naughty by Nature and was known to stay out till dawn with Joe Strummer. He mostly worked at night but might enter or emerge from his office at any time during the day, in moods that ranged from jovial to apparently quite depressed. If you stayed late enough you could smoke a joint with him or see the guy who actually lived on our hall and sometimes would

walk through it wearing only a towel. We heard that the Talking Heads had lived on the top floor twenty years earlier and later found out that a respected artisanal pickle impresario had his office in the building at the same time and in fact remains there to this day. In 2008 we moved our office, with Mark Weinberg's, to Dumbo, where then there were other magazines and nonprofits and now there mostly seem to be start-ups, and last year Mark moved to San Diego.

Nikil and I came on as apprentices at a time when the magazine was still in the early stages of its development. For years it remained unclear whether *n+1* would move past that point, whether we would find the time and money to publish more regularly and the next set of generative questions that would give us new things to say. More income, from magazine sales and some donors, helped (and would still help for that matter), but what really made the magazine feel like a sustainable project was an infusion of energetic new editorial actors. This was in 2010, when Christopher Glazek and Elizabeth Gumpert came on as assistant editors and Dayna Tortorici started as an (indefatigable) intern. At the same time, Mark Greif was creating the research branch of the organization, which so far has encouraged young volunteers and editors to pursue independent work on the radical feminism of the early seventies, contemporary literature in Central and South America, and the influence of internet pornography on sexual attitudes and behavior. The next fall

marked the beginning of the Occupy movement, which again reinvigorated our, and many others', understanding of what we could communally accomplish.

The younger editors' work is represented here by Christopher Glazek's 'Hasids vs. Hipsters', about the warring subcultures of gentrifying South Williamsburg. The essay first appeared in *What Was the Hipster?* (2010), part of the *n+1* book series, which has occasionally put out titles since the magazine's founding and will publish several in the coming year. Chris's own provocative lucidity has appeared with even more extremity in the magazine, in recent essays on the American prison system and class mobility. In 'Raise the Crime Rate', Chris made the point that the violent crime that has largely disappeared from American cities has simply been displaced into remote, overcrowded prisons. 'The nation's prisons now contain more inhabitants than any American city save New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago,' he wrote. 'And yet there is no "prison correspondent" at any of the nation's major newspapers.'

Chris's essay on American class mobility ran in the Intellectual Situation, the opening polemical section that has defined *n+1* since its founding. Always unsigned and often collectively written, the section has addressed dating, online bookselling, urban gentrification, global warming, and other subjects we can mostly agree are currently shaping our shared circumstances. In one recent issue, Elizabeth, Dayna, and I took the

entire section to describe the intersection of gender, digital, and financial anxieties at traditional general interest magazines, most notably the *Atlantic* and *Harper's*. 'What do women have to do with the internet?' we wrote. 'We submit that, in the eyes of media executives, women *are* the internet. Women, we mean the internet, are commanding a larger share of the traditional print market. The internet, we mean women, is less responsive to conventional advertising than to commenting, sharing, and other forms of social interaction,' and so on. We were speaking directly about the magazines we read and indirectly about the one that has become our own. The first Intellectual Situation set the bar for subsequent issues as it denounced the 'regressive avant-garde' at *McSweeney's*, the narrowness of the *New Republic's* book critics, and the merging of postmodern theory and cynical politics at the *Weekly Standard*. As ours surveyed the current magazine landscape it introduced the possibility that a new feminism and a rational approach to the internet could define $n+1$ as well.

Three essays collected here – Kristin Dombek's 'How to Quit', an ambivalent memoir of addiction; Lawrence Jackson's 'Slickheads', an account of growing up black in Baltimore written in local dialect; and Emily Witt's 'What Do You Desire?', about the politics of the porn industry and the new ethics of sexual experimentation – were all published in the past year. Something that gives us pride is that we doubt these

essays could have appeared anywhere else. Dombek and Jackson work at universities and for the most part have produced academic writing, while Witt makes her living as a freelance journalist for mass-circulation publications. The work these writers most want to do has no real place in their ordinary careers, and that's why *n+1* goes on.