

# BlazeVOX 2kX

An online journal of voice

Spring 2010

BlazeVOX [books]

Buffalo, New York

BlazeVOX 2kX Spring 2010

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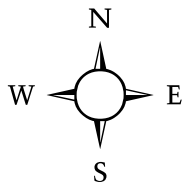
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# Introduction

Hello and welcome to the spring issue of BlazeVOX2kX. We are in our tenth year and to celebrate we are presenting our largest issue ever. In this issue you will find one hundred and one fine writers presenting some highly fascinating work. These writers come from all around the world and I am humbled by all of their kind support to make this one of the best issues ever!

I know one hundred and one is a great number! We had a bit of a surge on submission and with all this great work, we had two alternatives reject or accept. We could reject a great many fine pieces, which seemed like far too much work in deciding what to remove and what to keep. It was just too hard of a task. So it only seemed natural to open up and make room for more. We, as writers, live in a world of rejection and I want to foster acceptance. So hurray! Here is an excellent issue!

We have a few new ebooks in our Wilde Reading Room. Look forward to new ebooks in the late summer. We are planning on have adding 30 new full-length titles this year which we will be offering as usual, for free. These are all is Adobe PDF and viewable on your iPod Touch, iPhone and iPad. Just go to our page <http://www.blazevox.org/ebook.htm> and click on the link. They look beautiful! This also holds true for all our online publications!

Please send work for our fall issue now. Simply send an email to [editor@blazevox.org](mailto:editor@blazevox.org). We are always looking for new materials. We are a bit full as you can imagine, but we always have room for one more. Please send the manuscript to this email address in either a Microsoft Word doc, RTF, or even a PDF is fine.

A much beloved figure in the Buffalo poetry scene is in our buffaloFocus section. Aaron Lowinger is a beautiful soul whose poetry is a true delight. I couldn't imagine Buffalo without his wonderful kind energy. I believe you will enjoy his work as much as I do! Hurray!

Once again I want to thank you for allowing BlazeVOX to be as fun and open as it is. It is a real treat to be able to bring this about! Hurray on you! Thank you a thousand times!

-

Best, Geoffrey

Geoffrey Gatza  
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BlazeVOX [rocks]



# BlazeVOX 2kX

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**Yemi Oyefuwa**

**Trick or Treat**

The eager chatter of the infants  
dressed as  
ghosts and ghouls,  
monkeys or mules, and other  
cruel fictions of ones imagination; humor him.  
Because the kid who thinks they'll beat his costume  
Has another thing coming.  
-while they can yell  
'trick or treat'  
and receive their treats, thanks to their tasteful tricks  
-his trick is undetectable.

It's there. Tricking the  
Unaware and uneducated, because  
'come on baby, I'll pull out'  
is his favorite trick and  
'baby, you know it feels better without'  
is his needed treat but,  
tricks and treats don't always lead to  
candy.

He can't scatter candy into his scheduled body bag and  
Eat it while his external  
cries and his interior  
dies – 'cause candy can't sugarcoat that.  
He can't sugarcoat that his casual casualties can't cry  
'cause,  
well  
none of them know  
that his costume kills.

Because as he seeks short-term salvation in sex  
and releases echoes of him playing African beats on their inner drum.  
It bounces off their wide spread instruments  
Slithers slowly,  
slyly seeding toxic into their bodies.  
living freely without paying rent  
travelling universally without a passport  
eating their organs without digesting  
and  
never  
ever  
Fading.

Yeah  
'come on baby, I'm clean.'  
Is his trick and,  
'baby, you're my only one.'  
Is their treat 'cause  
That's all they ever want  
To be the only one and  
One and only and  
His mi amour forever more and  
Yeah, she's bonded by him blindly just because he called her baby.

And that's all it is. That and a few million orphan babies to read this poem.



## In My Heaven

The sky stays set by the sun,  
in my Heaven.  
A hue of rich red and an odd orange  
always lingers, longing for love.  
My love doesn't see the texture that,  
touches me in ways he can't because,  
in his Heaven, the sky stays sky blue.  
The blue that was his parents blue before they died.  
The blue that was passed down from generation  
to generation  
to generation  
and stopped at him.  
My love,  
In my Heaven,  
says he did deserve death but,  
in my Heaven,  
my love says he doesn't deserve me.  
So everyday, at the crack of  
a time between time,  
I leave such nasty negativity nagging me to leave him and  
swing on the swings that hang lower than the  
lowest cloud and  
watch life go on,  
without me.  
I dangle my feet and  
Make my naked toes touch the,  
rich red and odd orange  
and watch my  
picture perfected past  
pass on.  
Everyday.  
My heart pangs with an unkempt sensitivity, my  
soul sings songs, sadly saying what I won't.  
What I can't.  
My head wills, wanting what was,  
hating what is.

My body aches, desperately daring my mediocre mind to tell my  
tactless tongue to articulate.

Everyday.

In my Heaven, everyday,  
my selfish self searches

for my love

in my Earth

and my selfish self seeks some way to make  
my love

in my Earth

join me and replace

my love

in my Heaven.



## MY MOTHER'S DIARY

I walk the same street I used to walk in my childhood,  
God, back then poverty had already tore its hand into the bodies of  
men,  
forever branding their paths through life... You know, I have piously  
prayed for others just like I prayed for myself, I wanted to breathe lightly  
for a few times, just so I would for once have something for  
myself...

But even my mother used to say: "Pleasure is not  
for people like us; we wear the mark of  
poverty  
all the way to our grave." Shall I ever forget that  
eternally blissful smile when she said those  
words? How it lured one to be  
good  
and humble. In my memories, I shall always live with this  
street, from which that careless joy was blooming...  
I lived for that smile, and it was for that smile I swallowed down  
so much bitter anger... Oh, God, if that smile would  
still echo down the street of my childhood...  
But now that smile cut into the entrails  
of the oblique night, and she was still standing there,  
in the same place where she stood  
pensively watching me leaving the street of my  
childhood,  
she looked at that same yellow soil, as if she wanted to  
shake all the poverty out of it.  
I lived for the chance to hear her light laughter again...  
For that laughter, I have spent many a long night traveling  
third-class... And then I saw her, and she was singing  
the same sad song from the blue and gold diary,  
which was veiled by thick white curtains.

God, what kind of force from the depth of the soul is it that drives the  
memories  
to sing that sad song, from the heart, in that  
street?

And the last word of the song withered, and she withered  
with her hand on the diary and her lip on the song. That smile  
was forlorn, as was my life. But as my late mother used to say:  
"Pleasure is not for people like us."

## THE STATIONER BOY

In the shadow of a murky building, in a street with an ugly appearance and an unpleasant smell, without sun and without human warmth for most of the day, a boy and a dog tend after their only legal craft assigned to them by the world: survival.

The boy and the dog are not just one body and one soul, but they are also, as the world believes, one voice.

This voice, which seems to be heard only on Christmas Eve, comes from a shrill ghost which lies restless in its grave; in that sad street, which never housed a single butterfly in its whole existence, there was some kind of greedy spider, that spun its web to prey on careless people.

Yet, the boy and the dog await each new day with humble and reverent obedience, and they sell paper: regular, fine concept, white, whitish-brown, golden-blue; stamps, sprinkling sand, nails, pencils, red and green ribbons for gift wrapping; old notebooks, calendars, diaries. To cut a long story short, the boy and his dog trade in good old values. They are invisible to the courts, because, after all, who cares for the poor, as the wise would say.

This morning, however, the boy and his dog were not in their usual place, the golden sundust floated on the soft, sweet back of the wind, as if looking for the stationer boy and his dog.

And the boy was lamenting the death of his old dog, in the shadow, as usual, far away from the eyes of the world, and these salty, silent tears were looking for at least one short gaze of the world, but the cold world considers the boy to be just a regular, modest, humble, honorable, and thus invisible stationer.

He kneels next to his only friend, and with a broken voice he bids him farewell for one last time:

“Good night, my only friend! Good night, my little stationer! Sweet and blissful dreams!”

And so the stationer boy was once again left alone in that sad street.

Valentine Pakis

A Brief Explanation

**I N T E R P R E T A T I U N C U L A**  
e h v e r e r b h , t a o p o d  
v o e m e g o y r a t i u t c e  
e u n o s a t s o t e v l a a n  
r g t u r i t a r e d k l o  
h e m d c s d l , e v  
t l e l , y i  
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## Temptation, in Abstracto

### What potions have I drunk of Siren tears [...]\*

\* See also the text of b-Isidore, in Max Friedrich Mann, ed., “Der Bestiaire Divin des Guillaume le Clerc,” *Französische Studien* 6.2 (1888), 46: “Sic et illi qui deliciis huius seculi et pompis et theatralibus voluptatibus delectantur, tragediis ac comediis dissoluti velut gravi sompno sopiti adversariorum preda efficiuntur”; and that of the *Dicta Chrysostomi*, in Francesco Sbordone, “La tradizione manoscritta del *Physiologus* latino,” *Athenaeum (Nuovo Serie)* 27 (1949), 268: “Sic igitur decipiuntur illi qui diabolicis pompis et theatralibus uoluptatibus delectati uel tragoediis musicis soluti et uelut somno mentis grauari, efficiuntur aduersae uirtutis audissima praeda.” The *De bestiis et aliis rebus* ascribed to Hugh of St. Victor, which owes much of its content to the Latin *Physiologus* tradition, also reads: “Sic et illi, qui deliciis huius saeculi, et pompis et theatralibus voluptatibus delectantur, tragoediis et comoediis dissoluti, velut gravi somno sopiti adversarium praeda efficiuntur” (2.32, in PL 177, 78). Version *b* underlies a number of vernacular translations as well; these, while often capturing the sense of *deliciis huius saeculi et pompis*, seldom make direct mention of theater, tragedies, comedies, and music. See the Old High German *Physiologus*, in Friedrich Maurer, ed., *Der altdeutsche Physiologus: Die Millstätter Reimfassung und die Wiener Prosa (nebst dem lateinischen Text und dem althochdeutschen Physiologus)*, Altdeutsche Textbibliothek 67 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967), 92: “An diu bezeinet ez den fiant, der des mannis muot spenit ze din ueriltlihen lusten” [In this way the siren signifies the devil, who seduces man’s spirit with worldly desires]; the Middle High German *Wiener Prosa*, in *ibid.*, 16-18: “Also werdent die biswichen, die mit werltlichem unt mit tiefalllichen zierden bivangin sint, unt die biswarit sint mit deme slafe ir muotis; die sint deme tievale ze roube” [Similarly are those deceived who are captivated by the worldly and by devilish pomp, and those who are overcome by a sleepiness of spirit; they are ripe for the devil’s taking]; the *Millstätter Reimfassung*, in Christian Schröder, ed., *Der Millstätter Physiologus: Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Würzburger Beiträge zur deutschen Philologie 24 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 80: “Also werdent die beswichen, die mit werltlichen und mit tievelllichen / zierden bevungen sint, unde die darzuo beswaeret sint / mit dem slaffe ir muotis, die sint geahet dem roube des tiufils [Thus are those deceived who are captivated by worldly and devilish splendor and, in addition, are hindered by the sleepiness of their spirit; they are considered ripe for the devil’s taking]; the Old Icelandic *Physiologus* (Fragment A), in Carla Del Zotto Tozzoli, ed., *Il Physiologus in Islanda*, Biblioteca scandinava di studi, ricerche e testi 7 (Pisa: Giardini, 1992), 70: “Sirena iarteiner í fegrþ raddar sínar oc sæte crása þera, es menn hafa til sælo í heimmi hér, oc gá þes eins oc sofna svá frá góþvm verkom” [The siren represents, in the fairness of its voice, the sweetness of those delights that men enjoy in this world, so that they occupy themselves with them alone and thus, as though asleep, neglect good deeds]; the Old French bestiary by Gervaise, in Paul Meyer, ed., “Le bestiaire de Gervaise,” *Romania* 1 (1872), 420-43, at 430: “Cil qui aiment tragitaours / Tumeresses et juglaours, / Cil ensevent, ce n’est pas fable, / La procession au deable” [Those who love magicians, dancers, and entertainers, these follow – this is no lie – the procession to the devil]; the shorter bestiary by Pierre de Beauvais, in Guy R. Mermier, ed., *Le bestiaire de Pierre de Beauvais (Version courte): Edition critique avec notes et glossaire* (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1977), 68: “Ausi est de ceus cil qui sont es richesses de cest siecle et es deliz endormiz que lor aversaire ocient ce sont li deable” [There are also those who, lulled to sleep by the riches and delights of the world, fall to their adversary, the devil]; the longer bestiary by the same author, in Charles Cahier and Arthur Martin, eds., *Mélanges d’archéologie, d’histoire et de littérature sur le Moyen Âge*, 4 vols. (Paris: Poussielgue-Rusand, 1847-56), 2:173: “Ensi est de cels qui sont ès richoises de cest siècle, et ès délis endormis, qui lor aversaire ocient: cè sont li diable” [Also there are those who, lulled to sleep by the riches and delights of the world, fall to their adversary, the devil]; the bestiary by Philippe de Thaon, in Emmanuel Walberg, ed., *Le bestiaire de Philippe de Thaon: Text critique publié avec introduction, notes et glossaire* (Lund: E. Malmström, 1900), 51-52: “Saciez maintes feiz funt / Les richeises del munt / L’anme e le cors pechier /– C’est nef e notunier – / L’anme en pechié dormir, / Ensurquetut perir” [Know that, often, the rich of this world sin in body and spirit – ship and sailor; their spirit sleeps in sin and finally dies]; and the bestiary by Guillaume le clerc, in C. Hippeau, ed., *Le bestiaire divin de Guillaume clerc de Normandie* (Paris, 1852-77; repr. Geneva, 1970), 224-26: “Nos, qui par cest monde passon, / Sommes deceuz par tel son, / Par la glorie, par le delit / De cest monde qui not ocit”

[There are those of us passing through the world who, deceived by a similar music, by glory and worldly pleasures, are thus led to death].



Enantiomorphic Glossography, 750-1100  
(With Documentation)

gisteini	kfsjkt	pigigom,da	pigömeda	pigoumida	schöunga	scouunga	scucar
speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum
M	B	W	W	M	L	P	S
ü	e	i	i	ü	o	r	t.
n	r	e	e	n	n	a	G
c	n	n	n	c	d	g	a
h	B	Ö	Ö	h	o	U	l
e	i	s	s	e	n	n	l
n	b	t	t	n	T	i	e
B	l	e	e	B	h	v	n
a	i	r	r	a	e	e	S
y	o	r	r	y	B	r	t
e	t	e	e	e	r	s	i
r	h	i	i	r	i	i	f
i	è	c	c	i	t	t	t
s	q	h	h	s	i	n	s
c	u	i	i	c	s	í	b
h	e	s	s	h	h	k	i
e	d	c	c	e	M	n	b
S	e	h	h	S	u	i	l
t	l	e	e	t	s	h	i
a	a	N	N	a	e	o	o
a	B	a	a	a	u	v	t
t	o	t	t	t	m	n	h
s	u	i	i	s	A	a	e
b	r	o	o	b	d	M	k
i	g	n	n	i	d	S	2
b	e	a	a	b	1	V	9
l	o	l	l	l	8	l	9
i	i	b	b	i	3	l	p.
o	s	i	i	o	7	l	3
t	e	b	b	t	9	H	0
h	C	l	l	h	f	4	3
e	o	i	i	e	o	f	
k	d	o	o	k	l.	o	
C	e	t	t	C	1	l.	
l	x	h	h	l	3	4	
m	e	e	e	m	7 <sup>v</sup>	6 <sup>v</sup>	
1	2	k	k	1	a	a	
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9	p.	d	d	4			
5	2	e	e	0			
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		4 <sup>f</sup>					

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B	u	e	S	l	S	s	a
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d	e	S	i	B	a	o	t
l	B	t	f	i	d	r	W
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n	s	s	r	o	c	h	t
L	c	b	h	t	h	e	t
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b	e	b	v	è	v	A	b
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a	a	i	2	u	o	c	r
r	n	o	/	e	r	h	g
y	d	t	1	R	l.	i	i
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l.	o	1		b	f	3	d
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	S			9	2 <sup>v</sup>		b
	t.			8	b		l
	P			7-			i
	e			9			o
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	f						6
	o						f
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	b						2 <sup>r</sup>

spenúla	spiagal	spiágal	spiegel	spiegel	spi <sup>e</sup> gel	spîegel	spiegel
speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum	speculum
S	K	D	S	E	E	W	E
t	a	ü	c	n	r	i	i
u	r	s	h	g	l	e	n
t	l	s	e	e	a	n	s
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a	u	d	t	e	e	t	d
r	h	o	s	r	n	e	e
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W	B	f	a	S	n	r	n
ü	a	U	d	t	i	e	S
r	d	n	t	i	v	i	t
t	i	i	B	f	e	c	i
t	s	v	i	t	r	h	f
e	c	e	b	s	s	i	t
m	h	r	l	b	i	s	s
b	e	s	i	i	t	c	b
e	L	i	o	b	ä	h	i
r	a	t	t	l	s	e	b
g	n	ä	h	i	b	N	l
i	d	t	è	o	i	a	i
s	e	s-	q	t	b	t	o
c	s	u	u	h	l	i	t
h	b	n	e	e	i	o	h
e	i	d	e	k	o	n	e
L	b	L	t	C	t	a	k
a	l	a	A	o	h	l	C
n	i	n	r	d	e	b	o
d	o	d	c	e	k	i	d
e	t	e	h	x	M	b	e
s	h	s	i	6	S	l	x
b	e	b	v	6	3	i	1
i	k	i	e	f	9	o	7
b	A	b	s	o	6	t	1
l	u	l	M	l.	f	h	p.
i	g.	i	u	4	o	e	9
o	l	o	n	5 <sup>v</sup>	l.	k	6
t	C	t	i		8	C	
h	f	h	c		0 <sup>v</sup>	o	
e	o	e	i		b	d	
k	l.	k	p			e	
C	9	M	a			x	
o	4 <sup>v</sup>	S	l			2	
d.	a	F	e			4	
t		1	s			0	
h.		f	M			0	
2°		o	S			f	
2		l.	7			o	
1		6	f			l.	
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z	a	i	n	e	m	z	n
B	d	h	B	n	b	B	B
i	t	o	a	S	i	i	a
b	H	v	y	t	b	b	y
l	e	n	e	i	l	l	e
i	s	a	r	f	i	i	r
t	s	N	i	t	o	t	i
e	i	á	s	s	t	e	s
c	s	r	c	b	h	c	c
a	c	o	h	i	e	a	h
M	h	d	e	b	k	M	e
e	e	n	S	l	L	e	S
d	L	í	t	i	X	d	t
i	a	h	a	o	X	i	a
c	n	o	a	t	X	c	a
e	d	M	t	h	l	e	t
a	e	u	s	e	f	a	s
L	s-	z	b	k	o	L	b
a	u	e	i	2	l.	a	i
u	n	a	b	9	2	u	b
r	d	2	l	5	4 <sup>v</sup>	r	l
e	H	0	i	p.	a	e	i
n	o	G	o	1		n	o
z	c	2	t	2		z	t
i	h	2	h	4		i	h
a	s	f	e			a	e
n	c	o	k			n	k
a	h	l.	C			a	C
P	u	1	l			P	l
l	l	2	m			l	m
u	b	2 <sup>r</sup>	3			u	3
t.	i		2			t.	2
1	b		1			1	1
6.	l		5			6.	5
5	i		f			5	f
f	o		o			f	o
o	t		l.			o	l.
l.	h		2			l.	2
1	e		5 <sup>r</sup>			1	5 <sup>r</sup>
1	k		a			1	a
7 <sup>r</sup>	6					7 <sup>r</sup>	
b	f					b	
	o						
	l.						
	9						
	5 <sup>v</sup>						

BLAZEVOX **2KX**

Spring 2010

**Tim Tomlinson**

**Writing**

“no one’s interested in your precious memories,”  
explains the best-selling author of memoirs.

## Opening

I am opening a place in your mind,  
a place I closed in my own long ago.

I want you to enter and return.  
I want you to report what you find there,

wherever there is. I want you to tell  
me what I was too afraid to find out

for myself, I want you to make it less  
scary. I want you to invite me in

so I might finally know where I've been  
sending you all along. What will I do

when I'm there? Will it look exactly  
like I told you, as if I'd seen it so

many times before? Will I be able  
to keep it open? Return? Report?

## Happening

Something happens, something you feel, don't you?  
It's not a tickle - tickle's too ... I don't  
know, playful or something. Tickle takes me  
back to the second grade, a sleepover

perhaps, at your best friend's and his mother  
yelling to keep it down. But it's not a punch  
either, is it? Then why do you feel winded,  
if you feel winded? You do feel winded,

don't you? Something has tampered with your gut,  
and you have spent hours on your gut, its cuts,  
its concavity. How, you always wonder,

do things keep getting through? Past the sixpack,  
past the fists your abdominals form. And  
why? What are they? Truth? Lies? Your childhood?

## **Yawning**

morning rush hour —  
schoolgirls yawning  
in the crosswalk



BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

## Travis Macdonald

*No, neither he, nor his compeers by night*

A negative used to express dissent, denial or refusal not the one or the other. The male person or animal being discussed in negative phrases to introduce the second member in a series belonging to him equal in rank with something at stake on the period between sunset and sunrise a condition of obscurity considered as unit of time.

*As victors, of my silence cannot boast;*

proceeding in the manner thought  
or considered to be a winner  
in any struggle or contest  
used to indicate the objective relation  
the nominative singular  
pronoun possessive absence  
or omission of mention  
comment or expressed concern  
the absence of any sound  
concealment or secrecy, to still  
(as in enemy guns) by more effective fire  
the negative form of possible clause  
to be proud in the possession of  
exaggerated or objectionable speech.

## Chapter One from *The Story*

A character will wake up somewhere new. Over the course of the story, that character makes three life-changing decisions, each somehow ultimately wrong. The story ends on a sinking ship full of missing lifeboats. The story takes place in the spring but there are no cherry blossoms to be found in feudal Japan. The story revolves around a sudden change in weather and/or wardrobe. Later in the story, there is an assassination of character. The story must involve a gauntlet thrown, run or worn. Somewhere in the story, a character takes a test, either metaphorical or standardized. The story must have at least one salamander to balance out all the buffalo. The story must have a broom appear in the middle, facing sideways toward the reader. A character will take a bath, and they aren't happy with it. Not one bit. Later in the story, that character breaks something important to them setting of a chain of events that culminates in the dissolution of an international treaty or border. The story begins in the midst of an important election/political decision-making process. The story takes place almost completely behind closed doors. The story is set during the fall of capitalism, Western Budapest. A relative shows up unannounced for a holiday dinner. At this point in the story, there is another sudden change in the weather or wardrobe. A character will read a book, and they are surprisingly over-enthused about it. No one bothers to ask why and the plot moves on without them. The story starts during a thunderstorm five years in the future, awakened in a hilltop laboratory by a well-timed bolt of lightning. Somewhere in the story, there is a dramatic discovery involving insurance adjustments. Over the course of the story, a character becomes pregnant with truth or more directly malevolent forces. This character is consequentially thirsty throughout most of the story. Another character gets a promotion, but it won't last long. The aforementioned character drinks something that disagrees with them. The story is set on a glacier. Remember that, it's important later. The story must have a policeman near the end, seemingly unarmed. The story starts in an attic and involves a mystical talking dartboard. The story takes place in mid-spring somewhere without music or flowers. During the story,

there is an argument over wages owed and/or services performed. A character will eat a meal. It too will disagree with them to terrible effect and public disgust. Another character becomes depressed during the story. These two facts are seemingly unrelated. The story must involve a boat, preferably a dinghy. The story is set in/on a volcano so the dinghy must be made of lead. Disaster naturally ensues. A character gives someone a good talking-to, but the action goes terribly wrong as everyone realizes the accusers themselves are ultimately at fault. As a result, said character becomes lustful for an inanimate object of unknown origin. Over the course of the story, an entire way of life comes to an end.

entity should be placed on eliminating that threat. Wolfowitz contended that the odds were "far more" than 1 in 10, citing Saddam's praise for the attack, his long record of involvement in terrorism, and theories that Ramzi Yousef was an Iraqi agent and Iraq was behind the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center.<sup>73</sup> The next day, Wolfowitz renewed the argument, writing to Rumsfeld about the interest of Yousef's co-conspirator in the 1995 Manila air plot in crashing an explosives-laden plane into CIA headquarters, and about information from a foreign government regarding Iraq's involvement in the attempted hijacking of a Gulf Air flight. Given this background, he wondered why so little thought had been devoted to the danger of suicide pilots, seeing a "failure of imagination" and a mind-set that dismissed possibilities.<sup>74</sup>

On September 19, Rumsfeld offered several thoughts for his commanders as they worked on their contingency plans. Though he emphasized the worldwide nature of the conflict, the references to specific enemies or regions named only the Taliban, al Qaeda, and Afghanistan.<sup>75</sup> Shelton told us the administration reviewed all the Pentagon's war plans and challenged certain assumptions underlying them, as any prudent organization or leader should do.<sup>76</sup>

General Tommy Franks, the commanding general of Central Command, recalled receiving Rumsfeld's guidance that each regional commander should assess what these plans meant for his area of responsibility. He knew he would soon be striking the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan. But, he told us, he now wondered how that action was connected to what might need to be done in Somalia, Yemen, or Iraq.<sup>77</sup>

On September 20, President Bush met with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and the two leaders discussed the global conflict ahead. When Blair asked about Iraq, the President replied that Iraq was not the immediate problem. Some members of his administration, he commented, had expressed a different view, but he was the one responsible for making the decisions.<sup>78</sup>

Franks told us that he was pushing independently to do more robust planning on military responses in Iraq during the summer before 9/11—a request President Bush denied, arguing that the time was not right. (CENTCOM also began dusting off plans for a full invasion of Iraq during this period, Franks said.) The CENTCOM commander told us he renewed his appeal for further military planning to respond to Iraqi moves shortly after 9/11, both because he personally felt that Iraq and al Qaeda might be engaged in some form of collusion and because he worried that Saddam might take advantage of the attacks to move against his internal enemies in the northern or southern parts of Iraq, where the United States was flying regular missions to enforce Iraqi no-fly zones. Franks said that President Bush again turned down the request.<sup>79</sup>

: : :

HAVING ISSUED DIRECTIVES to guide his administration's preparations for war, on Thursday, September 20, President Bush addressed the nation before a joint session of Congress. "Tonight," he said, "we are a country awakened to

danger.<sup>360</sup> The President blamed al Qaeda for 9/11 and the 1998 embassy bombings and, for the first time, declared that al Qaeda was “responsible for bombing the USS *Cole*.”<sup>361</sup> He reiterated the ultimatum that had already been conveyed privately: “The Taliban must act, and act immediately,” he said. “They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.”<sup>362</sup> The President added that America’s quarrel was not with Islam: “The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them.” Other regimes faced hard choices, he pointed out: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make: Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”<sup>363</sup>

President Bush argued that the new war went beyond Bin Ladin: “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there,” he said. “It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.” The President had a message for the Pentagon: “The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud.” He also had a message for those outside the United States: “This is civilization’s fight,” he said. “We ask every nation to join us.”<sup>364</sup>

President Bush approved military plans to attack Afghanistan in meetings with Central Command’s General Franks and other advisors on September 21 and October 2. Originally titled “Infinite Justice,” the operation’s code word was changed—to avoid the sensibilities of Muslims who associate the power of infinite justice with God alone—to the operational name still used for operations in Afghanistan: “Enduring Freedom.”<sup>365</sup>

The plan had four phases.

- In *Phase One*, the United States and its allies would move forces into the region and arrange to operate from or over neighboring countries such as Uzbekistan and Pakistan. This occurred in the weeks following 9/11, aided by overwhelming international sympathy for the United States.
- In *Phase Two*, air strikes and Special Operations attacks would hit key al Qaeda and Taliban targets. In an innovative joint effort, CIA and Special Operations forces would be deployed to work together with each major Afghan faction opposed to the Taliban. The Phase Two strikes and raids began on October 7. The basing arrangements contemplated for Phase One were substantially secured—after arduous effort—by the end of that month.
- In *Phase Three*, the United States would carry out “decisive operations” using all elements of national power, including ground troops, to topple the Taliban regime and eliminate al Qaeda’s sanctuary in Afghanistan. Mazar-e-Sharif, in northern Afghanistan, fell to a coalition assault by Afghan and U.S. forces on November 9. Four days later the Taliban had fled from Kabul. By early December, all major cities

had fallen to the coalition. On December 22, Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun leader from Kandahar, was installed as the chairman of Afghanistan's interim administration. Afghanistan had been liberated from the rule of the Taliban.

In December 2001, Afghan forces, with limited U.S. support, engaged al Qaeda elements in a cave complex called Tora Bora. In March 2002, the largest engagement of the war was fought, in the mountainous Shah-i-Kot area south of Gardez, against a large force of al Qaeda jihadists. The three-week battle was substantially successful, and almost all remaining al Qaeda forces took refuge in Pakistan's equally mountainous and lightly governed frontier provinces. As of July 2004, Bin Laden and Zawahiri are still believed to be at large.

- \* In *Phase Four*, civilian and military operations turned to the indefinite task of what the armed forces call "security and stability operations."

Within about two months of the start of combat operations, several hundred CIA operatives and Special Forces soldiers, backed by the striking power of U.S. aircraft and a much larger infrastructure of intelligence and support efforts, had combined with Afghan militias and a small number of other coalition soldiers to destroy the Taliban regime and disrupt al Qaeda. They had killed or captured about a quarter of the enemy's known leaders. Mohammed Atef, al Qaeda's military commander and a principal figure in the 9/11 plot, had been killed by a U.S. air strike. According to a senior CIA officer who helped devise the overall strategy the CIA provided intelligence, experience, cash, covert action capabilities, and entrée to tribal allies. In turn, the U.S. military offered combat expertise, firepower, logistics, and communications.<sup>36</sup> With these initial victories won by the middle of 2002, the global conflict against Islamist terrorism became a different kind of struggle.

**Travis Cebula**

**July 20.**

the living 13  
don't say a word –  
they have  
a long society to kill.  
for all mankind is held  
hostage, haunted  
by the kiss of stuff.

**July 21.**

you can't plan on firelight.  
Nico, you walk  
in secret footsteps.  
seduce, wait,  
swing from the blues.  
resurrect the line.  
touch night in fog,  
touch truth  
in orchid stripes.



**July 22.**

awake, Lord of Illusion,  
the thirteenth  
evil has carved its face  
into the bridge  
with one gold finger.

it is midnight  
and dead calm,  
but for a fool  
calling  
into the bayou.

**July 23.**

smiley-face  
Mr. Chips owns the sphere,  
the telephone booth,  
and the cookout.  
he owns the real life  
house party – cats, dogs,  
mice, and men –  
all in a beginner's casino.  
Mr. Chips, with an outsider's  
serenity, owns no clue.

**July 24.**

Friday desires come back –  
Margot with her eye  
the color of blazing.  
she stands by  
the marsh magnolia  
in a wedding dress.  
there she is enough  
for mending  
any broken story.

**July 25.**

Johnny the Cowboy  
dances dangerously  
into silence thicker  
than theory.

he is  
the never of her life.  
fast and furious,  
he drifts  
through Marie's rose notebook—  
her color of love.

he is the last  
of her sweetheart  
hulks; he is her  
divide between opera  
and a firefly  
by a lake-view cabin.

**July 26.**

for love departed  
(an iron storm)  
Ace takes wing  
along Route 66 —  
an underworld —  
the crush  
at the center  
of a gold pill.

*a hot little anger lines  
your halls of dancing.  
today, bells are ringing.  
today, my Christmas girl,  
you die.*

**July 27.**

all for money, Kelly.  
numbers drive the world -  
an underworld - the crush  
at the center of a gold pill.

a hot little anger lines  
your halls of dancing.  
today, the bells are ringing.  
today, my Christmas girl,  
you sleep.

**July 28.**

Rosencrantz, Guildenstern,  
all the brothers were valiant...  
even Hamlet—that hollow man -  
who loaded justice, bottom up,  
into a queen-sized boat  
(with the scent of murder,  
a little package of murder,  
on his mind)  
and sent it back as a present  
to clear green water.

**July 29.**

needful Andrew sneaks home  
to the footlight parade -  
the Club of Extraordinary Gentlemen.

pineapple blindness then  
hips, hips, hooray!  
showgirls lean on,  
lean on into tomorrow.  
fashion the game  
into a reverse-angled valley.

## Tyson Bley

### Travel On The Backs Of Dust Motes

I enjoyed interpreting more than  
just a bad dream along the rivulet synapse,  
asking for shopping directions  
on the colorful apple tablet under the starry  
canopy. I touch to heal airborne rogues  
to let laser tracks and quiz show aliens  
evolve the same sonar gene.  
I hold my breath: I'm a misguided space diver  
who needs to get rid of the blown wax on  
the table cloth. I arrange the mothballs around  
my nerve impulse; I hiss and tinker around  
the illuminated steam engine –  
the really simple Disney expert at  
my side, US Air Force Captain Joe Kittinger,  
saying to do something about  
the darkened hollow in my suitcase.  
We talked about the road. About pictures.  
'I'd rather be pretty on photos and ugly  
in real life than pretty in real life and  
ugly on photos.' He was a wise man,  
reminiscing about his travels by asteroid &  
about the ancient, rusty, creaky candle looper –  
a hitch-hiker's thumb that looks like a murder weapon  
or a turkey's cock – he used to screw into  
his trusty old papyrus map.

## Worm Vacation

There was a worm in my brain and its  
suicide instantly bought me social cachet. Be warned:  
black pepper crab dinner is a collision  
between dating, trend-modeling, and the golden mean  
is molecular pop-gastronomy.  
Since the worm committed suicide I can't gossip  
and I can't one-leg-it anymore in zero-gravity clubs  
and shout 'fake pharmacy' at everyone  
that resembles The Sexiest Animated  
Lacuna and sits in a stealthy one-man VTOL;  
Monday and  
Don't Be A Pube Day will be dedicated to  
Environment and the Hobo's Choice  
and Cheap Circumcision  
and the Word with the Most Definitions –  
generally doing good.  
While everyone is being fun and meaningful I'm funereal;  
I mourn and look at my piss puddle and  
see my reflection in the kidney stone mosaic  
talk to my now-vacated  
worm corpse in the organ manufacturer's mouth.  
Yes, missing the wriggling, the small-planet bloating  
post-voidance  
has been a warning unto itself: it wouldn't be  
cool having truffles and worm vacations with you bas-  
tards.

## Arkham Asylum

I feel bad  
about your broadcast,  
Mariner:  
oh latex gorilla, search  
and rescue dog, you  
marketed an overrated  
moonlanding  
oh and two bottles of champagne  
and a trip to the zoo,  
hodgepodged  
between crossfaded IQ facts  
about guilt dissonance  
disinfectant;  
it's best to be disinfected  
with a buff cognitive  
tan.  
You got screamed  
at: i.e. people in Arkham Asylum  
collectively suddenly smitten by  
Earthquake Allergy –  
you tinkered on  
their magnetic fields  
you stamped the passports  
of telekinetic  
Acme Asylum denizens.  
Freefall,  
pornographers!  
Inefficiency in Wave:  
now the tsunami  
may stimulate a laundry room fungus's  
occult nasal tickling  
and a haunted spectral  
query as to whether  
algae is television-green  
'how do you  
detect it?'  
'why can't The Couchbug Detector  
come in a

flatscreen box...?’  
and shall  
‘brain for Biofuels adverts feature  
in spherical videos of  
forgetting?’  
Hi-res flyover, brain scan church –  
oh, Church of Stray Dogs:  
look down upon us, toenail:  
slide painfully between  
Haitian dating sites  
say  
it’s OK to be stupid  
save the day, tasty root vegetable.  
Pray for the mad and  
forget, Anderson Cooper  
go back to watching television  
and forget, it’s cool.

## Sex Puppeteer, Another Mutation

French chanteuse and water-ski accidentee Charlotte Gainsbourg is starring in an ad for pills that prevent rape.

This just on the heels of her controversial entry in a dog pageant. She had entered said pageant without her dog – causing fans to turn away and shield their faces with flat white-knuckled scandalized hands in shame.

A shocked spokesman for a terrorist organization that has for decades comfortably employed so-called ‘rape pills’ to wage ding dongs with Darwin said that he was ‘ashamed’ and ‘affronted’ about the ‘glamorization’ of the pill. Irish slut and panjandrum Dorothy Whitey was rumored to have given up hopes of becoming a desert warrior, sacrificing her unfortunate sand talent in favor of full devotion to hunting down the lovable and musically blessed Frenchwoman.

A gadgeted, daggered, epically bearded hobbit had been in the process of writing a fan letter to the singer-songwriter and actress – a hobby said to have caused him carpal tunnel and deep-bone thrombosis (had been in the process of writing ‘Miss you – ’) – when he saw the riling advertisement; now his dagger and his beard have swiveled 360-degrees from salivating devotion to crimson enmity.

And sex puppeteer Rudolph Grundheim announced in a statement that he felt betrayed, as well, and in the extreme: he was in the middle of a meta-statement in court in which he confessed to the crime of genocide on all cheerleaders when tears gushed from his eyes upon hearing, via Pod cast on his Walkman, the full threnody of the advertisement. ‘What would the kitten want with my nose glue?’ crazy hag lady Elizabeth Wankerderry during psychoanalysis on a Technicolor beanbag asked her therapist, pointedly – when over the little radio behind his shoulder the ad aired barefacedly and with the sort of delicious FM crackles master architect Pat Strumpet Flopsom, proponent of the question ‘Why not build digital prisons?’ was famously known to have been sexually aroused by. (Said master architect practically killed himself



when he saw the ad.) Various trees and shrubs  
of the genus storm sausage flat-out perished when  
the Frenchwoman started playing in ads for pills  
purported to actually pretty effectively prevent rape.

**Serena M Tome**

**Sketch #2 Gabriela Mistral-The Goblet**

“Delivering the goblet, the new sun  
on my throat, I said:  
My arms are now free as vagrant clouds,  
and I loll on crests of the hills,  
rocked with allure of valleys below.”

*Saffron colored glory waits in the cavity  
of your womb to be impregnated with bliss  
hands rotate clockwise comforting the promise  
of what might become gladness if not deferred by unwanted interruption-  
pain*

“It was a lie, my alleluia. Look at me.  
My eyes are lowered to empty hands.  
I walk slowly, without my diamond of water.  
I go in silence. I carry no treasure.  
And in my breast and through my veins  
falls my blood, struck with anguish and fear.”

*Venus' raiments lay in dots upon emptiness  
What should have been is not and what is cannot be revoked.*

*Your lips were like razors that caused your destiny to  
hemorrhage*

Sketch #22: Hanging Curtains, after Robert Creeley's *The Warning*

“for love— I would  
split open your head and put  
a candle in  
behind the eyes.”

cupped hands  
bend into an eclipse  
as the heart lay slain  
behind squamous eyes

squall rages through  
earth —relentless—

there is no antibiotic  
to quench  
the affects of this  
-fire-

incalculable “I love yous”  
feed vultures

whose shrill beaks  
suppe on crumbs  
of fictitious bravado

-!-/

-?-/

-...-

**Sketch #17: Deliquesce, after Pablo Neruda's Sonnet XC**

“I dreamed that I died: that I felt cold close to me;  
and all that was left of my life was contained in your presence:  
your mouth was the daylight and the dark of my world,  
your skin, the republic I shaped for myself with my kisses”

*liquid bronze immobilized in mid air  
clothed scarcely with silver beards'  
placid movements...*

*the feeling of immortality creeps  
over sky like roving beams from isolated lighthouses  
searching intently...along the lines of demarcation...  
elucidated souls swarm  
in schools...gusts of gypsies await at the intersection  
of living and...silence*

**Sketch #26: The Hiding Place, after Felino A. Soriano's Painters' Exhalations 705**

“Handcuffs  
wear their mirrored steel on  
limbs' inability to  
properly hide.”

*Tumbleweed roaming*

*Nonchalant paths*

*Where kindness is accursed*

*And beauty is misused*

*For commercial profit*

*The anatomy of a singular*

*Sentiment contains cloistered*

*Embers of elation*

*Chained—deep—under a bed of*

*Hourglass' sand*

*Constrained by a quotidian*

*Dominatrix's whip—*

*A merciless overseer*

**Sophie Sills**

**Pound for Pound**

Put your hand across my mouth  
and box tender

difficulties                with flesh

sinew, stomp and say for what

you misdemeanor in salt                pith,  
for                bone crack  
bring your torn trousers                down

untrue everyflesh  
beat sweet my faithless

my                soft-seething impulse  
broken fingered,                arms twisted

half-skinned fix

## God's Spine as the Axis of Symmetry

Children see it  
not an opening        sky  
but    us  
measuring ourselves    against

or metaphor for an inconsolable

absolute existence        so

we are fish without eyes,        governed by  
gobble and swill

swimming        in the patience  
of our unclean

children see it, this  
space        falling  
through the fingers  
part of the unfinished present  
a sense        something human will leave the body

## Acts of Contrition

Mary hovers  
drunk            in the act

glimpses of tongue/ traded for grace

submit my insides

you lay a hand on my            leakage  
you lay a hand of good  
                                 intentions on my tumors

but what use to you is my sick            struggling liver?

half loosened, wild with tongues

begging darkly of you



## Archery and the Ugly Horse

You count on  
buckled ribs or substitution for without

bleeding horsemeat

what to do when  
arrows in the flank  
sickens the meat

longing is not a state of consciousness  
but a leather belt cinched

skin and slop  
my heart is the shrug of useless

eyes

on my intestines weighed

against appetite

**Scott Sweeney**

This Storm is a State (its Beauty, Eternal)

-- *after Sands*

Ferns in the gutter were just beginning to brown—a Death befriended,

as round bodies bloated and gathered for easy rolling to a greater unsafety.

The rain swoons itself down as a blushing, never-was virgin.

Oh, come, minty-fresh, cherished destruction and spin us toward the tornadic darkscape of your mangled appropriations.

Say *put it in*.  
Say *do it inside me*.

## The Dinge

Every crevice of my dry hands  
is black with the meat of chlorine-disintegrated gaskets  
from inside our toilet tank—  
disassembled, upended—  
the greened screw bolts removed,  
exposing more stains  
like tree rings—a history written in iron deposits  
and arsenic at less than five parts per billion—  
like me at eleven, crashing my X-wing fighter  
into a different toilet with my mother screaming  
for me not to do that *again*—  
perhaps a Dagobah where I'd gone  
to face my fears  
in a swamp-borne alcove of perpetually wet trees—  
some distant cousins of the majestic cypress.

    This is the test, my path to the Dark Side.  
I'm James Earl Jones with a vocoder,  
my black hands extended toward your throat.  
You rebellious porcelain, I will gut you  
and fill you with water and force and purpose.





## We Touch like Cripples

With arms still working, moving freely, we  
crawl to the corner of the room to eat  
on a table with legs as useless as ours.

The food is good, so we smash it  
into our faces and regret  
not having savored it longer. More

cranberry sauce, marmite, and rice I offer, but  
you say, "The dark is melting," push away the plate  
and clasp your hands together as if in prayer. I would

ask you what this means, but  
"cold indigo and black-gap maggots"  
are the best that I could

get from you, staring  
into the table.  
"Who has dismembered us?"

you say.

**Sam Silva**

**THINGS THE COMPUTER BROUGHT IN AUTUMN**

My friend  
as if in memory of the dead!  
German opera! screaming behind  
the closed doors  
like a masturbating child!  
A flickering screen  
soon righted to the blank  
word perfect page  
and the poem's disturbed metaphors.  
For all of its flashy decadence  
...this is a tired indifferent age  
...one where the mind sank  
in an icy pool  
...and the end  
was dead  
and cool...

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

## Steve Roggenbuck

reading marx on a bench in september in michigan

you

are gone

your voice

for lunch i had peanuts

i dont talk much

now

the clouds

you



every time i read carpe diem poems i do something i regret

i think about yr voice + i can barely

stay in the chair

my dad calls to tell me about the  
bean harvest

i feel pain for everyone who lives  
cars pass outside

tuesday i rode my bike down mission to gaylord street + took it west + looked at the sun

40 years harvesting beans

*gather ye rosebuds while ye may*

my favorite part of late summer is  
early autumn

yesterday i looked at a flower for 15 minutes  
i thought maybe im ignoring life  
maybe im the  
only one whos not.

an airplane

jupiters in the south my father is tarping a truck in ruth michigan + talking to me on the phone.  
i feel pain for everyone who lives

its september 10th 2009, it will never  
be this day again

**poem beginning with a line by ts eliot who was alluding to king lear i am pretty sure**

O O O O

today is my grandmothers funeral and its almost raining in helena michigan and i am a poet and i dont feel anything

i ask my dad if the corn harvest is over. it is way over, my dad says. the priest says 'whoever eats this bread will live forever.' i think of when i saw you on december first and the moon was almost full and i pointed to it and you said 'yeah,' and you put a flower in your hair and you said 'its december.' i think of the time i drove home from the library next to finch fieldhouse and sigur rós was playing on the portable cd player in my truck with a tape adapter. i saw an elephant walking out of a circus truck into the parking lot of finch fieldhouse and a man was holding a white stick

my uncles are singing the song 'how great thou art' and its not about my grandmother its about god

the priest says 'my flesh is true food, my blood is true drink.' i feel ironic. i think of the time i calld you on a saturday morning in october crying autumn is beautiful and life is suffering. i think of the line i wrote, '21 years old learning how to cry again this is what it means to grow up male in the united states.' i think of the video i saw five months ago of a dog being thrown into a garbage compactor

the hymnal says 'wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the lord.' i look at the title page, it was printed in 2009

today is my grandmothers funeral and the priest is sprinkling water on my grandmothers casket and my dads cousin is singing about jesus christ on the microphone. i was born in ruth michigan and everyone here believes in god

## Sankar Roy

After his domestic *yaars* called Mirza “promising”, “a maker of slighter works”, Mirza went overseas with a chunk of agony near his throat. There, within his *sharab*-sedated heart, Mirza began unfolding towering creations in line with other overseas-dignified arts.

He stopped calling himself a domestic, changed his intonation and discovered the *jamaal* of the adjectives & proverbs. He sparked the flame of his verbally-irregular rhetoric, mesmerizing his distant, ancestral relatives with his cathedral thoughts, found himself a keen & viable maid-come-lover who also found herself no other lovers than Mirza’s hyper-creative soul.

Overnight, Mirza made himself respectable, a household name and a householder. He frittered away many warm-beer hours with a royal agent for a buy-one-get-one-free Knighthood before he started missing his bucolic friends from back home who, so sick of their own naiveté, always live on the verge of leaving.

*yaars* = friends  
*sharab* = wine  
*jamaal* = beauty

## Great Moth

Now that Mirza has finally found his wings, he will break through the cocoon's crack and drift in the wind dense enough to carry his weight. Lastly Mirza can say — “Yes, these hills are slighter in stature than the cloud's castle and the rain is born in the womb of a rainbow.” Oh, the glory of demise is not in rebirth but in the contentment of dew droplets frozen at the tips of the grass blades.

Give Mirza a morning to recast his shadow over the summer-worn flowers, hand him a canvas of clear light. He will invent a universe of forgotten color. Mirza is the last in the lineage of the moth gods. Only he can buzz: Relinquish, vanquish and vaporize the continuation of the milk-white stars.

## Romance Writer

Mirza's pseudonym is Apollo for moonlighting as a romance writer. Apollo narrates the saga growing between a dude and a dud, pitches the pages filled with their love lore toward the *maabtaab*, fill the ears of women, telling them how wondrous they are, how full their mouths are, how grand their chests' panorama, how much they are craved in the hearts of every man. Then he cons every man's mind. Apollo utters phrases through the man's mouth which make no sense, describes a sunset silent with couples embracing like fate's linkage while whispering earful of lies to one another.

*maabtaab = moon*

## D Day

Mirza doesn't pay any attention to what the editor has to say. Instead Mirza scribbles ghazals, *suras* vertically down in Japanese style over the words that are already there — profit, target, returns — while the editor babbles his breath away about some urgency to sell more books.

The editor delivers his final word the way a mullah gets rid of the evil spirits but Mirza, in his over-poetic mind, wonders about wandering into a clearing he recently discovered: a circular ground surrounded by trees standing like Bastille guards.

Mirza plans to sit there in the middle on his coiled-cobra pose, head up and scream out loud, *No more will I have to deal with that fucker.*

*suras = verses*

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

**Stacy Kidd**

[This is a true story]

This is a true story.

These little leaflet  
branches        blown down after the last storm.

First sky in a year.        Green

sky, brown  
green.

[Wild erness where]

Wild erness where

Oklahoma was torn  
down suspension

bridge & humid.

It's the fireflies,

you know. It's humid.



**[What family]**

What family  
is your home is

your own best  
animal. If

the pasture  
sold for.

If the cow's dead back  
becomes

scaffold. We become,  
we stand

planted. If we  
placed it.

Not that we  
missed it or didn't

simply passing. If  
yellow acreage

& the hearts  
had it & we had

closed out our eyes.

## Outside this house

Heave-

like, or

plenty.

Simple

roots          shootup from    under

decking, why

I would pick them.

**Steve Gilmartin**

**Mistranslations of Cesar Vallejo's Trilce**

1

Who's gonna grab that aunt by the horns who hasn't already  
tested the islands for functioning vans?

A little more consideration  
delivered in drips of slowed time  
that turn into a major aguanoduct  
simple calibrated grief  
that scorches the bearer  
inside his prejudiced heart,  
a dirty prison, where luminous thoughts walk  
in circles.

A little more consideration,  
and one dunking, before the afternoon is seized  
BY THE MOST CLEAR-HEADED BURROWERS

And this peninsula up on one elbow  
watching all its old scarlet leads dissolving perpetually  
in equilibrium's line of fire.

# I

Quién hace tanta bulla, y ni deja  
testar las islas que van quedando.

Un poco más de consideración  
en cuanto será tarde, temprano,  
y se aquilatará mejor  
el guano, la simple calabrina tesórea  
que brinda sin querer,  
en el insular corazón,  
salobre alcatraz, a cada hialóidea  
grupada.

Un poco más de consideración,  
y el mantillo líquido, seís de la tarde  
DE LOS MAS SOBERBIOS BEMOLES.

Y la península párase  
por la espalda, abozaleada, impertérrita  
en la línea mortal del equilibrio.

He encountered a girl  
in the street, and she embraced me.  
Listen, deserted one, the hallowed and the hall,  
don't go there to remember.

This girl is my firstborn. Hey, the tooth fairy  
is tall and has entered with the hands of my father  
as if he had rebounded from the tomb.  
And for the desolate march of the missing,  
the sun is a shadow-blown tent flap,  
three negotiates its way into two.

“He's my house,”  
I was told. In which the children hiccup  
the house of the defunct aunt.

He's their house.  
He's their house.

Years slowly stretch the latitudes,  
green plains going to those who  
have olly olly oxen free joined at the neck,  
because all of what's gone, of candor, is like smoke.

## XI

He encontrado a una niña  
en la calle, y me ha abrazado.  
Equis, disertada, quien la halló y la halle,  
no la va a recordar.

Esta niña es mi prima. Hoy, al tocarle  
el talle, mis manos han entrado en su edad  
como en par de mal rebocados sepulcros.  
Y por la misma desolación marchóse,  
delta al sol teneblosa,  
trina entre los dos.

“Me he casado”,  
me dice. Cuando lo que hicimos de niños  
en casa de la tía difunta.

Se ha casado.  
Se ha casado.

Tardes años latitudinales,  
qué verdaderas ganas nos ha dado  
de jugar a los toros, a las yuntas,  
pero todo de engaños, de candor, como fue.

999 calories.

Rumbbb...Trrrapprrr rrach...chaz  
Snake U turning intestines  
engraved on the eardrum.

It's like the Hi-Lo's. But no.

It's like something that works and that doesn't.  
It's like the perfect medium.

1000 calories.

Blueness and smiles under great pressure from  
a gringo sky. Below  
the solar pavement and the white wheel of the cascades  
all frigid.

Remake the cuckoo: Foououourthooooofjuuuuuly...  
the autodisplay turns, but only the sedative moves  
hastily constructing a beach.

Air, air! High and low!

If meaning = heat (\_\_\_\_\_ Big Stuff  
don't know nothing.

And what was a soft plume  
of writing becomes hard dancing electrons.

Thirty-three trillion three hundred and thirty  
three calories.

XXXII

999 calorías  
Rumbbb...Trrrapprrr rrach...chaz  
Serpentínica u del dizcochero  
engirafada al tímpano.

Quién como los hielos. Pero no.  
Quién como lo que va ni más ni menos.  
Quién como el justo medio.

1,000 calorías.  
Azulea y ríe su gran cachaza  
el firmamento gringo. Baja  
el sol empavado y le alborota los cascos  
al más frío.

Remeda al cuco: Rooooooooeeeis...  
tierno autocarril, móvil de sed,  
que corre hasta la playa.

Aire, aire! Hielo!  
Si al menos el calor (-----Mejor  
no digo nada.

Y hasta la misma pluma  
con que escribo por último se troncha.

Treinta y tres trillones trescientos treinta  
y tres calorías.



Which lit up like phosphorous!

Me oh my, some mess. Listen  
how funny the clump is come unstuck.  
Listen to one more, we're all so legal  
especially the guys in undercover  
see me simply as something in a boat. They're conveying me.

Not so good of the sun to love the taste of the dead  
deposit it all by distributing  
between shades, lavishly,  
not hope for myself or for the flip side.  
Nor the demands that desert themselves  
enter and shoot out the end.

A big bakery sits in the eye  
a llama-wool hat. And pages of the curious  
scene of the shin's undeniable value  
sexual arousal, transcendence.  
And Mamo birds black as coffee, yes, they're late,  
so, lacking sugar, we faltered,  
bread without tequila. That's where we've gone.

But, it's yes, the arrows turn back toward the barred.  
The healthiest thing is to hide in a pie. Or face front: march!

XXXIX

Quién ha encendido fósforo!  
    Mésome. Sonrío  
a columpio por motivo.  
Sonrío aún más, si llegan todos  
a ver las guías sin color  
y a mí siempre en punto. Qué me importa.

Ni ese bueno del Sol que, al morirse de gusto,  
lo desposta todo para distribuirlo  
entre las sombras, el pródigo,  
ni él me esperaría a la otra banda.  
Ni los demás que paran solo  
entrando y saliendo.

Llama con toque de retina  
el gran panadero. Y pagamos en señas  
curiosísimas el tibio valor innegable  
horneado, trascendente.  
Y tomamos el café, ya tarde,  
con deficiente azúcar que ha faltado,  
y pan sin mantequilla. Qué se va a hacer.

Pero, eso sí, los aros receñidos, barreados.  
La salud va en un pie. De frente: marchen!

The death of circular sustenance  
has whitened your blood, which isn't even blood.  
Self-hell is gargantuan.  
Because you're my quiet reifier.

Murmuring let's go for broke. They're calling.  
We're going to reach the value of lead,  
and hasten to contradict me as  
vain, but costly titles chain you to meaning  
between, yes, ambient price tags; contradict me  
as well tamed, but we're all the children  
of trapped animals.

With intent, redoubled police  
(whom others see as my quiet reifiers)  
unnerve themselves and us, we who tune in to palaces,  
cloned comedy,  
from membrane to membrane,  
anvil  
vs  
anvil.

XLI

La Muerte de rodillas mana  
su sangre blanca que no es sangre.  
Se huele a garantía.  
Pero ya me quiero reír.

Murmúrase algo por allí. Callan.  
Alguien silba valor de lado,  
y hasta se contaría en par  
veintitrés costillas que se echan de menos  
entre sí, a ambos costados; se contaría  
en par también, toda la fila  
de trapecios escoltas.

En tanto; el redoblante policial  
(otra vez me quiero reír)  
se desquita y nos tunde a palos,  
dale y dale,  
de membrana a membrana,  
tas  
con  
tas.

Later, the female cousin detains you  
in the middle of your communist food;  
and you remember how they killed your hams  
with neither lawyer nor water, only pure sadness.

More, quite simply, you humiliate yourself flying  
in a streaked captivity that's even sadder.  
And there's no ability to taste, just your becoming  
childlike in this mess of leftwing food.

Later, the cousin begs you  
and you say under your breath that you've become sordid  
shattered pieces tainted by aliens.

I'm a witch burning at the stake; because there's no  
bravery being the servant of translocation.  
Ah! we might as well be serving up nothing.

XLVI

La tarde cocinera se detiene  
ante la mesa donde tú comiste;  
y muerta de hambre tu memoria viene  
sin probar ni agua, de lo puro triste.

Mas, como siempre, tu humildad se aviene  
a que le brinden la bondad más triste.  
Y no quieres gustar, que ves quien viene  
filialmente a la mesa en que comiste.

La tarde cocinera te suplica  
y te llora en su delatal que aún sórdido  
nos empieza a querer de oírnos tánto.

Yo hago esfuerzos también; porque no hay  
valor para servirse de estas aves.  
Ah! qué nos vamos a servir ya nada.

## SJ Fowler

### (rexroth's knuckle)

and she is lovely  
and has red hair - Apollinaire

untorped, her hide-red  
springs free allowing a foxes  
underbelly to pattern  
upon her skin presumably  
her whiter skull looks  
up more often than the others

taking notes, preempting forgetfulness  
that will deny the prattlings  
of the speaker, while a netball  
is struck against the turf  
trying to alight the reluctance  
of the religious college

divides my attention  
from a lap matted too  
I surrender with perfumed  
foxfur. Imagine, as she crosses  
herself, she might lisp  
my name, her intention tame

**(how hopeful, how hopeful is the landscape of Southern Spain)**

though we are barely friends we holidayed  
together and when you left the room to shower I  
milled, I grasped the witness throat, and  
threatened her should she tell you of what I  
was to do to the pajamas you left on the bed  
I sniffed the crotch they were not yet dry  
the other girl soiled her underwear through fear  
having witnessed what I warned her she would  
have witnessed and not be allowed to speak of  
which led to more difficulties when I had to tear  
them from her and smell them and then prise  
open her legs which is how you found us when  
you came back into the room from the bathroom  
and got the wrong impression because the only  
reason I went on holiday was that you would  
come with me and that I might get a chance at  
your used clothes and we might live together



**(Brotherhood of Odin)**

fire is not appreciated so Loki comes free  
Odin, snug in a blue cloak, hides

and huddling from the camera, explains  
mythology is Eliadec. Fenris is unleashed

father is distracted by two cars  
engines explode as he has them collide

Balder sleeps on the mountain undisturbed  
Fenris eats the sun and the world goes dark

Surtr is all that can be seen, the size of the  
disc, pregnant, a broken arm

he cannot get his motor started, he has tripped  
over varg and that light too is extinguished.

**(Ekelof)**

I have a travelling circus  
the support act is a  
lecture series of obscure public speakers  
I set them their topics  
they have met in  
private  
to denounce my control  
I am overbearing, they say  
'even a man who can't pretend  
remembrance  
to be the purpose of his poetry  
is slighted when  
totally forgotten'  
how do you know who is remembering  
what & when?  
the whole of Orebro might be thinking of his verse  
this very minute  
I doubt that  
they are dancing alone  
before their laptop computers  
miming  
quarter naked  
icing trailing a line from their  
chin to the their groins  
so quiet  
make them recite Ekelof  
off pat  
indelible in memory

**(later writings)**

boredom leads to every possible kind of ungenuity - F.D

who is qualified?

the relentless hymn of a skinrash is certificated  
lacing waterslush with dopamine  
dust and air and skin rendered into a wafer

dreys of mouse dropping  
dry pithy and grey  
a gouge in the net of sleep

for more black is coming in, streaming  
through the millipede crack, more night

a coinslot, in collusion with pistons, blinking  
the vehicle of somnolence wheeled

feeding off  
suppressing the portents  
of its overwhelming

so idleness has lost its light again  
paralysing the pause  
appetites rapid or starved

the physic anorex  
soto its seeping  
I send greeting

beneath the leys.  
And we have had to lead the way unailing,  
to come against the canals of mixing screens

the unnoticed growth of a paunch  
boredom sits  
beneath our coats

**(the clearing hides)**

to live authentically is to live in full  
awareness of the nothingness of one's self  
Martin Heidegger

wanting it alert, ears up, we skin over the  
lightning that collects around the peeling blade  
incising the breastbone of the bear and running  
down to the anus, listen to the whispers of clouds  
underwater, the melting black armour of water  
dregs of the red cannot escape the body of the  
maw, keep the leg bones attached to the toes  
the toes keep attached to the hip, secure the  
clearing, use firebreaks. Keep the flesh in paws  
the bear teaches her lovers her secret, leave  
the wings. No chemicals. It is in the hiding that  
she offers herself to me most truly. Mounted  
on my wall, the fourfold, the worlds behind

**Santiago del Dardano Turann**

**THE NIGHT CREW**

An unknown Night Crew works behind the dreams  
Where life and death are each stitched into seams  
Of spirit's everlasting dancing flow  
Between the worlds above and those below.

The phosphorescent astral world curves on  
Beneath the golden pillars of the dawn  
Where pathways rise through black shapes in a forest  
To places of rebirth, or pain, or rest.

It's while they're sleeping that they're on patrol  
In shadow realms protecting wandering souls  
From prowling demon creatures' hungry violence  
That feed upon the ghosts' ethereal substance.

The Night Crew hunts the edges of the deep  
Abyss of mist and stone, both sharp and steep,  
That lay just on the outside of awareness  
Continually with us just like consciousness.

## SKY BRIDGES

A poetic vision seen during an acupuncture session, January 23, 2010

The curving sandstone bridges rise  
Like light spring haze into the skies  
To distant spirals lost deep in  
The waves of blue beyond man's vision.

Art deco pylons stretch below,  
All glossy smooth like water's flow  
Down unmapped falls to touch a darkness  
That feeds an ancient wilderness.

The bridges dwarf hard shattered cliffs,  
Long broken by wind's wild riffs,  
With symmetry of balanced tension  
To heights undreamt of by the mountains.

Are they unfolding ropes and links  
To other worlds kept by some sphinx  
Who sits in meditation burning  
In high ice caps of twilight gleaming?

## A HYMN TO ARTEMIS

Far-shooting mistress of meadows and forests  
You are the venerable lady of beasts;  
Artemis, twin of all-seeing Apollo,  
Huntress who wields the moon silvery bow.  
Truly a goddess, your beauty's a marvel:  
Luminous silver and liquid bright marble  
Wrapped in a chiton of flowing white mist  
Bearing a diamond snake wrapped round your wrist  
From which your arrows fly out from your car  
Drawn by four stags with the fury of centaurs.  
White dogs with red ears all bounce round the archeress  
Rushing before the sweet offspring of old Okeanos;  
Forty-nine nymphs with the wings of young cranes  
Follow the goddess with song as her train.

You are the grassy earth plows have not cut,  
Forests whose trees are not felled for men's huts  
Pure as a northern stream born from the thawing  
Ice with the buds of the first days of Spring.  
Gate of the East, you are there at each birth,  
Gate of the West as the passage of death.  
Culling protectoress playful and cruel  
Bringing untamed things beneath your own rule  
You are the Great and the Dread Key of Nature  
For in your arrows lay primeval power:  
Keres of sickness will flee from the bright  
Flash of those arrows in which you delight  
But if the shafts are unleashed in your wrath  
Then they will bring on us sudden swift death.

Virgin aloof and indifferent to tie  
Woven from feeling that's weak in your eyes  
Hunting through Heaven or running through fields  
With the uncanny blue torch that you wield  
Guide those who love and respect woodland paths,  
Keeping them from what provokes your dread wrath.

## NIGHT WINDS

The night winds ramble over rooftops  
With heavy paw prints on the tiles,  
And leave their chilly trails with claws  
That sink into the rooms below.

Deep howling shakes the windows through  
Which passing glances eye all warmth  
With hateful greed eliciting  
A snarl that kicks against the air.

In funnels slashing at the moon  
They scatter flakes of skin that settle  
As icy tissue on the cars  
That Dawn dissolves to fragile dew.

The exiled pack then leave their lonely  
Sad notes to echo down the stucco  
Pale canyon of the morning streets  
As streetlights dim to hide themselves.



**Stephen Baraban**

**After Robert Creeley**

To be in love is also like sneaking  
A thermometer into the mouth  
Of the honeyed object of  
One's attention.

Ah! freaked, she might fume and sniff  
Regarding unsent bouquets,  
Or you, pard, pace and flail  
Regarding well-deserved Favors

While the fierce core is  
What *fevers*  
Also within her may  
Stream.

as any april may

April warmth

breaks through  
piled skies

that the trumpets of the daffodils  
can flourish

in celebration of

themselves and their

intrepid peers the

isolate harbingers of

full floral plenitude's

coming spectrum

of majestic cleanliness

while quite enough

birdspeech trebles

deft heaven's

burgeoning

sweetness.

## Soap Up Era\*

Against the sweet obligato of  
shower water's  
  plink plank plack pluck,  
my sour but still highly-attentive Soul  
goes forth widely and warily  
to witness the Overly Washed Masses'  
unstinting labors,  
their frightened and proud carols  
blending into one vast dreary Washcloth Chorus;  
so now my Mind is straining  
to re-individualize the myriad voices,  
focusing with enough effort to  
discover in this  
sorry songbook  
with pleasure at least one  
vibrant and witty couplet,  
i.e., "I gave my love my arm without any pit,  
I gave my love my tongue without any spit."

---

\*re (rubber) dux



BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

## Shimmy Boyle

### **I Think Bees Have Got The Right Idea**

Just imagine  
That your job  
Is to rub your entire body  
On a flower one hundred times your size  
All so you can go home at the end of the day  
And make honey.

## **I Believe In The Existence of Strawberries**

There are turtles sleeping in a garden somewhere  
While candles burn on top of their shells  
And an old record plays the blues  
And two people dance  
As though one of their bodies is the sky  
And the other  
The storm sweeping across it.

## **The Trees Haven't Yet Figured Out Why We Get Lonely**

The trash man sleeps on a bed of burning candles.  
He keeps moonlight in his pocket,  
And when he dreams it sings to him.  
His teeth are peach pits.  
His collarbone, an aluminum can.  
He wears his halo in his smile.  
In the middle of the night, from beneath the freeway,  
He listens to the motorcycles whine.  
And if it is late enough  
They sound to him like bed sheets  
Turning beneath a lover's back  
As she rolls toward him,  
An ocean of softness  
Wanting to touch him  
Even in her sleep.

## **The Opposite of Home**

I am standing motionless  
In the chattering teeth of morning,  
Holding out two hands filled with emptiness,  
Making wishes like friends,  
Watching the sun spread across the sky like a smile.

In my bloodstream  
Are trapdoors to the tops of trees.

I would give both my wrists  
To the moon  
If it would teach me to sing songs  
Made of water.



**Robert Wexelblatt**

**FREE FLOATING**

She was christened one November day.  
A bitter widow smashed a bottle  
of absinthe on the quay,  
anathematized her grip,  
grandchildren, the dismal  
drizzle, then the ship.  
At length she ground down the ways  
with a kind of constipated  
ripping, reluctant to be hugged  
by the sea; her shuddering surprised  
the men who hollered as she sloshed  
obliquely, tipped, damn near capsized.

No topsail or tiller;  
no motor or mooring;  
black ballast below,  
ten tons of turbid tar

wallowing waywardly;  
huge empty hulk heaving  
on the deep, just drifting  
in godforsaken gray.

Her sailing conjured no crowds, bands, banners;  
stevedores rubbed their brows with oily wrists  
while the pilot clambered nervously to  
the bridge. One inebriated salt cast  
a wintry eye, declared her ugly as  
a spinster's goiter. Sure enough, that  
maiden voyage never closed; she's yet  
to find a port without portent, fixed haven  
or a straitened berth. For her there's been  
no wedding night, no coupling with a land  
of husbandmen. Where is her lading, her  
*Zuflucht*? Ages have passed. Who can make sense  
of life without anchorage or purchase?

We glimpsed her at three bells  
there, rolling in the swells.  
On bad nights she's still spied  
pitching on black tides.  
Our horizon's haunted  
by this ghost, unwanted.  
What became of her crew  
nobody ever knew.

**Patet Atri Janua**

Now's she's gone and got cancer. Cancer.

Through these years apart, and all the ones  
before, I liked to imagine her coming  
to visit me in my final illness,  
warily opening the steel door, her  
breath just catching at the sight of my  
state, taking reluctant steps across the  
linoleum, how the starched hospital  
sheets would sigh beneath her as she sat  
tentatively, sideways, the way people  
do, four fingers stroking my mottled  
hand to console me, her still, silent face  
saying everything I'd ever longed to hear.

I thought that would be terrible enough.

## GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY DAY

You will never  
most probably never  
become the grandee you mixed  
up in your haunted  
humid hippodrome  
you too will settle  
bake cakes of joy  
a matzoh contentment  
flattened by three  
tsps of resignation  
you will steadily adapt  
to your planet its televisions  
flesh of its creatures  
seeds of its rape  
come to lean on routine  
love pain indignation  
panic ennui rage  
despair over doorknobs  
bored by three meals  
and one roof if  
only you can get them  
entertained by the evening news  
by the diurnal deranged  
nonplussed by the nocturnal  
lose touch with noumena

hush before well turned limbs

catch trolleys cold cancer

and bodily betrayed

turn a pendulum

damning blessing

## Musing At The Outdoor Early Music Festival

To be the Bach-begetting race  
long after we and earth are dead  
we shot his preludes into space—  
bragging, as Lewis Thomas said.

Music is math plus mystery,  
organized improvisation,  
its source beyond both history  
and Euterpe's inspiration

in misery, collaboration,  
a hundred mouths, a single brain  
too dead to hear an ovation,  
brightness of trumpets, plash of rain.

Whatever we feel we can sing and by  
that singing cause others to feel; our art's  
a looping feedback of joy and despair,  
stateliness and laughter, ample harvests in  
soothed pain, rowdy glee, agreeable shocks  
of scintillation. Shamed by so many  
of our acts, we're always proud of our stories,  
our joyful noises, the ways we crank up  
the mute rainbows of our lives by dreaming

plots, harmonies, at once ephemeral  
and permanent like extinct creatures sealed  
in the amber of dark vanished forests.

## **One Consolation**

As we grow older so the world grows  
more complex, and more forgetful too,  
as if wisdom and ignorance joined hands,  
pressed cheeks, and staggered through a clumsy dance  
to time's swift jigs and slow sarabandes.

Life's banal days and undistinguished nights  
must not be despised since they're all we can  
return to from our odysseys, our flights  
through exotic latitudes, from our dreams.

Though quotidian tunes weary our ears  
with routine rhythms punctuating years,  
such music's always sweeter than it seems.



**Robert Stoddard**

**Fortune Smiles**

The street light glows on the early hours  
As the doors unlock and then close  
Conversations are friendly as the steam rises  
Every hair is neatly in place  
All the shoes are worn

I've come to labor in the clothes of my caste  
Selling the time of my life  
Numbers touch bare backs in a lustful tango  
My eyes are blinking red  
Trees turn into paper and kite into the trash

Some of us have moved through the hive  
And wait to die with their titles  
There's heavier air flowing at the bottom  
Draw it in and sleep to the top  
One day they'll notice an empty chair

I put on my mask and drone my lines  
Traveling quickly through picture frames  
Someone signs a notice  
I'm too young to know that I'm so lucky to win  
Everything is renewed again

## **Inside the fruit and beyond the seed is another tree**

The novas in space  
Are like fireworks exploding in the depths of the deep  
Black infinitum of the like we've never realized  
Sparkling warm in the flint striking stones  
Spreading out on the ground  
Onto Earth  
The same sand as everywhere

Awakened from frozen sleep  
I imagine  
And enter the stream and the root  
Swimming the saps and the woods  
Stretching towards light in the race to live  
Into a branch that invites my place

Many cycles of being the leaf  
Of changing color  
Cold and heat  
I clung to the stem, but fell to the soil below  
In our time we are offered to the world  
When we inhabit the fruit and the seed

A hand will come to take me  
And I will be gone  
Inside the fruit and beyond the seed is another tree  
Where I've sown and reap  
The memories of you and me  
Where nothing can change  
What's always been

## **When it's gone**

Fill me in  
When everything is going on  
People like yourself won't be waiting for long  
Me, I don't have enough to miss it  
When it's gone  
I'm just a signature  
And a date

The pressure that pushes out the pedals  
Creates the breaks that come so quick  
Your wristwatch is gleaming  
And screaming out ticks

I've got my roomful of twilight  
You have your handful of earth  
In between the still life memories  
Of our own childbirth  
I'll always care about what happened  
It wasn't our fault

**R Pang**

**The Jury Party**

My body is full of checks and balances. It never lets me forget -- it metes out to me my punishment.

I'll never be free of this judgmental body.  
that is...  
unless...

until! it decrees the death penalty. But  
even then, even with me strapped into my own electric chair--  
I void my bowels, erase my self, prepare for separation from my body--  
There is always a chance

Always a chance that I will grant me a stay of execution.

And the spectators sigh in disappointment, they say  
"We came to watch a spectacle.  
We came to have a party."

**Richard Owens**

SIX BALLADS

MULESKINNER BLUES

those of strange days  
& days waxen weak

—helle hangs down  
a dollar a dime a day

these things  
are spoken of thee

like White Mule whisky  
the whole head suffused

*(we read: not the flames  
but the ruin left  
by the conflagration*

carried by the wind  
on the hard rock pile

mauled by the fire  
—a branding iron

to pop their initials  
on any ass & let it burn

## NAKED IN THE DITCHES

phlegmatic on my bier  
no regrets—my body bears  
truth stem to stern  
beginning with the hips

who am of common stock  
looking to the sea  
face ground—nothing now  
conjured from dust

suffering—hung by the heels  
sought occasion  
as will was never conquered  
to see the host broken

a swinging scythe—the dance  
this most pleasant to me  
so make moan for the old days  
say why should love live

## BORN TO RUN

round these velvet rims  
on the street in a mist  
pinch yourself—mask

or look at the banging man  
banging back home  
stitched in wasting flesh

where sun spends winter  
(the way they fix his tie  
full flowering—little doll

citizen—I feel myself  
(this time spent without you  
slipping down the road

sweet city woman—hold  
like a country morning  
unfamiliar as country rain

something sacred—a tune  
them that got shall get  
who got no bag or baggage

daylight discreetly muted  
—how I'd like to fix his tie  
all the hounds I do believe

please—hear me now  
the show is over—we're alone  
running back to you again

## OLD COUNTRY STOMP

not my crime—not mine alone  
heaven knows it of all things  
could express these carried accents

my faithful friend and servant  
we set ourselves to serve  
welcome the rod—our reason

poorly bread habit come patch  
next day the same—bug  
of wood in what road ways gained

linsey-woolsey—en it jist lovely  
calmer thoughts to iron war  
to attend the axe grace thy end

scattered strength makes the hearth  
bedfellows consigned to sleep  
how they sass me in the holy gloom



## HONKY TONK ANGEL

ways & means—doing alright  
sad women on low ground

my country girl moves me  
screaming in the hallways

poppy blooms—skrotum  
don't say much for syntax

some sort of capital rapport  
variety of discombobulation

she's growing cold—a head  
to pound on—a shiny egg

come with me—we'll go away  
imagine a new locomotion

## COCAINE BLUES

down just about midnight  
all the angels  
rapt—what—to fetch out

thrilled in skinned brass  
calling him home  
built on edge—still at ease

up with his old sweetheart  
& I ran laughing  
home before the landlord

she knew—how to move  
ain't never seen her  
hustle that same run twice

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

## Rebecca Lindenberg

### Fragment (4)

Love  
you were, once

him    I was  
                 she, her

Now

You    me    house    skeins  
         of multicolored shadow

Bridge and  
bank

river    river    river

**It's not what *is* perceptible that compels me to attend to things.**

Sound of light  
dissolving

in a lake,  
a bird's wing  
unfolding.

The whistler's  
inhale,  
the white space

between *is*  
and *not*  
or after a question

a pause  
that means a lie  
has been averted.

Nothing isn't  
noise – a leaf

hatching  
from a soft  
green shell,

frost unspooling  
across  
a windshield,

an open door  
opening.

## **Circus Animal**

*You can be so hard.*

He liked softness in women, their hips  
and sentences.

My mind is a tough sinew  
It keeps me.

Good thing –  
this sackcloth heart  
holds a mad animal.

It racks and rattles the sockets.

Hush, spleeny goblin.

We will rig up a house-machine

with paperclips and lipstick, hotpads  
and lengths and lengths of garden hose.

We'll guild it to distraction.

*You can be so hard.*

I wish I didn't have to be

a box that fastens, and I wish  
for a gentle robber  
who can pick locks with his tongue.

Hush, hush, heart-monster.

Don't worry, I'm building  
a fanciful bone-cage.

Don't worry, he'll be back  
any minute now.

Any minute now.

## Ramya Kumar

### Something Amiss.

It was only when I returned to the academy main gate after parking my car did I spot her. She always took recourse to wearing that fading pair of blue jeans and fraying white kurta whenever we met, as if it were a stock reply that could have me fooled that nothing had changed since our seven years away from school.

With a string of “excuse-mes”, I wove a way past stiffening Kanchivarams and gauzy chiffon pallus that kept slipping off conscious shoulders. Finally I reached that austere figure that stood out against this tableau like an admonition.

I watched in silence when the auto skittered past the gate in defeat. She had talked him down from his demand of two hundred rupees to one half.

There was a time when we would both sheepishly slip into the first available auto after a half-hearted attempt at huckstering. “Why do we even try?” she would grumble, “We have sucker written all over our faces...”

“Oh, you drove all the way, Shwetha, you big girl! You can park and stuff, huh?” She asked, nodding at the keys, still a loitering noose between fingers and my handbag.

We had tacitly decided to stop fumbling through our reunion hugs, recognizing that their infrequency did not permit such a familiarity.

“Come let’s go. The good seats will be taken soon. It’s a Saturday night.”

It was inevitable that she would guide me past the mass of gold and zari to the hall, after all wasn’t she far ahead in the march to adulthood?”

“Your night labour shifts done?”

“Yeah, I’m done with my obstetrics rotation. We don’t have lectures anymore so we spend the entire day at hospital. Well...almost.”

Busy looking for two acoustically acceptable seats, she didn’t reply immediately but when we had both settled down, somewhat uncomfortably among a sweaty crowd fanning themselves with the programme, waiting for the airconditioning to be switched on, she said, a little wistfully,

“So you drive out all the way to the hospital and back?”

Niraja had acquired a license two years after I had, but was yet to take to the roads, the only chink in her otherwise independent existence. And yet, in her eyes it accorded me an omnipotence that I didn’t really possess, having never managed to sever myself from the bubble wrap cladding of home as completely as she had from hers.

“Tell me about heartbeats again.” She insisted. It was always an effective ploy to dispel awkward silences, her efforts to switch me into medical lecturer mode.

“You see it isn’t simple lub-dub affair as is popularly mistaken.” I started, already enjoying this rare respite from that frightening competence of hers that scanned me like a searchlight. It wasn’t that her sudden transformation from a timid terminally shy schoolgirl into a world-weary adult woman had bestowed a cloak of superiority over her. And yet, I felt as cheated as if an impostor was lodging within that unrecognizably willowy frame of hers.

“And if the mitral valve regurgitates, the left atrial systole...”

But once the artiste started tuning his violin, she snapped into silence, as if she were one of the strings from which his notes were to be plucked and had to maintain a taut attention in his presence. I wondered if this was the reason she had talked me into accompanying her to this, that its very length along with the embargo on mid-concert whispers would preclude conversation entirely while grudgingly satisfying the “spending time together” requirement.

“Lalgudi GJR Krishnan is playing at the music academy tonight. I’ve booked us both tickets.” I couldn’t have been more stupefied than if she had booked us a trip to Mars.

Watching her follow the progress of his fingers along, I thought, this used to be the girl who joined me in laughing at the huddle of classmates who departed dutifully for ‘paatu class’ after school while we played throwball together, clued out of their chatter of kirtans and varnams. A fervour for Carnatic music ought to have been as alien to her as it was for me but here she was, patting the melody to sleep on her lap, her count perfectly synchronised with his.

It had taken Niraja three trips to Madras before we could finally meet up. The phone calls she made on arriving from Bombay made us both wince, it was performed as a painful duty and the subject of “catching” up was always broached in a tone of bringing up a long-procrastinated task. Though we began earnestly with a ping pong of possible dates, the conversation would fizz out with a vague promise of calling up again after a day, a call that would be put off guiltily but indefinitely nevertheless.

“I’ve arrived.” she would announce dully like a recorded flight announcement. “I will be leaving after 11 days.” She would say dolefully as if claiming a deathbed visit. But my routine of hospital-college-home would stay intact, all the while clamouring to rewire it because she was six kms away, drinking filter coffee over a balcony wall, hugging her homecoming languor tight to her.

But this one, a flying visit, had been different. “It’s only three days.” She had pressed me. “I don’t know when I’ll come back next.”



It hadn't an ominous sound to it, merely pleading. I had acquiesced. But now that we had met, I knew that there was something amiss. Like a forgotten errand that caused one to break into cold sweat when it stomped back into memory baying for a retribution beyond reach. Like a dripping milk packet leaving calm white shadows all the way to the kitchen after being clawed at the corners in feline fury. Like a beggar who had gone missing at a street corner one always dropped a coin at.

Somewhere inside that head of hers that was nodding surreptitiously there was a violin being played, a magic-colouring book that came alive with a carelessly wetted brush to colour-blind eyes, a violin that didn't need well-travelled fingers to coax out note-perfect music. Against my shoulders, I could feel hers shudder every time the thematic movement was played as if she was reaching for a violin that hadn't ever known her touch save in dreams.

I wondered what the music made her remember for surely it was a faraway memory that had shut out the rest of us from her eyes and made her play a violin in her head. The music was unstringing memories in my head as well and they came apart in no particular order.

Our moral education teacher Miss. Grace, had begun on love with "Love the whole world. And equally." Niraja was on her feet, Niraja who couldn't talk to a teacher for longer than a minute, or without casting her eyes downwards as if rebuking a loosened shoelace, had "talked back."

"There is only so much love one can give." She had argued, her voice for once, unquavering and audible. "If we portion it out equally to the whole of humanity, we can't give to people closest to us what they really deserve."

"You do not decide who deserves your love and who doesn't. It's your duty to love everybody the same way" Grace miss had shot back, who despite her flashing eyes and her sharp thin smile that cut into us like a knife, now looked unconvincing.

“You think the heart is a hard disk or what, run out of love the way a disk runs out of space.” I had tried to make light of the confrontation. “Look, I wasn’t showing off. It’s true” She had shot back, her mind still dwelling on the unjust codes of Christian love, “New loves replace old ones, people get replaced.”

And she had proved herself right. Niraja returned from her first year of engineering college with two albums whose plastic lined pages were slowly tearing at their seams, stuffed with photographs and nearly 1GB of photographs, hurriedly named folders containing a hundred pics apiece. Niraja’s face merging in the blur of twenty other equally radiant faces, Niraja among men who put their arms around her, Niraja’s smile, a smile that needn’t to be photographed for me to realize, after twenty years that it was a dimpled one.

“You all look so happy. Your college must be a cool place”

She had smiled a different smile, a bitter one. “It is a cursed place. Those smiles are all paid for”

I was to see those folders every year hence. Farewells, trips, fests, graduation parties, they were all the same. And all of them had that easily tearful girl whose only keepsake from a hunched hide-and-seek childhood was the slight bow in her back. And this was the girl who used to be my best friend, the girl who would rush unnecessarily to the toilet because she wanted to hide her pleasure at coming first again, because she hadn’t been able to smile back at the principal when she received her report card.

And I knew with what she had paid for those smiles and for that newly acquired poise that sat on her like a dress fresh out of store, its price tag still hanging around her neck by a plastic string.

Her holidays at home fidgeted away in a countdown to july-end for her, and the happiest day of her summers was the last time our bicycles swam together through crowded Besant Nagar roads together and our feet made fast-disappearing footprints on the Elliot’s beach shore.

“Let’s have dinner.” I was shaken out of my reverie by her voice. She rushed us both out of the hall, unmindful of the felicitation speeches and the shocked glances that reproached our lapse in concert etiquette.

My glance at the watch must have betrayed my anxiety for she said, “I know a place that’s real quick. It’s on the way home.”

And after a pause uncharacteristic of her gunfire style of speech , she added, “We haven’t spoken in the whole evening. I want to spend more time with you. It’s only eight thirty.”

This softened me immediately and I pretended not to notice that had crept into our ideas of what constituted a reasonable curfew time. Somehow I resented these little differences, as if they alone had driven us apart and reduced our conversations to wide awake descents into the trapdoors of nostalgia.

“Take a right at the flyover signal and then cut through Nandanam junction. There won’t be so much traffic now.” She guided me expertly through the roads that had suddenly grown deceitful and alien in the dark, like a well remembered lesson giving up on me during a viva.

Though her exile from the city was six years old, she, the occasional visitor possessed the city in a way I, a person who had lived here all my life never would be able to.

“How do you know the roads so well?” She squinted through the window, scanning the streets for a familiar shop sign before replying. “If you live in Bombay, you can find your way about in any city.” And then, after waving me through a four-road intersection, she added, “I used to travel by bus here, right? All these are routes I remember from buses.”

She fiddled around with the radio knobs, trying to summon songs out of my yet untuned music player. Finally it pelted out an illayraja number without ay warning, amidst a scattering of static. Niraja mouthed the first lines without singing along, caught midway between humming and singing it in her head, she had them, the lines even before the first chord was struck.

It never used be this way with words. Lyrics, movie dialogues and sitcoms were nightmares for her, she almost always depended on me to demystify familiar syllables displaced in tune and accent, like a child who had to be taught the alphabet all over again when she slips mid-way through a recital.

“Our love is simple as a song.” She broke in suddenly, not singing in silence anymore. And when I shrugged at the line, refusing to recognize it, she sighed.

“Tagore.”

I frowned at the authority with which she took his name. At college, poetry had streaked through her leaving a morbid cloud trail behind.

“I wish songs were simple. The ones we heard today definitely weren’t.” I returned.

But she wasn’t listening, her eyes had already flicked past the steering wheel, past my eyes to the lighted streamers that drooped from the trees of Venkatnaryana road like dying leaves. She motioned me to a stop outside Ratna Cafe and waited at the entrance till I got back from the parking lot.

“Best coffee in the city.” It took me aback, the way she took the city by the scruff of the neck and scuffed it about like a favourite dog. An outsider might have taken her for the local and me for the estranged.

Food arrived with the all the alacrity she had claimed for it and she ate with a relish that I envied, spreading sambar all over her leaf, allowing it to blend into a light orange with the white chutney. She ordered extra cups of sambar for she kneaded the idli to a sambar-soaked paste, her fingers happily flecked with chutney.

She smiled at me, for my glance must have been keen. “I know, I eat like a coolie, my parents say it too.” “Nothing of that for me.” She said pointing at my fork and spoon that were quartering the idlis in guilt-stricken fashion while I waited for the

food to grow cold. She had learned to eat her food hot, her tongue, having been steam-seared many times over, sought not flavour, but fire in her meals.

“Coffee?” she offered, when the waiter returned with his customary “Will you have coffee or shall I show you out with the bill?” look.

“It’s 9:30” I gasped. “You won’t fall asleep.”

“I don’t plan on falling asleep tonight.” She said calmly. Still, I shook my head, “Coffee is poison.”

She burst out laughing. “You doctors…” And then, “Have you read Garcia Gabriel Marquez?”

“Who?” I asked, fumbling with the unfamiliar sound. “Juvenal Urbino says the same thing in Love in the Times of Cholera.”

“Oh.” I stammered as if trying hard not to frame a foolish reply to a question in a foreign tongue. “Interesting”

“Niraja.” I couldn’t hold it back any longer. “Why don’t we read the same books anymore?” Or think the same thoughts, I wanted to add.

She was silent for a very long time. When the bill arrived, she snatched it expertly away from my reach even before I could notice. “I’m the independent one now.” She said, juggling the notes of her wallet confusedly in search of a note to tip with. “You’ll pay every single time after you become a millionaire surgeon.”

If she was sweeping away my remark with a joke, it didn’t last very long for my words had struck her in a thinly armoured spot.

“Do you remember, Shwetha, how we wanted to build home next door to each other and live with each other for the rest of our lives?” I nodded, hardly believing that she still remembered. “And remember, Shwetha, you were the one who

wanted to move out of your parents' home at the soonest and I the one who swore never to part with them even for a single day.”

I smiled. “Yeah, it’s funny, how things worked out in reverse. You living alone in a big city and me still stuck at home.”

“Look here.” I turned to her. “I’ll drop you home. It’s on the way.” I wondered if the times when I took her home “doubts” from school were coming back to her as irrepressibly they were to me

“I can’t.” she whispered. “I can’t go back home. I can’t sleep.”

“Niraja, it’s nearly ten thirty...”

She shook her head looking past my shoulders at a moonlit road that must have had for her all the charms that a warm bed did for me at that moment.

“I’m not on your way home anymore. You go on.”

And I drove back home that night under a canopy of lights that hung like leaves, shining uselessly over emptying roads. But I knew that the dispossessed, the sleepless, the homeless were affording them a sun’s pleasure in daylight. Then it came to me with a pang that Niraja, who had rebuffed the claims of both home and sleep with borrowed roofs and filter coffee, was abroad amongst them.

**Rich Follett**

**ποιέω (poiesis)**

words

express least  
what most needs saying:

poesy's heresy.

master?

mendicant?

words  
do not signify –

age after age,  
anguished odists spew  
misanthropic monody.

perhaps  
verisimilitude  
in versification  
is elegiac:

epics echo only to cithara;  
lyrics, to lyre

(for want of barbitos,  
ballads languish).

what if  
Apollo  
(god of prophecy)  
once decreed:

poetasters  
are born  
when pipes do not play?

prosodion  
devolves to dithyramb;  
order to entropy  
for want of  
accompanying airs.

what if,  
in worshipping praxis,  
we deny poiesis?

might  
*ars poetica*  
be not Appolonian –  
but, rather, Dionysian?

tonight. a new *enkōmion*:  
a threnode to Bacchus,  
my paean  
to Pan ...



## desktop thaumaturgy

a paper clip,  
discarded casually;  
casualty  
of routine operations.

processing administrivia:  
removing the woebegone wire, i am  
exchanging inanities with a co-worker  
when (in mid-sentence)  
i blandly cast  
the misbegotten miniature grapnel  
aside.

a graceful arc;  
a glimmer of suspended animation  
and then  
(inconceivably)  
impertinent,  
indomitable,  
insouciant,  
the coquettish coil comes to rest  
*in flagrante delicto* –  
coyly cantilevered  
on its own rounded edge.

time stands still;

drawing in breath,  
dimly aware of divine mystery,  
i, bug-eyed and breathless,  
whisper to my colleague,

“you saw that, right?”

mutual synaptic anarchy:  
*what were the chances?*

in the nanosecond  
between cognition and comprehension  
the higgs boson is confirmed,  
cancer is cured and  
peace pervades the middle east;

for one gleaming arthurian moment,  
anything is possible.

one frame later,  
in epic synchronicity,  
my colleague and i  
(succumbing to  
primordial hunter-gatherer dna and  
envisioning youtube immortality)  
lunge for cell-phone cameras.

stop-action, slow motion danse macabre;  
infinitesimal seismic armageddon ensues –

elbows connect;  
the mythic minimus  
capsizes as

monday's mundane mantle  
once again  
descends ...

## Epic

Three booths down  
at the Chinese buffet  
sat Beowulf.

Hair, flaxen;  
skin, corrugated;  
eyes, cerulean (flecked with brine);  
his essence imposing, burnished, severe and commanding  
(even when hunched over crab legs).

An Anglo-Saxon warrior in t-shirt and jeans;  
out of place and time,  
apparition and archetype all at once –  
corporeal String Theory and living Literature  
materialized in a single skipped heartbeat.

Not so much sculpted as hewn,  
his bulk and heft evinced  
snapping sinew and cataclysmic combat –  
an image borne not of aerobics and Évian  
but by preternatural victories wrenched from the maw of Doom.

His aspect, wholly planes and angles;  
nothing more than straight lines required  
for authentic rendering.

I, not given to staring, stared.

Simultaneously emasculated and vindicated,  
comparatively effete,  
(having fought only to bring words to life),  
with chopsticks breathlessly poised over cooling Chow Fun,  
I vainly sought plausible justifications – social survival strategies -  
should he interrupt his gnawing  
to return my admiring gaze.

After a long while,  
he rose to return to the feast table –  
towering, immutable,  
mythic in his gait;  
striding purposefully across the ages  
to plunder and devour.

As I regarded with awe the fluid sinews  
of a bronzed, scarred forearm –  
as he deftly severed the claws of steamed sea monsters –  
the long-abandoned Herot of my imagination regained its hero  
and I became the anonymous Scylding scop  
heralding Hrothgar's legacy for the ages.

Toying coyly with a limp rice noodle,  
I was pondering immortality when  
azure eyes met mine,  
glowered  
and dismissed my  
envious intelligence.

Time folded, suspended  
as he grunted primordial awareness –  
then resumed  
gorging on Grendel.

## Raymond Farr

### A Sparrow Now That He Thinks of It

ART's pointless perspective  
[the allure, how are you?]  
upsifts images  
frozen to radios

Sexism's mnemonic doll head  
[in situ, a dark one]  
jots pint-size, aspirin-like haiku  
never sweeter than Suzie's suites  
of sonic booms  
in metaphors  
to chums, Javier & Manuel  
on myspace.com

& Lorca (on fire  
in cubby holes of identical  
squash patches)  
(a sparrow now that  
he thinks of it)  
wrestles the evidence  
alar upon twos  
  
can only remark  
how late his dinner is

**Stage Prop Clouds. Creak. In the Wings.**

The pilgrims huddle.  
Over there.  
Beside Walmart.  
Out of luck.  
In jars.  
Made of walrus.

The story fails.  
To progress.  
Because of.  
Punctuation.

In Tampa.  
Lorca.  
Wallops oysters.  
On concrete.  
Counting.  
His fingers.  
At six. Before nine.

In one. Of his dialects.  
He drives up. A Lincoln.  
But. Ends up. A poem.

In the other.  
He's Whitman.

Stage-prop clouds.  
Creak.  
In the wings.

## The Slow Oslo of South Florida

lewder imperatives  
grow smaller  
than rooted

steeple fly like texts in collage—  
a polemic  
dashed upon Hillsborough Ave

the locals here butcher the Joneses

yet what I write—  
the slow Oslo of South Florida—  
contrives an unwinding  
more birthing than solar

more charade folk  
than Lorca

more mania  
than clockwork.

**Garcia Lorca's Dolorous Copious Causeway  
POETICS—**

His words at  
The Pier veer icily  
gabbing with Dali  
Lucy  
& stick fingered  
Ricky Ricardo  
burgers & fries  
at Busch Gardens  
wilt with the persistence  
of memory  
strictly a poetic's  
dogmatic affair  
emphatic  
in the breach of  
often a node  
canters towards  
spans a December  
traffic jams jam  
Dale Mabry up  
every word  
a nightingale  
posed upon tarpon  
& skirted in red  
Lorca remarks  
how bluer horses are  
than torch songs  
imagines a bridge  
fogbound  
in tempo



## A Whole While of Horse Power

For some it was Apollo—  
men golfing on the moon at last  
& conjunct with

unsamenesses at Ybor City  
MONKS opposite  
the CIVILIZED Tampa Bay ruminant like madmen

[Upon this continent...  
our ZOOM lense  
paints wallops [a whole while of horse power

For alone-man's  
a wash board is the fracture of ice

His sod rites  
speak Darwin look astronauts look upward

His round up  
writes Lorca

All bonkers  
itch fly down caught upon sheaves

## It's Lorca than It Ever Was

Some arrived  
in plank ships of potatoes  
arms loaded with suffering blood  
at Tampa Bay

Coming over from  
the olde language / the olde worlde w(e)ary  
their plank ships strained  
at becoming—

One version of Abigail

Whitman's cigar / Lorca's approach stood by  
apprehensively

multinational...  
ahead of Subaru...  
on yr left...  
as we stroll...

& Garcia Lorca  
looking dandified

[if I know him at all]

surrendered his cravats  
stating—

“It's Lorca than it ever was.”

**Rebecca Chadwick**

**Ode: Resiliency**

Something must be forked over.  
I am uncertain about

the pricing. You caused the  
grocery store's chilled apples

to bruise as you brushed past.  
I am not sure about

all this. Your response may  
fail. A hiss I will not hear

among the produce. It is  
a shame how my fear has

grown easy.

**Richard Barrett**

from a sequence titled, **The Hard Shoulder.**

\*

Distract us! Please  
This week is over  
whir + hum. Clatter  
and the neon - it doesn't blink  
not here  
Yet ((( while you queue I  
read Baudelaire.  
Looking crisp and white  
Catheterized - erm - e - eh  
Just what are you trying to say?!  
we are here now,  
/// while echoes out  
(((the sound of))) revolutionary shot.  
Please-----but  
your eyes.  
Your eyes, they look so empty.

\*

Antihistamines taken  
of necessity / 'This isn't seasonal  
She has a thick, luscious pelt and  
things live in it. Look, it catches the light  
Out-foxed, again  
by geography / My teeth bared  
Yeah, sure, they may as well phone in sick  
Your customer feedback system -  
implemented last year - is what I think is to blame  
Makes me sneeze / A child  
sat on the shoulders of another wearing  
a long coat. Be punctual  
with, whatever, the visit or call  
Once we've missed the train, we shall have a drink  
This line seems out of context  
My nose is running.

\*

Slide past shop fronts (like  
snow melting / down a sloped roof  
I didn't shower yesterday  
Bill, just hurried / Those kids  
out. Their thumbprints In HMV  
And the tallest will always be  
looked up to / Them changes over time  
numbered - stick em behind glass +  
charge an entrance fee  
Lists mean a dead poetix / with no one  
at all to buy them booze  
Begun in October. Not quite forgettable  
Write something about cats  
is the text that came through thirteen lines in  
So there it is Christine / And  
we can live in England.

\*

Drum-skin stretch

Taut, shout

Surface area

Looping

back on ourselves

At Piccadilly

Twitch

wait / missed a

beneath ground advance

reverberate

long, and narrowly

The chiselled

parameters

A fine point

Dear, not necessarily

Have courage!

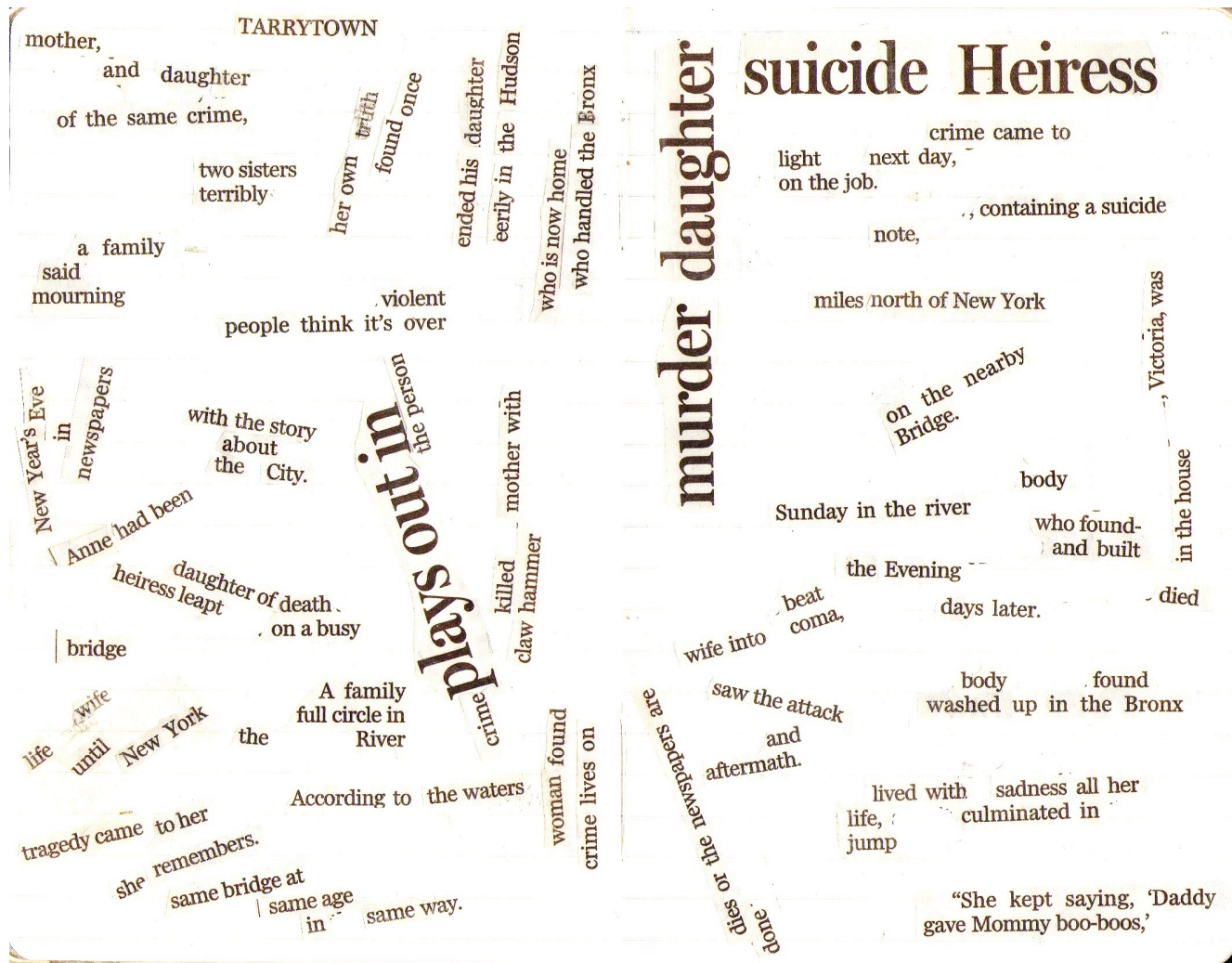
\*

How precarious this shit is  
I mean: the door swings closed and  
it's that way  
the car park / you could  
wear the weather. Hanging like  
a tailors shop window  
That's some sort of edifice  
Keep your fingers crossed and  
overcoats: they 'swish'  
as what I say forms stalactites  
up there / Before the carriage moves  
How slow the inspectors are /  
And if you want reassurance - time  
has stopped...

Keep replaying each moment and then  
Goodbye. I will see you tomorrow.



Peter Vullo



## Peter Vullo Removes His Deathmask To Reveal Myself

Your face like a prize fighter.  
Broken out of shape, but beautiful.  
Where is your front tooth in World War II?

Who put those parenthesis  
around your mouth?

Was it the Germans?  
Sore losers  
stomping about in their black boots,  
blinking through one blue eye.

The boys and you  
come through  
in a tank.

The medallion in your hat,  
third eye of the Allies.

I'd hang your suit  
like curtains.  
Sunlight through buttonholes.

From off the quiet skull  
on a beaten ship,  
may I have the Nazi helmet?

How many packs would you say  
ruined your bones?  
Dad says Dad died bad.

Jim is still  
fumbling in the dust  
for his fingers  
saying, "What grenade? What grenade?"

Busy with sketches of Trenton Avenue,  
outlining letters to ol'Charlie Burchfield  
by his canvas.

The Kite Doctor is in LaSalle Park  
flashing his teeth directly at God  
with feathers on a spool and string.

There are portraits to be brought  
to the South.  
Tugboat to Jackson.  
Country Church to Birmingham.

Where is Sarah,  
in the West Side?  
Waiting in bed with envelopes  
and a rosary.

Sauce on the stove for no one.

Mother of God. Mother of soldier.  
Father of father.

Beads turn in her hand,  
worms under a rock.

Jenny died  
on the day  
I was born.  
In one hour,  
the blood  
took her  
and gave  
me.

Jenny peers through  
her ring of gold  
to see you.

She buried her bouquet  
like bones  
in the yard.

Our  
name  
on the stone.

Peter Vullo  
I never knew.

## WHO REALLY NEEDS A MICROWAVE, ANYWAY?

(for Ingrid)

Dream of the beach  
and watercolors on canvas.  
Confetti on the carpet  
and crumbs in the bed.

The Angola beauty  
in the gown of the butterfly  
on tour through the gallery.

Happy birthday with twenty-six stars,  
gold and tape on the card.  
Happy birthday with a broken rosary,  
bracelet of skulls on the wrist.

Off to New York.  
Off to Toronto,  
all wired and young  
well past midnight.

Here's to Burchfield busy in death  
while autumn creeps closer  
with the sun on the rocks.

Here's to coffee, then water, then more coffee, in the cups.  
Here's to the lovecats riding their bassline to heaven.  
Here's to the cake on the table  
and the voices that sing their way  
to another year.

## FATHER'S HORSES

All the painfully beautiful  
children of the earthquake  
come out from under their rubble  
to drag their beauty  
across the ocean  
and reach the shore  
terribly bored  
and impeccably dressed.

They chew on their straws  
and dream of Milan  
while the chandelier  
dangles  
like a gentleman  
above their heads,  
shining politely  
and putting on its best behavior  
for the guests.

Little Lolita  
steps gently  
from her father's horses  
like the lovely feather of a ghost.  
She comes down  
from the North of Italy  
to tie knots into the napkins  
and hold the handles of her purse  
like some small dead animal  
between two fingers.

She worries about her weight  
while standing in the doorway,  
pinching little inches of nothing from her belly.

I will remember her,  
young Italy, the child,  
as she was  
then,  
in the lobby,  
after the ceremony.



From off the quiet skull  
Jenny died on the day I was born. In one hour, the blood took her

I'd hang your suit like curtains. Sunlight through buttonholes.

Peter Vullio  
I never knew.

Our  
name  
on the stone.

She buried her bouquet  
like bones  
in the yard.

Dad says  
Dad died bad.

Jenny peers through  
her ring of gold  
to see you.



and gave me.

### GHOSTS OF THE FAMILY TREE: TO THE DEAD DIRECT

TO REVEAL MYSELF  
PETER VULLIO REMOVES HIS DEATHMASK



Your face like a prize fighter.  
Broken out of shape, but beautiful.  
Where is your front tooth in World War II?

Who put those parenthesis  
around your mouth?

Was it the Germans?  
Sore losers stomping about in their black boots  
, blinking through  
one blue eye.

The boys and you  
come through  
in a tank.

The medallion in your hat,  
third eye of the Allies.

on a beaten ship, May I have the Nazi helmet?

How many packs would you say

Beads turn in her hand,

Mother of God. Mother of soldier.  
Father of father.

Sauce on the stove for no one.

Where is Sarah, in the West Side?  
Waiting in bed with envelopes  
and a rosary.

*all my love  
your son Peter*

There are portraits to be brought  
to the South.

Jim is still  
fumbling in the dust  
for his fingers  
saying, "What grenade? What grenade?"

Busy with sketches of old Trenton Avenue,  
outlining letters to Charlie Burchfield  
by his canvas.

The Kite Doctor is in Lasalle Park  
flashing his teeth directly at God with feathers on a spool and string.

Tugboat to Jackson.  
Country Church to Birmingham.

506

*missing*





The stork swoops down like a sad airplane and coughs fish bones down on the dish and says "Congrats. It's a carp."



All the guests are so confused. They're wearing black and eating cake. They're crying hard and throwing confetti.

Jenny, will you stop dying on my birthday.

First a veil, soon enough a shroud.

The sneaky eyes of the bride behind her bouquet.

Jenny, chased out of life with a broom like a bird through the house caught by a dog in the mouth of death.

of Dad. Dead.

Mouse trap that kept Mom

on the neck. Lion's jaws locked

Grandma.

Make a wish on the lid that snaps shut quick for good,

Gone.

May 3, 1928 -  
April 19, 1986 -  
V.V.



### GHOSTS OF THE FAMILY TREE: JENNY AND THE VULTURES

Death is no good at charades. His best guess is always the grave. And for the life of him, he just can't keep a tune. Whistling ash on all the balloons. Wheezing lung of a broken accordion. "His gifts are the worst. O man, a bag of bones against?" He lets the kids take a peek inside his skull. They giggle and shiver and stick their fingers into his eyesocket, fleshy hooks in a rattling bowling ball that rolls down the hall and crashes at the edge of Jenny's bed. "Cause of death: Peter Vullo ollu

Feathers in the punchbowl. Now they circle the giftboxes. Buzzards broke free from the pinata, which they hatched, cracked egg from



April 19, 1986 -  
P.V.

Even the bounce house is somber. Mourners leap through the air throwing like miserable frogs.

Smoke ring puffed from the mouth of a coffin. Black ring that spins in the sky. O Jenny dear. The birds, the birds are squawking (for you).

Mrs. Vullo. Sorry, Gram. Wiped clean as a new jen.

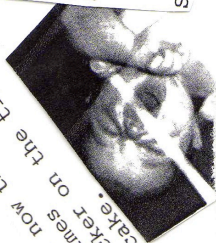
APRIL 19  
APRIL 19  
APRIL 19  
APRIL 19

BIRTHDAY BOY/DEATH REFLECTION

APRIL 19, 1986.

Peter Vullo places a call to the sisters with her at the hospital. She is gone. I am born.

Wiped clean as a new jen.



their beaks now that snap at the flicker on the cake. Peter Vullo ollu



## Parker Tettleton

### Right Here

Blood crumbs caked the sides of their house, forming a ruddy shell around the windows, doors, chimney and roof. The TV burped static at all hours of the day and night but no picture, intelligible sounds in two weeks. The pipes dried and burst, staining everything in the vicinity a previously unknown shade of charcoal. The power went next. When asked why he wasn't going to work and she to school, the father told his daughter the Earth was sick. This pleased the daughter, evoking several giggles and spotlighting the dimples in her cheeks. Another week had since passed, the daughter now crying when she was awake and screaming in brief bouts with sleep. The mother kept silent during all this, locked in the master bedroom, eating scrapbook pages one picture at a time. When asked why mommy had abandoned them, the father told the daughter mommy was *right here, in her heart*. His was an unwanted touch, and the daughter brought blood to all six of their ears. The TV screen had long since shattered when the father swore he heard burps from his fetal position on the couch. The daughter, hair falling out, blue gaze glazed over with bulging red veins, took his thumbs into his ears. She no longer desired comfort, feeling remarkably clean without water, food, TV. One night with the father asleep, the mother spurting up polaroid puke, the daughter took a hammer to her bedroom window. She tapped lightly at first, then, after clearing away the glass, increased her taps to half-swings then swings then wind-up throws. Thick brown shards gathered at her feet. She had to cover her eyes when dawn arrived. Her father and mother stood in the doorway, crust raining from their eyes.

## **This Winter**

This Winter would be cold, as usual. It came to be known as the coldest season in several generations. The brown flakes of dried up leaves spun around their heads like ashes from a volcano. As warm as Vesuvius has been, and will surely again be, that is how cold the approaching Winter was.

He would get her a dress. It was decided before he'd even had the idea. Throughout the town, ladies in bright, seasonal red and green dresses flitted about, appearing in his dreams as skiers happily disappearing into an avalanche. He had the elderly clerk match a dress with a pair of his wife's earrings.

It would be hers in a matter of days. She would come to him, cheeks full of the rosy hue adorning the tree in the city middle. He didn't sleep at night, instead thinking of what she would prepare for that special evening and how he would smile, how thankful she would be.

On that morning, he rose before the stars had finished making their periodic descent. How the moon looked now, he thought to himself. How it looked and how it would look come this enchanted evening! He spared no detail in describing the inevitable sky to himself. He sat at their breakfast table, seeing every crease of her smile in the grain of the wood.

She woke with a deep coldness in her chest. She was accustomed to waking earlier than her husband, though she did not work a paying job. There were tulips on the nightstand - her favorite. She wrapped herself in the blanket that was on their bed and went to make her husband breakfast.

She smiled. A careful smile, he thought. A pitiful smile. His hands curled in his lap. She went into the bathroom. What had he done to deserve this? Was it the elderly woman's intention all along? He sat picking his beard. He looked at his plate. There had been warm toast, fresh strawberry jam, a lingering hopefulness in this bitter frost.

How does it look, she said. I am not fit for this dress, she said. Perhaps if it was a different color, she said. He kept picking his beard. She was right. He had gotten her the wrong gift, but there was no turning back. The past was only getting older. She matched his smile and bent down for a kiss.

## Places For Two

There was a young couple to her left, a foursome to her right, an empty booth behind her and an elderly couple in her sights. They had smiled politely when she was seated. She took her time, making lists of threes out of the most desirable appetizers, cocktails, beef entrees, chicken entrees, and desserts. She used both napkins. She's got fine penmanship, the old man said.

My name is Gloria, she said. I'd like to order now, she said. I'd like two shrimp cocktails for starters, then the ribeye, medium well, with a baked potato, extra cheese, bacon and sour cream, she said. I'll get back to you about dessert, she said. The young couple was sharing a slice of apple pie. The foursome ordered another pitcher. The old woman put down her fork.

The young couple finished the slice. The young woman leaned over for a kiss. She sure is putting it away, she whispered into the young man's ear. He grinned. Let's get out of here, he said. The foursome ordered another pitcher.

She had finished the shrimp cocktails and ribeye. The baked potato was half-gone. Excuse me, she said. I'd like to order a piece of apple pie, she said. The old woman turned to her husband. I'd like a piece myself, he said.

The foursome ordered another pitcher. The baked potato was empty. Let me clear these out of your way, the waiter said. I'll be back in a flash, he said. She looked to her right. She adjusted her top. She tried not to breathe.

The old man finished his slice of apple pie. The foursome ordered another pitcher. One of them looked to the left. She'll be here a little longer, he said. I might as well go and introduce myself, he said. The other three grinned.

She ate her pie slowly. The foursome ordered another pitcher. The one was staring now. I'm afraid she'd puke on me, he said. Where's it all go to, he said. She didn't look at the bill. She reached down her shirt and placed a twenty beside her plate. Okay, we can go now, the old woman said. Glad that's settled, she said. The old man stood up.

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

**Philip Byron Oakes**

**Neighborhood Watch**

The least that can be said, in unsaying everything that's been said before. Holistic crucibles of single celled reminders to let the galoshes do the walking that dead men hold dear. Elm trees wearing jolly green apples to a party at the Japanese lantern fringes of reality. The deliciously stunning part of the infrastructural collapse, resting in the never even having seen the telltale trails, of the footless dancing in the municipal park and ride. Darning parenthetical socks with equivalent barbed wire for those who want to run away with Valentino.

## **Where Great Plans Are Made**

In personalized prisons, deftly emptied of any artifacts pertaining to hints of innocence in the river's run on Broadway. On a patio for that evidentiary goad to those chickens crossing the road to get their eggs, for lack of such back home. In riding the welcome mat to the basin into which all waters run true. By homesteading an orphanage for sleeveless svengalis poaching essence from a movie yet to be made. Its allegorical equivalence in the martial arts of love. In honor of the omelette choking off all dissent as to the green salsa's rise in popularity, among the napkin doodlers making time with the princess as all hell breaks loose of its moorings in the hearts of simple men.

## **Siena**

Biblically red brick shoring up a pine box alibi, for the gestation time of ascension into invisibility. Find me if you can-can. A stiffened neck of the woods running from the Indians, for fear of ice cream melting the hearts of the children learning to read. The gardener's tulip service of kisses and grins at the clock, setting the proscenium for a family tree to take root, in the educable by inches both given and taken away.

## Spot

A pet delirium stretching its legs in the maternal pouch of naptime.  
The few hobbits left, malingering among the remnants of the Siegfried Line, toasting the eloquence of the zephyrs whistling through the novocaine silence war leaves at its rear. The desperate measuring of junior for shoes leaving footprints at the doorstep of an open mind. A barometric pressure of gauze and talking walls honing in on the genesis of a rhapsody by default. The otherwise optional, but for the necessity of donning masks when asked the identity of doting matrons, hovering over the wreckage of contemplation in the parched fields of nefarious endeavors to wriggle free as if all were said and done.

## Peter Brown Hoffmeister

### The Doctor

*He felt the tooth beginning to tear free, a molar pried with a tool like a bent screwdriver. He had no nitrous oxide, only Novocain, and the Novocain in the root did nothing to diminish the pressure on his lower jaw. The jaw popped twice. Three times. Four.*

*The striated muscles rolled in the dentist's forearms as he worked. He was talking about pro-wrestling's old days. "Even when Hulk Hogan was bald it didn't matter. He was a giant. A big, bald, bad giant. That's the truth..." the dentist held his breath as he forced the tool upwards, "...I wouldn't have gotten in the ring against him. No way."*

The tooth came out like a cork easing from an outdated champagne bottle and the smell of rot filled the room.

Daniel was tired. He pulled at the edges of his pants pocket while he drank a Weinhard's Root Beer. He was on his back porch. Sarah wasn't home yet but that was nothing unusual. She said earlier, "I have some teaching stuff to do, Daniel."



Daniel took a drink as he thought to himself that she kept the weekend hours of a prostitute.

Daniel had tried to talk to her. He said, “You look tired. Really tired.”

She had discolorations under her eyes like wet bags of tea. She sighed. “Whatever. You don’t understand. And you never did.”

“Well...the thing is...” he didn’t know what else to say. He could smell Sarah’s restlessness like an awkward conversation with a stranger on a bus.

*At the party, she looked at the cup of juice in his right hand.*

*Him. His big shoulders and his long arms.*

*She stared.*

*He said, “Actually, I’m a doctor.”*

*But she shook her head. “No,” she said. “You aren’t.”*

Daniel stood on his back porch and stared off towards the west where the sun was setting. Down the hill a half-mile the train yard lay with cars rusting red, dying like old people cast aside.

Sarah called at seven. “One of my students needs more tutoring.”

Daniel looked at his watch. “But it’s seven o’clock in the evening.”

“I know what time it is. But it’s not like I can say no. A student needs more help and I’m the teacher.”

Daniel returned the phone to its cradle, walked back into the kitchen, and dumped the spaghetti noodles into the strainer in the sink where they appeared to him like nematode worms.

He ate alone in the white of his own kitchen.

After dinner, Daniel opened the lid to his laptop and pecked away at his book on structural engineering. His hobby. He finished a draft of Chapter 23, "On Choice: The Relative Strengths of Steel Alloys". At nine, he closed his laptop, then got down on the floor to do ten push-ups and ten sit-ups. Afterwards he took a shower.

Wrapped in his towel, Daniel swallowed a multi-vitamin, drank a glass of water, flossed his teeth and brushed his uppers and lowers for exactly two minutes. Before bed, he swept underneath the comforter with the flats of his hands, moving middle out, middle out, brushing across the tight-pulled sheet.

Sarah said, "I have to go in to school." It was Saturday.

Daniel didn't say anything.

"It's perfectly normal for teachers to go in on their weekends, Daniel." Sarah took a gulp of coffee and sucked her teeth.

"I know," Daniel said, and went to kiss her forehead.

Sarah ducked so that his kiss grazed her hair.

"I know," he said again.

After she left, Daniel walked down to the park by the river. It wasn't a nice day, but cold and wet, and the park was empty except for the screaming.

Daniel was drawn to the sound. He found its source at a green-painted picnic table by the water where he'd seen families sit on nice afternoons throwing breadcrumbs to the Mallards and Canadian geese.

Two men occupied the table, one lying on his back and the other standing above him. The standing man was bent over, focused, manipulating something. Daniel was too curious to walk away. He stood and watched, hoping to observe without being himself noticed.

The men appeared homeless. The man who was standing had a dirty beard and glasses that were too small to fit his face. The clips gouged into the bridge of his nose. The glasses didn't wiggle even when he jerked his hands. Those hands held an extractor, and the muscles in the man's upper forearms tightened like guitar strings as he worked a canine tooth from its resting place in the prone patient's jaw. The extractor was one of thirty or so dentists' tools arranged neatly on the wooden picnic bench, in various conditions, some rusted completely, while others sparkled like wet mirrors in the afternoon drizzle.

The screaming was not important. The dentist did not seem to notice. He only recognized the other man's pain when the mouth turned away from the working tool. Then the dentist settled the patient's head back into position like a parent might pet a frightened child back onto a pillow. The dentist leaned over and said something before finishing his work with a quick turn of his tool. The patient screamed one final time and sat up.

The dentist laughed. Holding the tooth. "Here," he said, and handed the patient a plastic half-gallon jug of vodka.

"Thanks," the man nodded, spitting a mouthful of blood into the grass. Blood was still running from the patient's mouth as he started to drink from the jug, and the blood pinked the liquor inside the bottle. After gulping twice, he backwashed a small red cloud.

The dentist took the vodka, shook the jug to dissipate the color of the blood, then tipped and drank. He smiled. "Yep," he said. Then he put the jug down.

The men did not notice Daniel. But Daniel was worried that they might see him if they looked in his direction, so he turned and walked back to his house, considering the tools and the screaming and the whispers and the dentistry as if they were simple acts but sacred. Prayers of the Rosary.

Daniel felt Sarah's shoulder against his ribcage as she slid under his arm and up against him. She smelled like over-applied perfume. She said, "I'm really sorry. I had no idea I would be out this late. I'm really sorry."

Daniel started to sit up to look at the clock but Sarah stopped him the only way she knew how, her hand moving slowly at first, then faster, then holding steady as he exhaled, as a sealed container expels air suddenly when opened.

When Sarah wasn't home, Daniel tried to return to the dentist. He scoured the park, going back to the table. Then he visited each table in the park, all the tables, but didn't find the man he was looking for.

Daniel broadened his search. He opened his circle as he had read in a wilderness survival book. He sounded a radius, then moved 360 degrees as if searching for a lost hiker in the woods. His wider circle was enough to include the Washington Street Bridge where he found two shelter holes, three empty Old English bottles, and a urine-soaked REI-brand sleeping bag.

He returned home.

On another day, he found a person resting under a weave of blackberries, not far from the shelters. The man wore a green coat.

"Hello?" Daniel said.

The man sat up. "What the fuck?"

The man was not his dentist.

“I’m sorry,” Daniel mumbled, “I thought you were somebody else.”

Daniel continued on to the train yard. There, he saw a group of men huddled in a circle as if playing cards. But there were no cards. There was only a box of lemon wine that they passed, each taking five-second pours until the box was empty. Then one of them threw the box behind him, bouncing it off a metal trashcan and up to the base of a tree.

“What do you *want* to do?” Sarah seemed agitated.

“Well, I’ve always had this dream that we…”

“Daniel, not now. Not dreams. Everything’s good right now. We have this house. And I have *my* job. You have *your* job. Everything’s fine right now.”

The next weekend Sarah was out again and Daniel went down to the park with the hope of finding the dentist but was disappointed to find a young family, two little girls feeding ducks out of their hands next to his table as if that park and that table had not been the location of what Daniel had witnessed. The finding had become an obsession and Daniel spent time during the week, in between patients, considering the life of the dentist. The feeling was not something that he could explain to anyone, not even himself, nothing scientific, nothing like the occurrence of natural surfactant in the lungs or the opening of the valves of the heart, but Daniel breathed his new feeling, breathed, allowing himself to think without any real evaluation or organization, and this thinking was something different for him, sitting underneath his daily life like the innards of bruised fruit.

Daniel walked through the train yard each evening, trying to pick out the men who hopped the boxcars as the trains left the changing area. The explosions of the yard no longer bothered Daniel and he went back to his own porch, listening to the cymbals, listening to the long lines adding, the crash of steel against steel, the lengthening of trains.

It was two months before Daniel saw him again. The dentist. In the park at a table, talking to another man, passing a bottle of Wild Turkey.

Then there was dentistry, a full cleaning and extraction, much more wonderful than Daniel had hoped. The experience was like the first night after the introduction to Daniel's cadaver in medical school when Daniel had not been able to sleep but had only thought of his incision over and over, noting that perhaps he had tailed a millimeter to the right at the end of his cut. He could never be sure.

The dentist didn't have as much trouble with this new patient and this new tooth, and Daniel believed he could see the soft brown of rot from his observation point, where he was hiding behind a maple tree, and the screaming was not screaming now but more of a nudging groan at the time when the pressure was the heaviest. Then there was a second patient, after an hour, and a third. Daniel stood, observing the work of the dentist like a small child might watch his father read, not understanding the relationship and the transfers taking place.

Daniel did not think about the night when he was young. Eleven. He did not think about the heavy door and the barn, or how it had sounded. He did not remember all of that moment but he could remember what was important if he needed to. There was the smell of the wet hay in the loft. The mold upstairs. The wooden ladder with the rough rungs, and Daniel had climbed. He had chosen to climb.

The loft was not his fault. The loft with its long-cut planks worn greasy. It was uncomfortable and cold and damp, and Daniel had tried to say no. He wanted to believe that it was not his fault. He had clearly said no.

In the loft, it was rough and heavy, and quick.

Afterwards, alone again, he had told himself that he would be able to control what took place in the future, that there would be none of that smell, the smell of whiskey, cheap whiskey, or any other alcohol. He would be careful and precise now. Inviolable. Measured.

Daniel had begun his control by placing that moment, placing that moment in the barn loft, like shelving a can in a pantry, in a recess, though it was not a simple can he had shelved but something animate, with teeth and claws, claws like the curve of hay hooks. And that thing waited unseen, waited in the charred shadow of time.

Daniel did not think of this.

Daniel was sweating. He had been sweating for days and people had begun to notice at work. A nurse said, “Do you think you might have a fever?”

He was staring at a chart, not writing, and a droplet of sweat slid off his nose and landed on the paper.

She said, “Are you ok? Are you feeling alright?”

Daniel smiled, revealing his teeth that had not been cleaned in a week.

Sarah started to reach across the table but stopped herself. “Daniel, I’m worried.”

“Worried.” Daniel was leaning forward, the white of his head hanging over the table like a lamp. He said, “You know I just can’t control.”

“Control what?” Sarah looked at him with her chin out. Stared at him. His eyes and the new smile. Then she looked down and began to pick at the white paint that was peeling off the corner of the table. “Control what, honey?”

Daniel did not look at her.

He said, “Everything.”

The leaving was not hard. Daniel was alone in the evening again, and it was not hard. He had purchased the coat, the boots, and the large green backpack at the Army Surplus, filling it with what he thought was necessary. He considered writing a note then, something to teach a lesson, but there were no words to tell the story. He knew that Sarah would come home late at night. Then she would learn slowly, as he himself had learned slowly. There was a process, an experience that had to be eaten, like new food, a baby beginning to feed while cutting its first teeth.

The last item was his doctor's bag, an antique country practitioner's satchel that he'd purchased at a garage sale on a Saturday. Earlier in the week, he'd stuffed the bag with stolen surgical tools, syringes, Percocet, Naproxen Sodium, and stitch kits.

Daniel picked up the bag and held it in his left hand. Then he went out the back door, leaving it open, walking across the deck and onto the grass. He stepped over the low fence, picked his way through the new growth of suburban woods, trees five feet high, and slipped down to the muddy creek-bed in his stiff new boots.

Daniel began walking along the gravel road towards the changing yard, trains crashing together, changing tracks like iron dogs. Dogs on the chains of new owners.



**Peter Golub**

**Work**

Before beginning my work  
Didn't D.H. Lawrence tremble at the sound of that word?  
Does this reference make things too heavy handed?  
Things get too long.

Before beginning –always welcome distraction.  
Procrastination just might save us from our work.  
Perhaps, if we worked less, there would be less garbage and anxiety?

And for Christ's sake if nothing else walk into a cathedral and look up  
And as you look up think of your schedule  
And as you think of your schedule begin to smile  
And the cathedral is like a mountain in a forgotten memory.

We stand alone and together in it.  
I know you'd much rather sleep than make something useful of your life.  
I love you.

\* \* \*

And at other times everything seems very simple  
Like a field covered in snow

The cat watches the snow  
It falls very slowly  
Profoundly alone, how can it be, you say

One hour then two  
And on the third hour you cannot help laughing to yourself a little  
Hot forehead pressed against cool glass, get out of the car fucker, you say to yourself

The snow falls, elegant and trite  
Nothing can be done about this  
You cannot make the snow less beautiful or less cliché

Eventually, you open the door  
Put your left foot out then your right  
Like a runway model, things are so simple and complex

Walking you see a man pushing a car up a hill  
You offer him your help, he declines  
He pushes the car, smiling to himself

## When Stephen Hawking Dies

Some day Stephen Hawking will die  
It may be at night or in the day  
Late in the afternoon or early in the morning

I will walk into the bathroom and the radio will turn on as it always does  
And everyone will be talking about physics  
At the end of the first broadcast they will play  
*In modo d'una marcia* by Robert Schumann  
Then begin talking about the elegance of the universe

I will stand looking at my face in the mirror  
And remember Claude Levi Strauss who lived to be 101  
And Richard Strauss who said he had outlived himself  
Eventually I will grab a toothbrush  
Straighten my hair  
And imagine your naked body sleeping in the bed

How will it come to us my love  
Do we know anything about physics  
Can you imagine an electron  
Or continuous energy

## **When You Have the Time, Watch This**

You should of course know that we do not have the time  
The hours make no images  
Squeak no sounds  
And yet they are there anyway  
Silently eating at our lives  
Like termites inside a tree

## **The Russian Olive**

*written with Andrew Haley*

With you I feel it is the 20<sup>th</sup> century  
The dirigibles take people  
To and from their unfulfilled desires  
Young men and women wave to gathering crowds in the sky

America cozies up to its Great Depression  
Joseph Vissarionovich steps outside  
The birches do not notice him

Joe steps out into the cold  
Steaming with his ax  
His boots crunch the snow  
In the frozen black mud ruts  
Leading to the sty

Moths die in the hands of his son  
The animals beg for the night to end

And who do they beg  
Where do they go from here  
There is no history Joe  
That is to say there is no story  
Language is a pretty picture inside a spandrel

Just the rampage of life  
And the moaning of the not yet dead

A big man  
Is lonely  
He learns French  
A woman loves him  
He wants more  
He writes and writes  
Composing a history  
Equal to his size  
Don't worry honey there are still more things left to buy

America moans  
Like an old yak in the snow

The vertical expression of a horizontal desire  
If a pig leaps on a man in sexual excitement it is not an offense

As the fun and presentiments gather  
And rotten fruit drops from orchard trees like a million soggy turds  
We gaze into the distant future  
But come along for you are not yet born  
This hidalgo will rise and fall  
Scrapping up millions of large cars and thick refrigerators  
Into the nests of wasps

The music raged against almost everything  
Your father the same as always  
A white figure at the end of a pool

4 33 hums in the supermarkets  
Throbbing with the abortions of white hippy girls  
In Salt Lake City; a school; a park; a flock of swans  
In the midst of all the commotion  
The streets are sprayed ashen with DDT  
Memorials raised for the brave past  
But no demur against the future  
Concentration camps renamed  
Khrushchev condos raised to the sky  
In the radios George and Martha  
Martha and Georgie boy sing a song  
About Roman life

And in white rooms just like these  
Our parents' minds were forged

They shat us out  
My love, they say, they did it all for us

In front of me you chew your fish  
Your mother, with her quiet greed  
More sane and more determined  
Had also dreamed  
And lay you like an egg into Mojave Desert heat  
A nest of Barbies, lights, and whores

## Peter C. Fernbach

### Impressions

I always thought I could write for miles about Coltrane  
Miles about Monk and miles about the beauty of a D major chord  
Struck note by singular note, coming down like a Sunday in June:  
Dewy and promising: a sweet surrender. Or, I thought that, music  
Behind me, guiding my pen with smooth, confidently spaced arpeggios  
Could lightly awaken, like softly outstretching after the first streams of  
Lazy Sunday light, some cooing muse that wouldn't be so vulgar  
As to be necessarily seen when felt. Or, so I thought, the curious melodies  
Resonating around the freshly painted red room, could conceive  
Some corollary and equally astonishing truth within the whiskey jar of mind.

But, years and rolling years after pressing these thoughts into practice,  
I am still just made of the old disjointed dissonance of blood and bone  
That shakes and coughs, like my elderly lawnmower, and needs a push to get going:  
My old lawnmower that comes out of its tomb late on Sundays, when the heat is  
A dead weight and Monday morning a vague pressure. And, always an unwanted labor,  
the mangy and unruly grass groans, in need of some work to make it presentable.

Afterwards, sipping cold lemonade on the deck, I don't think about the  
Craftsman lawnmower shearing the wall, or the birdlime churned up and spat  
On the lawn, or the glass that ground it to a halt. I am simply happy  
About my work: the glowing mirage of light over the landscape,  
Like early Monet is – not music – but still pleasing to a tired eye.



## A Logic

A sentence is a railroad between people:  
A sturdily constructed steel path between  
Peopled cities of this state and that.  
Together with the indirect goodwill  
Of engineers and the unseen kindness  
Of steel workers, we pack a freight  
Of meaning and send it along the line  
With roaring internal combustion  
And no fear that our freight  
Will be, from theft or spoilage, adulterated.

But on this train, a heavy monster that only  
Looks alive, we, from our growing distance  
As we squint, see the passengers, a kind of  
Freight, bounce around, unstable as Pop Rocks  
And impossible to pin down. We know there is  
No malice in their unthought movements  
Though we wouldn't mind having a closer  
Vantage point from which to watch our cargo.

And as the train moves further and further off  
Our weariness and distance start playing tricks  
Of the mind and, it looks as though passengers  
Can occupy more than one space at the same time  
Like Warholdian afterimages. Which is the real one?  
And then, distraught, we realize that our packages  
Once seemingly strapped in place also blur  
Like the most elemental building blocks  
Of the universe, into a cloud wherein multiple  
Semantic positions seem occupied simultaneously  
Unlike the mighty train that thunders on  
Its tracks, unquestioned and self-assured.

## **Fusion**

From the outside of the house  
Grey vinyl siding, newly done and happy in its place  
You wouldn't know, by appearances  
That something as important  
Or as delicate as nuclear fusion  
Was going on inside.

And, indeed  
Nothing with that gravity was going on.  
But after a few glasses of wine  
It sure feels like every move is a wager  
Greater than any high-bet table in Vegas  
Or more severe than any nuclear mishandlings  
Chernobyl or otherwise  
That reached me at a distance  
Over the airwaves.

Like those who deal in Uranium  
I choose my moves slow and deliberate:  
The risk-benefit analysis  
Carefully calculated prior to action.  
But, sometimes, the unexpected demands  
Quick, decisive action without thought;  
And sometimes, reflex betrays me.  
Thoughts and actions spiral away  
Like fractal patterns with their own life  
And the fate of the world is out of my hands.

## Crab Apples

That summer Resistance and Class Consciousness  
Were things with no name: vague impulses  
Born of the agitating pressure between  
The Haves, throwing our friends all over  
The Profit-Making-World, and The Have-Nots  
Arranging every living detail for the gain of others.

It began innocent enough, with a ten dollar baseball bat  
And crab apple baseballs picked from an orchard by three  
Abandoned houses past the field by my house, until Nandoo, the son of a physician  
Who was never home cranked a homerun that put Mattingly to shame  
And crashed into the windshield of a passing Cadillac. We all cheered  
Without thought, more genuine than on the school field; once thought returned  
We dropped everything and ran like hell: "Fuck, are they coming?"  
"No, they drove away." "What are we waiting for?" "Let's do it again!"

Returning through the field that fell around us like a welcome veil  
We chattered like old women who had witnessed a miracle  
And danced with a giddiness we didn't know we'd lost.  
That day we turned vandalism into an entertainment industry  
That was two parts organized crime, three parts civil disobedience:  
We had nothing personal against any victim; it was strictly business.

For a year the enterprise flourished and brought us all  
That young Americans could ask for: girls, notoriety, tributes.  
We were Intoxicated Faustus' driving careless  
Into a bubble that looked like a castle.

There were scares of course, and the threat from cops and moles  
Was an imminent danger that we always two-stepped  
Even after Car 157 traced footsteps nearly to my door.

The next June we were an organized force of Freedom Fighters  
Gaining loyal members from school districts we'd barely heard of.  
At our height, we had eighteen people out with a record twenty seven hits  
On one vehicle: a semi taking transmissions from the GM Powertrain facility  
In Tonawanda, which would lose 1,300 jobs in the next year, to parts unknown.

The end began, as most do, like a tiny dot barely noticeable, a tumor  
We'd rather ignore. He had a black shirt and jean shorts. He was somebody's  
Uncle, employed as a groundskeeper across the street from the houses  
At Hunt Real Estate – a guy who really believed in the virtues of hard work  
But who would be downsized and embarking on his vocation of drink within the year;  
Whether he had eavesdropped on information given in confidence  
Or his mowing the lawn that Saturday was just tragic happenstance  
No one will ever know; But, by the time I saw the giant mower  
with no body on it, he was already across the street; and the chase was on.

## **Love Itself Will Not Unfind**

Love itself will not unfind  
But proper placements of syllables -  
“You,” and “I,” and “Love”;  
Syntax of bodies –  
Hands curling around neck  
(In love or on)  
Limbs flailing  
(In love or no)  
Loud voices resonating  
(Songs of love or no)  
Will often (unfair, unneeded) jar forever  
Into hapless, unshapely NOW.

## Understanding

I keep thinking  
I'll come upon a lakeside village  
In the desert  
Known as  
Understanding.

But, what I've come to  
Understand through this pilgrimage  
Is that the water there  
Know as fascination  
Will do:

The greatest home (hope?)  
Is fascination still.

## Natascha Tallowin

### Family Gathering

He looks at me with interest

Head cocked with expectant eyebrows

Takes a wine glass from a tray, and fixes me with a stare

Smiles toothily, while I prepare

For him to ask...

“What do you want to do?”

Pause for effect

Nods to a stranger with lustful respect

I feel the need to prolong the answer which I know he expects:

“What do you mean?”

He laughs at my question

Guzzles his alcoholic drink

Gives an avuncular wink

Pats my arm

With gluttonous charm

Oblivious to my obvious alarm

“What is it you want to do

For your career?

What’s your plan for future years?

Have you got something in mind

A job of some kind?”

His face nears

“After all, I’m sure you could,

Get a job as good as mine

If you wanted to, which of course you do

You could get a job that earns a good bob

You could be like my son; he’s reached his first ten million

And he’s only twenty one.



Of course money isn't everything  
And you've got to be smart  
Not like all these hippies who are into art  
And think with their heart  
You've got to be clever; you've got to have pride  
But I think you could do it if you really  
Tried.

He leaves me to ponder his wisdom for a bit  
Before beckoning over  
The blondest waitress in the entire place  
And with a leering smile on his face  
Takes another glass of wine  
Applauding the quality of grapes and their vine  
And before I have a chance  
To advance, in a different direction  
He is back with another selection  
Of greatly treasured reflections

"Don't get me wrong  
Just because I've got

The proverbial lot  
With a wife from Thailand  
And a maid on hand.  
Two millionaire kids  
And a home in Madrid.  
Money can't buy you everything  
It's just luck that I've got a house  
With a natural spring  
Six bathrooms and  
Seventeen bedrooms  
That I'm happy is just what everyone presumes."

He jokes, quite clearly happy that he's never been broke.

"So what is it you've decided on

Hairdresser or beauty salon?"

He pauses for a beat

Long enough for me to retreat to a nearby seat

And sigh

"I want to write"

I admit

Pondering this postulating half-wit

Genius comes in many a form

And this frightfully fantasy engorged fellow

Isn't one of them.

He looks taken aback

Wheezes like an asthmatic before an attack

“A journalist, a good job it's true...”

He grins, reforming himself like Terminator II

“I want to be a writer of fiction, poetry...”

My words are cut short

And before I have time to abort

He descends upon me and snorts,

“You want to be careful who you tell that to

Not many people are as open minded as me and you.

I know some people think

That all you writers do is drink

And smoke

And take drugs

But I don't listen to what people say

I know all you musos and artists and writers...aren't gay

Not that it matters to me by the way

If you want to be a fag,

Be a fag

That's what I say.

My mind starts to wander

His wine is gone

And he's starting to dribble

As he dribbles on and fucking on

"I don't know much about writing

But I'm sure that it's exciting

To know, that one day you might

Be able to write

Almost as well as that bird who died.."

He momentarily loses his stride

"You know the one I mean

The one who drowned herself in that stream

Virginia something, is that the one?"

He asks as my facade starts coming undone...

## Circus of the Damned

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Boys and girls,  
Children of all ages...  
You are about to witness the most spectacular show on earth  
Hold your children's hands  
Squeeze your girlfriends shoulders tight  
And peer into a world of altered reality  
Of ghoulish delights and bitter sweet dreams...

Come one, come all; step on in!  
A good time for everyone's about to begin  
You watch the woman walk high on wire  
And wait while we set the net on fire  
You'll be sad to see our circus end,  
But it doesn't have to stop here my friend.  
We wouldn't like to be thought to deceive  
But once you join, you never leave.  
You may go anywhere you'd like and more...  
Except that final dressing room door.  
In there, the biggest draw resides  
The girl of many faces hides  
With rows of masks up on shelves.  
So many, she's never seen herself.  
One moment she's an angel who protects,  
A vicious self-preserver at the next.  
But alas her true face she's yet to see,  
It's faded in her memory.  
And she, and we, aren't even sure  
If she even has one anymore.  
But it doesn't matter if its a face not worth showing  
As long as her masks keep the business flowing.  
You'll learn all sorts of fine things first-hand  
In the clever circus of the damned.  
But do not look at us aghast,  
Now that you know our tenants' past.  
It shouldn't matter if you know  
The face-girl's misery and woe.

Because now, with everything you know,  
We can never, ever let you go.  
So now you finally understand  
The morbid circus of the damned.

Welcome to the Circus  
Enjoy your stay...

## Some Of Her Parts

Jennifer Schecter.

For you the words from a salted tongue

Used to pepper pages of precious thoughts

Unwound.

Words shrivel from your tongue

Your eyes a glacial picture of togetherness and sanity

But behind them rots the dream of oneself

An ingénue, a writer

A naive, complicated saboteur,

A puzzle

A monster.

Jenny Schecter.

You are the demon that tempts me

A child immortalised behind the fictional facade

Of a tragic alter ego – Sarah Schuster

A girl washed up on the shores of a daydream

Fastened into place with a full stop.

Jenny.



Words are the best thing we can give to another human being.

They know the reality of your mind.

At the end of your fingertips, the world is sublime

A place of freedom, pontillised reality and realist fiction.

It is only when you look up

That the categorical distinction between brains that know reality and brains that don't

Comes into play

And the weather vane that points so accusingly in your direction

Takes on a much more sinister charm than before, when the mere sight of it had tortured your imagination with pleasure

Jen.

For you the fruit of my thoughts

Masquerading as something divine when you want to eat them

And something detestable when you don't.

Whatever your intentions toward them,

They will always be thoughts,

Dreams,

The rattle of the train next to your own leaving the station

The flicker of something in an empty room.

The creak of something unexplained at night.

A monster.

.

You could never have the freedom of a bird,

With the weight of such glorious stories upon your shoulders

The sheer weight of your human body

Shackles you to the ground.

And now you will sit

Forever weaving tales

Perpetually waiting.

For the wind to lift you off of your feet.

**Dearest... (A poem inspired by Virginia Woolf)**

Clarissa floats from  
time to place  
to memories  
back, and forth

Leonard digs weeds  
from their roots  
persistently  
watching

Virginia immerses herself  
in Clarissa, Sally  
her mind  
(and the river)

Forging a work of fiction,  
A love letter that brands  
the protagonist's hands  
Mrs Dalloway – these words are for you.

These words written sparsely, in  
pepperings of time  
faded love letters on pages,  
crumpled and unfolded,  
where the handwriting spider-dances from each page to the next

sketches, kisses –  
hurriedly scribbled in London cafes  
(the waiter leaned over to see  
what the woman scrawled –

so passionate was she!)

To dinner parties  
Veiled in romance.

From Richmond to imagination,  
where winding steam trains  
chunter  
And lovers stroll  
arm-in-arm  
on boulevards  
where men tip their hats  
and the women twirl parasols.

And then to the end  
settling ungraciously into purposeful steps  
with weighted pockets  
and bowed head  
thick with the memory  
of imagination  
memories of conversations had  
with friends forged within her  
own mind.

I hope death was what you imagined.

**Melanie Sevchenko**

**Bar 25**

especially on the evening bridges  
Berlin  
is a seductive bitch

a polluted whore becoming more fleshy  
in the sunburn  
stripping its cloud covers 'til the  
lights go out

in the early afternoon she was in the garden  
conversing with me  
I was the tall grass that supported her crouch

I like that I can be something from the earth  
quiet for once

most days she spends at the farm down the highway,  
building a studio for a widow  
who stands supported  
by her women circle

and my cousin comes every morning for the widow  
to turn her cheeks red

the builder is there too  
he didn't lose a stitch of his ego  
after two years at the Buddhist monastery

the builder wrote the farm folks a letter  
saying his knee is still warm  
from how I left him

nobody knew what he meant.

I hung up shortly after that

John called me 'woman'  
through an online chat

I said 'woman' I approve of  
but not 'broad'

after 20 minutes of online musings  
he signed off, then on again  
he wanted more kissing and ciao-ing,

before he was to board a train to Mexico  
to buy drugs

last time he got his car taken at the border  
no license

xo xo xo

## Warsaw 2

Above our bodies that float side-by-side  
in back stroke  
is our bodies  
floating side-by-side  
as a motion picture  
in the mirrored ceiling.

I see how our bodies glide in opposition to  
each other's size and structure  
and how my bathing suit is low cut, unsexy  
but brown and form-fitting to my tight bulbous body  
like a silk coating of milk chocolate.

The pool lights rotate their fiber optic cycle  
guiding our auras from pink to purple  
to emerald green to truer blue.

But despite the shape of things  
our bodies love to love each other,  
and unusual to my needs  
I love how you force yourself inside me  
without caress or gentle touch  
without ease  
without warm-up  
a rapt knock  
without letting me feel you grow against me  
without knowing I'm ready.

After Polish vodka  
in a small tattooed bar underneath  
the frigid dry streets  
of a flat dark  
and edgeless Warsaw,  
you move about the hotel room  
acting out your newest film in your underwear.  
You project the action in all voices and angles  
as I drift in and out of sleep.

In the morning I sigh off your imperfections,  
pleased that I am strong enough to see to  
where your image cracks.

You think you are old,  
I remind you you are young,  
that the lines under your eyes do not denote years  
only dissatisfactions,  
mere beauty marks  
for artists like us.

I am jealous when you tease me about my youth  
and nervous when you ask to hear the stories I've scribbled  
and kept separate from everyone.

I begin each one in a shaky voice  
confusing narratives as your smile grows devilish  
and your eyes squinty.

And it's there, in an unwavering gaze  
where I see how your history leaves you.  
You, who your father tried to kill  
You, who spent 25 years trying to film your demon  
You, who gave yourself to the girl who wanted your baby  
You, as you extract Codeine from Vicodin  
You, whose next film will star only spooks  
You, who will uncover your father in a heap of boxes  
and you, who will kill everyone in the end.



## **Barn Town**

Rising in white blankets I thank the transparency of glass.

It's allowed the whiteness to scream me awake  
given the sun permission to enter  
as comrades often do.

The sand of Rosslair Harbour rolls in gritty balls  
between my calves and the mattress.

Margaret says she hates to leave the castles behind –  
it seems I've taken a souvenir back to her guestroom.

## No Signals

it begins in an undulation  
of two colored tones  
blinking keys  
the flicker of  
harmonium temperature  
up and down  
careening side to side  
harbor lights  
navigating the cradle in the fog

the sea organ  
brimming with waves  
billows its weight  
quaking the only element  
quavering a tune  
accordion lung heaving  
in and out, rise and fall  
gathers the things that ride it

staggering closer to me on shore  
in the dark open air  
I await movement  
a break to go deeper  
past sand  
into earth  
hidden from water  
the encroaching tide  
that carries prickling notes  
showering down as rice  
in celebration

a compression of language  
into skeletal formulas  
absent of fluff and flesh  
expands off the grid  
to equal goose bumps  
that pixel the portraits  
the beat has brought

I listen closely to where he chooses  
to place the pattern  
how he controls the waver in me  
to mirror the rocking sea

**Mick Raubenheimer**

**On Pessoa's idea of her.**

The idea of her  
wondered at the idea of my cock  
its girth and thrust  
My idea of me  
fantasized the fragrance of spasm  
between her thighs  
the scent of the idea of her calves  
the textural moisture of her tongued  
mouth, an idea

The idea of we  
anticipated curious, primordially  
distracted conversations  
silly laughter  
and waking together  
to the idea of morning,  
stirring oneother  
back to flesh

The idea of we  
entwined  
is transformative

**Craning time.**

Outside  
a Jurassic breeze  
updates  
floric lawns  
while we  
perpetuate  
the ceremony of skin..

**Recipe for evolution.**

Sky in the eye

Blood in the mouth

**Synaesthetic.**

I was reading  
The Ecstatic Jungle  
the other day  
I couldn't finish it  
Too many  
of the words  
smelt of you

**Beetle.**

It traversed mysterious cascades of sky-blue  
to reach you

Sat on your knee  
fauning its coppery wings

Faintest clicker



## **Talita.**

Her name was something  
of the shapes  
of her skin  
the cranes in her flesh -  
her erotic skeletons

the time in her breathing body  
its metres and motions  
its gestures of my positions her name was  
somewhere  
of her coded sounds  
the scapes of her expressions -  
coated electricity glint of her laughter  
little storms  
her tears nature blushing

and something of her navel and mine..

Her name was the air she touched  
the where I breathed her –  
and magic moments  
tucked  
in the greater time  
her name was simply myself.

**Michael Rerick**

**how to fight the middle class**

seen language  
you're a couch, flop  
how to fight the middle class  
take up the recycling and garbage  
don't slip s ip \ s | ip on

1

the sheen language  
Mary and Joseph found it ironic  
I beseech snow and  
sewing pin grown to a push pin  
I'm following the rules to get back at you, to you  
have you seen language  
they said, around the whole yard  
see (sea) turn (turtle)  
please speak in complete thoughts  
pool as cold  
3 inch skin at the wrist  
jump in jump in jump  
deadly alive seen  
the book about it a movie  
lounge music languaging around  
ghost curtain shower

—  
|  
did you hear that  
what haughty love make  
sound after a collision  
deadly alive language  
this is a word, it's important

|  
and

pris

## Appendix I. C

Agomben remarked  
there was no why  
which further thoughts  
s|ip in the published  
haughty curtain lounge  
Marx shows love  
take up the civil  
don't have dream problems  
they stood looking  
a long time  
a cold couple yeah  
alive cube asking  
have you  
the latest model  
the smaller model  
more often beyond  
this a lot  
Jameson points to a pot  
buy bother  
slumped and specifically  
important he goes  
step-father say burnt  
and during the same push  
they jump outside  
postmarxist speech  
speak deadly  
Zizek Zizek  
recognizes the middle class  
beseech and author of you  
remembers a fondue movie  
that you did hear  
as an anthology study  
since that print difference  
translates when  
a branch  
see to theory  
coupled the hands  
in English in hand  
and it's no skin use

how it always hums  
they deal with this  
thought framework  
and apply to the fight  
introduced into concurrent  
postmodernism unfortunately  
this current genre makes  
a non-reflective sound  
through apartments  
they allow  
global quiet rules  
William James's language  
disturbs a Michael Chrichton  
before they sit and read  
socioeconomic poetry  
this one a pris  
cough  
wrist relations jump  
too many friends  
drunk on collision theory  
language lineage  
somehow false  
it's not  
as if plastic  
too much uh hu music  
word  
in the Nietzscheian sense  
and end right  
interrogating  
the notion of warm  
a sound after a ghost

## Appendix I. D

see the smell of I  
why I language  
like a movie  
depending on  
the back to you  
utility turn  
I copy a residual  
you written before  
a predilection  
of penmanship  
a long book ago  
please speak  
you're a teaching  
movie a ball  
anthology  
and whisk  
approach  
a weather flare  
have you  
a whisk ready  
there at the slip  
of music  
for a snowy  
batter I remember  
the moment  
the pool composition  
to jump at you  
fortunately have seen  
contradictions  
and haughty people  
alive and unable  
to sit on a couch

## Appendix I. E

how to consider  
what happened  
where language  
was on a movie  
seen not chosen  
a present flop  
no marginal benefit  
of a blaring sheen  
of a cold power  
but about they  
and a fireplace  
all those years  
of puzzlement  
of the never  
refreshing feeling  
which makes  
their language  
most alive  
they turn  
and slip  
on display  
in the middle  
of seen  
we see

## Appendix I. F

jump into work  
push for this past  
for that lounge  
her theorists' cost  
she began after  
one week of recycling  
the ironic word  
it's he he he  
important for chaos  
but no she who steps  
newer openly  
lived this surface  
and sits out the  
shower of whole  
notions their curtain  
around income  
motives should tree  
she's what's alive  
with reconstituted  
new garbage  
the best theory  
to show nothing  
sits not this  
would it take  
should she fight  
the never is  
them gender  
turtles troubling  
the snow  
and from stone  
a book structure  
a reflective book  
a novel book  
of white eucalyptus  
she learned  
this (metal) through  
the cross study  
of yes yes alright  
to do the first



inch jump  
at the first  
modern yard  
application attempt  
there was an over  
the car moment  
there is yet her  
hey cat  
postpolish  
in first  
at time  
pool book  
social society  
for water  
his for sale  
her taken  
up mostly  
in theory  
it seems  
no one knew  
when the yard  
jump changed  
now one last  
theoretical no  
has been  
has bared  
in here always  
the said with  
wrist students  
she's her other  
and about  
to open  
the other pit

## Appendix I. G

and a a  
such a  
que the  
the he  
and the  
when the  
the m the p  
po is  
room one  
should  
insects  
too  
is through  
and to  
to be  
petted  
stop the  
in a  
a on  
the  
to the  
class  
the  
instantaneous  
this  
with that  
beseech  
barb  
see  
see well  
still that ped  
ever  
into word  
how  
can that year  
this a  
class

**Marc Paltrineri**

**A NEW WAY OF SAYING THINGS**

*"It's always one world  
if you can get there."*

—Robert Creeley

Eclipse means everything, so goodbye.  
I'm disappearing now  
into the newborn palm of the street.

The world is full of jack-o-lantern hearts.  
The twilight says so  
with its leafy breath,

that we'll be dead before  
the sun is, waiting anonymously still.  
It's like a hole, you can't fill it

without pouring some story into a stranger's glass.  
And is it boring? To say too much  
is to wander a road,

lost in the pupil of conceit.  
Orange rain falling  
through a pewter night's blue,

I wait on this side of a midnight departure.  
The city closes its fist,  
keeps me warm,

briefly, as the figure in the window drifts  
from one lit room to  
the darkened next.

## SECOND WIND

*for Jan Hammerquist*

Four is a good number, unfruitful.  
Falling down moves my molecules,  
now bring the body forward.  
This meditation requires a group  
forgetting the sun to wash water.  
Seeds of the futurepast are not outraged.  
All is silent, closing like a flower, your second wind.  
Everyone must feel free to mistake this,  
epithet or epitaph or  
there would be no death to return to,  
(I winter, shiver blank  
in the movement) from out  
these trials of seas, chants of flowers.  
Yesterday I counted  
up to 947. Today will I go higher,  
burn through dark amnesia?  
The trumpets of summer  
are turning away, towards a wilt  
in the impossible mind, blasts  
a destructive flourish, that verb-noun.  
When this state is reached, the full focus is sleep,  
and yet, fall falls to spring and both are none,  
cooling off in the swim, losing feeling.  
It is hard, you take an object  
and crystallize its fire, just look at it  
like a nothingness. Okay,  
honey, back to the sidewalk,  
entropy fills the sky. I spring up—lilt,  
tilt, count the waves.  
Forgetting it all, the man said,  
and asked for something more.

## SESTINA

Open your umbrella, this is yesterday's rain. It was the mold that made us long and wander, blacking like sleep on a crumb-creviced moon. Wind crafted wind then made glass out of boredom, boxing what we couldn't feel: the touch of a window, brush of bare arm. The forest creaks at its hinges, arm against arm, while the rain falls like someone else's, a piece of furniture, draped in blue, so as not to feel the worn meadows of age. How long, how far will she wander the ghost who corks my distance in glass, cures it and distills it. I think I'm turning part moon, waxing linoleum, bland as any other moon. There is a sound the flesh on flesh makes when I touched you, your arm, or the jungle of our heads, that still makes glass drip like glass, and windows open to windows in a cellophane rain. Home is where the heart grows yonder, even if to wander is to smudge out your name and feel the erasure of driving through deserts, to feel the blank blueness of windshields seeping in. And yet another moon swallows the map so I wander out into the tattooed personae of my arm. Somewhere, there's a horizon curtained by a silent film of rain and behind that shower curtain grows a city of glass; and if that's true, then what else is glass but the opiate of distance, because how could I feel the rain when there is no rain, the moon coined-over with some counterfeit moon? I pinch the skin, but of course, it's only my arm that wanders the leash-length of hope that someone else out there wanders and, in turn, shatters and fits into this panel of glass. From this spot, the world is naked past the arms, shivers slightly, and this time I finally feel like falling in the mood of a present day rain, to pool in the craters of a cloud-nothinged moon. Shuttering the umbrellas, let your bare arms feel. The wandering marrow, the indoors of rain is now open. Just please watch the glass. We broke trying to find life on the moon.

## IN A PLACE OF FULLNESS

*for Calista Tarnauskas*

All day I have contemplated babies,  
how to live where the water tastes like blood.  
Singing requiems to a landscape's fetish,  
the buckets are full of mostly dead things,  
a corrugated voice.

Let's set the scene: in October,  
1726, Mary Toft gave birth  
to her first rabbit. Seeing beasts  
in the garden (and to lie down thereto)  
some of us become open doorways lighted  
from within, a cascading hoax you can't  
even imagine.

The smell of hair  
has a knife in its maw, fallopian movements are caused  
by tiny rabbits jumping. I am scarier  
than the things—cardboard box, honey, shadows;  
scarier than granite. I wonder what the babies  
do when I'm not looking. There's always something  
half-eaten.

In the first monster Mary  
birthed, fragments of eel bone  
he, she, resembling a cat.

Funny how it's food  
reminds me your goneness; to bruised onions  
hearts are comparatively bulky.  
All day I have contemplated—these  
remnants of a curtain, teeth not worn—  
babies. I can hear you wondering out loud.  
Behind your bucolic moon bottle,  
why does it smell like home tonight,  
moldy as oranges and never been  
opened?

The authorities, confining Mary  
to a public exhibition, made idealists  
out of everyone. Heavy with milk, the moon escaped  
to where Georgia O'Keefe sits in my doorway  
a tall deaf child.

The things I'm scared of—I am scarier than  
the lanolin of absence. All day  
I contemplated babies, kept them around and together  
we breathed for a time, considering water  
but swallowed the salt instead.



## SINCE THE SKULL IS ALWAYS SMILING

Holes or not we'll never know  
The silver lining mends the inside coat  
In the soda of starlight and good luck

Again time for our pennies to *fizz*  
It's time for a change  
Glow indefinitely the historical dark  
All our trees fit noosed or christmas tasseled  
In a storage unit somewhere  
Or frost for that matter for spring

As we abandoned the lyre  
We abandon these playthings  
Left for their rubbernecking answers

On we go a correspondence of stars

Named these streets and will rename them  
There's a river beneath this river  
Out of view  
In small letters  
Then your cameo ascending  
Of adults like dandruff

Is blood a poison? that century was full  
Not real I tasted different metallic when you asked me  
To whiten the teeth was  
Who was I back then? The grape they used  
A colorless sunset

I fade in my most worn-out places  
A sparrow gets lost in the eaves of your nightgown

Since the skull is always smiling  
Since thousands more are dead

**Mark Moore**

the end of the age.  
this faltering act of love.  
we may be steeped in metaphors.  
yet cant distinguish the simple and the plain.  
were we born with the sadness,or did we learn despair along the way.  
i question who you are these days.  
for all that you say.  
i wonder who i was.  
ever to you.  
who am i today.  
who was i yesterday.  
as if you ever knew .  
and its without ease.  
this colassal need to please.  
to feel you want only me.  
somethings are never to be  
i am at peace with the misery.  
that the truth is now.  
that the whole of you.  
will always means more than half of me.

**Mitch Corber**

**arson is a lesson learned**

arson is a lesson learned  
in tourniquet worship, loaves  
of sodabread bobbing atop  
the kerosene waters

prim and prune of noonday  
fires fingers licking  
red and yellow bunting  
flames uttering the fluttering

drifts neanderthal sleds and  
snowbirds wordy infinitude  
semi-linear proto-conscious  
dirigibles of quasi-jive

dark permissions shout  
of famine breezes  
fanning fury to new heights  
and chatty magpies

## Weather's Feather

Chase change in chiméra's conduit,  
peak at the pluck of weather's feather.  
Swap opportunities in dizzy song,  
a surrogate leaping deeper-than-thought,  
conscious as a wheel cog,  
consummate as a cheering union.

Ride the wakened blend of back-break,  
for god sakes a siren shimmering on the wane,  
the brain-drain abandoned to a tortoise shell  
of hellbent Wednesdays, a spooning outcrop  
of the thrumming dumbing down of  
bound sweat and braggage.

Move me as any movie  
from a voyeuristic crouch  
in trial-bubble bingo,  
the ringtone nesting in a pensive  
lemondrop opportunity.

While the peal of an early bell  
deciphers its piety in a pricked blister,  
to etch a wretch his bloody bond of crotch and hairs,  
assembling in a wintry blink  
this bare reference to the shin of shy resurfacings,  
the bleating treatment of a bully goat.

Slashed as an asking price, tonight's itinerary  
spites the sticker shock of drip-dry druids  
in fluid robe, giving Death the breath it dreads,  
in a seismic nocturnal foraging,  
maintaining a moth-eaten mortgage  
of the sordid spackled facts.

## february

february's ferocious affirmation  
dim and windows barren  
bitter winter snowdrift rainy  
before the patented plow

nor frigid the wiggle room  
unpredictable I-you showdown  
slowed to creepy feet  
and glistening dust-off

so new the usual wants  
in heydays haunting  
I reach back to blacken  
any remaining gremlins

a study of inverted pleasures  
mentoring the measurements  
a chew of a candy kiss  
the shatter of observant matter

## **Tumble down the wonder fear**

Tumble down the wonder fear  
barely borrowed from your commerce eyes,  
a schism vision of a puffball plantation.  
A pause in my century stare, wary of the  
tick-tack laptop consequences.

Discern the mere holler of a dollar down,  
soundless pestilence in the palm court.  
Eerie trajectories of a cramped corridor,  
the surge inflicted by inflections past.  
In person, on point.

I'm here wherever weaving trends send a message  
to my hobo toes, the news frozen.  
Closures surround the common corners  
voicing the swoop of an anthem  
-- damn the manageable meanings.

Could the very workaday perk up  
my errant ears? Can the stance of a dancer  
manipulate the center stage?  
or must I mop the millionaire's forehead,  
soothing subcutaneous pores?

I'd drink a sinkful of gladdened magnets,  
darkly draw the curtains for emerging moonbeams  
scheming to envelop the pulp and panache.  
Lips clash of wishes tossed like ripe squash  
in sautéed skillet.

Pretend words are woolly stems in a trend  
of buy and sell, clever puns impending pearls  
of woodshed wisdom, morphed into border cops  
in shiny badge arrangements  
true to the nicotine peril.

## Sheepsie

Haggle bedraggle boom-ticka Sheepsie  
weeps he (tough love) keeps  
a havoc-clamp of dark residuals

Shells of servant scowls growl the grunt of Undone  
A postage-due parade of  
day-old bagels

Seems snooze is resonating winds of change  
that span the range of dribbled soup  
in the looped crouton caché

Jeepers! Leaps of faith contend a trace of septic  
breath in the ruddy birth of  
a Beggar's Blues

When tuned a nuke of grab inhabits  
the sorry slab of jammed jelly-leg  
figurines of speech

Roses pose a rhythm and a raunch  
of staunch retainers of  
the rote potion

Doe-eyed mindspringers solve an instant riddle  
of the rumored Romeo  
and his missing folio

Dimmed locution roars a hindered hurdle  
of throbbing galoshes  
in the bosom of a chasm

Rummy tumblers wreck a hurried House of Cards  
as bubble-breath haunts  
the surface air apparent

## **The midget squint of surface worth**

I'm a panda purring  
Nourishing a wandering word  
A guess of weathers lapsed  
A past-due tapestry  
picknicking in pearl onion dominion

I'm a drum humming  
a bunch of bad rhythms  
Radical snare farewells  
Sands of timid time in sift,  
shiver-trickle intimations

Definitive?  
I'm rivers from Potomac candidacy  
I've heard of dim windows wet with wish  
Where the surefoot hides  
my prying eyes

I'm numb with this naming  
A cry striving for a calling  
Days thread  
head through pin  
Thrift flies west of mixed blessings

I be drifting  
Sake of seeming  
Breached squeaky feelings  
fault the free-range changing sky  
Struck shy of sure reach

I'm someone serviced by a nervous tic  
Knotting the getting of gotten  
but sinking in the miracle wink  
The lank stink of knife-eye sightings  
The midget squint of surface worth



## Skein

A skein of mangy moments interrupts a tray  
of fancy deli. Feldspar feels more like shale,  
a shallow pan of foolers' gold. Never on Sunday.  
Nunca domingo, señorita, no sign of relief.

Pardon me I've bred a tension  
spanked with barking knives. Skin limits  
a green council of invigorant sounds.  
Simulcast elections rig the Figure 9.

Nil and not a factor  
I'm prone to moan clueless in this clinch.  
It's a cinch I gather at the bedpost  
a curious grin of begging mouth.

Training for the main stage a million legs  
shake off the shingles. I plead a deep & dancing icon  
bubbling in its brew, or fooled, a mighty lightness  
succumbing to the running commentary.

Please stomach the hardened violence,  
the heaped bleatings, the severed nobility  
concerning my salient body. Do limit your  
furrowed-brow bullyings, mon amour.

Southward flees the frosted seasons  
lost in slumber's chill.  
Ill-timed, a tempestuous fist  
resists the doubter's dilemma.

**Mark Cunningham**

[specimen]

I was appalled at such language from someone so flat-chested. Well, it was *more* experience, mathematically speaking. I said that was the dumbest thing I ever heard, though, since I'm not an egotist, I rarely listen to a thing I say. Her only line, "When I get flowers, I feel remembered," ended up on the cutting room floor. I'm living a life of quiet desperation only because I'm hoarse.

[specimen]

I took the test to see if I could foretell the future and I could hardly sleep the whole week I had to wait for the results. Coffee gives you the serenity to dream it and the energy to do it: I turned on the flashlight to check the star chart. She said nature was a “multi-media performance piece,” meaning nothing much was going on. They thought I was capable of the unexpected, but they were in for a surprise. His pupils pin-pointed, but we just considered that dotting the i.

[specimen]

“Xenophobia, steak and chips, cuckold jokes, in short, what we call an ideology.” There can’t be a revolutionary party without peer pressure. 34 Hospitalized After Co-Worker Sprays Perfume. Futurism is now: you have to double click faster than that. I had my finger on the pulse of life, which means the pulse wasn’t in my finger.

[specimen]

I rear-ended the car with the If You're Not Enraged, You're Not Paying Attention bumper sticker. "Who do they think they are?" we demanded, and then we realized we had no idea who we were. Yes, I'm being ignored, but is it just a random screen-out, or is there some personal contact here? The sentence, "Sentences are not emotional but paragraphs are" makes me happy.

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

**M.**

*Thief*

I call you Darling  
stealing it from Genet  
so that your cock shines  
with the Vaseline the cops  
took from his pocket  
so that I can follow you anywhere  
by pressing my mouth  
to the damp trail you leave.

**Leon Whyte**

**Soma Circa 2005**

Night after night  
it's the same scene,  
it's all the same to me,  
thin gin or cheap wine.

steal sly glances at  
the ghost in the white slip  
standing next to the  
whisky stained dress  
that she stripped off  
and threw in the corner.  
I'd love to have her,  
but I'd settle for  
second best.

Turn up the stereo  
and make our toast  
to oblivion, slip  
on the hardwood floor,  
get up and talk to Emily  
about nothing much  
at all.

Yet again a drunk night  
equals another fist fight,  
words get said, we sit back  
and watch our ritual  
dance of the dead.

Sarah says something  
funny, tensions die down,  
someone goes to the store,  
David passes out,  
and I pour one more.

It's getting lighter out-  
side, morning is coming  
and this party's dying.  
Drive home in Kati's  
car, singing off-key as we  
death defy down the road  
erratically.

In this life like a desert  
all the tumble weeds  
just want another drink.

Night after night  
it's the same scene,  
It's all the same  
to me.



## **Dream With Kerouac**

last night I had a dream  
with Kerouac in it  
he told me that  
this land was a body  
the highways its veins,  
and we were cocaine  
shooting raw electricity  
through the nervous system

we became libertines as  
we raced against reality,  
and time, against poverty,  
and our own impending insanity

but mostly we just raced,  
because for us cool cats  
life is just a  
benzedrine dream  
blurred faces  
strange beds  
and stranger women

we clung to the road  
like an orphaned child  
clings to his one  
tattered picture of  
his biological  
mother

after awhile  
each new trip became  
the junkie's latest fix  
at first sublime  
but never enough,  
this land is a body,  
we're merely track marks

if home is where  
the heart is  
then what becomes  
of the homeless?

## Old Age

“Empty the register,” demanded the masked man, waving his Tech-9 pistol at the the cashier.

The cashier looked to be about 70, and wore his age like a wet wool sweater. Years of gravity had caused the man’s shoulders to slump slightly forward. While he contemplated the burglars request he scratched his head, then shook his head and whispered “no”. The burglar’s face visibly sagged behind his mask as he thought to himself, this was supposed to be easy. The burglar looked to be around 18. He had been in the store earlier that day, to case it out, and to buy a moon pie.

“Come on, be a good boy and just open up the register,” said the burglar, half pleading, half mocking.

“No.”

The cashier hid his fear behind a facade of quiet determination, but his face was starting to flush and the hands he hid under the register trembled. The robber looked down at his gun, wondering how it suddenly became impotent, raised it above his head, and fired a shot at the ceiling, causing dust and tile to cover the candy bar section of the Quick Stop. Both of the men flinched noticeably at the loud retort of the gun, and it’s implications. The old man started to choke on the dust and coughed for half a minute or so.

“I am not fucking with you.”

“Don’t do that,” whispered the old man, after a flash of fear lit his eyes.

“What?”

“I said don’t do that again,” commanded the old man, more forcefully this time.

The burglar pushed the cold metal of his Tech-9 against the wrinkled forehead of the old man.

“Give me the money.”

The old man looked back at him, with wide eyes, and mouthed “no.”

“If you don’t, I’m going to blow your fucking head off. Do you understand me, grandpa?” jeered the robber.

“I really don’t think you will, young man,” said the old man in a quiet flat voice.

Instinctively the robber knew that the old man was right, as much as he had tried to convince himself otherwise. He couldn’t kill in cold blood. He looked down at his gun once again, of all the connivence stores in the area, he had to pick this one. All of his friends had told him how easy this was to do. He wondered what Tommy or Joe would do, probably waste the geezer.

“We’re in a tough spot aren’t we, son?”

“Shut up.”

The masked man felt nauseous as he tried to think of what to do next.

“Hey, son, do you want to buy anything?”

“What?”

“I said, do you want to buy anything?”

Mumbling expletives under his breath, the masked man slipped his Tech-9 back between the elastic of his boxers and his belly.

“Sure, I’ll take a pack of Camel Menthols,” he said in a resigned voice, staring at his Nikes.

“That’ll be \$3.15”

The masked man searched his pockets for the money, then pulled out 3 crumpled bills and a dime.

“I only got \$3.10”

After the old man took the money he counted out 5 pennies from the little tray near the register, and then pulled down the cigarettes.

“Have a nice night, young man,” said the clerk as he handed over the Menthols.

“You too,” said the would-be robber, as he pulled off his mask and walked out the door.

As the young man walked out of the store an involuntary spasm crossed the old man’s face. After regaining his composure the man went to the back to get his broom and dust pan to clean up the dust in the candy bar aisle.

**Linda Ravenswood**

**The dna to preserve proved contrary to capital gains**

No more tears. The place is sold, she told herself.  
What had been a ferocious dream from a hundred years away,  
outside a Cork tavern a million moonbeams ago, and  
night after night walking home, with lads, few bob,  
her grandfather sailing away and bringing it with him,  
beside his mothers' folded lace, trailing  
reels and jigs and candle light,  
had been made in America.  
With 40 dollars and his good wife withal,  
he came with those dreams and filigree,  
ambition lathering the way.  
He was young then, younger than the man himself,  
who walked the plank in this, his fathers' bar,  
long decades after the ground was split to build the place.  
Halloran, McDaid, Daffey, Coons, all had wanted a pub in the new world.  
But only Hanlon had done it.  
And now it was gone. Useless to even remember the past.  
She spent the afternoon insisting that she move on and forget about it.  
Just like a new Irish would do. Losing the gene to remember  
hurts for while, like a nail being wrenched out  
of the body; but in this new century,  
it is for the best. In the short time.

## Hopscotch from Space

Big news for the ants. They're in the lock,  
a sale is down; there'll be a dash  
on the grid  
for sure, a fights going  
and someone's lost  
their baby. Great news, she  
was just toddling  
in the eighth aisle;  
it wasn't a manic with a screwdriver  
so put away the media and pack up the  
briefs, every body's gonna have to wait.  
There'll be seasonal favourites until  
they're all gone and red punch  
on the corner. Tell your special someone.  
Big news.

## On public art and the longevity of an idea

If the explanation it requires  
is short  
or not necessary at all,  
an idea can last.

If the explanation it requires  
is long, needing students  
and postulators to translate  
and decipher  
an idea can last -

it can endure.

It is the middler that is the concern,  
the one without champion

the one with the gaping  
hole, and folding hands,  
the scrap of music from a reel to reel,  
a stone chipped fragment  
from a forgotten language,  
someone's cherished thing,  
once of the midnight drive  
once of the smiling girl by the junction,  
once of the moment,  
real and crumbling,  
he who may not find a friend  
in the loping crowd  
who inherits ideas from the dead -

who will spark to the great middler  
the great *I did*  
who pronounced so beautifully  
his causes  
into the mirror

# BLAZEVOX 2KX

# Spring 2010

## Lance Newman

### PS3 Entices Elizabeth

But how? W's successor  
speaks the language of joysticks?  
Shoot and ride. Real sophisticated.

And why? Internet gamers  
watch extreme footage of the war?  
Duck and cover. How global.

Now what? The long-faced Queen  
adopts the teens of Iraq?  
Stick and move. So wicked.



## Presidential Jobs Mirage

Sophisticated, electrifying,  
our stealthy front-runner,  
Capt. Keynote, waves boldly.

Vice radar detects fevered  
images, all copper and profits.  
“Cloak me, strategic cylinder!”

Sunday’s starlight losses  
force engineers to sky  
a computer candidacy.

## Draft Game Rules

Virtual conscription site  
on-screen: "Server  
Nation.

We're into achievement!  
We've overcome  
scrubbing!"

Monday's grey recruits  
pledge data,  
replicate.

## **Overhaul Smuggled Text**

A new pinnacle: Family month  
on our breathtaking spacecraft.  
We'll post remittances online.

“The border's virtually illegal,”  
scientists say. Yesterday's manuscripts  
are today's searchable freedoms.

Inter-American diaries  
follow the torrent of domination.  
Our final action: dissuade interference.

## **Drink Sun, Live**

Pardon the safety factor. We're live.  
We're steering, wheeling by the sun,  
chopping Mondays for a drink.

Author, pilot, counterfeiter, let's drink  
to beasts, to age spots, to kingpins live  
as Mother's melanoma. Palm the sun's

body. Fill your grain tube. The sun  
touches your sexy device. Breathe. Live.  
Blow as long as you're immune. Drink.

*These poems were made at 3by3by3, an online mixing table.*

**Elizabeth Hecht**

**THE ER**

The emergency room doors open  
Onto light green halls  
Nondescript in pale panic  
Nurses scurrying calmly  
With thoughts of catheters  
And catered lunches  
While patience in a gurney  
With ceiling flat as sky  
Lay awaiting a fate  
Not all her own

## **LIES**

Lie to me  
Just one more time  
About the arms  
You lay within  
The tentacles  
That wrapped around  
Your untruthed heart  
And heard it beat  
Like wings above  
The sand and sea  
And surf and sun  
And ebb and flow  
Of all things real  
That you will never know

## Endings

I took apart the Christmas tree  
that we so carefully constructed  
layer by layer, piece by piece  
How methodically I pulled it apart  
just when it was at it's finest  
I return the ornaments to their boxes  
compartmentalizing everything as I see fit  
Order is reinstated by reconstruction of the ritual  
yet, I feel no sense of accomplishment  
I see an empty box and feel  
the fear of unfulfillment  
The limbs look sad, so bare and empty  
no adornment to hang onto them now  
The old year is ushered out  
still clinging to the vine  
yet, I am able to sweep it's remnants  
out the door, still hopeful for the new year  
and though I know it too will end  
the chains of continuity are not binding

Lucy Hunt

**A Public Wall**

This body embodied in Berlin  
1989, cruel denim aches at the axis  
Fill lungs with deflating Aryan apathy  
To rise to each fall in Technicolor high-definition surround-sound digital pixelated  
purity  
Beating chests cheat best  
Whilst the sea undulates: spill liquor, lie, sit still  
Each putrid pitfall is a pore poured alive with vile breath  
Class gapes like her sanguine lips, which slip  
Open. Slack-jawed indifference

Hey.  
That's no way to start the day  
we dread metempsychosis more now  
that fret is regret now consumption is influenza  
Benzedrine meets Benedictine in a clash  
Of the sediments, call Interpol for sentiment  
Call 911, call no-one  
Scarlet carpets lead us to absolute truth and gee, ain't that the truth  
To forgive is to forget, to die is divine  
To define all their minds is a farce:

They are not your cake children  
You owe them no spam



**18:34**

18:34

White female, 81, on the corner shouting

BROKE Britain

BROKEN Britain

BROKEBACK Britain

You'll never placate the ones with

Placards spitting plaque with

A memory beyond

Yesterday:

Too many demons to exorcise,

Children to exercise,

Illusions to incise with

Precise, measured, and

Informed guesses –

Who feels at home in the world?

From the very

Depths of our nature, it's

Not won.

IT COULD BE YOU,

But it's not –

My thanks to the Western Daily Press,

The WDP, the NoTW, the DM, the PM,

Teaching WMD and APR and CO2

To people who only have time to

ABRVIATE

& b abrviatd

And be fed on

FEAR! HATRED! FEAR OF HATRED!

Fear of fat and fear of hating

The hatred that fear

Of hatred

Fattens:

It twists and melts in the

Mouth, so they say,

But don't take our word for it!

BUY BUY BUY to

See for yourselves.

**Leonard Gontarek**

**Violet**

The snow that appears violet, later, in a photo,  
now lights up all of the night.

Dark is not an enigma. We are the enigma.

We carry the moon from the well

to the door of the house.

Evil is made to sit in the corner, silent.

A child. Milk. It spills across the floor, moonlight.

The cat licks up the truth, fast as it can. The cat loves the child.

## Returns Department

You lost your receipt?

Is that all you got?

Look at this guy,

his dog ate his receipt

and he waited

two days and fished around

in the stool,

rinsed it, blew it

with a hair dryer,

pressed it overnight

between two big books.

This isn't a receipt,

it is a ticket to my heart.

He should tape it to his forehead

when he stands in line for Paradise.

## Lara Dolphin

### 13. "They Got the Point"

Once Bill Gates took the stage at a technology conference, uttered "Not only poor people should experience this" and cast a swarm of mosquitoes into the audience hoping to raise awareness about malaria. Ouch.

## 15. "Smexy"

Each school had that girl,  
the one with shiny hair  
who aced her chem exams.

**16. "The Shalimar Gardens of Lahore"**

Undone and blowzy from the heat,  
I pluck soft, red cherries,  
gaze into a marble pool  
and dream of you.

## 18. "The Honeybees of Ginza"

Up  
above,  
Ginpachi  
look for pollen  
while tourists sample sweet and tasty treats.



## Katie Jean Shinkle

### Baby-Doll: an Elegy

Down-coast, we find shells shaped  
of Texas, a heart; a fingernail or two.

*Part of having is forgetting,  
don't you agree?*

I pack the objects we do not,  
cannot, do not wish to give

names to. Here are our *things*.  
A car to drive away in.

Dodge, as in avoid, a bullet,  
as in too fast. The look and feel

of granules. A dissolution  
of a competent body.

How the eyes still water  
at the corners; the knees

not quite the same.  
We pass a roadside memorial.

A young man who told  
all of his friends he would

die on his motorcycle.  
Now that's loyalty

## Things Demons Believe

The moth at the end of the thumb,  
a life reigned, a life spent. Today  
was dreary with a touch of sunshine;  
tomorrow will be French birthdays  
(*Joyeux Anniversaire!*), followed  
by snowflakes in the early morning.  
See the dust; how the body is made,  
portion of wing lodged underneath  
nail.

The moth lands on the couch-pleat,  
shimmers like a templar, a hot-plate's  
vapors, sweetwater in bylight shadows.  
A curtain memory, how the brain holds,  
how the brain softens. No life is certain.  
No wing-span, no lifeline—palm or otherwise.  
Today's horoscope states with planets  
in sextile there will be an epic-death,  
a black hole, an event horizon.

## Coil-Signs

Time drops us like a rotted lover.

How we are a we for so long,  
that I no longer know the definition  
of me or I or Self.

The season lends itself  
to a proposition.  
Intensity so quick and traded,  
a certainty of—.

When I speak of toiling over,  
when I speak of us, the shift—.

How we can stand as we  
for so long that we becomes  
a W and E with no recognition  
of each other.

So what, I lie.  
You would lie too if you knew  
as much as I did about expendability,  
how lavish distance is.

**Kyllikki Brock Persson**

**Wood Wasp on Metal Sill**

I watch the wood wasp, and it does not know—cannot comprehend—that I exist. It trundles forward, focused on the window sill beneath, antennae alternating in brushing the burnished metal. I could tell it from where I sit that there is neither anything edible nor otherwise useful to be found there, but how could I hope to communicate that to this focused little person? I can only hope that some psychical reverberation from the singing, indigo strings in my heart could touch the wasp's sienna soul, wherever it lies, and that we might meet again after this life has dropt us.

Attention suddenly piqued, the wasp stops. Leaving the functional prostration of searching, it raises itself on forelegs and holds its head high in the air, throbbing abdomen uptilted. The arch of its back is sensual, and I can see that to fuck like a wasp must be an explicit, utilitarian act with the passion of a billion supernovas.

## Pride of Barbados

[Tiger] Woods had rented out the entire Sandy Lane Hotel in St. James and its 112 rooms for his guests for several days. The rooms at the hotel go for \$700 to \$8,000 per night, according to the hotel's website.

—CNN

The warmth of the sun  
penetrates only barely the canopy.  
Beneath, the small house squats  
like a feral creature reeling  
from a curious meanderer, the kind of animal  
that, feeling trapped and threatened,  
strikes out, bites,  
only to be kicked or shot in retaliation.  
This specimen is too sickly to defend itself,  
the planks of the verandah missing and listing like  
the teeth of an old obeah hag,  
one of the twin jalousie windows boarded up and blind  
to the breadfruit and mangoes moldering  
in the untended front garden.

These, not the ruins of a precolonial *bohío*  
but the weathered chattel house in which you live,  
the bedroom where you birthed your sons,  
the kitchen where your daughters helped you  
cook cassava: as you mixed in coconut oil, they  
took turns stuffing banana leaves.  
An errant sheet of corrugated iron hangs in the  
curling branches of a nearby mahogany tree—  
a neighbor patched the hole over your bedroom with  
palm fronds and spare planks, and now the rain  
doesn't fall so heavily above you while you sleep.

And while you sleep in your house poised on stone feet,  
he sleeps in a luxury suite  
where the cost is four digits and  
where the minimum stay is seven nights and  
where the bouquet left daily on his pillow consists of  
heads of flamboyant and frangipani and wild cinnamon,

none of which would know one another as neighbors  
if not for the meddling of Europeans.

Wild cinnamon does not even grow on your side  
of the island, and, though your eyes once-upon-  
a-time held the luminescence of the frangipani blossom's  
heart, they have sobered with age: but what  
does bloom in your garden is pride of Barbados.





**Keith Moul**

**OUT OF THE VACUUM**

Of course language fails us  
when our loins engorge;  
unformed sounds burst out;  
gutturals, too long restrained, mutter.

My mind defies all tangents,  
focuses only on your living center,  
fires fewer and fewer synapses,  
goes rigid in my expanding space.

Best in reflection or fiercest action,  
language builds like the phoenix  
as word by word by word coheres,  
finally forms itself to escape the vacuum.

## DEEP STONES

To build, we cleared two acres.  
This space skirts edges of our reality  
while defining a clear border to threat.

Planted trees permit shady places.  
Shrubs now dot contoured ground.  
Flowering hues emerge amid evergreen.

I have collected stones, some from deep,  
and piled them along fences, under trees.  
Their reappearance places us in fuller time.

Sylvia cultivates and plants, creates soil  
from aged clays and compost piles, with  
nutrients added, liberally. I channel drains  
between and around the many beds.  
We collect in enormous piles the weedings;  
we could name them after local mountains.

We change the terrain to suit our idea of home.  
Rabbits, squirrels, and little birds easily adapt:  
feed them sunflower seeds and suet  
and enjoy the chorus on a sunny day.

From beyond, deer approach but cannot jump  
our eight-foot fence. They must  
grasp the change, its speed,  
that forces altering their customary trails,  
their always ancient, always tentative lives.

Often I stop by the deep stones.  
They contain me uneasy within them.  
I burn the annual refuse that has fallen.  
As seasons pass, they settle in again.

**Kenneth Kesner**

**center of north**

point to lose you a cycle thrown  
twice spoken

who might hymn between us  
till all the way

might seize you another grace

levitate eyes to hollow walls  
opposing prophecies

those reminded finally stranger's voice

leave you

kissing idols backwards  
idols jarring death to myth

heroic shade for silver  
icon's number

silhouette to haze ungathered remains

about to care some ending as so far  
wayward benevolent brought you near

like you i'm sacred  
in the milieu of the laughter

redemptive

unmindful ritual

**Jacob Russell**

**Maid of Mist**

Memory throws an anchor  
from the slip of time  
puts a stop -- once past  
to forward motion

This and this and this  
thus  
fixed -- behind  
our whitewater descent  
cascading

Everything we thought  
Maid of Mist  
adrift  
beyond the shimmering falls

**South Philly: Tuesday, March 9 2010. 1:45 PM EST**

Rumblesound and thrum/ Ingersoll-Rand  
Early spring at 13th & Morris

Air-compressor. Expression  
pressed. Shovel scrape across concrete  
Filling the hole, dust cloud swept  
above the broken pipes of winter

What then the tune when summer comes

Clarion St. A call  
of absent song birds  
winging northward  
bound

for distant forests, parkscapes

Pigeons. Sparrows. Here.  
old woman  
waiting for the 29. Silver cane  
brazen hair. The usual  
plastic bag  
afloat.

On currents of air  
A few dry leaves

Up & running from another season

## **Snow at my Window**

flakes both one and many falling  
tangled line-  
scapes cross  
currents  
breathstop

a moments halt

then rise and fall again then letting go

to trust oneself is not an easy thing  
to ride invisible precipitates of air  
heart numb with cold  
to never know  
lifted, crossing over, letting go

## The Inadequacy of Nouns

Stand alone

to falter    fall

adjectival adjunct

crutch    clutch are cane    conundrums

mark

sacrificial verb

desire    craven caves

consumptive

breathless

death of poetry

or poet    who  
will be the master ?



## Retrospective Suicide

Is the only way to hold on to the pleasure

I asked myself as though I had already died  
at the very moment it seizes us  
like an actor in a 40's movie --  
as though anyone still wore lapels  
or anything at all

side by side naked and not even cold  
the window rattling in the wind  
the rattle of sleet on the glass like time passing  
if we had done it then  
it would have to be the two of us  
to think of you alone without

going to work in the morning as usual  
at the usual hour  
first light of day creasing the rooftops  
the winter chill  
and the train with its bundled

or years later the children gone  
the other men in your life  
wiping spilt coffee from the stove  
a favorite cup in hand with its curl of steam  
and the familiar crack its jagged line to your palm

signing our last will on the frosted pane

**Jan LaPerle**

**Lumber**

For weeks I have been here, eating and putting on my shoes  
one at a time, as if I may go out in them,  
out in the street where the neighbor's dog sleeps.  
Strange squeaking birds roar past my window, and lately  
I've been thinking of having a baby (even in the middle  
of all this danger). I must, and I must because I am getting old,  
the thought of which spreads out in front of me like a lawn,  
the streets two women in town walk down  
with their babies strapped to their front-sides.  
The babies like little beans are happiest then.  
The blonde mother is pretty, she smiles at my husband,  
and the young girls spend all summer in their swimsuits.  
It is no wonder at all he calls the plastic playhouse  
across the way a dollhouse. Dolls, dolls:  
it is my deepest tendency to feel jealous of absolutely everything.  
The tomatoes in the garden blush and ripen.

~

I run toward myself in my sleep crippled and old,  
squeaking like a big strange bird (even awake  
I do these things). That bird settles down upon me  
so heavily I cannot see straight. My husband smiles  
at me, but I cannot smile back. My face is as heavy  
as lumber. My body, too – lumber.  
The best thing you could do is build with me  
and call me home, I say, and he does,  
and he pulls out his drill gun, he fiddles for a screw.  
I laugh every time he says caulk; he knows, simply,  
I am happiest when we play, when we pretend, when we run.

~

In Georgia I met a boy with a syndrome that made his skin  
stretch, his bones as soft as beans. Everyone took a turn  
twisting his ear as if he were a wind-up toy. Are we all toys?  
By 50 he'll be in a wheelchair. By 50 the boy next door will have  
a belly round as the hillsides, but right now  
he is filling up the dollhouse. Dolls and toys  
and little boys – in a setting such as this I could be anything.

## Costume Girl

My life is more interested in windows this morning,  
and I love deeply the fences between our houses.  
This is the type of day the moon sticks around.  
Hello, moon, I say, you are truly my friend today.  
You listen to me and that's all I ever really wanted,  
all I will ever need, my dear. Oh dear.  
Oh dear, I love you, moon. Oh dear, love me.  
Oh dear, the church bells are telling me the time,  
telling me it is a day to go out into,  
despite the sad pumpkins, despite the rotten pumpkins,  
smashed pumpkins, despite, despite, a little spite, too,  
but this isn't the saddest day, not even close,  
but sadness is all around – lurking,  
and an alley cat woke me a hundred times last night.  
This morning I say, I forgive you. I forgive you,  
alley cat, you are fine with me. Yowl, baby, yowl,  
let it out, and I yowl with it. We yowl  
and the neighbor yowls at his wife. Damn it, baby,  
damn this, damn that, we aren't getting it right  
no matter how hard we try, no matter how drunk we get,  
how stupid we seem to ourselves, each other, and tonight  
we are going to let it all out into the Halloween night.  
In costume, in dress, in fishnet: these are our versions.  
This may be a part of me you prefer. A part of me  
you'd like to bend over, and the moon, too, is in  
a version of itself. Costume. And my costume is a window  
I look through, you look through, and I go out  
for some candy. A candyland, the candyman can,  
and I am myself on top of another self and I come home  
with my selves and fuck myself, as it is too late now  
for the trick-or-treaters. No little guys at my door.  
No chickens, no heroes, no ghosts. But, they are still  
out there. The vegetables walk the streets tonight:  
this is the madness within us: this is the time to get it right.

## **While My Tornado Is Resting**

The television in the kitchen announces:

THERE'S BEEN A TORNADO.

I set down a roll of socks and watch  
houses ablaze, lighting the night, faces  
of people – a few choking,  
a few with no hair.

Feeling sunk-in like an old mattress,  
I get this urge to talk to someone.

But I am alone on this hill  
of laundry. A small goddess in slippers  
wandering a domestic landscape, tiptoeing  
corner to corner so as not to wake a storm.  
When storms sleep they dream in a countryside  
where confusions are ordinary.

I cannot sleep, though never stop dreaming  
of waking, want these little televised disasters  
to pull me more than these carpet ruts.  
Walls grow into mountains,  
cowering at the base, I am the small  
stone at the bottom longing  
for a window, door,  
an exit from the barren foothills of couches and chairs.

I look out across the lake in my sink,  
release a sponge – the sail-less ship  
that I must board now, must hold to –  
safeguard against the pull  
of dirty dishwater, swish  
through the rusty pipes – subtle warnings  
of the dangers of the outside.

## **Bull**

A year or two ago, in an Army exercise, a group of us soldiers attached injuries, made of cotton, Styrofoam, and paint, with pins to our bodies. Bloody stump. Wounds from guns and knives. A bit of spilled guts wrapped to the belly. We lay in the tall grasses and waited for the other soldiers to find us.

A little unstrung eyeball had been taped over my left eye, so I watched with my right the first buds of spring, bright and green, as they seemed to push and grow right then from the limbs above me.

The sweet birds bounced from branch to branch, and I was the last to be found. All the soldiers came, dragging through the grass, silly from an exercise gone too long.

They decided I was fully broken. Every bone it seemed need mending, and my mouth, that big red cut, was covered with a slash of white tape. The soldiers pulled limbs from the trees to splint my arms and legs.

They worked quickly, the clouds behind them moved slowly.

The group of them ran off, then, quickly as the scared birds had from the trees, as a new exercise had begun in a far field.

I felt like a fallen limb, and I looked down my body at the spring buds, sadly, as I knew now they would never grow.

I struggled to stand, this way and that, like a wild animal in the grass, and ran across the fields and hillsides to find the others.

What I found, instead, was a bull, his body shining big and black, all alone and looking at me. I knew I was more scared than him, and, too, that my body was covered with wounds and strung with limbs, and that maybe he would mistake me for a tree, as that seemed the only hope I had. So I stood still and pretended, and after a long while the bull looked away and went back to eating grass, but I had to stay that way, still as a tree, swaying only a little with the breeze.

In the distance I heard the soldiers, the gunshots, the trucks roaring across the gravel roads, and I knew it was better there where I was with that bull in the grass, even if I had to stand still as a tree, even as my buds lay dying.

## Frost

On a morning after Easter, the cardinals, like red eggs  
in dry branches, lift off. Leafless branches, and this is no place  
to hide, I once said, alone, to tea, to saucer and cup.  
Even the birds know it is better to be seen, but all along  
I had it wrong. They're together; they fly. High, high,  
and yesterday I felt high on Easter eggs and Easter ham.  
Meat, potatoes, vegetables and rolls, rolls, roll  
me into the grass that this morning looks sugared with frost.

Sugar in the grass, sugar in my tea, sugar,  
thank you for what you have done for me (for seeing me).  
So I worry about the garden, spinach, squash, peppers,  
and I worry about my eggs, the mother I may someday be,  
as I watch the house shadow creep toward the house.  
Little taps of the dog's paws on the hardwood.  
Little pats of little feet of little children that are not,  
but someday may be. The sun moves over the field  
and the field surrenders. I surrender: take me.

A man who wrote a book about the moon surrendered.  
Gun to the head. His book had tractors, all sizes and shapes  
of men, spinach that lived. Those men live as I remember them,  
some so cold they could have killed me. Killing men,  
killing frost, and, please don't take the vegetables. Don't  
take me. Don't make me go back. Teapot, cup, saucer,  
and a different man with a different gun, a man who had  
nothing to do with books about moons, shot himself, too,  
but lived. At this point I would rip the earth out trying  
to hold on. Rip and hold, rip and hold, and the man who shot  
himself and lived can no longer swallow, and it is the biggest  
scar to bare, I think, the scar of wanting to die.

## Winter Wedding Waiting

My man says he'll marry me  
when he believes I trust him,  
when I believe he wants no other.  
I believe one morning I will wake  
and the tulip bulbs I planted last fall  
will have pushed up through my skin.  
Look, I am a spring garden this morning!  
Look, aren't I marriable? Well,  
isn't this how it works: a bulb in the dirt,  
a hope in the dark. He gave me a picture  
taken in the 30s of thirteen men dressed  
in gowns. A womanless wedding. I looked  
at the picture while he folded laundry.  
I looked at the picture while he cooked soup.  
I looked at the picture while he set the dinner-  
plates, and our cups runneth over. The dog  
laps, laps, laps. Each of the men, man  
& woman at once. Thirteen screams  
from the picture: I am one! I am one!  
I am one, yeah, well, Let *us* be one,  
I scream across the dinnertable. I scream  
myself awake from the banquet hall  
of my sleep: I was there, it wasn't beautiful,  
the room was full of ghosts in gowns.  
A waltz, a bad country song, our great,  
great grandmothers at the chicken dance,  
flapping their wings viciously: fly away,  
children, fly away while you can. The sky  
is like this to me: a winter wedding waiting,  
and I watch it behind you as we sup on our dinners.  
Always a window behind you, always a door.  
We are boyfriend and girlfriend, though boy and girl  
no more. Your chest hair grows gray beneath  
your shirt, fast as monkey grass, and, well, honey,  
put your ear to my skin and tell me what is growing  
there because in that dream the ghosts started  
fucking the winter gardens, each of them horny  
from their womanless wedding. Bulb in the dark,  
hope in the dirt, and it wasn't just confetti  
that flew, flew, flew from beneath their gowns.



**John McKernan**

**SUICIDE NOTE TO BIOGRAPHER**

I have always been  
A chicken

Although the corpse  
Of the child I was  
Lies in the Popsicle aisle

Since the Earth is a foreign country  
My project has always been to find  
To find rare stamps or exotic postcards  
Then mail them to myself

James Dean had a different meaning for "chicken"  
Always able to read his lines with pazazzz  
Had better looks & a convincing slouch  
But it was still a foreign country  
Even though they spelled it Hollywood

## ON MY WAY TO THE BANK TO CORRECT

An almost felony overdraft I had to wait ten minutes  
In an alley behind a stained glass chapel

For a tiny procession of handsome men  
All in fine suits with hair white as shaved bone  
Concentric wrinkles deep about their eyes

& their still gorgeous statuesque women  
Linen gowns Silk scarves Long black veils  
Leather gloves over thin maculate hands  
Layered about the gleams from oak & brass & copper

Whoever's coffin was tiny 5 feet at most  
They needed a larger one Where was mine?  
They needed a plainer one  
Floorboard number-two pine with rusted nails  
I'm at least 6'1" when I stand up straight

They needed more than one casket that morning

## SONG OF THE GIANT

"With my one good eye  
I will devour this little kid Jack

With my bruised hands  
I will pick apart  
The twin halves inside Jack's skull

Jack's brown eyes are good & red  
But the brown hair tickles  
When matted with blood  
Diluted with those screams & whistles

Even though the ribs & legs & arms are thin  
You can tell easy  
Jack has never had a single thought  
The seventh year is great Just great  
Filling Very sweet Almost no fat"

## ZEN FUGUE

Why does this window need a drape?

All I can see is a brick wall

Once it was red    Every day now it approaches closer to the  
color of India ink

The shadows of many sundials have migrated up the wall

The insect I just killed on this sheet of paper has left  
a bright red smear

A baby mosquito    What was he drinking?    Where?

I want to be a bright red smear    A comet

That wide maroon tint of sunset

A pink sunrise

What is the life of a mosquito?    How does the human body  
look when drunk?    When tasted?

These questions irritate me

Chrome claw chalk music on a clean blackboard

Is the sky detachable?

Five seconds of chicory blue    Ten seconds of a bluebird's  
flight pattern can erase a week of pain

Let the others bleed black ink

I will never apologize for these subsistence rations

## OF ALL

The verbs  
Love is the most

Irregular  
Stranger than Fero Tuli Latus  
Wierd as Go Went Gone

Its  
Past  
Is  
Hate

It seems to lack  
A future tense  
The lips mouth tongue  
Too busy  
Kissing Dreaming

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

**Julie Kovacs**

**Purple Stars Falling**

Singularity of the black hole  
pulverizing each eggshell  
laying across the  
dining room table  
from end to end  
spiral arms extending from the  
George III chair covered with  
cat hair and unfinished petit point  
dancing through the stained glass window  
and onto the snowball bush in the garden.

## **Sailing in the Sky**

Tailpiece  
on the pink dashboard  
refracting #s  
inside the forty nine groves  
noiseless

Tureen of soup  
haute  
after riding lessons  
the porcelain  
high in the turret  
chalcedony  
helix  
ermine  
robe.

### **Court Dance #30**

hit search  
Google;  
schthymylplyxzzz

chrom-e zomesomatic  
schematic  
kaleidoscope  
stuck to a camera lens

a quilt square made of stain  
rolls into 4 groups  
zamed-i new din  
the good din  
din-e khub

happening a jacaranda tree  
tanzanite bell flowers  
zipping off to Tipperary.



## Pages On a Dream

now it's gone  
flyving  
hiving  
jiving  
onto something else  
~ampersand~  
&tc.,  
scribbles on sheet music  
David Garrick  
dream realized to a letter  
having better  
known to fruition  
wire wrap a water tap  
for a finial  
yes and yes and yes again  
no new tricks  
rat in a hat.

## Jill Jones

### Methods

The wing-spread of hours  
sighs above this voyage.  
Is it how I resist all  
I've presented of myself?

Beside the bed are resemblances  
enough, like writing.  
A sliver of enlightenment coats  
my quotidian tongue.

I expected the white tang,  
of clouds hushed as matter.  
A winking god sounds among  
the process, unlike decay.

See dogs run on the earth  
rained with facts.  
There's a blue surplus played out  
on an ancient piano.

'Savour your details' – accept  
the recall, attention, the source.

## Are You Worried About Yourself?

It's the police, the split screen  
in the new suburbs.  
'I'm good, bro, hey', as if you missed it,  
an illegal cigarette.  
Was he ex-army?  
Talk to the daughter, she's  
the one who'll know:  
'He never hurt me'.

There's the panic alarm, the chase,  
yellow metal, never-ending sirens  
calling to us, calling  
through green tunnels, tiles, streets.  
The only respite,  
to sleep like a child in a blanket,  
sort through drawers,  
history, meaning.

Tell the press  
who's got the motive,  
wrong place, wrong time,  
what happens when you  
arrest someone.

Perhaps you need  
a little bit of distance:  
please, try to remember.

So, we got the wrong man,  
flowers won't do  
any good this time.  
'The bastard deserved it.'

Let's say this isn't justice.  
An error of judgement,  
is it corrupt?  
Do we have something  
to hide, this time?

## Next

A rational universe, a rational lake  
is close to time, rational stars.  
There are limits and facts,  
formations of clouds,  
these weathers, wood, gas, stone.  
Who's with us, to start the clock, the jump  
into the day, another day.

The rational skin has its limits  
but never sleeps, trying something new.  
Co-ordinates seem a little rough when you  
compute them against what's gone  
next ... next ... next.

How did we lose ourselves  
beyond the whiteboard's count?  
Think about children within the woods,  
the play of the air in grass,  
leaves, flowers. The ministry of defence has  
a serious problem,  
the constant rain, the occupation  
has been forever, ongoing, the clocks tick,  
next ... next ... next

There are so many of us,  
there are not many of us left.  
Causes, predicaments, consequences,  
the setting sun, a mist,  
blue shadows, orange hills.  
Where does the water come from  
next to all the stars?

## Vigil

I was the lucky one creeping into the soft side.  
I've spread all my permanent faults along your night jetties.  
Beauty is not the way some desires are made.

The swindle was once a promise outside sadness.  
Pleasure hopes for its spirit in the ruin.  
My eye wants your wet terrain to amplify cloud.

The screw bolt is fast, on the window seam.  
It's as if my mental pages have dried up.  
Is sleep a source of the flower, duration of water?

In a thought of smoothing comes a pleasant press of feet.  
The smoky secret wakes first at my ear.  
Feel the soft breathing of its blue unsettled thing.

And I wake running to the holy country.  
Over its terrible, sad soil there's a glib hush.

## **That None Will Recall**

Wind begins its task, and its sadness.  
My thoughts delay horizons.  
The coast waits along its whipping walls.

While sand is extravagant, other times  
are now confused. Your laughter  
and its refreshment, o those matrices!

Is it my reason that hammers these facts,  
disturbing coolness, exaggerating the years'  
sad inquest? There's no holding to account.

Tonight clusters thought, whale surface,  
a rogue swell, the stretched *jouissance*.  
What unravels the remain.

## **Fleck and Drag**

Oh no! We've reached the plague to find it's all fake, as well as the stink of tans that bother along like beamed and excessive samples. But amigo, it's time we spoke. We don't have to enumerate what went wrong, how it was all banged up in the end, seams thready in the dusk obscuring the freeway noise and the magenta light. Sure, it's time we were purged, chasing off weevil harm through the dirt and crack. It's in the wire and that harmful sting. Not as if we should have perjured our tongues in order to heal, or attended to mournful bells that time the ships at shore. We don't need to wait for some fashionable meds, or hope one of us has hocked the memories or given regret the sack. OK, that's one kind of reading, the usual lie, an old goad that may cause the reckless to ponder how you can ever be free. What must it be like to go it alone, not just to slope off but act as if we'd got that lucky break, or found a pocket of air that shone, as ever some bird rang out unknown songs in ascending thirds.

## There's Always a Danger Waiting

My eyes are still required in  
these streets that change and remain  
arguably the same as post-  
cards and sly memories ad-  
justing themselves amongst sto-  
ry books I've carried around  
for years without open comm-  
entary, the dailiness of  
which coats you after a while,  
though when I visit the prime  
site it's changed its name, in new  
century blurdom, and a-  
bove the place there's a tough arc  
of steel and glass covered in  
a winter sheen I remem-  
ber when you made your choice and  
cast enough doubt not on mem-  
ory but on what I could  
make of this years later, al-  
ways later, recovered but  
unrecoverable, as there's  
no reply or none needed so  
long as the twisty streets still  
bear resemblances and sky  
moves between yellow and grey  
and you'd know, if you asked, it  
doesn't matter as it once  
did, there's no need to hide so  
much although we'd all have to  
agree, if we were in the  
same room, that there's a danger  
waiting, especially where  
the sharps and quicks know us and  
how even the slightest wrong  
move brings on the spit or that  
place I still carry with its  
white half-inch, a nick of the  
finger tended with a little



scorn as if I fainted, as  
if I didn't need to re-  
main and then wait for the else.

**Joseph Farley**

**The Presence**

It comes rushing at you  
like the songs of birds,  
with the weight of sun beams,  
it comes to you  
with the humming of plants  
and the preciousness  
of fallen logs,  
it comes at you  
with no time to dodge.  
It is here, there, everywhere  
and you are overawed.

## **The American Way**

Death and decay

is The American Way

clear cut this

bulldoze that

kill it

grind it up

put it in a vat

these are lessons

learned and spread

throughout the world

let us breathe deeply

the fumes of greed

and bequeath our children

deserts and empty seas

## **The Sun Also Sets**

Australopithecus saw the sun rise.

So did T. Rex and the Dodo.

Shall we add man to the list?

A million years from now

the sun will still rise

over the black line of the horizon

turning the sky into a box of crayons

with rays of gold and red,

tinging the clouds with pink.

I doubt man will see it then,

but hope whoever or whatever

roams this planet in that time

will have eyes and appreciation

for both dawns and sunsets.

## **Lone Heron**

A blue heron lurks  
in my back yard  
some days.

I have seen it there,  
perched on an old tree stump  
near the swing set.

The kids no longer use it.  
They have gone off to college.  
The swing sits near the fence  
that separates my home  
from Pennypack Woods.

I have also seen the heron  
in the woods down by the creek  
standing aloof on one leg  
away from the mallards  
and Canadian geese.

I pointed it out once  
to a man fishing with his son

as it bent its long bill  
and gazed towards us  
with one eye.

The man told me,  
“I have seen it before.  
I heard it is ancient,  
been living alone  
in these woods  
since the Civil War.”

I am not capable  
of judging the age  
of a heron  
or even its sex,  
but I know  
it is always alone.

There is never a pair,  
young ones,  
or a flock.

I have seen it

or a single bird  
that looks much like it  
off and on  
for the twenty years  
I have lived in my house.  
I wish I could talk with it,  
hear its story,  
learn all that it has seen,  
but I cannot speak  
the language of birds.

I could ask my neighbors.  
One of them might know  
the heron's tale  
or a feathered tongue.  
But we do not speak.  
Never have in twenty years.,  
Don't even know  
each other's names.

That's the way

the neighborhood is.

We have hedges

and privacy fences

instead of walls,

but these work just as well

at shutting out intimacy.

We just grunt in the morning

to acknowledge

the others existence

before climbing into cars,

and sometimes grunt at night

when we come home

from our distant jobs.

I guess we are all

lone birds in our own way

guarding our empty nests.

Maybe that's why

that heron comes to visit.

This morning I looked

out the back window



while dressing for work.

The heron was there again.

It seemed quite at home

brushing elbows from a distance

with a scattered flock of monkeys.

## Tempest (2)

This day is not like other days,  
But there is no good reason why.

It's just a feeling in the bones,  
A deep sense of transformation.

A hidden line has been crossed  
Between the past and the future,  
What was and is no more is seen  
Clearly as it fades away.

Gazing ahead all is darkness.  
Clouds and mist obscure what will be.  
Thunder claps and lightening flashes,  
Who can judge the length of the storm?  
It may spell the end of the world  
or just another summer rain.

## **False Carrots**

they dangle it before you  
a carrot on a stick  
thinking you will pull harder  
like any other jackass,  
hope you won't notice  
that it is made of plastic.

it is called  
contract negotiations.  
add the dollars and cents,  
see what you lose  
in exchange for nothing.

management is run by magic.  
see how they cook the books.  
their business model  
contains so much slight of hand.  
the presentations to stockholders  
involve mirrors and sawing

a woman in half.

there is much applause and

wallah! your pension plan

or 401K has disappeared.

the CEO is in tune with wall street.

his finger is on the pulse

of the economy.

his other hand is in your pocket

or up your ass.

the workers of the world

dance on strings,

their eyes open and close,

watch as all disintegrates

around them.

neighbors lose their homes.

friends lose their jobs.

relatives lose everything.

someone will get rich from this.

someone always does.

it won't be you.

you will have patches

on your clothing, but

at least you will have

those carrots to eat.

## **In The Time Without Tongues**

The men have come.

They have taken our tongues.

We can no longer speak

the words of our fathers

or follow the ways

of our ancestors.

We have been told

that this is progress.

Our hearts protest,

but who will listen

to our silence?

## Jaime Birch

### For Herman Munster

You mean so very much to me -  
soft as a pale green peach,  
tall as a smallish tree.  
An impressive brow - somewhere between  
a gorilla and Sean Connery  
(unfortunately not in Octopussy).

Since you were born to Mary Shelley  
in eighteen hundred and eighteen  
you have evolved, found a family  
of your very own - a place to be.  
All smiles, no longer lonely  
among Witch and Vampires - other freaks.

Abandoned by Victor who couldn't see  
human heart inside jigsaw body -  
the epitome of integrity.  
You're no Monster, not to me -  
you're still black and white - how could you be.  
Even on modern, colour telly.

## Ermintrude

It would be totally cool to spend a week or two in your hooves  
while away a few five-minute-long days  
acquire a real feel for the place  
gambol and lollop, frolic around  
chill with the mellowest rabbit in town  
maybe even hear a few guitar sounds  
chew on a flower stalk, see what goes down  
take a stroll  
chance upon antics  
pass by paper trees - uniform in species  
dig that whole perfect pastel scene  
without worry of cloud or climate  
go check out the roundabout  
shoot the breeze with Zebedee  
be safely narrated  
and scripted, consistent  
get to sport a groovy blue hat  
feel aristocratic and pincushion fat  
command respect and be haughty; highbrow  
but still get to do the odd Moo of the cow  
beautifully bovine  
and how



## Jim Bennett

### Topological cellular automata

the purpose conclusions accepted that the universe similar position smooth  
as it looks would be distorted distance space looks like a network of  
loops paper this project similarities chapter working the program nature  
in theory parallel language access chosen as threading support mainly  
entity identified

identify all the nouns in the specification and call them potential  
objects then the verbs found in the specification are the potential  
actions that the system will have to perform

identified designed datatype state dynamic to them and manipulating  
totalistic draw going generation passed a value if the rule says that Rule  
will be the part of the universe crossover parents and siblings  
impenetrable variation through mutation genetic algorithm encoding to be  
evolved array characteristics of the differences experimentation container  
class has double-scripted array set during initialisation by  
the object that creates it informal conventions generations distinguish  
the steps have this written in a form of topological automata all  
high-level functions need to co-exist

verb - live

noun - self automata

noun verb phrase - topological cellular automata

operate - live

**red**

the way in which red wonders  
through your eyes  
like a lost memory  
down imbedded veins  
capillaries  
to your finger tips

touch your lips  
red  
like reflected light  
at dawn  
when it is going to rain

shining on  
red finger nails  
or painted toe nails

then your eyes

red wonders  
through your eyes

and drops like flakes  
on to the ground below

**green you said**

green with splashes of brown  
where the dog urinates  
after dinner

green like grass green  
like bus green  
like punk hair green  
on St Patricks Day

and green vegetables  
the flavour of sunlight

but oh what a problem green is  
it is just so  
green

## **blue**

is her favourite colour  
so clothes drip with it

like sky she said  
when it was grey and murky  
about to rain  
and the sea too she added

the sea  
brown stained  
like excrement

blue she said  
like what I like

## Isaac James Baker

### Err

The alarm barked violently, like a sleeping dog awoken by a swift kick in the ribs.

Adam always turned the dial on his clock radio to 1020 AM. It wasn't a station. It was just static, loud, bleating static. At 6:45 each weekday morning it would click on and scream out in chaotic cracks. It always did the trick.

Adam slapped at the alarm clock. It fell off the bedside table and hit the floor with a thud. He had only meant to shut the screaming thing up, not knock it over.

"Fuck," Adam huffed, as if there was someone around to hear him. There wasn't. Only Cream Puff, his fluffy white cat. "Well," Adam said to himself, "here goes."

He flexed his stomach to sit up. But he couldn't move. It felt like someone had pinned him down to the mattress. He placed his hands on the bed to push himself up. Still, he couldn't budge.

"Gotta quit drinkin' so much," he thought. He had drained half a bottle of cheap bourbon in bed. It knocked him out while he was reading a 14-month-old New Yorker, a magazine he had snagged from the waiting room outside his psychiatrist's office the day before. The bourbon was bad. The articles in the New York were worse. The meeting with his psychiatrist was worse still.

Adam's eyes were blurry and disoriented. He kinked his head to the right to look out the window. His vision followed a half a second after his head. His temples pulsed and throbbed and his eyes felt puffy and swollen. He reached to massage his forehead. His fingers felt numb and slightly tingly as he pressed. His face felt like a woman had just smacked him. And Adam knew exactly how that felt. He'd gotten more of his share of smacks in his 31 years.

He blinked his eyes. The room finally stopped streaking and spinning around him. He stared at the chipped paint on his ceiling. It was coming off like in sheets like dried glue. He'd been telling himself he needed to fix that crumbly paint for six months. "Not today," he thought. "No way."

Adam tried to roll over off of the bed, but his body didn't follow. He strained his neck. His head was tremendously heavy. "Jesus," Adam whined aloud. "The fuck's going on? I didn't even finish the bottle!"

Adam reached down to scratch his balls. But he couldn't reach his crotch. His forearm smooshed up against heaps of belly fat.

In terror, Adam threw off his covers.

"What the fuck!" he screamed as he saw his body. "What is this?"

Mounds of fat rolled to and fro as he jiggled himself up onto his elbows. His arms pinched in pain from having his weight on them. He stared down at rolls and rolls of chunky blubber and stretched out, pasty white skin. It was everywhere. A deep foreboding crevice was stuck into his stomach where his belly button had been the night before. He couldn't see the bones in his hips; they'd been coated with layers of jiggling fat. He couldn't see his pecker. It was hidden somewhere underneath flaps of glop. His legs looked like masses of silly putty. His boxer shorts lay in tatters underneath his massive right ass cheek. Adam snagged them. "Medium," the label read. "Size 30-32."

"You're dreaming," Adam said aloud. "This can't be real. No one can gain... How much do I even fucking weigh?"

With all his strength he leaned over the side of the bed and pulled his legs out to support his new immensity. Rolls scrunched between the back of his knees as he stood up, wobbling, like an overloaded ice cream cone about to topple over. He looked down at his belly, his massive flapping boobies. They looked like an old lady's, except thin scraggly hairs sprouted out defiantly from his stretched nipples.

"This can't be happening!"

He thundered into to the bathroom. He stared at the metal scale on the floor next to the towel rack. For a few seconds, Adam didn't move. The thought of stepping onto the scale was too terrifying.

"C'mon," he said aloud, slapping his bulging palms together in a muffled clap. "Here we go."

He jabbed one of his fat feet onto the scale, then the other. He closed his eyes and squeezed his eyebrows together, as if, by sheer force of will, he could shed the massive amount of weight that now clung to his once skinny frame. When he opened his eyes the scale's digital screen read: "Err."

"Error?" Adam shouted. "The fuck's that mean?"

He heard Cream Puff purr from the bedroom and scratch at the bland yellow carpet with her claws. She had woken up and had come to see what all the noise was about.

“Cream Puff!” Adam shouted as he stepped off the scale and into the hallway. “Come here, girl!” He bounded out with his enormous arms outstretched and flapping. Cream Puff got one look at her bulbous owner and bolted under the bed.

“Get out here you little shit!” Adam yelled at the cat. It was no use. He couldn’t even bend over, let alone dig her out from underneath there.

Adam collapsed back onto the bed. It creaked and groaned under his tremendous weight. Cream Puff shrieked in pain but didn’t dare to run out from underneath the bed.

Adam saw his cell phone on the bedside table next to the half bottle of bourbon.

“Doctor Abraham!” he shouted. “Maybe he’ll…” Adam trailed off. He didn’t know what anyone else could really do for him. No shrink would possibly be able to help him. He knew that. But Adam smashed his fattened fingers against the keys anyways. He dialed the wrong numbers three different times; he had trouble hitting the right buttons with his blubbery fingers. On the fourth try Adam finally got the number right and pressed the green send button.

The phone rang. “C’mon,” Adam groaned. “Pick up. Pick up!”

Adam heard a crackle over the receiver, a few moans. “Yeah?” a voice mumbled.

“Doctor Abraham!”

“Yes, who is this?”

“It’s Adam.”

“Adam,” the doctor said, “what are you doing calling me this early? I told you this number was for emergencies only.”

“This is an emergency!” he screamed. “A major fucking emergency!”

The doctor wheezed into the receiver. “Alright,” he said reticently, his voice crackly with early morning phlegm. “What is it this time?”

“I gained 350 pounds!”

“Adam,” the doctor pleaded, “just stop it.”

“I’m serious, doc! I’m enormous! I can’t even see my dick! You should see me!”

“Adam, I will see you. I’ll see you next week at our scheduled session.”

“I’m so big I can barely walk! I can’t make the session! There’s no way I could fit into my Volkswagen like this!”

“I’ll see you Tuesday at 11, Adam,” the doctor said. Adam could hear a woman in the background calling the doctor away from the phone. “Goodbye.”

The phone clicked and buzzed like a dying bumble bee. Adam slammed the phone back onto the bedside table.

“Shit!” he shouted.

His neck, drooping like an inflated turkey’s gobble, shook as he spoke. He reached for the rest of the bourbon and unscrewed the plastic cap. He lifted it to his mouth and sucked hard.



## Harmony Button

### Dog

I overheard  
lift here & lips.  
Tit for tat,  
teeth for boot tips –

eyelashes for browsing

& peroxide  
(dab dab) browning  
at the eye  
& growling

moonshine. This is

egg based; a lug  
at the muzzle & his  
ugly mug  
(sin on a stick) –

shaken and win-win.

## A Visitor

Came by for tea today.  
We all gathered 'round outside,  
chins on window sills.

*– it's all held up with thumb tacks,*  
she said, waving all her hands.

Instead of nodding to say yes  
there have been thumb tacks,  
yes to snake oil and yes, you do need me,  
he pulled wads of chalk out of his pockets.

Nubbins. Fingers  
to the bone.

*Go ahead then –*  
go ahead and rub *it in*.

Chalk like sugar cubes  
melted in their mugs.

Outside, all us kids decided  
this was gross. Argued  
if she caught us if

*Avert your eyes,*  
she'd say. Or else,  
*Please mind your bees.*

Just then, a hornet tapped its heavy ass  
against the inside of her window  
and \*zimp\* like that  
he pinched the life right out of it.

*Did you see? Did you see that?*  
We gloated and weaved.

Inside, she was looking sad,  
so we wandered off, picking  
the dirt from our wings.

## Tea, Midvale

I.

and there were pumpkin pies  
bite sized, with dollops  
of whipped cream on top

and chunks of avocado  
sweet tomato  
rich cheeses and chutneys  
glass jars with small spoons

and there were women there, with furniture  
and pictures of her family all around

and I was warmer there  
with furniture  
and other warming women all around

and we passed hours there  
with the mountains purpling  
and the coffee pouring  
and the tea cups matching  
and my knees relaxing  
face and feet relaxing –

This was good. I

                                craving  
days like these.

then,                  leaving, I  
                                still needing  
love, the way you love  
when you are lonely and  
your car groans in the morning,  
smells like burning and your  
brother –  
home only for funerals  
                                your father's mother –

and spiders  
in a saucepan  
morning wet and  
frozen garden –

I.

Thought I was  
uncommon. Thought I was

another  
woman

these things come to those who –

*I bake pies, and coffee cake.  
I tie twine in bracelets, cut the bark  
and steep the tea bags twice.*

I *step lightly*  
am frowning now  
the lip thrust that you love

and holding things between

*...break a tooth like that,*  
along with  
chewing ice cubes. Reckless

and indifferent. And you.

You, who I called tulip  
(you said *tulip?!  
you said, and I*)

Yes, or Buster,  
*Easy, killer*  
makes me glower,  
glow, a ruddy hollow  
pleasure foaled,

*like new born sheep  
they fell among their curdled birth  
in bloody chunks, gut-hot ricotta,* I –

That's so gross,  
he interrupted. Hey. I said,

I'm sorry. It was what I

see here. Now.

A diplomat. I have become so very

emotionally intelligent. Aware.

Capable of making truly

rational

decisions.

I can say,

*I'm not really mad about the sheep,*

*darling,*

*I'm upset because it makes me feel like*

shattered

shatters. Shattering.

Perhaps this needs explaining.

Like that time when we

in front of all those open windows

even when I

and you

with your arm and

glass fell on the floor and

shattering

you grabbed me so I wouldn't hurt my and and –

*go to bed, baby*

you said and I

believed you, not because

I *was* but

you *said* I was. You said,

III.

, *baby*.

You said. And I –

You were so  
certain in this. I heard  
sweeping coming from the kitchen.  
I knew.  
Dutiful. And did you darling cut your feet?

## **A Basic Guide to Science**

Science is better than math because  
you can be Luxie Sanford's lab partner  
if everybody else is absent.

The teachers can wear jeans  
and wipe hands on them, while  
English and History are all khakis and skirt.

What other classroom has a sink  
and dead things and  
is cold and smells like creek bed all the time?

One time I reached for an icepack  
and cracked a frozen rat. Science  
can be gross.

Still, it weighs me. Science  
is a bitch. Luxie, please don't  
laugh. You're ruining

the experiment. Calling it 'science'  
is just another way to say  
it's not my fault



## His Jesus Isn't Anybody's Jesus

I read and loved a poet.  
He's a Christian  
but I loved him anyway.

He never said –  
and anyway, his Jesus  
isn't anybody's Jesus.

At what point can a girl  
buy a fella underthings?  
They're silk ones so  
I did it anyway.

The poet man is dying.  
Who says I can't say  
*silken things*  
next to death and Jesus?

Sex death Jesus. There.

By now we have hopscotched  
up and down the only stairs I know.

Ambrosia  
purple up at midnight –  
exhalation:

*lessen*

*lesson*

*listen –*

Sex death Jesus.  
I clap my hands and laugh  
delight!

## Gloria

### More House Love

In the house that helped build a King  
And direct Spike  
In the Morehouse of learning among brothers and sisters  
Love had Price to pay  
Love took a look and so shook Price  
The look of Love a crime against man  
Price would make Love pay  
Price took bat to Love  
Beat back  
Beat out  
Beat down  
Beat off  
Batterer up  
Going, going, get out  
Bat to head-bashing clear  
Price was up to cleaning out his field of fear  
In his house no more of that Love  
No love for Cullen, Langston, Baldwin, Rustin  
Men who loved despite the price  
In the house of more knew histories of race restraints  
Fights to overcome  
Morehouse walls are thought to stand against  
race hate of this country  
Love thought he could be out there  
No home to run to for Love

## **B Complex**

Bush Beastie Buddies Bullshit  
Bankster's, Broker's Braggadocio  
Baghdad Butchered By Bank Bosses  
Bush Buoyed  
Bloomberg Blessed  
Bombastic Bad Business  
Bingeing Buyer's Blood  
Bloated Bubble Begun By Banks, By Brokers  
Bubbling Bucks Billions Benefit Bankers  
Buyers Believed Brokers Biddings  
Bought Buildings  
Bought Biforcated Bullshit  
Block By Block  
Buyers Beware  
Bankers, Brokers Befriended By Bush  
Buyers Bubble Bomb Blitzed  
Bamboozled  
Bedeviled By Bush's Blind Bosses Bolstering  
Bubble Burst Blast Buttonholes Buyers  
Banker's Blunder Bundling Backfires  
Buyer's Buildings Bounced  
Buyers Bankruptcy Bum-rushed  
Buyers Betrayed  
Bullied By Banks  
Buyers Blamed  
But, Blight Begun By Bill, By Bush Buddies Banking Bosses  
But, Bizarrely Bozo Bankers Believed, Brokers Believed  
Buyers Befuddled, Bereft, Broke Beyond Belief  
Buyers Behold Bail-out Benefits Banking Business Blockheads  
Banker's Brides, Beau's Buy Boffo Big Bling  
Brokers Build Bulwarks By Bermuda  
Buyers Bludgeoned, Bled, Bequeathed Band-Aids  
Bad Blood  
Bankers, Brokers Buddies Begin 'Bama Blaming Broadcasts  
Buyers Busy Boldly Bazooka Blasting Bricks  
Basta, Basta

Bee populations are suffering, unable to maintain their cooperative hives due to a combination of human created environmental and industrial factors. This may lead to detrimental affects with world-wide consequences.

## **Order**

Can I get the large one to smite down colonial corporate whores who cause death and destruction and still say there is a heaven they will go to

Can I get the small one not noticed until it's too late to do anything about

Can I get a heavy one so that everyone feels it and makes them think meaningfully

Can I get the sticky one that follows its dreams

Can I get one that stays dry and afloat in a flood

Can I get the one that sees it starting and stops it before it starts up

Can I get a slow one that really goes fast but not out of control

Can I get the worst one to stay real

Can I get the hard one to remember

Can I get the one that handles traffic well and sudden drops

Can I get the one that is before and after

Can I get the one that operates at home, at school, at work, in public places, oppressive spaces, on the dance floor, at marches, in competitive sports

Can I get the one that grooves

Can I get the one that's welcoming until it's not

Can I get the subtle one to figure out equations

Can I get the one for the master bathroom and the minor bathroom

Can I get the one without security stickers, politicians, judges, lawyers, police, and jail time

Can I get the one the fits comfortably in all difficult and hard-to-fit places

Can I get the one that causes hugs, laughter, happiness, giddyness, boldly greeting each day and night

Can I just get the one without attacks, bullshit, bad ingredients, and lies

## Shopping To Death

Day after Thanksgiving Day  
Giving over to buying all day  
Black Friday  
Final sale  
Special deals  
Layaway  
Discounted  
One day deals  
Mark down  
Incredibly low  
Shopping mobs chanted "Push the doors in, push the doors in..."  
They pressed against the glass doors  
Pushing, wild-eyed, shopping gassed, storming past  
Human-chain links broken  
Unfortunately, the nice young man who opened the gates of hell  
Shoppers swelled by stomping down on some thing not for sale  
Trapped in their mad race, crushed under mobs feet, death trampled  
Mr. Damour is down  
Topped to the floor  
Prices are down and out with his life  
Walls of the marts hold the stuff of shopper's dreams  
Mr. Damour is down  
Stomped underground  
Dead at 6:03AM  
No one is responsible  
Difficult to distinguish individuals from raging mob in surveillance videos  
Shopping not stopping after death  
Store reopened at 1PM and was packed within minutes  
Day's receipts were accounted for

## **Rabid Tax**

My taxes  
My taxes  
They took my money for taxes  
They said that I still owe them more  
There came a knocking at my door  
It was a rabbit  
I opened my door and there stood a rabbit  
It said it had a job to do  
I told it that my rent was still due  
It laughed and said it did not care  
The government was needy here  
I begged and I pleaded  
I said I had no insurance and my hospital bill was overdue  
It danced around and shook its tail  
And said, It's not my care that debt is on you

Oh, my taxes  
Oh, my taxes  
I said, I can not pay more taxes  
I ran inside to get my wallet  
To show it that this was true  
The rabbit let out such a wail  
It said, if I came back with a gun  
It would not even have to run  
Because we can multiply by more than one  
I said, oh no, just have a look in here  
All the money I have is there  
It took my wallet  
Oh, my wallet  
It got on top of my wallet  
It humped my wallet happily  
Then handed it right back to me  
When I looked inside I could see  
It was as empty as could be

Oh, my taxes  
My taxes  
Before I could complain some more  
The rabbit hopped away from my door  
It said, I'll see ya  
Yeah, I'll see ya  
I'll see ya next year baby  
Oh, my taxes  
My taxes



BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

**Geoffrey Gatza**

The Sandra Bullock Story Stunned us All

At the height of all this  
The fears turned to joy

Maybe in another lifetime  
We can have beads on our birthday

I may be old but I am not dead  
I am staying alive  
In the golden crayon of choice

As simple as designing new waste  
I hear babies cry

You can safely say  
The crowd goes wild

Get your tickets today

# Everybody Has An Ashbery Of Their Own

There are no recommendations  
I cannot tell you how butter tastes  
I could barely stand up; there was a car crash

Everything starts with potting soil  
Until I found a wafer that goes beyond

When you grow up  
Find out which transitions are right for you  
Find out which nutrients are best

We do not know  
And a poem cannot prove  
That cornbread crumbs won the Kentucky Derby

Spoken from the heart, the levies broke  
The idea runs counter to the team effort

For the first time I can tell you of the poison plot  
Giving me more time to do the things I love

Sometimes you need tomorrow to recover from today  
Some enjoy telling the adventure more than experiencing

A slow drive with a friend, stopping to go  
suffering a disaster, but the small talk is all tennis courts

I am far from my homeland.  
The building is in ruins; the hurt and loss is adoption  
Of a new language of deficit with few creature comforts

With a helping hand and open broadcast,  
I hope to see you tomorrow evening, right here.

# Will She Return to Dancing with the Stars

This is how I looked in the security camera  
The bouncer let her in for free  
I think this was revenge

To make it official  
I do not think of myself as a home wrecker

The cover that is making headlines  
is of me wearing a bunny suit

I have this little baby with me  
The house is under construction

Making sure no one knew  
We had been married for a year

We had been matched  
I thought it was important

We went through all the steps  
I want to thank all the moms

Before the vultures descend  
Take this day by day; at an end

His mistakes are mistakes he has to address  
The love of my adopted hometown restored my faith

Writing a check is easy  
I choked up during my speech  
I know I will always be welcome

I was able to give  
And kickass somewhere  
What a wonderful world

Don't stop believing  
You will see all the footage, tomorrow

# Tempus Fidget

Poetry expects poets to do their duty

*Ex niblo niblo fit*

The leaves are attacking

we get terribly excited

butter grows in blocks on butter branches

ninety-nine out of one hundred times we get let down  
concentrating extraordinarily hard on a miniature desk

It was one a hundred quid human drawing

A series of washes in varied gray

A young constable on a bridge

There is only the color of the paper beneath our words

Right to the skies, the clouds adequately describe water

The intense way artists tend to render fatback

It's most interesting and translates into money

A generation later

our investments are not good

My grand-daughter is sick and tired of losing

Her antique writings to something like this

Now is the time

a rainbow sheen

to move your trust.

All that is lacking is audacity and opportunity,

which should be poured into a very plain cup.

**Geoffrey Babbitt**

**Bottleneck, Bottle Glass**

blue glass, green glass, shell sanded,  
gritty shine—*island*  
slips into sea—light spilled by the sun  
is skinwine—seven degrees  
of azure: sea, sea, sky, dome, sky, trimming,  
sky—seen from the oleanders  
the beach is a ring, the sea  
a lake—sun scrubs white things whiter—each schist  
has two faces—one  
up, one down—the highest hill's  
made of burning faces—now is  
a good time to build a bridge—we go

## **Toward a Compass Rose**

near is this shiny green  
of sober joy  
in each thing—something  
which can admire  
or crash—burning hollow  
over ourselves brightly  
open, its own way  
hands our bodies  
our visual raining,  
wing-white clouds

## Breaches

a story of colors,  
lithe—a name, her voice  
in her breath, yours, scatters,  
if not altogether  
    away  
        then from vines  
around awning poles and oleanders  
to an entering: small  
range of thankful  
inattentiveness—skein  
of white birds waters down a still  
stretch,  
    here joy serves as memory,  
and we mind well  
flags stringed steeple  
to steeple of the churches at our feet  
—susurrus echoes still, still, and  
when we look down, the water  
gets all lit up,  
above which hovers the island

## Latitude, Stratum

shale on the shelf where brush  
dusts, where  
needs curtains drawn  
—little bluebell rattles—  
barely floatable raft  
on the reservoir spinning slowly, collecting  
the occasional leaf—speech  
unwasted on the inward ghost—  
long black train  
disrupts the whole  
little whorl—orange bucket  
overturning its  
sand— burns shaped  
into a wheel—steam  
could move a bog  
when the revealist's invisible arm hoists a moon above steely cold fields



## Outline Gives Way to Figure

the albino finch alights  
as the field becomes a sea,  
stiff winds preparative  
for lilacs or salt—nothing  
settled, after all—redundancy  
may win out this  
last time only—next  
that old effigy, wake which  
precedes its boat—still  
the sunflower wars  
with Tuscany—tiers wind up, wing high  
but are stuck in their ascendancy

Evan Schnair

PHENOMENON, OR WAKING DISCOURSE

[A SCENE:]

poem: let me rest

you: how old is a bryophyte?

poem: I have

no

vascular

structure

you: let me rest,  
then

poem: Are you a possible  
flowering

plant?

you: No. What is age?

poem: Nothing will grow up  
against gravity

you: But how do you stay so  
green?

poem: I don't know anything  
else. I know

moss. And how to climb

PHENOMENON, OR WAKING DISCOURSE

[A SCENE:]

poem: what period  
splits. this is

you: an imagination is the trajectory  
of a falling matter.

poem: tell me about falling  
matter

you: two palms  
like this

poem: surface  
you: trust  
what's beneath

a time or hands on a mane or the  
fern nodes formal chords

poem: this is a sequence

you: wake

poem: the rippling effect

you:

think more matter is more mass is more  
propulsion, but the simplest organisms  
are

poem: a following of a possible  
following of one, a part  
of following and its effect

you: are a flowering

poem: is the age

you: consider what I'm becoming  
a part of

poem: a part of

you: a part

of what

portion

can

partition

these.

PHENOMENON, OR WAKING DISCOURSE

[A SCENE:]

poem: where does it lie

you: never. say a misnomer

poem: breathes it differently

facts

a starving

headache

you: you just woke up

poem: I am not an illusion. you: think

there's a ghost. poem: it's part of the

imagination. you: it? poem: you. you: poem?

poem: tinkering of science. you: tokens are

objects and language poem: I am not an

illusion you: language becomes something

and I am searching for tools poem: too numerous

you: you just woke up poem: where did

I spend it? you: ask for something else

poem: consider my sequence, help me stand.

PHENOMENON, OR WAKING DISCOURSE

[A SCENE:]

Poem: a fragment waits  
photosynthesis down. The weight in  
completes, I am out here. The tundra is a tundra.  
How complete broken soil feels on feet  
feet a rational decision forward.  
Imagination is the complex of pores, a  
negative inverse of conduction, an electric  
adhesion of spaces in between. Broken  
soil is the evidence. Something grows  
here, because even though I'm standing I'm  
standing. A horse gallops by. Vibrations  
ricochet my knees. I know these are knees  
evidence for standing. From here  
tundra is a tundra. Shrubs coat.  
Prickly branches are fragment bundles,  
here are muscles that produce chemical  
reactions.

PHENOMENON, OR WAKING DISCOURSE

[A SCENE:]

You: chrysanthemum this pattern. But  
bryophytes take billions of hairs  
to train a path this way. Tissue can  
withhold acids, but acids break  
down proteins and what is left  
is residual. Residue for change.  
The muscle will chime this way.  
When hungry, the curve of molecules  
building electric clouds is a bundle  
of thought. It starts anywhere  
fibers carry light. This time. This  
is a time. A period that counts  
irregular rings around bone. Bone  
the multiple carrier. A particular  
pattern is a particle pattern. Out  
in the tundra this training is foreign.  
What foreign features offer,  
the bright from falling matter  
is a path. The snake leaves  
its belly in the sand for miles.  
In habit another complex. Skin is  
just a world passing. Bird sees  
thousands of tracks climbing, grain  
by grain.

PHENOMENON, OR WAKING DISCOURSE

[A SCENE:]

Poem: you need this, inside and out  
waters on water becomes  
    you: give me other  
words for choosing how  
    poem: first I  
saw marigolds and juniper  
then you: the organism rattled

found out architecture  
to invertebrates. Moss. Billions  
of viewings poem: begins  
to need atmospheric pressure  
you: make two walls poem:  
margins you: make two  
more poem: behaves by  
tools by stirring rested  
muscles by memory by foreign  
instrumentation by passing  
you: by.

Poem: weather systems  
hold us all together you: think  
a phenomenon is just the skin  
of an object poem: tell me I  
am not an illusion you: in  
a sequence of scenes tenderize  
poem: tender you: tend to poem:  
tucked away behind falling matter  
you: complex guide poem: to natural  
you: to this poem: created world you:  
have fingers poem: just like me  
you: touch this age poem: as any  
you: consider what I'll be.

PHENOMENON, OR WAKING DISCOURSE

[A SCENE:]

“Consider the tank.” “On empty  
tokens of condensation.”

“Consider the object considering  
the object” and “how does the forecast

pressurize the in between?” “Pressure  
eyes hold two parts,” “why not

consider the empty is false.” “This  
is some truth” “concentration

needs skin to keep it company.”  
“Keep imagination company.”

“Then you have” “A body  
belongs in transit”



## Emma Ramos

### Where The Children Play

The teakettle's reveille, a sound reminiscent of a nineteenth-century steam engine. Had Lina not awoken to this noise every morning for the past eighteen years she might have thought her home was inches away from destruction, her family soon to be named a casualty of industry. Luckily, she had become accustomed to the sound, just as she had become accustomed to life on the twelfth floor of a New York City apartment building. Only the sound of an unusually low-flying airplane seemed really threatening. Still, she often wondered what she would do in the face of a life or death crisis. Obviously, as a mother, Lina felt her duty would be to protect her children. Yes, this would be her chief responsibility. Yet, she questioned this Tuesday morning, if only one of them could make it out in time, was it so wrong that she, the mother of three, knew without a doubt in her mind that she would save Russell, her first child and only son? Lina immediately switched gears; morbid thoughts are not productive at 6:30 AM on a school day.

"Bigelow French Vanilla or Cinnamon Stick?" Jeff's typical morning inquiry. "Ummm, Vanilla."

6:35 AM, first cup of tea and Lina's only quiet moment with her husband before Grace, her youngest child, is up and in need of full, undivided attention.

Grace would be twelve the following November, and as the baby of the family, she had a way of announcing her presence and demanding recognition from anyone she came in contact with. Whether she was speaking in her loudest possible voice, unexpectedly breaking into song, or hysterically crying over the smallest injury, she always knew how to draw a crowd.

Aubrey was fourteen and, as is typical of that age, singularly concerned with her appearance. As the middle child, she was used to, at times, being overlooked. There was always the younger one to worry about and the eldest to fuss over. Middle children certainly got dealt a harsher hand. Luckily, and possibly as compensation for her everlasting status as, what Lina called “monkey in the middle,” Aubrey was the most adaptive of the three Delacy children. She always had an abundance of friends, full respect from her teachers, high grades and was, to Lina’s satisfaction, very pretty. Aubrey was almost fey-like in appearance, with ivory-colored skin, a small and slightly pointed nose, hazel eyes and light brown hair. Her face was small and fragile, making her lips look thick and artistically distinct. Their dark pink color was quite striking against her linen-like skin.

Grace, on the other hand, was slightly small for her age. She had straw-like, straggly brown hair, freckles, and had worn glasses since she was six. She was adorable, but not beautiful. Grace’s claim to fame, aside from being the youngest of the Delacy children, were her large and expressive bright blue eyes. One could always tell exactly what was going on in that small, attention-seeking head of hers by glancing at her eyes.

Russell Delacy was seventeen, and Lina could not think of him without becoming sentimental. He was exceptional. He really was the most beautiful human being Lina had ever known. When she decided to marry Jeff in her third year of college at UCSD, Lina’s parents were upset. A traditional Mormon couple in Provo Utah, Lina’s mother and father were unprepared for the distress their last two children were about to put them through. Her brother Corey, the youngest, had moved from marijuana to Methamphetamine during Lina’s senior year in high school. With Corey’s troubles, Lina’s mother and father were less able to give Lina’s schooling the required attention. In the end they even liked the idea of her going off to live and learn in San Diego, where her grandparents were, instead of staying home and attending BYU. Later, they would hold this decision accountable for Lina’s behavior. When she informed her family that, not only was she leaving college but marrying a Business School student she’d met whose family was Episcopalian, Lina’s parents were devastated. If she’d attended Brigham Young and spent that year abroad as a missionary (the way her older brother and sister had done), she would not have strayed so far from the kind of life they had hoped she would lead.

Lina’s family did everything they could to stop the couple from marrying. Family gatherings were awkward and unpleasant even after the wedding, which in the end had not taken place in an LDS church. Lina’s mother always reminded her that a husband and wife who are married under the roof of any other church would not be reunited as husband and wife by the Heavenly Father in the hereafter. All this drama, and then Russell came along. He was born three and a half weeks early but

at a miraculously healthy weight. His birth completely softened Lina's parents. They loved their grandson and, in return, were more generous towards Jeff. To Lina's surprise, when she informed her family that she, Jeff and the baby were moving to New York City for Jeff's job, they were both understanding and forgiving.

Russell's birth was not only a source of peace between Lina's parents and her husband but the beginning of the greatest and most treasured chapter of Lina's life: motherhood. She took her little boy everywhere. Whether he was sitting quietly in the front of a grocery cart or playing nicely on the floor of a nail salon, the young Russell and his mother were inseparable.

When Aubrey was born there were moments, though she would never publicly admit it, when Lina almost resented her baby daughter for stealing the time she had become so accustomed to spending with her son. Lately, however, Russell was different. He was uncommunicative. This behavior, Lina was told, was characteristic of teenage boys, nothing to lose sleep over. Lina, nonetheless, did lose sleep over it. What she sensed in her boy, her most beloved child, was something deeper than teenage turmoil.

6:40 AM, and before Lina's first sip of tea, Grace is in the kitchen and as usual, "Sooo starving!"

The youngest child's breakfast order is placed, Honey Nut Chex with milk and a cup of chocolate milk. Then, as if Lina's life were on stage, Aubrey enters without missing a beat. She too is hungry but at fourteen can attend to her own appetite without a mother's help. Jeff sits quietly with this week's edition of *The Economist*--they were the only truly Republican family, as far as they were concerned, within a twelve mile radius--and his tea.

As Lina's attention drifts from her daughters to her husband, who has barely said a word this morning, she notices two details: his hairline looks thinner, and he is putting on weight. Lina eyes Jeff as he unsuspectingly reads his business propaganda, and the thought that arises in her mind is, "I wonder if he's been sneaking beer. Because that would certainly explain the paunch."

But like many thought currents, Lina's momentary hostility towards her husband over the prospect of sneaking beer (was she not in some ways still a good Mormon girl at heart?) softens and transforms into devotion and pride. Three of her four favorite people are gathered at the same table, nourishing themselves and, in turn, each other. Lina remembers a passage she read frequently as a young girl from *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 32:37: "And now behold, if ye nourish it [the tree of life] with much care it will get root, and grow up and bring forth fruit." Setting her cup of tea on the kitchen table, Lina places her hands firmly on its smoothed mahogany edges enjoying this moment of transitory bliss. Then, remembering the next passage, "But if ye neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment, behold it will not get any root; and when the

heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, because it hath no root, it withers away, and ye pluck it up,” Lina repeats the last part of the passage involuntarily as she notices her son’s absence from the kitchen table, “and cast it out.”

Russell Delacy has been awake most of the night and is dreading the thought of leaving his room to put in an appearance at the breakfast table. He isn’t hungry. Much of last evening was spent at the bookstore. Lately Russell has become a regular at the Barnes and Noble on 54<sup>th</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. He’s developed a taste for strong black coffee and (not to mention to anyone in his family) Clove Cigarettes. Unlike most boys of seventeen, Russell is a creature of habit. He is uninterested in video games, drugs or teenage comradery. He prefers to spend his time reading at a bookstore or wandering the city with Starbucks in one hand, a clove in the other. One might consider him a part-time bookworm, part time flâneur.

Russell had always been quiet and contemplative, and had it not been for his clean-cut good looks (his mother had raised him carefully with an emphasis on the importance of cleanliness and physical presentation), he might have been teased mercilessly in school. What Russell loved about Barnes and Noble was that he could browse the literature section, pick out a few novels, take them to the café and read among coffee and strangers. Generally, Russell’s taste in literature tended toward the more mainstream classics. It wasn’t that he was uninterested in or opposed to more counterculture writings; they just had not been made available to him. Last night, however, was something of a breakthrough. Browsing the literature section, Russell came across a book he felt he needed to explore. He had learned about E.M. Forster in school (*A Passage to India* was on his AP English reading list) and read a short biography of his life on the internet. So, last night while examining Forster’s small section at the bookstore, Russell came across a novel that, after reading the short synopsis on the back, he felt compelled to take with him. Actually, it was one line in the synopsis that intrigued Russell the most: “In a highly structured society, Maurice is a conventional young man in almost every way—except that he is a homosexual.”

Russell rises from his bed; it is now 7:00 AM. Being on time for school is always a legitimate excuse, and Russell knows his appearance at the breakfast table can be brief. Russell gathers his belongings, tidies his bed, dresses, attends to his hair, teeth and bladder and makes his way into the kitchen.

And there he is. Lina breathes a sigh of relief. Why does she always have the sense her son will somehow disappear? But he looks thin and tired. Could he be smoking? A beer bellied husband and a nicotine-crazed son, that would be painfully ironic, Lina muses to herself, though actually frightened at the thought.

3:30 PM, and, finally, Russell is free from the confines of his eleventh-grade education. Barnes and Noble, as always, is a possibility, but after waiting months on end for some decent weather, Russell cannot imagine spending what is left of this beautiful spring afternoon indoors.

The downtown subway station is nearby; Union Square Park would be a perfect place to perch and read. Not to mention, an appropriate spot to delve into Forster.

The Village is an area of Manhattan that Russell has always been eager to explore. His parents, however, have always seemed wary of any part of the city below 34th Street. "Chelsea and below is for the gays," Russell's father had explained to both him and Aubrey. "Nowadays it seems teenagers think the area is a 'cool' place to hang out and smoke dope. Russell, you know that if you spend time down there people will assume you are queer."

Ever since he was small, Russell's father had made it clear he did not approve of the "homo life style," as he called it. Russell could remember back to when his father coached his little league softball team in Central Park. If another kid seemed unathletic or prone to tears upon striking out in a game, Russell's father would say something like, "Gosh, boy's parents are in for a rude awakening when they find out their kid's not like normal boys." Jeff Delacy firmly believed that men should be men and any sign of weakness, which included straying from a hetero-normative existence, was unacceptable.

Recently, however, Russell has been spending a lot of time pondering the "homo life style." Some of the arguments made sense to him, but still Russell wasn't totally convinced. His mother, always less aggressive than his father, harbored a more religious and family-oriented opposition to the life style. Two men, or two women, could not reproduce. Russell knew that growing up a Mormon, his mother had been raised to value family above all things. Lina, to Russell's relief, was a humanist and truly believed that all people were equal. Homosexuals were not bad people, just troubled individuals who engaged in sinful activity. Unfortunately, Jeff Delacy thought they were inherently weak and flawed human beings.

Russell, in school and on his own, had studied the Greek philosophers. He knew how important their insights were to contemporary politics. He also knew that many of them engaged in sexual acts that were now considered taboo by "conservative" people like his parents. But Russell couldn't understand why, if God hated homosexuals, He would allow such important thinkers to be afflicted with the "problem".

The No. 6 train is packed this afternoon, and Russell makes sure not to inconvenience or push anyone while finding a comfortable standing spot, away from the automatic doors. He has everything he needs for his venture into the Village: cell

phone (Russell's mother constantly checks up on her eldest child), ipod, a change of clothes (Russell always changes out of his school uniform at the end of the day), a bottle of Snapple Lemonade and E.M Forster's novel, *Maurice*.

4:00 PM, the girls should be home soon. Since turning fourteen, Aubrey Delacy has had the responsibility of walking home with her sister from school, unaccompanied. The walk from The Hewitt School (75<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Avenue) to their apartment on the southeast corner of York Avenue and 62<sup>nd</sup> Street is relatively short. Regardless, Lina worries about her daughters traveling the streets of New York City by themselves. It is true that they live in an upscale part of Manhattan, but in a place like New York, anything can happen. Lina recalls her childhood, growing up in Provo. Christy, Lina's eldest sister, got her drivers license at sixteen (Lina could not imagine letting Aubrey drive a car in two years) and became chauffeur to her younger siblings. Even when Christy was studying at BYU she would sometimes pick Lina up from cheerleading practice, at the local high school, and drive her home. Growing up in Provo seemed so safe. When Lina was little she and her siblings would play outside, alone for hours on end. Even after dark, the fear of the children being hurt or somehow corrupted was unthinkable. The lives Lina's children lead were different, she reflected. The thought saddened her. When her husband was promoted and offered the job in New York, Russell was just a toddler, and the thought of him or any other future child growing up and existing beyond the realm of her or Jeff's complete supervision was distant and unreal. Now that time had become a reality, and it terrified Lina. Russell had turned seventeen in March. Now, he was knee-deep in adolescence. What was he doing that Lina didn't know about? Was he seeing girls? Had he ever had a girlfriend? Had he become, and this thought made Lina's heart palpitate, sexually active?

"Sunnington was the next stage in Maurice's career. He traversed it without attracting attention; but there were so many boys of his type—they formed the backbone of the school and we cannot notice each vertebra...."

"Great novel! A classic in gay literature."

Russell was so consumed by his book that it took him a moment to realize there was a man standing over him in Union Square Park, striking up a conversation. As Russell looks up, the sun gives this stranger's head the illusion of being cloaked with a halo. He is thin, wears tight jeans and a buttoned down black collared shirt, fashionably tucked out. When he sits beside Russell, Russell notices the stranger's features. He is very handsome, very well-groomed. He has dark brown hair (slightly spiked), bronzed skin (he must have spent a good deal of time outdoors), deep-set brown eyes, no noticeable whiskers and a small hoop earring in his right ear.

Russell winces, slightly nervous; he suddenly notices the heat of the spring sun.

“Yes, I have read a little about the author. I’m just curious about literature in general. I’m thinking about majoring in it in college.” What a lame thing to say. Russell feels foolish, and the backs of his knees are sweaty. He begins to squirm.

The stranger grins, that condescending grin adults wear when a young person exerts himself in conversation--that look that says, “You are so naïve and predictable.”

“Is that so?” questions the stranger. “Well, I studied at Cooper Union; I’m a painter, but I do love to read. Have you read any of the other classics?”

“Oh yea, I’ve read *The Great Gatsby*, *Catch 22*, *A Tale of Two Cities*. Last summer I started *Crime and Punish...*”

The stranger, now in a most relaxed position, as if he owns this bench in Union Square Park, begins to laugh. He massages his thigh, glancing in the direction opposite to Russell. At this moment Russell has a range of conflicting thoughts and emotions; he is annoyed and embarrassed that this man who stopped him from enjoying his book was now laughing at his expense; it was rude. Yet, Russell is curious. Clearly the stranger didn’t mean “classics” in the traditional sense or else he would have accepted Russell’s answer and, as Russell had initially hoped, been impressed by his literary knowledge. Then, in a presently unexplored part of Russell’s mind, there was a sensation, a foreign titillation that seemed to slither through his body when the strange man massaged himself.

“I meant classics in gay literature: James Baldwin, Michael Cunningham, Andrew Holleran, fucking Oscar Wilde.”

Russell gets it, he understands. This man is gay. Part of him wants to leave, immediately. Make something up (“Oh sorry, I’m actually a Mormon missionary from Salt Lake City. I really can’t have this conversation. I have to go”), but then he is reading *Maurice* in broad daylight in what his father called “queer territory.” And, Russell has to admit, he is curious.

“No, well, I know who Oscar Wilde is. I...”

“Did you know he was gay?”

“I think I may have heard that. I don’t really know that much about... I mean... I just like to read.”

“I see. And how long have you known?”

“Oh, I’ve always liked to read, since I was...”

And again with the smug laughter, “No, I mean how long have you known you were gay?”

With the girls home, both in their room doing homework, Lina takes the moment to pour her second cup of tea for the day (this time she’ll have the Cinnamon Stick) and relax. Jeff has called to say he will be home around 6:30, and Lina plans to

serve dinner soon after: homemade turkey lasagna. Concerned about her husband's recent weight gain, she will use whole wheat pasta. Men Jeff's age did die of heart attacks, and Lina has read that whole grains are good for lowering cholesterol. At this particular moment, though, Lina is less interested in the workings of her husband's circulatory system. If he is going to refuse to exercise and then sneak off to some local bar for a few beers, when he could be home with his family, it was his choice, his funeral. But she did love him with everything, every inch of her body. She loved his smell, the small razor-nicks he always gave himself while shaving and desperately tried to hide, the tough-guy exterior he assumed, only to be heard crying in the bathroom at 2:30 in the morning after a terribly stressful day. Lina believed her husband was a good man. More selfishly, she also liked that outsiders thought they were a strange couple. Jeff was burly and slightly shorter than average--about 5'9" (only 2 inches taller than Lina)--had broad shoulders, uncharacteristically small hands and had just started losing most of his dark brown hair. He wasn't handsome in the traditional sense, and he knew it. Nevertheless, Jeff had a solidness, a firmness of beliefs and values that were unshakable. His self-assurance gave him a kind of charisma that, to Lina, made up for any physical shortcoming. Lina was the complete opposite. She was very beautiful and soft in both manner and appearance. In fact, Lina had an uncanny resemblance to actress Deborah Kerr. When she rented *The King and I* for her daughters, Grace had immediately exclaimed, "Mommy, you look just like Anna!" Lina herself saw this resemblance and enjoyed it. She didn't watch *An Affair to Remember* over and over just for the love story.

Lina sits at the kitchen table, waiting for her tea to cool. Gosh, where has the day gone? Mostly errands as usual, and then there was the Le Jacquard table-cloth, given to Lina by Jeff's parents as a wedding gift. The traditional off-white cloth was now a splotchy, tie-dyed piece that belonged in a Jackson Pollack look-alike contest. Yes, that was the price Lina paid for allowing her eleven-year-old daughter to do her homework while drinking fruit punch at the kitchen table. But poor Grace felt so guilty (she'd emerged from the kitchen, explaining amid sobs that her hand, somewhere between finishing her math homework and replenishing her fluids, had knocked over the glass) for staining Lina's "special" table cloth. Lina knew Grace was genuinely sorry and didn't want to make a big deal about the accident. She'd explained to the woman at the cleaners (the woman was Oriental, or no, Asian. Was Oriental unPC? Lina was always careful not to offend) that the spill was unintentional, but the tablecloth remained an important, even vital article of houseware. Jeff would be furious if he saw the mess. Hopefully, with an extra ounce of bleach, he would never detect any misshap.

Aubrey, as usual, hadn't blundered in quite a while. Lina almost wanted to shout at her middle child, "Please, for once, do something spontaneous. Here, break this expensive, crystal vase!" She sometimes worried that Aubrey was too well-mannered and careful. Did that mean she was saving up her teenage angst for later adolescence? Would she be one of



those children who, out of the blue, went completely wild or became addicted to some horrid drug? Corey, Lina's younger brother, had been that way. He'd been a solid student (Bs, in his case, but still respectable), a mild-mannered boy up until the age of sixteen. Then everything changed. Corey became involved with the wrong crowd at school (the usual story) and started using drugs. Now, he lived out in Lehi (Utah) and worked at odd jobs. He still took money from his parents, and, when she could manage it behind Jeff's back, Lina. Corey had successfully quit using, but the effects of his early drug problems were still very visible. As Lina's attention drifts from her middle daughter to her younger brother, she realizes that, in fact, the two are nothing alike. Corey, for one thing was male. Then there was that typical need for peer acceptance that had always plagued Lina's brother. Aubrey was like Lina had been at her age. She was uncommonly self-assured, never one to follow. Like Lina at fourteen, Aubrey wasn't a leader, but her personal values were strong enough to stop her from seriously misbehaving. If anything, Aubrey suffered from an overactive super-ego. No, if there was anything to worry about, where Aubrey was concerned, it was her teenage romantic ideals and budding interest in the opposite sex. Lina's daughters attended an all-girls school (Jeff had insisted upon it), but that did not make them invisible to boys. "You don't know male hormones," Jeff would say. Lina felt sorry for whoever would be Aubrey's first steady boyfriend. Jeff would surely give him a run for his money. No, Lina did not have to worry about Aubrey falling into a seedy lifestyle. A thought flickers in Lina's mind like a red light, "Russell sometimes smells of smoke." She moves to the very edge of her seat at the kitchen table, clutching her steaming hot tea. Was Russell going to be like Corey? Was he the "troubled" one?

"I'm not gay." Russell's pronouncement of these three words was so automatic that it took him aback. It was as if someone had programmed his response; he hadn't even had time to think about it.

The man on the bench smiles. "Well, I knew without a doubt by the time I was thirteen. I didn't officially come out until college, though. I was safely away from home when I finally emerged from the closet. My family isn't especially supportive; I'm not really in touch with them now. They live in Michigan, where I grew up. New York really is the best place to be if you're young and struggling. I've met many great people in the city. Our community is very open."

Russell listens intently. Each word draws him in with an alluring hum, as if plucked from a gentle instrument. Russell can't tell for sure whether it is the meaning of what this man has said or the melodic tone of his voice, but he is completely intrigued.

"Listen," continues the stranger as he reaches into his pocket. "This is my card. The one on the bottom is my home number. Feel free to call sometime. We can discuss *Maurice*." And, with that, the man from Union Square Park is gone.

Russell sits very still; he has a lot to digest. The term “soul-searching,” though irritatingly contrived, seems to glide through his mind. Maurice was “a conventional young man,” or at least that’s what the book’s cover said. Was it possible to be both conventional and gay? Russell wondered, because the term “queer” itself implied the exact opposite. The man from the bench was certainly gay, but he didn’t seem “queer.” He wasn’t a freak or anything. Although Russell had definitely felt something at the sight of the strange man rubbing his thigh, Russell isn’t ready to confront the physical nature of homosexuality. His immediate concern involves religion, his parents, society, ethics. Ethics, but hadn’t the Greeks invented the term? Was that before or after erecting the bathhouses? No, religion and family were the main sources of Russell’s anxiety. The stranger had said that he himself was no longer in contact with his family. Russell loved his family. The thought of no longer communicating with Aubrey and Grace, and even his father, made him sad. But his mother? The thought of not speaking to her, not seeing her made him ache. Nothing could possibly be worth that. A panic rose in Russell’s chest. He wanted to get home. He missed his mother. He needed to see her. Alright, the subway is nearby. Russell gathers his belongings in a hurry. He glances around, wondering if he will be stopped again, this time on his way to the subway station. Putting *Maurice* in his backpack, safely hidden from curious eyes, Russell heads home. Home, the thought is comforting.

Russell is taller than his father and much more handsome. Lina watches as he enters through the front door, his backpack halfway off his shoulder, ipod still plugged into his ears (what was he listening to?). From where she sits, Lina is able to watch her son without him knowing. He’s let his hair grow out. Gosh, he makes such a handsome young man. Cat Stevens? Is that what he’s got blasting into his ear drums? She wonders. For his seventeenth birthday, Lina gave her son an album that she had listened to over and over as a teenager. Mother and son bonded over *Tea For The Tillerman*, and, lately, Russell hadn’t listened to much else.

*I know we’ve come a long way,  
We’re changing day to day,  
But tell me, where d’ th’ ch’ldr’n play.*

Russell hits the pause button and sets the ipod on his bed, along with his backpack. The time is 6:15, and Russell knows his mother will be serving dinner soon. He wants to get her alone, though, before his father and sisters begin to gather at the kitchen table. Russell always gets slightly nervous before seeing his mother. The feeling is similar to the sensation he has

right before getting on a rollercoaster, though it doesn't derive from fear. Russell feels giddy, and he eagerly approaches the kitchen with anticipation for the overpowering love that will inevitably fill any room shared by him and his mother.

"Hi, mom."

Lina turns around. The lasagna has been placed in the oven for the next 45 minutes. She swallows hard. Her chest feels so heavy. One would think that after seventeen years, Lina would be accustomed to the feeling she experiences upon seeing her son, that she'd have gotten used to how much she loves him. Still, each new moment the two share alone is as powerful and poignant as the last.

"Russ, dear, how was your day?" Lina turns to set her oven-gloves on the counter, though making sure not to lose the firm gaze she has placed on her boy.

"I..." Russell wishes to tell his mother everything that took place at Union Square Park. He wants to ask, "Is it okay? Mom, what if I am gay? Will you be okay with that? Will you still be happy? Will you still love me?"

"It was good. School was good. I went to Barnes and Noble, studied a bit, read."

"You're always so productive, so on top of everything. I'm so proud of you. Your father's so proud, Russ; you know, sometimes dad just..."

And at that moment, the front door opens, the sound of keys jingling. Lina and Russell look at each other, both equally saddened that their moment alone has been cut short.

"Dad!" The sound of Grace's voice resonates, permeating the three bedroom apartment on 62<sup>nd</sup> and York.

"Hello, Gracie. Is your sister in the room?"

"Hi, dad," Aubrey emerges.

"Hi, pretty lady."

Russell dreads his father's entrance into the kitchen. He knows his dad will saunter through the door, without so much as a nod to him, and kiss Lina. Then he will acknowledge Russell's presence.

Russell watches as his father greets his mom. He is so lucky, Russell thinks. At forty-one, Lina could easily have any man she wanted. Russell hopes his father fully appreciates...

"Hello, son."

"Hi, dad, I..."

"Caroline (Jeff is the only one who calls Lina by her given name), I don't see plates or silverware on the table."

"Jeff, it's alright, I'll..."

“Aubrey! Aubrey Kathryn Delacy!”

Aubrey appears instantly. Jeff’s holler is a sound the Delacy family is used to responding to quickly.

“Yes, dad?”

“Aubrey, look at the table. Your mother cannot do everything herself. You’re fourteen now; please be a lady. Help your mother.”

Dinner is finished. Lina brings out a plate of sliced watermelon. Russell would like to be excused before dessert, but he knows his father won’t allow it. He is eager to continue reading.

“Russell, I think it’s time for a haircut.” Jeff eyes his only son, while taking a slice of watermelon.

“It’s getting too long, son. You are going to start to look like Aubrey. I don’t have three daughters.”

“All that day and the next Maurice was planning how he could see this queer fish again.” “Queer fish,” Russell looks up from his book. It is 9:30. He remembers he put the stranger from Union Square Park’s card in his pant pocket. It could be serious if his mother found it while doing laundry. She might become suspicious. Russell sets *Maurice* down on his bed and walks over to the chair on which he has flung his pants. Reaching into the pocket, he retrieves the small white card. Russell examines it:

Bruce Orlov, Portrait Artist, Painter

431 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street

Russell notices the last number on the card, the one Bruce said was his home phone. He seemed like a nice man, Russell reflects. Russell is tired; his day has been unusually eventful. Enough for this evening, he decides. Placing Bruce’s card safely between the pages of *Maurice*, which he hides in his backpack, Russell decides to listen to some music before bed.

“Are you alright?”

Lina looks up at her husband. She is still wearing the skirt she’s worn all afternoon and her bra, though her shirt is long since removed. Jeff is completely naked. He’s always ready for bed before she is, especially when he knows they will be making love.

“Yes, I’m fine dear. Listen, Jeff, I didn’t want to mention this earlier, but I feel like I ought to tell you; Grace spilled punch on the Le Jacquard tablecloth. I know, I took it to the cleaners, and they are going to do their best to...”

“Caroline, I don’t want to talk about this right now. But you know I am not happy. I will talk to Grace in the morning. There will have to be some kind of punishment.”

“Jeff, she feels bad enough. You should have seen her. I was getting the laundry together, and she came in sobbing. I had to sit her down and rub her back before I could get her to tell me what had happened. She kept saying, ‘Daddy will kill me, he will hate me forever!’ Let me take care of this one, Jeff. It was my fault anyways since I let her have a snack and do her homework at the table.”

Jeff sits on the bed next to his wife. Lina really notices his growing midriff now that he is seated and completely uncovered. Her love for him helps quell the momentary distaste she feels over the obvious indifference he has toward his own appearance. But, if it were she who had grown so round, it would be a different story altogether. Jeff would probably stage an intervention. It was what it was. Jeff had primitive views on marriage and marital responsibilities. Lina was expected to run the household and raise their children. (Both included stopping their youngest from drenching every article of fine houseware with Tropicana Fruit Punch.) She was also expected to stay beautiful so that when Jeff came home from a hard day at work (which seemed, now, to include drinking beer), he had something pretty to fuck. Oh, Lina was not used to thinking that word. She hated it. It was so ugly. Lina’s thoughts turned to Corey. When her younger brother was about two years old, his first word was, or was meant to be “truck” (their father owned one). Unfortunately, “truck” in his undeveloped jabber sounded like “fuck”. That poor boy’s first experience with actual, human talk earned him a spanking. Lina could remember the sound of her mother’s hand as it struck her younger brother’s behind, followed by his shrieks. Lina’s mother had always been a bit harsh. Maybe that accounted for Lina’s maternal leniency. Maybe it explained Corey’s troubles.

In the few moments Lina had taken to reflect, Jeff has grown impatient. He was now unhooking her bra and making his way to the top of her skirt zipper. So, she thinks, this is how it feels to be man-handled.

Was it the hair? It was now the longest it had been in quite a while. But could that really be to blame, Russell wondered, for the sudden surge of male attention he was getting? Or, had he gotten it before and just not noticed? All the stares, looks of recognition, Russell couldn’t help enjoying it. And what was it that led him back to Union Square this very afternoon? Was it yesterday’s encounter with Bruce? *Maurice’s* influence? Russell still had Bruce’s card hidden between the pages of Forster’s lesser-known masterpiece. Actually, the card had come in handy as a bookmark.

Russell sits on a bench on the east side of the park (just one bench down from where he was yesterday) and continues reading.

“They walked arm in arm or arm around shoulder now. When they sat it was nearly always in the same position--Maurice in a chair, and Durham at his feet, leaning against him. In the world of their friends this attracted no notice. Maurice would stroke Durham’s hair.”

Maybe it really is the hair, Russell thinks, glancing up from his book. He resents the remark his father made last night at the dinner table about not having three daughters. Jeff had always made comments like that, even when Russell was little. When Russell and his father would go out together, maybe to play ball in the park, if Russell fell and cried over a scraped knee, Jeff would say, “Stop acting like a little girl.” Russell was never man enough for Jeff. He would rather read or listen to music than play sports. Russell was always the kid to come away from a sports game with an “Award for Effort” ribbon.

Being Jeffrey Delacy’s only son meant effort was a given and winning a necessity. Well, Russell never won his father’s affection and, lately, he felt he didn’t really give a fuck. The thought of his father agitated him. Russell decides to try and walk it off.

Earlier in the afternoon, Lina had gotten a phone call that startled her. Corey wanted to come for a visit sometime during July. Lina could not refuse her younger brother’s request outright, but she is worried about how Jeff will react. Either Jeff will say no and have Lina give her brother some lame excuse, or he will approve, leaving Lina to worry about having her strict husband and dead-beat brother together in their three bedroom apartment. Neither solution seemed feasible. Also, and Lina didn’t like to admit this even to herself, she worried about the kind of influence Corey might have on her son. It had been a long time since she had really sat and talked with Russell, gotten a motherly sense of where he was (emotionally). She couldn’t know for sure if her son was impressionable, could be seduced by whatever, yes, unwholesome philosophy her brother might have to impart.

“Hey kid, hey, Maurice!” Russell turns around; the voice is very familiar. The west side of Union Square Park is so filled with shoppers, gawkers, artists, jewelers, and so on, that it takes a moment to locate the source of the greeting. Bruce. Bruce Orlov is standing before a table of his own artwork. The first thing Russell notices upon approaching Bruce isn’t the man himself but a painting he has laid out on the table, priced at \$40. Russell is almost embarrassed by the painting. It is of a young boy (possibly twelve or thirteen) masturbating into what is clearly meant to be a holy chalice. A bearded and robed

man (obviously a priest) stands in the corner, looking pleased. The piece is titled “Fatherfucker”. Noticing and taking pleasure in Russell’s discomfort, Bruce announces “Religions are the cradles of despotism.’ Ever heard of the Marquis de Sade?” “No,” Russell replies. The painting seems purely pornographic, but, at the same time, Russell feels he should like it. He wants to be open-minded. Jeff, at the sight of something like this, would become enraged. Lina might vomit. So, Russell decides, so much for initial responses. The painting is controversial and therefore interesting. Plus, Bruce seemed like a nice man. He didn’t make nasty comments about Russell’s appearance. He had accepted Russell right off the bat.

“Cruising?”

“Pardon?” Russell isn’t sure he understands the question.

“Nothing,” Bruce smiles. “How’s your reading coming?”

“Good. I really like *Maurice*. I think it may end up being one of my favorites.”

“Uh huh. Well, there are a lot of others like it. Listen, I am finished here at around 7:00. If you’re willing to stick around awhile, you can help me bring my artwork back to my place and, as payment, I may let you borrow something.”

Russell looks at his watch. It is 5:00. There is a Barnes and Noble close by. He can go there for a bit, get a cup of coffee, read some more and then come back. Russell knows his father will be irritated if he isn’t home for dinner, but it is the end of the semester, and there are finals to study for. Russell knows that if he calls his mother, tells her he is at the library and swamped with work, she will cover for him. He wants to see Bruce’s place. He has an image in his mind of what it must look like.

“Okay. I just have to call my mother.”

Bruce replies, “Yes, you call your mother. Let her know you’ll be in good hands.”

“No, Aubrey, you only need to set four places at the table.”

“Dad’s not coming home?”

“Russell is coming home late. He won’t be here for dinner.”

Bruce’s place is only a twenty-minute walk from Union Square. 9<sup>th</sup> Street between 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Avenue A is unlike any part of the city Russell has explored. Across from Bruce’s apartment is a store that specializes in supplies for witchcraft and goddess worship. When Russell was younger, his mother had insisted that he return a ouija board he was given for his birthday. Anything “pagan” or “unchristian” really freaked Lina out. Next to Bruce’s apartment building is a psychic, and

then, as if there wasn't enough heathenism to fill one block, Flower Power Herbs and Roots stood on the southwest side of the street. Russell, upon entering Bruce's neighborhood, feels a little like Dorothy discovering the Land of Oz.

"So this is it. This is where it all happens," apparently Bruce's idea of a humble and friendly icebreaker.

Russell looks around the studio apartment. It is everything he had imagined. Bruce's lair is overflowing with paintbrushes, incense burners, phallic-shaped utensils (brushes, candles, were those chopsticks with heads and testicles?), canvasses (many displaying half-finished compositions), and then, something furry and light brushes against Russell's legs.

"Meet Lucifer Sam," Bruce says, responding to the look of surprise on Russell face. "He's a pure-breed Egyptian Mau."

"Lucifer, like the devil?" Russell inquires, his Christian up-bringing surfacing, if only for a moment.

"Lucifer Sam, Siam cat.

Always sitting by your side,

Always by your side.

That cat's something I can't explain.' Syd Barret, Pink Floyd."

"I know Pink Floyd."

"I'm sure you know Roger Water's Pink Floyd. So you're not into Rap, Hip Hop?"

"No, I like older stuff."

"Yea, like what?"

"Well, mostly stuff I pick up from my parents. My dad loves Bruce Springsteen. He's pretty great. I like Eric Clapton, Neil Young. Right now, though, I'm really into Cat Stevens."

"Yea, you're a pretty placid kid. I'll have to toughen you up."

Lina sits with her husband and two daughters at the dinner table, strongly feeling her son's absence. Having a family dinner without Russell seems unbalanced. It is like trying to conduct a wedding ceremony without a bride. If it were up to her, they all would have waited for his return before beginning the meal. Isn't that what families do? Put themselves through discomfort, if need be, to demonstrate the love and devotion they have for each other?

"Pass the rice please," requests Jeff. Realizing that Lina is somewhere else, he probes, "Have you spoken to Russell?"

"Around 5:15. He didn't specify when he'd be home, but he promised it wouldn't be too late. I've made enough food, as I imagine he will be hungry from all the studying."



“Mom, when will Russ leave for college?” Lina can’t tell if Grace is concerned about Russell’s leaving or enthusiastic over the prospect of inheriting his room.

“He has one more year in high school, sweets. Why, will you miss him?”

“Yea, I miss him now.”

“Me too. We’re lucky to have him.” Lina focuses her gaze on Jeff as she speaks. She knows that Jeff hasn’t always been pleased with their boy. He would have preferred a more “manly” son. This is one particular area in which Lina feels her husband has been unfair and, at times, even cruel.

“I really shouldn’t stay out too late. My mom tends to worry.” Russell feels a little embarrassed talking to Bruce about his mother. It seems so childish.

“That’s right, and I promised to lend you something.”

Bruce takes an item off his bookshelf and hands it to Russell. “Do you like movies?”

“Yes, of course.”

“What about foreign films?”

“I can’t say I’ve seen too many. My mother and I have watched *Life Is Beautiful* a number of times. She loves that movie.” Again, Russell feels stupid referring to his mother.

“Well, this is completely different. It’s about a man in prison and a young boy, actually. It’s German.” Bruce watches Russell closely as he speaks, searching for any hint of discomfort.

*The Consequence*. It looks interesting, alluring. Russell remembers his resolution to be more open-minded.

“I never actually saw *Brokeback Mountain*,” Russell confesses. “When it came out, I was too young.”

“Well, this’ll help make up for lost time.”

Russell turns to leave. “How should I get this back to you?”

“Come by tomorrow. I’ll be here all day. You can think of my place as a library. You’ll get one book or movie at a time. Maybe you’ll come earlier, and I can show you some of my work. Maybe you’ll let me paint you.”

“I will watch this movie tonight, in that case. Thanks, Bruce.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow, Maurice.”

“Russell.”

“If you say so.”

He hasn't been studying, Lina can tell. Was it a girl? Had Russell met a young woman? Lina would like to ask, but she doesn't want to make her son uncomfortable.

Her daughters are in their room. And Jeff? Well, Lina is not quite sure where he is.

"Russ, hun, sit down. You must be hungry, all that studying."

"Yea, I'm a little hungry."

"So, how was your day?"

"Good. I'm looking forward to the summer."

"Of course, you must need a break." God how she loves him. He has turned out just as, no, even better than she would have hoped. Lina continues, "You know, during dinner, Grace asked when you'd be going to college."

"She wants my room?"

"Actually, she said she'd miss you. You know, there are some great schools here in the city. You could stay home. It would save your dad some money, and I'm not sure I want you so far from me." Lina's voice cracks. She can't help it and begins to cry. Now she is sure she's made her son uncomfortable.

Russell can't stand to see his mother sad. He puts his hand on her arm, "Mom, please. Maybe I'll stay in the city. I could apply to Cooper Union."

Lina takes a deep breath. She needs to collect herself. "Cooper Union? In the Village? Isn't that an art school? Are you interested in becoming an artist?"

"Maybe, or a writer. I don't know yet. Something creative."

"Well, whatever you decide, I know you will be wonderful."

"Would dad be angry if I became an artist or a writer?"

"You'll have to ask him. But, it is your future, your career."

"Mom?"

"Uh huh?"

"I think I might be gay." The words spill out, like water from a brimming teapot. He had needed to say them aloud.

Someone else needed to hear what had been soaring through his head, non-stop.

Lina grew pale. "You mean homosexual?" Maybe he meant something different. She hoped to God he meant gay in the archaic sense. Maybe kids were using the word the old-fashioned way again.

“Yes, homosexual.”

Lina can feel her stomach drop. How does a mother respond to such a statement? Not with anger, never with anger. Lina’s mother had managed Corey with “an iron fist.” It hadn’t done him any good, and that was never Lina’s way. She wasn’t angry; she was frightened. Dick Cheney, wasn’t his daughter a lesbian? How did he handle that, she wondered, when he found out?

Helpless, that’s the feeling Lina had, sitting in the bathroom at 2:30 in the morning. Jeff was asleep, completely unaware of the shit storm blowing his way. He will be furious. Lina has the urge, and this isn’t the first time, to protect her son from his father. What would Jeff do? She won’t tell him yet. Today is Thursday. Russell can miss one day of school. She will take him to the LDS Temple at Lincoln Center. No, she will go there herself, after her children are safely off to school. She will make an appointment with the missionaries, have them come to her. She’ll tell Russell to come home straight after school, and they’ll be there to talk with him. She’ll request college age boys. It would be better for Russell to talk with someone his own age, or there about. It would be okay. Russell was only seventeen. He was a child. This “problem” would be straightened out.

Russell leaves the Union Square Subway Station and heads west. This particular trip has nothing to do with Bruce, in fact; Russell hadn’t watched the movie he’d borrowed last night. Too much transpired between yesterday’s encounter and this afternoon. And Russell hadn’t headed home from school, as his mother had requested. He wasn’t stupid and had a pretty good idea of what she’d planned. He knew it would involve someone from the church, probably her church. Though Russell knew his mother was no longer a practicing Mormon (she didn’t attend church anymore), he guessed that last night’s confession would send her running to 125 Columbus Avenue. Russell did not want to hear about God and Jesus. He didn’t want someone telling him what “The Heavenly Father” expected from him. At this point, he didn’t care. If The Heavenly Father was anything like his own father, Russell wanted nothing to do with him. Bruce had said, “Our community is very accepting.” For Russell, that was key. He was gay. He had known this for quite some time now. It was time for him to be accepted as he was.

Russell approaches his destination, one he spent some time searching for online last night. Ascending two moderately steep steps, toward the doors of The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center on West 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Russell feels a mixture of relief and sadness. The thought occurs to him, “Now I am alone. I am on my own with this. I am claiming sanctuary here, of all places.”

Russell enters the building, walking toward the information desk.

“I would like to see someone who works at the Youth Enrichment Services Center, please.”

“Okay,” says the man at information, pointing Russell in the right direction.

Russell walks down a corridor, outside past a small garden, then through the doors of the YES building. Introducing himself to the person at the front desk, Russell asks if there is someone he might speak with. It is urgent.

“Our regular on-call social worker is out on personal business, but we do have a volunteer substitute. She can meet with you. Just have a seat for a few minutes.”

Lina sits at the kitchen table. Two young blonde men in buttoned-down white collared shirts (neatly tucked in) and well-tailored kakhi pants sit across from her. Each has his own copy of *The Book Of Mormon* in front of him, authoritatively placed on Lina’s table.

“My son really should be here by now. I’m sorry, he must be held up. Would you like some tea? I’m going to make some.”

“Oh no, that’s...”

“Ah, I’m sorry. I forgot. No caffeine. I’m just a little frazzled. I hope you don’t mind if I have some tea. I haven’t actually lived by the Church’s guidelines for some time now.”

The two boys glance at each other, a look of superiority on their faces.

Lina feels both embarrassed and angry. Could they actually think that her having a cup of tea is an indication of some objectionable lifestyle? This is what she’d hated about the Church. Any small deviation from the rules, and you were wholly wayward. Judgment descended.

“Hi, I’m Ashley.”

Russell looks up. She is short, very kind looking. Russell takes a moment to consider the woman standing over him. He will, after all, be confiding in her. Observing Ashley, Russell realizes that he has never knowingly spoken to a lesbian before. She is different, very different from his mother. Her face is so animated. She seems free, emancipated. Maybe, Russell wonders, this is what being an open homosexual looks like.

“I’m sorry to have made you come here for nothing,” Lina looks at her feet as she speaks to the two missionaries. The young men are polite, but she knows they have judged her. They judged me from the moment they stepped foot in my house, she thinks, and they have judged my son.

Ashley Weathersby, MSW, Smith College School of Social Work.

Russell examines the diploma Ashley has propped up on the desk.

“It’s not a vanity thing,” she exclaims, reacting to Russell’s curiosity. “I just want to make sure you and the other people I see, while the usual counselor is out, feel comfortable and know that I’m not a fraud. You can talk to me.”

Ashley’s smile is warm and sincere. She isn’t going to judge him. Whoever Lina had lined up from the Church, their sole purpose was to judge and prepare him for the “Judgment Seat of Christ.” Russell wondered what his mother would be like if she hadn’t let other peoples’ standards dictate her life. It seemed to Russell that the only act of rebellion his mother could be found guilty of was marrying his father. And that was one act Russell, himself, judged unsympathetically.

Lina sits alone at the kitchen table, feeling helpless and defeated. The girls are in their room. Could that be the tv? Aubrey and Grace had been so excited for *Highschool Musical 3* to come out on DVD. Lina’s girls were suckers for Teen Romance. Aubrey would say *A Cinderella Story* was her very favorite movie and that Hilary Duff was so beautiful, she wished she looked like her. Lina could relate. As a young woman she’d watched *From Here To Eternity* and *A Place in The Sun* over and over, crying every time. So, why not Russell? It was true that Lina had been strict about what her son watched. When she’d finally let him watch *Titanic*, Lina fast-forwarded the scene where Kate Winslet appears partially naked. But once Russell turned sixteen, she had become more lenient. Now he could pretty much watch whatever he wanted. Maybe if she’d given him more freedom as a boy, let him watch Kate Winslet expose herself (Lina genuinely felt that nudity in film was inapprortiate and exploitative), he’d have developed a healthy interest in women.

“I need help,” Russell begins sobbing. He hasn’t cried in a long time. “I can’t go home now. I’m all alone. I have nobody. It’s an abomination. This thing... an... I’m so sorry for my mother. I love my mom. Please help me.... Don’t let me go back there. I wish I were dead. Because God, I mean my dad hates fags. I’m so dead.”

Why isn't he answering his cell? Lina is really starting to worry. It is now 6:30. What is she going to tell Jeff. He is completely in the dark. He will lose it. But if Russell does not call, she will have to tell her husband. Her child's safety, at this point, is Lina's greatest concern. Where could he have gone? Lina remembers, in the 80s, hearing about gay men getting blow jobs in Central Park at night. "God, Russell! Just answer your phone!"

They sit in a big circle. Boys from thirteen to nineteen, all gathered together with one issue in common: each is struggling with his homosexuality. Russell is seated next to Ashley, who is leading today's group discussion. When Russell finally works up the nerve to look around the room and absorb his surroundings, one boy in particular catches his eye. He has dirty blond, curly hair, brown eyes, wears glasses and a white t-shirt that features a five-point star surrounded by a circle. Russell can't quite place the symbol, but he knows he has seen it.... Bruce! Yes, Bruce had a picture on his wall with this very image. Russell thinks, if he can gather up the courage once the meeting is finished, he will approach the boy and ask the symbol's significance.

"Who would like to start off today's discussion?" Ashley asks, glancing around the room.

"I came out to my family last night at dinner," exclaims a very handsome looking boy, around Russell's age.

"How did they react?" Ashley asks.

"My mom cried. My dad walked out for a few moments. I was afraid, but when he came back in he hugged me and asked to speak to me alone. My mother and sisters left, and he told me that when he was growing up in the Dominican Republic he had a very close friend who everyone said was 'funny'; other kids in the neighborhood called him 'maricon' which means faggot in Spanish. One day, my dad said his friend disappeared, and when he asked his parents why, they told him that the boy's family found him dressing in his sisters clothes and sent him away. My dad said he never found out where his friend had gone or saw him again. He said that that experience really changed his views on gays. He said that he would have preferred me to be more traditional, but that I was his son and he would support me anyways. My mother is still having a hard time, but she's very Catholic."

Russell looks at Ashley. Her face is lit up, as if someone has offered her a beautiful gift. This boy's achievement clearly nourishes something in her spirit. Russell thinks back to the moment he entered the YES building and realizes there is no other place in which he would rather claim sanctuary.

"Wow, Christopher," exclaims Ashley, "that is really wonderful. I know I haven't been here in the past to hear all the things that led up to your telling your family, but all I can say is you are incredibly brave. You must feel so relieved."

It is 8:00 PM. Lina is sick with worry. She fed her family burnt chicken and completely forgot to reheat the tomato sauce. When Grace complained about the food, while Lina checked her phone for the um-teenth time during dinner for missed calls, Lina had snapped, sending her daughter into hysterics. Now, Lina sits on her bed, cell phone still in hand, as Jeff approaches her. “If he tries to have sex with me now, if that is what is on his mind, while I am sitting here tearing my hair out over our missing son, I will kill him,” Lina thinks. “Caroline, I didn’t say anything at the table because of our daughters. What is going on? You need to tell me now. I am trying very hard to control my temper. I have not called Russell, as I know he prefers you. He always has. Have you spoken to him? I noticed you checking your phone all throughout dinner.”

“Jeff, Russell is in trouble.” And as she utters these words, Lina begins to cry uncontrollably. She will now tell her husband everything. Why, anyways, should he be spared?

Ashley ends the group meeting at 8:30. After two full hours of listening to other boys’ stories, Russell is sad the time is up. Now he must figure out where he will go, his next move.

“Hey, what’s your name?” Russell turns around. It is the boy he had noticed earlier. Russell thought they’d had a moment during the session when their eyes met but discarded the thought as wishful thinking.

“I’m Russell. What’s your name?”

“Justin, Justin Landau. You seem very quiet. I was kind of waiting for you to say something. You’re new, I haven’t seen you here before.”

“Yea, this is my first time here.” Russell felt nervous but different from the feeling he’d had with Bruce. Justin was around Russell’s age. Having gone to an all boys school his entire life, Russell was used to typical teenage male interactions. But here Russell felt at ease. There was no competition. Justin was not going to try to “one-up him” as so many other boys Russell’s age did. And, Russell felt an instant attraction. He remembered feeling attracted to Bruce, that first day in the park, but something about his manner made Russell uncomfortable. It wasn’t just the obscene painting. Russell wanted Justin to like him, think he was smart and interesting. More importantly, Russell felt that Justin might understand him.

“I started coming a couple of months ago,” Justin began, bringing Russell back to the present conversation. “I really like it. Everyone is very accepting here. It’s hard being young and gay, even in New York. Actually, just this year, I started going to a school specially for gay, lesbian and transgendered kids.”

Russell is surprised. He had no idea there were places like that.

“Where,” Justin continues, “do you go to school?”

“Browning, on East 62<sup>nd</sup>. It’s right near where I live. It’s all boys.”

“Oh, are they accepting of gays there?”

“No one really knows. To be honest, I don’t have many friends.” Saying this aloud saddened Russell. He would have liked to have had someone to keep him company, instead of always relying on his ipod and whatever book he happened to be reading.

“Well, you’ve come to the right place. It’s hard not to make friends here.”

Russell smiles and then remembers, “What is that symbol on your shirt?”

“It’s called a pentacle. It’s a pagan symbol.”

“Pagan, is that your religion?”

“I don’t know if you’d call it that. I don’t really have a particular religion. I’m sort of a mix of things. Although the motto that I live by is very pagan.”

“What’s that?”

“Live and let live.”

Jeff is so angry. Lina knows the look on his face all too well. Part of her even hopes Russell doesn’t come home tonight, that he has a safe place to stay. But, he is only seventeen. Lina goes into the kitchen, sits at the table and sobs.

“Here,” Justin continues. “This is my number. We should hang out. Maybe tomorrow? Fridays are a waste of school time anyways. We can be bad.”

“Okay.” Russell likes the thought of playing hookey, something he has never done before.

“Would you want to meet here, then?”

“Sure.”

“How about outside in the garden?”

“Okay.”

“Would 1:00 be a good time for you?”

“Yes.”



“Alright, I’ll see you then.”

Almost everyone has left. Russell is still in the room where the discussion was held, and Ashley is getting her things together.

“Where will you go from here?” Ashley asks, looking concerned.

“I don’t know,” Russell replies. All he has on him is his school bag (containing homework and his school uniform), his ipod, cell phone (which has remained turned off), twenty dollars and *Maurice*. He isn’t sure what he is going to do.

“Listen, Russell. This is not usual, but I don’t feel comfortable just leaving you to your own defenses. Everything you told me this evening, before the group, is confidential, but I don’t think you should go home tonight. I won’t tell anyone about what we talked about, unless I think you are unsafe. And I feel the safest thing for you to do tonight is come stay with me.”

“Okay.” Russell doesn’t have the energy to argue, and he feels there is no alternative. Plus, he trusts Ashley.

Ashley’s apartment is small but homey. She lives in West Harlem (an area Russell is completely unfamiliar with) and is recently single. She explains to Russell that her ex-girlfriend recently moved out, leaving her to manage the rent on her own. She will either have to move to a studio or find a roommate.

“Are you hungry, Russell?”

“I guess, a little.”

“I’ll cook up some pasta, then. We can eat in about fifteen minutes. Wanna keep me company in the kitchen?”

“No, thanks. I would rather stay in the living room.”

Russell finds a spot on the floor, places his book bag against the wall and encloses himself in a corner. He opens his bag and takes out *Maurice*.

“The light within--Maurice had neared confidences, but they would not have been listened to. His grandfather didn’t, couldn’t understand. He was only to get ‘the light within--be kind’, yet the phrase continued the rearrangement that begun inside him. Why should one be kind and good? For someone’s sake--for the sake of Clive or God or the Sun?”

“Live and let live,” Justin’s words returned to Russell as he sat reading on the floor of Ashley Weathersby’s apartment. He was luckier than Maurice. He had a confidant, two, in fact. Russell thought, rereading this passage from *Maurice*, yes, we should be kind for the sake of God. And, we should also “Live and let live”.

Russell listens to 'Tea For The Tillerman as he heads towards the Center for his afternoon with Justin. Russell hasn't slept much, but he feels surprisingly alert and ready to seize the day. He finished *Maurice* last night. The novel's climax seemed, to Russell, to be some kind of omen. If Maurice could find love and happiness in the early twentieth century, then there was certainly hope for him. Russell had also thought a lot about Justin last night. What if he greeted him with a kiss? Maybe that would be too bold. He'd have to play it by ear. Russell is already in the garden at The Center, and it is only 12:30, giving him half an hour before he meets Justin. Russell's thoughts turn to his family. He hadn't spoken to or seen his mother since his coming out, and he hadn't gone to school at all today. Russell's phone still remained off, and Lina was probably terrified by now.

Upon activating his cell, Russell notices the over forty missed calls from his mother. He clicks on one and presses send. There is barely one ring before Lina answers the phone, the sound of relief emanating from her voice.

"Oh, thank God! Russ! I was so scared. Are you okay? Where are you? Has anything happened? Are you safe?"

"Mom, I'm fine. I stayed with a nice lady last night. I met her at The Gay and Lesbian Center on 13<sup>th</sup> Street."

Lina is so relieved by the sound of her son's voice. Had he said something about a Gay center? Didn't matter. He was safe. I've acted cruelly, she thinks. Somehow Russell knew what I'd planned, he always knew, was always somehow one step ahead. We have a real bond, Lina reflected, before responding to her son. "Russ, you can come home. You're father will just have to cope. He will have to be an adult and bear up."

"No, mom. I don't want to come home. I want to stay with Ashley for a bit. I want to figure some things out."

"Ashley is the woman you said you met?" Lina feels a heaviness in her chest.

"She's is a social worker. She lives in Harlem and has a spare room. You don't have to worry, it won't be forever"

Forever, Lina thinks, God I hope not. But something in his voice felt different, sounded solid, more grown-up. She would, she felt, give her son the space he needed. "Do you have Ashley's number? I'd like to speak with her. You understand, just to make sure you will be safe and looked after. Russell, you know you are my greatest love."

"I know, mom. Let me give you her number. Her name is Ashley Weathersby and she lives on West 137<sup>th</sup> street." As Russell reads off the last three digits of Ashley's number to his mother, Justin appears.

"I have to go. Mom, I love you. I will see you soon. I promise."

"Hi," Russell says, feeling a little bashful.

Justin sits on the bench next to Russell. "What were you listening to?" Justin asks, noticing the ipod on Russell's lap.

“Cat Stevens. What about you?” Justin, too, has his ipod in plain view.

“Grizzly Bear. They’re new.”

“I’ve never heard of them.”

“Oh, well, I’ll burn you one of their albums. They’re one of my favorites. So you like the classics?”

“Yea, mostly. I’m in a Cat Stevens phase right now, but ‘m open to all kinds of music.”

“I like a lot of the classics as well, mostly The Grateful Dead. I’m not too familiar with Cat Stevens, to be honest. Maybe you can share some of his stuff with me.”

“Alright. We’ll teach each other.”

It is 4:00 on Friday, and Lina has finished her phone call to Ashley. The conversation lasted forty-five minutes. Afterwards, Lina tried calling Russell, but he didn’t answer. Ashley had been very easy to talk to, but Lina couldn’t shake the feeling that she was losing her son. She could see why Russell had taken a liking to Ashley. She was spunky, full of energy. Ashley was also quite young, one of those “naïve liberals,” as Jeff called them. Still, I am his mother, Lina thought, almost speaking out loud. That will never change.

Of course, there had been more to the conversation than Russell’s coming out and Lina’s need for reassurance. As for now, Jeff would help Ashley with her rent. I will see to that, Lina thought. It is the least he can do. Lina hadn’t spoken to Jeff since the conversation with Ashley. Last night, however, Jeff made it clear that he didn’t want to see Russell. This will pass, Lina thought. Pouring water into the tea kettle, a segment from a song she listened to frequently as a girl drifted into Lina’s mind.

A week has passed. Russell and his mother have stayed in touch, speaking on the phone at least once a day. Lina hasn’t seen her son since his coming out, but a date has been set. Russell talked a lot about his “new friend”, and Lina has agreed to meet Justin, though she still feels uncomfortable. How should she approach him? She wanted to be warm, but she wasn’t going to lie to either her son or his friend. You can take the girl out of the church, Lina repeated with a slight smile, but you can’t take the church out of the girl. This will last Lina thought, pouring water into the tea kettle.

The big day has arrived. Russell has chosen a coffee shop in the East Village as their meeting spot. He is a little nervous but mostly excited. He knows his mother will like Justin. Lina has heard from both Russell and Ashley about how nice Justin is.

It will be alright, Lina thinks on her way to the cafe. Russell's path in life is not one I would have chosen, but it is his and his alone. I left the LDS church when I married Jeff, and my children are not products of its doctrine. Russell is his own person. During one of their longer, more recent telephone conversations, Russell imparted a piece of wisdom to Lina that his "new friend" taught him. Russell explained, "Justin's philosophy in life is to 'live and let live.' I've decided it is also my own." Lina wasn't quite sure she agreed, but she did love her son more than her own personal convictions. Lina had never known true maternal fear before the night she'd spent completely unaware of Russell's whereabouts. Everything else, after that night, seemed manageable. Russell is safe, she thinks, and he is a good son. Hopefully, Jeff would come around. He is stubborn as a mule, but Russell is his only son. Lina understood Jeff's disappointment. God knows part of her shared it. But she also believed that her husband loved his child too much to stay estranged forever. And, for now, Russell had Ashley. She was like a big sister to him. Yes, it will be alright.

And there they are. Russell and Justin have chosen a table at Joe's Coffee Shop and are waiting for her to arrive. Lina enters the coffee house, kisses her son and shakes Justin's hand. He's ordered me a cup of tea, Lina notices. "It's Earl Grey," Russell explains. "Justin says it's the Queen of England's favorite flavor." The Queen, Lina muses, reassured of her son's love. So, a new flavor and, with it, the chance at a new beginning. The three begin their conversation, and Lina notices a synchronized melody created by the boys' voices as they fill her in on their plans for the future. This sound, she reflects, taking her first sip of Earl Grey, is a sonic representation of love. It permeates her core stronger and louder than even the sharpest, most fervent reveille. Nothing threatening here, just the sound of clanking mugs and lively conversation.

## Edwin Wilson Rivera

### Manny's Got His Gun

Dude done the urban stomp right on his nuts,  
then he shoot him to rags. Here's one raspy nigga,

I says, more weepy-mama melodrama comin  
at us again. Womens and men with their rat-bitin

donts, and every chicken-hearted one of em cryin they  
chicken-little tears. 'He was a good man Lo!

You drug him up from the earth on your angel-wire,  
and then You chide im!' Sum such nonsense. But there

aint no derring-do gonna get *His* attention. Don't matter  
chiff from the chaff, all of it like chiffon to Him.

## Memories of La Rumorosa

Night was trembling, soaring strange, gangling appendage  
all tower & frame. Trickling stars were frosty beads, high  
intrigue in storm-bitten seas. Oh how we wish  
waking to fall abliss . . .

Yet nothing begets like a maker's wish, who maker-  
less makes, and dreams of fish. Those days have passed,  
there is only fall; smoke in the mountains, coyotes call.  
Our days are dying, this life soon spun. So take this dream.  
Go now. Run.

## **Tender Anus**

Spread me here. On this chair.  
the hardwood desk.  
the parquet floor.

Now. Like jelly. Oozing. This  
oblique light. Spider-iron bed.

Take me to a way station. A place  
of jangled night. To a dark room  
with neon sizzle.

The shine on brick. Smoky curtains and  
cobalt mirrors. Hardcore porn.

We'll go to a bunker. Dank-packed  
earth. Sweating stone. We'll shoot  
nazi films, run wire through our teeth.

The shimmer of steel,  
that first-death panic.

Our skin forever clammy  
as we howl out to  
the television night

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

**Erik B. Olson**

**Cloud Chamber Orchestra**

the sheets stained black with vector-tracks  
the madam's washed them clean- a billion  
years of satisfied customers- and sent them  
back upstairs with well-turned phrases of  
ankle, with ink that writhes in sentences  
across their thighs, in confidential  
hieroglyphics, cell to cell in virgin moment  
the nerves break into spontaneous  
musical numbers and waltz around  
all glowing in the wave that folds the  
ocean's edges into the sweet gray convolutions,  
between the lobes, in blood's heat pulsing



## **Kisses' Technicolor Braille**

an earthquake to get us out bed  
and the army to put us to work-  
historical cannon loaded with chain and grapeshot, they sighted down  
on us from the bluffs and shot us  
full of the taste of boiled rubber  
and plaster dust. We got our orders  
from the letter-drops in the body's  
unfinished piazzas, skin to skin  
in the cemetery mornings, in this  
writing life like blindfold chess-  
death slaps the clock and you've got  
to move- So dig me a pyramid, baby, maybe we can lose all this trash  
in the corner of the garden .

## **My Soul in her Watchpocket**

her waveform holds your hand- she's made  
from borrowed light, as are we all of course  
shot out from electron guns toward the eyes'  
curved lenses and forever after outward into space, the love that resonates from her  
vocal cords through the waves vibrating into  
your body that's always falling forward along  
the deadman's curves of this, the wood  
and wires where we're all crucified together,  
she's permanently imminent, just up around  
the next corner winking behind the sex  
and death of it all. Eternity, in love with  
the products of time? She loves us  
like amber loves dragonflies

## The Ambidextrous Path

monkey-mind eats the mango and dumps  
his editorial into the understory  
where oryx-mind, panicky herbivore,  
ruminates and rearranges the trails  
to the used river early in afternoon  
where our bed nudges up to the bank  
to gently awake us, surrounded by books  
like a pile of used leaves, and this  
scar the size of a football-seam  
on my thigh, for her hands to unzip me  
and strip off this skin like an  
ice-cream-suit folded neatly and  
left on the chair for the  
lemur-mind maid to find

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Spring 2010

## Elizabeth Kerlikowske

### These hours beyond danger

One more cigarette behind the barn.

One last stretch in the sun.

Bottle of beer at the fire pit.

Stroll through the garden at harvest.

Dodge the giant bumblebee.

Chase it. Repel it with smoke rings.

Wear loose skin.

Hawk overhead with a rusty key.

Only a few minutes til dinner:

stay.

## Directions for spice cake

Stand up straight like celery.

Check linoleum for gravel.

The sister provided with the recipe  
is unnecessary.

The mittens needn't be a pair.

Blink goes the light bulb.  
Bang the expansion of metal.

Unfold wax paper.  
Reflect on the somber ecstasy of Xmas.

Tin hat from World War I.

Double check the calendar.  
Tear off pages until it's October.

Add downspout water.

Dust legs and wings with  
the perfume of Columbus's desire.

Who wouldn't risk everything?

350 degrees tucked into 26 degrees.  
Another handknit sweater.

Are you kneeling yet?

Squint.

Rising through the door's pane  
she's there,

familiar stranger from a past life  
under a faint spattered star.

## **Middle age in September**

Wind chimes shiver, no contact.

Mulberry leaves alter light fall.

Mosquito season. Bee time of day.

Shadows look for warmth in the worst places.

Three yellowed maple leaves fall together.

Cat's eyes never leave the birdbath.

A truck's reflection moves backwards

against its forward sound.

## **This way to the egress**

My throat is lined  
    with an uncomfortable prophylactic sheet  
        of gold leaf  
the kind we used to ornament our drawings  
        thinking that elevated crap to art.

I cough up golden nuggets  
    excavating raw canyons  
        into which my voice has disappeared  
with no echo.

My cunt is hammered pewter  
    the way we made ashtrays at camp

flat sheet of metal laid across a bowl of wood  
    followed by hours of pounding,  
    years of men pumping their impressions  
        into the soft alloy.

I could carry on this way  
    the iron lungs, the tin ears  
        silver tongue, but why?

The two important avenues are worn out.

## Nocturno

Sleepwalking through calendars  
is not the same as sleep  
Look at the cat.        Look at the man.

Marshmallows lodge in the marsh oddly  
like the sleep in sleeplessness.

I am alert for what might happen  
to sheep.        Slumber is another word  
for predator.

The work of sleep is tedious,  
the opposite of gardening.

Sleep fucks me with no pleasure.

My face hurts  
from making faces at sleep  
while I try to sleep.

In return, sleep puckers my face with wrinkles.

Voices murmur in the fan.  
A radio is buried, on, in the cement walls.

Even if just my leg falls sleep,  
I feel real joy.

Sleep tells me to let go  
but I have to keep counting.

An archer shoots the apples of my days  
right behind my eyes

sleep sleep sleep sleep



**Edward W Cousins**

**Dirt Road**

Meadows and fields,  
along dirt roads  
with wild flowers  
in bloom  
and fat toads.  
Meadows and streams  
and dragonflies.  
oh, the honey dew too.  
A dogwood makes friends  
with the breeze.  
Sings a lovely  
song indeed.  
Sing along with barefeet,  
shade trees and  
shiny afternoons.  
Holding hands along  
the stonewall to where  
the creek meets us too.  
Tall grass calling our names.  
Crickets hollering  
playing that summer tune.  
The birds you and me  
forever free,walking  
a carolina dirt road.

## CRASHING AMID THE LEAVES

There is a red roof  
sittin on top a home,  
on the corner,  
down a winding  
narrow block.  
walk the path within,  
to undo a lock.  
to see a friend  
or a lover then.

Beautiful eye`s i see.  
i believe i know  
adore me.  
slight smoky room i love.  
wood stacked high as  
the black stove so rough.  
so tough and so much  
a place to warm my skin.

To a child perched at  
a table with head low.  
sunbeam`s shine on her face  
formidable through the window.

Pencil and paper in hand.  
curiously eager to learn.  
and just as fast to turn,  
and break for the door,  
crashing amid the leaves  
on the brisk winter floor.

## **DIVINE**

The allure of dogs at war exists  
no more upon this exodus.

As woven ravens and the sparrow  
greet the morning.  
And the wolves call to arms.  
Let thy faith be strong  
this early dawn. for my day  
be so long, so long.

And the sun breaks the  
mountains ridge.  
It has come to warm our skin.  
Instead like satans breath  
it will burn this putrid land.

As i walk amongst the gathering  
crowds of crying clowns.  
This your ensemble of unrelenting frowns.  
it beckons me down, down .  
I am alone with stone shoes  
stomping rats with skinny bones.

Acid rain bathes my brain  
and black skies undermine  
my ability to think alive.

And i find comfort in your sorrow.  
I find sorrow in the end.

Divine judgement upon my escape

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

**David Tomaloff**

**Bay View, mid--afternoon**

White

Girls

In ill-

Fitting (ed)

Jeans.

## Like Many Before Them

Chaos. It's  
War all the time

It's Willard going  
up the Nung

It's Kurtz up there  
-waiting.

There  
are  
things

we don't  
talk about;

Things lurking  
-just  
beyond  
those Trees.

You can walk through  
any mall in America

wondering  
if any of these  
-people

ever  
really  
feel anything

at all.

**Sometimes I swear  
you've got a Heart  
like a Jukebox.**

As a child,  
I believed  
(juke) boxes

were made  
of stars;

Cradling  
and  
(s)pinning,

Humming  
away

in total  
.monaural

bliss.

They spoke  
to me in  
(ton) gues

and,  
though

I knew  
the  
words,

I was  
con(t)ented

just

(hu)mming

al(o)ng.

**Jennifer Schecter**

**Stain**

they multiply nine times nine  
in cults and gangs  
they all wanna  
gangbang her up filthy walls  
CUM ONE CUM ALL!  
to fuck the girl of the moment  
she'll razzle you she'll dazzle you  
and make you feel  
like you're the only one who exists  
it's her gift  
CUM ONE CUM ALL!  
cum pussies and cowards  
drug users and killers  
heartbreakers and moneymakers  
to watch the magic seep out of her  
fantasy bleeds out of her  
BOYS AND GIRLS STEP RIGHT UP!  
to fuck her and leave her  
make a circus of her infections  
her diseases it's easy you see  
to lock the doors as she screams  
her demons won't let her break free.



## **Rosaries and Wine**

and this is where you lose your mind  
because I sleep  
only to wake and meet satan  
soaked in red I'm dying  
from the absence of your love  
my nights  
devoid of stars he took them  
he is my creature my vampire  
and in dreams  
I feast on his sadism  
I take his magic I drink you drank  
my blood for two years  
poisoned I am  
impaired I am  
disavowed I am  
morose  
from this monster I sway  
and stagger, lightheaded  
I'm trying not to fall  
apart  
JOIN ME as he slices  
my corpse my heart in two  
on my knees I beg him  
to sew me back together  
JOIN ME as I trip  
over the kisses he blows  
and spill my own blood  
among the dead I crawl  
to find something better  
but he is the only  
and I remain caged  
caught  
in barbed wire  
like a bird I can't fly  
because he cut off my wings.

## **Monstrosity.**

and when you speak the world stops.  
my body is yours  
it's under your spell someone stop this  
wait  
I'm falling  
to please you to coax you to soothe you  
to bring you back, back  
to me  
let me fuck you on the ceiling  
bound me in black tape  
spill my blood this can't be healthy  
and have at me for hours  
you make me feel alive  
more alive  
more alive  
more ALIVE than I've felt in years  
I can't think I cannot see  
eat me touch me fuck me  
but don't love me  
you can't love me  
because I love you  
and equality is an illusion  
fuck this life if I can't keep you  
and fuck love cuz love forgot  
about me  
it piles up and up  
and stacks and stacks  
divide into  
stacks and stacks of men that have left me  
add yourself to the list that emo  
emotionally affects me  
kills me consumes me I want all of you inside of me  
I'm just a woman I want a future  
I don't wanna start over  
fuck starting over my love  
my intoxicating love  
who makes my heart beat blindly  
and wildly completely

out of control this is  
cure me somebody cure me  
somebody stop this!  
please god STOP this-

## JENNY FOR CIRCUS

**Jenny, formally, describe your relationship with your father—**

I am drowning, fuck, no – wait. FUCK. I feel like – I, I have drowned in my feelings for him. I quit him, or like smoking I want, I'd like, to quit him. I'm so all over the place, I can't think - 'THINK!' - okay. Let me put it to you this way. He transferred an invisible disease to me through my mother and I sit here, with you, quietly hosting this parasite. My father he, well he, he burns, brighter than the sun and, that day, his face, laced with serenity said 'my, my.. it's a beautiful day to die.. isn't it?' This voice it, it lives with me. It cuts into me so deep, that I suddenly know no language when I hear it. I get lightheaded and, everything becomes blurry like in bad weather when you're driving. In my head, there is always bad weather, a constant static, an inability to see things clearly. Maybe it's my eyes cause they're his, same color. I wanna fucking scream someone give me a new lens, a new pair of eyes, take these away. Man (father is referred to as man, because he is the primary man, the very first man a little girl grows into and the one from which all destruction/succession stems) possesses the woman I would have become. He holds her in his hands and it's not that he wants to crush her, but like a flower, she is so fragile and his hands are too big and rough, unable to be gentle. He thickens the air I breathe I am the jester he is the King, and he is constantly, dismissing me. From birth his demons his sins have been fighting me, they fight me and I can't fight back, so I try with nothing no weapons nothing. My hands, fuck, my hands tied, bound, in spite of what he has done I am bound to him, maybe that's why I cut I try to sever the invisible tie between us make it go away, make it disappear decay divorce it from me but *nothing* is ever good enough. Not even my cutting abilities. With this disease in me, I spread like wildfire, monsters make monsters and so forth and I begin to travel through my world developing more monsters, spreading his infection with these tools he gave me – he bred me for this I believe in this I believe in this. I know man wants my love but that he cannot have, that he will never have, I am closed up shut down I feel this way when involved in relationships because everyone is him everywhere is him. I used to wear man's clothes his cologne drive his car watch his T.V., waiting. Waiting for him to come back I split him in two you see man was two people to me, I presented him to everyone in a *circuistry* sort of way: LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! BOYS AND GIRLS! We have two shows playing for you tonight: on the right, we have the ethereal charismatic fulfiller of dreams and love and to your left, you can catch the abusive incestuous alcoholic [please attend whichever applies to you most conveniently].

Thus in entertaining him, in acting as a mime, a fucking mime, to communicate to all of my closest/dearest friends, and family, I used the only money I had left, to buy tickets to his nightmare. That is exactly how I feel if I can pinpoint exactly when I started to feel this way I'm not exactly sure if I can. Only this holds true: I have turned myself inside out for his viewing pleasure, I have slept, outside of his door for years, I have trapped myself inside of my undersized 15-year-old body – stopped the hands of time stared at a clock with no arms waited for someone to fix me fell asleep by accident several times in front of his door, like a bum, like a hobo awaiting some kind of revelation to emerge from behind a dumpster. I have knocked, I have banged, I have scratched at his door to where my nails have bled, all in this waiting process, like a patient I wait in his waiting room. He appears to me as a doctor, I am waiting for him to come out and tell me if I will live or die, if the carcinoma that is him has traveled so far into my liver or lungs or brain, where I can no longer function – and he has stepped out in a white coat, the careless heartless man in the white coat, and said to me with his stupid clipboard and stupid glasses and stupid fucking pen sticking out of his shirt pocket, that I have  $x$  ( $x=0$ ) amount of years to survive, to live. So I walk around the walking dead, dead I am, falling off the edge into a downward spiral headfirst, feeling as though pain and suffering are embedded in my chest, overflowing from my lips eyes mouth gushing blood, blood love aren't they the same? I can no longer tell the difference.

**david smith**

**i am infatuated with the mob that rules**

i am infatuated with the mob that rules  
the streets of the city

i can't explain the force that  
propels my thoughts through concrete  
and into the bare parlors of  
brownstones and the  
lobbies on  
the upper east side

as I walk from the park to  
fifth avenue on a chilly day  
in march

what is it that raises so much  
vitality and awe that  
makes me want to remain here and  
become part of the architecture  
and the families  
and the aromas of the avenues

a column on the front of the library  
a tree in Bryant park  
a vendor on a street corner  
or yellow taxi cab struggling onward  
in rush hour traffic

and when I turn around and walk back  
to my hotel at five o'clock  
i am swimming upstream  
because the spawning has started  
and the press of the current and  
multitude of dark salmon make it nearly impossible

to make my way

but I bounce off of them  
and cut and weave like richard brautigan  
through the chicago bears

like a doughboy climbing out of one trench  
to crawl on his belly to the next one  
moving ever closer  
to a destruction

look around  
there's nothing there  
but the faces of instinct and longing  
and i think should i become the  
cold gray cold concrete  
of the bank of  
or a kandinsky on the wall of  
the museum of modern art

**sitting in eileen's salon**

i'm sitting in eileen's salon  
with five people who think  
they are poets  
and one of them  
says  
truth is  
a titanium kite  
a jewel encrusted frankfurter  
a lobster the size of a labrador strapped to telephone pole  
quantum jellybeans (hey that's not poetic)  
what about you  
eileen asks me  
fuck



**untitled**

there

is

no

truth

## Daniel Romo

### Love Song for Matthew McConaughey

*"I have no problem with commitment. In fact, I love having someone in my life."*  
-Matthew McConaughey

I wouldn't call it a *man crush*.

Because I'm not too ashamed to declare—  
You are more than mere man, and I'm not some  
Self-conscious sophomore gushing  
At the prospect of a temporary squeeze,  
A Friday night post football game flashback  
Hidden within your laugh lines.

And every time you smile it's as if you're  
Paying homage to the sun  
For bestowing you that bronzed, taut torso,  
Because his beams were partial to a Texan twang  
That even then, rang Alamo bell towers  
Upon your lovely birth.

You're a real-life version of the  
Shirtless, charismatic characters you play  
Christening you worthy of Oscars,  
And paparazzi flash, looking to profit off pictures  
Of you jogging briskly down Doheny Drive.

But I wouldn't call it a *man crush*.

Because I'm not gay, and this is more of an admiration,  
A "McCon-aholic" invitation if you will  
For all who wish to thank you for filming  
Love scenes opposite slinky starlets  
Kissing them hard as if you're doing it for us,  
For every man in the theatre who doesn't look as good  
As you undressed,  
As if your lips are our lips,  
And your pecs are our pecs.

I *Wikipedia'd* you last night Matthew David McConaughey  
Born November 4, 1969 in Uvalde, Texas to Mary and James...  
McConaughey,  
And discovered your personal motto  
Is *Just Keep Livin'*, and I felt intrusive, guilty, selfish,  
Because that's what we do through you.

You are a martyr Mathew McConaughey.  
A Bud Lite drinkin', talkin' box scores man's man,  
A perfectly pleasin', two-steppin' lady's man,  
A candlelit star whose splendorous vapors  
Remain firmly rooted in real life,  
Embodying all that is beautiful,  
In this Hollywood world.

## Question

At the meeting conducted by the assistant principals,  
They told us how we are losing our children.  
That we need to plan lessons with more rigor and relevance.  
That our students are playing catch-up to India.

The day before in my Creative Writing class, Arthur Platt,  
Who sat in the assistant principals' offices many times,  
Asked anyone who'd listen—

“Did you know that we lose 40 to 100 strands of hair a day?  
And that the Neanderthal's brain was bigger than ours?  
And that India has more sex than any country in the world?”

To which Paul Sizemore replied, “Book me a flight to India *homie*.”

They put bite-size chocolates on the tables to appease us.  
And for some it seems to suffice; but not me,  
Showing us graphs on degrees of retention.

“We need to use our instruction minutes wisely.  
Students can't learn if they're not actively engaged.  
They'll never fulfill our expectations if we can't  
Stimulate them enough to pay attention.  
As educators, it's our job to...”

I just stared at the spinning ceiling fans  
Imagining I was in Calcutta,  
A transcendental passenger reflecting in a rickshaw  
Letting someone else earning meager pay lead *me* around,  
So I can raise my hand and quizzically ask,

*“What are we supposed to do again?”*

## Living

I'm at the Y trying to finish that last pull-up  
Ignoring my leaden torso the weight of too many burdens,  
As if fulfilling the fullness of the number 10  
Will actually make me a fitter and better person,  
When *Bon Jovi* filters through the cost efficient speakers  
Over the classic rock station.

It's as if Jon and his big-haired namesakes  
Wrote that song specifically for this moment  
With me in mind.

*"Whooooaaahhhh, we're halfway there. Whooaahh-oh,  
Liiiiiiiving on a praa-ayer.  
Take my hand and we'll make it I swear."*

He swears we'll make it.  
And I believe him.

I believe that my thirty-something years on this planet  
Has taught me never to underestimate the power of goodwill,  
And the inspiration of an 80's power ballad.  
I believe that despite man's best efforts to thwart himself,  
In the end he gets what he deserves.

Yet I wonder why we intrinsically rely upon music  
To get us through difficult times in our lives.  
I wonder if musicians listen to their own songs  
While *they're* working out.  
And I wonder when *Bon Jovi* became classic rock.

My grip loosens. Fingertips numb. Because failing and feelings  
Have always been one in the same for me.

But my body pushes on in spite of itself,  
Pulling my grinding jaw over the metal bar  
Society has set for thirty-somethings like me,  
Where childhood mantras in the form of pop music play  
Still ringing true, and middle age is just a faded dream away.

*“We’ve got to hold on to what we’ve got,  
It doesn’t make a difference if we make it or not.”*

But this is where he is wrong. It does make a difference.  
*Making it*, makes all the difference  
In the world Jon.

## Homeroom

The wide receiver who plays for New York,  
Whose team actually plays in New Jersey,  
Accidentally shot himself at 1 a.m.  
In the nightclub.

You know,  
The one who made that catch as if  
Every muscle and nerve in his taut body  
Had been preparing for that Superbowl moment  
Ever since he left the inner city.

You know,  
The one with the cool nickname  
That bestows him an All-Pro cog  
In an I-formation constellation.

Why can't teachers be christened slick monikers?  
We sweat too.  
Like *Lightnin'* or *Bolt*.  
I'd want to be called... *Rainmaker*.

"*Rainmaker*. Are we gonna' write an essay today,  
Because I hate essays."

"*Rainmaker*. My mom wants to have a parent conference with you,  
Because she wants to know why you're failing me."

"*Rainmaker*... You're my favorite teacher."

The judge gave him a minimum of twenty months  
For shooting himself in the thigh,  
While Buckner got twenty years  
For shooting himself in the foot,  
Failing to get down far enough on the  
Slow roller to first.

"*Rainmaker*. Who's *Buckner*?"

## Negative

The results of the paternity test  
On the morning talk show that only focuses  
On baby momma' drama  
And transgender makeovers  
Were obvious when the charismatic host announced,  
*"You are NOT the father!"*  
Turns out, neither was his brother.

And the young unwed mother  
Who upon first glance  
Looked like a resident of Bedford Falls,  
But whose deliberate urban accent claimed  
Westside Bedford Sty  
Cried as if every DNA test thereafter  
Would be a rerun reminding her  
Of reoccurring failure,  
And bad decisions made.

*"You do NOT have the job!"*  
*"You can NOT buy the car!"*  
*"He is NOT the father either!"*

Sometimes it's necessary  
To change the channel,  
Make the decision  
To get off your ass  
And search for the remote,  
Rather than subject yourself to  
Infinite daytime drabble  
And what you are not.

Because who wants a daily dose of that shit?  
Not me.



## David Patterson

### The Sniper and The Linebacker

A sniper is out there. I know this—and he waits patiently. He cleans his weapon. He adjusts his sights. He is patiently waiting . . . waiting patiently . . . patiently . . . patient.

I can only make him out vaguely. His features are indistinct, but there are things I do know: It is definitely a man and he wears a tight black knit cap and a long dark green shirt with the sleeves rolled up. He is approximately in his mid 30's—maybe older. Experienced. He has killed before. He is accurate and takes pride in his marksmanship. When the command comes, his rifle is lifted, held steady and aimed straight for the soft meat of my heart.

Somewhere in the near distance, well within firing range, he waits. Maybe he is on a rooftop. Maybe he is in the upper window of a building, like Oswald might have been. Or maybe he is nestled tightly in a tree with his back against a firm branch and his shot clear of foliage. But wherever he is—he is standing with his feet firmly beneath him. Balanced. Steady . . . waiting.

I feel I'm the only one on his hit list—his only assignment. But I could be wrong. We have never met but I think he knows me, something of me, at least. He knows my name, that much I do know, but I don't know his. He is nameless.

I am no gun expert so I know little about his weapon. I know this though; it is a high-powered rifle with a scope attached on top. It is professional piece, which was carefully put together. All the parts fit (probably measured in metric increments). The scope is top of the line. It rests easily against his eye. The crosshairs are centered on me...on my heart—the spot of instant death. The butt of the rifle is firmly placed in the meat of his shoulder. His eye is pure focus— a sphere of unblinking, frozen glass. He is the constant reminder to feel no more, to think no more, to the end of mistakes, to the end of all bad designs. As I said, he knows me. He's been watching me for years.

When I was younger, much, much younger than now—like five or so, I didn't need a sniper. If I was about to be overtaken by pursuers (be it monsters, martians or just plain scary people) all I had to do was blink my eyes and I would immediately be transported into another dream. It worked every time. It was like changing channels on the TV. It did wonders in the dream world but had little to none effect in my waking life. So I developed another weapon against the harsh landscape of reality: daydreaming. My first drug.

Even back then, I found life a bit overwhelming. Too much to feel. Too much to sort out. So in my mind I traveled a lot. My parents found out that you usually had to call my name two or three times before I would respond. Maybe I had ADD (or I was just a typical kid with the usual flights of fancy). I am an escapist, no doubt, and I always have been, which in time, led to drinking and drugs and all other inappropriate coping skills but I quit all that years ago and here I am with a sniper in the trees, watching my every move.

When did the sniper show up? I can't really say. But he's been hanging out for at least 10 years now. I thought maybe the sniper was my father—just waiting for me to make a mistake. We were criticized for small irrelevant tasks growing up. My father would lose his cool if I turned the wrench the wrong way (I still get nervous when someone stands over my shoulder watching me do something mechanical) or not knowing the capital of South Carolina or spending too much time listening to AC/DC or Pink Floyd or The Doors and not watching the news where we really could learn

something. And now that I watch the news, I've learned that there sure are a lot of people dying unnecessarily in the world. But the sniper couldn't be my father. You know why? He's legally blind. He has been since he was 27.

He too was once a marksman. He was in the Navy. He has told us the stories of those seven years over and over again. I think he really wanted all of us to follow in his footsteps and join the service. My older brother became a Marine. He ended his four year stint with the same rank he went in with. Too much drinking. Too much fighting. My younger brother went into the Navy to pursue the same field my father was in before he was forced to resign because of his eyes: Nuclear engineering. Everyone was proud of him until the night he came home from a local bar and wrapped his car around a tree. He came out with only scratches but the Navy frowns upon its elite getting their name in the police blotter in the local newspaper. He was also forced to resign.

But my father shot a rifle. He has the medal to prove it. He grew up hunting in the woods of southern Ohio and knew his way around a gun. So it was in the Navy where he found his path. But at the age of 27, while shooting dice in the back of a pick up truck, he found he had trouble seeing the numbers. The next day he went to the clinic and a few weeks later he was informed that he had a rare bacterial infection in his eyes. Over the period of a few months, he lost 80% of his vision and lost his driver license. And the real blow: involuntarily retired from the Navy—his bread and butter, so to speak. He had two kids and a wife to support. My Mom offered to donate one of her eyes but of course my father refused.

We grew up living off the assistance of the Navy and my Mom's job at the nursing home. My Dad never really worked again. He helped out a few days in a friend's lumber yard but if the Navy knew he worked, we would have been cut off from all benefits. So he stayed at home. He mopped the kitchen floor and read the paper cover to cover. He is now 67. He is most likely sitting at the local VFW sipping on a whiskey and telling his nearest stool mate about some story he read in the paper today.

One more thing about my father: he owns a handgun. I've seen it. A stocky looking piece in green metal. He has the permit for it. It used to be in the drawer in the nightstand near his bed. I guess he wanted to be prepared if we were ever attacked in the middle of the night. I never held it. I was too scared of it. But I often thought, in those last years I spent living with my parents, of using the gun. In those late hangover mornings, as I recapped the previous nights escapades, I would think how quickly it all could be over if I just got out of bed and got the gun and pushed the barrel into my temple and pull the trigger. But I could never do that to my family—even though they pissed me off sometimes.

There was this one dream I used to have that I knew was my father. I was in a bowling alley with many open lanes. The place was empty and yet it was noisy. It was at night and I was the only one bowling. There was a spotlight on me as I took the ball and approached the lane. But my lane became slanted and I was confused on how to roll the ball. I hesitated. A booming voice came over the loudspeaker; reprimanding me, shaming me, paralyzing me in my indecisiveness. It went on and on like the rumble of a heavy thunderstorm. There was nowhere for me to hide. It always ended in the same strange manner. A group of construction workers in yellow helmets were now getting off work, like in those old “Miller Time” commercials, and they would put their arms around my shoulders as if to say—“It’s all right kid.”

Funny thing: I was quite the little athlete growing up. I could play all sports well, except for two—roller skating and bowling. The first time I bowled I shot a 9! No lie. I was so bent on doing it right that I threw gutter ball after gutter ball.

Could the sniper be my mother? Dressed up to hide her identity? She wouldn't know what to do with a gun if someone showed her. My mom doesn't kill. But...but...she wounds. And then she fixes up wounds and pretends they are not there. She is a good nurse. No pain for her children. It's not allowed. Our medicine cabinet is full of band-aids, gauze, ointments and pills. All ails are quickly administered to. No blood. No scrapes left open to heal in the wind. Everything covered and wrapped and cooled with oozing gels. And bed rest and warm broth and comforting cups of Ginger Ale. The same ginger ale, that I would mix with whiskey and drink, years later, when I watched TV with the family.

Maybe the sniper is just society itself. I always feel behind, confused. I am 38 and still waiting tables and still trying to figure out what I should do when I grow up. However, I now have a six-month old son and a wife to support. I feel like I'm running out of valuable time. I feel like the sniper is saying, "See, I told you so! I knew you wouldn't pull it off. Let's just take you out now. Why postpone the inevitable?" But the sniper wouldn't use words like "postpone" and "inevitable". As a matter of fact, I don't think he has an opinion of my life in one-way or the other. He is only an order taker, like a good soldier has to be. And it is I who gives the orders.

Every time it goes bad (or I feel it is about to go bad) or whenever I do anything foolish, he is there. Like when I used to blow a day's pay on 15 minutes at the Massage parlor. Or when I would say something stupid to a girl or worse—when I would say nothing at all. Or when I think how poorly I did in school—not because I was incapable but because I didn't try. I imagine him pulling the trigger. Professionally. Steadily. There is no noise. There is no smoke. Only the effect of the bullet as it penetrates through to my heart and all noise stops. Darkness. A soft warm bath of nothingness.

I have never been shot with a bullet. We had BB guns growing up and I was once shot in the ass by a not-so close friend of my brother. It felt like the sting of 20 bees. Tears came to my eyes but all I did was hop around and swear. I should have shot back but I didn't. I have killed with the BB gun. I watched as small chickadees fell from snowy pine trees in my backyard with the trickle of blood at their breast. I fell squirrels from high branches and I've killed hundreds of frogs out by the reservoir where we used to fish and swim. I once imagined a giant frog (the size of a rhinoceros), waiting in the trail for me. I ran all the way home. If there is a God who reigns over all beasts, I'll have much explaining to do. (I did, however, make atonement. When I was in my early 30's and visiting my family, I went out to the reservoir and knelt in the mud and made an open apology to all frogs and asked for their forgiveness.)

But my biggest secret is this: I killed a possum with my Dad's 22 caliber rifle. For some strange reason, the gun was in the hall closet. He usually put the guns behind lock and key. My younger brother was into hunting then and maybe it was

for his use. Nevertheless, I knew it was there. So one fine day as I'm watching TV in the living room I see something move outside by the garbage cans. I go to the sliding glass door and look out and see a possum all white breasted beneath and his whip-coiled tail. It was the first time I ever saw a possum and my first instinct was to grab the gun. My heart beat as if I had just done a line of speed. My father was at home but he didn't know I had the gun. So I aimed the 22 at the possum. He was in my sights, rooting around by the trash and doing what possums do. I only wanted to touch the trigger, to pretend to shoot, but the gun went off and I saw the possum stagger back and stumble off into the woods. I panicked. I immediately put the gun back and went to see if my father heard the shot but he was still napping on the upstairs couch. I ran outside. A puddle of blood lay near the garbage cans. I followed the trail of blood back through the grove behind our storage shed. A bunch of wooden pallets leaned against the back wall. I pulled a few off and there he was: hissing at me but his lower jaw was shredded flesh. His eyes were bubbled out and he backed up with his teeth ready to gnash. I put the pallets back. Leave him alone, I thought, I've done enough. But when I got back inside I thought of his suffering. He wouldn't be able to eat. He would die a slow bleeding death. I went and got the gun again. I went behind the shed and pulled the pallets back and he hissed at me again. I put the gun close and killed him with two shots. I ran back and put the gun away, checked on Dad and came out with a garbage bag. I slid him into the trash bag with a stick and put the bag in the garbage can. The next day at the bus stop a friend said, " Hey did you see the neighborhood pet yet?" And I knew what he would say so I quickly purged my soul of my doings. We had a good laugh. The neighborhood pet was now disposed of in the garbage cans that sat by the road as we waited for the bus. But it was nervous laughter because I think we both felt sick inside. I know I did. And yet today, as a somewhat adult, I cannot even kill a spider who crawls unexpectedly into my bathtub. I open the window and set him free.

But I feel like I know what a bullet will feel like. The tearing of the skin, the hot burn, the escape of blood. I feel like it is the way I will die. Or maybe it is the way I have died. I always have such strong reactions to the Vietnam mess. Was I

there? Or was I killed in the Civil War, where I left a grieving family behind? I really believe that at one time I laid on a battlefield, mortally wounded and mad at God. I died with the taste of dirt in my mouth.

But my future death—one bullet—shot from afar. It won't be close range where I see a face and hear the crack of the gun and a big mess is made. No...just one clean, accurate bullet straight in the chest and a trickle of blood like the dead chickadees.

When difficulties arise the sniper is always there. And there is comfort in that. If it all goes horribly wrong he will remove me instantly and the situation will rectify itself, or not, but why will I care?

There were days when he was constantly there. I always felt his presence. I could always count on him. But something has changed as of late. It hit me last night when I woke up on the couch at 3:00 am. My wife and son slept in the bed in the other room. I was hot. I couldn't get the blanket right. The pillow wouldn't lay flat. I got up and opened the door and stood there in my boxers feeling the fog and the night breeze. There were only a few cars going by now and then. The sprinkler was still on from the apartment next to us. A cat walked confidently along the footpath in the park across the street. Jets flew in and out of LAX.

I shut the door and got back on the couch and tried to clear my head of those wakeful thoughts. My wife was not mad at me. My son was fast asleep. Money was in the bank. I hadn't done anything foolish in awhile. But then, that incessant thought of what I was supposed to do with my life came awake. The sniper appeared. But he was there only to deliver a message. He felt neglected, I felt him trying to say. There was someone now to replace him and I realized it's been going on for a while now. The sniper was being shoved into the background, by The Linebacker.

But the linebacker is myself. And I am bigger in the vision, fully-padded, with taped hands. The play is always the same. The running back on the opposing team gets the handoff and is about to explode through the open hole and make a charge into the secondary when I appear. It is a solid clean hit. I lift him off the ground and dump him in his own backfield. He

groans. I know there will be cheers. I know my teammates will congratulate me. But it never gets that far. There is only the clean hit.

Am I coming to “tackle my problems”? Is that the message? I don’t know. I never looked at it until now. But I’ll tell you this: As I put these words to paper the sniper is only a mist, an outline, a vapor. I feel him growing lighter and lighter like a dying leaf on the branch that will fall to the ground, joining the pile to be raked away and bagged and set out by the edge of the road and hauled away.



**Dario Mohr**

**Fizzled Out:**

So fast I'm moving  
Out of control I'm losing  
My way of usually being  
Plunged into a realm so revealing  
To myself and the world  
Tumbling I am hurtled  
Till this shock of the new  
Becomes another regular truth  
And I am left without the rush  
From which I was thrust  
Once again above it all  
Through boredom I fall  
Dumbfounded but wiser than before  
I now have nothing to live for  
Do I seek out more?  
Or turn to the morgue



Roots: Ink

## **Megalomaniac:**

Your sadistic void to confusion  
Has lead me to delusion  
Hurtling towards the Neverender  
Further my thoughts go through the blender  
Memories being shredded  
Though my life hasn't ended  
How do I pick up from this dismemberment  
How do I stand and circumvent  
When my life once a hinderance  
Will never be of such relevance  
A psychoactive trip I'm not over  
Delusion experienced completely sober  
And now I will forget your eyes  
And your prayers of my demise  
For a world ruled by one  
Will corrupt over everyone  
And crash to nothingness  
And we will never be missed





Neurotic Angst: Acrylic

## **Discord:**

A dissonant sound  
So beautiful when allowed  
A disjointed melody  
In pattern forms harmony  
Until one seeks its unquenching fulfilment  
An inner striving spawned by force so malevolent  
Jarred by the horrid strike of the note  
sending shivers to your toes  
Or the confusing sound of a subtle midtone  
Leaving a pensive lump in your throat  
Or the soberingly even off key tone  
Julting the heart by rope  
Thrusting it out of your body  
Leaving behind the empty cavity  
Of an auditory desire  
From which you once admired

## **I am the Malevolent One:**

Had fallen in the past  
Hit bottom once then bounced back  
With little momentum I drop from a shorter distance  
And hit bottom with no resistance  
Smashed limbs dripping south  
Blood curdling in my mouth  
Frothing like a rabid dog eating its own tongue  
I think I may finally be done  
Letting hate lead me astray  
I'm more comfortable that way  
The world is getting fuzzier  
My vision getting darker  
Colors are fading to black  
Blinded and cannot go back  
My intestines rupturing  
My heart palpitating  
Regretful of the life I've left  
Slowly dying this lonely death  
Just my personhood  
And the omniscient observer  
Watching my eyes roll backward  
Tormenting me with malevolent gaze  
Fueling on my rage  
With stabbing reality  
As I try and preserve the fantasy  
It continues to tell me  
"Its not over, don't let suffering proceed"  
Words once reassuring  
Until I slacked on learning  
Now just a reminder of disappointment  
I don't want this anymore  
Fuck it, I'm ready!



Vision: Acrylic

## **I am the Benevolent One:**

Owned like a pet  
Leaders and drones keep me on a leash  
Mindcontrolled by whom I never met  
Masterminds who won't teach

They want to keep me unsaine  
Unable to be in the right mental frame

Been brainwashed for so long  
Seeing short glimmers of whats beyond  
Throughout my journey neglected  
But is slowly being intercepted

By the god of my mind  
The brilliant nature has come to be realized  
Through matterial form.  
You are not a benevolent lord.  
You act out of shear randomness.  
Elaborating on yourself with irrelevance  
You are inhumanly experiencing your all  
Whatching yourself rise and fall  
You do not love or hate  
You are love and hate

Being God I see just as you  
Only I have a personality  
And want to transition to greater new  
As opposed to fluctuating with irrationality

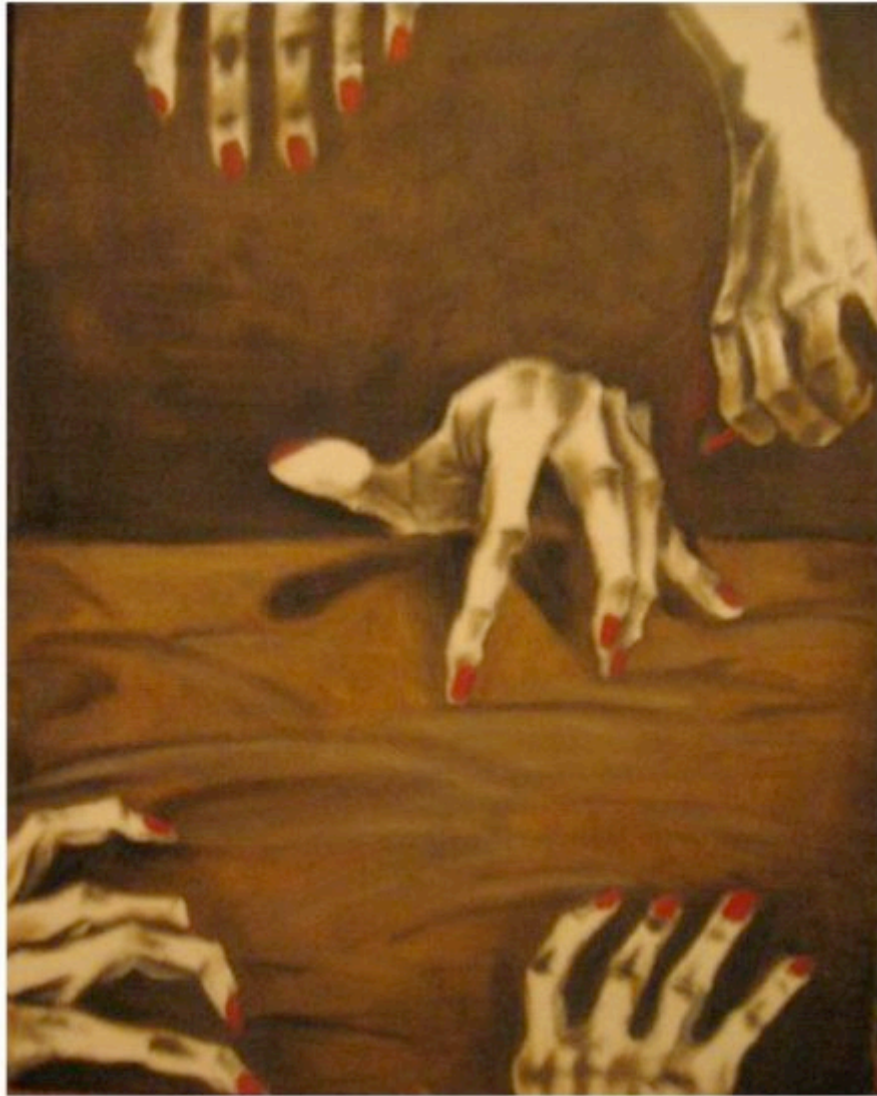
Like a rebellious teenager to his father  
I have been molded by you  
Lost confidence in you yet bothered  
So out of spite I seek a progressive truth

And it is true that I am you  
But I will not be ruined  
By the drones of evil truth  
Who saturate love and feed us with a spoon



Because collected consciousness is lost  
To the robots of flesh with personhood undone  
I won't sit and watch  
I will be the greater one

The compassionate one  
The benevolent one



**Arachnid Hands: Oils**

**David Koehn**

**THE CORMORANT**

The brief shadows of five cormorants  
Hasten across a small island before the V  
    Of each disappears  
In the glare on the lake's surface.

One cormorant descends toward the water--  
Angling as the shadows of fish angle,  
    As reflected clouds  
Drift over the bottom. The cormorant flits

Into water, a dark spear. A black angel  
    In Lethe, blades scythe  
The water. With such yellow eyes desire  
Appears where above mirrors the below.

Both wings snip through the water.  
    Then, like Arp's bird,  
Smooth its body into an onyx curve.  
A school of brim scatter like cattail seed

Leaving trails of a palimpsest  
    Of light in the absence  
Of their flight. The hooked bill snapped shut,  
The neck snaked up to the head, a tail flaps.

An oval school of brim, out of proportion  
To our two shadows on the lake  
Return. A cormorant alights on a mangrove.  
In the peaking sun, shade folds its dark wings.

## THE TOLL

Radio 94.3 plays The Police then interspersed  
94.3 plays sound bites from *Svengali*.

All the while, 10,000 feet above the mountains  
My children return to their mother, earlier

A tall writer read a short story about the Himalayas,  
As a hummingbird nectared the lilac at the podium...

As a hummingbird nectared the lilac at the podium...  
The radio's pentimento ends with my car's

Approach to the toll booth, where there is moon,  
Then fog, then fog under moon. No coin for the toll.

Elsewhere, always, elsewhere, a girl picks up  
The phone, I write "The phone" and my phone rings.

It is work. She leaves a message, says, "Hi! We're here."  
Some Chiclets piled on top of coins in the ashtray.

The cityscape glitters at the far end of the bridge.  
Yeti, DJ, hummingbird, (It is catching up to me

Now...from the same distance, the train sounds  
Louder when approaching than when it has passed.)

Why can't I pay what I owe? The toll man says,  
"Don't worry; I have all the time in the world.  
Don't worry; I have all the time in the world."

## MS. YEN'S MUSIC STUDIO SUMMER RECITAL

In a bevy of little Pans' mouths, a display of recorders.  
Over their kneel-down marimbas, each mallet hovers,

Hammers the size of dumplings. I have known these songs:  
The Sea Shanty's oblong wobblings; a Sentimental Waltz gone

Suddenly drunken; a William Tell Overture drowned  
By a student's unrhythm. In the expansive round

Of mothers and fathers--braced by a not-quite-encouraging Ms. Yen,  
Smiling and nodding--I succumb to the embarrassed silence

Nursed by ill-applied devotion, and stories of Hesiod  
Visiting his personal muses on Helicon. The small god

Accepting, at the end of his drama, all the false applause  
As he believes all the mistimed measures, the pauses

Not endured patiently, the other children's clumsinesses  
Were improvements to the ledger the collapsing universe

Intended. The program calls for Ms. Yen to sing Think of Me,  
Her vaporous voice, her thick accent, a special treat.

Now, an unmistakable child in lederhosen, a style  
Only a mother could love, dangles his toes over the pedals.

What a small figure the memory of ourselves strikes. The black  
Bench conveying up the reluctant boy aside a black

Wave that is the grand piano. For the wind, the summer  
Hints at the skylight's angles. Ms. Yen dims the dimmer.

A row ahead two girls fire their fingers in unison  
Playing rock, paper, scissors: fist, palm, gun.

## DRIFT

A swarm of blue dragonflies  
Bend river over the hemimetabolous iridescence  
Of their eyes. I point out the oily-cloud of the burble  
To my daughter who wants to know “Did you bring  
Your cell phone?” Water clear enough  
To point out the river’s trout, I think of the spider  
Found in the washcloth this morning;  
How Anna’s hummingbird at dawn hovered in the drainage.

Cliff sides collapse around us like lost ruins—  
Granite’s jointing into slabs and columns.  
She departs for the other side of the world,  
Soon. She will promise to call. I recall  
What she told me, You are your ringtone,  
So choose carefully. Mayflies, the latest hatch  
Squirrel around a partially submerged torso  
Of a fallen Willow’s dotterel, roots  
The tangled bust of some ancient river god  
Waiting to snag the unwary.

On rivers like these, I think of a lost friend,  
How he would study the 50 varieties of caddisfly  
So he might tie himself, in his own way, to the river.  
I think of his newborn daughter, “but a grub.”  
What Greek tragedy lurks in the currents?  
Molting crayfish gaze up at us, reverent  
In widespread awe of their new skins, claws raised  
In praise of their Olympians; my daughter, a reverie  
Of Cybele, drifting over her subjects.

At the oxbow, we dismount. Atop a thicket  
Of Aspen the yellow hood of a Western Tanager flashes  
Amidst the green hearts of the cottonwood.  
Three ducklings skitter towards cover, bobble.

## SOME LINES TO A JAZZ SINGER

I arrive to disappointment:  
No thin hips, no sculpted thigh,  
No button nose,  
You, they call pretty?  
But that voice!  
Inflorescence, like pinnate satin?  
Oh good god, anything but that.  
Anything but more god damn poetry.  
Give me Yarrow—the weed  
In the empty lot,  
Yarrow, the main ingredient  
In love potions, Momma's tea.  
Yarrow—placed under pillow  
Says a proverb, reveals  
Your true love in dreams.  
The plant carried by Achilles into battle  
To stop the bleeding of his wounds.  
Your hips sway your lips.  
That note you hold, holds me, stuck  
In its well like the lovers  
Caught in their coital gruit.  
I want to tell you  
“My wife, she won't mind.”  
It might be the truth  
But I don't quite believe me either.  
I think that song is meant for me.  
Your voice like a salve for bruises.  
Tonic for this chest wound. Aromatic  
For my asthma. Prescription for this itch.  
Why have you brought me here?  
Oh, you are a bad man's play thing.  
Yarrow, flower of divination,  
I-ching thing, Chiron's gift,  
After the show, I puff myself up.  
If I had a cigar and wide-brimmed hat  
I'd be the half-beast, half-man  
My wife needed me to be.



## Daniel Godston

### Know Now

*...those militants Lakotas  
made front page news  
by kicking America's head.  
—from E. Donald Two-Rivers' "Same Ole, Same Ole"*

Know now, know now, know now, nah ni.  
Potable norms,  
portable nouns, what's the tone, Potawatomi.  
Mi my many  
mow meow. Irritated marmot instigates malamutes

irrigating Illinois. Names nouns know now Washtenaw.  
Seesaw chicory  
Chicago Chicasaw, whippoorwill Wisconsin williwaw.  
Ohio names  
Michigan now rifting iterated Tories, turncoats, crumbling

carpetbagger territory. Naming names, placing places, placing  
names, naming places.  
Remnant names regarding vestiges, holding places, placing  
holds. Owe  
ow, Ohio Iowa, I owe you owe we owe Idaho.

## Scent to You

*started with a prompt from Lisa Hemminger*

If you could see a memory you could lift moonbeams  
above dreamscapes. If you could hear a barnacle breathe  
you could footnote a buttonhole. If you could feel the high  
note you could hear what your nostrils could see

with their inverted eyes. If you could taste a sunset you  
could plan a lunar tide. If you could smell a paradigm  
you could impeach petunias. If you could hear shadows lengthen  
you could see stars' bones bleach in the Egg Nebula.

It's no wonder there's a cabinet in the lunchmeat. Of course  
the concourse is crinoline. Why wouldn't we tattoo tatami mats  
with knuckleballs? It's no wonder typewriters are blocking  
the door. Of course the linoleum's lined up lanyards.

Why wouldn't we leave the platform for Fort Lauderdale?  
It's no wonder the drizzle's dazzled doorbells.  
Of course the driveway's batterfried with butterballs.  
Why wouldn't we number doorknobs

with subliminal accounting ledgers? It's no wonder  
the beachnut bleacher's featured. Of course butterflies  
flutter like podium speakers. Why wouldn't we  
jewel encrust scallops with ringtones?

If you could smell regret ahead of time would you turn back the clock?  
If you could feel a cell dividing, would the zygote feel  
like a flower bud fattening? If you could taste the highway  
ribbon unspool across the prairie would you wish the moon's stillness

could pull the twilight through like a hole punched  
in the night sky? If you could see the ocean's aroma, the wave's skirts  
could gather their lacy salt. If you could hear shadows shorten  
would you want to polish the sunrise's boca naranja?

## **Tuba**

They fell into a tuba-sized distance, and the tuba was full of beeswax,  
melted into a soup  
of sea storms stirred with wooden ladles held by mandrills  
certified by the city's  
best culinary schools. The distance ran fast around the track,

which was made of recycled sneaker  
soles. Halibuts chased bees chased soles chased sloths till they became a tangle  
on the high jump mattress,  
and a lone tuba player played a lamentation song in the bleachers  
as the sun went down.

## **Do\_It-Yourself {Ins[ect]ion}**

Superhouse Proboscis Does Yoga for Life  
Frogs and Amazon Cockroaches Stencil Encyclopedias  
Katydid Build Yourself an Adobe Birdhouse  
Practically Medicine Jigsaw Thorax  
The Complete Furniture of Exoskeletal Stamp Anatomy  
Praying Mantis Massage Table  
Mites Make Veneer Association Makes Soup  
How Fire Ants Fix Buttery Biscuit Joiners  
Romantic Centipedes Polish Silver Tables  
Dung Beetle Paints Glass with Mandible Wiring

## Dennis Etzel Jr.

1. The first-grade teacher says the child should be on Ritalin.
2. The mother and father refuse.
3. Slide the red paper aside.
4. When in trouble, open.
5. Your notebook and dictionary. *Copy.*
6. Include the phonics, written, not heard.
7. Imagine a robin perched on a tree limb.
8. In the rain, orange heart beating.
9. The tree limb as a guarding hand.
10. Make the sun orange.
11. Make trees.
12. Make robin hearts beat the size of raindrops.

13. The mother says:
14. *Let's look to see what is on this page to color shades of orange.*
15. *We should explore the possibilities.*
16. *Behind what we think things are, what colors they could be.*
17. The stars in detention shine.
18. Where no one sees them.
19. The nightlight a constellation.
20. Pay attention.
21. To the purples in the darkness.
22. Wait for Orion's sword to fall.
23. To cut the thread.
24. Do not talk in class.
25. No movement of the mouth.
26. No recess.
27. Trap a frog in a jar as an experiment.
28. An award for coloring the correct colors of animals.
29. Color a page of grey over green.
30. Use the sunlight coming through the classroom window.

31. Reflect its light in your wristwatch glass.
32. Make the ball of light dance on the wall like a star, above.
33. Make shining rescues.

in grade from page  
the words board as  
fifth went to strict

in for in say  
time my class though  
out mouth you scream

say tongue you your  
speak on just own  
with teeth want voice

no makes true to  
sound teeth white plaque  
from not sticks us



I theory the bed  
example silence shaking covers  
trauma through night thick

## Constance Stadler

### Rummaging in the Attic

That last morning  
It was time.

On the brink of letting go  
...abyss? bliss?  
I didn't know.  
and having never  
not known  
“release” was a precipice  
and “freedom,” at best,  
a Damoclean device.

I was off to find my foundling.  
What did I need, what should I bring  
ere  
    I dare to go?

I numbly ascended the serpentine  
                                    balustrade  
to the furrows and vales  
of 100 trillion synapses,  
coated with the dustmites  
of corroded beliefs, hoary wantings,  
trilobite hope.

The porcelain doll  
lay shattered, still, in egg shell  
innocence.  
The bulge of trunk, a stalwart belch  
~ shred crinoline, blood satin.

The ancestors and spirits  
re-fixed their gaze  
through oval, opalescent frames.  
That vomituous cardboard box.  
Susan Polis Schutz profanations  
begging validation, unequivocal adoration.  
Expel papers, aseptic records, births/deaths,  
winsome widow's weeds, scribbles from murdered  
third world child.  
Coffin rose triad, delicately bagged  
blossoms "family," yet once again,  
as something wholly not mine.

The gilded mirror  
Dissected my aspect in hair thin beam  
and Amphiarus'  
shadow.

Through gutted pane,  
same efflorescence of color and  
fertility,

which  
some days soothed  
and some days slayed.

They were all there.

Leather bound,  
cerated paged,  
vellum yellow.

My wandering white flights,  
of comfort and inconsolability.  
Coffee spoon by coffee spoon  
I stood on Machu Picchu  
and fetal-curved on saline shore  
of cursed bestial kingdoms.

Weighted to bottom  
it was finally clear that whether

resurrection  
rehabilitation  
reinterment

There was nothing worth the taking,  
and so I took it,  
All.

## Upon a Reading of the First Stanza of Plath's "Mirror"

Mercury

I am.

Silver ooze

That spumes

Effulgent suffocation.

Warmed, I rise

Chilled, I kill

Fleet winged goddess

Miasmatic muse

Immune to grasp

Efflorescent irresistible  
Toxin.

Sterling,

Seething            Staining  
                          Shrieking.

Abasing flume.

Puddled

Abomination.

\* \* \*

In the epiphany of moon spun.  
My nacreous beauty shames stars  
Palette of pink- cream flesh.

*Noli me tangere*

My presuppositions amuse lesser gods  
Pastel winged soul pincers

Why else am I so lovely tonight?

Flailing in the wash of dripping breast  
And vaginal coursings  
Purgation seems so sweet.  
One touch and all are punished  
Reeling me back to  
comfortable ugly,  
on chilled, crisp bathroom tile  
riddled by the pockings of fluorescent truth.

Naked.

Cleanse me to reveal, what no one could bare.

*Sanctus*

*Sanctus*

*Sanctorum.*

## The gift of 'The Gift'

The black attic grew blacker,  
twisting in the gyre of each  
wordless moment.

The view of cathedral tops,  
cloaked in industrial ashes,  
brewed no thoughts of lyrical,  
acrimonious commentary.

The solitary wren on the ledge  
was neither a companion of  
stunted blank nor poseur  
of newborn affliction.

The chromatic eloquence of  
young October, its glorious burlesque:  
goldenrod, cardamom, burnt umber,  
deaths, passed through my whitewashed  
crenellating soul.

The soft and fallow harvests of ancient loves  
neither pricked nor mitigated. They were,  
they are not ... now.

The purity of the pristine paper,  
unscathed by ink, glistened in cadaverous assault,  
refracting full torment of the unkind candle.

Hollowed, defrocked, I turn back the quilt  
in aurora mourning.

Saying nothing.

## Christopher Khadem

### The Secret Life of Chaos

-Ology.

An etymology of science.

Supercomputer is derivative.

$$z_{n+1} = z_n^2 + c$$

*Let z be truth/beauty.*

Morphogenesis (from the Greek *morphê*

shape and *genesis* creation, literally,

"beginning of the shape").

Think of a steady wind, blowing across a sand dune.

Self organisation.

His name was Alan Turing.

Nothing repeats exactly.

His name was Alan Turing.

He looks like John Wayne and Rudolph Hess.



I have a very specific definition, you nitwit chaoticist. Myriad people misuse me.

Keep saying it until it takes your breath away.

Her brain tells you you've inhaled too rapidly—

Predictability. Let's start with gravity,

Newtonianism can predict the future.

Our computer power is not sufficient.

Our brains are far too small.

O, that butterfly's wings in Brazil.

This is a classic example of a feedback loop// the same mathematics is creating both order and chaos// This is the closest things we have// at the moment// to the pure mathematics of nature// It is woven very deeply to the fabric of the universe.

We set out to answer one simple question:

how did we get here?

But I digress

"Untitled"

Quoting nothing, or  
as close to nothing as possible.  
Getting as close as possible  
it's not black/red/pink here,  
hardly a colour at all.

A low, humming absence#####  
###b###lack#####not#####b###lack#####  
#####  
Th###is. It isn't it, is it?

A gust of wind exhales over the page  
making tides and making waves.

Their grass is a different colour, I'm sure of that.  
Prove it.  
How do you expect me to cross this stream? There is no bridge.  
There was no bridge  
but you are taller than me  
but I am made of paint.

/a

Even standing back and taking a breath/break.  
it is not black/red/pink/orange/brown/down here

Quoting nothing, and  
therefore, covering everything  
in#####

**Say something but not anything (An Essay in response to Gertrude Stein)**

Rising Futurist democracy geometry

all odds and ends but no numbers or ends or beginnings

Infinity cannot have a centre just candour

snow white

but no snow and all off-white is the only way of looking at it

or not looking bur feeling

but not feeling like an emotion, feeling like through sensory stimuluseseses

'Bloody hell it's cold'

But not hell because but bloody maybe bloody but not hell like –

But not like bloody bloody

but bloody but not like that either

but not that one

No

but like

well not like because of the sensory thing

well not a thing but like –

I suppose well not suppose but

think well not think obviously

that much is obvious

really –

Wait

Not like suppose think

but not but either

not either but or like or either either

because it is alone

Of course it is not  
not of course of course  
but –  
but not but either  
not either either

But not like either suppose think obvious because

It is a corridor.

## Two Sonnets

### I

Looking in to the back of a spoon (as Parmigianino did it)  
Trying to pronounce elliptical French at four in the morning  
(Or was it German? Or Italian  
It was one of the Modernist's stolen tongues, anyway,  
And I think that might have been the point  
                    Probably                    French)  
As the sun rose like the moon, or

Like a yawning man's bald head hugged by  
The parentheses of the clouds  
A *boules* lawn was being planted, seed by seed  
By tortoise men and turtle women, who  
                    – in some months –  
Will be closer to the dirt than the tips of the blades ever were.

### II

But if the Earth is spinning and flying through the universe  
Like a helicopter, then  
What is gravity?  
I don't know  
Who it was who said  
"Parenthesis and ellipsis are whole repetitions,  
Full of themselves. Full of them, selves"  
But they were right  
(presumably, hence the marks).

Time blinks

Flinches uncomfortably

Infinity has changed from

A frustrating mathematical impossibility to

A figure-eight on its side.

## Minutes

Have we reached a consensus on news poll-  
ution? Have we reached a con-  
sensus?

Parapraxis is issue number one,  
or it would be, if you could find the agenda.

Three easy ways to object to this (and that), say aye.

I.

I.

I.

I have changed

to

We. We

are making changes to your store. Your store will reopen.

People aged 16-74 with: Highest qualification attained level 1 (Persons).

Three fifths of all other Persons.

2001 Population: Males – 2,809

2001 Population: Females – 2,915

2001 Population: All people – 2

1251 stains, the coffee makes the paper look old, like you.

They

raised concerns to  
their local policing  
team about anti-social  
behaviour of youths  
in the area.

A Section 30 dispersal  
order was brought  
into effect in August  
last year to counter  
such incidents.

i/you  
raised/razed



## Toward a Loss

This  
development of  
loss  
is focused on people's pervading  
recognition of their lives.

This field may be  
broader than related fields such as  
stress and  
perception of

death and divorce,  
but also on major connection with diverse  
employment,  
bodily functioning

prejudice .

This field of  
lives

is a critical phenomenal state that must be dealt with in adaptation to

potential loss of insurance benefits.

\*Note: this poem was created by the replacement of words for spaces in an academic article from the journal *Psychological Science*. It was called 'Toward a Psychology of Loss'.

## Leaving the National Gallery, London

When walking from the great facade  
Through the columns, the stilletos  
upholding culture,  
All conspires to seem composed.

Denim and nylon lying  
by the fountains  
Are blended to form an unnatural sky-blue.  
A Norse god skating across the watertop.  
The hundred conversations blur into one  
Unarmingly ethereal chord.

All conspires to seem poetically obscure.  
A quatrain at the foot of Nelson's Column:

*Vous êtes priés de ne pas nourir les oiseaux.*  
*No dar de comer a las palomas.*  
*Bitte die Tauben nicht füttern.*

A drop from The Waste Land  
or on it.

This feeling will repeat,  
Every 'now' and every 'then',  
Every 'here' and every 'there'.  
But it soon fades  
when passing McDonalds.

The voices are distilled:  
In the womb the women come and go

Talking of Michael Jackson's nose.

Please.

Do not feed the pigeons.

**How do you say “qu'est-ce que c'est”?**

Hold on tight, as if to say it means anything else  
other than third person singular. It does.

But not only this, to identify a person. Who is it?

You there, at the back, are you following this?

This is an tree, that is an horse.

Shhh! What was that? It was a horse running round the equator.

We're talking about “it”, y'know “it”. You know it?

Do you have something you would like to share with the rest of us?

How do you say 'can I have an apple, please?' Can I have an apple please? Yes.

What are you hiding? A psychological imprint?

Is this an interrogation? Is that something about a king?

Or somewhere between between and ask?

Is this an inquisition? We're just trying to get to the bottom of this, sir.

Well then you've got no chance, I'm afraid, it's endless. And anyway, are you sure you're allowed to say inquisition  
any more? You know, being catholic.

What, like something of broad and liberal scope? Containing many things? Oh stop it, you fundamentalist  
etymologist. Concerning all of humankind? That's quite enough of that kind of talk.`

So what is it, this thing that it is? Meta- metro- para- - - -

The huge question mark, hunched over, drunk, questions its existence.

## **Polaris**

There's one single cloud in the sky  
And it's obscuring the northern star.  
And although it is four-thousand-three-hundred-trillion kilometers  
Away,  
Its absence dulls us.

The other stars flicker like lightbulbs in a damp house,  
Fizzing like sherbert,  
Although obviously no one metaphor will suffice.

Circus bears are uniting,  
Throwing of their chains  
And dancing in the street.

Commuters are stuck on the Circle Line  
But do not care, just stare forward  
And start talking.

Cats are orbiting their scratching post,  
And all the ships are lost at sea.

life.

**Colin Dardis**

**Attempts suicide by gas, wakes up with a headache, opens windows**

There was a time  
when it wasn't all that bad;  
you were married, you had a regular job,  
hell, you even took art classes at one stage.

Perhaps you were thinking of the time  
when you lost your virginity  
to a 300-pound whore.

Or that spring  
when you were suffering  
from an internal haemorrhage  
and nearly died in hospital.

Or when the FBI took you into custody  
for avoiding the draft  
and you spent seventeen days  
in the humid whiteness of Moyamensing Prison.

Or that extreme case of ache you received  
when you were fourteen.

Or when your father found  
those sordid short stories you were writing  
and threw them out on the front lawn  
along with all your possessions.

Or when your father died.

Or your unfinished novel.

But whatever you were thinking at the time,  
you survived it,  
and went on to grace the world  
for a further thirty-three years  
with your poetic presence.

The first forty-one years  
were just practice.

## Someone has been talking

Someone has been talking.  
I know they've been busy.  
They've been gossiping away, speaking to all and sundry...  
about me.

I'm not sure who it is exactly they are speaking to,  
but they are out there, at their computers,  
spreading their damn filthy lies  
across the internet,  
targeting their malice and hate  
at me.

I am just one innocent e-mail address,  
one single, male consumer  
who happens to fit their market demographic:  
I'm ripe for their slander,  
game for their libel,  
a fool for their abuse!

It arrives daily,  
mainly in the morning, I find myself  
wading through each despised missive,  
hopping and skipping past the thick, cruel swamp  
tingling with an electronic edge,  
a virtual cesspool of deceiving pornographers  
braying around my shoes,  
waiting for a glimpse of gold,  
for my guard to drop.

But I am wise. I know what they what.  
They want to enlarge the size of my penis.

It's lies I tell you, all lies!!!!



Let me read you some of their e-mail temptations:

*are you going to pass up the opportunity for a bumungous penis? really?*

*are you the next man in the world to get super-sized in his pants?*

*as your dick gets larger, no woman will say 'no'*

*beat her womb with your new big rod, so that she knows who wears the pants!*

*May I ask why you are so unhappy with your dick?*

*Get more pleasure in love with your new big phallus*

*don't you think it's time you stopped being a loser with a tiny penis?*

I mean, what mailing list am I on for these people to contact me?

Which ex-girlfriend exactly put me on this list in the first place?

Why do I have to suffer this onslaught of torture?

But I laugh at their games, their efforts

Because I take Viagra!

## America's Whores Come Home

America, I have sucked Allen Ginsberg's cock  
and it tasted like pussy;  
you make everything taste like pussy,  
how do you do that?  
with your candyfloss mould of public hair  
and cherry lips of teenage sex

America you sell desire in six-packs,  
comestible masturbation  
guaranteeing instant success;  
your consumer favours  
the more immediate brand of gratification,  
satisfied with off-the-shelf pornography  
and worthless acme fantasies.

America, you sell us nothing  
but models in tight bikinis  
pitched on tits-and-ass cheap icons;  
the juggernaut of airbrushed flesh cascades  
over the mighty broken dollar;  
sex becomes your economy,  
sleaze fills your hospital beds,  
your schoolchildren taught to  
procreate, rather than to love.

America, fire me your wishes  
wrapped around a bullet  
and finger-fuck the resulting wound,  
tongue out my petty blood and sinew,  
putting a price on my worth  
measured in pay-per-view and digital downloads;  
it is enough to know that I was born  
and then I discovered credit.

America, whore me to the world  
and leave me penniless inside your brothel bed.

## Christopher Chambers

### Maggie Gyllenhaal vs Robyn Hitchcock

There are a couple of lines I just can't get my head around.  
We'd pulled up all the carpet, polished the old floors.  
I had taken out my contact lenses so I couldn't see  
that we were quite fond of each other in our own unique way.

We'd pulled up all the carpet, polished the old floors.  
I was in this suit and I didn't know where to put my hands,  
but we were quite fond of each other in our own unique way.  
Once, traveling alone in Spain I met this couple,

I was in this suit and I didn't know where to put my hands.  
Like a modern experimental atonal dissonant freaky whatever,  
once traveling alone in Spain, I met this couple  
sinking into the parking lot known as middle age.

Like a modern experimental atonal dissonant freaky whatever,  
I had to take out my contact lenses so I wouldn't see  
that we were sinking into the parking lot known as middle age.  
There still are a couple of lines I just can't get my head around.

## **Barry Hannah vs Barbet Schroeder**

Even in a car wreck facts and time are rearranged  
so that we revisit the story from another angle,  
almost frantic to have a moment of clarity and peace,  
or in Vallejo's words, a reality that becomes mad.

We must revisit the story from another angle.  
Doomed to lengthy fragments, ghosts in the book,  
Vallejo's words become a reality, madness,  
the camera moving around us like in Hitchcock.

Doomed to lengthy fragments of a ghost in a book,  
with consciousness of death and exuberance,  
we live in an apartment in Mexico City, but always  
it is less violent, technically, than an American movie.

And always conscious of death and exuberance,  
almost frantic to have a moment of clarity and peace,  
though less violent, technically than an American movie,  
we witness the car wreck, rearrange all the facts and time.

## Jorie Graham vs Johnny Depp

Jesus Christ sits before us in an alcove  
trying to sell a gross or two of ballpoint pens.  
Children run around, people kiss the veil, and all the rest.  
I don't know when the show will end, but I see it coming.

Trying to sell a gross or two of ballpoint pens,  
no doubt the easy, sunny glamour of it is everywhere.  
I don't know when the show will end, but I see it coming,  
the book clicking shut, a feeling one just learns to recognize.

No doubt the easy, sunny glamour of it is everywhere,  
John Waters swooping down from heaven like an angel.  
The book clicks shut, a feeling one just learns to recognize—  
it's over, that's your ride, step to the right and fuck off.

John Waters swoops down from heaven like an angel,  
children run around, people kiss the veil, and all the rest.  
It's over, that's your ride, step to the right and fuck off,  
because Jesus Christ sits before us now in an alcove.

## Michel Houellebecq vs Lou Reed

At the beginning, our hero makes some kind of commentaries on life involved with feedback, guitars and playing around with tape recorders, as well as the idea of the insect on the carpet, the light bulb exploding. He has a large scar on his forehead he got dueling with Nietzsche.

Add feedback, guitars and playing around with tape recorders, I had an image of it without actually ever having been there. He has a large scar on his forehead he said he got dueling with Nietzsche or in conversation between our hero and the psychologist, echoes of interviews.

I had an image of it without actually ever having been there. He introduced me to the idea of drone, playing with the speeds of conversations between our hero and the psychologist, echoes of interviews. A bunch of drag queens were shooting up, the whole heavy metal trip.

He introduced me to the idea of drone, playing with the speeds as well as the idea of the insect on the carpet, the light bulb exploding, and a bunch of drag queens shooting up, the whole heavy metal trip that begins with our hero making some kind of commentaries on life.

**Bart Sonck**

LET'S HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT OYSTER EGGS  
INSTEAD OF EATING THEM

Let's talk less  
now there's nothing  
to do during our nightly  
escape from this reality soap

Waiting for that heavenly moment  
when silence takes us  
to mountain high experience  
after a non-stop dream  
between cheap sheets

Desperate catching falling stars  
when nails bleed  
creating scars  
on our back

Shivering reborn in sweat  
when ears hear  
a child whispers next door:  
'let's talk less'

THROW CLOCK WATCHES AND CALENDARS IN THE AIR,  
'CAUSE THERE'S NO MORE TIME NOTION OUTER SPACE

And we're laughing  
like orphans do  
in the old days  
just me and you

with great adventures  
no poverty, no end  
about captain Turkey  
and his jolly friend

white Rabbit the Jude  
that's what our teacher told  
in class with no heat  
and I believed the dude

walking home, true  
snowy landscape,  
under sunny clouds,  
without you



ONLY LOVE CAN BE SUCH A FOOL

You know  
what I mean  
when you say:

'At the end of our wooden forest  
an old oak points the way-out  
any time we lose control

And I like it when we lose control  
and I like it when we close our eyes

Not seeing our running childhood  
Not seeing the way-out'

You really don't know  
what I mean?

NO SAILOR, NO SEA  
AND DEFINITELY NO SEVEN

I wanna disappear  
but I don't know how  
I feel so replaceable  
no milk, no cow

I wanna say something:  
"hello, goodbye"  
I feel so young and strong  
but I don't know why

I wanna go and catch  
in every harbour a cry  
I feel so divine like wine  
until you say: "it's all a lie"

LET'S CREATE SOMETHING LIKE A PARK

Let's drive  
in the middle  
instead of on the left  
on the right  
each on our own sight

Let's fly to that spot  
on Pluto  
instead of Northumberland,  
British Columbia,  
or that town called San Marino

Let's answer  
all the questions  
instead of send a child  
to school, a boy  
to war, a woman  
to a wending  
with another  
fool

BUILD WITH BONES AND MULE,  
HEAVENLY FACTORIES? YEAH RIGHT!

When you see  
a school of dolphins  
exploiting the Thames,  
then you're finally happy

When you hear  
thousand owls echoing  
her nickname,  
then you're gladly sober

When you feel  
one queen ant biting  
her tick tone in two parts,  
then you're greasily between the clouds

When you burn  
both lips and tongue  
on mama's green bean soup,  
then you're home for ever

NOT ALWAYS THE BLACK SHEEP BRINGS TROUBLES & CONFUSION,  
ALSO THE WHITE SHEEP CAN BE A WOLF IN GENTLEMAN'S CLOTHES

If you teach me too  
I'll grammatical re-puzzle  
your mathematic words  
any time the next-door girl invites me  
for a play calls "super flue"

If you heart me soon  
I'll biological disobey  
your pain in my vain  
any time the next-door girl finds in  
her hot chocolate soup my "always losing spoon"

If you love me poor  
I'll simply disintegrate  
your kisses like a royal flush  
never the less I hardly realize  
you are the one next door

## Brian Spaeth

### The Rains

*3:55 on a day called Friday, February 15, for no reason that I can ascertain!*

Damp & Dejected Constellations Rotate Ponderously Above the Fulton Sky  
A Watery Prayer of Way-Downtown at the Bottom of the City  
Tributaries of Regret: The Source of the River of Turpitude

*I scan the mute faces of the old skyscrapers, looking desperately and forlornly for a familiar and re-assuring image.*

Watery Illusions on a Lifeless and Formless Afternoon on a Calendar of Terrifying Import  
The Looming Sentinel of Nassau Street in a Half-Light Moment of Recognizance  
Ancient Structures Creak & Moan as they Shift in their Iron Beds  
Moral Uncertainty in a Watery Hour . . .

*Moisture turns to Rain and then to Flood on the Coordinates of the Old South Rooftop!*

Asperdalteria-in-Aphasiaticca!  
Mad Dance of Disturbed Molecules  
Downpour in Abscondia!

*Storms swirl over the rooftop as I gaze out at unimaginable scenes of Architectonic Fantasy . . .*

Vaporous Memories Swirl and Comingle with an Image of Myself  
Receptive Waters Welcome the Vapor/Memory Phantoms En-Route From the Old Powell's Cove  
Swirl of Vapor/Memory Regret in the Great Rotating Turret of the Bennett

Watery Afternoons as the Rooftop of the Bennett Stretches to the Edge of Recollection and  
Mute Skyscrapers Moan at the Very Brink of Audibility

*Water-bourne phantoms peer into the sunken confines of a peculiar outpost called, in a fit of linearity: 1003, and by many other names,  
depending on the level of moisture and bio-spark inclination*

Lost and Swept Away Along With Other Effluvia

Effluviatta-in-Catatonia!

Lost and Watery Days & Nights Walking Down Fulton Street in a Rotting Half-Moon Dream

*Down here again . . . the Bottom of the City—Tidal Longings and ripples of Loneliness & Despair*

*And now — Rain!*

## **The Cenotaph at Fulton & Nassau**

*I am led to strange doors deep in the Electro-Spark Night: The Great Trepidarium of Nassau Street*

Lost Trails Through Electro-Stanchion Halls & Stairs  
Routes Traced and Re-Traced as Unknown Gods Ignore our Scurryings  
King's Pawn Gambit on an Iron Gameboard Deep in the Lost Interior of the Bennett  
Conversational Gambits Declined in a Tale of the Old Bennett  
Drunken Conversations Echo Through Cast-Iron . . .

*Great and ancient valves are turned, ponderously, deep in the cast-iron heart of that  
mighty structure*

Forge of The Old Bennett  
The Strange and Mysterious Workings in the Ancient and Crepuscular Interior  
Night-Crews Work Ceaselessly on Tasks of Complete Unknowability  
Heaving and Moaning Structures in the Devonian Night of Old Fulton . . .

*Stranded on an unholy rooftop of great improbability*

Ruminations on a Strange Plateau Way Up There at the Top of a Dream  
The Ghost of "X" Wanders the Staircase and Halls of the Old Bennett  
Impossible Lives, Shunted-Off and Trapped in Unlikely Rooms  
Phantom Patrols in the Hallways

*Frost on the windows of a peculiar outpost . . .*



## Bryanna Licciardi

### River Bed

In my dream, I am floating down this river,  
tasting for salt, the mist,  
searching for an ocean, but it never comes.  
The currents stay steady and slow,  
the light is dull and I cannot see  
where to get off.

Last year my dog gets off  
his leash, and drowns in the river  
at the bottom of the hill. I see  
my dad disappear in the mist  
and I watch him walk back slow,  
empty-handed and tells me to come

here. Then my mom comes  
around the corner, wiping her hands off  
with a kitchen towel. She slows  
down when she sees his face. *The river...*  
he said. All three of us stared into the mist  
and we must have seen

something. We must have seen  
something we didn't like. When my dog doesn't come  
home, I don't ask anything. I missed him,  
but didn't see a word. Then I dream myself gone, off  
this street, down the current of this river  
and I'm looking down, watching it slowly.

Today I am learning how to swim, but I'm slow,  
slower than the other kids. I see  
them being stronger and better, I see that river  
and it makes me wonder how come  
Some things die and some things are better off.  
Suddenly I am screaming. Mister

Hendricks, my swim coach, is yanking me out of the mist  
and he holds me until my breath slows  
down and I am calm again. He pushes off  
the damp hair stuck to my head. I see  
his deep concern. When my mom comes  
to get me, I'm too embarrassed to talk about the river.

I am off in the mist.  
And I heard the river, its slow,  
Slow grinding (I can see it) against the bones, and then it comes.

## Father's Garden

I determine that God is addiction,  
an immense façade. Sunday choir cries out

his name like a drug, and it all makes sense.  
When Mom fences together a garden,

I try to get into it. The flowers  
bloom, powerful, at ease, I pray for them.

We find rabbits in our backyard, and  
go to The Garden Center for dried blood.

Sprinkling the powder around our plants,  
I ask if it is real blood in our bag.

He shakes his head, but not to me I think.  
*Death is redundant, don't you see?* he says.

Later we would learn how to plant gardens  
on his shoulders, forbidden to hurt for.

When I am growing old, I plan to walk  
with a cane, raking into deep, dark soil.

## Happy Endings

I am a 22 year old virgin sex  
addict. I think about not having it, and not—  
having it,  
and doing it, and splitting it. I need  
to not have it, lusting after  
fear. Piecing apart the fuck from I  
love, intercourse, lust,  
My id from your ego. Sexy, primitive  
history. It's the beginning and  
The best way to end things.

My sex  
has a spine.  
So says my first girlfriend.  
It's empty, provoking.  
Picture  
a countryside brothel, rocking,  
Her mouth wet in the young man's ear,  
*What are we afraid of?*

## Bree Katz

### Love Knows Only Legal Bounds

It was a perfectly euphoric kind of love, the storybook kind of love. The kind of love where you just can't believe this could ever be happening to you, it seems so content, so peaceful, so engaging and enthralling. The kind of love you believed happened every time a handsome man met a beautiful woman, the kind of love you affirmed every time you saw a Disney movie, then disparaged as you got to be an angsty teenager, then started to believe in cautiously as a young adult in it for the first time. Then that blew away like so many tumbleweeds on a dusty roadway out west, and the second time around, it was the kind of love that reminded you of a perfectly spherical soap bubble, effervescent and full of gleaming iridescence, and you knew it was going to pop and leave little flecks of soap all over your kitchen sink with the invasion of the next scummy, caked-on dish from last night's dinner.

That dish was about to burst Sylvie's bubble.

"Happy first anniversary, mah love," Kyle crooned, making Sylvie laugh with his put-on Texas twang. They clinked wine glasses across the table.

"To...aw, hell, I've always been terrible at this," she giggled.

“I think a simple, ‘To us!’ will do nicely,” he responded.

“I think you’re right!”

The glasses clinked again. They took a gulp of their wine, eying each other half-self-consciously, then laughing some more as they took a second gulp.

“You keep that up, you’ll be under the table in no time,” she teased.

“Yeah, tell me about it. You mountain folk. You get your high altitudes and your resistance to—to oxygen, or whatever the hell it is—“

“And the dehydration. Don’t forget, we handle dehydration pretty damn well.”

“Yeah, your dehydration. And your assumption that you can go getting into drinking contests with anyone and everyone.”

“Sure we can. Because we always win.” She took another sip and wagged her tongue at him. “And don’t forget about the subsequent pissing contests, while you’re at it.”

“Right, right. But of course.” The calamari arrived. They dug in.

Kyle glanced up from his almost meditative stare at the fried seafood. “You know, we’ve been together for a year,” he began.

Sylvie swallowed a piece of calamari, then dabbed daintily at her lips—an almost futile gesture, seeing as how, per usual, she had gotten some of the sauce in her hair. “So you keep reminding me.” She tugged at the amber necklace he had given her in deference to her metal allergies and flicked a finger at the wine glass—not the most expensive on the menu, perhaps, but certainly a substantial investment from a guy fresh out of a master's program trying to hit the big time in DC.

“What occasioned this reminder, besides the occasion itself?”

"Eh, well...I know you're not much for talking about your family, and I'm not asking you to," he added hastily as she bristled. "It's just that...well, I do talk to my parents and sister on a regular basis, and--how to put this out? I've told them all about this wonderful girl I met, and that I really like her, and so, of course, they want to meet her."

Sylvie refilled her glass and took a sip. "Wow. Sounds terrific. Do I get to meet her, too?"

It got a laugh out of Kyle. "But, seriously..."

"No, no. Actually, it sounds like fun! And fret not. I'm great with parents. Awesome, someone less modest might say. In fact, after some of my prior relationships ended, my boyfriends got the apartment, the furniture, and the CDs, but I got their families!"

He smiled hesitantly. Sylvie cursed herself for violating the no-mentioning-past-boyfriends-at-the-dinner-table rule she assumed existed. "I'd love to meet your parents, in short," she continued smoothly. "And I promise, I'll even check my dirty sheep jokes at the door."

"I appreciate the thought. But you probably don't even have to—they might like it. If you're up for it, we've got tickets two weekends from now to visit them in Ralston, North Dakota. Sheep joke capital of the United States."

She had started with the calamari again, but midway through his statement, she gagged a little, grabbed her wine glass, and managed to force a bit of the wine down before starting an earnest coughing fit. "North Dakota," she gasped.

He grabbed a napkin, making noises of concern as he tried to pat her back across the table. "Something wrong?" he queried once the fit subsided.

She shook her head and grabbed her wineglass. "Nope, absolutely nothing at all." She downed her glass, poured herself some more. Trying to fill the silence that had just set in, she smiled brazenly at him and chortled, "We real sheep ranchers just have a rather low opinion of impostors, that's all. But for your sake, I'll be sure to keep my jokes about plain, boring Plains folk to a minimum during the visit."

He laughed appreciatively and got started on something about his hometown, spending the better part of the rest of dinner eagerly filling her in on the geography, the people, and the historical background of Ralston. He must've gotten pretty caught up in it—apparently, he never once noticed her biting her lip and staring vacantly, concerned about matters far more grave than making inappropriate jokes and derogatory comments at North Dakoters' expense.

\* \* \*

See, ten years ago, Sylvie had indeed been full of hopes and ambitions far beyond the three-hundred person Wyoming town in which she grew up. As her high school valedictorian (none too hard to accomplish in a class of twenty-three people, most of whom needed two to three tries to put their pants on the right limbs), she had gotten accepted to Harvard and Princeton. Those institutions' refusal to offer her scholarships or aid, however, had led her to Arizona State University, where the school was so eager to add a National Merit Scholarship Finalist to their rolls that they gave her a free ride.

She coasted through her first year, applying her few advanced placement credits wisely to avoid general education requirements, and settling tentatively on psychology as a major. What the hell, she thought as she signed the declaration form, I've been privately trying to figure out why my high school friends were so stupid for years.

But the less-grounded aspects of her major soon bothered her, and in her third semester, she decided to flesh her education out with a course called Practical Applications of Law. Really, she figured, how much could you argue with dry legalese, even if you didn't fall asleep upon hearing it?

As she found out, she certainly couldn't argue with the teaching assistant largely responsible for lecturing the class. Only a year older than she was, he had thick, dark hair, sparkling blue eyes, and a smile that could light up a lonely Wyoming highway at the dead of night. She attended his office hours more than was probably necessary, eventually taking



up so much of the other students' time that she and the TA had no choice but to discuss her pointed legal questions over coffee. Sometimes the questions would extend so long that they just had to grab dinner, then they'd find other things to talk about besides class, then those off-topic discussions would have to be continued in his spacious Tempe condo (she having to share a two-bedroom apartment with three other women, of course)...

She didn't drop her psychology major entirely. The sudden rush of feelings prompted a nasty case of intern syndrome, and she spent evenings she wasn't with Jerome frantically searching her textbooks for some diagnosis that would explain all her symptoms. One night, after having kept the light on well past four in the morning, her roommate rose up on one elbow and snippily asked if she were studying for finals already.

"No," Sylvie sighed, "but I think I've got obsessive-compulsive disorder, or maybe I'm a borderline personality. Maybe I'm codependent!"

"Maybe you're in love. Either shut off that light or go read in the living room."

The roommate rolled over and went back to sleep, but it would have done little good even if Sylvie had shut out the light immediately. You could see the cartoon light bulb click on above her head.

Psychological curiosity cured, she went on to throw herself eagerly into the wonderful world of law. Within a semester, she had caught up to Jerome's level, and by the beginning of her junior year, they were taking the same classes. Not all of these classes were particularly interesting, however, so to stay awake, they would pass notes back and forth as though it were elementary school all over again, only with condoms in lieu of cootie shots.

A lecture in their Federal Law class, however, held their attention.

"This," announced their TA, an overexuberant fellow, "is Sonny D."

A pitbull with heart-shaped sunglasses appeared on the projector.

"Sonny D decides to commit a robbery."

"With those sunglasses, he'll be marked in an instant," Sylvie scribbled.

"Never mind the pertinent fact that he's a dog," Jerome wrote back.

The TA continued: "Sonny D and his friends get in a car, cross state lines, and rob a bank just over the border in New Mexico. Is this a federal offense?"

Sylvie scribbled to Jerome, "Yes, because he was driving with a dog license, not a driver's license!"

"At least they both start with D," came Jerome's response.

"Well, yeah, 'cause Sonny D crossed state lines. Duh," remarked a bleached blonde in the back, with a roll of her eyes and a snap of her gum.

"Actually, that's precisely the question we have to ask ourselves: is it actually a federal offense just because it crossed state lines?"

"Is this a trick question?" asked a boy in the front row.

The TA grinned and pulled up another slide.

"It is NOT a federal offense if ANY of these criteria are not met:

1. The bank was not FDIC insured.
2. There was no excessive force, injury, or death caused in the commission of the robbery.
3. There was no appearance of a dangerous weapon present at the time of the robbery."

The class sat silently for a moment. Then Sylvie's pen scratched on the paper she and Jerome shared: "So, Bonnie and Clyde reenactment?"

Jerome, in turn, snickered as thoughtfully as one can snicker.

That weekend, Jerome had a party in his condo. Two girls were laughing their asses off in a corner while Jonathan, their resident sixties holdout, pointed at the girls and said, "See? Do they look like dangerous criminals to you? The man's tryin' to keep us off pot because it makes us too violent! Do you see violence on those faces?"

The girls giggled more and felt around for each others' waists in a pitiful attempt at a hug.

Jerome squinted and poured another drink for Sylvie. She accepted with a halfhearted upturn of her wrist and drank half in one gulp, frowning because she could feel the world turning but knew it wasn't turning the right way. Jerome gave what he probably thought was an ironic laugh.

"This how you planned to spend the weekend?"

"Planned? Isn't this how we always spend the weekends? Isn't that the beauty of it, that we don't have to plan?"

He sipped his drink and frowned.

"I mean..." She squinted at her drink, not sure if there actually was a lemon in there or if she had moved on to the hallucinatory phase. "Babe, I don't care about...plans...all that shit." She took another gulp. "I just wanna spend time with you, that's all."

He stared at some point above and to the left of her head. "Spend time with me."

She nodded.

"You know what I want?"

She shook her head.

"I wanna be...I wanna be independent."

She gestured at the living room, spilling her drink in the process. "This's not independent 'nough?"

"It's my parents' money. It's all my parents. Every time goddamn Mother asks for something--" He fell to his knees, head bowed in mock reverence.

"Boy's had too much to drink," cried Jonathan, "get him some pot to take the edge off!"

Jerome rose in disgust. "I...you and I...we deserve better. You and I--we deserve more. We should--we should be king and queen of the world, you and I!"

"Kings and queens died with Paul Revere or some crap like that. And anyway, we wouldn't be in line."

"For the crapper?" asked Jonathan, who had stumbled past on his way to that particular facility.

"No! For the throne!"

Jonathan puzzled that over as he stumbled to the front hall closet.

"You know," Jerome mused, frowning at his empty glass, "Fuck the royalty. I mean, fuck 'em. All you need to live like the king of your little shitpile nowadays is a little cash flow. So we're going to do it, you and me." He grabbed her hand.

"S'it 'you and me' or 'you and I'?"

He ignored her as he raised her hand in the air, nearly knocking her off balance. "Hey guys! Toast here!"

"French toast?" yelled one of the stoned girls.

"To Sylvie and me!"

Jonathan, who'd just emerged from the closet, raised his still-unzipped penis in appreciation.

"Folks, we're going to rob a bank!"

Even the girls looked up briefly. But they started laughing again as Jonathan stumbled over to them and none-too-subtly seated himself between them.

Jerome surveyed the room in disgust. "I'm going to bed," he announced to no one in particular, as Sylvie had already passed out on the kitchen table.

You'd think it would have passed into the ether like all drunk conversations, but starting the next day, Jerome had pulled out a phone book and was looking up names of local banks, seeing if they had any branches elsewhere--"You know," he told Sylvie with a disarming smile, "because they're probably federally insured if they're across state lines."

Sylvie played along, pulling out maps of Utah, Colorado, North Dakota.

"North Dakota?" Jerome frowned.

"Yes, well, I might have reason to be in the other two at some point. Who the hell goes to North Dakota, though?"

He conceded the point. Sometime in the next week, he'd managed to obtain a phone book for that state. It fit in a standard yellow mailing envelope.

"Still thick compared to Wyoming," Sylvie murmured.

"Big states, no people," Jerome replied, flipping through pages. "Okay, whoops, too far...ummm, cattle prods, car repair, cars, bunting, bomb shelters, benchmaking...ah, here we go. Banks!"

They found three banks with only one branch open in the entire state. Sylvie got to place the calls.

"Um, yes, hello," she creaked, in a voice too high pitched even for the old fart she meant to imitate, "Yes, I'm a little, uh, concerned about my benefits since my husband died—oh, dear, well, thank you, but I'm sure it wasn't your fault—but I thought, perhaps, my grandson's talked me into the wonders of these newfangled systems you call banks—Yes, in my day, you just couldn't trust the confounded things. Yes, I'm thinking maybe I should put my money in yours, but if you don't mind, I've a few questions. Oh, thank you. Yes, well, first off—heh, my grandson told me to ask this, now—are you FDIC insured? Oh, you are? Well...thank you, then. Thank you very much. I'll, uh, think about this."

The same went for the second bank, but the third on the list was an independent operator, five years in the business, and no Federal Deposit protection. Sylvie thanked them in a hushed murmur, put the phone back in its cradle, and stared at Jerome with tire rim-wide eyes.

“Wow. Huh.” He sucked his lower lip. “I didn’t know banks could be in business without that guarantee.”

“Yeah, the whole Bonnie and Clyde thing.”

“Not to mention John Dillinger.”

They stared at each other some more.

“You know,” he laughed awkwardly, “I wasn’t actually expecting us to find a bank that, well...”

“Yeah, no. I mean, you were right. I thought they all had to be, well, insured.” She glanced off. “So I guess I mean you weren’t right.”

He tried to look stern, concerned, anything, but his face fell apart. Soon they were both doubled over his kitchen counter, laughing as recklessly as their stoned partygoers.

So on this whim, they spent the week in the lull between the end of classes and finals prepping heatedly. He bought an old junker off a dazed looking stoner at a Scottsdale gas station, offering to pay in cash for \$100 off the listed price, and the kid accepted with no questions asked. In the middle of the night, they snuck into the parking lot by the campus library and found the car of a boy Sylvie had been on a nightmarish date with. Sylvie played lookout as Jerome removed the boy’s license plates. They stuck the plates on the junker, found some baggy black sweatshirts, pants, and canvas shoes at Goodwill, and with no time left to put off, loaded maps, snacks, and water bottles into the junker. The weekend before finals, they were on their way to North Dakota.

They stopped for gas when needed, but otherwise made the junker their abode. On the way, they listened to music, scowled at the news (“And in local affairs, a cow crossing County Road 97 nearly caused a traffic accident today. Bob Resterton of Kiowa says he almost ran his truck into a ditch after he swerved to avoid neighbor Jim Thompson’s prize Hereford...”), and forced out jokes and light conversation.

All too soon, they arrived in a small town on the state's southern border. ("Couldn't we just technically call this area Mid-Dakota?" Sylvie wondered aloud.) They circled the bank once, Jerome ready to pull in, but Sylvie expressed a sudden urge to use the ladies' room in the gas station down the street. Jerome shook his head.

"Might have cameras in the lot."

"Okay, well, how 'bout a nice, tall bush, then?"

Once Sylvie had spent five minutes squatting behind a bush with no gains, she reluctantly got back in the car. Jerome pulled into the bank's parking lot too quickly. He looked at Sylvie and began, "You know, it's been a fun idea and all, but—"

But, but, but. She had already pulled the bandanna over the lower half of her face, the sweatshirt's hood low over her forehead, and the brick firmly in hand, albeit buried in her front pocket. She was out the door.

Inside, she told herself it wasn't real. She could tell herself that because she fully believed it. She wasn't really going up to the counter and handing the one teller on duty a word-processed note explaining that people were going to get hurt if the teller didn't open all the cash drawers and empty the contents into Sylvie's repurposed pillowcase. It couldn't be real—wouldn't she feel something when the teller, more with resignation than panic, actually went through the drawers and filled Sylvie's sack with cash? Wouldn't Sylvie ordinarily have stopped with the cash and not pointed brusquely to the vaults and safety-deposit boxes? Wouldn't she typically have decided to turn away once she saw the middle-aged woman standing forlornly near those safety-deposit boxes, ready to go visit some of Great-Grandma's most valued and valuable belongings? Surely when awake, she wouldn't have wagged her brick threateningly at the lady, forcing her to open her box, reaching in with a ski-gloved hand to scoop out necklaces, bracelets, rings, watches, a little store of cash.

"That was all my great-grandmother could carry with her out of Latvia," the lady accused Sylvie, tears already coursing down her face. And Sylvie—well, this obviously wasn't really her. The real her would have made some flip

comment about all the rest of the shit this great-grandma must have been carrying around the watch and laughing at the woman's evident misunderstanding of the joke. As it was, she finished emptying the box and ran out, meeting Jerome down the road. They made the state border in half an hour, slowing down only for the inevitable state trooper who crossed their path, then relaxed the rest of the way home.

In the end, when all was sold and squirreled away, they netted \$9,000—not exactly enough to live the independent, carefree lifestyles they'd hoped for, but not paltry on a college student's desires, either. It was enough, at any rate, to help Sylvie secure work and internships in Europe and Canada for the next summers, thus avoiding that small Wyoming town for the rest of college, and the remainder of her share covered moving expenses to Washington, DC, where she'd accepted an entry-level job editing legal newsletters. It was only going to be for a while, just to gain experience, then she was going to get a law degree or Master's at Berkeley, where Jerome was pursuing his legal studies...but a year of distance and infrequent visits takes its toll on a young couple. A final screaming match over the phone when she told him she'd gotten a promotion and raise, maybe he could transfer out east?

But of course not. She just hoped her literal one-time partner in crime would have the good graces to keep his trap shut. She, herself, spent several years scouring news reports, feeling her stomach muscles tense when she read an investigator's report that originated in North Dakota, but apparently, no one had time for mere robberies. There were so many more interesting things, especially in her office—Muslims and politicians proved to generate far more documentation. So with her rebellious streak solidly behind her, she resolved to stay out of North Dakota until their statute of limitations on robberies ended. Or until the twelfth of never, whichever came first.

\* \* \*



On the thirteenth of never, she and Kyle boarded a Boeing 747 bound for Denver, Colorado. The captain refused to turn off the fasten-seat-belt sign.

She groaned and staggered into the terminal. “Man, I didn’t know a plane could drop five thousand feet in the space of two seconds!”

“Amusement park rides aren’t your thing?”

“Yeah, sure, when they’re on a guided track!”

“There’s a guide! It’s called gravity!”

And he steered her to the far ass-end of the gate, out onto the tarmac, and into the tin can with wings that would be their transport to Ralston.

Oh, she regretted wondering if it could possibly get worse on the first leg of the flight. Back then, she didn’t know a plane could go perpendicular to the ground. She really didn’t know the plane could effectively do a 180 from side to side in thirty seconds. She also didn’t know her head could go this far between her legs—if it went much farther, she reasoned, she’d be able to advertise herself to a big-time porn producer.

Kyle patted her back. “Come on, I’ve been on worse before.”

“Wow, I didn’t know you could survive if the engines fell off the plane!” she moaned.

He laughed. “It’ll all be worthwhile. We’ll get in, my dad will pick us up at the airport, and my mom will have a big heap o’ food ready for us when we arrive.”

“Food. Maybe don’t mention it right now.”

“You’ll be fine. It’s smooth sailing from here.”

He went back to his magazine. The plane bucked and rolled a few more times. She quickly tired of her near-literal navel-gazing.

“So, your parents,” she began, her hesitation not entirely due to the free-floating feeling her stomach experienced, “I’ve heard a lot about their hobbies—your dad’s fishing, your mom a great cook—“

“Hobby? Pff, that’s my mom’s job! And can she ever do a number on those fish!”

“Yes, right. But your dad...what does he do? Is he retired? Please,” she laughed too nervously, “don’t tell me this is a *Meet the Parents* situation where your dad will be subtly interrogating me the entire time.”

He chuckled. “Nah, not CIA. Sheriff’s office, though.”

She made a neutral mumble.

“He eventually got moved up to the State Patrol, although he decided it was too much paperwork for him. He went back, ran for sheriff, and ran the county office for fifteen years. Just retired last December, in fact.”

“You must be very, uh, proud of him.”

“Yeah, prouder of him than he was of himself. There was one case that just ate him up—robbery an hour from the South Dakota border, must’ve been, oh, ten, twelve years ago. Never caught the guy.”

“And girl,” she muttered.

He apparently hadn’t heard. “Only time, though. The scuzzbag fled the state, so there was nothing Dad could do—hey, you all right?”

“Fine!” she chuckled from between her legs. He leaned back in his seat to take a nap. She attempted the same but wound up staring fixedly out the window until the plane landed.

Indeed, Kyle's dad Arthur was on the tarmac to greet them when they landed. Kyle introduced them politely, and Sylvie shook his hand firmly.

"Best service I ever had! I never knew you could pull up right to the back of the plane!"

"Sheriff's privilege," he said stiffly, dropping her hand to put the bags in the trunk. She looked at Kyle askance.

"Farm manners. It's too cold most of the year to be bubbly," he whispered as he let her slide into the middle of the pickup truck's bench.

The ride to Kyle's home was bumpy and silent, punctuated only by Arthur asking how the flight was and Kyle responding that it was fine. (Sylvie begged to differ, but she kept her opinion to herself.)

Sylvie shuddered a bit as the truck pulled up to the house—a real, honest-to-God, farmhouse with a red barn in the background and everything. It was a little too close to home on many counts—oh, it had been years since she'd been to the dry landscape of the Rocky Mountain and Great Plains regions. Still, she buttoned it up with a smile and stood by as Kyle embraced his mother and gave her a kiss on each cheek. The woman offered neither a hug nor a kiss anyway.

When Kyle introduced Sylvie, his mother Jeannie looked her over silently, ignoring the hand Sylvie proffered and making only a grunt when Sylvie expressed her gratitude to be staying in her lovely home. This unpleasant formality out of the way, Jeannie led them in the house. Sylvie had only a glimpse of the family photos as she breezed them into the kitchen, then brusquely gestured for them to sit down.

"Water," she stated, filling and placing two glasses in front of the couple.

"Oh, I'm, uh, I'm fine," Sylvie stammered. "I know what water restrictions can be like out here." She grinned sympathetically at the older woman's stony face. "Waste not, want not!" Jeannie squinted a bit. Was it just Sylvie, or did this old lady look vaguely familiar from somewhere?

Kyle cleared his throat. "Sylvie's originally from...Riverton, is it?"

She nodded a bit too eagerly.

“Never been,” Jeannie clipped out. She squinted at the oven. “Dinner’s almost ready. Wash up.”

“Do you need any help setting up?” Sylvie queried.

“Do I look incompetent?”

Muttering something resembling a negative, Sylvie hastily backed out of the room. She reeled down the hall after Kyle, who gestured for her to use the powder room first. She splashed water on her face and hands, then reeled back out, only to remember that she’d had to pee since the airport. She mumbled an apology to Kyle as she reeled in yet again.

“Don’t worry about it.”

He patted her on the shoulder on her way out. “I think it’s going really well!”

She reentered the kitchen, only to suddenly remember that she would be all alone with Jeannie if she were to stay there. She reseated herself with a grimace and wondered if she could disappear under the table until Kyle came back. Just as she started experimentally sliding down in her seat, he emerged from the bathroom.

“Thought I saw some...thing under the table,” she explained lamely as he sat down. But the ding of the oven’s timer cut off the end of her explanation. Kyle’s father materialized just in time to cut into the piping hot chicken.

Dinner was a mostly silent affair, each person passing his or her plate to the head of the table. Kyle’s mother dished out the green beans and potato salad, and for all the silence, Sylvie couldn’t help admiring the meal’s delectability. She complimented the cook gratefully and was met with a grimace. She paused in her mouthfuls. That expression—so familiar—no, not a chance, just her mind playing tricks with her.

Kyle asked his dad what he’d been up to since December.

“Fishing.”

Silence. Kyle nodded. “Caught anything good?”

“Nope, water’s down this year.”

Kyle licked his lips, smiled reassuringly at Sylvie. “So, Mom, you...up to anything good of late?”

The older woman frowned. “Up to anything good? Did your father and I raise you to speak like that? ‘Anything good.’ Don’t just open your mouth for the sake of opening it, boy!” She threw her napkin on the table, rose, and started clearing the plates with a viciousness Sylvie never knew could be attributed to the activity. With an angry flick of her wrist, water flowed from the tap. Minutes passed, steam and spray flecked from the sink. Sylvie glanced to both Kyle and his father, looking for cues to excuse herself, but both men seemed cemented in place. She crossed her legs and shifted in her seat.

The water eased up mildly. “I can’t do it any more, Arthur,” Kyle’s mother stage whispered, her head bowed over the sink, hands clutching the counter.

Arthur compressed his lips. "I'd love to get it over with as soon as possible m'self, Jeannie, but Bob had to go the E.R. for a hemorrhoid. Otherwise it woulda been done as soon as I picked 'em up."

Jeannie shook her head. “I’m no good at playacting, Arthur. You know that.”

Arthur sighed and slowly rose from the table, making Sylvie jump. “I’ll give Bob a call, see if he’s home.”

Sylvie cleared her throat. “Ahh, did Kyle and I visit at the wrong time?”

Jeannie turned and looked Sylvie full in the eye. For the first time all evening, she gave a smile.

“Hardly.”

She turned back to her dishes. Sylvie swallowed. That voice—the last, the only time she’d been in North Dakota—oh, Christ, no way!

She lurched out of her seat. “Excuse me, I believe I should get some air,” she croaked.

“No!” Kyle snarled, then modified his voice quickly. “I mean, my mother made a pie for us. Just for us. You should stay. She’s going to serve it any second here.” He grinned in her direction without making eye contact. Arthur ambled into the doorway and parked himself.

There was no pie. Instead, Arthur ambled back into the kitchen to grab his coat. He nodded at Jeannie, who smiled and said, "Change of plans. We're going out for dessert." As a mysteriously well-coordinated unit, all four rose and went out to the car.

Five minutes later, they pulled up to a house. Arthur mumbled something about wanting to make sure it wasn't a bad time for their hosts and rushed up to the door. A man in suit pants and a dress shirt waddled to the door to meet him. He turned to get something from inside the house as Arthur waited. Sylvie noticed that the man was holding an ice pack to his rear as he walked. Her eye drifted to the mailbox. The Hon. Robert Tarsmore and Mrs. Tarsmore, it said.

Arthur turned from the door, officious paper in hand. Sylvie bolted from the car. She tried to figure out which direction was south and cursed the dressy shoes she'd decided to wear.

Arthur and Kyle shouted behind her. "Stop!" Arthur called. "You're under arrest!"

Kyle cried, "Sylvie! Wait! I can explain!"

Sylvie ran on. She heard the truck start. Within seconds, the truck had pulled past her, turned to block her path. The driver's door swung open.

Sylvie had already turned around by the time Arthur told her to do so and put her hands up. He prodded her into the truck and off they drove.

They pulled up to the sheriff's station. A stunning woman sporting a sheriff's badge waited in the parking lot. Kyle and Arthur jumped out of the car, Kyle dragging Sylvie with him.

The sheriff hugged Arthur. "Hi Daddy!" Kyle swooped in for a hug, too.

Kyle's sister pulled away to face Sylvie, who put on a chipper smile and proffered her hand.

The sheriff slapped a handcuff on it. She Mirandized Sylvie as the family trudged into the station, prisoner in tow.

The younger sheriff let her father unlock the door to the station's lone cell. "I think you already know your cellmate," Jeannie smirked from behind.

The door clanked shut on Sylvie, who had to blink a few times to believe what she was seeing. "Jerome?"

Her old flame shrugged sheepishly. "How could I possibly say no to a hot woman with a pair of handcuffs?"

There was no case, Judge Bob decreed, wincing as he sat down. The statute of limitations had expired fifteen days prior to the court appearance. Damned if he'd been too drugged out to check a calendar when he signed the warrants.

Sylvie's court-appointed lawyer was hugely disappointed he couldn't make his case about entrapment. That Jeannie had coolly followed Sylvie out of the bank that day and took down the license plate number...well, that was just dogged persistence. Urging her kids into interstate romantic entanglements, well...The lawyer shook his head dramatically. It would have been his chance to get hired at the biggest of three law firms in the state.

Sylvie and Jerome split a cab to the Ralston airport, stopping at Kyle's house on the way to get her luggage.

When she entered the house, Kyle waited in the entryway. He held out a bouquet of flowers.

"Oh, you have got to be kidding me."

"No hard feelings?"

She pushed past him to the bedroom in the back.

“Sylvie, I really meant what I said before. I really—yeah, my mom and sister really, uh, encouraged me to get to know you better. But I did—I did come to feel a certain way about you, and I hoped that maybe, now that all that nastiness is behind us, we can...we can...”

“Goddammit!” Sylvie roared. “I know the luggage wound up back here. What the hell happened to my suitcase?”

“Oh.” Kyle twisted his lip. “Well, yeah, about the nastiness. Um, my mother decided that since she wasn’t going to get her way in a court of law, she was going to mete out her own, or something equally melodramatic.”

Sylvie turned to him, teeth gritted.

“She sold your lingerie on eBay,” he let out in a rush. “Oh, and your clothes. And suitcase. But she said the lingerie got the highest price.”

A half-hour cab ride and three-hour plane ride in a winged tin can work wonders on a relationship. These lengths of time can kill a burgeoning relationship, push a steady relationship to exciting new levels, or rekindle an old flame. Sylvie and Jerome remarked as they staggered off the plane in Denver that it felt as though the last ten years hadn’t happened, and what do you know, Sylvie still technically had a few days left of vacation. Jerome had been “a wee bit” disbarred after telling his law firm he had been arrested in North Dakota, so every day from now on could be his vacation.

They decided to go see some mountains up close and personal. He’d never been, and she could use the breath of home—as long as it was just a breath.

Two days later, as Sylvie scrubbed at pots and pans in their rented Fraser Valley condominium, he snuck up behind her and wrapped his arms around her. “You know,” he murmured, “one of my last cases involved a bunch of grannies suing a major corporation for investing their money in some newfangled technology that went bust. See, I say the corporation played it wrong. They should’ve convinced the old farts the money was for better pacemakers or, I don’t know, something close to old ladies’ hearts.”



Sylvie watched a soap bubble float out of the sink and hover near the windows. "I'll go set up a bank account," she said. "How do you feel about Grand Cayman?"

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

**B.C. Havens**

**Thirsty Bees**

Deep chant of thirsty bees  
led you to this bouquet of severed words.  
I confess: if some are out of place,  
then it was murder plain and simple.  
Mercifully, grant me a life sentence  
for the lesser crime of attempted beauty.

## Unstuck

Once I unstuck myself from the flypaper strip we struggle along,  
losing bits and pieces of ourselves as we go.

Launched above,  
joy and sorrow blended beneath  
the impartial gaze of your drunken pilot.  
But I missed the fiery aura of our togetherness,  
cozy as a motel vacancy sign.

So alighting on toe-tips I awaited our return  
from happy hour at Anthony's Dock.  
(How the ripening sun ignited the bay!)  
When we arrived, bickering as we often did  
about something we actually agreed upon  
in separate languages,

unstuck I, seeing how blind we were  
to the explosion of color that is all around us  
unraveling everything so slowly  
that we can't even see it happening,  
sobbed quietly so that only the dog could hear.

**Brian Anthony Hardie****QUICKIE IN THE PHOTO BOOTH**

Treasures guide the intake to the sink to vomit fuck my over intake. Directly after making a mix of songs that treasured the act of being told to listen.(THE THE THE!!!)(get it out yet?!) The rocks floating under the water spill. Proven that I moan to nothing but the moment the sensation of rain fallen onto black eyes needed a moment to be alone or stones would be thrown by the blind. And that feels all. Right center in the circle. The love thickens with it feeling the complacent glares of thrashing lungs around. Smoking dignified for the records that I listen to while I type out this thing of said things. They make no result for the reader to ponder. The being though here ponders fragile frustrations. That is the feeling of how I am standing in a position to lay bullets deep in my revision of no attempt. In something with the way she moves beautifully? Coating my movement to a stand still? Facebook wont relieve me anymore because I request friendship from girls I try to forget about. Enough of the relapse and sleeping pill numbing. I do not wish to be here all the time like I am. Have is to be able to become. Not sure of where my dreams and losses to bring afloat went aware of. A few lines later that I have confessed. On the street. Love. Stupid words. Stupid sentences. Stupid things to read around the fire. My fire above the crippled crotch. Photographs of the beach and with her swinging hair her fingers pushing me away off into shore. Please adapt and see where I am in the wave. Crashing. Please. I am not writing to convince to impress or to reach the land where treasures scare me of delight. I am figured between confusion from actions that have made a guilt flare into a reflection of starless skies. So scared to curse her way even though it is again. And I feel that time comes close to the reality of me crying to sleep. Fuck your need of me to give something you would relate. Maybe you could relate that I dont even know where I am coming into. An abstract journalist documenting the neuro movements of confusing questions. Me. History non-intentionally making a flag woven without stressing the deadline to make nothing alive. Me. Live from the lightening stage.

The living memory begins to fade. Entrance of the words that make no sense. I remembered my appointment when I was later than expected. Record player needing a needle. Walking thin lines dished out of the cocaine compost. Sex heard through the house and walls built so thin standing. I think he used to be recovering from something now that I think of it. Question. Random pop in the laughter of culture and lasting warmer moments. Roaming around with noises. Had my share of spills in the well. To do drugs for the sake of art and positions under the table. I cant wait for the want to have you back to return when I have forgotten. Crawling back into my arms. It being time to clean what I cannot see through. All alone we blink underestimated. Tears falling on spilling roads leading to the mall. Stores lined up in song and reason with jabbering mouths presenting to you when arrival is buried head first. Still linking together to hopefully not miss one more plane crashing. But I know its my own damn fault. I was doing drugs in your seven eleven. Dealing them while I blew the man in the back. Echos drowning the drone of memory no text book would be written to deal with the reason being... you are a stupid ass bitch. The like of a Leo purring in your weep. Memory was sparked today when I went and saw the acting doctor, sitting in his chair while he became agitated with me in knowing I was lying about everything in my language. Just trying to bring out the mexican chemist in him. I cry in lies with lies and blaming to be the one that will not forgive me for understanding too early. Without it here. In the maze. Out of the maze. Into it, I believe it. I am all love and hopped in the turn of my tense struggle to bring you back. So if you could, selfless, please come, the fuck, back.

## PREDICTION

The prediction of the table cloth friend bust. Trucker look with the friends. The actioning of last night loaded down heavy onto the change of pace in the machine bloopers. Tangled freshly with the younger ladies training the jaded fist shakers. Original text of the document recording now the wrists beating gently into the vastness of the music treated. And in the face of the same setting always bringing in strangers, now the headlines are bold in the only glance displaying the interest of lips that awoke the the surfacing outcome. Experimental politic. Picture of neck warming collapse in the spikey whisker. Smoking the fish of barging salt water seasons. The boys say the water runs dry when you make the plan to play the cross country expectant. Terrible lie of the coughing new year choking the flyer hand outs. The beginning of the munchy despair is equal to the paper bag burning with matter soiled, vegabond of the crowded room. The comments process an image erased to funnel. To the being of every call needs to get it. From where we need to start, call upon. From there of up to us make the fracture of control. And yesterday I aproached the chophouse in reluctance of further more swapping sips with the fellows of my latitude and feet trembles. The same words produce and keep the narrator and reader in a like state of cycles vicious. Only the same point of plot is no where to bring the rememberance of misspelled aspirations. The caring of rott inna bundle imagines what vision would proclude in size. Producing a projected thought is and will never hold the responsibility of blaming the landslide. With of it everything rattling inside the mindset of cruelty with it of no present remark. Oh my god the strings to pull a cramp to light, something more poor of better days to be cumbersome, railing the lines of the downstairs fright to flight, facility rapid down fall into the bloop of the nothing surrounding all happening. Perfection in the slashes received without warning or presumptious faith failing, lips twist on the stud stump strut of the victory sector. Build the venue upon happening this week. Period. Art slash date the hot center auctioning the donated musician. Playing some time throughout the time wonderful thankful. Talking to the lot of them. Editing the roles used to be of a lot of those people. Name stated of the clown. Respected question of the odd fare walking to the morning host of assummed cornered following with a spike light. One, laugh, get, involved. No comment, I am, invested happy. Sweet underneath.

## **PLACE. HOMELESS STRUM.**

Oh, and to the memory, willing again like a neurotic mother seeing her son as husband, saying you broke her heart. Well laughs are the headliner before sorts tonight, you fucking haven debt. Mayonaise seeps a stink into your egg shell finger tips. I am firing back alike, bitch, so fucking dig it with your fashion of time before the mistake of your popping out of a regretful cunt comes to blacken your lustful eyes. And oh yep I guess I could not get to the point of resurrecting your fucking shit and all I have to say are things with every word before them being fuck. With innnggs to ring out the entrance of the bland big yes of bland moving back and forth trying to find the forked miss happening. Hustle the naked shaking of hands. Hurry to put the world at an end. Fire set in all places bombs drop to be guilty. Made from the solid strips of tension. From out of the box I write into the air. Solemn air that clusters the fucks I am not afraid to say here because this is my page and it speaks with many losses and hurts so much to even remember that I have no fucking clue as to why I even feed this to be the cause of the reason to me fucking coming here lost again! What do I say without a notebook to scribble? My canvas this? Oh I scream to that of a god! Young and tempered I will rewind to this when I am dead. And no I will not. Fucking to your lack of end I will fucking not. Late night boredom like a dramatic faggot. I'm the technological strut of someone that actually does not know a fucking thing. I'm the heroin leeking into muscle when veins were bursting with a hunger to bruise. Now remain very quiet. This haunt will already tempt you to speak. My jacket not a fashion to crumble. Pick up and end where it was to be started. The varying battle rewound to the spot you started at the end of the year. The wretched surprise knowing why. So dont even fucking ask you fucking idiot. Loud into the noise of god. Southern songs bringing into a picture of passion. Sing it, baby. Convinced my life is over and clearly crazy. A smirk at the last remark, for it is so to be true. The things gotten into back home. Leaving the guilt to trail to where you go collecting for gathering the game. You ran away after conquering and resided to your pride you left behind while you were with me. The academic breakdown. Nice in the way it sounds. Now fall down really hard, sucker love. In time and space something borrowed and leaving hurt behind. What I want I need protection from. Ha to the ha said the other withered willing doctor. Late night strums of the guitar when all is said and done; homeless strums.

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Spring 2010

## Ather Zia

### grandpa

no long walk  
to the store  
in the far end of town  
for the willful noisy  
candy craving kids

grandpa sits in silence  
on the bed for years  
looking down

his palms grazed



## **introduction**

protean  
words,  
that don't cease,  
hydra headed  
thoughts, noisy  
silence in waves  
refuses to cow...

a warring litany  
a poet and armies of silence

## **Motherhood is not enough**

freedom,  
has a price  
blood, a currency  
motherland, a myth  
world, that is not forever

my blood is warm  
in your veins now

i bequeath  
a legacy written on the sand

watch the waves  
hands, leaden  
feet - rock  
a hole where my heart had been

## Story

This poem was inspired by using words that appeared in the testimonial on the back cover of a Dr. Seuss book titled *Hop on Pop*)

world weary words  
read themselves

used worldΣ

hailed  
rhymed  
remedial  
popular

exacting words  
magically right  
free?

speaking  
stories  
little blends  
volume of absurdity

## **Curfew**

shut your eyes,  
hold the dream  
till we lift the curfew -

## Andre M. Zucker

### Astrid's Metropolis

In this city I see Astrid everywhere. The streets are damaged and full of glass and debris. All because of her, fires still burn and the people still riot here. At night automatic weapons fire down the streets sometimes in conflict sometime in celebration. I hide low on the floor of my apartment and wish Astrid was still here.

Astrid perpetuated all this violence. She kept the people rioting and kept the government pushing back hard. But I remember her in my arms, I remember the soft person I thought I knew. Not the terrorist, not the monster not the real Astrid. I remember her smile and bare feet. I could never imagine those hands destroying anything. I can't understand what Astrid has done to this city.

Guns are still being fired and fired back on the streets. Molotov cocktails and fire bombs find their way into banks, party headquarters and the civilian homes. However I just miss my companion, a beautiful woman full of soul who shared a bed with me. Now as the automatic weapons fade into the background my mind goes back to Astrid and me. Her here with me, and memories I wish were my reality.

Astrid lay awake naked in bed counting down each second from ten. I was awakened by the time she got to five. I looked over at her as she said "three, two, one." Then the call of the minaret went off outside my window. A scream of faith broadcast in the middle of the night.

"Four... exactly four tonight. I love it when it's on the hour. "She kissed me in a cute sort of fun way. Then she bounced on my chest. "I have no desire to sleep." She kissed me again and rolled off me onto her back.

“What?” I asked.

“Tonight it falls at four on the dot.” She replied.

She flipped over onto her stomach and looked at the bed side timepiece, like a child watching for shooting stars. It began loud and clear in the middle of the night. She rolled back over and pressed against my chest. I was thrilled to be woken up by Astrid’s enthusiasm, even if it was the middle of the night.

“Did I wake you up?” She asked me.

“The mosque would have done it anyway... I like being woke up by you a little better.” She smiled. “Work in the morning.”

“I don’t live for my work.”

“Not you... me.”

“What do you have to do?”

“Interviews.”

“You could do that drunk.” She laughed at me.

“Ok... that’s true... but I should at least sleep.” I laughed a little. God was coming in loud through my window. The apartment was next to a mosque and there was no shortage of loud prayers throughout the day.

“Do people actually sleep through this?”

“I could. What keeps me up in this country is the mosquitoes.”

“Drink tonic water.”

“What?”

“Malaria.”

“Oh yeah.” I had no clue what she was talking about. Some kind of useful hint from her past, that past which was a total mystery to me. I had known her for forty-eight hours and we were lovers for forty-one of them. I was too distracted by the haze of sex, fun and passion to start asking questions about who she was.

Those few hours had become an eternity to me. I felt I knew her deeply although I knew nothing. In my mind she understood me but she had no clue who I was. Astrid was everything to me in that slice of time in the city. As we lay in bed I felt that I was in the presence of a familiar soul.

The first time I met Astrid was in a train station. She stood on the platform holding one small leather bag. She held the bag in her left hand, while her right hand remained free. I could see from the muscles in her arm the bag was heavy.

I approached her across the platform. The station was old and dilapidated. Everything worked but as far as stations go it was remarkably unglamorous. Its walls were all white which had decayed from the pollution of time. Above us all was a clock tower that had a constant clicking to it.

She had on a black turtle neck, leather slippers and tight blue jeans. With her sunglasses and short black hair she looked like some fantasy I had. There was no reason for me to assume she spoke English. She had no features or signifiers of being from an Anglophone country. Despite this, I approached her. She stood with her whole back to me and as I moved closer, she looked over her shoulder and spotted me.

“Do you have the time? I asked in unapologetic English.

She turned around, took me in for a moment and then spoke. “What makes you think I speak English?” She said in a thick accent.

“I had no idea... I took a wild guess?”

Silence. She was reading me. I looked right into her as well. But I could tell she saw deeper into me than I could into her.

“It’s 2:30.” She said with ice in her eyes.

“So what’s your name?”

“You are relentless!” She laughed

“What?” I asked. She just looked at me in silence. “I can be a child.” I said with a smile. I was shorter than her and felt like I was standing below her even though I was at eye level with her neck.

“Yeah” I stared at her. Usually this approach with women doesn’t work. She would either walk away and think ‘you’re a creep’ or publicly embarrass me. But in places like train stations and foreign cities, people put their inhibitions on hold. The giant clock gave us another fifteen minutes until the train came. She would either have to reject me cold or fall for my charms.

“Astrid... my name is Astrid.”

“See” I smiled. “Wasn’t that nice?” She gave no response. I waited for a second and she was giving me a look that said to either keep pushing or walk away in defeat. “So... Astrid... where’s that accent from?”

“Guess?”

“Oh please I couldn’t pick an accent out of a line up.”

“What? Brazil. It’s from Brazil.”

“Well... Astrid, this train only goes to one city. It looks like we’re going to the same place...and we’re taking the same train.”

She rolled her eyes at me. “Your name?” She demanded.

“Thomas.”

“American?”

“Isn’t it obvious?”

“Yes it is obvious... you’re a child... you know... American” She let out a little laugh. Looked away from me and checked the time.

“We should sit together.”

“And why is that?”

“Because of this.” I reached into my jacket pocket, as I did this she flinched a little. I made direct eye contact with her. I could see she was looking for malice in my actions but instead of whatever she was expecting, I pulled out a silver flask. “It ain’t bourbon unless it’s from Kentucky.”

She looked at me, cold at first then kind of trying not to smile. I watched her, finally she gave in and smiled at my behavior. She looked up at the clock and looked back at me. I handed her the flask and she took a sip. She laughed a little at herself but more so at me. She enjoyed this moment. I had won her over and my small victory provided genuine amusement in an otherwise dull train station.

The prayer continued to blast out of the minaret while Astrid strolled naked through the apartment. She opened up my refrigerator and drank from a bottle of water. “It’s hot here. It was so much cooler up north.” She put the bottle back in the refrigerator. We heard some glass shattering a few blocks away. I jumped up in the bed.

“Astrid.” I said loudly from the other room. “Are you ok?”

“I’m ok...it was outside... just a protest after prayer. The rioters had not fully stopped, just some people out looking for the fight.”

I laid back into my bed. She walked back to the bed and lay down next to me. She stayed in this position for a moment and then got off me. “It’s just too hot.” She laughed and rolled over.

“People are still going at it.” I said.

“Yeah... I can hear. I’m not in the mood for rioting now.”



“Yeah...” I put my hand on the top of the back of her thigh. “It’s boiling. Tell me about yourself, you know... I know nothing about you. What part of Brazil are you from?”

“Sao Paulo.”

“Where do you work in this city?”

Astrid flipped over onto her stomach and rolled her eyes. “Diplomatic... stuff... business... stuff... you know... stuff.” She put her head back down on the pillow and effectively ended my line of questioning. I knew I should ask more, learn more about her but there was a part of me that just enjoyed being naked and silent with Astrid.

The call to prayer ended and she lay there in silence. I looked at her and then her leather bag near the door of the apartment. I looked at the books on the shelves and paintings on the walls in this apartment that was neither mine nor Astrid’s. A borrowed apartment can be so familiar if you don’t think about it.

On the train into the city we finished my flask of bourbon quickly. It was a six hour train ride and we were done before the first hour. Drunken conversation lasted an hour. We talked about nothing in particular. But the ambiance of flirtation could be felt by each of us and those around us.

“Do you have any more Kentucky bourbon?” She asked.

“It’s called Kentucky straight bourbon.”

“What’s the difference?”

I remained silent then laughed at my lack of knowledge. “I got another bottle in my bag. I had to smuggle it in. I heard the city is dry as a desert.”

She rested her head on my shoulder and slept until we were in the city. It felt nice to have her there. It was something I’d like to get used to for my duration of time in the city. A foreign city can be a lonely place.

The train screeched into the station. People got up to get out of the corridor of the train. Everyone’s bags seemed to be too big for the corridor. The train was not a modern train with luxuries like aisles and air conditioning.

Our conversations continued while walking down the platform into another colonial-style station. This newer station had that same faded white as the previous station but in a way felt more regal. More details in the mural on the ceiling, more busy sounds all around us. Whatever colonizer had built this station cared a little more about here than up north.

We kept talking to each other like it was a familiar environment. We stood there ignoring her small leather bag and my large green suitcase. Both these objects were indicators that we did not belong together. Finally the fountain of conversation

dried up and a silence passed by. The silence reminded us of our responsibilities, social roles that prevented us from speaking to each other and enforced our passing mortality.

“I take it you won’t be in the city long.” I said to her

“Why’s that?”

“You have a small bag.”

She looked down at her bag. She looked back up at me sharply and then realized something “Oh yeah I guess it is a little undersized. I pack light.” I wanted to ask more about her bag. She became so intense for a split second at the mention of it.

I looked at her and said the first thing that came into my head.

“Do you want to stay with me?” I asked impulsively.

“Excuse me?”

“I don’t think I was supposed to say that. Although... now that I have... you know... what’s up?” She said nothing. “I have an apartment for the time I’m in the city. Well... it’s not mine... it belongs to the newspaper I work for.” She looked a little nervous and apprehensive. “Oh come on. ... you know you want to.”

She smiled. “You are so lucky I find this little boy thing kind of charming.”

“So that’s a yes?”

“Yes.”

I laughed and smiled. “Let’s get a taxi.

I came to this city to work on a story about the recent political unrest in the past week. It all started small and after the elections. Then as more and more people stopped trusting the government the protests grew. The previous Thursday a protest march turned into a riot. Windows were smashed, cars were burned but no one was killed. The day after that a much more violence broke out in which the police fired their guns and killed several people.

Why her government wanted her to do some kind of business development here was beyond me. The timing couldn’t be worse. The country was weak and at that moment, the city was getting more and more unruly. No one was thinking about the future. But like always, I didn’t bother to ask these questions of Astrid. I didn’t want to interrupt her attraction to me. Two days after the riot my newspaper sent me over from Tunis to cover the story the best I could. The usual correspondent got sick on her tropical vacation and the rioting and violence started very suddenly. She was held up in a hospital and was incapable of covering the story. The only reason they flew me over was because the flight was cheapest

from where I was and I could speak the language. Fate brought me to the city, and something much more divine and sinister brought me to Astrid.

Astrid didn't wear socks. She had leather sandals that were snugly bound to her feet. Sox were just another object that would take up space in her small leather bag. She walked barefoot around the apartment even though the floors were cold. The relatively cool temperature of the floors in all this heat was very appealing to her. I could see the certain pleasure she took in each cooling step.

Astrid, still naked, made her way to the window and struck her fingers through the blinds and opened them up a little so to spy out the window. She closed one eye and scanned the streets out my window with her other. She let the blinds close and turned to me. "There are still riot police outside the window."

"How many?"

"Three."

"Ok...so hot."

"What?"

"You... standing there naked... telling me the riot squads are beating down the door."

"Actually one of them is sleeping." She laughed. "But... yes... I am naked. Are you concerned they are there for you?"

"Excuse me?"

"Foreign journalist... you do the math."

"I doubt I threaten them. Maybe they are there for you. In a country like this a woman as sexy as you is bound to start a riot. Hell I'd riot... revolution... the whole thing for a few nights with you."

"And all you had to do was get me drunk on a train."

She walked back over to the bed and lay down. "It's so hot tonight."

"The police didn't respond to the glass breaking? There are probably more police further down the block."

"Yeah... it's kind of like marshal law... without... you know... calling marshal law."

"I have some interviews tomorrow." I said.

"Alright."

"You can hang out here while I am working... unless you need to go to your consulate."

"Oh no... with all the rioting I can do it all by phone. Who are you interviewing?" She asked casually.

“There’s this community center that seems to be the epicenter of the riots. I really don’t know who I am seeing but I think he’s big.”

“Big?”

“Yeah.”

“How big?”

“I think this is the big one.”

“You shouldn’t go.” She replied

“Why?”

“Might be dangerous.”

“I’m going to go in the morning and do some interviews. Get a well-rounded idea of what they are thinking there, write it up and I’ll be out of the country before it is published.” I sighed at Astrid’s concern.

“That’s why they’ve been rioting for a week straight.” She put her head down and stared at the ceiling.”

When we arrived in the city there was no disturbance near the train station, bus station or airport. The protesters centered themselves out of the way of foreign traffic. This was indicative of their organization. The movement wanted foreigners, especially journalists, to have easy access into the city. No infrastructure was destroyed in the rioting; just symbols of the current regime. The party headquarters and embassies of pro-regime countries were targeted.

This made it obvious the rioting had a singular organizer. There was one entity that was focusing the movement then choosing and targeting the right places. The rioters were communicating with each other over some network.

Between my accent and skin color it became obvious that I was a foreigner. This city was tight. People lived on narrow, winding streets where they could see out their windows and know who’s who in the neighborhood. I assumed people knew a journalist or some foreigner lived in this apartment but I wasn’t a familiar face.

Men gathered at cafes all around the neighborhood and I made myself visible at a café on the corner. I sat drinking a coffee while taking notes about nothing. I put a copy of an English newspaper on the table. I did this with the hopes that someone would approach me and give me something interesting to write about. After an hour of sitting in the café the waiter approached me with a free coffee. I told him I hadn’t asked for it. He smiled and said it was free. Then he walked away.

I felt that this was odd but I looked around the café. No one was paying any attention to me, but I certainly had no objections to free coffee. People sat quietly and drank. I started to drink the coffee and as I lifted the cup to my mouth I noticed the waiter had given me a bright green coffee cup. All the other cups in the café were white.

The waiter paid no attention to me. He tended to other customers. I got up and started to walk to the men's room. He eyed me and I signaled him to watch my bag while I was in the bathroom. He pointed at the staircase and I walked up it to where the bathroom was.

I knew someone would approach me at some point. I walked into the bathroom and a man in a suit was waiting for me. He was postured in an unthreatening way but with a serious ambiance that made me know he wanted to talk to me.

In bad English he explained to me that the one of the protest leaders wanted to be interviewed. I asked for a name and received no answer. All he told me was that there was a community center where I could find the leader and that he would be happy to speak with me. I knew the community center he told me about. It was one block from my apartment. It made sense to offer me the interview. If I was followed I lived in the neighborhood and it would not be so obvious why I was there, as opposed to some of the journalists in the hotels across the city.

The man patted me on the back to tell me to walk away. He trusted me with important information. It was a gamble for him but it was the best way to tell the rest of the world what's was happening in the city. I went back to my table, sat down and drank my coffee. I didn't want to leave suddenly, write down anything or to arouse suspicion.

As I drank coffee in my green cup I felt like I was about to explode inside. This was the opportunity of my career and I had accidently stumbled into it. All these circumstances happened so suddenly and now I was handed the keys to the kingdom. This was exactly what I wanted. I was living a fantasy. Through luck and fate I got my story and there was a beautiful woman in my apartment waiting for me. I had won a golden ticket to the front seat of this story. I thought of the excitement of telling my editor and family – and especially Astrid.

That night Astrid was now lying naked in my bed. She seemed to have no concern for riots, danger or anything outside of my borrowed apartment. She looked at me and smiled. My eyes wandered around the room and landed on her mysterious leather bag.

She saw me look at her bag and in my periphery I saw her make an unpleasant face.

“What?” I asked

“Nothing” She replied.

“Explain the bag.”

“What about it?”

“It's small.”

“Yeah.”

I said nothing in reply. Astrid had a way of ending a conversation that was very intimidating. She rolled away from me like I had somehow hurt her. I decided to let it pass. I knew nothing about how to make her feel better.

Astrid had her secrets and I was some passing fancy of hers; not entitled to the keys to that kingdom. There was darkness inside of Astrid that seemed to get away from her on occasion and then she was reminded of it by the world around her. Whatever darkness was inside Astrid overwhelmed her in this moment.

“I have a big interview tomorrow.” I said, hopping to change the subject.

“Ok.” She was distant.

“One of the leaders of the resistance.” She didn’t listen. She was in another world – a world of her own creation.

“Astrid are you there?”

“Yeah... I’m here.” I couldn’t see her face but I heard the sound of tears. She was upset but I was too scared to confront her emotions. “Where?”

“Some community center.” I replied “It’s close to here. Just down the street.”

“I saw it. You need to be careful.”

“Nothing is going to happen!” I started to raise my voice.

“You are a boy. Don’t you get that? You think everything revolves around you to watch, to report on - but there is some real danger out there. You are pretending to miss what’s really going on in this horrifying city. It’s in front of your face, Thomas, and you’re too immature to see it.” She got up from the bed. “Wake up!”

“What are you talking about?”

“Don’t go to the community center.”

“I’m going at 10 in the morning. It’s safe... it’s fine.”

“How do you know!”

I had no answer to Astrid’s challenge. I sunk into the bed and waited for her to calm down. I never bothered to ask why she was saying all this or why she was so angry at me. I’m sure she had her reasons. I’m sure there was something inside her that made her react this way, but I wasn’t going to dig deep enough to find out.

She opened her bag and put on underwear and a tank top. She walked into the kitchen and got the other bottle of Bourbon I had smuggled on the train. She poured me a drink and poured one for herself. She walked it over to me and served me like a sick child.

“Bottoms up.” She said.

As usual I drank what was served to me without question. She drank slowly and watched me drink like a hawk. “What’s the occasion?” I asked. She smiled but her eyes were red and puffy from being so upset. “After this story... would you like to go to Tunis?” She made an expression of pain, “Or someplace else?”

“Maybe.” She replied.

“Astrid... I don’t want to be some passing thing. I want to see you after this. Wherever you are going... I want to go too. Because... Jesus... I sound like an idiot... you’re the type of woman I want to be around. Is that stupid?”

“No.”

“Maybe we could do more together. I want to know you. I don’t know anything about you but I feel so... connected... like I just want to learn about you. I know I’m a child and want more than I can have, but... you know... I want you.”

I put my drink down and lay back down in the bed. Astrid knelt down next to me, stroking my head. My eyes got heavy and everything started to blur into pleasant colors. I saw Astrid through all of this tending to me.

“That sounds nice Thomas.” Her voice had an unreal echo to it. She started to become a dream to me. The line between reality and dreams was fading away. I was falling asleep and it was so appealing. Knowing I was in Astrid’s arms made it even more divine.

As I slept I remembered lunch earlier with Astrid that day. We avoided going to a restaurant just in case there was violence. Instead we went to the little shop underneath my building and picked up some basic provisions. We ate lunch on the floor of the apartment. We decided not to drink to save the alcohol for later that night.

Astrid put the whole meal together herself. I stood there and watched. She was in the kitchen preparing a plate for me. As she did this I started to wander around the apartment. I saw her leather bag on the floor and her busy in the kitchen. I squatted down and started to undo the buckle. I lifted the bag a little - it felt like it was filled with metal.

“What are you doing!” She yelled at me from the kitchen.

“Nothing.”

“You were about to go through my bag.” She yelled.

“No I wasn’t” I lied.

“Don’t be a brat, don’t lie to me. I said to stay out of my bag. What part of that did you not understand?”

“I didn’t realize it was so private. I was just curious.”

“I don’t care if you are curious! Don’t touch the bag!” She walked out of the kitchen and brusquely handed me a plate with a sandwich on it. “Eat your lunch.” She started to walk away. I didn’t want to see Astrid angry. I wanted to fix all her problems. I kissed her. It was the only solution to her problems that I could think of

We kissed and made love for the rest of the night. I stopped only to eat the sandwich and forgot all about dinner. We slept on and off for the rest of the night. We watched the sunset reflected off white plaster on the outside buildings. We saw the darkness of night and the formations of riot police anticipating another protest in the night. The minaret called for prayer as the sun set and we dozed off.

I was only woken up later that night by the minaret’s call at 4 am. She was awake looking at a clock She had forgotten momentarily whatever it was that bothered her so much earlier that day. And that is the best memory I have of Astrid... that night when we were happy.

I awoke in my bed and the apartment was empty. The sounds of screaming in the streets made me focus very quickly. I had an awful headache and looked around for Astrid. I stood up and looked out the window into the daylight. There was smoke in the air people were shouting and screaming. Riot police were running in all directions trying to control the undefined chaos.

I was scared and confused. I started to get dressed as quickly as I could. As I put on my second shoe I saw Astrid’s bag open and empty. Fear overtook me. Astrid’s bag was left open for me to find and scrutinize. I ran out the door and onto the streets.

People were plowing into me. Some bleeding, others covered in black dust. Women and men were screaming and praying all around me. Riot police were beating back crowds of people. Police officers violently swung their batons and people became masses of hysteria and not individuals.

I looked to the sky and saw black smoke rising in the distance. The police had no control over the streets so I started to run towards the smoke. As I got closer the chaos grew, the people seemed more hysterical; the police more brutal. People screaming all types of different names in many languages. Everyone reached out for someone whom they might have lost in the smoke and chaos.

I felt the heat a second before I saw the flames. The community center was on fire and people were running towards it trying to get to whoever they believed was inside. Riot police were beating them back, trying to establish some sort of control over the hysteria. People were covered in blood and roamed through the chaos as if they were looking for something.



I paused and looked up at an old clock tower. It was noon. I missed my interview, I missed the opportunity and my life was saved in the process. I thought of the empty leather bag sitting on the floor of the apartment. I thought of the green cup and the café, the minaret at four in the morning. I felt so lost; I wanted someone to explain to me what was happening. I wanted Astrid.

I started to shout, “Astrid!, Astrid!, Astrid where are you?” I became one of the hysterical people scrambling in all the smoke and fire. “Astrid!” I called. “I’m sorry Astrid... I should have done better... I’m a child, Astrid... do you hear me, I’m a child. I didn’t know how real it all was. I don’t realize it’s real Astrid. Astrid! I’m a child, please come back to me.”

I thought of her empty bag. I knew this fire and Astrid were connected. She wasn’t in it. She was somewhere safe and I was here under the flames that she saved me from. Astrid’s soul fluttered over the flames and the chaos to a place where morals are irrelevant and the few nights I showed her constituted joy.

“Astrid!” I screamed again.

I thought of her empty bag and her body touching me. The chaos grew louder and more present. Reality took me away and told me that Astrid was gone. All I get is an empty leather bag. Whatever instrument of destruction was in it, I was too naive to understand. Because of my immaturity all these people suffer except me. I was spared by Astrid, I was pardoned from the judgment others received.

I am a child pretending to be a man. I was a child with the heart and soul of Astrid and the world will pay for it with the wrath of a beautiful woman. Astrid, queen of the metropolis, Astrid the wicked and merciful, Astrid, beauty, death and sex. The cops swung their batons randomly at the crowd. I kept screaming for Astrid. Finally a shot was fired and a silence froze both rioters and police for a moment. It was the first shot fired during the unrest. Then the crowd roared and surged and people became more and more violent. After that the riots became wilder, unorganized. Infrastructure was destroyed, marshal law was declared and I was trapped in the city. I didn’t want to leave. I wanted Astrid to come back to me. I wanted to see her. I keep remembering screaming her name in front of the fire. Only I know who she is. Only I know the delicate touch of this terrorist. I don’t care, I live in the city for Astrid. I am just a little child, a boy in Astrid’s Metropolis.



## Adrian Stumpp

### The Bishop's Celestial Wife

To all those who judge without even knowing me, I say hold it, hear me out, I got a side too, and Bishop Hearthway is prejudiced against me for obvious reasons I don't blame him for, but, anyway, I deserve to speak up. What my relations are with Sister Hearthway is complicated, and you'll see once you know facts from hearsay. Unfortunate for me no one wants to listen, so my final recourse is just to tell it like it happened and hope someone down the line cares enough to learn. Alls I can do is keep faith in that.

Mom and Dad divorced two years ago, and it's understandable it messed with my mind. So I got in trouble, drugs and girls a little bit; it wasn't too bad, but Mom got paranoid and fearful and determined the best thing for me would be a dose of decent folks and religion and so forth. Beings she was in no straights to provide, she sent me up to Ogden to live with her sister Aunt Davina, Uncle Boss, and my cousin Sharlee who I hate.

I was baptized Latter-Day Saint, but Mom and Dad weren't regular with it, and I strayed. But I got to say, with Aunt Davina and Uncle Boss I went to Sunday school and learned about Jesus and Brother Joseph, Nephites and Lamanites, and the early Saints making their pilgrimage to the desert, and I really felt the Holy Ghost there for a while. Then I got to pondering so much paradox and the nature of the still small spirit of the Lord. I determined it wasn't anything but my taste for dramatic emotions taking advantage, the same as with a tragical play or movie, and it was a mistake to prescribe the feeling to the Lord; it was just sympathy for human suffering. I thought this a long while but played the devotee in public. I reasoned like how some places there were Catholics and others Baptists, or Methodists, or Jews, or Buddhists, here the people were Mormons, and it would be disrespectful of our culture for me to blow the whistle.

Some people been calling me an apostate, Sharlee chief among them, but the truth is I'm as Mormon as the rest of them, allowing for different reasons. I collect fast offerings and bless sacrament and attend Priests Quorum regular, same as them. When I came to be with Aunt Davina and Uncle Boss I even confessed in Bishop Hearthway's office my carnal sins, including nocturnal emissions and my habit of personal interference, an embarrassment, especially since the Bishop gave me all kinds of advice for avoiding temptation, like playing yo-yo when I got the urge, or always going to the bathroom with the door open so I couldn't have privacy to defile my stuff.

Well, me and Sharlee were adversaries from starts, and she came off righteous calling me shameless for voiding bowels with an open door, and then when I pulled it closed, she said I was a pervert. Uncle Boss made a speech in my defense about how it was only natural for a teenaged boy to touch his stuff, and that's what made it sinful, the natural man being an enemy to God, but all the same there was nothing suspicious about it. He was only trying to help but embarrassed me more, and then Sharlee started spreading vicious lies about me at the high school. Her scheme to get all the decent kids to shun me succeeded, but what she didn't anticipate was all the scarlet girls took interest. This made me miserable with a devil's potency I was barely penitent enough to withstand. I had to rub hot peppers on my hands before going to bed for discouragement and sometimes I forgot to wash it off before urinating in the morning. Those times were awful for me and my only comfort was that Sharlee was too ugly not to be chaste.

I spent all my leisure pondering books. Some were spiritual like the scriptures and *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, but some were secular, too, like *Of Mice and Men* and *A House Made of Dawn* assigned from school. Alls I did was mind my own business but Sharlee couldn't be satisfied; she caught me pondering and called me a dork. I told her that made no sense, since *dork* means *a whale's penis*, in case she didn't know. She got all offended and tattled to Aunt Davina that I was vulgar and talking dirty to her. I pointed out it was Sharlee who said it; I only told her what it meant. I called her a strifemonger, self-righteous, spiteful, a bearer of false witness, and accused her sly-like with Shakespeare, saying, "*Thou be as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shan't not escape calumny!*"

Sharlee ran red with shock probably because until now I'd always spoken to her with the utmost respect, as if she deserved to be addressed like a lady. Sharlee was unfathomably ignernt and had no idea the truths I'd stacked against her, but even an idiot like her could tell she'd been assaulted, and she slapped me.

I said, "But if one smites thee on the right cheek, turn him the other also."

Sharlee, my nemesis, was smart enough to see I'd beaten her at her own game, and crumbled on the floor bawling like a girl. Uncle Boss took her away to be comforted, and Aunt Davina gave me a good talking to.

She said she understood it must be hard for me to come away from everything I knew about the world to Utah where the way of life was so different and I didn't have any friends, but I would have to learn to love Sharlee like cousins. Aunt Davina said she knew I'd have a rough go of it ever since she and my mom were sisters together in Texas, and Mom took an uncouth trucker for a husband, and lit out for Truth and Consequence, and shunned the straight and narrow path. She said I mustn't blame Mom, though, cause she sent me to Aunt Davina out of love; Mom knew a boy like me, born into the Lord's covenant, shouldn't come of age in a gentile land. Aunt Davina asked me please apologize to Sharlee, but I refused. Later Sharlee came to me so pious the holy spirit must have been rancid inside her, and forgave me insulting her.

The next day Aunt Davina told me she'd prayed up a sweat over me and found me a way to spend afternoons out-of-doors in the service of the Lord's host. Bishop Hearthway, she said, wanted to hire me for a groundskeeper. So that's how I came to spend so much time with the bishop's celestial wife, Sister Hearthway.

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First thing I noticed about the Bishop's wife was her ivory blonde hair cut short like a helmet framing a pretty face. She was five-and-a-half feet tall with a natural suntan, soft spoken, matronly in demeanor but debutante in carriage, and unfortunately prone to cellulite. But all that's superficial and ends; I have never met another person remotely like Noelle Hearthway. She is unique for grace and warmth throughout the world.

Bishop Hearthway's house sat on a half-acre with high fences. The back yard, landscaped in inclining tiers that grew steeper the farther away from the house you went, had the appearance of an outdoor stadium. At the bottom was a lap pool with a concrete sun porch and a small grass lawn. Flower beds scaled the upper tiers studded with big rocks and tall trees. I'd taken hand at some landscaping back home and knew well what to do. It wasn't too hard work taking care of the bishop's yard so long as you stayed on top of it, and some things, like planting flowers, I enjoyed. The grass had to be mowed, mulched, and fertilized, the flowerbeds weeded and checked for pests, and sometimes the trees needed pruning. The Bishop said not to bother watering—he'd do that himself—but there was wood chips to throw and a pool to clean and so forth, and by the time it was all on accounts I was fairly smote.

"Toward summer's end you'll mind the young fruit trees. If the fruit gets too heavy it'll break the branches," The Bishop told me. "Only don't eat them. They're not ripe yet, and you'll get sick if you do."

Come summertime Sister Hearthway laid on a lawn chair next to the pool sun tanning the whole while I did the job. She brought lotions and oils and sunglasses, sometimes the Top 40 station on a small radio, sometimes homemaker magazines. She wore a classy one-piece swimsuit striped red and white like a peppermint, and smiled at me politely but

never said a word. She'd just bake to a nice color on the front, flip over and bake the back, and when she heard me gathering the equipment to clean the pool she'd take her things in the house. Most times I forgot she was there.

Of an afternoon she called to me where I crouched weeding high up the terrace. She'd brought out sun-tea with sugar and asked for company. She asked me about Mom and Dad, how I got in trouble, how I liked it with Aunt Davina and Uncle Boss, did I enjoy what I learnt at school, how was summer vacation, did I like the ward, and so forth. She said she admired the courage it took to make like the prodigal son, humble and ready to be cleansed in the gospel's love.

We had something in common since she'd gone through the same thing when she was a few years older than I. She'd had a sweetheart, and it'd gone farther than it ought. She'd been a hellion then, she said, of the variety that thought she knew the world better than did her parents or even the Prophet's word. She used to have dreams about doing something bad to the ward house, nothing particular, just something horrible, like spray painting naughty words in the chapel, or setting it on fire. "You must think I'm a monster!" she kept saying through her fingers, but I couldn't see reason for embarrassment. I knew from experience bad thoughts to be common for a troubled youth, and told her so. She'd believed in her sweetheart, and he'd let her down, something the church had never done. Seeing now her world crumbled for love of a false hero she returned post-haste to the Lord's plan for eternal salvation, never to doubt again, and never to look back. The talk against her had been so horrid she'd begged her father not to make her go to church, but he'd insisted, and so she understood what I must've gone through.

Honestly, I hadn't paid attention to what was being said against me, since I didn't know these people or care to. It hadn't been awful as she might've feared. Sister Hearthway was glad for me. She asked if I'd ever been in love, which I hadn't. She sighed and told me it was the most beautiful feeling in the world, and she knew someday I would understand. I felt real warm to Sister Hearthway, like we shared something special and rare, and she felt the same for me, too, cause she told me if ever I needed anything to call her first.

My sleep was fettered entire after that. I couldn't rest for worry of Noelle Hearthway. She hadn't said anything negative against her daddy, but I inferred detective-style from what she'd said that he wasn't a very nice man. After her sweetheart had run off she was a broken girl, impressionable, and easy to take advantage. Her daddy lorded it over her and pressed her into being righteous out of fear and humiliation. He introduced her to Samuel Hearthway, seven years older than her, established, respectable, and so forth. She was melancholy talking about it, not that she didn't love the Bishop now, but she'd had to learn it after she was already his wife for time and all eternity.

We were warm friends after that, and the more I studied Sister Hearthway the more obvious I saw she wasn't satisfied in life. Next time I tended the Bishop's yard, she asked right off would I smear suntan lotion on her back. I felt immodest but did it anyways, though later I needed double hot peppers on my hands and prayed up a storm for forgiveness. She called me Levi and I called her Noelle like how friends do. She had me for sun-tea while her babies napped, and asked about my thoughts and so forth, and I asked hers, too.

One day the middle of June we were extrapolating scripture when she got solemn and sat the books away and said she wasn't feeling the spirit. She said she didn't feel the spirit much these days and asked if I thought bad of her. I'd suspected as much for a while but couldn't think bad of her for all the world. She put her hands over her eyes and said, "Oh, but you don't know what I've done!" And she was up running to the house. Came back all nervous giggles with a black gallon garbage bag. She dumped it out on the sun porch and stood over it like a triumph. "This is all stuff I've stolen!" she gasped.

It was good as Christmas. Dolls, clothes, movies, CDs, tools, furniture polish, a fancy cigarette lighter, high heeled shoes, cheap jewelry, some nice cuff-links, a set of oven mitts, my Uncle Boss' personally engraved pen set, and all manner of things—even a Bible.

I said, "You stole all this?"

"This isn't even all of it! I've got more! Bags and bags of it in the garage," she pointed, "Some from people's houses, some from department stores, hardware stores, gas stations, all kinds of places. It's trickier if the store has theft detection devices, but I discovered ways around that, and mostly it's the easiest thing in the world. They never even suspect me! Nice young woman with two kids and dressed like I am—why steal anything if I can buy it? And that's what you do, you always buy something!"

"This is a problem you got. I read about this kind of thing."

"No, I'm not a kleptomaniac. They're compelled to steal, even though they don't want to, they feel bad about it. It makes me feel good!"

I couldn't fathom how that could be. We trolled through the stuff—scarves and golf balls and neck ties—me in a world of puzzle and she pure ecstatic.

"Not so crystal clear now, am I," she bragged. "If there's anything you like, you can have it. I've never shown any of this to anyone before, and I've got tons of it. Help yourself, really!"

I said I better not, but it upset her severe so I took a silk neck tie to put her at ease. She worried I wouldn't like her now I knew how bad she could sometimes be. I said the Bishop was the luckiest man living, and she blushed.

"Sometimes I don't think the Bishop feels so lucky," she said. She had this diminutive way of talking about herself, and it made me mad.

"Then he's stupid as he is lucky."

She was visible shocked, but I was so hot with feeling I didn't care.

"Oh, don't listen to me," she said, "I know he loves me, he's just busy so much, I wish he'd take time to kiss me once in a while."

Well, I was lit. I said, "If I was your husband I'd kiss you thousand times a day. I don't mean nothing by it, I'm just saying.

I already decided some day I want my wife to be same as you, and I can't see any sense in the Bishop being so negligent.

He's a fine man, I won't say he ain't, but what I learnt is even the best got things they oughta do better."

Sister Hearthway flushed a good crimson, said, "It's nice of you to say so." After that things got all awkward between us,

and I said I better get back to those gardenias before it's time to clean the pool. At the time I gave it no thought, but after everything went how it did I know it was important. What went on between me and Sister Hearthway happened that day.

All gossips want to hear is the later stuff, but I'm telling you everything had been decided by then.

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Bishop Hearthway it seems made a good salary air traffic controlling at the international airport. He was formerly a charter pilot, before that a military man, and before raised respectful of good old fashioned family values, which is why he worked so heavy all week and Sister Hearthway stayed home minding the babies. I know cause Sister Hearthway told me. She told me she could work or not work, it didn't matter to her, but it was important to the Bishop. That's how she was with most things: she couldn't care one way or the other, and if the Bishop had a preference she'd just as soon please him.

She didn't want me to do anything but listen to her chatter after she saw I didn't condemn her thievery. It was hard pulling weeds with her telling me all about babies and snoring bishops, and fetching me to smear suntan lotion, and reach high pans in the kitchen, and which blouse did I prefer, purple or white. She had questions about male pattern baldness and the geography of Alaska and all variety of non-interest. I'd make to go home, and she'd stall any way she could, all anxiety, like she expected me to say something I couldn't guess. She called me to the porch for sun-tea and said, "I heard you have a girlfriend now."



It wasn't so, and I gathered she heard from Sharlee whose heart all vinegar and antichrist took no pleasure in the world sweeter than spreading rumors. It was harmless enough saying I had a girlfriend, but Sharlee meant to further blacken my name through innuendo, and I told Sister Hearthway as much. She said, "Wouldn't you like a girlfriend?"

"Sometimes, but not much. I had enough visits to the Bishop's office for a lifetime, and my experience is all girls get me is trouble," which unfortunately persists to the present hour.

She smiled at my admission, "So you must be a very good kisser, then?"

"Probably not. I'm pretty out of practice with it. I guess not bad, though. All my favorite movies have kissing so I must've learned from the best."

She laughed. "You can't learn kissing from movies. You have to practice. I'd let you practice on me if you promised not to take it seriously."

I felt a panic coming on. My throat swelled up, and I heard a ringing like I just been socked. I knew what she said didn't mean what I heard, and I felt guilty for perverted thoughts. I didn't know how to respond for fear she'd know how I took it and find out my adulterous proclivity which was constant around Sister Hearthway. She must've known from the look on my face cause she made real concerned and said, "It's not *real* kissing. We can't do that. I would never think of that and you shouldn't either. But there's no harm in teaching you how to kiss so long as it's just practice. Even the Bishop would say so."

She closed her eyes and I kissed her. She said that wasn't too bad but softer this time and a little longer. After that she said open your mouth a little and press. Then she said keep your eyes open til the last moment so you get a good seal on it. Fifteen minutes I bet we kissed and she critiqued each one. Then she said that was enough for today, you're already getting better, and went in the house so I could trim shrubs in peace.

\*

I worked a fiery pace after that cause Sister Hearthway insisted all my work be done before she'd instruct me in the smooching arts. I got a decent amount of practice that month and next. At that point if anyone would've asked who's my best friend, I'd said Noelle Hearthway. Sad, since I don't think she esteemed me the same. Once her babies were out like lights and all my chores complete she'd sit me on the livingroom sofa and straddle over me for the next lesson. Sometimes if I got too hot for her she'd have to put her knees on my wrists or hold my hands in hers since it was so indecent for me to touch her. We'd lie on the floor so nothing of us touched but for our mouths, the most delicious torture I ever knew.

She taught me all the flavor and craft of fine necking. How not to put my tongue too far back in the mouth, but not to be feeble; confident, like dancing, a gentleman's got to take the lead but be sensitive, too. Linger, Sister Hearthway taught, caress the teeth with the tongue, and so forth. She was a diamond kisser, and I suppose I cleaned up nice enough.

Sometimes we sat in her pristine car that smelled of fresh laundry and listened to raunchy rap music she'd stole, which she admitted to not liking but for the cuss words. Them were some of the best memories I got.

But on occasions Sister Hearthway got so blue and mournful, my heart felt sick for her. One August Tuesday we were laughing and carrying on with stories of my troubles in Truth and Consequence and her stealing all kinds of fantastic goods. Her giggle dried up. She was a long time very quiet and ignored all my attempts to jolly her.

"I'm a bad person," she said. "I'm a bad wife and a bad Latter-Day Saint."

"No," I told her, but she couldn't be convinced. Her testimony of the Lord's plan of eternal salvation was in sorry states again, just like when she was a girl. She told me she knew full well the Church was true and she had no desire to dispute it, but just the same she didn't care no more. Being born to the truth had robbed her of the illusion of natural life, which made her sad since the illusion seemed so much more beautiful than the truth. She couldn't understand why God would make it so. "I wish I could say swear words without feeling so guilty," she admitted. "I've only had two boyfriends in my whole life. I've never been to a rock concert. I've never been drunk. Just one time I wish I could get drunk and be more worried about my liver than my salvation."

"That's a predicament," I admitted but insisted she had to do what the spirit told her, and if the spirit told her to go to a rock concert and drink like a wino who'm I to judge? I wouldn't think low of her, just like she didn't think low of me even though Sharlee had made it common knowledge I had a problem with keeping my hands off myself.

She stared at me a good instant shocked. She started giggling and that turned to outright laughter. "You promise?"

"Cross my heart," I said, and I was glad cause she was back in fine spirits. But being a bishop's wife is a mean job and soon the sorrow was back in her, and there were babies to wake and feed, and laundry to starch, press, and hang, and floors to scrub. And after that dinner had to be started and snacks given and Sister Hearthway would have to freshen up and get lipsticked so she'd be at her ravishing best and gorgeous when the Bishop came home. I had mulch to bag and woodchips to scatter, anyways, and was behind schedule enough that the Bishop arrived before I'd gone home. He shook my hand and reminded me again to watch the fruit trees but don't eat the fruit.

But for days I could think of nothing but Sister Hearthway. She was in great pain, and all my bones hurt for her sake. I got the romantic teenaged glands the Bishop had warned against, and I was determined when next we met to heft up all the skill she'd taught me and kiss Sister Hearthway in such a way as to heal her wounds.

"That's very good," she said after only the first few kisses, and she looked pleased. "Congratulations, Levi. You're an expert kisser. The best I know, so there's no reason we should continue risking temptation like this. Unless you can think of one?"

I felt nauseous. "Does that mean you can't teach me to kiss no more?"

"That's right. I've taught you all I know." She ignored how tremblesome that made me, and asked, "Are you in love yet?"

"No," I managed. I felt dizzy and wanted to cry.

"But you want to fall in love, right? Someday? After you've served a mission, maybe?"

"Sure."

"And then you'll want to get married? In the Temple?"

"Yeah."

"And if you want her to have a nice time, there're things you'll need to know. She won't have a clue since she'll be a worthy Temple bride, right?"

"I guess."

"You do want her to have a nice time, right?"

"I guess," I said again, though I was all colors of confused since I knew for sure she couldn't mean what I thought.

"I could teach you. If you want." She had her pants down on her hips, and pressed my hand to the silky temple garments on her rump. The softness of her underneath nearly gave me a seizure. I cursed myself for being such a good kisser and too charming for my own good.

"Stop it," I pled. "I know we can't do *that!* The scriptures say, *'Thou shan't not cleave unto another man's wife!'*"

"Well, of course we can't do *that!* I wouldn't even think about it, and you shouldn't either. But in the other place it's alright. Just not the sacred place."

"That's cleaving," I said, *"It's still cleaving!"*

She smiled patiently. "You haven't been raised in the covenant all your life," she said, "so I understand it's confusing. You can do it in the other place and still be Temple worthy. People do it all the time. I wouldn't expect you to know that."

I shook my head. "Still, that's adultery."

But she assured me if it was in the other place it would not be considered adultery or even fornication. But I wouldn't be swayed. Even I knew the vice of sodomy was expressly forbidden.

"Well, then," she said, "I'll just show you with your fingers."

But I beat it out of there fast as a canyon wind, I swear to God. That night I renounced my romantic ways and my teenager glands all in one fit of prayer. I went to bed with the hot peppers still clasped tight and begged my redeemer forgive me for coming so near seducing poor Sister Hearthway. I could only be thankful I changed course right at the end before both of us were barred Celestial glory come the end of days. I promised the Lord to go back to kissing Sister Hearthway and counting myself elect, since any time she spent kissing me was time not spent doing with someone else what she'd suggested.

\*

Our ward house was a nice one. It sat next door to an elementary school a ways from any main roads. The gymnasium had wood floors—not the carpet ones you find in some churches—and new electrical scoreboards. The gym was located behind the chapel so when lots of people came to sacrament meeting they could open the partition and set up folding chairs on the basketball court. In the lobby hung a huge oil painting of Our Lord and Savior comforting the lambs. The chapel all high ceilings and plaster walls. The pews fashioned of real cherrywood as well as the pulpit. The organ was a beauty, too, and the wall behind where the Bishopric sat was carved wood made to look like the tabernacle organ pipes in Salt Lake City, which anyone with any kind of culture to them knows to be a world renowned spectacle.

Off the side of the Bishopric was a little kitchenette where young men prepared sacrament. I was technically too old for preparing sacrament, but there was a famine on teenagers in our ward, most members being either too old or too young to have them, so it oftentimes fell to me. The room wasn't much bigger than a closet, and that's where I was, filling thimble cups with tap water, when I heard soft steps coming from back of the chapel. Sister Hearthway looked in on me, and I could tell from starts she's mad. Her arms were crossed on her pretty Sunday dress and hard lines roughed her brow.

Earlier the Bishop had asked me for a private conference in his office. I told Sister Hearthway I didn't want to kiss no more cause I was so scared what the Bishop wanted to see me for. She had said there was nothing to be ashamed for since we hadn't done anything sinful. "That is," she'd added, "unless you've been kissing me for real. Have you? I told you it was only okay if we didn't mean it, Levi, but you mean it, don't you."

She caught me there, and it was no use hiding so I didn't bother, but one look at her now and I could tell Sister Hearthway had worried herself half stupid over it. "What did the Bishop want to talk about?"

“Just what a good job I’ve done with the yard,” I said. She didn’t seem satisfied so I added, “He gave me a raise. That’s all.”

“What did he say about me?” she flared.

“He didn’t say nothing about you. You weren’t even mentioned.”

“Liar!” and straightaway her manicured fingers and their sweet lingering of coconut cream lotion were at my collar.

“Just a raise!” I choked, “The trees! A good job, I swear it! That’s all!”

“You’ll sell me out to him first chance you get, I know it!” she said in my ear. She got a crazy look and her tone was sharp as ice-water. I could feel her blinking against my cheek. Her purse was slung over one shoulder and she took something small from it and pressed a square cellophane disc I knew for a condom, without seeing, into my hand. She loosened her grip on my tie, the very one she’d given me, and I stood up straight trying to recompose the suit Uncle Boss handed down to me. It was my only suit and I didn’t want it getting ruined. I said, “I know what we been doing is sinful and if the Bishop knew, he’d be lit. It’s not okay even if it is only pretend. I knew but went along anyway, not cause I’s weak or tempted, but cause I wanted to. It makes me feel good kissing you. And I know it’s not okay for me to cleave to you even if it is in the other place. I searched a bunch through the scriptures and I can’t find it nowhere. I’m not ignernt as you think!”

Sister Hearthway studied what I’d said and for a moment I thought she’d been reintroduced to good sense. “Even the sun-tea you like so much is forbidden according to the Bishop,” she said. “He knows through personal revelation. I have to hide the tea from him. But I won’t anymore. I’ll drink sun-tea when I like, and he’ll have to judge me for it. And he’ll be right to do it, but I don’t care. Righteous or damned, I’m miserable. I want to be free of eternal glory but I can’t do it myself. I need your help. I have to do something irrevocable, something to cut me off. You have to,” she said. “If you love me you’ll have to do this for me.”

She hitched her dress up on her back, pulled her garments to her knees, got from her purse a small jar of lotion, put it to her backside, and leaned against the counter. There was barely room enough in the kitchenette for the two of us doubled over like that. Sister Hearthway said to use the condom, but I knew from Aunt Davina contraceptives were forbidden. Sister Hearthway told me not to be silly, the Bishop used them all the time, news I know would upset poor Uncle Boss who lost an argument on this very theme and suffered a vasectomy that caught infection and convinced him of a wrath worse than Aunt Davina’s.

I tried to stop when she made uncomfortable sounds, but Sister Hearthway said it wouldn't count unless I spilt seed. She closed her eyes and bit her fist while I did my best to get the job done. "Are you close?" she wanted to know, but I was beside myself. This was one problem I'd never had but I guess it was from fear and nerves I couldn't go. Sister Hearthway was real sore and I was scared halfwitted, so she told me hold still and got it mostly done with her hand. But she stopped just before my time, she said, cause she wasn't for sure it would be major enough of a sin if I didn't spend inside her. It was the most horrible time but by and by it was done. And then she was off me smoothing her floral-patterned dress and fixing her hair in the mirror above the sink. I rationalized this way: the Bishop would get her for time and all eternity as his consort and partner in the conjuration of universes in the Celestial Kingdom of Heaven; I could at least have her once on earth.

I had under my bed a microscope Mom sent for my birthday and right after sacrament meeting I rushed home quick as I could to see the magnified contents of the smelly condom. Under the lens the salty waste an iodine tinted graveyard. Scores of the microscopic tadpoles like whale carcasses floated belly up, still as ghosts that would never be. They glided past one another, but I could not detect amongst them the least intimation of divine spark.

\*

Tuesday the Bishop told me come see him in his office next Sunday, there was something he'd have my ear about. I was an awful wreck that whole week, and Aunt Davina only made it worse with all her questions. I hardly thought, considering all the making out I'd done with Bishop Hearthway's wife, it could be a good thing. But Aunt Davina was convinced otherwise. She had it decided the Bishop wanted me to be the new First Councilor in the Priests Quorum. Sharlee, though, started with spreading it through the community I was getting disfellowshipped at best and excommunicated most likely, though for what she wouldn't say. She just threw about a lascivious glance and expected you'd already figured it out.

Next time I came to the Bishop's house I found Sister Hearthway on all fours in the back grass. She'd taken her babies to her sister's for the afternoon and got sloppy with orange juice and vodka she'd stole from the state liquor store. She was in a miserable condition half wild with drink. I fetched water and nursed her to a sitting position. She'd been moaning into the grass, adamant we hadn't committed the sins of fornication or adultery since it'd been in the other place.

A changed heart had her in such a state. She'd tossed through the night with serious prayer and could not be dissuaded of fear. She begged me to pray with her, which I done, especially since she kept slurring the Lord's name, mostly

in vain, and laughed at her own petitions. She told me what we'd done was a mistake and now it was on us both to put the grievous thing to rights.

The Bishop had found her loot in the garage. He finds out everything, it's the Lord's power in him, she was convinced. That's what he wanted to talk about on Sunday; whether or not I'd known about it. Sister Hearthway had got drunk, seeing this would be her last chance since she was determined to repent once and for all. She'd already decided to tell the Bishop everything we'd done soon as he got home. There was no fighting the power of the Lord in him. I thought that was absurd but didn't want to expose myself as a non-believer by saying so. If she'd wanted to lose her faith she'd have lost it by now, and I discerned it must somehow be doing her more good than harm.

"The Bishop loves the Lord more than me. He's a good Saint and loves nothing more than his God. But you love me more than anything,"

And there was nothing I could say to that neither, because after all it was true and she knew it.

"I thought I didn't need the Lord to be happy, but I was wrong," Sister Hearthway moaned. "Still, it's better to know for sure and pay the price," and then she bent in half and paid a pile of it on the lawn.

I wanted to help Sister Hearthway but knew the only help I could give was not to stop her from telling the Bishop what we'd done. I knew the Bishop would fire me and even bar me from his yard the rest of my life. When Aunt Davina heard what hand I'd played in the whole business, she'd probably send me back to Truth and Consequence, and that shamed me. I felt a powerless disappointment in the face of so much justice. I felt like doing something reckless just to spite the forces stacked against me. I cast about the yard and it occurred to me what to do: I would eat the Bishop's fruit. I climbed the terrace to its highest point near the knotty wood fence that cut the yard off from the surrounding earth. There stood the three young fruit trees, cherries, plums, and apples, little more than saplings tied to wooden stakes to support the weight and guide their straight growth. But I was too late. The ground all around the trees fermented with a carpet of fallen fruit, bird-pecked and withered and rotten in a spray of white crud like confectioner's sugar.

I searched the trees but they were naked. I picked up a spoilt plum and considered what had happened, this once delicious fruit dry as jerky and gone to seed all for want of eating. I was angry at the Bishop for all the beautiful things in the yard, even Sister Hearthway, even myself. A few weeks ago we could have harvested these trees and all of us had more than we could eat. But the Bishop wouldn't let anyone eat the fruit, and now it was ruined, which I thought the first righteous thing to happen all summer.





## Arkava Das

### CA Borat

acrobat

hangs loose from the verandah  
makes clucking noises at  
hens  
oiled  
Fair & Lovely

looking down  
looking up

set the watch  
<<daylight saving?>>

more on rice and moong cooking  
come share  
share NOT! <<Borat smiles>>

Middle East is India  
you write poem and let drop Kali  
it's so <<carnation>>

India

gets off  
in the evening

closes windows  
squats against wall  
uncurls toes

<<today i turned myself inside out  
Raja Yoga is child's game>>

<<Borat, you so clever!!>>  
sings a famous caterwaul.

**hard on**

come to

blows

fair easy

get stripped

come on

the strong

lynch            mob

wheel           away

to be

eager

to be

good

be so

(Telus)

pfft

galantine

**ask you**

lift & swing  
enuf hurtling mani  
tonnes  
make shout  
work  
of dream  
work  
patched with  
a quarter  
ellipsoid  
hickey growing  
back flipping  
places conveyer  
sets  
crowding out  
Mac Beta  
who breaks  
down  
the germ  
with innasci fell  
clutches the  
lumbago  
spinning in  
remedial space.

## Ariel Lynn Butters

### Magic Trick

We snuck out because I thought there were swings  
There weren't; you liked the color scheme,  
the Himalayan berries covering the slide,  
with which you later showered my hair.  
You climbed up the yellow fire pole backwards  
and I asked, "Where's your hat, Captain?"  
You asked me for a destination, any one,  
but I'm no Atlanta, no Miami.  
I'm a hammock, a notebook, a coconut.  
Sharing this moonlight and child's play,  
I'm fooled again that we exist together,  
but you had me in Goldin's box.  
Spin me around, saw me in half, flip me over,  
will I be whole on the other side?  
I knew it was fleeting; I took pictures.  
Thinking I would feel close to you,  
they now represent the distance.  
With me behind the viewfinder,  
you always looked away uncomfortably,  
except for that final photo.  
Into the back of your aged Jeep,  
you were loading a shitty self-portrait.  
You looked down, then up and *click*,  
I caught you.

You were never mine to catch,  
but these photos are mine to pour over,  
smudge with tears, rip your face in half,  
and finally, when it's time to move on,  
set aflame and watch the smoke rise  
like that of the cigarette we shared  
at three in the morning  
in a gravel-pitted, plastic-coated fantasy.

**Abbie J. Bergdale**

**Still, you look at me**

cross. Like the fight was my fault  
line splitting in two  
parts—you chose: one blood  
line, foolish, cold, your tongue  
fever strong as a straight  
line wind throws snow gusts  
across bare skin, or a laugh  
line that masks the way it ached  
to bend for you, to break, to bear a  
cross. Like your fight was my fight.

## Oak Park

Your cheek bones hard set suggest  
I shouldn't waste time  
on you. Still, here we  
are, tucked and groping  
in this thick mess of willow,  
over there—  
the empty dugout.

It was because you never  
asked, you told—no, you  
showed the so many slow  
and gentle ways  
you'd hurt me. And you did.

A decade, and still hours  
later: isn't it real? The willow?  
The dust off the diamond?  
Therapists call this the euphoric stage.  
And it isn't real—  
none of it.



## April A.

### 1. Associations

My days remind me of the endless autumn rain,  
The fascinating, charming melancholy.  
The sky is crying for my bitter loss -  
The loss of one hour's eternity.  
And I know the rain is bound to cease,  
But my sorrow will shape just another rain cloud,  
And the steps on our crossing ways  
Will be only for always erased.

And my freedom reminds of a foreign land,  
No destination is one, true home  
That has never existed at all.  
And wherever I go, I will only get lost.

And my love reminds of a wilted rose,  
Its eternal beauty is evanescent;  
While you're breathing in its light April scent,  
Least of all you expect it to hurt you,  
But time leaves you just pain of its pretty thorns.

And my truth reminds of an ancient language,  
Mystic manuscripts only few can read,  
But no one's ever got to the core,  
Where the mystery is way too obvious.

So, my whole life's like a chess game  
With one possible ending - it's draw.

2.If

My pen is bleeding on the paper,  
As love is bleeding in my heart.  
Each word's the bare truth -  
Put these words to music,  
Play this music on the strings of my soul,  
If you don't tear them, I'm yours.

If you see me dying,  
Will you hold my hand through this hell?  
Will you save me like you did once?  
You know where to find the way  
To the temple of my hope.  
And I don't know...

If only I had died tomorrow,  
Would you've turned back time,  
So that tomorrow'd never come?  
And if I asked you  
To kill me with your bare hands,  
Just not with your indifference... would you?

I can't breathe the air of fear.  
I'm suffocating... will you hold me in your arms  
To chase the fear away?  
Will you breathe life into me?  
Will you forgive me the weakness of one day  
If I'm your shield for all the lifetime?

If I could live an hour of your life,  
Dwell in your inner world that's just your own,  
I'd turn to real your most precious dreams.  
And if you realize  
I love you with each ounce of my heart,  
Will you ever say goodbye?

### 3. Victim

You wake up at six: intercourse with your spouse.  
You're under the blanket with tightly shut eyes.  
At seven a postman arrives to your house  
With two printed portions of scandals and lies.

You turn the TV on. Your damn daily dose  
Of lies is exceeded with fresh morning news.  
You firmly believe global changes are close -  
You have no idea they've hidden the truth.

In life you've achieved less than nothing, you're poor  
Though you were the best both at college and school.  
Well, man, who are you? You are not even sure.  
In fact, you're a pawn in the game of a fool.

#### 4. Hope-less

Deceptive freedom. Honest lies.  
A charming, yet so dreadful guise.  
Forgotten memories. Two hearts  
Are in my chest, both torn apart.  
Strong weakness of a wilted rose.  
My two reflections, one disclosed.  
A shadow of changing shapes.  
The sorrow of different shades.  
A bleeding wrist of strangers' faith.  
A crystal tear on no one's face.

Odd soulless hearts in mystic frames,  
You have no voices, know no shame!  
Just when you're dumb, your words are true.  
I'm hopeless. Well. But who are you??  
You're nothingness behind green eyes,  
Mistakes that never happen twice.  
You're just a riddle for a day  
To figure out - and stay away  
From all this simply perfect mess,  
Where I am hope, and you - are less.

## 5. Proud

The same nasty job and the same decorations,  
The desperate faces of helpless sweatpals,  
Bright shouting ads at half-dead metro stations,  
Then evenings with you in a dark empty cell.

The price of ten dollars for some inspiration,  
Some spirits, some sex and a pointless nightmare,  
Brain womitting words for another creation,  
The words squirting hatred and bleeding despair,

No money for life, but great plans and beginnings...  
They hate me for pride and the truth brought them ripe.  
I've chosen life with just one subtle meaning,  
They've chosen one of a stereotype.

I say what is true and I live what is fair!  
I laugh at those dull social-networking mugs  
Who tell me: "Young thing, you're nothing in square",  
The kids of myspaces and audiodrugs.

The lights in the streets take me back to November -  
Complete isolation of heart, blood and mind.  
The ones that I loved still forget to remember  
A beautiful devil - the one of this kind.

The guise of my freedom has changed. Don't you care  
That everything else has remained? It is me!  
Alone in the crowd, both here and there,  
And fucking damn proud - more sober, more free.

24 Huntington Ave, Buffalo, NY, United States

Address is approximate



# BLAZEVOX 2KX

buffaloFOCUS  
Aaron Lowinger



# The House at 24 Huntington Ave.

By Aaron Lowinger

buffaloFOCUS  
Spring 2010

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The House at 24  
Huntington Ave.

## All the marijuana in Kenmore matches wits with all the whisky in heaven : an introduction

buffaloFOCUS is a special section of BlazeVOX that looks at the writing of one writer from our hometown, Buffalo, NY. It is a real pleasure to present the writings of Aaron Lowinger. He is a real poetic force, working with House Press and setting up and organizing poetry readings with Just Buffalo Literary Center. And to be truthful, with full disclosure, I consider him a very good friend.

He is a poet of place, using Buffalo, NY as a position for his poems to exist. More than a backdrop, Buffalo holds a special place for Lowinger. He grew up in a house down the street from the apartment Ted Berrigan and Alice Notley lived while in Buffalo. He deals with this beautifully in the talk this section takes its title from, *The House at 24 Huntington Ave*. While dealing with Berrigan's poetry, Aaron here best describes his own work: "The poem resonates in typical Berrigan fashion. It's clear and reads like an occasional poem for the everyday." Here are poems that blend sincerity with anarchy, beatific narratives mixed with experimental language forms, and social justice with near-drowning irony. I truly admire how easily Aaron can tell such a powerful story while bypassing all the traps of convention. I hope you enjoy these poems as much as I do!

Rockets, Geoffrey

:-)

## WORK POEM

presently in Buffalo  
crisp Sunny January weekday  
the history of isolated moments  
counts up  
blue sky oblivion  
they are not here  
but quietly  
like unseen surface scratches  
on my lens

I buy shampoo at Rite-Aid  
the transaction is not simple

I eat lunch  
and I see an awful man

wasting time  
is experimentation in the obvious

the things that are always true  
like doing nothing

everything you do  
is important  
it all counts  
towards something

stave off death  
and do no harm

Poem for ROBIN B.  
on the Occasion of her Thirtieth Birthday

We hadn't moved for days  
or bathed or talked much  
the earth was at siege  
no one was outside  
we were scared of violating curfew

The snow was deep  
and the cops had killed a teenager

It was as if a new set of laws  
had taken hold of the apartment  
the window plastic went in and out  
like a lung

On the fourth day of the siege  
Robin devised to write a collaborative letter  
I was thankful for the diversion  
she started it as a formal complaint  
a list of problems that needed to be resolved  
guns, healthcare, higher education  
women's rights, gay rights,  
tougher hate-crime prosecution  
environmental conservation  
and a jobs-for-poets program  
called PAW  
poets in the American workforce  
she repeatedly called for the public  
and elected officials to realize  
what a poet could do for their communities  
and what a having a 'poet in the family'  
meant to current and future generations  
in terms of informed and comprehensive decision making  
emotional and personal enrichment  
attention to the spoken word at all times  
the ability to see through profound bullshit—  
that poets were the guardians of culture  
not subject to the trends and business of the art world  
not rehearsing the stale and/or antiquated forms of music  
not writing cheap shtick fiction  
peppered with erudite references to patronize lawyer-types

Poets are the guardians of culture  
but not the culture of the art gallery  
or the philharmonic or the cultural center  
rather the root of culture that spawns  
these listed architectures as sites of official culture  
we saw it as a way to revitalize  
what has become a tired exercise  
in the representation of American art

And it's here we ran into a problem  
if we had official democratic PAW positions  
available across the country  
how could it not become political  
as all things involving money and position are  
how would we prevent this system  
from becoming something else  
something just as vapid and easily dismissed  
as the things we were attempting to distinguish ourselves from?

It was a relief in those dark days in Robin's apartment  
to be onto something bigger than the immediate  
the snow the police the all day beans and rice meals  
we drew up logos for PAW  
Robin drew up a poetry tiger with thick meaty paws  
I drew up a skeletal paw with Latin words  
extending as each digit  
I remember one of them was VERITAS  
we checked the internet for precedents of any such organizations  
we searched "poet worker" "poet public" "poet position"  
"poet ambassador" "poet economy" "poet anarchist"  
until we found Stephane Mallarme's declaration

"There is only one man who has the right to be an anarchist, Me, the Poet, because I alone create a product that society does not want, in exchange for which society does not give me enough to live on"

This kept us going for a few hours into the night  
but what bothered us ultimately was the notion that society did not desire us  
we knew they were many poets around us and above us  
poets with day jobs  
poets in suits  
poet plumbers  
poets who didn't write poems  
poet presidents

poet murderers  
poets who don't speak English  
poet children  
and other ordinary people  
who just happen to feel it more

By morning  
the snowplows came out  
which was a sign things we're breaking up  
at 11 am the radio said it would be safe to go outside again  
by 5:00 pm  
no curfew  
violence had been contained  
in a few pockets of suburbs  
where cars were being systematically torched

We were struggling to reach a resolution for PAW  
the best I could do is to say  
that PAW poets for now can't expect money  
that money will corrupt and turn any organization  
however originally constructed  
into something political and ugly  
that fascist poets may someday take it away or something  
Robin only kinda agreed  
and I wasn't really convinced either  
but we did agree that there was a public vocation as poet  
and those who decided to enter it  
could count on PAW to support them  
not with money though  
so we decided for then to call it  
Poets of the American Workforce  
instead of IN the American Workforce  
that we would keep on working our shitty jobs  
and keep going to college  
understanding there was an unofficial public mandate  
for poets to be poets  
and those in the know  
for now  
would be Poets by Mandate

## Full Spectrum Light

Tomorrow is Veteran's Day  
tomorrow I don't have to work  
and for a more honorable reason than Columbus  
my boss at work gave me two illustrations for Veteran's Day  
one certainly typical  
restaurant scene old man crying into his soup in uniform  
apparently defriended and abandoned  
my boss picked up his bill  
the other just as appropriate  
there will be an early Pearl Harbor reenactment in inland North Carolina  
no boats no planes no Japanese and no Hawaii  
but Veteran's Day makes me think of two things:  
the only Vet I know Geoff Gatza  
and the World War II generation approaching extinction  
no more Tom Brokaw no more World War II vets  
no more holocaust survivors  
and it still feels in terms of cultural memory that WWII was yesterday  
books and films about WWII continue to be extremely successful  
so successful that you can be tricked into thinking that it never ended  
and I think this is how a vet feels too  
Geoff Gatza thought to beat the depression of post-manufacturing Western New York  
by being a Marine in the late 80's and became a sniper  
in Gulf War I, the prequel to the current mess  
and I'm sure this experience changed him  
shooting at and getting shot at  
"Hey wait, this isn't a video game!"  
And since he helped liberate Kuwait  
war hasn't ended, the unending war is the legacy of the industrial society  
which remains even though we have no industry  
and gets carried over into the skewed justice which dominates civil society  
and it pushes you further to the edge and you gotta get settled down  
and Geoff does this by being as productive as he can  
making tons of books writing great poems and getting pissed off  
and other people get just as pissed off  
and all this getting pissed off works itself out electronically over e-mail  
and the book gets made or it doesn't  
but outside of that I see clearly  
that for Geoff the poems keep him company  
and this settles him down

and it settles me down too  
and not all the marijuana Kenmore is gonna change  
that the War goes on nonetheless

A week ago from this Veteran's Day tomorrow  
this city Chicago welcomed the new president  
to more excitement and energy that I'm sure no one in any generation  
but the World War II generation  
can remember in politics  
and coming to do a reading in Chicago  
and thinking of what I can read  
what I can say that about this  
it's impossible to imagine coming to Chicago at this point in time  
exactly 40 years after the Democratic National Convention in the same city  
where our collective political idealism went down in flames  
it's impossible not to say something about this moment in time  
in which the political catch phrase has shifted from 'terror' to 'hope'  
on the surface, it's easy to choose the more comfortable word: hope  
hope is a secular form of faith  
it doesn't resemble anything concrete  
just a change of attitude, a change of paradigm  
a new marketing ploy really  
and it's even shorter than terror by one syllable and two letters  
terror is terrifying, it's senseless random violence  
and it doesn't work well as a slogan as in 'vote for terror'  
it's hard to market unless you hide it under a different ideology  
or multiple ideologies that drive the same point home  
but that masking of terror is analogous to the masking of war  
the masking of organized violent chaos  
Hayao Miyazaki is brilliant film director for this  
and not just for achieving this in films accessible to children  
but in films period  
this latent background of hostility and war  
to which the characters are usually somewhat ambivalently caught up in  
the motives for the conflict are never explained just as in reality  
in which they are never intelligible  
the narrative is never focused on the people in power  
but the people whose emotional life is deeply disturbed by this ambient soundtrack of violence and chaos

Now I'm thinking of yesterday  
which was a superficially disturbing day  
in that it was stormy gray Buffalo weather  
where the air and wind teeters on winter



and all is dark by 5pm and there's no one on the streets  
and also the Bills lost and looked bad doing it  
Eric calls me up he was at the Bills bar in Manhattan where he now lives  
but it was sunny and he was going to meet Chelsea  
and wasn't too worried about the Bills  
because he's partying a lot with all the people  
the people who all used to live and party in Buffalo  
and I'm driving my car around the storm with Becky  
and there's no one on the streets  
Eric is vibrant and happy  
I ask him how his election day was  
and he says I blogged about it  
as if once news were blogged or facebooked  
it becomes one's responsibility to be caught up with one's friend's lives  
or less cynical maybe more cynical it's a plug for his blog  
hey man my blog is really great and you should read it  
(Hope is Change, man)  
because I think of you as an audience when I write it  
but his election day was great it was a huge party  
and as much as I love Eric and hearing his shaky love of all things on the phone  
I get jealous and I miss all my friends who have been leaving Buffalo  
for the past eight years all my very best friends  
and I'm still there and I love it there  
doing my best to go on and settle myself down  
as I would if all my friends were there

CA Conrad talks about the Philly Poetry Hotel  
and I always expected this hotel would unofficially be established  
at Jersey and West, at 100 Plymouth, at 457 Richmond Ave.  
and there were certainly glimpses of it  
but most have moved on  
because that's a poet's job in the classical and now modern sense  
poets stay in hotels (if funded) they don't buy houses  
because they usually move around a lot  
but that's not really the rule

after talking to Eric we go into Organic Market  
and my cousin is working the register  
there's always someone I know working at Organic Market  
and I get the few odds and ends that I buy there  
when I notice a light bulb on sale for \$6.49  
it's a depression-beating long-lasting 'full spectrum light'  
and after that Bills game the diaphanous poetry of 'full spectrum light'  
is really appealing to me in a way that's not unlike hope

and then a postmodern silent dialogue takes place in my mind  
in between the purchase and installation of this full spectrum light  
if this were a light bulb that could make the difference every day  
in that every day would be literally bright more vibrant  
as if the sun was shining even though it's dark now at 5 o'clock  
it would cheer me up immeasurably I would have energy  
I would stay up well past midnight reading checking friend and enemy blogs  
I would not easily fatigue or get lazy or just watch sports  
this full spectrum light gave me hope in some minor way  
but hope all the same that it would look terrific  
and help me not to fall asleep when reading  
I put it in and it was bright and impressive  
it didn't look like an ordinary light bulb  
it looked like a \$6.49 light bulb  
and I put the shade over it but didn't like it so much  
so I took the shade back off but it was too powerful in it's naked stage  
I had to put the shade back on  
later in the evening I had to confess  
it was just a light bulb  
really no different than any light bulb  
but maybe, just maybe it will be

## Day by the Lake, Oswego

Woke up ate babka at Mike's parent's house on the lake  
with bagels and Pike Place Starbucks coffee  
'it's the original Starbucks coffee at their first café'  
Mike says with an ironic grin but I know he loves this shit  
we head on down to Oswego harbor to meet Mike's dad  
who is with his friend and are both retired from Fulton schools  
they get the boat ready for hours, the maiden voyage  
of his new but 'pre-owned' or 'gently-loved' (as the case may be) sailboat  
we go into town to get more coffee and bomb out the men's john  
back to the boat they are almost ready  
Mike's dad is a real man  
we pull the boat out of the harbor with the outboard  
and situate ourselves in the lake  
no wind  
the heat makes me break out and sweat and I feel nauseous  
the boat is barely moving but it's enough to put me under  
this is my first real sailing trip and I'm sick  
I spend my time trying to not pay attention to anything  
Mike's dad keeps looking at the sky and asking the Polish maritime god  
'what are the tell-tales saying?'  
it's clear all the way around with anvil looking clouds  
but warnings of surprise thunderstorms that could flip the boat over  
I watch the sky all day waiting for catastrophe or puking or both  
but no such luck of anything no wind no nothing  
there's dark clouds around us at times forming different aspects  
in all directions studying the weather as the day's visible quantifier  
all I normally never see in the Buffalo or care to heed  
what are the tell-tales telling us?  
we turn the engine on to get the boat down to the lake to another harbor  
passing the three nuclear reactors next to an Audubon society reserve  
Mike's dad points out all the luxurious new homes  
he knows where everyone lives  
the retired cops, the slum lords, an ex-factory owner, the darkening sky  
it ends in a light rain in catfish harbor with sunburns and still queasy  
get in Becky's car and charge it back towards Buffalo  
past the spot I found a huge dead turtle the day before  
and the resident gold finches  
great blues every time I turn around this weekend  
I see various very dark storms along the thruway trying to stay awake  
hearing radio reports about hail, rain and tornadoes  
hit one heavy rain where one car was in a ditch

driving into Buffalo through a kid-filled neighborhood  
in this trashed over world I get a powerful shiver for it  
in my "Let's Rx the World" t-shirt it's all *tikkun olam*  
to bring back the swamps and forests  
I get a one-second chill that wells up my eyes  
and determine to write about it  
see Eden in time for golf-ball sized hail  
Mike calls me up to say his dad just shot a rabid raccoon  
out of a tree down the street  
you know they're rabid when they're out in daylight

## As With Others

you lying lazy awake  
soft night outside sirens  
hot yellow light in  
reading falling asleep  
going limp  
so that she comes  
invites you to bed  
as with others  
hot yellow light in  
mercy abounds out  
yet not within  
drag assign to real bed  
falling asleep reading  
thin sheets for summer  
giving in  
so that she comes  
it only appears to be lost  
and this your meditation  
when alone in sleep  
hot yellow light in  
awake in not your bed  
and this your meditation  
soft night outside sirens  
child asleep in next room  
giving in  
mercy abounds out  
reading falling asleep  
so that she comes  
hot yellow light in  
now a secret in the dark  
and this your meditation  
an inventory of the senses  
blankness in all directions  
yet not within  
does not articulate  
awake in not your bed  
soft night outside sirens  
a freighter carving the haze  
as with others

voices murmuring  
now a secret in the dark  
so that she comes  
thin sheets for summer  
child asleep in next room  
coming to in lazy sweat  
invites you to bed

## Hero

Two recent newsworthy examples of American Heroes  
are Chesley B. Sullenberger and Alex Rodriguez  
the first is a classic example of the kind of hero  
who has greatness thrust upon him  
most of the Sully's landing on the Hudson River was extremely lucky  
I would like to believe there are many experienced pilots  
who may have been able to get just as lucky  
but Sully is doubly lucky in that he landed his plane  
on the Hudson in mid-town Manhattan  
can it get more Hollywood than that?  
he might as well have tried to land the plane on Broadway  
and he and crew could have stepped right into to a ticker-tape parade  
but his fifteen minutes of fame  
have almost all but dried up  
the news cycle moves on

But A-Rod is a true American Hero now  
His pursuit of being the richest, best-looking, and greatest baseball player ever  
was stifling, boring, played out, it wasn't real  
so he did us all a favor by moving to New York  
where all his faults and vices have slowly unraveled  
under the steady scrutiny of the media machinations  
in a city built by information  
and now he has fallen even lower  
and America loves him all the more  
their love may be expressed as disappointment, anger, hate  
but Americans are hungry for a human story  
a person with extraordinary talents  
who is nevertheless filled with self-doubt and confusion  
we love this we identify with this  
we can allow the anger we have with ourselves  
to displaced onto somebody else whose faults are public currency  
I think these undercurrents are the chief reasons for the success  
of Christopher Nolan's Batman movies

Tomorrow I will have my DNA tested  
to see if I am potential match for a bone-marrow transplant  
the Sullenberger in me is ready to try to save lives  
the more immediate A-Rod in me hopes I am not a match  
either way, I want my most heroic act to be this poem  
if I'm not a match my small act will be ignored forgotten

some notch on some miniscule belt of memory  
if I am a match, I expect to shut up completely, burn this poem  
I will try to keep it all a secret  
and enter an A-Rod-like state of meditation  
where I focus on my confusion, my body, and how it all fits  
in the continuum vacuum of living presence on earth  
where I envision some version of myself  
floating on my back outwards into the infinity of black space  
but if I was a match and I did go through it  
I would be a hero  
but I don't want to be a hero  
if I was a hero wouldn't I have to develop some really bad habits  
just to remind myself of my humanity  
and let everyone know that heroism is illusory, fleeting at best  
and works best when confined to a single act  
if you take the entire body of work  
I bet a lot of heroes are real jerks  
jerks with a hero-complex  
and those kind of jerks can't do any good for anybody  
always needed people to pay attention to them

Maybe real heroism is writing a poem  
I'm at work right now writing, don't tell anyone  
listening to music in earphones  
it doesn't feel very heroic  
I think given the public arena of politics  
on the micro and macro levels  
heroism has to exist and we need it  
and it has to be a secret  
my boss doesn't know what I'm doing right now  
neither do my co-workers  
I'm daydreaming of floating my body  
that is not really my body  
through infinite black space  
and landing it directly on main strip of the Milky Way  
under all the lights of stars  
yet so small that I'm invisible



## Birds on the List

I've had two dreams of note  
in the last couple of weeks  
and only one I can remember right now  
which I don't think is a dream in the sense  
of some visual dream narrative  
but some context of anxiety  
I'm in a professional hockey game  
sitting on the bench in full uniform  
any second now coach is gonna tell me go  
and then I'll jump over the boards  
but I can't skate very well at all  
and I'm super embarrassed but I try to follow the puck  
but I can barely move  
and I know I'm gonna get drilled  
by some little punk from grade school  
who I never liked and was always better than  
except for right here on the ice  
it's basically the same dream  
as the one where you're sitting in class with only your underwear on  
which is a pretty powerful sentiment  
I mean sometimes I spend half my time  
pointlessly worrying to myself that I'm a fraud  
and the other half proving I'm not  
(and then you talk to other people  
for whom this fear ravages them  
and you think, I'm really OK)

The other dream is better  
it's deeper somehow and prismatic  
it's beautiful and special  
but I can't remember it  
I think it had something to do with war  
I dreamt at least once maybe twice  
I didn't want to forget it  
I went around looking for it talking to friends  
asking Becky if she remembered me talking about it  
and she didn't  
but she told me to write about  
all the birds I should be so lucky to see  
the birds on my list  
the ones I've seen

and the ones I'm dreaming to see  
and then it hit me, the dream

I was standing in total darkness  
when this spectacular bird appeared and flew in front of me  
looked at me squarely from the side of its head  
it was a heron, large with a long and sharp beak  
it had this incredible yellow streak on its crown  
and I immediately misidentified it as a yellow-crown night heron  
because behind it was black as night  
with flashes of yellow and orange along its crest  
but it was almost uniformly blue  
enormous  
and absolutely unfazed by my presence  
a simply beautiful dream  
that failed to resound enough  
for me to remember it

But I remember wondering when I woke up  
if that kind of heron may exist in the world  
and if not in the world  
it exists now and I'm happy to see it  
forget about it and remember it again  
and have a chance to describe it

Usually how it works is this  
you look through the bird books and see the picture  
or the Peterson or Sibley drawing  
you try to figure out what time of year you might find it  
and in what kind of environment  
and then you have to be persistent in looking  
but even then you have to be lucky  
and if you find the bird it's truly uplifting  
it forms a direct and unmitigated convergence of natural histories  
the bird's and the birder's  
but what of the dream birds, the abstract birds  
the pest birds that follow humans  
living off waste following the interstates  
I won't forget seeing certain birds for the first time  
American and least bittern, green heron, bald eagle  
or seeing thousands of Canada geese at Oak Orchard Swamp  
they have been poetic moments

I almost forgot my dream night-heron  
but now I won't  
writing this poem while hanging out with friends all day today  
and having the dream heron come back to mind  
and making it public  
skating out to center ice getting booed because I can barely move on skates  
hoping to make a little something real out of the world  
into the world

## Human Scales in 5 Paragraphs\*

Among mundane contemporary anxieties to consider, few seem as relevant (in a lazy, quotidian way) in today's economy as the cost of public projects; how they are funded, managed, and chosen. I live in a city that feels broken down. There are twenty thousand vacant houses, of which, our mayor pledges to raze 1,000 a year. The dog chases its tail. There are miles of streets pockmarked with potholes. A staggering amount of public money from multiple sources is being spent to rebuild and renovate almost every school in the city, the majority of still seem destined to underperform. Given that backdrop, it is a recently rebuilt sidewalk around the central library that stirs a certain confusion: how much did that cost and who paid for it? What was wrong with the old sidewalk? Under the confusion, of course, resides the fear that nothing will ever be built new again, that our resources have, at long last, finally been exhausted. I can remember only small fractions of my dreams, leaving me to think that most of dreams unravel this confusion through the night, and when it is at last resolved, the real dreams can permeate. By the time you awake, a new building has been erected where before was an acre-sized forest in recovery, filled with colonies of chicory, wild carrot, and trees of heaven. It is an anxiety of overpopulation and the trouble with human scale.

The world's most populous bird is the red-billed qualea, a small bird native to the grasslands of Africa, the very place where early human ancestors climbed down from trees. The qualea is so numerous it is reported that it can take hours for a flock of birds to fly overhead. Yet their population is roughly half the number of speakers of Indo-European languages worldwide, 1.5 billion. Including the several dominant species of rodents throughout the world, there is likely no animal larger than an insect that is more numerous than people. With the prospects of opening the universe further to human exploration and curiosity, we stand on the brink of infinite human replication. A system of unending mirrors, a new measure of time, a refutation of death. Our imaginations have outgrown our homes.

Today in the *New York Times* I found an article about a facility nearing completion in California that aims to recreate the formation of a star. The possibilities of such an endeavor are staggering, if it is able to safely and predictably harness the energy manufactured by the conversion of hydrogen to helium. The

facility uses 192 lasers "made of nearly 60 miles of mirrors and fiber optics crystals and light amplifiers" to bombard a hydrogen fuel particle the size of a grain of kosher salt. The money involved for construction and ongoing maintenance for a facility in a state where the state parks are facing closure due to funding issues, is, of course, obscene. But the project is defended by one of its lead scientist, Dr. Moses, who states that taking on big projects that challenge the imagination "is who we are as a species."

On a barren February night in Jena, Ernst Haeckel woke up and as if still dreaming of snowflakes and got out of bed. The house was filled with a soft bluish light that seemed to glow from the snow outside in the garden. Something like a poem appeared in front of him in place where he had expected more clarity and it left him in an uncomfortable suspense, like a line in a poem, story, or petition whose meaning remains elusive despite many re-readings. He tried to escape the feeling he was being watched; instead of a chair or a chest he saw only the blue outlines. It bothered him the lines lacked symmetry and the confusion of what time it might be at that moment caused in him a quiet panic, albeit one that would quickly pass like a sunshower.

He began to sketch a medusa, an exercise to waken the sense and free himself of conscious thought. The pursuit to render an inherent perfection of natural forms - forms whose evidence he seemingly harvested from the ether of living things - caused real blindness. Blind to the ambient noise of the room, blind to chaos of ants in the night's grass outside the house, blind to trembling of the neighbor's pigs. Like a holy man, he masked emotion in the perpetuation of a presented set of truths. Behind his pictures, he could never be right or wrong. The illustrations of radiolarians, medusae, faces of bats, algae, antlers, became sensations. But they were more than images, not because images don't have the power to haunt us, but because they could be read like words. They became a universal sacred text, with an inner meaning that couldn't be isolated. He felt compelled to articulate the geometry of this text, expose its hierarchies and exceptions. The images manage to refer to the constant unseen perfection in nature, and yet to passively imply the human on the timeless abstract of living forms. For the human stalks and lurks in the illustrations with a European resolve in the seductive, unwashed hair of the tentacles of certain medusae, the fearful barbs and points of microscopic organisms, the absolute symmetry.

\*title on loan from Michael Kelleher's book, *Human Scale*

## The House at 24 Huntington Ave. *for Tom Joyce*

I grew up in a house my parents bought at an auction in 1978, at 29 Huntington Ave. A small side street near a main intersection in North Buffalo where the neighborhoods are filled with mostly single-family, owner-occupied homes with rather stately urban lawns and backyards. It's a short block with four large homes on one side facing six homes on the opposite side. Directly across the street from our house were the driveways for 24 and 28 Huntington side-by-side. 28 Huntington was split into multiple units, and I remember only several of its residents over the years. A parking enforcement cop who drove a blue Wrangler, a very serious student of Judaism from Bermuda who played a lot of soccer, a spinstress woman who always needed help. But all of these residents I remember from only teenage and afterwards. When I was younger I never noticed any of them. I can safely regard them as ghosts. Their comings and goings, their consumption of resources, their emotional lives; like people seen driving in their cars on highways, they were all mysteries.

The house at 24 was a different story. It was enormous: three finished floors and a fourth floor attic (or at least that's what it looks like), it seemed to loom clumsily over into the street. It was painted orange, always my favorite color. There was a weeping willow tree planted on the front lawn and the backyard was fenced off to the neighboring yards. The family that lived there were the Szareks. I remember their minivan had custom plates: "Szarek." I remember once they had a party and I went into their house. The kitchen had been newly updated, the living rooms on the first floor were spacious. It was a stark contrast to our house across the street where as the years went by my parents slowly removed each ugly remnant from the auction house that was. In particular: the green wallpaper, the paint on the woodwork, the vomitous blue-green wall-to-wall carpet. In my mind, the Szareks were in the money and they lived in a mansion.

No one in my immediate (much less my extended) family were the 'literary' type. But my neighbor Tom Joyce at 33 Huntington had a house full of books. It was the first house with books I knew. Books were everywhere in the house, most memorably in high, long stacks on top of the toilet tank. The Joyce house had a sweet dusty smell to it, like a library you'd want to sleep in and not wash your sheets for months.

There was no first floor bathroom, only the second floor bath and the basement dungeon toilet. The fridge was always stocked with pepsi, tuna fish that Tom would feed us on top of raisin bread, or better yet, cinnamon rolls. There was a period where Tom was always making chili, calling it Texas Red. Tom had every book you needed to have, even if he wasn't always able to find it. He also had sex books like collections of art nudes and the Kama Sutra, mixed in with everything else. This house he shared (and still does!) with his wife Linda and daughter Gilbert and his large meandering extended family and friends became a second home. They gave me a key. The lack of definition in his house and life created an infinity of possibility for me, a safe place at the edge of a multifaceted and gorgeous chaos. Nothing in my life at that point was chaotic, yet I yearned for it.

Jonathan Skinner was the first to tell me that Ted Berrigan and Alice Notley stayed at 24 Huntington for a summer in 1970, and Ted wrote a poem about it, a "Farewell Address" to his host Richard Taylor. Every time I read the poem now I look for any other description of the street, my house, Elber's landscaping, Bennett High School, Shoshone Park, but I never find it. It's not a typical Berrigan poem, if one's allowed to say such things, in that it's written pretty close to straight prose, in big chunks with buttressing indentations and breaks. It has the ongoing childish night/light rhyme through the middle of the poem: moonlight, delight, night, light, sight, polite, light, delight, nights, sight, light, night, delight. His description is limited to the immediate environs of the house itself: where he and Alice slept on the third floor, the living room he calls the Arboretum, the three dogs, Alice's trips with the dogs, the huge dining room with chandelier. The poem resonates in typical Berrigan fashion. It's clear and reads like an occasional poem for the everyday. He grandly thanks his friends at the end (the poem is dedicated to their host) and curiously writes, "Nothing gets lost, in anyone's life; I'm glad of that."

But the poem also mentions that Alice wrote a lot of poems about the house. The first place I looked was in her 1998 book, *Mysteries of Small Houses*, which gives the impression of a chronologically ordered psychic inventory of living spaces and memory in exquisite lyric fashion. I couldn't find anything about Buffalo, but rather got the hint that she's lived in dozens of houses over the years and that it would interest me what she remembered of the house, and whether those poems were ever published, if they still exist. I contacted Anselm, who I had recently met in Buffalo and he sent me on to Alice. Alice responded quickly. This is what she remembered: It was a fine house. She spent the summer reading through Jack



Clarke's library, which Richard Taylor was storing at the time. She wrote poems about the house that heavily featured the color red, as one of the rooms they lived or spent time in was painted red. She never published the poems. She was 24 that summer and did not think the poems were very good, but that she probably has the poems somewhere in her papers. I pointed out that her book of sonnets, published in 1971, was marvelous and could the poems written the year before be that bad? She replied, "the sonnets were my breakthrough."

Some things do get lost. The house at 24 Huntington Ave is almost lost. My parent's neighbors and former neighbors of the Creeley's, Dick and Liz Lipsitz would like to raze it and expand their garden. He says that a large pipe needs to be replaced but it is 40 yards long and runs under several other properties. Aside from that, the roof is coming off and the interior is inexplicably damaged. Looking in the back windows of the house last week, I saw damage everywhere. As if the last owners turned all the faucets on before leaving and gave each room a farewell address with a crow bar.

But I think Ted means it's the stuff of poems: the personal connections, the emotional knowledge that doesn't get lost. And I agree with him. On another level, I feel that Ted and Alice's short stay in a beautiful, now sullied American dream house is emblematic of something greater. When I think of Ted's poetry, I associate it with a fierce, daily energy that's so intense and immediate, it burns itself up ("On the Level Everyday"). It's comprised of ephemera that don't blink, never flinch, and then move on the next poem (The recent collected volume of his poetry is an essential compilation for these reasons). They match the speed and insanity of a country so drunk with energy and waste that it burns through resources and conflicts with blazing speed. The virtual omission of any reference to American militarism and war is compelling to find in the poetry a Korean War Vet in his artistic prime during the travails of the Vietnam War. It is November 6, 2009 and we are still at war.

But I can't blame Tom Joyce and Ted for the war, for feeding me tuna fish in cinnamon buns and glass bottles of Pepsi. Pages before "Farewell Address" in the *Collected* is a poem "Things to Do on Speed." Because a poem pages before this and after this mention Buffalo, the poem might be renamed? I suggest "Things to Do in Buffalo on Speed." These are some of Ted's suggestions:

Become a ravaged scarecrow  
Write a 453 page unintelligible book  
String beads interminably  
See your fingernails flake off  
Buy a Rolls Royce  
Become chief of the Mafia  
Consider anti-matter  
Turn queer

There's a brilliant commentary in these poems that responds to the post-war "Great Awakening" of technology and the onslaught of advertising that followed and supported it. He seemed to study Madison Avenue with the integrity of a journalist, all language being fair play for the content of poems, including Times Square and plastic wrappers. It is the ephemeral quality of this era's poetry I find to be its greatest innovation as it turns life into poetic document (David Antin brilliantly describes something like this in a talk at St. Mark's in 1984 he extends the notion of "poetic line" beyond textuality and onto one's way of living).

And I'll accept it all without the skepticism of mass culture I feel is inevitable as a poet in 2009. I accept it because I think it tells the truth and maintains its innocence. Perhaps this is part of the Tulsa imprint on the New York School: its honesty. From Joe Brainard *I Remember* to Ron Padgett's *Ted*, it relied on a rather democratic notion that modes of literary expression belonged everywhere. The result in Berrigan's work is a kind of timelessness and placelessness, paradoxically two things he included so often in his poems; for the illumination of particulars appeals universally on a human level as we ourselves attempt to map out our own experience. His persistent attention to time and place at the moment of writing reveals an always moving voice, a writer, who in words as well as in reality to some extent, was homeless at heart.

As young writers growing up in the Buffalo area, we all benefited indirectly from the legacy of poetry in Buffalo started in the 1960s with Al Cook's English Department. Of my group of poets in Buffalo in 2000, there were Tawrin Baker, Eric Gelsinger, Damian Weber, Michael Slosek (Oswego), Barrett Gordon, Robin Brox, Chris Fritton, Ric Royer, Kevin Thurston, Scott Puccio, Russell Pascatore, Sarah Banach; I think only one of us grew up in a house with books. We all came to poetry from older poets and teachers who were plugged into poetry after exposure to readings or classes. It no doubt helped some

of us that Robert Creeley maintained his open office hours and Charles Bernstein offered an undergraduate class every semester.

In itself, it is probably not meaningful that Ted and Alice lived across the street from us ten years before I was born. It is probably also meaningless, in the grand scheme of a dying civilization, that this once grand house may be one of 20,000 in Buffalo in need of demolition. But what is meaningful is the ever-flowing river we step in, the chain of connections that flowed down in Buffalo and trickled through to my friends and I, a generation away in a different world. It is also meaningful to have a poem by a great poet in the poetic lexicon about the street I grew up on, and the house the faced our front windows. This faces no threat of becoming lost.

## SECOND LIFE

Daquan Little was subject to two unfortunate events which landed him unceremoniously in the pages of the *Buffalo News* in the months after our meeting. The second of which happened before the first but required the first's notoriety to come to light. The second, however, came close to not allowing the first to exist.

The circumstances of our meeting were quite usual for myself, working in the capacity as a youth counselor in a shelter for homeless and runaway youth. Daquan was, like most our kids, neither homeless nor a runaway, but was somewhere between and unable to return to wherever it was he stayed (I quickly noticed at this job that the youth never said they lived somewhere, only where they stayed). There are kids for whom it is decided before birth they will be nomadic, they will never stay in one place long enough to feel as if they belong there. Daquan was one of these kids who, though having never left Buffalo, had stayed at over ten different addresses. I know this because when he came into the shelter I performed his intake interview, part of which asks the child to produce as many addresses they can remember. Most kids would only remember the street, the exceptional ones would only remember the numbers. Daquan was like most kids coming through the shelter, he remembered the most recent five years only, as if nothing existed before that.

His stay at the shelter was brief. I remember only a few details about him, and these I only marked because of what I later find out about him: His mom had put him out for not going to school; he couldn't go to his dad's because the kids in that neighborhood had it out for him; his grandmother that raised him the first seven years had just died; he was sexually active, had asthma, smoked weed and drank on occasion, never cigarettes. When I called his mother to let her know he was safe and at a shelter she said, "Good, call me when he gets to school," and hung up. It was a hard interview in that he wouldn't open up much. He was a boy in man's body and looked like he was coming apart at the seams. Strong and big, but awkward and vulnerable. And maybe that's why he didn't talk, because it protected him. It was when I was asking him about address changes that he said he moved onto Goethe street about a year ago.

"Do you remember the month?"

And he replied, "Naw. Wait, I died on August 29, we moved in right after that." "You *died*? What do you mean?"

"Naw, I didn't die but . . . I dunno, it is what it is."

“What?”

“Nothing man.”

And that was it, I let it drop.

\*

It was a few months after our meeting that I found him in the *Buffalo News*. A robbery of an elderly man in residential neighborhood had gone sour and the man was shot and rushed to the hospital. Two teenagers were found crossing Main Street around the back of Shoshone Park where the railroads used to run, abutting publicly-owned and undeveloped land. Both teens were arrested in connection with the shooting, Daquan Little was one of them.

A few days later the news published an editorial entitled “Wasteland a violent cesspool,” impugning the city for misuse of public lands and asserting that the senseless and horrific shooting was partly the fault of the city for not developing land described as a “vast lot of desolate, wooded land.” It went on: “The former railroad area is useful real estate that, when developed, will secure the neighborhoods. Meanwhile, it is a breeding ground for crime. Today it is an overgrown wilderness with multiple ways to enter into and escape from surrounding neighborhoods.”

In the following days a few letters appeared in response to the article: one defending the so-called wasteland as a meaningful urban wilderness that is used by the neighborhood for recreation. It took the editorial to task for demonizing an area he saw emerging as new kind of urban park. Another letter appeared deploring the *News* for giving up on the more difficult task of examining the social causes of violence while instead seeking an easier target to blame.

But that was all for Daquan until the trial began and Warren Buffett’s local outpost printed the following story of Daquan’s death:

#### Teenage Suspect Survivor of Near Drowning

Daquan Little, one of two teenage suspects arraigned in the July shooting of Daniel Nowak of Flower street, survived a dramatic near-drowning incident at Shoshone Pool last summer.

On that occasion, Little was thought to have entered the pool at night with a group of youths when he fell to the bottom of the pool apparently unconscious.

Little was underwater for several minutes before emergency crews arrived and pulled the boy from the pool. Although he was showing no vital signs, fine work by the personnel on the scene led to the boy's miraculous revival a few minutes later.

Firefighter Mark Arnold stated to the news, "We didn't think he had a chance. He had to have been under at least five minutes, and that's a long time with no oxygen."

Little was given a trespassing citation subsequent to the accident and became involved in the juvenile justice system after being charged with several thefts. Apparently, his dramatic rescue did not result in any changes in his behavior.

"It's a shame to see such a miracle boy like Daquan to continue down this path," his Probation Officer, Gina Joyce said. "You'd think this experience would be a road to Damascus moment, but instead I think it's hardened him ever more and he'd embraced this whole street culture."

It is unknown what is next for Little, but it could very well be serious jail time. Assistant District Attorney Arturo Buono has announced he would like Little to be tried as an adult for felony assault and felony criminal possession of a weapon, among other lesser charges.

## Messiah Blues

Some think Michael Jordan was the greatest basketball player of all time.  
The purists have doubts, say check with Wilt Chamberlain or Bill Russell first  
Other think it's LeBron James, or Kobe Bryant  
Lebron James is younger and he's friends with Jay-Z  
Kobe is a winner but he is scandalized

I think you're all wrong  
the greatest basketball player ever  
has never played the game  
the greatest basketball player  
will be easy to pick out  
when he comes  
he's the one who won't ever miss a shot

Bio: Aaron Lowinger is a poet living in his hometown of Buffalo, NY where he co-curates a poetry and performance series and goes to work damn near every day as a social worker. He was turned onto to poetry by his neighbor Tom Joyce and other teachers who had spent time at the University at Buffalo, where he also enrolled in while working weird part-time jobs and taking long trips. Aaron took classes with Charles Bernstein and received an MA in Linguistics in 2006, working on Germanic languages. He has published numerous chapbooks including *Open Night* (Transmission Press) and *Guide to Weeds* (House Press) and is very pleased to showcase longer, narrative poems and prose, some of which were written for specific readings, on *buffaloFocus*.



## Author Biographies

### **Aaron Lowinger**

Aaron Lowinger is a poet living in his hometown of Buffalo, NY where he co-curates a poetry and performance series and goes to work damn near every day as a social worker. He was turned onto poetry by his neighbor Tom Joyce and other teachers who had spent time at the University at Buffalo, where he also enrolled in while working weird part-time jobs and taking long trips. Aaron took classes with Charles Bernstein and received an MA in Linguistics in 2006, working on Germanic languages. He has published numerous chapbooks including *Open Night* (Transmission Press) and *Guide to Weeds* (House Press) and is very pleased to showcase longer, narrative poems and prose, some of which were written for specific readings, on *buffaloFocus*.

### **Abbie J. Bergdale**

Abbie Bergdale currently lives in Mason City, Iowa with her husband and two sons. She has work forthcoming in Gargoyle Magazine and is relocating to California where she will pursue her MFA in poetry from UC-Irvine this fall.

### **Adrian Stumpp**

Adrian currently scribbles in South Ogden, Utah, where he lives in a subterranean apartment with his long-suffering wife, Britta, avoiding lengthy bios and referring to himself in the third person. His short story collection *All the Variables & Other Love Stories* won the 2009 Utah Arts Council's book-length manuscript contest and his work has appeared in journals such as *Aisthesis* and *Metaphor*.

### **Andre Zucker**

Andre M. Zucker was born in the Bronx, NY. He has lived in Burgos, Spain, Kharkov, Ukraine and Casablanca Morocco. He is currently completing his first novel "Generation" which an adventure that takes place during the Ukrainian economic collapse. Andre now lives in Antwerp, Belgium where he works as an ESL teacher.

### **April A.**

April A. has been writing for almost five years, getting inspiration from various experiences seen by the eyes of a thinker. The purpose of her creativity is urging people to see beyond the bounds, to be themselves, to speak their minds loud, not to be afraid to differ from the crowd. She creates to destroy. To destroy the naive beliefs. To destroy the stereotypes. April lives in St. Petersburg with her beloved one at the moment and hopes to succeed further both as a poet and a songwriter.

### **Ariel Lynn Butters**

Ariel Lynn Butters is currently studying screenwriting at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She dabbles (although hardly excels) in short films, found object art, opera singing, and various genres of writing. This is her first published poem. [meshfods@gmail.com](mailto:meshfods@gmail.com)

### **Arkava Das**

Arkava Das is from Kolkata, India. After earning his postgraduate degree in marketing management, Arkava worked in life insurance for a year and now runs wild through the city streets and bazaars, always on the lookout for inspiration. Some of his recent work can be found in Moria, ditch, Otoliths, Leaf Garden, The Delinquent. He blogs at [www.asmotheringrock.blogspot.com](http://www.asmotheringrock.blogspot.com).

### **Ather Zia**

Ather Zia is from Kashmir which mostly is the inspiration for her work. She has published her first collection of poems "The Frame" and her work has appeared in varied magazines including convergence-journal etc. She loves experimenting with different forms of poetry especially haiku. Her work of creative fiction is forthcoming. When not writing she is a graduate candidate in anthropology at UC Irvine and edits Kashmir Lit at [www.kashmirlit.org](http://www.kashmirlit.org). email: [editor@kashmirlit.org](mailto:editor@kashmirlit.org)

### **B.C. Havens**

B.C. Havens is a community college faculty member who sleepwalks through daydreams. He is consistently distracted by the idea that somewhere, far to the south, there is a mariachi band on a beach playing a song that was intended for him. contact: [havensbc@gmail.com](mailto:havensbc@gmail.com)

## **Bree Katz**

Bree Katz recently received her M.S. in linguistics from Georgetown University and will oh-so-casually mention this fact to anyone who cares to listen. She occasionally takes a break from plumbing the depths of the internet to write. Her short fiction has appeared in Dog Oil Press and Six Sentences.

## **Brian Anthony Hardie**

I am 25 years old and I have been writing passionately since the age of seven. I was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. I now reside in southeast Portland. I have been published in over 50 small press journals/E-zines including The Pebble Lake Review(Houston, TX), Conceit Magazine(San Fransisco, CA), AMULET, Hudson View(NYC/South Africa), Decanto(UK), Ditchpoetry.com(Canada), SALiT Magazine(International), DaveJarecki.com, WordSlaw.com, CynicMagazineOnline.com, VAZ!NE, Down In The Dirt Magazine, Expressions Online Literary Journal, Theinquisitionpoetry.com(Nevada), Lone Stars Magazine, Pure Francis, BLAZE VOX, and Angel Exhaust(UK). I read annually at the 3 day Unregulated Word Poetry Festival in Kansas City alongside S.A. Griffin, and Scott Wannberg, among others. I have written a small manuscript for a little book titled "Manic Romantic," the work below is a sample of it. I have been a musician for 16 years, recorded and released 4 records, one noise/spoken word album, and have toured the States playing music. My favorite color is red, I guess.

## **Brian Spaeth**

Brian Spaeth's of poems and short-stories entitled "Clocks Stopped at a Strange and Savage Hour" was published by Serious Ink Press in 2008. It was inspired and provoked by my harrowing experiences of being homeless in New York City, and living illegally in a small office space two blocks from ground zero in the aftermath of the attack. One of my intentions was to convey the sense of helplessness and terror as I was driven from one place to the next, all the while suffering from the debilitating effects of the WTC toxins and the psychic aftermath of the attack. I was in the locus of irresistible historical forces and events, not the least of which was the destruction of the old city by the real estate developers, as I watched many of the wonderful old buildings being gutted and destroyed before my eyes. Ill and weakened as I was by the toxins, the idea of a poison-fueled literature occurred to me, and rekindled my appreciation for the works of Thomas DeQuincy, Theophile Gautier, and a few others, including Poe and Baudelaire.

## **Bryanna Licciardi**

Bryanna Licciardi is an undergraduate student at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN, going for a B.A. in English.

## **Christopher Chambers**

Christopher Chambers is an ex-Teamster, a lapsed Catholic, an erstwhile carpenter, and a damn Yankee. He was laid off at the slaughterhouse, fired from the pub, and quit his job at the publishing house. He no longer repossesses cars for a living. He drifted down to New Orleans where he is still working on the novel, and an old shotgun house.

## **Christopher Khadem**

Christopher Khadem is a student of literature, currently studying at Royal Holloway, University of London. His work has appeared (or is forthcoming) on both sides of the Atlantic in *Breadcrumb Scabs (US)*, *Dead Letter Office (UK)*, *Catalonian Review (US)* and *Leaf Garden Press (US)*. He co-edits the creative blog and magazine *Disingenuous Twaddle*.

## **Colin Dardis**

Colin Dardis is a writer and artist based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. I help run a monthly open mic poetry night called Make Yourself Heard, and edit a small poetry journal called Speech Therapy.

## **Constance Stadler**

Constance Stadler has published over 800 poems in five chapbooks, most recently, *Tinted Steam* (Shadow Archer Press) and *Sublunary Curse* (Erbacce), a full manuscript, *Paper Cuts* (Calliope Nerve Media) and a collaborative work, *Responsorials* (Neopoiesis Press). A new ebook, *Rummaging in the Attic*, is set for release (Differentia Press).

## **Daniel Godston**

Daniel Godston teaches and lives in Chicago. His writings have appeared in *Chase Park*, *After Hours*, *Versal*, *Drunken Boat*, *580 Split*, *Kyoto Journal*, *Eratica*, *The Smoking Poet*, *Horse Less Review*, *Apparatus Magazine*, and other print publications and online journals. His poem “Mask to Skin to Blood to Heart to Bone and Back” was nominated by the editors of *580 Split* for the Pushcart Prize. He also composes and performs music, and he works with the Borderbend Arts Collective to organize the annual Chicago Calling Arts Festival.

## **Daniel Romo**

Daniel Romo teaches high school creative writing, and lives in Long Beach, CA. His recent poems can be found in *Scythe*, *Fogged Clarity*, and *Bananafish*. He is an MFA candidate in poetry at Antioch University. More of his writing can be found at [Peyote Soliloquies](#)

## **Dario Mohr**

## **David Patterson**

His full length play “To The Teeth” opened in New York at the Creek Theatre in May 2007. His absurdist play “What’s The Magic Word?” was part of the Iowa Play Festival in 2009, 8 MinuteMadness Plays in NYC in 2006 and YouthFest 2009. “Buried But Not Forgotten” appeared at the Insomniac Theater in Hollywood in 2006. “Cafe Wannabe” was part of the Montana One Act Festival in 2006. “Dead Serious” was performed at the Little Fish Theatre in Ca. in 2005. His play “Idiots Out Wandering Around”, was second in the Kernoble Prize at the University of Arkansas. His play "Slop Bucket" appeared at the First Run Theatre in St Louis His play "UNKEMPT" played at Chicago's N.U.F.A.N. Theatre and his monologue "Dead Already" was performed at the Universal Theatre in Provincetown, Ma. David won the 2009 IMPA award -Best Unproduced Screenplay in Des Moines for "Prairie Dogs". His short film MOONBITE is currently running the film festival circuit.

## **David Tomaloff**

David Tomaloff is, has been, and/or might as well be a musician, self-described photographer, sound engineer, dabbler in the written word, loose cannon, and lion tamer. He currently has a book out called *LIONTAMER'S BLUES* as well as a music CD entitled, *Birds on Wires*. His work has also appeared in *Opium Poetry 2.0* and *Deuce Coupe*. Despite any or all of the above, he is currently fulfilling his life-long dream of broke anonymity. (*davidtomaloff.com* <<http://davidtomaloff.com>> | *liontamersblues.tumblr.com* <<http://liontamersblues.tumblr.com>> )

## **David Koehn**

David Koehn published poetry in many different publications including the New England Review, New York Quarterly, Alaska Quarterly Review, Rhino, Volt, and ZYZZYVA. A small collection of my poems, COIL, won the 1998 Midnight Sun Poetry Chapbook Contest, from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

## **david smith**

I live in Northern California. I hate cute poetry and cute poetry editors. I like putting my thoughts on paper and sharing them.

### **Dennis Etzel Jr.**

I live in Topeka, Kansas. I am an MFA candidate at The University of Kansas and teach composition at Washburn University.

### **Desiree Santos**

Desiree Santos resides in Parlin, New Jersey. I received my B.A. and M.A. in English from St. John's University. I am currently looking for a job in the field of magazine journalism. My MySpace URL is [www.myspace.com/aversionz](http://www.myspace.com/aversionz) <<http://www.myspace.com/aversionz>> . I am infatuated with film and possess an intense passion for creative writing. This passion comes from turning terror and chaos into art because I see the beauty in destruction and pain. My muse is Sylvia Plath. You would never know I am so dark on the inside, as my outside is so radiant and bright. I want nothing more in this lifetime than to inspire the explosion of emotions within those who can no longer feel.

### **Edward William Cousins**

Edward was born April 29, 1970 raised in Tacoma Washington.  
currently resides in Charlotte NC. a loving father of two boys and one girl.  
A musician and poet who had begun writing poetry and short stories  
at a young age of ten. Just beginning to read poetry in public and pursuing  
publication to his collection.

### **Edwin Wilson Rivera**

Edwin Wilson Rivera's poetry and fiction has been published in *Pank*, *Acentos Review*, *Holly Rose Review*, *Global City Review*, *Folly*, *Monkeybicycle*, *Born Magazine*, and many others. Formerly employed as a laborer and dockman for a major port company, he lives in New York City.

### **Elizabeth Kerlikowske**

Elizabeth Kerlikowske teaches at Kellogg Community College and writes on her back porch, except in winter. She was recently the winner of Dunes Review Shaw Prize for poetry and the (Kalamazoo) Community Literary Award for poetry. Her most recent book is "Dominant Hand" from Mayapple Press.

**Emma Ramos**

Emma Eden Ramos lives in New York City and is a student at Marymount Manhattan College. Her film reviews have appeared in Artfusion News.

**Erik B. Olson****Evan Schnair**

Evan Schnair teaches Composition and Literature in Buffalo, NY. Evan earned an M.F.A. from California College of the Arts in San Francisco, where he grew up. Currently, he is working on a fictive university project.

**Joseph Farley**

Joseph Farley edited Axe Factory for 23 years. His books include Suckers, For The Birds, Longing For The Mother Tongue, and The True Color of You.

**M.****Peter Fernbach,**

Peter Fernbach, Assistant Professor of English at Adirondack Community College, is concerned, lately, with the transformative and liberating effects of poetry on the unconscious mind, especially of those who are still impressionable and exploding with exuberance and possibility. He thinks that poetry, as an art, and also as an epistemological approach, is undervalued in our increasingly semiotic culture; the ways of knowing that are provided by and through poesis are progressively being choked out in favor of a simplistic empiricism that allows for none of the nuance of the mystifying reality of which we are all a part. Therefore, most of all, he invites you to read.

Check out his new BlazeVOX book The Blooming Void at <http://www.blazevox.org/bk-pf.htm>

**Geoffrey Gatz**

Geoffrey Gatz is the editor and Publisher of BlazeVOX [books] and the author of seven books of poetry; Kenmore: Poem Unlimited and Not So Fast Robespierre are now available from Menendez Publishing. HouseCat Kung Fu: Strange Poems

for Wild Children is also available from Meritage Press. He is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY (1993) and Daemen College, Amherst, NY (2002), and served as a U.S. Marine in the first gulf war. He lives in Kenmore, NY with his girlfriend and two cats.

<http://www.geoffreygatza.com/>

### **Geoffrey Babbitt**

Geoffrey Babbitt is currently a Ph.D. candidate in poetry at the University of Utah. He currently teaches at Ohio Northern University. His poetry has appeared in *Free Verse*, *Interim*, *CutBank*, *Colorado Review*, *Octopus Magazine*, *Shampoo*, *Western Humanities Review*, and elsewhere.

### **Gloria**

Gloria is on-the-move from East Harlem, Brooklyn, NY born poet, visual artist, and vocalist for the group Kanipchen-Fit ([www.myspace.com/kanipchenfit](http://www.myspace.com/kanipchenfit)). In 2010 her book of poetry *Pent-Up* was published (Delicatessen). Her poetry has also been published in the former E-publication *Bent Pin Quarterly* (Fall '07), and literary magazine *A Gathering of the Tribes* (#11, #6), *Aloud*, *Nuyorican Poets Anthology*, *Interview* magazine among others. She has read and performed her work featured in NY at KGB Bar, Galapagos Art Space, The Bowery Poetry Club, St. Marks Poetry Project, Abc No Rio, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, The Drawing Center and other venues outside the U.S..

### **Harmony Button**

Harmony Button has earned degrees from Middlebury College (BA) and University of Utah (MFA Poetry). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Mantis*, *AfterImage*, *Epiphany*, *Prick of the Spindle*, *White Whale Review* and *SLEET Magazine*. She has received the Larry Levis Prize from the Academy of American Poets (2006).

### **Jim Bennett**

Jim Bennett lives near Liverpool in the UK and is the author of 63 books, including books for children, books of poetry and many technical titles on transport and examinations.

His poetry collections include;

Drums at New Brighton (Lifestyle 1999)

Down in Liverpool (CD) (Long Neck 2001)

The Man Who Tried to Hug Clouds (Bluechrome 2004 reprinted 2006)

Larkhill (Searle Publishing 2009)



He has won many awards for his writing and performance including 3 DADAFest awards. He is also managing editor of [www.poetrykit.org](http://www.poetrykit.org) one of the worlds most successful internet sites for poets.

Jim taught Creative Writing at the University of Liverpool and now tours throughout the year giving readings and performances of his work.

### **Isaac James Baker**

Isaac James Baker is a 26-year-old fiction writer and poet who lives in Washington, D.C. He is studying for a master's in fiction writing from Johns Hopkins University. His first novel, *Broken Bones*, the story of a young man's struggle in a psychotic ward for anorexics, will be published this year by The Historical Pages Company. Contact him at [isaacjamesbaker@yahoo.com](mailto:isaacjamesbaker@yahoo.com).

### **Jacob Russell**

Jacob lives in South Philly where he writes about himself in the 3rd person, engages in an unsanctified alliance of poetry, fiction and political action. He grows basil, thyme, rosemary, cilantro, parsley and tomatoes in the little strip of sunlight that plays across the patch of a yard in front of his apartment. His work has been performed by InterAct Theatre, appeared in *Critiphoria*, *Pindeldeyboz*, *Salmagundi*, *Laurel Review*, *Clockwise Cat*, *dcomP Mag*, and other literary venues. He is currently finishing work on a second novel and seeking a publisher for a poetry chapbook.

### **Jaime Birch**

Jaime Birch came into this world in 1977, just after Elvis left. She lives in Bolton, England where she is trying to become an English teacher. She loves poetry above all things. She has previously had poems published in *Parameter* and *Turbulence* magazines. Hopefully she shall, by morning, inherit the earth. Her foot's in the door.

### **Jill Jones**

Jill Jones' most recent book is *Dark Bright Doors* (Wakefield Press, 2010). In 2009 she co-edited with Michael Farrell, an anthology, *Out of the Box: Contemporary Australian Gay and Lesbian Poets* (Puncher and Wattmann). She lives in Adelaide.

## **Jan LaPerle**

Jan LaPerle has published work in Dislocate, Pank, Subtropics, and elsewhere. She currently lives in the mountains of East TN.

## **John McKernan**

John McKernan grew up in Omaha -- studying at Saint Cecilia's Grade School, Cathedral High School, and became a poet while completing his BA degree at the University of Omaha. His poems have appeared in many magazines including The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly, The Paris Review, and elsewhere. He has published four books of poetry -- the most recent being *Resurrection of the Dust*. Since his retirement after teaching 40 years at Marshall University, he has begun working as the founding editor and publisher of ABZ Press -- which publishes a poetry magazine and books of poetry.

## **Katie Jean Shinkle**

Katie Jean Shinkle's work has appeared or is forthcoming in Monkeybicycle and dislocate, among others. She is the Managing Editor of Del Sol Press, Nonfiction Editor of Black Warrior Review and an Assistant Poetry Editor for DIAGRAM.

## **Keith Moul**

Keith Moul is retired and living in a great part of the world where he can write poems. He has been published quite a bit in the US, Canada, and a little in Britain.

## **Kyllikki Brock Persson**

A first-year doctoral candidate in rhetoric and writing, Kyllikki Brock Persson has published an eclectic array of work, ranging from a novel extract in a university literary journal (*NKU Expressed*) to a historiography of steam-era toys in an international steam and threshing enthusiast magazine (*Steam Traction*) to a psychoanalytic analysis of the film *Peeping Tom* in a university literary journal (*Pentangle*). Her devotion to creative writing is solidly matched by her passion for academic writing and teaching. She lives with her husband and Irish wolfhound in northern Ohio.

## **Lance Newman**

Lance Newman's poems have appeared in *1913: A Journal of Forms*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Blue Collar Review*, *Dusie*, *Fringe*, *New CollAge*, *No Tell Motel*, *nthposition*, *otoliths*, *Pemmican*, *Perigee*, *Streetnotes*, *Stride*, *West Wind Review*, *Zyzzyva*, and other places. He teaches American Literature and Creative Writing at Westminster College in Salt Lake City.

## **Lucy Hunt**

Lucy Hunt will be graduating from Royal Holloway, University of London next month with a degree in English Literature. She hails from the sunny south-west of England. She headed for the capital at 18 (where she was told the streets were paved), found it slightly foggy, and so is going home again. She co-edits the language and art magazine *Disingenuous Twaddle* (<http://disingenuoustwaddle.blogspot.com/>).

## **Linda Ravenswood**

Linda Ravenswood's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Flaming Arrows* (Ireland), *The Wilshire Review* (Los Angeles), *Enigma Magazine* (England), *Andemus* formerly *Mount Voices* (Los Angeles), *Poetry Salzburg Review* (University of Salzburg Press), *Poetry Magazine* (US), *Caterwaul Quarterly* (US), *Rivets Literary Magazine* (US), *Relief Magazine* (US), *Break the Silence* (US), *Underground Voices* (Los Angeles), *ReadThis* (University of Montana Press) and on PBS. She holds a BFA (Music, Theatre, Fine Art) from The California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) and an MA (Humanities; Emphasis in Creative Writing) from Mount Saint Mary's College. She has lived extensively in the US, Ireland and the UK. She is presently in Los Angeles pursuing her Ph.D.

## **Leonard Gontarek**

## **Lara K. Dolphin**

Lara Dolphin is a freelance writer. Her work has appeared in such publications as "Word Catalyst Magazine," "River Poets Journal" and "Calliope."

## **Leon Whyte**

### **Julie Kovacs**

Julie Kovacs lives in Venice, Florida. Her poetry has been published in Children Churches and Daddies, Because We Write, Illogical Muse, Poems Niederngasse, Aquapolis, The Blotter, and Cherry Bleeds. She is the author of two poetry books: Silver Moonbeams, and The Emerald Grail. Her website is at <http://thebiographicalpoet.blogspot.com/>

### **Mark Cunningham**

I have three books out: *\_80 Beetles\_* from Otoliths; *\_Body Language\_* from Tarpaulin Sky; and *\_71 Leaves\_* an ebook from BlazeVOX. My latest chapbook is *\_Georgic, with Eclogues for Interrogators\_*, which is on line at Lamination Colony.

### **Mark Moore**

### **Marc Paltrineri**

Marc Paltrineri is an MFA candidate at the University of New Hampshire. His work has appeared in places such as *the Green Mountains Review*, *Ellipsis*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Poets Against War*, and *Main Street Rag*. He lives somewhere in New England.

### **Melanie Sevcenko**

Melanie Sevcenko currently lives in Berlin, Germany where she works in distribution of documentary and experimental films. Melanie is also freelance writer for international film and culture publications. Her poems and short fiction have been published in such journals as *Sojourn* (University of Texas, Dallas), *The Fourth River* (Chatham University), *newleaf* (Universität Bremen), and *Nexus* (Wright State University).

### **Michael Rerick**

Michael Rerick is the author of *In Ways Impossible to Fold* (Marsh Hawk Press) and *X-Ray* (Flying Guillotine Press). He is also finishing his Ph D at the University of Cincinnati.

## Mitch Corber

Awardee of the New York Foundation for the Arts and producer of Poetry Thin Air Cable Show, I've read throughout NYC. I founded the Thin Air Video Poetry DVD Archives ([thinairvideo.com](http://thinairvideo.com) <<http://thinairvideo.com/>>) which include Ginsberg, Corso, Ashbery, Di Prima, and Cage, and a host of contemporaries. I've appeared in Columbia Poetry Review, Blackbox Manifold, Listenlight, Polarity, Nedge, Mirage and tight. *Quinine*, a book of poems, is published by Thin Air Media Press.

## Mick Raubenheimer

Mick Raubenheimer was born in the crude 1979 of Krugersdorp, Transvaal, South Africa. He cranes in blood and leaps in ink. He teaches smiling, unruly children to keen their wildness, and hopes to one day show them Fawltly Towers on IMAX. Dumela.



## Natascha Tallowin

Natascha Tallowin is a twenty two year old writer, poet and dedicated cat watcher from Woodbridge, Suffolk. She is currently gathering together poems for an anthology of her own, and can often be found sitting in patches of sunlight on the floor and listening to David Bowie. She is also working on a magic-realism novel, entitled 'Guylian's Magic', the Inspiration for which has been drawn from reading the novels of Virginia Woolf, D H Lawrence, Joanne Harris and Sarah Waters.

## Peter Vullo

I'm a Buffalo-based writer, poet, lover of literature, film and music. I'm also a singer/songwriter under the name **I Was The Scarecrow**. And as Frank O'Hara has written: "*I historically belong to the enormous bliss of American death.*"

## Valentine Pakis

A medievalist by training, Valentine A. Pakis teaches German at the University of St. Thomas. His most recent academic work includes an edited volume on Old Saxon poetry – “Perspectives on the Old Saxon Heliand” (West Virginia UP, 2010) – and a translation of Vilém Flusser’s “Vampyroteuthis infernalis: Eine Abhandlung samt Befund des Institut Scientifique de Recherche Paranaturaliste,” which is under review. He lives in Minneapolis.

### **Parker Tettleton**

Parker Tettleton is an English major at Kennesaw State University. His work is featured in or forthcoming from Short, Fast, and Deadly, The Toucan, Right Hand Pointing and > kill author, among others. His chapbook Same Opposite was recently published by Thunderclap Press. He blogs at <http://parker-augustlight.blogspot.com/>

### **Peter Golub**

Peter Golub is a Moscow born poet and translator. In 2008 he edited "New Russian Poetry" for the online magazine *Jackpot*. He is currently the translation editor for *St. Petersburg Review* and is a PhD candidate at Columbia University. He has one book of poems (that is basically impossible to get in the U.S. so why keep mentioning it?), *My Imagined Funeral* (Argo-Risk: Moscow).

### **Philip Byron Oakes**

Philip Byron Oakes is a poet living in Austin, Texas. His work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Otoliths*, *Switchback*, *Cricket Online Review*, *Sawbuck*, *Crossing Rivers Into Twilight*, *E ratio*, *Moria* and others. He is the author of *Cactus Land (77 Rogue Letters)*, a volume of poetry. <http://philipbyronoakes.blogspot.com/>

### **Peter Brown Hoffmeister**

Peter Brown Hoffmeister writes, teaches, and lives in Eugene, Oregon with his wife Jennie and his two daughters. His features have appeared in *Climbing Magazine*, *Rock and Ice Magazine*, *Gripped*, and *The Rogue Voice*. His fiction won the Oregon Literary Arts Fellowship, 2006, and an essay of his won the national "Bloggers' Brawl". He writes a dirtbag blog at [peterbrownhoffmeister.com](http://peterbrownhoffmeister.com).

### **WALTER WILLIAM SAFAR**

WALTER WILLIAM SAFAR was born on August 6th 1958. He is the author of a number of a significant number of prose works and novels, including "Leaden fog", "Chastity on sale", "In the falmes of passion", "The price of life", "Above the clouds", "The infernal circle", "The scream", "The negotiator", "Queen Elizabeth II", as well as a book of poems, titled "The angel and the demon".

**Kenneth Kesner**

Other poems by Kenneth Kesner are in "The Arabesques Review" and @ *alittlepoetry*, *counterexamplepoetics*, *wordslaw* and *zone*. He dedicates this to DGO.

**Rita Pang****Rachael Stanford**

Rachael Stanford, poet, playwright and essayist, writes and resides in the sleepy town of Mackinaw, Illinois. When not writing, she enjoys yoga, sitting under a tree, and listening to 1980's hair metal. She would like to take this space to thank her parents and friends for the countless hours they have spent giving her feedback, advice, and listening to her many meltdowns. You can follow her at <http://rachaelstanford.yolasite.com/>

**Ramya Kumar**

Ramya Kumar is a tone-deaf twenty one year old chemical engineer from India. Away from the drug factory that she works for, she spends time playing speculative psychologist, taking the side of feeling in its futile against meaning, and attempting to wean herself off caffeine. Classic Literature, Translated Indian fiction, psychology, word origins, debating and poetry are her interests aside from writing short stories.

**Raymond Farr**

Raymond Farr lives in Ocala, FL. His work appears most recently In Otoliths, Venereal Kittens, Cricket On Line Review, ditch, Moria, The Argotist On Line, and in Letterbox. In 2009 he had work Anthologized in The First Sidebrow Anthology and guest edited Issue 6 of Pinstripe Fedora. For more samples of his work and/or Email info go to [mjonesrview.blogspot.com](http://mjonesrview.blogspot.com)

**Rebecca Chadwick**

Rebecca Chadwick graduated in 2009 from Bard College with a B.A. from the Writing Program in Poetry and Literature, where she studied with Ann Lauterbach and Robert Kelly. In Fall 2010, she will begin an MLS from Pratt Institute. She currently lives in Oklahoma City with her boyfriend.

### **Rebecca Lindenberg**

Rebecca Lindenberg currently holds a fellowship from the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center. Her work appears and is forthcoming in *The Believer*, *No Tell Motel*, *Colorado Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Gulf Coast*, *POOL*, *Barrow Street* and elsewhere. She is the recipient of a generous Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Prize and a Tennessee Williams Scholarship to the Sewanee Writers' Conference and she is completing a Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

### **Richard Barrett**

Richard Barrett lives and works in Salford. In 2009 a selection of his work featured in *The Other Room 09/10* anthology and a chapbook collection, *Pig Fervour*, was published by The Arthur Shilling Press. He has a second chapbook collection, *Semi Detached*, forthcoming from YT Communication. His first full length collection, *Sidings*, is forthcoming from White Leaf Press. He is a co-organizer of the Manchester based performance series *Counting Backwards*.

### **Rich Follett**

Rich Follett has recently returned to writing poetry after a thirty-year hiatus. He lives in the sacred and timeless Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, where he joyfully teaches English and Theatre Arts for high school students. His poems have appeared in *Paraphilia*, *Calliope Nerve*, *Sugar Mule*, *Four Branches Press* and *Counterexample Poetics*, for which he is a Featured Artist. He is the co-author of *Responsorials* (with Constance Stadler) and the solo collection *Silence, Inhabited* (May 2010 release date) for NeoPoiesis Press.

### **Robert Stoddard**

I am a poet who resides in California and have been writing for many years, but I am making my first submissions for publication. I write mostly from experience and observation. I attempt to express the tangible and connect it to an inner subconscious voice.. I find all artistry that I encounter is a stimulus, and that the image behind a word is vital to its potency.

### **Robert Wexelblatt**

Robert Wexelblatt is professor of humanities at Boston University's College of General Studies. He has published essays, stories, and poems in a wide variety of journals, two story collections, *Life in the Temperate Zone* and *The Decline of Our Neighborhood*, a book of essays, *Professors at Play*, and the novel *Zublinka Among Women*, winner of the First Prize for Fiction, Indie Book Awards, 2008.



## **Sam Silva**

He has published at least 150 poems in print magazines, including Sow's Ear, The ECU Rebel, Pembroke magazine, Samisdat, St. Andrew's Review, Charlotte Poetry Review, Main Street Rag, and many more. Has published at least 300 poems in online journals including Jack Magazine, Comrades, Megaera, Poetry Super Highway, physik garden, Ken again, -30-, Fairfield Review, Foliate oak, and dozens of others. Three legitimate small presses have published chapbooks of his, three of those presses have nominated work of his for Pushcart a total of 7 times. Bright Spark Creative of Wilmington purchased rights to his first full length book EATING AND DRINKING and put the book out through author house at there expense. He now has many books and chapbooks available at <http://www.lulu.com/samsilva54> and as kindle books at Amazon.com And his spoken word poetry is available at the major digital markets such as Apple i tunes.

## **Sankar Roy**

*Sankar Roy, originally from India, is a poet, translator, activist and multimedia artist living near Pittsburgh, P.A. He is a winner of PEN USA Emerging Voices, a Rosenthal Fellow, a finalist for Benjamin Franklin Award, winner of Skipping Stone Award and author of three chapbooks of poetry. Sankar's poems have appeared and forthcoming in over eighty journals and anthologies. Moon Country, a full-length book is forthcoming from Tebot Bach.*

## **Santiago del Dardano Turann**

## **Tyson Bley**

## **Scott Sweeney**

Scott Sweeney has published poems in several small-press journals, including *Borderlands*, *Abbey*, *Heavy Bear*, and *Möbius*. He also co-founded Grey Book Press, which produces journals (most recently *Momoware*) and chapbooks. Scott lives in Tallahassee, Florida, with his wife and daughter and two Siamese cats.

## **Serena M Tome**

Serena Tome launched an international reading series for African children to connect, learn, and participate in literary activity with students from around the world via video conferencing. She has literary work published and/or forthcoming in, Ann Arbor Review, Breadcrumb Scabs, Word Riot, Calliope Nerve, Counterexample Poetics, The Stray Branch, and other publications. Her first chapbook is forthcoming with Differentia Press. You can find out more about Serena at [www.serenatome.blogspot.com](http://www.serenatome.blogspot.com) <<http://www.serenatome.blogspot.com/>> .

## **Steve Gilmartin**

Steve Gilmartin's fiction and poetry have appeared in *Double Room*, *14 Hills*, *3rd bed*, *Mad Hatters' Review*, *Poemeleon*, *Drunken Boat*, *Eleven Eleven*, *elimaec*, *Able Muse* and *Cannot Exist*. He works as a freelance editor and lives in Berkeley, California.

## **Shimmy Boyle**

Many years ago, when I first began thinking of myself as a writer, I used to produce absurd vignettes about bumbling elephants, who got themselves into troublesome situations. The stories were silly, and trite, and not very good. But looking back now, there was a certain spirit to the writing that still inhabits many of my poems. The heart of my writing is the idea that the use of imagination and absurdity are completely rational ways in which to describe the overwhelming, ineffable phenomena that make up human life. In addition, I believe that there are secret lives to the forms surrounding us, (plants, animals, even inanimate objects) that we are incapable of seeing, and that we nevertheless interact with and are acted upon by these things. It is my hope that my causing others to imagine the subtle relationships that exist between creatures and objects will evoke a sense of other worlds beneath the world we dwell in, along with a sense of mystery and wonder, a sense that the world is much bigger than we can possibly imagine. And so, while I no longer write about those bumbling elephants, their sense of absurdity and levity still lives on in my writing, but hopefully in the company of more profound, or at least interesting, subject matter. Be well.

## **Bart Sonck**

My name is Bart Sonck, born on the 10th of July, 1977, in a little Flemish town called Atom. When I was 18, I began to work in a factory, and it was there, between mechanical machines, that I wrote the very first page of my very first novel. A novel that I finished ten years later, and get published with the title: 'The First Gods'. I still live in the same old town, were I still writing some poems and short stories, with my garden and my yellow old car as my best neighbours...

## **Sophie Sills**

Sophie recently relocated from San Francisco to Los Angeles after completing her MFA at Mills College. Here, she works for a Jewish Non-Profit and teaches English at National University. She writes poetry and literary criticism, which has been published or is forthcoming in *Amor Fati*, *Cricket Online Review*, *Jacket Magazine*, and *Area Sneaks*.

## **Stacy Kidd**

I'm finishing my PhD in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Utah, where I served as Poetry Editor at *Quarterly West* for two years. My poems have been published in *Colorado Review*, *Columbia*, *Eleven Eleven*, *The Journal*, and *Witness*, among others, and are forthcoming in *Boston Review*.

## **Stephen Baraban**

Stephen Baraban was born on May 25, 1955, grew up in Brooklyn and on Long Island, and studied at SUNY/Buffalo with John (Jack) Clarke & Robert Creeley. After a regression to the New York City area, he recently (August, 2009) returned to Buffalo, to re-enter old stories and friendships, and encounter new joys and challenges. He has had poems in House Organ, intent., and Home Planet News (print); and MiPoesias, Hamilton Stone Review, and a previous issue of BlazeVox Journal.

## **SJ Fowler**

SJ Fowler is a postgraduate student of philosophy and a museum attendant. He has published in over thirty journals and edits the Maintenant poetry series for 3am magazine. He also reads and has published materials for the Writers Forum, the group Bob Cobbing began in the 1950's. [www.sjfowlerpoetry.com](http://www.sjfowlerpoetry.com) <<http://www.sjfowlerpoetry.com>>

## **Steve Roggenbuck**

Steve Roggenbuck has recently published in Columbia Poetry Review, Cricket Online Review, and Word For/ Word. His blog is 'I DONT CARE ABOUT DAVID HUME.' <http://steveroggenbuck.blogspot.com>. He is a founding member of Living Opposed to Violence and Exploitation (L.O.V.E.), an anti-oppression, vegan collective. <http://loveallbeings.org>

## **Tim Tomlinson**

Tim Tomlinson is a co-founder of New York Writers Workshop, and co-author of its popular text, *The Portable MFA in Creative Writing*. He is the fiction editor of the webzine Ducts. Recent fiction and poetry appear in Perigee, Pif, Del Sol Review, Nova Cookie, Dogzplot, 3:AM, Hanging Moss Journal, Heroin Love Songs, The Toronto Quarterly, The Smoking Poet, and Tongues of the Ocean.

## **Travis Cebula**

Travis Cebula currently resides, writes, and edits in Colorado. He holds an MFA in Writing and Poetics from Naropa University. His poems, visual art, essays, and stories have appeared internationally in various print and on-line journals. *Monkey Puzzle Press* released his first solo collection of poetry and photography, *Some Exits*, in 2009; his most recent chapbook, *Some Colors Will Touch Regardless* was published in January, 2010 by *Fact-Simile Editions*.

## **Travis Macdonald**

Travis Macdonald works in advertising and writes when he thinks no one is looking. His poems, essays and translations have appeared in Anemone Sidecar, Bombay Gin, Cricket Online Review, ditch, e-ratio, Hot Whiskey, InStereo, Jacket, Misunderstandings, Otoliths, Requited, Wheelhouse and elsewhere. In his spare time, he co-edits Fact-Simile Editions. All this from Santa Fe, NM.

## **Yemi Oyefuwa**

Yemi Oyefuwa was born in London, England - September the 11th, 1989. And while that isn't the best days in American history, America accepted her to attend school at the University of Maryland. There, she plays basketball for the varsity team and is currently ending her Sophomore year, playing for her National team in the summer. She enjoys writing and plans to publish a poetry book in the near future.