

## Nabes gone by

One of Brooklyn's foremost bards has written a new collection of poems set in a gritty Brooklyn known more for factories and tenements than its hipster coffee shops and penthouse apartments.

In the book "A Night in Brooklyn," D. Nurkse, a former Brooklyn poet laureate and recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship, casts aside the trendy style of irony that's pervasive in the borough for something more sentimental.

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"The book is probably more influenced by an older view of Brooklyn," said the Kensington resident, who released the work earlier this month through Knopf. "In some ways the book is referring to a period where there may have been less of a cultural divide. North Brooklyn was a pretty gritty place and Williamsburg was a pretty gritty place and now [they're] the opposite."

The collection includes poems that highlight the stark beauty in that grittiness, such as "The Dead Reveal Secrets of Brooklyn," a poem that describes the bloodshot eyes of a Hoyt Street window washer, or "Making Shelves," which is set in a plexiglass factory in Bushwick, or the title poem, where Nurkse waxes about the romance of sharing a narrow bed with a lover.

Still Nurkse, who has lived in Brooklyn since 1973, says he appreciates the new side of Brooklyn, in all of its stroller-mom and rooftop-farm-to-table glory.

"People in Brooklyn used to pride themselves on their ability to endure; it was a culture based on solidarity and suffering and enduring

hardship," said Nurkse. "And now a culture based on a new coffee shop and individualism is a little bit more about hedonism. But people are more intellectually curious now and there's a beauty to that, too."

Nurkse, a professor at Sarah Lawrence College who's lead workshops in schools and prisons around the city, says he's worked hard to articulate his own vision about Brooklyn but ultimately appreciates the borough's community of writers.

"Whenever I go to a writer's conference or colony it seems everyone is from Brooklyn," he said. "It's not, 'Where are you from?' but, 'What neighborhood are you from.' I'm very proud of the accomplished writers who've been here."

*Nurkse reading at BookCourt [163 Court St. between Pacific and Dean streets in Cobble Hill, (718) 875-3677. [www.bookcourt.com](http://www.bookcourt.com)] on September 12 at 7pm. Find "A Night in Brooklyn," there, as well.*  
- Eli Rosenberg



**Romance for the old borough: Former poet laureate D. Nurkse's poetry reflects his more than 30 years of living in Brooklyn, but it leans heavily towards the past more than the present.**  
Photo by Steve Solomonson

