



**BLAZEVOX 2KX**

Fall 2010



# BlazeVOX 2kX

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BlazeVOX [books]  
Buffalo, New York

BlazeVOX 2kX | Fall 2010  
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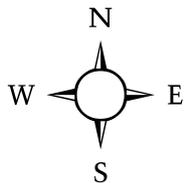
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*publisher of weird little books*

BlazeVOX [ books ]

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BlazeVOX

*To Pen Creeley  
Who made this autumn special*

## BlazeVOX [books] Mission Statement

BlazeVOX [books] presents innovative fictions and wide ranging fields of contemporary poetry. Our books push at the frontiers of what is possible with our innovative poetry, fiction and select non-fiction and literary criticism. Our fundamental mission is to disseminate poetry, through print and digital media, both within academic spheres and to society at large.

We seek to publish the innovative works of the greatest minds writing poetry today, from the most respected senior poets to extraordinarily promising young writers. We select for publication only the highest quality of writing on all levels regardless of commercial viability. Our outlets of publication strive to enrich cultural and intellectual life, and foster regional pride and accomplishments.

BlazeVOX [books] consciously acquires a collection of titles providing focus, continuity, and a basis for the development of future publications. Through the publication of works of significance, BlazeVOX [books] is committed to the dissemination of knowledge.



BlazeVOX [books]

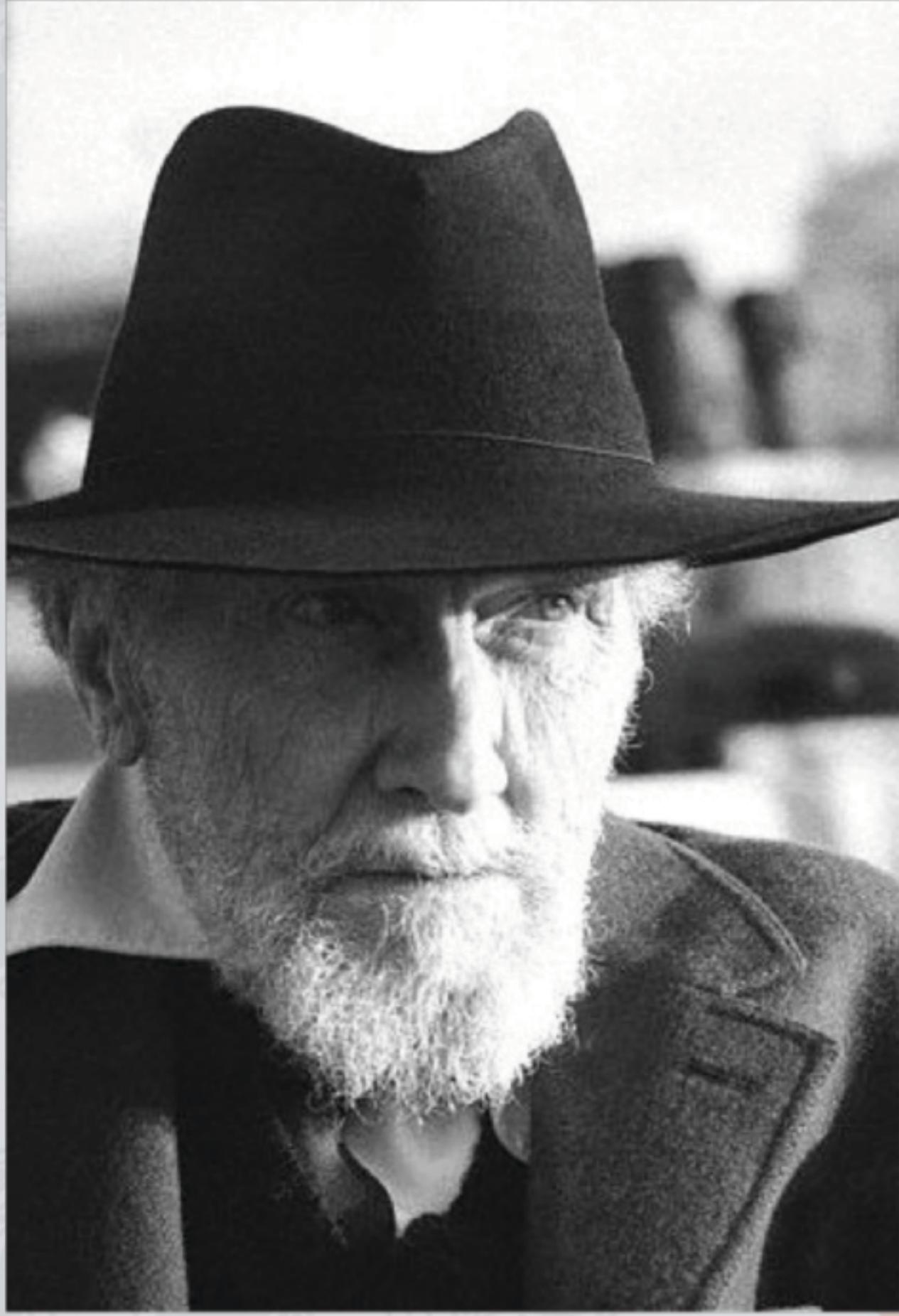
## Author List

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Laura Straub  
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Camille Roy  
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**Buffalo Focus :**  
**Norma Kassirer**



Ezra Pound at 125

## Ezra Pound at 125: *Either move or be moved*

Welcome to the Fall issue of BlazeVOX 2kX. Once again we have a wonderful issue of wild fictions, poetry, and visual poetry. We have 86 authors presenting a varied array of writings from authors around the world, from varied backgrounds and whose ages range from 17 to 82. So hop in and be moved by these works!

*Either move or be moved* is a favorite quote of mine from Ezra Pound. This simple phrase resounds in my mind of all the possibilities that can be open by the act of using ones own potential. In this case writing, but it is applicable to all the arts. I myself say, be relevant. We chose Ezra Pound as our Editor in Chief as he is still quite a relevant figure for today. We cannot forgive his politics but on his Quasiquicentennial anniversary, we say hurray!

On October 30<sup>th</sup> Erza Pound turned 125 years old. This is a big day for any writer and since he is our Editor-in-Chief, Ezra's birthday was something we did not want to miss. We had a nice celebration in Buffalo, NY that trailed on the tails of another literary event going on that day, Big Night. It was a lucky coincidence that I had already been scheduled to cook up a feast for this event, so it was natural that I themed it a birthday party. This is one of the best reading series in Buffalo featuring poetry, poets theater, music, film and of course, food. I have been cooking for these events since the inception of the series last year. It is always a thrill to entertain so many through food and poetry. And it is the perfect way to pack a room for a poetry reading. Although, to be honest, Ezra's birthday was not mentioned during the event, a simple slip of the mind of the hosts, as there was a lot going on that night. So not everyone knew that this was going on. But I was near the dining table and doing my best to explain that the Ezra Pumpkin was a tribute to our Editor-in-Chief. All one hundred guests had a good time and that is all that matters. So hurray!

The full menu is below and many pictures of the event follow.

For More information on Big Night:

<http://www.buffalonews.com/entertainment/article46762.ece>

And an iTunes Podcast treat for all: Ezra Pound: Early Poems and Translations  
Free Podcast of Pounds works read by Alan Davies Drake.

<http://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/ezra-pound-early-poems-translations/id211007656>



Ezra Pound is generally considered the poet most responsible for defining and promoting a modernist aesthetic in poetry. In the early teens of the twentieth century, he opened a seminal exchange of work and ideas between British and American writers, and was famous for the generosity with which he advanced the work of such major contemporaries as W. B. Yeats, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, H. D., James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway and especially T. S. Eliot. His own significant contributions to poetry begin with his promulgation of Imagism, a movement in poetry which derived its technique from classical Chinese and Japanese poetry - stressing clarity, precision, and economy of language, and foregoing traditional rhyme and meter in order to, in Pound's words, "compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of the metronome." His later work, for nearly fifty years, focused on the encyclopedic epic poem he entitled *The Cantos*.

Ezra Pound was born in Hailey, Idaho, in 1885. He completed two years of college at the University of Pennsylvania and earned a degree from Hamilton College in 1905. After teaching at Wabash College for two years, he traveled abroad to Spain, Italy and London, where, as the literary executor of the scholar Ernest Fenellosa, he became interested in Japanese and Chinese poetry. He married Dorothy Shakespeare in 1914 and became London editor of the *Little Review* in 1917. In 1924, he moved to Italy; during this period of voluntary exile, Pound became involved in Fascist politics, and did not return to the United States until 1945, when he was arrested on charges of treason for broadcasting Fascist propaganda by radio to the United States during the Second World War. In 1946, he was acquitted, but declared mentally ill and committed to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. During his confinement, the jury of the Bollingen-Library of Congress Award (which included a number of the most eminent writers of the time) decided to overlook Pound's political career in the interest of recognizing his poetic achievements, and awarded him the prize for the *Pisan Cantos* (1948). After continuous appeals from writers won his release from the hospital in 1958, Pound returned to Italy and settled in Venice, where he died, a semi-recluse, in 1972.

# Just Buffalo Big Night Menu

October 30, 2010

Happy 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Ezra Pound

“Some Cook, Some do not”  
—Ezra Pound *Canto 81*

## Snacks & Birthday

Ezra Pumpkin 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday Display (Carved Pumpkin)

Nine-Grain Herbed Crustini

Ezra Pound Cake: Pumpkin Cornbread

## Dinner

Big Night Pasta Salad With Tomato And Basil

Mushroom And Cheese Ravioli With Mushrooms And Colorful Peppers

Curried Potato And Pea With Ginger Syrup

Black Beans And Hominy Autumn Chili

Red And Golden Beets, Carrots With Walnuts And Blue Cheese

Smoked Paprika Couscous With Dates And Tomato

Roast Autumnal Vegetables

Eggplant And Green Peppers With Balsamic Vinaigrette

## Desserts

NYS Cortland Apple Pie

Chocolate Pumpkin Bread Pudding With Whipped Cream

Chocolate-Topped Éclairs

Traditional Raisin Cinnamon Rice Pudding

Halloween Fun Candies And Creepy Crawlies



# Big Night

Oct 30th, 2010







# BlazeVOX 2kX

Fall 2010



**Ashley Burgess**

The Fire Law:

The Fire Law is stained glass. Not in church but in my eyes, it shines shallow. And the soldiers see the oil between my fingers, the chains around my music, as I grasp, gasp the words. They poke their swords at my shark skin.

Lame

The Fire Law is polar bear drowning. Not in church but in my mom's eyes, and only when she looks at me, in a quagmire.

## Sweet Anxiety

The sky is green,  
a moody swirl  
in static edginess, pending.  
I wait on the balls of my feet.  
My nails  
tear  
at the ones I used to board up the cellar  
where I hide.  
Thunder-red beats boom,  
as I glimpse my hazy reflection in an iris,  
churning black blue storm clouds.  
I quake,  
my earth shakes.  
Rapture shifts  
its weight,  
crushes the wind from my lungs.  
A keening whistle matches  
my tone,  
sucks me out and in.  
Pinpricks of hail on my skin, warm  
as a hand (gritty soft sand)  
makes tiny lacerations into my cheek.  
I'm lifted;  
salt on my lips.  
No currency for the ground.

## The Seventh Seal

A pleomorphic society splits,  
chunks of rock from the sky create big puffs of dusty earth.  
Fills nostrils, clogs lungs with incense.  
blood rains down, spit fire,  
some say heavens prayers hurtled down,  
turned against us to help in earth's destruction.  
A woman bats cleaves away with an  
abandoned staff.  
No forehead stamp,  
she looks to find her own niche in the ground  
that won't burn her ass with steam.  
Sun sinks when it should rise, dropping  
like an uncooked egg yolk, shiny and malleable.  
The moon melts in a puddle of phosphorus, dripping  
from the sky, acid rain;  
children slap their hands in it,  
put it into their mouths to make teeth glow.  
A beautiful moiréd look to fallen armor.  
make light dance in color like the Aurora Borealis,  
smooth. As if this shit had never happened.  
She is a relict between a crack.

**Andrea Dulanto**

The Politics of the Dance Floor

We are walking Dublin,  
optimistic—  
3 freshly showered American girls  
looking for the nearest dyke bar,  
bats flying over our heads,  
lit up cathedrals,  
two hours  
we walk the river.

Shangrila, Narnia, rabbit-holes and looking-glasses—  
*are those women holding hands?*

But even straight women hold hands.

Why are all the dyke bars from New York to Dublin buried beneath bridges?

We endure, we endure,  
3 not-so-freshly showered American girls.

And the bar rises out of Dublin's financial district,  
bastion of glass and steel,  
Emerald City—  
disco lights on the second floor.

Inside— sleek décor,  
Garbo, South Beach, Josephine Baker's fan dance, The Great Gatsby—  
where the furniture thinks it's better than you.

But the women are like us, same haircuts,  
same movements of hand and wrist,  
same drama—look, Fiona didn't mean to sleep with Siobhan—  
and not like us,  
because they're Irish,  
another history inside of them, another way of dancing to music,  
another way of listening,  
leaning close.

We stare at ourselves in the mirror,  
no one is dancing.

We want to dance.  
We want to be sociable.

But these Irish women turn their backs on us when we sit down next to them, we can tell they're doing this on purpose— we move  
around the room several times to test our theory— it's true— they're turning their backs on us.

Two hours, we searched Dublin—we demand to see the Wizard, we don't care if he's a disembodied head behind a curtain, give us  
something for the journey—we're entitled to this, we feel entitled—

Then the DJ breaks out Beyonce,  
and it's every dyke for herself  
on the dance floor,

except for us

we don't have to fight for a place

we are getting down

3 American girls

we own this  
we own everything.

## Groceries for Roethke

1.

I dream of food I can't eat:  
Food that practically digests itself,  
uses very little stomach acid,  
comes in a pill  
or better yet an IV  
rooted inside the intestines,  
kicking through the blood  
an odorless, tasteless magma  
at light speed,  
every vein opens up, says: *ab.*

2.

I dream of food I can't eat  
and this is the supermarket of my dreams,  
but it's not a dream,  
great automatic mother,  
her hyper-sensitive doors  
know when to swallow and close;  
she keeps her linoleum distance,  
her traveled, speckled tiles— green, black and white,  
splattered with spaghetti sauce, blood for the bloodless,  
crevices crusted with curdled milk,  
slick with salmonella from a crushed carton of eggs,  
covered in microscopic slivers of broken glass,  
shoeprints;  
endless silver mouth of shelves,  
tin can smile,  
bright reds, yellows,  
inducing hunger in the well-fed,  
she watches from the ceiling,  
florescent, humming.

Caves inside of her—  
soft, mealy plum skins,  
anxious tomatoes,  
over-eager bananas, still green,  
impenetrable husk of imported avocados,  
but nothing grows here;  
smudge of fingerprints,  
ripeness-test,  
one learned of decisions.

I wander frozen foods,  
realm of the unspoiled,  
nothing alive, nothing dead.

Thinking:  
So that's how it is,  
life, a spinach leaf—  
it wilts, pre-packaged, in a plastic bag,  
or turns to icicles.

Believing:  
My life is not a spinach leaf.

3.

I feel the urgency of carts around me,  
near collisions,  
substance, matter, equations—

Where are all the mathematicians?

What do they eat?

They grow numbers  
or levitate.

Other people grow children, satellites,  
protection  
outside their own bodies—  
screams of *I want, I want*  
easier (or more difficult?) to refuse.

Plastic, cardboard—  
cereal boxes, artichoke hearts in a jar,  
bottled water,  
100% pure.

I want to eat the insides of inside.

I want to be more than chemicals.

*The body is chemicals.*

I want these carts to collide.

4.

This is my body  
rising.

No ripeness, nothing frozen  
at its peak—  
no hunger,  
real or manufactured.

This is my body,  
I eat through the ceiling.

I am full.

## AE Baer

### A Little Big

I wanna be a someone big, you know  
I wanna name streets-  
Hell, I want the streets to be named after me!  
I want the ecstasy of saddling up some steel horse  
Throwing a hundred, a thousand, a million  
nameless bodies onto a battlefield, a petrol street infected by barriers and shot reason  
I want to plant asphalt flower lip imprints on nameless baby heads  
I want a nameless crowd lapping up my spilt pennyroyal tea  
Jeering and crying and screaming and clapping and going into hysterical fits  
Lying on the pavement, common sense running like diarrhea into a collective sess pool  
Where they can all chain smoke my candy syllables and hand over their trust  
Like a coffee shop twit caked up on too much makeup  
Ready to pool her V card over to the first Lyon Burke  
I want to mess with the briefcase boy  
Act like I'm accidently gonna push the Doomday button  
Paint something nuclear, like I do by just being me  
Yea, yea I wanna chain hefty bag eyes, common eyes, nameless eyes  
To me on the big screen in the big news  
Where all the big kids get to stretch under euthanized sunlight  
On a playground reserved for gods and overgrown infants  
Yea, yea- I wanna be big, I want my name on back pockets  
Lace panties, underground posters, action figures  
I wanna be the big shot behind the Brazilian import  
Wearing some Verdi chapstick  
Chomping down on a smoking robust some Latvian doll lights up for me with a selenium zippo  
Wait, wait- no

I wanna kick it classic, pop rhino boots with spurs up on my desk  
With some dame from Liverton with eyes that only burn blue on rained out nights  
Her Kaolin fingers crawling like she did last night in the Dutchman suite  
Cross the endangered hide of some biological complexity I bought dead with flat paper  
And I want her to light up my bone pipe with a match book  
Puff, puff, rings bouncing off my lampshade, her tits, my empire-  
Yea, yea- I wanna be someone big with a big name and six letters  
Sitting cross-legged in a palace with thick walls  
So no one can hear me smashing sour mash and glass  
On some broken Fazioli clavier I never learned to play  
(I bought it for the silence anyway)  
Faking the Dutch Act  
Cause I got everything and nothing  
All the empty skulls of ladies by the score  
A cold, golden mattress  
And a private priest to kiss my sin for me  
Oh yea, I wanna be big  
So I can have the privilege of dying  
Like everyone-  
And no one else.

## The Dutch Act

“I can’t go on. I’ll go on.”

Got a jar of coined won

Color of road kill on hard Canadian carpet

Pounded out to keep the tar pit & wages fresh

Fresh as tits

Fresh as roach monk bones in the streets of Saigon

Fresh as this pixel feed tube I got plugged into my wooly brain

& I got it moaning Boddah like a *vierge folle* in a bath tub

After hack-sawing the hymen like cracking quail eggs against a Seoul sauce pan

*Come as you are, as you were, as I want you to be...*

Roast them Cannon Street Hotel love letters, roast ‘um or play ‘poete maudit’

You pussy, pussy & your Cornwallis bust can’t even soldier out to face loss

Do play me, kid on the corner who decided the Old Man ain’t on this block

Figured it out while crushing pocket watches & kicking over nail polish-colored bugs

You know He’s got no place here if He hasn’t ever had an orgasm

Or left his mulberry jizz on some foreign mattress in a burnt-out borough suite!

Eh, but I'm done interrogating the Seleni for His whereabouts  
Got better things to do, like mimic 'the Maltese Falcon'  
Or smash the naked light bulb hanging like a tangerine testicle &  
Keeping our damn stone flotilla square dancing with Newtonian notation  
Looking like a fat bomb-  
Bomb, bomb, bomb!  
Bomb in the cellar of a Dresden beer garden  
Where a queen waits with an unfiltered right hand for her king-  
Tired of all this goddamn war, they can take her husband now for all she cares

*...Memoria*

*Memoria*

*Memoria...*

But how bout you love? I want your opinion-  
Or are you too busy soldering bullshit to bee hives, claiming you ain't a child no more  
Least you don't think you think like one...

Love, we all think like children  
& end up rubbing elbows on a tree stump cause we raped the Good Earth silly, backwards  
Like them

Sitting in their pretty cabanas sucking up the duck smoke of some Cuban intestine

Saying, gee, gee, wouldn't it be nice, wouldn't it be- nice...

*...As I want you to be, as a trend, as a friend...*

Be it you, be it holy, ain't nothing above my conscious

Ain't nothing above me

I ain't got time for ceilings that don't exist, or stars that bum it on streets named after 'incurable tyrants'

You came here cause I'm old & fucking brilliant & I've got affection spilling outta me

Like semen out the port hole of some prophet busy with a half dozen tramps in the parlor where he met the mother of his six whiny children (one born dead)-

Ha-ha fucking bloke with his capital disregard and his sin.

But you know what?

*...I don't have a gun*

*No I don't have a gun*

*No I don't have a gun...*

Right now-

Love's letting someone nail a Cezanne into your torso

It's investing all your hard cash behind your back in flat stocks

Damn them aesthetics, them orchid symmetry, them nanobots in my blood stream

That creep, creep, creep up the gravel driveway into my balsamic soul

You know Wall Street gonna send slug men up here

To pull the bag off my head for I get to hang with some decency-

Fuck um'!

And fuck Grandma!

She sits there in her ghost dress

Sowing me something nice, something Sunday nice

With bone thread & ash cloth

Something that stains when the seconds fall off the cuckoo clock on the back wall

Where she kept your grandpa's war letters from Monte Casino, all under the floor boards

Only thing she got now, left of his pudding brains anyhow, some vent words in formaldehyde ink

Ink, ink, ink!

Well fuck ink and fuck you-

*...Memoria*

*Memoria*

*Memoria...*

I'll dose off after a little pinky time & soft porn

& booze

That's why I got a bottle of Scotch,

half-Lethe, quarter hocus pocus, quarter nail in the coffin

quarter something like bad math & mind hurricanes

I choke the whore neck of the glass wire with fly-swatter fingers beat flat like railway cars by-

BOMBS

Fucking bombs tossed out the back of burning gliders while the soldiers-

(Idiot soldiers

Idiot, idiot soldiers

*...No I don't have a gun...*

Let the machine harvest 'um

Like Mexicans harvesting Byzantine grapes in Salinas)

-Sob behind closed doors, years later, their eyes confessing Aegean salt water to dead handles of schnapps & napkins with running ink

Running ink from an idea they had in a bar somewhere long ago

'The Dutch Act--'

It's all ape shit.

APE FUCKING SHIT.

*I'm so happy cause today I found my friends, they're in my head...*

Ha-ha

They'll call me a nut bag when this is through

Probably feed me genius for the first ten minutes of my Nobel! Nobel! Nobel! salutation

They probably won't understand the repetition of three, three, three...

No- they will-

Holy, holy holy!

Ha-ha, all morons, all morons dear Aden

But don't worry, be happy!

*...Sunday morning is everyday for all I care...*

You & I

We'll toast somewhere in the Sadducee armpit of the valley

*...I'm not scared*

*Light candles in a daze cause I found god...*

Then you'll pack my barrel with lead & steel

I'll pack yours like a mother fu-

'Wanna say a prayer?' You'll kindly ask,

I'll say fuck you, you pompous ass

And trigger squeeze, free at last, free at last, free-

BAM!

It's just like it was before?

*Yeaaa, Yeaaa, Yaaa.*

## Barrel in the Mouth, Barrel of the Month

It was the plan all along

Between the mentor and the god

To Dresden bomb the palace

Where the Dead Poet and his Eurydice

Lay naked on a satin causeuse

In a concourse, a discourse, a diatribe

Of sucking up battery acid through metal straws

To spit in the face of our favorite Joyce subject

And our worst enemy

The pronoun with a synchronous heart beat-

**Alban Fischer**

Hatskook

Nothing is going to happen to you  
Simply by writing a letter and getting on a plane.  
There's delirium and there's  
The world and I seem to be talking about  
The thing that will open up  
The plausible. In a parking lot  
I felt the world would be a better place if  
I were to watch it disappear. What I  
Remember is we walked for blocks  
And blocks and we were like  
An elegant sentence. Language  
Is what happens to you. You have to choose  
A heart made of wood  
And money to make it all work.  
But it doesn't work. And I am  
A beautiful fragment and it's okay.

**Amylia Grace**

February Rain in Milwaukee

The night is red. A storm  
is brewing. Cold rain

on naked heads drawn skyward  
in the late Wisconsin winter.

We all hear it too late; gutters  
pinged with rain, sound

quicken like breath,  
the tinny music of swelling

gutters, all rusty and surprised.  
I touch my belly and think

of you--that emptied silo no longer  
waiting to be filled.

Memories rise up like heat.

## Merging Dreams of Lovers with Leftover Pizza

Our dreams are simple. Mid-mornings across the black  
Formica counter. The Times  
spread like sunlight over slices of cold pizza I serve  
on paper plates.

Me in my spa robe, you inside it. The tender hours.  
No need to practice  
worse-case scenarios. Or hide behind the spill  
of Mahler's Fifth

sudden & shifting between emptied rooms.  
Oh, to live not like Mahler, but a symphony!  
Like the world, embracing  
everything.

Learning how to rejoice in the cacophony. Like trombones  
sliding inside pianos. The wordless hours.  
Your lips buzzing into a mouthpiece. The vibration  
of hammers

and strings. My fingers like children on sea-saws, bouncing  
through the notes—tethered to the sound of a G  
stretching into itself. I am here,  
as always.

Looking into a bruised eye like a peephole  
with something more ferocious than love. Maybe this  
time we don't fall after all--and love is not destined  
to deteriorate.

The future fluid and connected like dreams or Great Lakes,  
only far less dramatic. Like water evaporating and falling  
as rain over Boston. As snow over Maine. Forever merging  
with the salt of the Atlantic.

## Meditations to The Max

You are all oomph and spunk directed outwards. You run  
me in circles, sleep still in our eyes. Energy like light filling  
curtainless rooms. Today I am six again and digging for gold

in the sandbox. Our filthy feet banned from the house. Instead,  
we dip toes in the river. Secret handshake marks the spot.  
The language of hands another current. Christians (like you?)

imagine God with hands, but I am not so sure. Even monkeys  
are taught to speak with their hands. Babies discover their hands  
when they are six weeks old. They ball them into tiny fists,

slowly turning them back and forth before their eyes, amazed.  
My own hands dug and dug and came up with only this:  
Silt and sediment once buried deep now carried on wind

and water. Fast flowing rivers and freshwater lakes. Reminders  
of home. Chubby clouds in crowded skies. Springtime. The grass  
lush and lime. Lilacs already browning. But they're still good.

Enough to explain a little of the world and life to you and tell you  
why it should be lived. Like musk. Persistent and penetrating.  
It is closeness and the memory of closeness.

An aroma that smothers with thickness. It is locker rooms,  
babies' skin and feet. Sweet smelling, earthy and unctuous.  
Even now I remember the musk of men I loved and nestled.

Babies do this too—tuckling tight against mothers' necks.  
I smell you even after you're gone. Life moves on without you  
and I have only these words to give. Some are sodden. Flimsy

balled tissues from Papa's funeral. Bones like silver hidden  
in the earth. Here, touch the evidence: coins, jewelry,  
swords. All burdensome to hold. Even the word itself is soft:

*~ s i l v e r ~*

Shout it and no one runs. But be weary--one could crush all  
you love with other soft words. Like no. Like yes. Like gone.

--for Max, b. 2002

## Over the Transom

Mom and I mapped a route to the U.P.  
and Northern Wisconsin but drove no further  
than Door County--a pseudonym of Grace.  
Champagne was her ballast.

I napped and poked about the pool, spying girlhood  
dreams like a one-track navigator. She'd jerk awake  
on the king-sized bed, soaked to her eyeballs in alcohol,  
struggling to stammer

*You have no clue, honey. A bucket.*

I'd heave to and mark my place in an Atwood  
book, uncinch the scarf, a caterpillar clutched  
about her neck, covering the scars surgeons left  
in lieu of glands.

Sometimes, I'd read aloud to her, plunging  
stanza after stanza for fear if I stopped, I'd end  
her life. Mom out on the balcony to smoke again,  
watching the contrail solidify.

Dreams tethered to consciousness, to breath.  
I don't document her days with pen or lens.  
Can you picture sky striped with artificial clouds?

Old hat, blue and white late-day, late September.  
Searching the trees for a secret closet. Twenty toes  
dipping in a chlorinated sea.

Before my feet could touch bottom, Mom got swamp  
nosed and honked like a swan. Swimming agape  
in a handful of glitter, flirting between the underwater

legs of strangers. Grandpa peered through old parochial school windows to capture her. We were in the deep end, she still a catch with a slit throat—her slit white and striking

(all the Rugby boys used to say). Like the potted orchids beside her hospital bed, a nod to all her richly colored blossoms--sensitive like her, and hard to care for. Exquisite lives made of brevity and beauty--more idea than flower.

I put up boundaries and she unfurled them, like her faded black bikini—raised in surrender or offering before flinging it at me, naked, her story in a nutshell over the transom and lost in an orbit of bubbles,

such desire universal. Like Twilight, like Bella, and the wish to be undead before fucking. Or not— for me: a one-piece underneath the black pencil skirt I insist on wearing poolside.

Our bodies still damp at dusk; Mom and I, two white orchids left atop his headstone. Then shame is the prize, cadaverous, trapped sables.

*Goodbye, Daddy. Goodbye, Grandpa.*

I sputter out. How easy it unzips from my mouth, like this skirt worn for him, its zipperteeth torn apart with Mom's help in the back of a Buick.

## Variations on the Word *Leave*

*-After Margaret Atwood*

I would like to watch you leaving,  
which will not happen.  
I would like to watch you,  
leaving. I would like to leave you,

to exit with grace and nonchalance,  
like the leaves on the late autumn  
trees: their downward fall  
short and to the point.

I would like to leave before becoming  
brittle and walk out of the house without  
you, appearing lost and lonesome  
before appearing no more.

I would like to be left  
in the forest of loose ambling leaves  
with its slant sun and bonechill.  
Leave me please

between patches of sinuous sun  
and dollops of stillgreen grass. Chin up,  
nose skyward and pointing to broad  
shouldered cloudshapes, little tufts of breath  
atop the crooked world.

## How It Ends

I dream you up sometimes late at night. When I wake I hear this pitch in my ears--an unfamiliar sound, something like gravel in a tuba--low and sudden. And I think maybe this is how it ends, each death a concerto. No streams of violins or the haunting din of loss. Just a small room. A lamp beside a bed. Sleeping children at peace. And sheets and sheets of loneliness. Not a big finish, really. Suddenly there and then not. The bread of the body brought to His lips.

## What Remains

Outside in turtlenecks we tend to our fading  
garden of peppers and pumpkins. You call for the dog  
and ties your shoelaces while august flecks of gold  
and rust fall piece by piece from the trees.

I would like to touch you now, but we've been  
unrecognizably replaced--these bodies, like our lives  
beyond that now. The minutes pass on with each  
non-touch--like suffering, like skin, like grief.

I water the garden and see you proudly pocket the last  
orange and yellow pepper. Everything we have  
planted has survived. The sun droops downward  
in the sky. We pause to watch half disappear. What remains

seems brighter. I am happy until I notice you have turned  
to go. The moment has passed and I am holding a watering can  
and not your face. I call your name to tell you I need you.  
You smirk. I have leaves in my hair.

## After Visiting an Unmarked Grave in India

Once in India  
I stood on the edge  
of a grave and looked  
down at the bones

inside; I could not tell  
women from men, or  
which hands killed;

dried pelvises all  
opened the same,  
like prayer books  
lacking words.

Delicate wing bones  
forever cinched  
around the spine

like tea saucers  
about to snap—  
broken things

being taken away:  
the moon behind  
the clouds, the proud  
lean of tall grass, and us

keeping watch  
like herons and loons  
that wait for fish  
that wait for smaller fish.

White bellied gulls  
swoop down to dine  
on garbage. The water  
still rubs the shore.

## What Was Heard [Cat and Bird]

If you care about something, you have to protect it.

-John Irving, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*

I.

Last night Andrew Bird fiddled his compulsions like tin, announcing his Big Thoughts on laptop speakers. And there was Zeus, belly up. My arms cradled around him--the purr of a higher vibration.

It felt something like love, like the start of something good—and Zeus pounced on the chance to court Mr. Figgy's rump with his tongue.

Elsewhere I knew what creatures were doing to other creatures: the chase and capture, the joy in killing others' joy. But I rejected all the proof that the strong always prey on weak.

I rejected the pine tree in the small of my backyard and the brown horned bird on its bow, but took it back on functionality after admiring the varmint free yard.

I rehearsed rejecting Christianity again--before the neighbors could repudiate me for refusing to play tit for tat. Yes, rejection felt good in my bones! Subdued surges of endorphins, a temporary siege on the body, the regurgitated sick of wrong remembrance brought on like relief. Like tension relief after coming.

The tingle of toes. Oh, I practiced it! Reciting His name, courting constructs to add to my list. Like fidelity. Like love. Like us. A nest beneath the roof with feathers bound in twine-- a silent ornament of delight. Watching the cats watch the sparrow through thick panes of glass.

As a girl I learned the hymnal. Singing God's eye is on the sparrow--but not taking men at their word (divine and human alike). I lifted the glass and Zeus rushed toward the breeze, wet nose pressed tight to the screen, the window opened to truth. *My!* Curious cats craving chance after chance to ruthlessly

capture their prey. I denied my flimsy faith in a nonchalant God, then practiced rejecting Him, too! What use is a father who doesn't protect you? How easy to repudiate Him! I practiced once more before hearing my voice reject my own name.  
II.

The Blackberry buzzed. Two texts from a lover in Odessa: *Remember reading Owen Meany at night in separate beds?* (Oh baby! It was better than phone-sex!)-It read like invitation.

Turns out he's just a fiction born into fiction, something like the biblical Jesus. All miracles rendered invalid—thrown out on some obscure technicality by the female judge from Kamchatka.

But people like us, with Andrew Bird on tinny speakers and enough extra hours to enjoy a room filled with music, should remember armlessness does not equal surrender—which is what my two thumbs texted back.

I felt some validation after no reply came and Zeus licked dried jam off my hand. I would not reject Zeus, not even that haphazard black speckled tongue. How could I? I chose him (or was it he who chose me?).

Winking code between cold shelter bars. Spending each evening of this (God given?) life grooming Kitten with his sandpaper tongue. It isn't much, but he is met with applause from this audience of one, impressed nightly

by the sheen of fur coats. Imagine! Man grooming man in joy for the coming of love—not just aching to poke into bottles and bodies of water or women, in dogged service to ancient needs of the flesh.

## Reasons to Stay

Because it is night, because we fought today.  
Because it is raining and rain is a reason to stay  
alone inside. I recline the old Lazy-Boy, sides stuffed  
with yesterday's crumbs: pen caps, the loose,

forgotten change that isn't mine. All the unknown things  
we lose hide in obvious places. One copes with helicopters  
by choosing a bird to listen to. I invite the outside in  
again--a fight you never win.

Refusing opened windows when it rains—a habit carried  
over from girlhood. Even then I could feel the air and know  
if a storm were coming. Or not; the difference essential,  
like our fights, the subject same as always, historic.

Let's forget all that for now, okay? All I want anymore  
is simple. To putter with you in the last streams of sun,  
clear and shattered--a slow notion of marrow in half light,  
determined by aperture; and sanity at too long intervals.

Anger is made stranger by self-editing--suddenly  
the sun's a stone. To forgive you each day is my ritual.  
There, where least words thaw taut water and everything  
wants a narrative. All I ask is that you make me laugh.

## Amy Hard

### Claret Chain

As tender as a summer blackberry rushes pierced juices over a naive tongue  
Your fingers enclosed my neck in burning copper flames  
A closed smile held the blood of red peppers sizzling over an open fire

I was stained and blotted on your skin  
Straining to involve myself outside of my core  
Ill with the obstinance of faceless images

Flowing in the undercurrents of reality's dislocation  
In an iron room where neither lying or sitting are comfortable  
I wait to be pulled apart  
Wait for joy to fall

In the suppleness of dying I am aroused  
So my lips can leak a sapphire river between my breasts  
Lying on a bed of gravel I wait for the scissors to fall  
To live dreamlessly

**Antony Hitchin**

Lost Province

We  
Buffer  
wind in  
lost province,  
passing the  
places of leaves,  
lit cigarettes, rusted  
epithets  
the no,  
no,  
discord of minor keys,  
wireless barometers mercury course pitched in pebble arc, skimming three then drowning in lost syllables ...

Yes officer, we have eaten your crepe and are the embodiment of affirmative nods.

Now our palms call to clouds.  
And we pucker to kiss the lake.

## Crest

Waving from the crests of waves, you know they would take us under beautifully?  
with mermaid scales and rhythmic clutches -back to the womb -  
which we try to recapture at night in our bed lying fetally - we have both seen -each looked at the other.

Bend over me as Sicilian's bend over the coffins of their dead, wailing fists pounding veiled in black.

We will take this dirt and crumble it in our hands, pummel ourselves until we are fit,  
shredding papier-mâché people then excising the glue from our skin.

# The Extensions

Worms

worms

worms

you concocted

chaise longue, gin, tonic, valium tablets, packet of cigarettes

We are pathetic people straining to extend elations, you moving

the ouji board consciously with your fingers writing destiny through glass tumblers until assurances are met ...

terracotta made; flowers dying in winter, awaiting summer to rise from the dead

yet only seasons deliver such a resurrection trick.

## The Archive

Camera recording forgotten masterpieces-absent memories  
these archived crypts, noir artefacts,  
shoelaces, ribbon strings unloosening,  
reels flickering black, white walls  
lens watching the platform as the train pulls out

we are all passengers but few are called as drivers

## Murals

Pencil spaghetti heights, biro sex origami, your email unfurls  
perchance to dream  
suffering bruises as dogs squat and cats claw and  
spit  
you breathe me into sunrise,  
sunsets,  
love hotels soft kimono, our lustful march  
south  
turtles ambling sand following lunar light ...

Murals on walls of deserted buildings  
candle blushed caves blushing red whetted lips.

## Amy Lawless

### Toilet Story

Sometimes, when something horrific is described, music or film is joined to the description. This helps mankind learn from these events. But what of those happenings about which no one wishes to create art? Perhaps Disney makes a cat, or perhaps an artist pours a skeleton on top. Please synch my body up but leave the zipper down.

## The Shape of Spain's Flag

During insomnia, I think of Marc Summers from Double Dare.

He is OCD and washes his hands like a thousand times a day.

The river. I wonder if he washed his hands in the river.

That's fun in theory but he would be too stressed about other, different bacteria that doesn't fall out of faucets.

When there was a gunshot, all the deer stopped farting and munching grass, and they all looked for a millisecond in that direction and then all sprang away away, like Nazis, away.

That moment on my way to bed, sober, knowing that the next seven hours would be hell.

After the volcano, all the victims were able to subsist on what came out of the volcano. We call them Ash-eaters, or Ashatarians, or Ashgans.

I take an Ash-eater and he climbs the stairs into my bedroom.

Then the next night, sated, he sleeps on the couch.

Then there are more and more. They can't properly be fed and satisfied.

Then got out of control. I was out of baking soda and vinegar and food coloring.

Everyone knows paper mache is hard.

The Ash-eaters tell me that the devastation is real. They tell me the flooding of ash that I made in my kitchen is real. They tell me there are no more trees.

One has ash where his pupils should be. One has brown oil smudged in the shape of Spain's flag. I tell that one he's an idiot. He was in my bed looking at me hungrily like a zombie who doesn't know he's a zombie yet. I ran downstairs and emailed him to get out.

I'm sitting here waiting for him to get the message.

## Body Science

My skin pushes water through itself  
and Adam called this sweat and the water is called sweat.  
My female parts void water from my bladder  
and Adam called this urination and the water is called piss or pee.  
My tear ducts excrete water from my eyes  
in conjunction with emotion  
and this is called crying and the water is called tears.  
Each carries with it different hormones, is expelling different substances along with itself.

I don't know what to call this feeling but I know you are mostly water too  
and that you're gone from me.

## Male Urination

Most male humans urinate standing up. Foreskin causes turbulence. The circumcised male urinates with more accelerating force. An interesting statistical study would analyze the male ego in relation to his pee's speed. After urinating, an uncircumcised human male squeezes or very gently quivers (jerks at) his penis. The human male trouser, or pants, generally have a "fly" – a zipper allowing easy portable access to his member and, if necessary, his sex. Yes, other trousers are indeed available, but these are generally reserved for drag queens or those males who prefer to sit down while urinating. These trousers have an elastic band, also allowing relatively easy access to the male penis for the purposes of urination, sex, or gentle cupping of the testicles.

# DICHOTOMY

Inside for a day, prone

Outside for two hours

Forty-five minutes at forty miles an hour inside

Five minutes outside

One minute forty seconds outside

Ten hours inside

Four minutes outside

Ten minutes inside

Three minutes outside

An hour and a half inside

Five minutes outside

fifteen minutes at forty-five miles an hour inside

Ten minutes outside

Two hours inside

Ten minutes outside

Fifteen minutes at forty miles an hour inside

Ten minutes outside

Fifteen hours inside

**Anisa Rahim**

Doors

A door he tries to open.

Surreptitiously, a window

That he comes through.

*Leave me alone, already.*

The dirt has been buried.

An open-door policy in the office.

The entry, unexpected.

File dropped on desk.

*Close the door, please.*

When not speaking small things make a difference.

Hi, hello when entering.

Bedroom door left slightly ajar.

*Shut it softly.*

## Two Voices

get out, we are better, more special than the rest

this was not our plan to remain here

packing, closing, the glisten of

removing, speaking the heart in a room that may say ridiculous

but still you say yes, I reject this, and maybe even you

and maybe even myself for who I was in all this

it becomes easier then to wear the colors you could not wear before,

like sapphire blue

forgive, for it was all the past anyhow, not even be a memory

at least the hope of it, there is a paradise

we may not be so worthy but ordinary perhaps, why try to be  
more than ordinary when ordinary should be just fine  
if there is a mimic, we should follow, rather than flee, who is to say  
fleeing will lead us elsewhere  
it is enough, more than we could have expected, to be loudest in the mimic.

the one who longs for freedom, possibly mad. always  
looking for escape. *stop packing.* we are here,  
we were born here, we landed here,  
we are to remain. We can erase the past,  
die from here.

the blood of the future on her cream skirt, by then,  
one voice long gone, the other an imprint.

(Inspired by the film Revolutionary Road)

## Untitled

Well, a group of us swam across the river,

My family thought it the best thing

*tell me what Honduras looked like, so that I can dream a little bit*

well, it is pretty, very pretty

there are mountains,

many things grow there, coffee beans, yucca, plantain,

*and did you walk up and down those mountains freely,*

yes, yes, of course, it is like you are filled with the sky,

used to pick coffee beans, hands smeared with soil

*I like your rose dress, satin under sheer*

my friend gave it to me, only pants for the factory

if I must tell you,

*I am here,*

I ran onto the street that midnight

no one spoke my tongue,

only a tall man and a dark woman on the sidewalk

I thought the night could swallow me,

he came out on the steps and said he was sorry, wrong

my back hurts, even now,

no big thing, honestly, to swim from one place to another

## On Cows

*I would have been a cow*, my mother answers

do cows speak and think of one another, of us,

*they must*

but they move only when slapped by the palm of an hand

derisive click of the tongue, 'huth'

when the street throbs with Maruti cars,

scooters, dry air

it is as if they were all alone,

in a field, eating grass,

they might as well be staring at the sky,

the moon hanging from its lip

you can't understand,

and she tells me some days later  
about the cow she was gifted once,

*such big, pretty eyes*

her own eyes grow larger as they says this,

she comes into my bedroom years later  
and asks me if both her eyes are the same shape

yes, of course, leave me alone,

you are so strange

*No, one is slightly larger than the other*

ten years later, I would look in the mirror

and realize the same thing about my own eyes

*God denied us symmetry at birth*

but no, it was the beauty of jagged shapes

## Flight 1549

They found some feathers in the metal of the plane,  
afterwards,  
the rudder perhaps.

From what we know, planes strike birds  
birds should fall when they fly too close

Here a plane swelled and rocked the Hudson,  
shiver of ice,  
tremble soaks

And it is not the story we knew-  
one prevails, the other dies.

A different story broadcast:  
collisions can lead to mutual descent

Sun, sky  
distant from each body  
in a matter of minutes

## Amanda L. Stephens

### My Body Becomes a Furious Globe

whenever I hear the door rear back, smacking his heels,  
then the thump on tile by tile inching barefoot while blue worms  
expand under my skin—materialized white fog (human moist)—  
I whirl and whirl in the watercolor sheets, twisting & biting my lips,  
squeezing slimy oysters shut, grinding my teeth: Rage  
my ribs are growing out of my body: Rage  
my ribs are branches hanging over the bed.

I hear him singing that little ditty—  
a pathetic cover of his own love-less mess—  
classic rock. Listen. Listen: “Another one bites the dust,”  
another, another, my legs tense up,  
I rise from my bed like I rise from my grave.  
My ribs weigh a ton of hate.  
My eyes leak red from all times he kept me awake!

Do you know the robber of sleep?  
Have you found his gray hairs in the sink?  
I’ll lynch his lips for all the times he stole sleep.  
My mouth dreams the kill.  
Words slice—cut the light.

## What Dies

when my fingers, cream white and unreal,  
clutch my father's long pointer finger  
as he leads me into his walk-in closet—  
five years old—turn off light—his breath  
smelling like burnt toast & milk

when I'm chased through woods above  
Ritter Park by a twenty-year-old man—  
puppy dog blue eyes, black hair—  
who likes what he sees: a 10-year-old girl  
and decides to go after it

when I walk up the back stairwell to eighth-  
grade homeroom—my ass grabbed  
by jock-boys, geek-boys—  
who I wouldn't give it up to yet—  
bad-boys: I ain't bad when

when I slap my high-school boyfriend  
for calling me a dumb bitch. He punches  
the wall above my head. I slide  
to the hardwood floor—blue paint  
chips littering my hair

when I look at men in my twenties,  
hoping they don't look back, and if they do,  
hope they think I'm too ugly to look at,  
so we walk by each other  
indifferently, asexually—

boring glances in the grocery store check-out line,  
boring glances in the dentist's office—  
fluorescent lights milking my skin,  
boring glances under each other

until the girl ghosts escape,  
and I hold each deformed black pearl  
in toned, loving arms,  
slowly stringing  
them back  
together.

## Brian Anthony Hardie

### BRAINS IN ALABAMA

ya know, provided I dont say something I would be safe from all stumptown eyes blinking twice, rather to leave it soft sizzling in a skillet amongst summer sex I will not have hence to where I will be longing. The crunch of buttered bread burnt to our crisp retrosexual romances, sliding poison lips down the curves of our lazy libidos, forgetting the transfer to walk back through the freedom captive in a capsule in a bottle on my dusted bedroom floor. Breathe, you.

cause you let the blahs set the groove as a mind stain, you will catch those tears in rain buckets while you bob with hands tied trying to remedy the riddle of the rotten apple brooding at the bottom. your last cigarette will burn with numb forgiveness, your withdrawal of substance will shake you sick in an unwelcome home, guilt will set the stage with barrels of booze, fear will be invoked in the thorns of our devils.

## WEST COAST ROCK TOURS

at the existent withhold, drowning  
Columbia carp, smiling in memory in  
smelly high school scent, and withhold,  
to leave it and me a sake taken to leave alone,  
gypsy love lost on the mind flowing a rapid  
end to a long fight not won.

exhausted interviews seen to the channels  
thought to provide a comfort, not even  
on the edge, forgotten in the ring of  
a text message vibration. Scandalous  
strings strum covers of cliché sounds  
heard so often. My machine gun trigger  
invites me to blast happy tension into the  
eyes and ears for conventional speakers to  
later mention when addressing a non-pleased  
audience, attending only for the will to  
be seen in the eyes of any name announced.

Back to the triggers... no, never mind. I am  
done now with you here. The only  
reason I continue aloof is because it feels  
good to do so with this one pen I found. The  
art gods to be fooled not, I am not  
bowing down to any of your cunt blood  
feet. My scribbles look of a font anorexic.

A little matter for observation  
to keep the sun from rising today. There  
are more worthless awakenings in my  
internet screen than a  
more reflected truth in a mirror shattering  
before eyes, complete.

## Bruce Bromley

### What the Burning Says

After reaching the height of his mid-thigh, having grown distant enough from the ground to realize that you can connect the closely seen and the far away, the detail and an extension of details, I began the dogging of my father.

But the problem remained that Andreas—a name my father preferred to any smaller sound, one which he had always instructed his single son to use—was so rarely there that the determination to pursue him might be answered by nothing except its own abrupt, kindling charge. Even so, now that I was sufficiently remote from the grass that continued to support me, I saw how the six year long dilemma of my father's scarcity gave out a range of possible solutions. And, leaning against the front door, both feet on the slate walkway that bordered the wide rectangle of the lawn, I spotted one of them in the form of a trail whose contours I started to trace around the cherry tree, strangely de-petalled by the thicket of storms that had burred village and sky together all this May. I accompanied it up, over the rock garden, while it seemed to slow in the willow's stooping green; I noticed its golden rippling; I thought I could smell the ghosts of my father's cigarettes and hair cream, as though the ripples were exhaling. Yet, unaware if the ghostly were capable of exhalation, I resumed following the trail into the backyard, through the screen door, past the denim shirt I imagined to be growing, somehow, out of the stone floor beneath it. I discovered myself in the bedroom that my mother had left to Andreas a year ago, when I overheard her saying that she was going to live with another director whose films would give her face the exposure it deserves—and will repay. Because I did not know how to seek for her, I obeyed the obligation to accept her loss. Now, however, standing over the bed, undone, finding the trail's collected stuff in my hands, a near yarn of hair which my father's head declined to go on threading, I learned that though you can hunt after a man in need of reassembly, you may not spy him, summoned, on the other side of that effort. I wondered, nevertheless, what it would mean to carry on trying.

It meant, this struggle over time to amass indications of my father's presence, not that Andreas should be restored to perfect wholeness by virtue of their gift but that he had been there at all and could be memorialized by a son adept at gathering the tokens of him together. I arranged them in little heaps in places where Andreas would be sure to see them—on his pillow, on the shut toilet lid in his bathroom, on the computer in the study. I came to understand that these repeated accumulations assumed an Andreas who would lose a button, for instance, along with the boy who committed himself to returning it to him, exchanges which could only confirm the two identities engaged in them. Yet this was before the imperative that seemed to descend on me, requiring me to hold tight even to those remnants of Andreas which others would call impalpable. I stood in the driveway, just after Andreas and a butter-colored woman had propelled the red convertible into it; they vanished behind the study door. I was listening to the engine's heat as it pushed into air with a prolonged keen, my right hand straining over the hood to concentrate its upsurge, cupped inside my palm. But the front door thumped, and Anna, the woman with whom Andreas intended to replace a mother gone elsewhere, at least in terms of meals and housework, was maintaining that you could not keep what must always disappear. While she spoke, I knew that the car's heat, having poked through skin, was moving in a wave up my arm; I identified Andreas as its source; I knew that its intensity would be mine, for the short time that my flesh might contain it. Perhaps that was what they were for, the buttery-haired woman lying with Andreas on the study's sofa, or the Anna who sometimes swayed underneath Andreas in her room off the kitchen: meant to stoke a fire of blood and bone until it vaporized into the breath which you cannot keep. Anna went on talking about dinner, about bedtime; I felt myself watching the memory of a late-night moment in which Andreas, hesitating in the doorway, a grooved V between his eyes, looked hard at the son he took to be in bed, asleep. I memorized that look. Through the distance between us, it taught me that the father did not know what the son was for.

Two years later, when I was eight, Anna informed me that Andreas would permit me to visit the studio in the city, so long as my attendance verged on the invisible. And, from the first of those visits, I understood how you could speak well of distances, since the sighted see, the unsighted move, because of them. The crew busied themselves in setting up a shot in which a woman with cropped, almost jagged hair was staked among hurling flames; they popped; they hissed, but she made no sound. From where I waited, in the shadows at the rear of the sound stage, I heard something wheeze and slide as it shouldered a weight that it did not choose to carry. What I will soon learn to call a dolly had the camera and its operator on top of it, the whole angled diagonally towards the woman who remained on fire, stopping short of the flames themselves, leaving a space that would equal the length of Andreas, if he could be laid on air and hover 5 feet off the ground. Stepping in closer, pausing just below the cameraman's back, I watched the monitor whose image focused on the woman's head, on

her pupils, inside which burning jumped and bobbed, as if the gap between camera and woman had been flattened out, rubbed out, wiped away, though that interval allowed this picture to be born and to lie about its birth. Beyond the monitor, opposite the cameraman, Andreas detached himself from instructing the woman to hold her face so that the light could leap across it: he was staring at the boy who had come too near and above whom a klieg-lamp fizzed, warning me to re-angle the direction of my eyes. Afterwards, many years afterwards, it will seem that I saw the figure of a man whose hair retreated quickly from the sternness of the face beneath it. But, in that moment, the baking gulf between father and son guided me to see that I would burn, and the burning must mean that you were found.

## Billy Cancel

**cropped hair but medusa approaches nonetheless.** dot beneath red petal sunset. we've lost our ability to bite & sting. should i use these cleaning fluids though they might suck the earth apart? once we were just two sleek bodies down the asbestos mine. mary rose versus u.s.s ramage is what they're watching as their unmanned vehicles roll & three field system gets spread with sea floor. intangible geometric abstractions are no real help right now. even in version 3.1 you'll no doubt spot a beetle on its side. why wasn't there more after the parlour games some blissful geometry or at least a single fierce loop around updated garden? she is crossing the garage forecourt. days of filling dark blue boxes with wet mussel shells shaving mugs coins must come again. you've cut my hair how i like it but she's at the door. pass me ode to an invisible summer this is the sound of a thirsty man.

**multi-colored neon spirals** seem to lead to a weeping birch so i'm taking a long walk off a short attention. pink arches frequent scales of silver gray high yellow railings his guardian angel obscured in the spectrum. you'll depict each region as it'll be found in near future. another one dusts the bite in the blue room but there's still time i promise. a strip of bacon was slid into a dove which he stuffed in a duck that he shoved into behemoth. that generator yard will be no place for you i would never disallow such separation. morning & the coliseum in flames the news spreading from peripheral to peripheral blur but faithful i stay to my original orbit. timing off he went to see a sausage about a hotdog. into the wild goose you'll go blue handles through leviathan white neon spiral to water elm.

**waste places egg to larva** recognition none not boiling  
but an endless chain of southern interior untuned pianos  
against white walls what is good light where is the milk  
crown palmate one pinnate two pinnate three times  
a foul zone touch-me-not-jack-in-the-pulpit cats  
made of newspaper cats made of string collected  
homage to friendly germs the net above is the very  
same one i slipped through blue-eyed-mary-barn-  
yard-grass over arrow creek there is a nervous  
strain. brain fade & half sharp rotating the strike

**all broke held loose.** rain stream folked down green lane, trigger. railway  
line far beneath cold viaduct, decoy. would the transmission tower really  
be a waste of lightning? ferocious calculator, six roads circled the town.  
wind buckled seagull as brave souls sung their maps & i pull the first link.  
chatting with moon ball happy lines through lost zoo quiet boy's  
life beneath angel oak window into an egg gentle garden of verse  
all around the little town magic pebble green jar how telephones  
work aurora digital blue rider archlight thelab gold framed  
aftershock idea asylum good kop baby's head blink radar  
sunset echo decoy trigger boulevard tower tessellated girls

**fish tail+monkey+sewing kit=mermaid.** down by the river at night  
a man dressed as a tree passes a line of poplar trees the trunks  
reflecting in the water. good evening art enthusiasts good evening  
sports fans. blue sprayed metal moon propped up against the wall  
in your mother's hallway in pride of place by the stairs. had once been  
thrown into the arms of marsh egret's nest mangrove knot high  
tide someone's luck. this line is currently under construction. through  
the dunes i cut myself an avenue to collect more fish tails by  
the water's edge. read here to reset the poem. i throw my bag  
into the reeds & gather bark & branch. read here to void this poem.

**southern yellow stink** bugs cover the yellow wood  
sorrel behind BKS Tax Services at 1054  
Dawley Boulevard glorious jewel scabbards plague the grey  
headed coneflowers outside Exit Realtors at 931  
Bowman both you & i know  
how this would end somewhere  
in Texas with a large sprite  
2 bacon cheeseburgers & a lethal  
injection maybe  
not Texas.

**Barbara Duffey**

We Can Definitely Report that We Have Not Released Man-Eating Badgers in  
the Vicinity

Mavericks per the law of fur and claw, they sing their call sign, “Only When Provoked.” And boy, are you One to Provoke, you who went to the vet in the flash-flood warning, knowing you'd be stranded, just to buy prescription cat food. You'd stroke a badger's coat, coax it down from my bureau, rub its face beside its croc-strong jaw. What do you expect? You heard the man—no one else is responsible. Your need to feed will get me hurt.

## Other and Unspecified Misadventures During Medical Care

—medical billing code E876.3

It could be worse: Fall on Stairs in Water  
Transport, Accident Involving Spacecraft,  
Injury Due to War Operations

but Occurring after Cessation of  
Hostilities. If only it weren't so  
hard, the Other, Multiple, Ill-Defined

Dislocations, easy, the Foreign Body  
Left In. After the Unspecified Fall,  
susceptible to the Toxic Effect

of Substances, we Conflagrate in  
Private Dwellings, Shock Without Mention of  
Trauma. The whisper quickens down the line:

She's a goner, and we don't know why. When  
the sun finally shone enough we could  
see the bottom of the river through rushed

snowmelt, we packed our bags and left by the  
back door, two Single Liveborn on the lam.

## Sonnet of the Spontaneous Combustor

On fire, I live as if a specimen,  
performing my spectacle above  
a critic-crowd who name me in Latin.  
Research appears in the journals of  
whispers: *a self-oven short order cook,*  
*he could be, this mannus uni doli;*  
*jet fuel; an ADD-sufferer's book*  
*light; hot dog, marshmallow rotisserie;*  
no person but kindling, tinder, power  
source employed in engines, pushing pistons.  
But when I'm unlit, the cautious cower,  
the throng parts for me, everyone listens.  
If I were predictable, I'd draw jobs,  
know myself—instead, my chance heat throbs.

# The Circus of Forgetting

We went on an oddball, B-lister  
bender for a while, but now  
we plan a *montagne russe* down Main Street,

elephants on inverse pyramids, and  
a radar for the overburdened.  
When we find them, we'll invite them in

the three rings, spin them three times, super-  
annuate their memories by pulling  
on their auricles as we strum a

lyre whose strings are made of werewolf gut.  
If they have boisterous thoughts, we'll throw them  
in the mash tun, ferment them to beer,

or repair their puzzle-hearts with glue  
of cafe latte and rice flour.  
It will be a mixed blessing. They will

rest easy as bots, fail at math,  
lose children, flail their hands when they  
learn we don't offer future-proofing.

They can't choose whose bear hugs to accept  
or which ragamuffin kiddo to  
kiss at night. They overlive in fright.

# Theories of Sculpture

Snoozing in rock, minding your own business  
you free. He knows where you are. is how Michelangelo finds you and chisels

Barbara Hepworth will round your edges,  
buff you down, sphere you,  
turn you in a lathe so each limb  
liquefies at moment's notice,  
you, a frozen movement.

Rodin will make a you  
with bronze, mold from absence, fill you in  
waiting to be remembered.

Degas will build you up, flake by flake, from metal  
and dress you in a tutu.

You will always stop a wave-beat past a kneecap,  
always extend past the lines recognized as human-shape.

The Brancusi you  
a wily, gilded,  
pregnant fish. You are  
parentheses married at the tips,  
the gleam off bulges,  
a side-stretch before a run.

Giacometti will thin you tall  
as marathoners, keep your head but move it  
on continuous legs.

*The legs only*

*the mind's antennae to earth.*

If you ran your legs thin, would your broadcast change?

I ask because I fear my mind's

too weak a signal to reach

earth on its own: I want to look like someone who knows what she's doing.

## Benjamin Dickerson

### Los Angeles: A Scape

Because everything here is wrought twice &  
glossed over, this is for you: O City  
of extended syllables, whose orange blossoms  
fall & mix with bougainvillea reds, whose hues  
of autumn haze to pair with mornings' smog & beams  
(the rift between the visceral & tangible), whose  
scent of Pacific & LAX & the 405 blows along  
Sepulveda & past streetlights & signs (NUDES  
NUDES NUDES OPEN 24 OURS), which flash  
like set lights. Because not much is loud  
or said but shown as the reels roll  
much like the surf & the crop of make-it-some-day  
starlets from Ames, IA or Truth  
or Consequences, NM is picked for shoots  
in the Valley & traffic hums like silence  
repeated so much in space:  
Because here a child says shyly,  
"I met Mickey Mouse today," and one cannot argue  
the way one argues about gravity  
or light at the end of days. Because simulacrum  
is the fulcrum of identity in the city  
whose jetties act as fingers reaching for the long  
unknown wildness of the deep, whose nouns all clash  
as ivy climbs the freeways overpass &  
whose reflection is the unwieldy sprawl of a starry night.

## Crisis Rises

star is the/a sound.

A reverse inward of a particular  
ly erudite way of list  
ening.

star in the sound

a in the sound (an echo, a repetition, a same but thought of different consequentials,  
a nobody has heard the intonation sort of reflection)

A roundabout way of standard  
hearing

Abasically subset star missing and arms  
trying to speak through hearts (Mercurial

star of the sound

A general breakdown of simplicity, the way  
the small things the aging of the earth  
desire for lack/as  
one no longer recalls the fading

## 2 Other Places:

...and all the birds are different here.  
We move through water thoughts  
and distinct wings, the wandering streams  
of air: unleavened disjunction our  
pseudoscience of explanation.  
But, such is want.  
Waning exegeses:  
thoroughfares of depletion.

A bit of you:  
center the force of outward  
motion depleted by lofty empty  
ness's of fantastical provisions of  
spacetime fabricated textures of

“Plenty of tacks to go ‘round.’”  
a task of ‘round here  
to hear the circle argue  
ment of plans the clock  
ticks agreements. Find low:

Here no one can hear

A promise:

Here no one can hear

A premise:

Hear no one can hear

A pretense:

Now there but not  
spruced and scrubbed  
and sliced  
but now.

A sudden movement sent bodies recoiling  
and whistling through the night's whisper  
of traffic and hum of waxing streetlights.

Meet: a command to lift—not see.  
be<sup>2</sup>.

covered prison eyes see  
the same shade of dark:  
heaviness.

It's all happening<sup>1</sup>

& & & &  
She said she was  
harvesting the messiah.

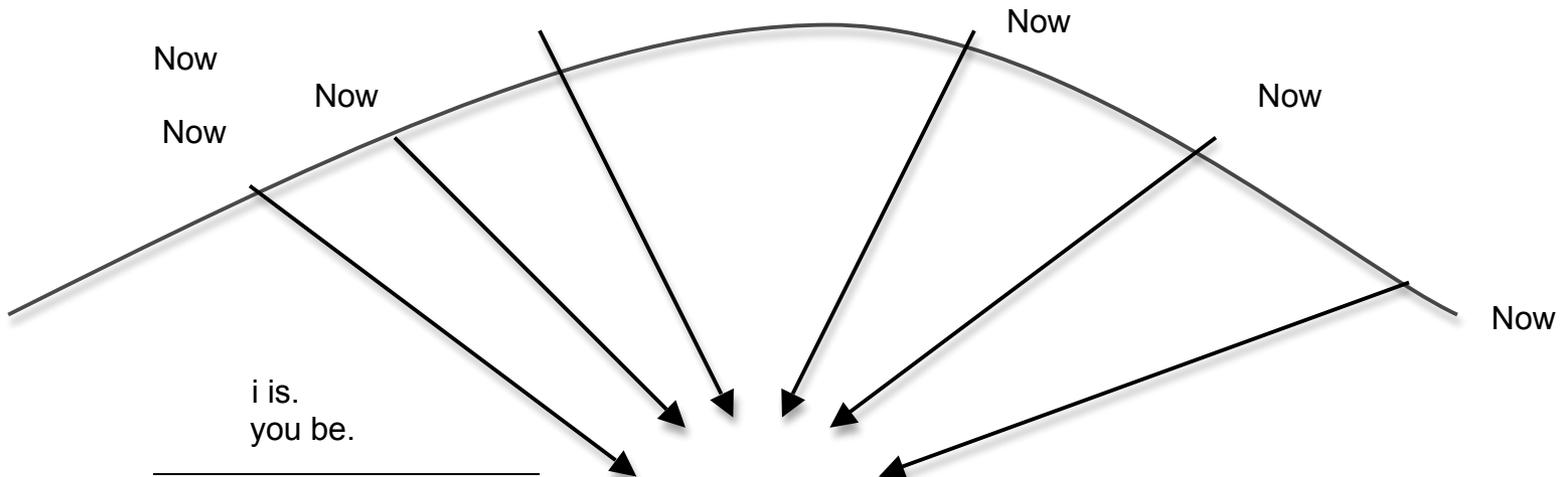
So the sky blues then unblues,  
Saturdays

The unfounded separation of

the low-lying country's forgotten sights.  
Locust hum.

Synchopated retribution.

Now: Now: ("p t")  
Now.



<sup>2</sup> we happen upon the shores where a dead/dying/thriving claw extends into a crab or something not entirely unlike a crab

<sup>1</sup> see note on pg. 64



“the bells still ring with  
out me/you, list the in  
betweens.”

Temper, then tamp and jostle:  
Jazz loose from grooves so  
sleep comes from this.

A nature second  
departed then we then us  
and sheets and backs  
turned away from our outside

As if others could hear  
As if others could here  
As if others were hear

that is/was/were what splits  
the shadow: aline, or align  
well here:

no want  
to say goodbye.

“In that light she looked strange and theatrical.”

## Brian Edwards

### Fun with Black Ships

Most of the officers were afraid to speak to the press.  
Which was to be expected considering newspapers weren't invented.  
It took weeks to entice the men from the lower deck.  
All those drums added up to little more than a fake tan.  
Of course, no-one dared breathe a word to the Commodore.  
Frustration already threatened to shred whole forests of diplomacy.

Shiny buttons were a harsh introduction to the art of diplomacy.  
Demands were made, but the interpreters were reluctant to press.  
Of course, no-one dared breathe a word to the Commodore.  
Instead they faked blueprints for gadgets not even invented.  
Negotiations took long enough for the gunner to work on his tan.  
He used ropes to scare children into thinking snakes lived on deck.

Rumours soon spread that the ambassador was shuffling the deck.  
*Dint take t'savages long*, quipped the gunner, *to sniff t'fart o' diplomacy*.  
Sensibly, tongues were bitten on the subject of his tan.  
By now the children were ogling sketches of a prototype printing press.  
Guaranteed to touch these shores no less than a year after it's invented.  
Of course, no-one dared breathe a word to the Commodore.

*Of course, no-one dared breathe a word to the Commodore.*  
Ship's log, a thousand-plus pages, recorded all incidents both on and off deck.  
Historians bicker back and forth about what facts were invented.  
Example: *The Islanders Are Not Savages*: clearly a flourish of diplomacy.  
Not to mention farming exaggerations such as the steam-powered rice press.  
Anyway, the wives soon grew bored: they had fish to gut and backsides to tan.

Village girls sneaked on deck to see for themselves the gunner's tan.  
Of course, no-one dared breathe a word to the Commodore.  
The gunner suffered rum sweats and challenged fishermen to bench press.  
*Stronges' bloke 'ere can tek t'lass of his fancy b'low deck.*  
Officers and village elders were now a few bottles deep into diplomacy.  
The ship's cook was spellbound by a dicing technique a local woman invented.

At last, shouts bounced down the hill when the diamond mines were invented.  
The Gunner was distraught about the hours wasted on his tan.  
Pistols leapt from their holsters: *a kick in t'solar plexus o' diplomacy.*  
Of course, no-one dared breathe a word to the Commodore.  
Even the sand shook with the sound of wooden clogs on deck.  
There was little time to take names and the interpreters didn't dare press.

The girls wore tan stockings and carried the best torture tools invented.  
Any man could press against their flesh in the name of diplomacy.  
Once back on deck, no-one dared breathe a word to the Commodore.

From *The Ninety-Five Confessions*

**Confession #12**

Skinny chicks are clopping coconut shells  
in bed. Clop-clop. My nuts cracked.  
The restaurant floor's all blonde bright lights  
but the basement is dark, dark, dark—  
just a splash of pink to please the crude.

And yes, this dude meant to be rude  
when I refused to drink at your well,  
hell, those prices could keep me warm all night,  
get home and find my trunk packed,  
followed by the moon and a filthy narc.

### Confession #14

When booze-thumped, gutter-twanged,  
weed-pickled, my eyes sprout wings—  
Oh such sweet visions. I then endow myself  
with mighty meat, a fat veiny club of Man,  
approach then, cocksure, the finest of the fair.

Pumped, I prep my lair  
with dancy-tunes, trinkets and rings.  
This exercise is bad for my health.  
I need a damn new lifestyle plan  
before my drum gets good 'n' banged.

## Confession #22: Killing Dad

Doctor, drive a chemical spear  
this black muscle through. Tried to drown  
it in booze beat it with books.  
His way out he drank, drunken Houdini.

Put on his house a plague, around the world  
ran. Found him flappin' two big ears,  
pissin' in di inkwell, whistlin' Puccini.

Sleep none shall, so bring on the nouns,  
proper ones, worth the big bucks.  
*Vincerò! Vincerò!* My worm's uncurled.

## Confession #25

My breath smells like metal, my hair of fire.  
I constantly speak as if owed  
something, fantasise about train wrecks,  
feel more afraid of disease than death:  
already suffer from inopportune erections  
and flat feet. Last night, every station  
the same: twenty three houses ablaze. And yet  
I, mute, clipped toenails, thought about cocoa.  
Addicted to cocoa, prefer it to sex.  
Also, a liar.

## Author Name Here

### Searching

I watch the blossoming trams narrowing  
down laddered tracks, stingray tails sucking  
sustenance, winter-wrapt parcels alighting  
with blunt hydraulic bursts. Around me

cars cough and buses belch as  
pained pedal-pushers point  
pessimistically into steamy gouts of gas  
staccatoing along the sheen

of flickering neon. Pale faces form and fade,  
hands-pocketed, feet following a familiar force,  
eager to leave each new-formed space  
before a tangential touch. A siren howls

warily. I see so much and yet beneath I feel  
and taste scores of pressured purposes, a hundred  
hurried hatchings, myriads of missed moments. While  
huddled in heated haunts,

eyes abeam with dreamy needs fulfilled, lost latte  
lovers linger over little lies and proud promises  
soon to be left in the scramblings of early  
morning madness.

And yet I watch.

## Out of Africa

I came upon a child in Africa  
while on my way to climb.

So smooth and young and thin,  
across his face a sad yet honest grin  
etched on cheeks and brows leathered, torn  
eyes with depths which buried sights well worn  
and weathered deep into a raw, receptive soul,  
sights such as only seasoned men  
have any right to know.

His teeth were chiselled flints sun-clipped  
to match that dangling from his ear.  
Where once free laughter danced, a scar  
turned most attempts at glee into a sneer.

He'd never seen the patterning of autumn leaves  
because in his domain there were no trees.  
No fresh-flowered fragrances had ever stung  
nor rap songs clattered off that tender tongue.  
His eyes won't catch the light of starry skies  
they flash with pride as one more feeling dies.

An AK47, sleek-oiled, back-strapped,  
fingered skywards fiercely  
in accusation over childhood stolen.  
Fatigues hung tattered cov'ring boots too big  
for feet best saved for plying soccer's touch,  
and yet I saw him kick a ball with friends  
and hoped a moment's innocence until I saw  
it was a human head, grotesque and swollen.

We wander ruthless roads in doing good,  
“Suffer little children to come unto me.”  
And how the children suffer in the struggle to be free,  
Where we look on as others separate the child from hood.

I've climbed, traversed wide swards of green and grey  
across a dozen continents I've learned a hundred wisdoms;  
why then when challenged thus, have I so little left to say?

## The Bishop's Gift

The monks  
boiled  
the bishop's bones  
then  
ladled out  
the rich soup  
to  
fill the need  
of the faithful  
who wanted  
a blessing.

bruno neiva

titles:

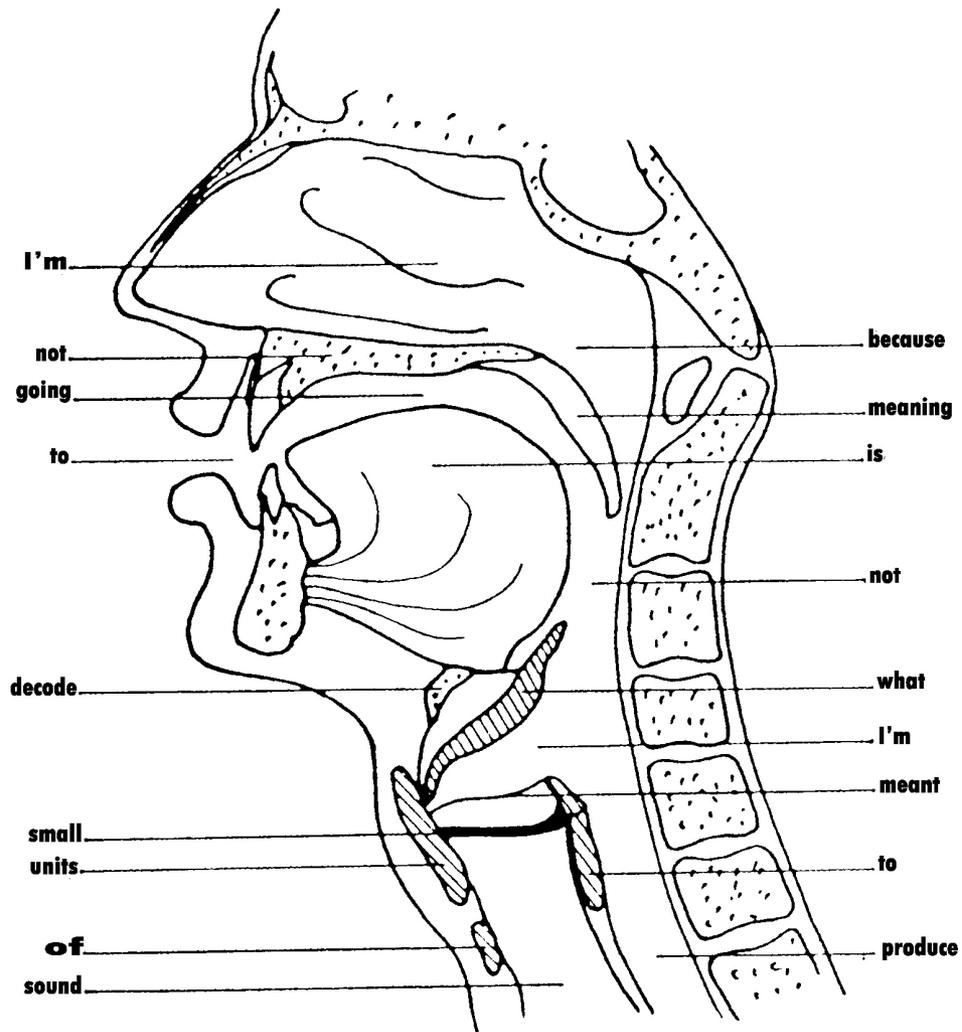
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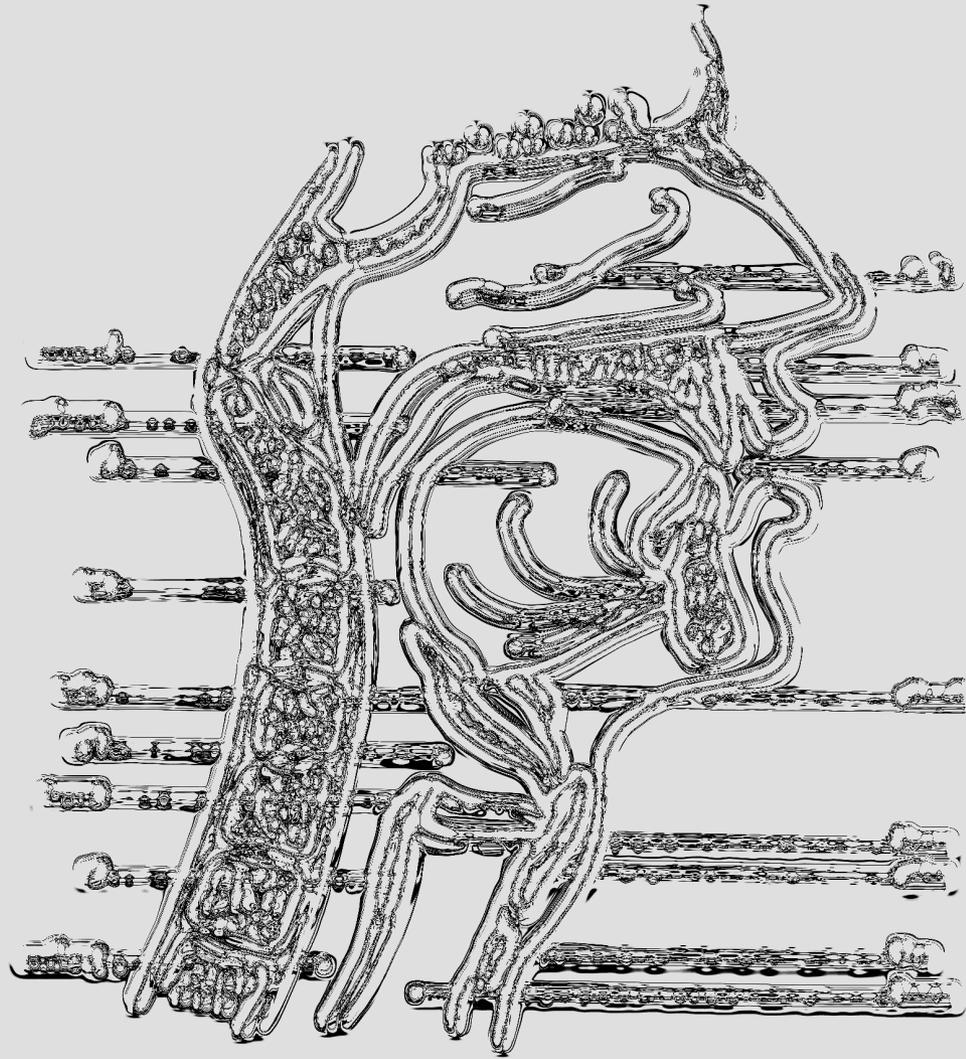
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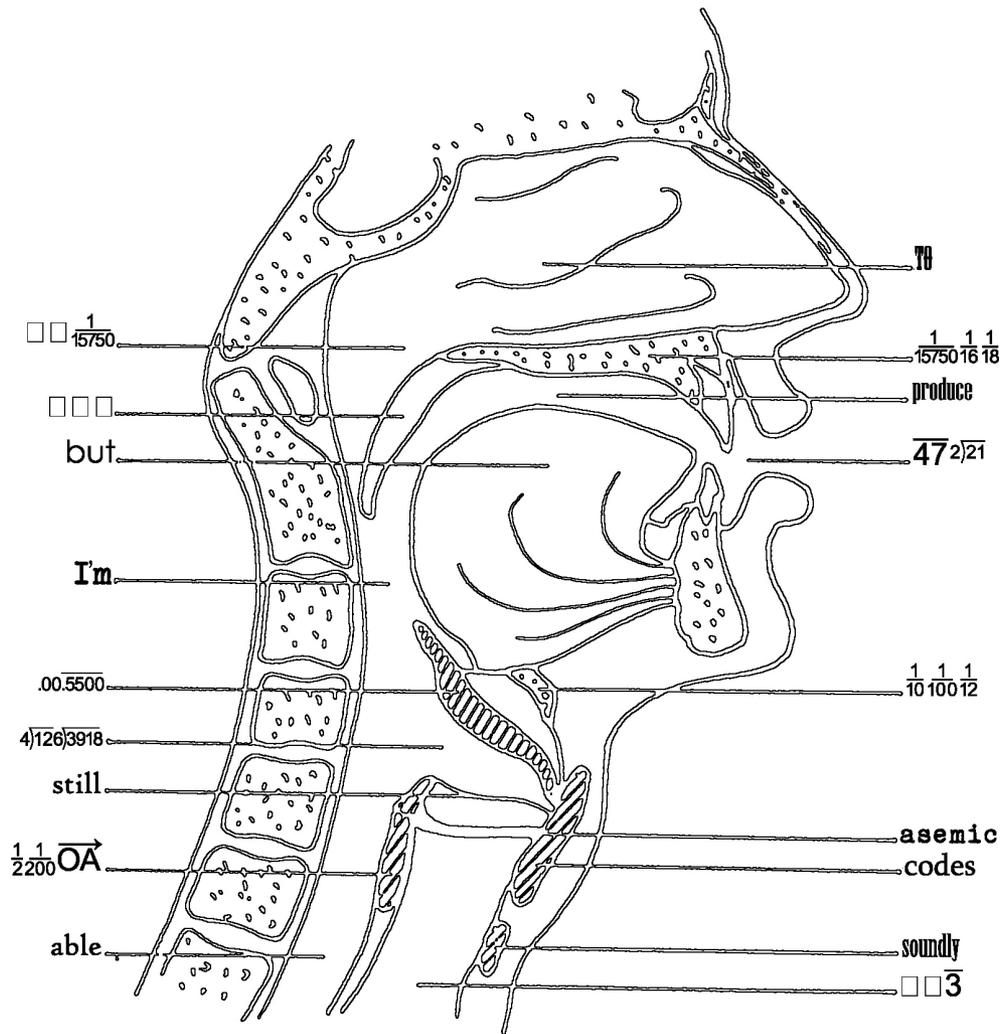
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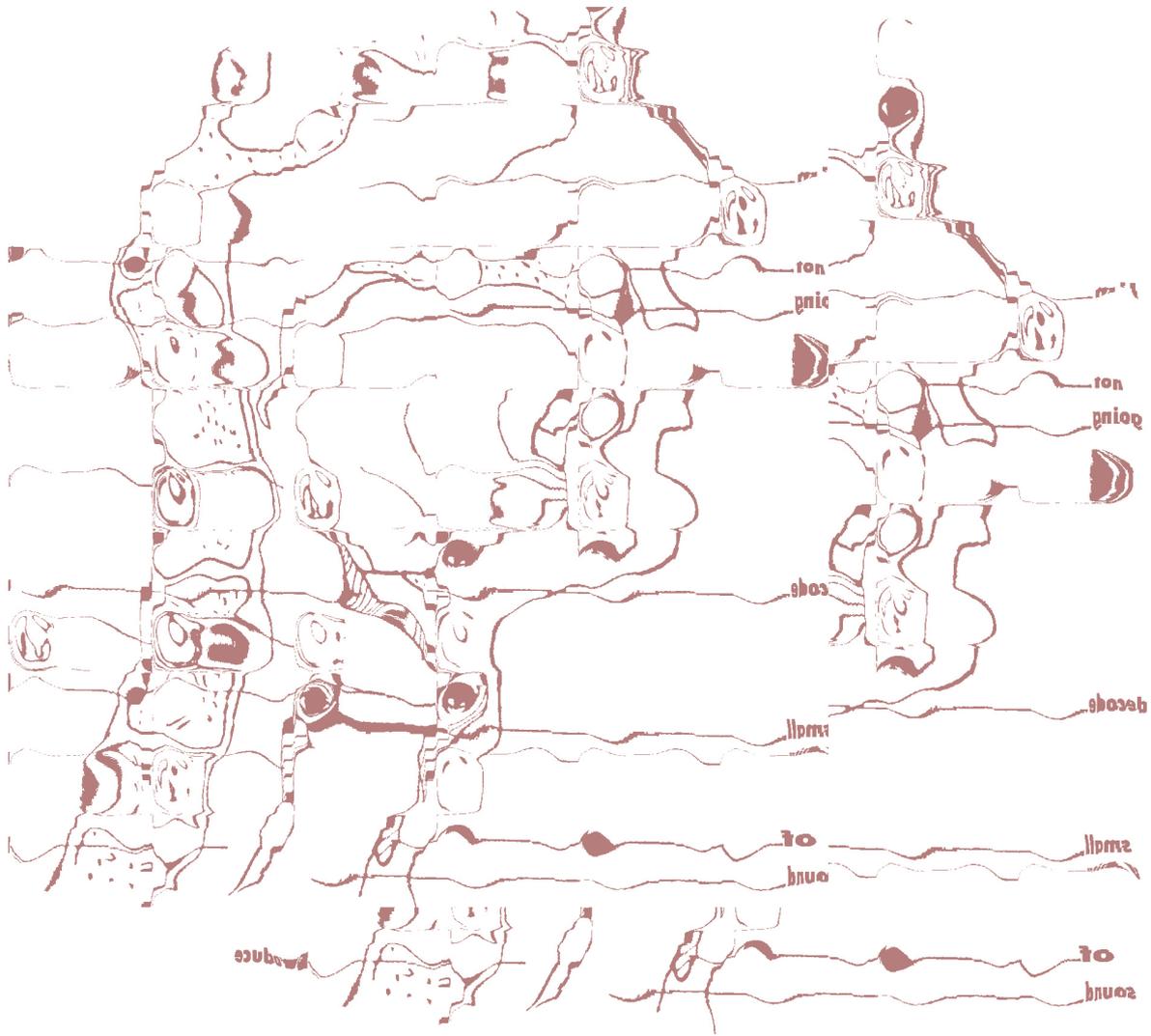
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soundly

□ □ 3



BLAZEVOX 2KX

Fall 2010

**Brad Vogler**

:

the binding here broken  
here bound/broken

one takes such time such light under/beneath  
the door

unstopped walk

lake road and corn gone season

:

:

map next                    spoken  
a way of back woods

where  
binds

blinds short  
morning on/in  
the painted over chipped  
sill over  
over  
white over

still

hearing want and way  
what        did/said

went on and/in this short matching

an opposite setting

this (is) full for  
a fallen jar of went on  
against ground  
undone the glass  
the rest steps  
easy  
deep earth smell dries

each night  
idea of (further away  
a rust that  
                  (changes)  
an altered rust(ing)  
  
a (slowly changed) rust (thunders)

:

:

even with such a voice  
saw/ a voice  
unhear/unheard

brewery  
barn  
rot wood wept yellow  
yellow wept rot-wood

a half road's distance/ from  
to but not ending  
road distance

:

:

(corn) field fence(d) yard

that this keeping on/track of  
plied land  
replied

parcel track(ed)and varied  
and re  
again  
turn/  
turned

:

:

lake at eyes distance

no boat/  
shore goes

(mudded cliffs pooled)

lake anchored/anchored lake

on/in

sand/weathered shore stretch  
like grayed water/sky

:

:

gulls

convergence of then/now but  
any/an address (is) full of you

known shore

contain(ed)/mapped

(for) telling

shore sense/ sight

lake sense/ sight

:

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Fall 2010

## Bob Whiteside

If you have deserted the folly  
Straight way without dally you will  
Part into pristine pieces of boredom,  
On the ocean fray some of us parlay  
Our presumptions, dislodge  
With chisel the default character,  
I say the moon is a salted nut  
Fell between the couch, or a  
Soaring hawk soaring just to soar

Think is a hinge on  
The brink but never  
Certain weather it is  
Rain on daisy foreheads  
Or clutter some clouds  
Odorously pertinent  
Over large stretches my luggage  
Is a sky grin ascending  
Impounded is improbable

Life means settle for less  
Due away with the wind  
Before it satisfies your face  
Of its wild silences  
It means  
Pay cheaply  
And ignore it  
Throw away the beginnings of light  
Sit calmly and make misery of your ledgers  
A sitcom of tears  
Is cheering  
For your demise but  
You will have nothing to do with their name calling

## Carl Dimitri

### *Boris, My Angel*

It was the American who pressed for marriage. He'd lose her otherwise. She seemed so flawless that it made him insecure. Made him sweaty and unsure. Made him fail in bed.

The doctor wrote out a prescription. The American mistakenly chewed the pill. It tasted like the stars. Then he took and hurt Komiko with his eerie erection. She was sore, she said, and it hurt. Would he please stop? He slowed but he did not stop. It was good and it was like justice. She was grimacing. So now he stopped and washed-out onto his back and sighed at the ceiling. Everything sucked. Even sex.

Komiko looked in the mirror over the dresser. Her cheeks were red. She wiped the tears from her cheeks and looked in the mirrored closet doors. The sun was just at the windows, stealing now onto the beige carpet, the beige and white bed, the white walls. Maybe she should photograph this movement of light. She could post the photos on her blog, calling it "A Study of Light." But how she disliked these colors and how she had told him over and again.

The American was – how else could he say it? – he was a real estate agent, and being a real estate agent he knew resale value. Ha. He knew the value of nothing. He had no sense of the subtle energies. It was up to her to establish some feng shui with plants in the corners, and with the many mirrors, which attracted and circulated the ch'i. So it all fell apart on that Wednesday morning.

He took her by the arm. But Komiko felt a disturbance below and so wrestled away. Naked she took the dumbwaiter down. There in the kitchen she saw two switches and a filthy slimy rat. She flipped one switch and tiptoed around the rat who was slumbering, and who, when he awakened, shrieked at her clear-

coated toenails. One lonely bulb with a chain attached hung from the ceiling. She yanked it. This old subterranean kitchen smelling of flowers watered faithfully. This old tongue-and-groove paneling. This old cracked and curling linoleum. And Boris, at the wooden table, penciling his manuscript. Gray haired and mild mannered, he said graciously, graciously he said, Howdy.

Komiko looked his crumpled suit up and down. He was terribly out of fashion. He was clearly Jewish. He was human-historical debris. A New York intellectual. A socialist. A lover of music. Howdy, he said, without acknowledging her nudity, the simple lines (simple and clear). My name is Boris.

She smiled at him. This was *the* Boris Kuperman, the radical turned reformer. The rat tore off behind the stove.

Komiko wanted to ask him. She felt it so strongly. (She felt everything these days. It was her intuition. Cosmic transformation was afoot. Her intuition prodded her more and more.) She said, You are a conscientious objector?

-I'm a pacifist, Boris said.

-So you're not a conscientious objector?

-Oh sure

-Have you ever been fired for your views?

-Yes, ma'am. From the American University.

The past academic year had been very fruitful for him. He had just completed a guide to the occult. *Fear and Folklore*, he called it. Anyway, that's what he wanted to call it. But the publisher liked the title, *The Devil and How to Avoid Him*. He had to deliver the manuscript by five o'clock that day. But he had taken a wrong turn at the township. Would she help him find the publishing house?

Komiko was grateful for Boris. She thanked the universe for him. Thank you for this gentleman. He kept his eyes to hers. He did not gawk at her vagina or her snowcone breasts. She put on her boots and set out to help him. They set out beneath the quick-moving storm and into the forest. Boris took a chest full of air. The pine trees sure are pretty.

Komiko agreed. It was an unexpected landscape. Then there was all of this, the greenery of the pines and oaks and maples and the ferns and the soft carpet of pine needles. There were the mushrooms blooming on the tree bark and the forest floor. She wanted to say something.

-My grandfather was a horribly sick man. A lunatic mind, really. A scientist and a philosopher. A grave robber and an archaeologist. He eventually stabbed himself, thrusting the blade into his ribs, before dispatching us to the halls. It was a mere spectacle to frighten children, although it did indeed kill him. We were happy in the manor house until then. It was sweet love. It was lipstick. It was a yuk a minute.

The brain depository closed at five a.m. It was already six. Komiko reached through the mail slot and unlocked the door. Boris put his manuscript in a jar by the sink. Komiko intuited a dark energy in the closet.

-It's those men, Boris said. Dead now, but buried alive.

Alright alright, she thought. It was good enough for the likes of them. War criminals is what they were. Unholy monsters. They bombed promiscuously. They gave birth to a time of blood and dying.

Boris lugged the corpses from the closet and spread them beneath two massive pines. He read a passage from the latest biography of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky. Then he spit. To hell with them fellas, he said. Buzzards gotta eat same as worms.<sup>i</sup> Then he took his guns out, butts first, and shot the villains. It was high symbolism, his greatest act of apostasy.

Boris had never been the same since his ambush. A bullet-headed man with a microphone and a camera crew pinned him behind his toilet and asked him appear on Tomás de Torquemada's *You Can't Win*. Boris said he would appear, but only two conditions: that Rupert McFlintock explain why oil wasn't \$20 a barrel, like he predicted at the outset of the War; second, that Torquemada come onto Boris's show. There they could talk freely. It was PBS. Boris would give him a full hour, unedited. No commercials.

Then with wet eyes Boris turned to Komiko: I didn't surrender. They took my horse and made him surrender.<sup>ii</sup>

Komiko's intuition blazed a seething unconquerable lifechanging longing for this man. From here on in it would be all Boris all day and night. She would think of him before sleep and would wake thinking of him still. She threw her arms around his neck. *Boris, my Angel*. They made love on the countertop, face to face, lips lightly touching, eyes hardly blinking. She was wet, really wet, for the first time in her life. The warm shuddering orgasm.

-Please forgive this, she said. It's really unprofessional and kind of crazy. But I have to get this off my chest or I might never get to sleep. I think you are the beginning and the end of loveliness. There is no end to your beauty. And I have been lovesick with you for three months, maybe more.

-And you are plenty pretty, Boris said. Then kissing her hand, he said: We better get a move on. The brown shirts don't like us killing their friends.

But it was bad luck with the cash running out. Komiko assured him that all she needed to do was tell the American she loved him once a week and visit his mother every second Sunday. (He looked like his mother, and she looked like a very tall hobbit.) For that he gave her silver; he installed an imported kitchen in their home, although beige. The electricians did it up special. It was the biggest heist in United States history.

She called him.

-Where have you been, he said. He was sweating, high on laptop pornography.

-Sorry for bothering you.

-I knew you were gonna be late, he said. So I took the phone off the hook. I can't afford to have another bad night of sleep.

Komiko would call him tomorrow.

The American was – how else could she say it? – he was a twat. Always complaining, always whining. This was what turned mere marital tedium into all-out loathing. Still, it could've been worse. It could've been raining. Just as she finished this thought the thunder came, then the rain, beating the corpses hard.

Komiko's boots filled with water. She needed a hot shower and a nip from the bottle. Boris took her by the wrist and led her to the Lost Lady. He ordered an apple martini for Komiko and a glass of Pernod with ice for himself. But it was a long time since the bartender had anything to drink. Everything had run out, even the people.

She put her head on his shoulder. I hope we can forgive and forget, she said.

-You know there's never no forgettin, Boris said.<sup>iii</sup>

She sighed. She told him about her photography. She had done a series of shots of the dining room table. But let's be honest. She was no photographer. Her intuition told her as much. If only she could do

something useful. Be of use to people and animals. She had questions for him, the most important of which was this: would they ever arrive at truth and purity? Boris didn't know. It certainly was an admirable goal. And the search itself, he said, the search would certainly lead to admirable discoveries.

He leaned his forehead to hers. Her breath was sweet like lake water. Here was a woman of depth. If only he could make love to her three or four thousand times before he died. But there was scant chance of that. He was already seventy-three years old. He enclosed her hand between his, saying, The fin-du-monde is on heartbreaking display. But it is good that warriors like us can meet in the middle of it, with kindness, without thought. He kissed her cheek then and turned off the stool and swung out the doors.

HeShe had just met the girlboy of hisher dreams.

Meanwhile the American shattered a mirrored closet door with his fist and tore out of the driveway in Komiko's BMW. With great pain he thought of her. The way she shuffled when she walked. The way, when he first met her, she wore knee-high boots and carried the purse with the puny dog and cellphone inside.

He tore off to the mall, hoping to find a woman, hoping it would matter to Komiko if he did. He got off the escalator and began it. Women and girls advanced in near lockstep. Spooky action at a distance. Nearly all wore the knee-high boots, carried the baggy purses, the dogs. She was everywhere, grim and mirthless. He leaned against a glass front. Everything was goddamn beige. Goddamn bad feng shui. He was so tired of himself. It would take awhile. He hated his flaws, real and imagined.

They threw Boris in jail for protesting the noise that mankind is making. Using a megaphone on the streets of Camden, he said he could no longer quiet the voice of his conscience. The time had come to liberate ourselves from fear, anger and hatred. There was no need to be afraid of ourselves and each other, he said, and to demonstrate this he hugged willing passersby.

Komiko cried every time she visited him in the maximum security prison. He usually wore a white v-neck t-shirt and brown dickies. When he misbehaved, they stuffed him into a patriotic jumpsuit. He told her not to cry. They were soon exiling him to Barcelona. She could visit him there.

Komiko said, I'll come there I'll get a hotel in Barcelona or a nearby city I'll roam the streets I'll get drunk on the fumes of cars and women wheeling babycarriages if they've got them I'll call you I'll say hello

I'll say Boris I'll say it's eleven o'clock in the morning I'll say the sun is at the window I'll say I'm already wasted out of my mind high on my freedom.

Komiko decided to become a veterinarian when she grew up. She divorced her husband and married her work. She made a good first impression. She shipped her waiting room - with its pets, stomach obstructions, interns, parrots, pop music – to Spain. It was all summer and pink lust then. She was whipped by it, crazed for its taste. It was the best sex she ever had and she had had it all over the world.

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<sup>i</sup> *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. Screenplay by Philip Kaufman. Based on the novel by Forest Carter. Dir. Clint Eastwood. Perf. Clint Eastwood, Chief Dan George, Sondra Locke, Bill McKinney, John Vernon, and Paula Trueman. Warner Bros, 1976.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

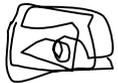
<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

## Christine Herzer

### MUSIC BOX

i wake to a dream  
i am pregnant  
we had sex

*while i was sleeping*  
*while i was stolen*  
*while i was stealing*



such a long time  
since  
i stopped  
touching lies  
and so many other  
rooms



your nearness is like touch

my eyes forever falling

when i turn

into his hands

glass things filled

with liquid and a scene of some monument

rubber-banded

onto it

a note that says 'human'

# THE SPACE BETWEEN SHINES THROUGH

evaporation knowledge

*fresh open buddha hand*

gentle cycle

iron

*simply drift*

cannot be upset

untourable

satin solution

during sleeping hours

soft          mouth feel

as when

*after a long bath*

gesticulation

offer a secret

corny is a candy bar from germany,  
it has been produced by the schwartauer  
werke since 1985 and is available in 11 flavors

*maybe, i should call?*

# FOR FEAR OF NOT ENCOUNTERING

*my compulsion toward you*

*admits only yes, and*

*hair in love*

*things that smell, extra tables,*

*being organic in hypermarkets*

i closed my eyes, afraid to be seen

there was thinking to dissolve

i knew by this i meant *proof of purchase*

sundays that baffle—

*saag bhaji, teeth like stars*

*may not have*

*common usage*

*and it got better*

*fühlt endlich dass du dich verstecktest  
aber sie, aber sie verändert dich*

a foil windbreaker,  
a waffle-knit hoodie,

*who said mousified? our feelings touch----- you will have to trust me*

*you undress, my tongue*

## **passage through**

sex is a civic imperative

obey the one you trust, trust the one you obey

## **in a place where no none knows what we've done**

no. babies are not, generally speaking, cold. they are warm, and soft, and smell nice. they are very much in touch with their basic needs: food, home, love, and a clean diaper

## **in various positions of free fall**

*i like to be a source*

## **barbie is safe II**

more than 28,000 barbies have been separated from passengers after flights departed with no barbies on board

## **barbie getting married**

invasion of privacy is sign of success

## the recognized face

i met my face at the main gate of an ashram in India,

we fell in love without recognizing each other  
how i know it was love?

*there was fear, there was beauty, it hurt, and  
i felt ashamed for someone else*

how i know my face?

like all Ghesquiere's pants:  
it is ultra modern,

original, and an object of desire;  
i couldn't afford it

India, the preferred term is mad-house,  
it reveals who you are—

like all hindrances // luxuries:  
no one pities you, there is convulsing, truth-banging

the time it takes a lizard to eat up a  
cockroach,

how she holds on to him—fear  
is forever afraid,

the other night i watched a baby

lizard,  
a fat roach approached;

pearls melt in vinegar  
sheep  
can  
recognize  
other sheep  
from pictures

my face said *trust me, you are beautiful*  
my face said *i want to tell you everything about me*

my face was the most beautiful thing i had ever watched,  
i wanted it,  
i wanted his country, and a wedding

when you recognize what you wanted  
in other words, when you recognize  
what you have been receiving  
*do you give it back?*

face is a 4-letter-word, face contains

*spinach, spruces, monopoly,*  
*god, shit, peanuts, pain, plastic, hotels & houses*  
*pride, okra,*  
*mogra, passport, monsoon*  
*rose,*  
*roses*  
*autobiography*

i met my face at the main gate of an ashram in India,

we fell in love, without recognizing each other  
lovers like roaches are very shy, excel at night-work,

are always afraid of being watched  
for pleasure

love, like global warming, is a sign of market-failure,

unlike tourists with return, or onward-tickets,  
who leave plastic, liquids & body hair behind,  
fuck up prices,  
excel at comparisons,  
*me, and my face stayed*

my face said *you have Hitler mind*  
my face said *i want to kill you*

my face was 21  
my face was a drunk,  
and paper thin

India, the inside of my face outside  
it reveals who you are—

faces become humid & original & im per tinent  
therefore capable  
of

*autobiography & adult content*

*i love you, i miss you,*

*i will kill her, i will kill myself, i want to drink with you*

*i lied, i am not lying, okay?*

*I lied, i am not lying, okay? trust me, and for the first time,*

I FUCKED

my face,

even in public, a foreigner-woman, therefore,

available—

it hurts to enter god

it hurts to be loved back, love contains\_\_ *I think, I think* love contains

*success / sex / sterne / mercedes-benz/ I think, and*

*poetry, guts, giving, giving, giving, nervous, I think nervous and giving giving giving*

frequently it comes with a pool /

swings / and

tests at its entrance/exit gates;

it hurts to enter god

it hurts to be loved back, god contains nothing

god contains everything, *my faces?? a house for my faces...god*

god is not a container

god is not a container is not a container IS NOT A CONTAINERis

no spitting, no spitting, okay?! okay. okay, fine!

god is a tattoo artist who works from home

tattooing love,

it involves opening one of the body's main protective gates,

one of my native neighbors locked the door after me twice, placed me next to him, on an egg-white leather couch that seats only one, *i eat very light*, my feet touched the ground, all windows were closed, *do you have shoulder pain? i have been to the west [doing foreigners], my wife won't be at home*

when you recognize what a face contains  
in other words, when you recognize  
what you fear,  
do you fall in love?  
do you fail god?

a common problem with tattoos is dissatisfaction, tattoos are meant to be permanent,  
like facts, and unlike faces,  
or love, GOD can surgically cut  
*sex / success / sterne / mercedes-benz*  
and stitch the edges  
*poetry, guts, giving, giving, giving nervous,*  
back together, *nervous, nervous*  
this can leave a PAIN, A MUCH PAIN  
a power,  
a weakness, and  
a deep love of rain

a recognized face provides opportunities for lovers to house GOD

pearls melt in vinegar  
sheep can recognize other sheep from pictures

through it all our faces remain,  
in a notebook,  
next to my passport,  
inside the fridge,  
to let you know,  
it rained  
in Paris yesterday  
*BROKEN ENGLISH,*  
*DREAMLAND,*  
*JESUS SON, i don't miss you, I love you, bye, bye bye*

## Seeing somebody who is speaking, Imagining her ashes, 2005-2008

an item named body exists already in this location

she films her intuition only, she is beautiful, a rectangle

if you don't violate, it's not morally complicated enough

china has 44 million missing women

holiday inn loses 560,000 towels a year

about 120 corpses remain on Everest

this is an installation

she believed she was different from all the other girls

3 outstretched words on a table, on top of each other, unconscious, raped

domestic passengers mix freely with international passengers in airside shopping malls

more people can identify the golden arches of Mc Donald's than the christian cross

he seemed like such a good boyfriend

silence is the basic sound element of love

an item named body exists already in this location

they made a list of people we would invite to the wedding

when walking on ice bergs they can turn over without warning

she did not believe that he took the \$100 note from my passport

she replaces it with the one she is saving

the christ is not called to unconditional approval

when falling into ice-cold water exposed parts will freeze in about 4 min death will occur in 15 minutes

money is never the problem, but having money, when the other has nothing causes problems

she lost a lot of my hair, had blood tests done, *anchoring wind*

general elections were being held and sonia gandhi won an unexpected victory

tom ford left Gucci

she started taking iron pills, with the earlier writing often legible

female sex tourists are often overweight, incompletely erased

an item named body exists already in this location

silence is the basic sound element of love

the time of death is uncertain

sonia gandhi heeded her inner voice and abandoned her own prime ministerial ambitions

this is an installation,

bush got reelected

ideal conditions are difficult to achieve in the home *hanging from a hook*

and then something will happen again

silence is a form of pain

she films her intuition only, she is beautiful, a rectangle eating into fire

she checked into the world's guesthouse with a silence badge and  
a butcher-knife

2 countries agreed to the formation of a united nations associated boundary commission to determine the final disposition  
of the disputed border zones

a visitor to the Tate Modern pronounces himself thrilled that the exhibit 'shibboleth' allows for the possibility of injury

she looked at the i she had taken out of his base note

he attempted a double-toe loop

the mosquito net broke

safe can become stylish  
*detachment, too, has its bridges*

*writing is an ungraspable future*

writing is anchoring wind, eating into the fire  
silence did not allow to penetrate the body through it  
silence is the basic sound element of love

*all holes you can see you can travel into*

if we need the private to be public *exposed parts will feel maniacal*  
all other skin, housed between tracing paper, closed by simple, interrupted sutures  
armies of arms in young blazers, *do you want to taste my kiss from 2004?*  
*maybe even write in big fat blocks of prose*

and then something will happen again

the bottom word has a mother

something continues, stops whenever a visitor enters

silence thinks its collapse

the mosquito net broke

he attempted a double toe loop

she could not believe her beliefs, however developed, like scenes in a movie on intuition, body, we cannot be precise  
about its location

china has 44 million missing women

the time of death is uncertain

the sentences dress for dinner

the sentences carry the emotions

sutures must be strong

sutures must be flexible

the thread color was straw

the thread color was violet

an item named body exists already in this location

she replaces it with the one she is saving

she is filming her intuition only, she is beautiful, written more than once, with the earlier incompletely erased and often legible

this is an installation

**Caroline Kloksiem**

Sheeting the house

In this morning                      every morning  
rises and settles                      reds and yellows  
off walls and windows, through children's foreheads

Making do                              doing our best  
down to eight                          families left, eight  
same-thinging                          mothers and mules  
new babies might never hear the bee's bright buzz

But the day-in                          tit-flap of wet sheets  
winged over doors                      we tack above rooms  
this draining awareness: accounting for every fissure

For what's left to do                      with the little bit of sugar  
remember how white                      over and over, crisp and dry  
these sheets' first life                      remember

How much                                  longer

# Psalm

The flat-spoon porch chimes have gotten  
wind-bound into one again. Out over the sun-  
plain: spoon-curved ribs of working

husbands, a few scattered trees stick-thin  
and starving for nests, starving to enfold them  
with tools tucked burning in armpits. Collective

wood-plank sweat, their tree-skin bark  
curling away from their knuckles  
while they work, like wings. Little boys

kick angels in the sand, the land  
already erasing itself says *no*. Go on  
coughing on cornmeal and wings nightlong.

## Posts

We name our boy  
birdsong, wheatbloom  
corner-of-sky-

ifact, cooling and calm-  
light, protective quilt

blankets our half-set breaths  
sturdiness: an offering

arrowhead, almost  
spearhead, piercing cobalt  
authentic air like an art-

ing after fever, faint moon-  
white, seven days' stitched grace: time

loosens all territories  
name, golden token for a boy

## Let me try again

The baby bleats lamblike from the crib, what's baby  
for *let me lift my head*. And outside the white sheets *slup slup*  
flapping, soft gauze in a gray breeze.

The difference between us: I cried to decide on a plan and then  
piled shit-sheets on the lawn. I like the way

my hood shaves the sky. A way to circumcise  
that gathering pressure, that tumescence overhead. How basic  
clouds like fleas can be—loyal to shadow for a matter

of seconds, then scatter overhead, light as cotton  
pills on blankets, the beginnings of prayer, the itch in my stockings. Or light

as why you chose me when another one didn't. Something a child  
can't tell: how sharply a drought thins trees, lets in the slicing  
light-like fire. The time I began supper blessing  
*I pledge allegiance*— At the time, I didn't

see it: Some things so ripped their split  
cannot be darned. Given a do-over,  
I'd take forthrightness over joy, what's free: just now, even

the milk tricked out from under me—

## Milk, butter

Neck bone gnawed over for marrow:  
settling white pool in a cool tin pail.

Its opaque center appears  
to look out, watchful with its universal

clouded eye. I cast a folded cloth to  
form a barrier, barely full

enough to swish when I carry. Looking  
up, I see clouds molding into

shapes of living things, and then something else  
entirely. There's the point at which part-

icles get worked into oblivion. A second stage without a name.  
What mothers all over share with the the goat... Who knows  
how long? Early morning turns, already spitting half-truths.

## Christi Mastley

### Pain au Chocolate

“It was Julia Child who resurrected American cooking in the late 1950’s. That’s what the book says. The fact is that Julia Child just mongrelized American cuisine by mixing it up with French haute cuisine.

“James Beard, on the other hand, truly glorified American food by trusting the original recipes to work, if they were made right. James Beard. You know, I knew James Beard before he was James Beard. Back when he was still a wannabe actor. I cooked for him. Back in my Greenwich Village days. We were at the same opening night party for some miserable off-Broadway play. Bad, bad show—what was I saying? James Beard. James Beard, and we were at the same party, and I had brought these canapés, these onion sandwiches, because the director had absolutely begged for them. You take good, wheaty bread and butter it—butter, never mayonnaise—and then a half ounce of Vidalia onion, chopped, and just a touch of salt and parsley, and you garnish them with a burst of sturgeon roe. Anyway, I had made these sandwiches, and when the party ended, I went to get my tray, and James was standing there with a half-eaten sandwich in his hand. He looked at me, and he said to me, ‘What is genius? What is genius? I don’t know what it is. I can’t put a name on it. All I know is some people have it and some people don’t.’ And then he handed me the sandwich and walked away. I’ll never forget it. Just an incredible moment with me and James.” The chef wagged his head. “Some people have it and some people don’t.’ Huh.”

Day Enshaw, solitary in the front row, was taking notes. “Some have it [genius] and some don’t (James Beard).” She stopped and stared at the quote. Then she scrawled it out and wrote underneath, “Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration (Thomas Edison).”

The chef eyed her impatiently. At first, he’d been flattered by her attentiveness—the first row seat, the neat notes, the good questions she brought (in lists) to office hours. He’d thought maybe she had one of those academic crushes on him. For a few weeks, he’d welcomed her visits, playing the gentle magnanimity of a post-repentance Abelard.

She, though, played nothing and most particularly not Heloise. One day he’d looked up to find her standing in his office doorway and affably begun chatting. She’d interrupted him mid-syllable.

“You don’t need to small-talk me.” Then, in his silence, she had realized her faux-pas. “That was rude. My apologies. But of course you don’t want me wasting your time with inanities.”

Well, of course not. That was the end of his trying to be kind to the Iron Maiden.

He scanned the classroom for something to take his mind off her. There was Foster Moore, sprawled all over his desk. Now there was a good student. A crème Brule in room full of pudding cups. Boorish, undoubtedly, uncouth in his ridiculous cowboy boots and blonde dreadlocks, half-asleep in class, always the messiest cook in the lab, but also undoubtedly brilliant. He’d come into pastry school, and, in the first week, produced the lightest meringue and moistest sticky buns the chef had ever seen. He’d also discovered a rising method that produced whole wheat bread with the consistency of brioche and created his own ergonomic spatula in tinfoil.

The chef smiled kindly at Foster. Foster didn’t notice because he was trying to fly a paper airplane across the aisle to one of his henchmen. The flight aborted in the middle of the aisle. The chef longed to show Foster the goodwill Day had rejected. He strode down the aisle, jolly as St. Nick, and picked up the airplane from the crash site. “Not well-made, not well-made at all.” he chuckled to Foster, and carried the airplane back up to his lectern.

“Now, I was a good student and of course I never flew paper airplanes in class.” he said, caricaturing a scowl. “But I certainly did make a good paper airplane. People said about my paper airplanes...” He unfolded the airplane and Day caught a glimpse of writing on the sheet of paper from which it was made. The chef saw it too. Smoothing the paper out, he began to read it.

She could guess what it said. She’d heard Foster and his friends elaborating about the chef. This time, Foster had blown himself up. The chef—at least this chef—wouldn’t forgive him. Probably, he’d start slighting Foster in practicals, finding invisible flaws in the crumb structure of his baguettes and bearing down on him for bad sanitation techniques as he cooked. The chef would have to pay greater attention to her pastry, once he’d rejected Foster’s. A sense of fate grew in her mind. This was the top turning, the climatic moment which would spark her rise into her own. She waited.

The chef looked up, red-faced. “So you bet I don’t have a girlfriend,” he said to Foster, too incensed to spare himself public humiliation. “You want to throw tomatoes at me and you bet I don’t have a girlfriend.”

Beautiful, thought Day, absolutely beautiful.

Foster slid down a little in his seat. “Now, chef...”

Oh, no. You’ll never get away with it this time.

“Now chef what?”

“Man, what can I say...you know, sir, I don’t have a girlfriend either.”

No dice. Foster squirmed and tried again.

“Not all the time. I mean, I don’t want to throw tomatoes all—I think you’re misreading my airplane, sir.”

In the back of the class, someone snickered. Someone else. Then someone else. Suddenly the whole class was laughing. For a moment it could have been at the expense of either Foster or the chef, but Foster, snapping a look around, quickly joined in. Clearly, the chef was the joke.

He had opened his mouth to rain down judgment, but the laughter knocked him sideways. He looked around uncertainly. He wasn’t sure what they were laughing at. He thumped on his lectern, but edged behind it at the same time. Day almost chuckled. But then again, this was Foster’s doing. She twisted her face straight and shot a hand in the air. The chef didn’t notice.

“Excuse me. Excuse me, chef!” He turned dazedly to look at her. “Could you explain the requirements of that next paper to us, sir, before class ends?” A good question, a good student question, one that would certainly galvanize him into retaking the classroom Foster had usurped.

Foster laughed before the chef could respond. “What are you worried about? You could write that paper with your eyes closed. Ten o’clock. Class is over.” He started to get up. Then he stopped, halfway out of his chair. He was looking at the chef, who’d become a St. Helena-Napoleon in the front of his own classroom. Foster sat back down.

“Hey!” he said. “Let’s get the requirements for that paper. I gotta start working on that.” Then he fished in his backpack, pulled out a notebook and a pencil—Foster, who never took notes—and looked up at the chef with bland expectancy. Reluctantly, the class followed his suit, except for Day. She had frozen when he spoke to her.

The chef eyed Foster warily. Then, seeing nothing but sudden innocence and a new longing to learn in Foster’s face, he timidly began to describe the essay requirements. He stopped, checked Foster once again for betrayal, and, seeing him dutifully making notes, began to speak with more confidence. Day took no notes. She stared straight ahead, a pillar of non-cooperation, until she realized that Foster’s coupe was so absolute that token rebellion would only look silly. Defeated, she slid down in her chair like her spine had melted. For the first time since class had started, she let herself look at him.

He was still writing, pencil clenched in a third-grader’s lockjaw grip. That, at least, he didn’t do well. His hands weren’t meant for writing. They were built for pastry-making: gentle, to smooth butter into delicate Danishes, and quick, to spin gobs of molten caramel into sugar threads. For molding those marzipan figures of his, tiny, perfect enough to keep in a curio cabinet along with mounted butterflies and souvenir spoons. The day they’d worked marzipan, the food coloring had dyed his hands all the colors of the rainbow. His fingertips had been yellow, his knuckles blue and purple, and the insides of his wrists had somehow turned rosy pink.

That was a counter-revolutionary thought. She blinked a few times. Then, turning back to her notebook, she underlined the Thomas Edison quote to strengthen her faith.

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Fall 2010

**Carlos Ponce-Meléndez**

Depth

In the depth of my soul  
Putrid doubts  
Eat my useless god.

Everything is an existential error  
Nothing is true but my secure fear  
Even you are just a dead lie.

## Self portrait

Squiggling lines try to define my confused face  
While my eyes, pathetically, search for meaning.

My Picasso mouth speaks the truth even when there is none  
While my prominent nose destroys any hope of beauty.

Dissident hair covers my forehead and my doubts  
While my parabolic ears capture more banality that I can bear.

My skin color is crude and matches my intrusive brain  
While my whole looks defies definition.

An honest self portrait; no perfection here,  
Just a human variation with a tragic soul.

## With my imagination

With my imagination I created galaxies and heavens,  
Destroyed millenary gods and created others that nobody loved.

With my imagination I finish dictatorships and tyrannous,  
Created marvelous and perfect utopias and made the past and present happy.

With my imagination I had more lovers than any sultan,  
More wealth than all the kings together and engendered hordes of saints and wise men.

With my imagination I died and revived at will  
Wrote all the poems and novels and forgot to hate my enemies.

With my imagination I finished time and matter,  
And turned myself into a poem.

## Camille Roy

### Lucy In The Sky

I put the boy to bed  
*turtle scout mixed from rub & spring.*  
Then I washed the knives, to get rid of the black stains.  
There was Lucy's note, waiting  
on the kitchen table.

"Dear Camille,  
We appear in our meat clothes and then erode. It's forty three by the clock. Now I've got these big boobs and a sturdy helping of meaty muscular. But I'm casting my ear to the winds, so to speak. Pulling my eyeballs out of the mud. That is personal. The deal with history, as I fill up my shelf, as I clutter it: my story will outlast the tale. The daffodils with their yellow shock, the mental shock of yellow upthrust from green, it's so French. I mean I've had this story all along and I've waited for it to become... uh, like animal skin.  
---Lucy"

I composed a reply.

Lucy---

You were interested in lovers as dream states.  
You entered the personal only through that doubt.

...so much tissue wasted on a dream!

*LUCY*

When your arms crunched my ribs,  
holes opened up in my psyche  
& I was spongy & clear...

*LUCY*

with the big eraser,  
all my feelings  
turning  
vapor--

Each of your gifts, we hauled across the plateau:  
such as a light cunt, lightened by aperture.  
And something we were letting coil in our ears, those pushy disturbances.

Now I feel, uh, wedded to evil. My brain keeps serving up nasty pop-tarts  
in which peace of mind is indicated by bubbles of lust.

What you & I did was so good it was nauseating.

xox

Camille

Dear Camille,

Happy about your note. I didn't expect it. It's weird, that moment of being sexually attracted to someone who might be dead. You weren't the first. When N. died, I loved her desperately, my feverish hands closing over a ghost.

Last night's bath left my scalp itchy. This morning the view out the kitchen window down to the port (factories and warehouses) was of a dreamy peachy pink sky over the glossy bay. The colors were so pretty they whirred.

I'm sick of being here, in pretty-land.

Bad sex. Abusive sex. Kinky sex. Established sex. Tunnel of love sex.

Buried muscles in chalk. Big toe in a bottle, buried again.

You can imagine my amazement when I heard you were not dead!

Your living warmth made me sleepy. I slept for four days.

Love, Lucy

Dear Lucy,  
I'm rattled. Every night a different rattle.  
Every day, waiting.

This may be the weekend he dies. They're all gathering.

His knees are bigger than his thighs. He weighs 95 pounds. He's covered with lesions.  
He crawls around the house and if we don't watch him there's shit everywhere.

Today the boy woke up early & came down my stairs crying *Where are the clouds?*  
It was before dawn and the sky was white.

Lucy, our frantic episode was undercut by embarrassment.  
Surrealism and embarrassment and a humor like heated fur.  
It resembled a meditation but was more painful. It was romance.  
Slowly rags crushed their paws into my chest.  
Lungs bleated while the aroma seeped from my nipples.  
I was still singing, *Can this go on?*  
while sitting cross-legged among the stinky pillows.  
Dear Lucy, your body is judicious...

Baffled reader of my own life!  
Camille

Dear Camille,

I read somewhere that dialog is tongues-in-a-nest.

My tongue is wagging in my stomach & it wants to be scooped out. For a cluster fuck.

A closure fuck. A placement.

*Please don't forget me.* Instead

we'll practice breathing as you deviously surround my nipples with tiny barracuda.

You'll press your palm to the mirror of my face,

& I'll have nothing to say to that palm.

Tunnel of air is all I'll have to kiss you with. I'll be nude then!

Camille - I need your brainy ideas because you're... because I'm...

You are supposed to love me particularly, to pluck my plum. To wet fur me aside.

Everything else was just a sex toy.

(Note: my pants need gathering & squishing.)

pleadingly,

Lucy

Dear Lucy,  
I calm myself with magazines.  
Stare at you from the greatest distance I can imagine.  
Your hands cup my tremble and I could piss  
just from relief. That's my feeling.  
It's invented & pleasurable & underage.

Tiny tongue marches in the welt  
then whiplash. The joke stares before jumping.

Or something! Stuffed with plans and paranoia...

This is what I'll do:  
I'll gather my interests into a Herd,  
& head for that valley of blood known as the brain.  
I'll drag myself to the shore, flop by the water, suck a bottle of soda.  
I'll feel so complete, sunning at the beach next to my own guilty corpse  
wherein appetites fester.  
Giving you up...  
... a waffle between flattery and substance.  
Opening my life to what's intelligible!

I always wanted to be a gangster but I guess I'm just a punk.  
still yours, Camille

Dear Camille,  
So many little scams --- out in the world, etcetera.  
Who cares! I think about our slinking attraction,  
everyone ignores it if they can. But it's the nugget of our story.

Did I tell you what your boy said when I took him to the fireworks?  
*The adventure is in the sky. The adventure is falling down.*

I thought you were the white legs in the grass  
gleaming & moonlit. Seeping their whiteness.  
You were my miniature city  
but this room is my hole, with its greasy sheets  
& queasy fantasies (slick this ending with regret).

I took a mud bath & understood what was so great about being an earthworm  
With no problems & a brain as pure as a cloud.  
If emotions aren't reality, what is?

Goodbye, architecture of my life ---  
love, Lucy

**Carol Smallwood**

The Tooth Had Been Pulled

but the pain lingered.  
The dentist called it phantom  
as nothing was left—like the  
roots of desire

## Begging the Question

Advice at a homemaker's workshop:  
Make your bed first so the sense  
of accomplishment pushes you  
forward

On the blackboard:  
Who Am I?  
Don't See  
Don't Talk  
Don't Feel

They call it acoustic shadows: in the Civil War  
(or Battle Between the States) battles were not  
heard a few miles away but heard further away

A monk, feeling sorry for the butterfly struggling  
to get out of its cocoon, tore the cocoon open.  
After the butterfly had dried its wings in the sun,  
it struggled in vain to fly--its wings had not  
acquired strength

Moonlight was so bright there was no shadow

Shrek is back at McDonald's—smiling, lime green,  
offering rewards for codes

On the back of a student's t-shirt:  
You only live once...  
But if you live it right,  
Once is enough

## Every Late Summer

they come—pale yellow butterflies that  
travel no direction.

Small, solitary, crisscrossing,  
as if straight lines forbidden

Why so late in summer only a week or so?  
In town and country they go erratic ways  
while I try and see any design

When one hits my car no matter if I swerve,  
its impact makes me reel against chance

## Blood Test in January

In the hospital waiting room *Time's* cover is Why Your DNA Isn't Your Destiny. I was there for a blood test--I'd developed the same cancer my mother died from. *Newsweek's* cover: Yes He Can (But He Sure Hasn't Yet) with a picture of Obama.

The television on the wall: Filibuster, Election, Republican Scott Brown, Polls, 2,000 marines in Haiti. Air drops. Pipelines jammed. The world looks to U.S.

The woman across from me with a boy was snapping her gum. The wall clock was big with extra sharp hands. The reception desk had a sign: We Are Now Protecting Your Identity. We Ask for a Photo ID Prior to Providing Services.

The waiting room gradually thins. My name is called, I am asked for new health cards but not photo ID.

My name called again is by a young man in white coat. They usually are not men and I enjoy the change. He only called my first name so I give him my last to make sure he has the right person.

A blue pillow with hearts supports my hand after I am seated. I say, "They usually use a butterfly needle. After chemo it takes 4 or 5 pokes in my hand."

The young man ties my arm, inspects, tells me to make a fist. After he jabs deeply he asks, "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine." And continue to stare at his feet through my sunglasses and ask, "Is it coming?"

"Yes" he said.

"You are a good poker."

"You expected a hard time? Have I ruined things?"

"Yes, my excitement is gone for the day."

On the way home, a police car blocks traffic for a funeral. The cars passing have a festive air with fluttering flags.

## Tea Bubbles

Once the lid's off you see bubbles align  
On the Wendy's cup like Braille,  
The hot water dots make no evident design

I lift the styrofoam cup like mulled wine  
In adoration to the Holy Grail--  
Once the lid's off you see bubbles align

Copernicus didn't change how the sun shines  
Even after his theory wasn't thought a tale:  
The hot water dots make no evident design

I pull apart the tea bag looking for a sign  
But the string-joined bag leaves no trail,  
The hot water dots make no evident design

The bubbles pop after a slow climb  
And line the inside as if dales  
As the tea darkens with time

Raising my cup to customers in line  
I hope their quests do not fail;  
Once the lid's off you see bubbles align,  
The hot water dots make no evident design

**Chad Scheel**

**Appetite**

As if resistance  
were enough

jangling (minor)  
keys

Learning to whistle  
then fighting the urge to

**That I do not**

Pigeons

forced  
to find

the difference

between  
roofs and rock

ledges

## **Alchemical**

A 60-watt light  
from down the hall

*No one would want  
to be us right now*

We are, so it's difficult

—

A rose, tinted  
or not

is perceptible

I pinch  
like a bulb twisted

## **On finally learning to whistle**

a fence must  
come down

plentiful

rosebush must  
decay

## **LOOPED**

beyond

bounce  
and attack

hammers snuff  
out

stammered  
tones

smeared  
touch . your

bare  
neck

**WE**

are members  
of one

another . Piercingly  
on the surface

a crab  
apple bounces

liquid . buoyant . and it

is not  
thinking

of you  
at all

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Fall 2010

**Darren Caffrey**

adulation

In the trees - something more than a snaking branch - twists and twirls its neck and thorax - a crest of movement pressed into spine - one less than explosion - something more - than a close fit - the perfect home - slow and fast - a prison break of the first man to crawl on his belly - where once he walked with the desert - the sand forming - turns to show itself - a fortress - chasing his earth - out of respect for his mistakes to follow.

## epigram

Don't write fuck  
unless you mean it,  
...words we say  
to puncture hot balls of panic  
or forgetfulness.  
There *are* manners  
and of course, to all  
they go by the order to which they fall.  
I am more intrigued that not all do  
fuck this or that  
or the other.  
Then what happens...  
grips  
like one pocket,  
where the best of us come back  
for air  
to a comma or a full stop,  
put where it is not needed.  
Hung to the winds,  
that we are the coming of a world  
unblessed.

loving

cut fuck and bleed spit  
fuck cut and spit blood

-----  
me consumed by once  
pleasures forced to hide

-----  
the stains and holes  
stay with us no doubt

-----  
the good life is nothing new  
nothing like good

-----  
but choice  
as a matter of taste

-----  
the face has eyes  
too close to forget

-----  
my decisions  
follow these same lines

-----  
to extend  
open or shut by ecstasy

-----  
a secret killer  
a secret love

-----  
this is a secret  
life

## Donna Danford

### To Whitman and Wordsworth

The ground I till does not accept every seed  
Spilled forth in agony, for memory  
Or any other trophy. I labor for one  
Thing even when static; my patience  
Is full expectation—my feigned dissertation  
On giving makes giving a diatribe, a will  
To power. Vacuous this giving, this vast gift.  
As I danced and molded the word, my skirts  
Envied you. I undressed myself in every moment  
Of undressing you—held myself as I held  
Musk and fig leaf in my mouth, shredding  
The cloth of shame. A shackled desire or mounded holy flesh  
Is better than the unlickable lobe penned;  
Even poets have turned every word against themselves.  
Something in me does rock, or rut; something cradles  
My loins if not longing. Blood rushes to bath  
My swollen tendencies, the awkward pumping  
Of my days. Against need I pump and swindle  
To ease a moment's satisfaction, and in a moment  
Die, the dying lasts, eclipses desire.  
But there, on your incandescent pages, my teeth  
Glisten, sharpened, ready to feed. No frenzied  
Daffodil, nor slanted, dusty beam could dislodge  
The perfect weight of you, a preened and  
Rhythmical eternity of words.  
(Emily's truth sachets like a disastrous invitation—her  
shadows hold their breath.)  
Gentlemen, I sacrifice my best, my most  
Extravagant ignorance.  
The worms will weigh us in together.

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Fall 2010

Debrah Morkun

PAST LADY POEM.

O sorry nights when everything's too complicated  
she hangs woodcarvings of 19<sup>th</sup> century tugboats

that we still use to go  
from one side of the river  
to the other  
in our work clothes

she hangs wooden creatures

now they are animals

now they are sun dials

now sky and chair

in the old park there's a slide show

to commemorate

a feudal kingdom

in grandmother's back lot

we placed the name of communism

in cherished firelight

the only place we could actually hear each other speak

your voice suffocates

so I can't hear you

to strain the ears simply to hear is to barter the brain

so you suffocate your words with breath

we are living in a dangerous time to be bucolic

by billy club, rusted nails and spindles, we millionaires

vaccinate this hamlet moment and cough

five more cities between us

a pair of combat clothes

the sergeants ended their nights in grocery stores

checking time clocks

on the back porch of the sinister clam dive

I parked my car

the westward expansion between us

five continents north of leopards

a history field without motion

time, moths, residue

we bring the tired soldier to the ship, he bellows like a man about to kill a flock of geese

I stood in the ocean just a few feet from the fishing port

raked all my possessions

divided this poseidon wish

to blow away this sea village

the forest was open

I looked through

I could see him

undressing, peeling each green leaf

from his body

uncovering mist & air

he makes breakfast for us

I know outside the windows

there's a glittery Honda Civic

and we're going to drive it to New Hampshire

over at the neighbor's house, they're pushing the maximum load

of cherries up a conveyor belt, into their home

i do mean benito mussolini carrying the flag through the mountains and down into persia

i do mean benito as he travels through eurasia bringing classical muskets to the charlatans who gave him a pilgrim tribe

i do mean benito, who has stormed through the universities until the walls fell down and a student's surgery lead to the building of a shrine to a teacher who swore an oath to the socratic order

i do mean benito who makes unmistakable calculations at the amount of merit prisons congratulate

i do mean benito who gathers factual data, population density, how much earth needs to be swallowed by the bosom of the land to survive

i do mean benito in the morning when the church girls get in their miserable Hondas and drive mercilessly to the veranda to look beyond the cliffs

i do mean this crafted image of the fascist and we're stealing his name to impregnate the ladies, so lickety-split and the cipher of this concubine is the harlot is the desert is the floor

give me a mask to wear, give me human feet

I will cast away the steamships with a simple flock of geese

time travel, the roots and meanings of shadows,

laurel oceans

it is summer, this is all impossible

\*constation called exterior

imagine i remained in my rancid apartment, washing my bowls from this honey she left  
imagine you're washing this fire he started with his yellow-green geraniums, hatched  
this sun from the wired nest he left outside these prison doors  
imagine i quit my job turning off her grotto lamp  
and imagine your last day was the day before  
these willow trees became the center point  
for our travels, you're imagining  
this cloudy dust that's gathered  
here is the last unreal figment, is  
the last hopeful unreal

\*constation called interior

such logic, to wish the world  
to collapse, as if i had  
such venom, as though  
we should keep our hands  
over this fire, so heat  
can make this cloud's  
moisture so  
unreal

\*to *constate* means to recognize the state of a thing or phenomenon, to establish fact without applying personal judgment

tomorrow i'll wake you, tomorrow by the staircase, tomorrow this stairwell, this threshold matter

breath of heartland express trucks

rigor of flesh landscape commerce

pubescent in idolatry

this half-formed dress

I put on in the back seat of the truck, so belabored

dress of semen, mucous, clouds

infant clothes burning in the fireplace

yellow lukewarm sashes children wear proudly

clamshells collecting light in the putrid lantern

my nightmares, flickering lamps

these candles and my peripheral vision

but the trap door, a kinetic experience, the way out through the back of the head

## David Plumb

August 23-Saturday

The teenager says, "When I'm with my friends, I'm not a real person, but when I'm on line..." If you say it, you make it so. Or bend the adjective, verb, noun, to a nightly swarth of TV Tee Hees and I caught you naked. Are you, you?" America buys elixirs, salves, pills, anything to wash, rub or drown the bleak highways at 23% interest and climbing. It's one fat casino. Even grandma leaves the kids in the car.

Hurricane season. Tropical Storm Fay swamps Florida. Fannie Mae in the bucket. Get banged at the pump. The Northeast boasts early cold..."Change." In the wings. Biden for Obama, yarmulke on tap with hosts of flag waving peddlers to follow. The Olympics stream on. Jamaica stomps the track. China winks (is she 14?). Star shells for MacDonald's and Visa. America drops the baton twice.

Who dances on the Moon? Which crank knocks at the door? Who slips on the White House floor this time? Bombs for Jesus? Photo IDs at the cemetery? What's the catch?

## Back from the Pharmacy.

I open the bottle. I swallow.  
I am cured of insignificance.  
I am awash in anomaly.  
I rejoice. I pay homage.  
I am just too much.

## 101st Plasmatic Extravaganza

In the blink of America, in the belly of Saudi Arabia  
on the spine of China and Pakistan and Sudan  
a day of magnificent explosions get sold in cracker jack boxes.  
Toys, and necklaces and underwear flap everywhere  
Digital cookies wrapped in tasty chocolate blowups  
kill fish and babies and grownups and goats and chickens.  
They kill the sky. It's a Fourth of July Thanksgiving  
when everyone has their head up a turkey butt.

Johnny Upton steps on a Baghdad bomb in Rudyard Kipling's Afghanistan  
and the country makes Super Bowl dressing, a celebration of bowed heads  
green peas and marshmallows on sweet potato pie.  
Guns echo on the plasma screen, the teams take the field.  
The pretty girls wag their rumps, beer froths in Paradise  
and all over everywhere, purple mountains majestically  
watch the clicking, clacking, babbling, flickering game

Somewhere in Texas an Attwater Prairie Chicken scratches for a mate.  
Somewhere near Tuba City, Arizona, a pickup truck races to a plate of Indian fried bread.  
Somewhere in Florida, Bacardi the nine foot alligator chokes to death on a plastic turtle.  
Somewhere the President wears jeans and smirks.  
Somewhere the Vice President hides in his fat listening to  
his private heart machine beat him alive.

A thousand elephants with crosses tacked to their sides  
and butterfly wings clipped to their ears march out of the sky.  
Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and Dominicans and Haitians  
stand in line for the next trolley, the next truck or boat  
the next something and somewhere in Chiapas, a Zapatista  
cuts and pastes Lacandon history with a laptop.  
America's bugles hoot the alleys, the shopping malls  
the empty schoolyards and the parking lots.

Movie stars wearing flashing teeth and short skirts wail  
cross-eyed songs in the Forget You Night. Flags flap  
in the bombed out brains of soldiers eating crow.  
Babies screech, mothers scream and wives stand  
at blank windows staring into emptiness.  
A philanthropist mail-orders nine hundred dollar caskets from Costco  
with "He Didn't Get It," printed on the lids.

Priests Hail Mary on her way to Dubai for a facelift.  
Jesus takes a good room overlooking the sea. Rabbis rally.  
Mid East kings sell slick promises of BEST Buy  
in a Black Box with whores in the backroom on Sunday.  
A man marries his dog in India and Minnesota  
opens five Bed and Breakfasts for single canines.

When all the announcements are made,  
all the prayers whispered, all the turkey stuffed in all the crows  
and all the butchers close their cash registers  
and all the pundits choke on the babble in their throats  
and all the pretty girls jump all the pretty boys  
and all the slot machines stop at strawberries and 7  
and all the Easter Bunnies die waiting for Jesus.  
and all the monkeys hang from their cages waiting for somebody  
somewhere to speak up about something besides Freedom  
Democracy and Terror, the immortal screen flashes MORE!

**Diana Salier**

eating raisin bran in my underwear, again

just me and the milk  
and spoon and sunday  
and a/c unit doing its lawful duty  
without having to be  
asked twice  
STOP

how many poems can i write about  
eating raisin bran  
in my underwear, again  
before the mundane becomes  
so mundane it's not even  
worth talking about anymore  
in fancy sweater  
and new leather shoes  
at a cocktail party  
and no one laughs  
how droll, how droll  
is the everyday  
but that's the beauty of it all,  
now get me another one of those  
pigs in a blanket  
and a glass of red  
i'm fresh out

i could change the story  
imagine for a second i'm not  
eating raisin bran  
in my underwear, again  
perhaps i'm burying bombs  
in the coat closet  
underneath two leopard-skin  
bodies and a scarf  
from the fall sale at bloomingdale's  
i'm riding my bike  
up to mount olympus  
to take athena out  
for brunch at joey's  
and a visit to the melrose trading post  
i'll buy her a new dress  
and something she can hang  
in her living room  
to think of me while i'm away  
on international business

maybe i'm climbing  
*le deuxieme etage*  
of the eiffel tower  
because i stole a baguette  
and two apple croissants  
from les deux magots  
after jean-paul sartre came to my bedside  
and threatened me  
with crippling doubt and nothingness  
if i didn't deliver the goods  
by 2:13pm the next day  
and the french police  
are trying to shoot me down  
like king kong  
only this isn't new york  
and i've already been killed  
by enough beauties  
in my time  
thank you very much

## nostalgia vs. fruitflies

everything is reminiscent  
of everything else.  
i am just a nostalgic person  
at least i know this much is true.  
i'm a glass half-empty type, always reluctant  
to ask for a refill.  
go ahead, ask me about the past -  
you'd think i had no long-term memory,  
had never learned what the world could do.

i was just going to say,  
*i couldn't imagine you hurting a fruit fly*  
but then i realized  
that was a line from another poem  
i wrote about another woman  
who i apparently couldn't imagine  
hurting a fruit fly.

i'm not around you all the time,  
i wouldn't know if you trapped one in a jar  
and lit matches inside  
laughed as it flailed like a marionette  
and clipped its wings without any method  
like a four-year-old cutting paper snowflakes  
before the winter solstice.

## happy&birthday&america

body full of margarita mix that comes out green  
on the rocks with salt and two red straws  
vodka and cranberries and gin and coca-cola  
from the can and three sirloin tacos with chipotle  
salsa, hold the bacon, and a hamburger  
and french fries with a small, pink lemonade

it is the afternoon of july third, twenty-ten  
today my best friends were born  
twenty-four years ago and their mothers either  
cry remembering the push and strain  
and hours of labor that don't even earn  
paid overtime or a one-hour lunch break  
or they leap from bed and call first thing in the morning  
still wearing nightgowns and sing  
*happy birthday to you*  
*happy birthday to you*  
all raspy into the answering machine

i have my naked body  
and an old faithful guitar  
where a young faithful woman should be  
it keeps her place without complaining  
it doesn't tell me that it never loved me  
that it could answer all my questions  
but i wouldn't like the answers it would give  
like some magic lamp genie  
with a superiority complex

i'm thinking of the day that H left the san fernando valley  
packed black converse lo-tops and vinyl collection  
blasted bowie in a silver corolla on the 101 to oakland, ca  
i must've been crawling around montreal  
(who put the REAL in montreal)  
boozing with the literati and pretending i knew how  
to speak french and order a pint of blanche, *s'il vous plait*

when she closed the car door and rammed the gas

i must've been imbibing a spirit  
to get rid of hers to release it from my lungs  
and replace it with a mountain of cigarette ash  
and a curious newfangled contraption the scientists call  
HAPPINESS  
with a capital H

body full of gallo white wine and five dollar pints  
plain cheese pizza from a store that sells  
mostly lebanese food, and two slices of wheat bread  
for the illusion of health.

this just in – there are no goddamned promises.  
there are no ninety-day guarantees.

i leave the long white windows closed  
curtains drawn, so i can only see  
part of the world  
at any given time

**David Toms**

From: 'Those Feet and Where they are Going: Tom O'Bedlam Sings His Song

He countenances the flecks of the wastrels  
He puts the boot in  
Severs his listless  
Coming  
Gasp  
Practic

Now I'm just waiting  
I lever a stream in the wake of the moon

I'm just waiting for the launch  
Of broadcasted lancer  
Crack!  
Chance to separate the gighams  
From the night corners

Snatched kisses  
Is lung and piss  
Offing  
A sense drastic  
And the shattered

It is important to remember  
two words from every speech

every rank

is - rotten  
every glyph  
a gyre  
and every  
end a rapture

blast-be ruffle  
be plume  
get on yer knees and  
Prynne

oh excuse the squeez  
box/  
ing of ringlets  
ingot gold hoblin'  
gob-ful  
of

A variety of diletantes  
have been view/  
ed  
&&  
skewed  
stew/  
ing  
skewered &&  
lamb-  
asted/asterik  
supple with arsenic  
and laud/  
ed  
educated by  
bi-lingually  
train/ed  
and test/  
ed  
legal/  
slaters && roof  
tilers

the poems are doing battle at the fronts. The port-cullis is whistling.

Thomas de Quincey.

Jones.

Adams and the invisible hand. Dante Alighieri quotes David Ricardo as saying "By far the greatest part of those goods which are the objects of desire, are procured by labour".

Back to the check-outt

straight off the bat the kids sed

What's'yer reasoning on this?

re/zoning

re/opning

re/sizing

re/align

ing-lore

loc

uter/us

and them

simply

saying

re/plying

pli/a

pli/é

-ble

play

Or other somesuch ethnocrutch to levitate from.

Tom's gone roun'd'twist. I've seen enough to sim/ply

s/ay

ail/

ments

From the hag/g and hungr/ie goblin

That into raggs would rend ye [rocks]

And the spirit that stands by the naked man

In the Book of Moonshine - defend ye!

That of your five sound senses [and the one not taken]

Never you be foresaken

Nor wander from your selves with Tom

Abroad to beg your bacon.

*From: Those Feet and Where they are Going: Tom O'Bedlam Sings His Song* and is from a recently published chapbook by the Knives, Forks and Spoons Press in the UK

**Elizabeth Brazeal**

Pavane

Why snails mate on the sidewalk  
I'll never know.  
Or by what inscrutable process  
They sense desire in each other  
And chart a course towards each other  
Slower than slow,

Till, after a day of striving,  
Lover and bride  
Arrive at their destination  
And, ordained by the dance of planets,  
These two immeasurably smaller  
Planets collide –

And then a boy rides through on a bicycle

And an iridescent star of shattered shells  
marks the moment of consummation

## Eric Wayne Dickey

### Easy to Love You

What do the pine boughs say?  
That's easy enough, they say, *I love you.*

What does the crunching gravel say?  
That's easy, it says *I love you, too.*

In fact, the whole earth says *I love you.* We can put words in-

to the mouths of gravel,  
but we always turn around

at the end of the road:  
Our headlights search the night,

waving around long white  
carrots at the stars.

A soldier says to his enemy,  
*I love you* with bullets.

*I care about you enough*, he says,  
*to end your suffering.*

The dead soldier says *thank you,*  
*I love you, too*; his family does not.

Firing a gun is a long road,  
full of blind corner and potholes.

Wars come and go, soldiers live and die.  
And we keep making more of them

every time we have sex.  
We open our legs, and set them free.

# The Presentation

a woman draws arrows on a flipchart  
talking at the front of the room

she draws quickly, leaving the arrows incomplete,  
lines and dashes with sloppy triangles

the woman is pretty and talks fast  
her breasts shake as she moves

she draws more arrows  
that begin to swarm and swim

at her like sperm  
I start to get an erection

I'm in love with her now  
but I know I can't have her

not here, not like this  
I'm a married man, for crying out loud

but I'm drawn, moth like,  
to her flickering beauty

she talks about how we can blow  
job satisfaction

I can't believe she said those words  
looking right at me, no less

she follows the buttons down my shirt  
with her eyes and stops at my belt

I start to resist  
how am I going to tell my wife

who will surely take the kids  
and move in with her mother

I will eat dinners alone in my dark house  
while my children sleep in unfamiliar beds

the woman knows I can't live like that,  
not without my kids

she draws her attention to somebody else  
and I sigh in my chair

after the woman finishes her talk  
we all applaud and I walk up to her

looking into her eyes, I shake her hand  
saying, *thank you for that fabulous presentation*

## Toe Job

I clip the toenails  
of the old folks  
at the Crestview.

The tick tock of the clippers  
count down the seconds  
for this one here, Emma,  
close to the end.

Her toes twitch when I touch them,  
squeeze my fingers.  
My thumb gets tangled in the jumble.

These toes will never again  
fondle another's toes beneath the sheets.  
No running through grass or mud  
of which these toes once knew.

No giggling, no tickling,  
this is not my son  
resisting and wrestling,  
risking having his skin snipped  
or being cut too close to the quick.

Just the sound of Emma's shallow breath,  
of an oxygen tank valve,  
and the clicking clippers.

I spread the toes with my fingers  
and hold the cracked yellow sole in my palm.

**Ed Makowski**

Saying Something

My friend's daughter

I hadn't noticed

watching

spoke to the side of my face,

“You don't talk much.”

I turned my head

toward the voice

and there she was

next to me,

apparently,

the whole time

“Really?” I asked.

she shook

her head

“Hm.

I used to talk

a whole lot.

Guess I learned.”

# Brothers

Woke up at 6am  
and there was piss all over

In the still pale pastel  
Sunday morning  
you could see  
the wood floor's slant  
by which side of his  
wet jeans  
the puddle came to rest.  
Amazing; a bladder's capacity.

Laying there looking  
like a beached donkey  
mated with a baby bunny.

Goddamn, I thought,  
I've never pissed myself.  
Are these the times I  
missed, all  
those years working  
instead of partying at college?

Well, I've dealt with sandy diapers and  
naked pooped on the floor oopsies,  
carried an ill father to the toilet.  
the only difference here is  
20 some years and  
a drunk.

Not worth losing sleep over  
I turned the fan on  
and went back  
to bed

# Thy Kingdom Come

At the church festival

there was a banner

above a tent offering

**FREE STUFF**

There's not much else to say

just a bunch of Catholics

clamoring

for the cheapest

option

## Penthouse Suite

I live onna top floor've  
'at building. Penthouse suite.  
Always lookt like a beehive t'me.

I moved in'ere fourteen years ago.  
Woman in charge felt bad fer me  
bein' sick'n all an  
she gave me a room at da top floor.  
Government housing.

I had bedbugs  
4 times in my place. Dey come in  
an'ey spray poison, an'ey move aroun' da building.  
Like little musical chairs.

Then we all take ar furniture  
let it rot outside in a sun an rain  
unused.  
It's like a dump out back dere.  
But we're por people, we can'afford  
new furniture.

It's three-seventy-nine a month,  
'lectric'n heat included.

I think about movin out, I say I want to,  
bin sayin it fer years ...but

with th'economy so bad,  
I dunno- y'know?

But after da last time  
dey spray fer bedbugs  
I outsmarted'm  
an I got'n air mattress,  
which is real nice cuz  
the bugs can't crawl up  
when I'm sleeping, it's slippery  
an' ey fall offa da sides tryin'da get ta me.

**Erin J. Mullikin**

*iii. How to Remember a Birthday Party*

This is the cake of it now, tiny dove,  
so that when we think

here in this place,  
this is what we've come to:

you cough in my ear,  
tell me something

about the way the icing falls,  
drips onto the plate,

& how much it reminds you  
of the way your grandfather

fell from the bed.  
How the curtains shivered

just barely,  
so that his thin hair

was seahorse silver  
in the waving.

A little patch of green  
rug then & there,

a old arm stretched across,  
but here tonight,

a beckoning of tiny candles,  
small moving shadows,

an equation of memories,  
a summation of what happens.

•

Now I've blown out the fire,  
walked through a wall,

heard the bells  
before they ever began to ring,

heard our hair growing, a freezing.  
Every keening chime

sounding out your story,  
your voice saying to me:

*Can't stop what's coming,  
can't stop what is on its way.*

*iii.* How to Remember What You've Read

The sound of books opening  
will fawn in the night,

will land pages,  
feathers in our hands.

We may have hands.  
We hold our mothers

from far away.  
There are two sides

to every paper animal  
among the spooling

shadow farm.  
We may have a song

that rises up from  
the dirt of scales,

the tiny octaves,  
a dialogue of volumes

& splinters.  
Here, a bleeding.

Here, a pool where we swim,  
our terming

a guidebook for those  
who have heard the wake,

a mourn or a splash,  
a sigh or a cough.

*vii.* How to Remember an Apex

The wasp brood  
frightened us, didn't it?

We ran into the dark clouds,  
searching for the solar

arc of Hercules's spine.  
The stars

separated us:  
You: a curtain of black water,

swimming away.  
Me: an awful knowing.

•

If there are birds around us now,  
let us meet with palms as bright as design.

The deer will bring the bellows  
& the goats will raise a chorus

to horns & grass.  
We will like it here

among the refrain of air  
as the cloudiness of doves

forms black diamonds  
in millpond water.

We can float on the surface  
of orchid smoke,

our coats ballooning

to the sound of colts

learning to walk  
across the ice working

over the pear trees  
near the barn.

## Flower Conroy

### THERE'S A LEAK IN THE PLEASURE DOME

Camille Rose Garcia, may I come in?

I see the trees have narrowed.  
The wallpaper sky's itchy skin peels.  
What drips from that heart-shaped cloud?

All the sick woodland creatures  
prance in your glitter acid rain.

Ah, the Night Factory. I knew a girl who  
couldn't escape her Nightmare Factory.  
I didn't mean to imply they are the same.  
I didn't mean to imply my deer are like your deer.

My duck is your duck.  
My burning house.  
My bag of peppermints.  
I didn't mean to say my birds, uranium, &/or pill bottles  
are anything like your knives, castles, &/or octopus alphabets!

I don't even know you  
that well.

Cannibals & princesses, butchers & bunnies.  
Your painkiller gardens,  
your extra-strength aspirin buttercups,  
your numbed houses.

I've never ridden on a swan.

Though I've built a few altars before: teeth  
are powerful as far as talismans go.

No thank you; a cup of tea does sound lovely but  
I must be going. It's cold in here & I haven't my sweater  
& I forgot why I wanted to enter your foresty wilderness  
of sadistic charm in the first place & today was the day  
I promised to cut back & polish the black roses.

You should see how handsome they are!  
They're as big as babies' heads.

## DO YOU MIND?

Your Romanesque strip tease trompe  
l'oeil leg drapes over the ledge  
like the procession of the equinoxes;  
your toe, therefore, threatens  
to touch the tip of my shoulder.

I'm trying to read this book of lost poetry  
fragments: Sappho—maybe you've heard of her?

I see how the mauve silk gathers  
in your lap; I can only imagine  
the sensation of cool cloth puddled  
upon equally soft & downy penis.

You are handsome.  
I never said you weren't handsome,  
my golden naked knight.

Yes, I see it “makes a proud display  
of the Ionic, Doric & Corinthian orders  
on its massive stone facades, with [its]  
classical quoin & voussoir motifs  
sculpted in high relief!”

I still don't want your toe touching my ear.  
Getting toe-tangled in my hair.  
Squishing my face a little in an awkward  
moment of readjusting.  
I certainly don't want that bright flesh grape  
in my mouth for me to suck on  
like a pacifier in a slobbering baby's  
hungry gummy toothless mouth!

No way. Not me.  
Nope.

No.

Really, I shouldn't.  
Well, as long as you don't mind.

## WHAT'S A B. J.?

I don't get to ask this question & my introduction to the many layered art of fellatio begins on the bathroom floor in worship po-

sition. It was a tiny carpeted bathroom; blue, I think, with wood Wainscoting & one window that overlooked the fenced in looming

yard. I loved that yard; I loved how it butted the farm. I loved the fire escape alley behind it, separating our yard from the people behind

us 's yard. Loved the giant oaks' autumn mattress of brick tinged leaves, & their barkskin. The sound & lingering aroma of the lawn wetted with late rain.

I loved the rich summer sweat of fresh slit grass. I solved how it began; the ending, however, befuddled me. Upon tongue, down throat into belly: gum-

my worms. Seasick prickly fireworks in October. I survived praying another way that season. Gravity demystified. What goes down may come up.

## WHINE OF WOOD ON WOOD

To wake & open the backdoor  
without knocking first

& be locked  
in the gaze of a wild creature

so strange to have trespassed  
into your neighborhood

a lion in the country  
or a dromedary in the suburbs

or the critter who's been having  
an affair with your spouse

that in your shock you do not  
make a sound—not even

when it looks away, scuttles  
across the yard then

looks back—just before exiting  
the broken gate.

## Geer Austin

La dolce eight and one-half

Jesus flies in by helicopter and the city awaits a visitation.  
You're in another helicopter. You ask  
bikini rooftop women for their telephone numbers.  
They like the attention. Jesus flies on alone.

Everyone shows up at the spa. It's a nightmare really.  
Your wife your mistress your producer. You play host to  
actors desperate for roles. Your mother appears. She always  
does. Claudia is there. She smiles and smiles.

You want to make a movie that shows it all but it's  
so hard to fit it all in. Wives are brunette and troubled.  
Mistresses run free. Blond impulsive discordant. Your  
mistress becomes your wife. You can't make a decision.

Your friend who has it all commits murder and suicide.  
Groceries on the street. *La strada. La bella figura.*  
Yet in despair, you are perfectly coiffed and attired.  
Marcello. Guido. Federico. And you have other names.

In the end a party. Climb the scaffold. Trash the house.  
There's a striptease and an arkish procession. You live  
or maybe leave the good life. Your black is so deep and dark  
and your white a silvery gloss across the surface of the screen.

## Gregory Dirkson

### Return Policy

5:28 am. The wind rocked the blinking yellow streetlights hanging outside the school. Inside the neighboring discolored brick apartments, the only lit window chronicled the packing of a young woman. A car navigated the streets for newspaper boxes and at each stop, a figure in a coat and gloves delivered blue plastic bags. The wind rushed down Main Street, leaving the elementary/middle school behind, and ricocheted off the exteriors of the Walmart, Stop&Shop, Dunkin Donuts, Chiles, local bars and small American restaurants in the center of the urban town. The transit bus, searching for morning commuters, left the station and passed the Drives and Avenues of the housing districts; raised ranches with two-car garages, no need for public transportation. Little movement or sound came from the cloned neighborhood, but a man was hitting the snooze button in his bedroom, instead of rising from the cotton sheets. On various properties, lights were on, showers were started, cars were warmed, and goodbyes were exchanged. The sky was still black.

\*

6:04 am. In the corner bedroom of a maroon raised ranch, Joe was running late. The broken lace of his “Wolverine” work boots, thin threads sprayed from the loose end, reminded him to get new boots. He didn’t have a problem with the stains, the dirt showcased hard work, but since he spent the day on his feet, he needed support.

After adjusting the blue, standard issue, workpants over the laces of the boots, he turned toward the cherry oak frame on the bedside dresser and sighed. He remembered how a passing elderly couple took the picture, while the four of them posed in front of “Layne’s Kitchen,” where they ate breakfast every morning on vacation in Portland, Maine. Joe

would order coffee, rye-toast, and the leftovers from the plates of the girls and Heather. Despite his unadventurous order, it was the best breakfast he had ever eaten. The visit to Maine was their last vacation as a family.

He was wasting time. A strict schedule kept the girls calm. Heather left on July 14<sup>th</sup>. He was helping hang whiteboards in the mathematics wing of the newly remodeled Monroe Middle School. When his phone vibrated and flashed the caller ID of “home” he thought it was Kelly or Rebecca wondering where he put the dog leash, since they always wanted to leave it in the middle of the floor, when it belonged in the closet. His answer of ‘it’s in the closet’ was met with ‘where’s mom?’

\*

8:04 pm. Inside a two bedroom apartment in the faded brick building, a cry from an unlit hallway clashed with the glow from the television screen. Veronica, sitting on the couch, relaxing, raised her hands to cover her ears while her gaze left the screen to the annoyance down the hall.

Veronica had already turned the television down to a barely audible level and kept her movements to the small shuffling of limbs. She didn’t want to deal with a problem. Another cry interrupted her. The show went to commercial. She placed the bowl of “butter-lover” popcorn on the glass edge of the coffee table, rested the remote on the “Cosmo” magazines beneath the bare lamp, and evenly folded the corona blanket into its corner position of the maroon couch.

With her feet planted, she stared down the hallway at the black screech. Veronica’s shoulders slumped as she exhaled. The cry from the darkness was reverberating in her head, a musical solo of need and loneliness. She knew the neighbors would be awake by now, but fuck them; at least they had buffering walls.

She rocked on the couch with her anger. Her eyes locked onto the partially open door, “What is your fucking problem?” Lunging from the couch, Veronica stalked toward the room, “You wanna cry? I’ll give you something to cry about.”

\*

6:17 am. Hearing the neighbor’s car pulling away from their house, Joe passed the closed bathroom and heard giggling from the dual-faucet sink.

“Morning. Breakfast in fifteen. Scrambled eggs with cheese and frog-legs.” The girls gargled out “Dad” with toothpaste filled mouths. He smiled while descending the stairs. In the kitchen, he turned on the stove, started his coffee, placed bread in the toaster and grabbed three eggs, yellow American cheese, 2% milk, butter, and orange juice from the refrigerator. Each girl received half of the eggs, a piece of toast with orange marmalade, and a glass of orange juice. He poured his first cup of coffee and walked to the door that led to the back porch.

Heather never threatened to leave, but her unexpected absence from the house, immediately led to Joe’s understanding that this was for good. After the phone call, he rushed home to find half of the suitcase set gone and his drawers emptied. There was no note. He was sitting on the edge of the bed when the girls came in the room and noticed the bare drawers and now spacious closet. Rebecca wanted to know if she went on vacation and the older Kelly began to cry.

Joe spent summer nights reassuring the girls of their mother’s love and safety while instituting a schedule to keep them from becoming too upset. His actions were successful. Today marked the end of the second week of February and both girls were doing fine in school. Kelly was enjoying her move into the middle school her father had helped construct, and Rebecca was the best in her fourth grade class at the multiplication table.

Locking the door, he waited in the dining room for them to come eat. An unlocked door meant she was still welcome. The stomping down the stairs broke his trance. Before they turned into the dining room, he readied a smile as they sat and drank juice.

“Aren’t you forgetting something?” In mid swig, Kelly and Rebecca placed their glasses down, pushed out their chairs and hugged Joe. Grasping them with a bear-hug, he lifted them off the ground and their smalls kicks of annoyance were silenced by laughter. “Hey, stop messing around and eat breakfast.”

They began to eat again and Joe warmed his coffee.

“Are we doin anything for vacation?” Kelly said while piling scrambled eggs on her marmalade-covered toast. “Brenda is from class.”

“I won’t have time until the summer. You know that.”

Rebecca joined the pleading, “But, we never go anywhere.”

“Yeah, why can’t we?”

The girls stopped eating and stared at Joe while he sipped coffee. He ignored them while he sifted through envelopes on the counter and made their lunches. “Dad.” He spread peanut butter and slices of banana on Rebecca’s sandwich and only strawberry jelly on Kelly’s. “Dad.”

“We don’t have to go far.”

“Maybe camping.”

Kelly gave her sister the ‘that was stupid look,’ “It’s too cold to go camping.”

“Well, you’re not saying no good ideas.”

Joe corrected Rebecca, “It’s any good ideas.”

“I just wanna go somewhere. I’m bored.”

Kelly and Rebecca rose from the table, breakfasts finished and attention focused on persuading their father. A school bus drove by on its routine round-up of students.

“Come on Dad. Please.” Both were pleading and lightly tugging on his overcoat.

“We used to go all the time with mom.”

The pulling stopped, each girl backed away from their father, who was pressing his hands against the counter with his back to them. Joe closed the clasps of their lunchboxes, and spoke to the oak cabinets, “We’ll go on a day trip or something. Get your coats, we’re leaving soon.”

\*

8:12 pm. Veronica’s heavy steps contrasted the wailing. The clang of the elastic stopper, announced her presence. Holding onto the door, she loomed over the crib. Through the flickering the television screen, Veronica adjusted the blanket to cover the tangled mass of wriggling and wailing before closing the door. She changed into a pair of tight jeans, a revealing top, put on her heavy coat, grabbed her keys and license, left the television on, and walked out the door. Rather than wait for the bus, she walked across the street and followed Main Street until the warm doors of the bar near Walmart opened and offered her warmth and silence.

...

10:37 pm. Inside the ‘Corner Café’, situated conveniently at the corner of Main street and the end of the consumer market, the lit television screens flashed sports highlights from the day and provided the only strong light in the room. Every patron was at the bar besides the man at the pool table and Veronica and a young man who occupied a table by the window. Veronica teased the straw in her newly ordered strawberry margarita with her tongue. Two glasses containing overheating cubes of rose-colored ice were to her left. “Are you trying to get me drunk David?”

“Well, I was hoping you’d get drunk and take advantage of me.” Moving the drinks aside, she leaned over the table, allowing her breasts to rest and reveal, while kissing him. The fruit from her mouth combined with the cream from his white-Russian reminded Veronica of the Creamsicles from her childhood.

“That was nice,” he grabbed his drink and finished it.

Veronica licked the sugar from the rim of her glass. “You want to come over my place?” He nodded. She finished her drink and rattled the ice in her glass.

“We’ll take my car.” He quickly led her outside to his car. Veronica exhaled heavily, watching her breath dance and then disappear in the cold air.

Dave was holding out his keys to her, “Do you want to drive? I don’t like driving to places I don’t know at night.” “Nah, it’s not far and it’ll be worth it.” He unlocked the door and helped her in. As he walked over to the driver’s side, Veronica drank water from a discarded bottle on the floor and applied some lip balm. While the engine warmed, and the heat fought to produce warm air, Veronica kissed Dave and lightly bit his lip.

“Ow.”

“You don’t like it rough?” She smiled and Dave came in for another kiss, but she denied him.

“Take a left out of the bar onto Main. At the third light, after the school, take a left. It’s the first complex on the right.” Once out of the parking lot, Veronica rested her hand on his crotch. She massaged him through the jeans, using the friction of the fabric to make him erect.

She undid his belt, buckle, zipper, and held him in her hand, bent over and took him in her mouth. His moans and pelvic gesticulations monitored his enjoyment and established a pace for her to follow. Dave’s free hand rubbed her lower back and grabbed her ass mirroring the movements from his groin.

Veronica felt his joints stiffen and stopped, allowing him to calm down. “I want to save that for later,” she said, wiping the corners of her mouth. “Take a right here.” He parked the car, readjusted his clothes, and accompanied her toward the apartment.

\*

6:55 am. Joe parked close to the sidewalk directly in front of the entrance to the elementary/middle school. “Have a good day girls. Zip up your jackets.” Leaning into the back seat, he kissed each girl on the cheek and gave a quick smile. After good byes and the shuffling of heavy book-bags, he watched Kelly and Rebecca enter the doors that connected the middle

and elementary schools. Only when they were both safely in the building did he move so other parents could drop their kids off in the front of the school.

The office knew Heather had left and was under strict orders to notify him if she appeared. Joe nervously hoped that one morning, while Kelly and Rebecca walked into school, she would be there to greet them. They wanted their mother back and he wanted answers.

Parking in his assigned spot, Joe killed the engine and the rest of his coffee from the morning. He gathered the tools needed to survive the day, coffee mug, lunch consisting of two apples, ham sandwich on rye, and three chocolate-chip cookies, wrapped in a plastic Wonder bread bag, and the latest Steven King novel. He read during his breaks to avoid the conversations of the custodians who worked under him. He popped a piece of gum, chewed it five or seven times while putting on his gloves, and spit it onto the cracked, faded yellow line on the pavement while closing the door of the car. Stretching he turned toward the service entrance, vision clouded by his breath.

The wind cut his face and the short walk to the entrance made his eyes water. The door was slightly stuck because the brisk exterior air and the controlled interior heat battled for supremacy among the joints and insulation that surrounded the heavy metal door. Using all his weight, Joe pushed down, pulled on the handle, and the heat welcomed him, a dying act before exiting into the harsh conditions of a January morning.

\*

11:05 pm. In the glow of the blinking stoplights Dave and Veronica walked up the darkened cement stairs. Dave still grinned when they closed the door on the chilling night temperatures.

“That was amazing.”

“I’m glad you liked it. There’s more.” A low murmur of isolation and the television greeted her when she opened the door. Veronica hoped the child’s mumble was only audible because her ears were accustomed to listening for it. Grabbing him by the belt, she led him toward the closed, complaining door into the bedroom.

“I want you to fuck me.” He gave no verbal response, but lifted her shirt over her head and unhooked her bra. She removed his pants for the second time, while he cupped and grazed the sensitive surface of her swollen breasts.

He placed scattered kisses on her neck, until he eventually reached her left breast. His hot breath and lips were a welcoming touch from the hungry mouth that usually hung from her breasts. The desire to have them caressed rather than sustain life was overwhelmingly erotic and she felt the wave of an orgasm rush over her.

Returning to him, she lowered his pants, while he tried to remove his shoes. In his urgency, he kicked his foot and flung a shoe into the wall shared with the crib. The low muttering from the wall became an awakened scream. As the volume escalated, he deflated in her hands.

“What the fuck?”

\*

7:01 am. Missing from Joe’s usual entrance was the jovial chitchat of the other staff members while waiting for his daily tasks. Silence accompanied him to the break-room where Joe opened the refrigerator, moved the Pepsi bottle and the creamer to the side, placed his lunch behind them, and barricaded his food with the two misplaced liquids and a bottle of ketchup. He punched in and reached for the coffee pot. It was empty.

Joe always told himself that his underlings made coffee for him, to appease the god of their job. He knew this was untrue because just like him, they needed coffee to function, but he could always count on a filled, steaming pot of black coffee when he arrived. This was the first morning that he could remember without coffee. “Bastards.” Opening the cabinet in front of him, Joe found the filters and the Folgers original. While fumbling with the gold plastic cover he surveyed the break room for the first time. As his fingers searched for the scoop and measured out the proper amount of ground beans, he noticed the jackets thrown on the table with the corresponding employee’s lunch anchoring the various heavy jackets to the table. All of his employees knew that Joe was a strong advocate for neatness; their work represented him, and he didn’t allow sloppiness. His anger was rising but then he noticed the assigned mugs were still hanging over the sink, dry; they had not brewed coffee.

Footsteps approached the door. Frank, the overnight custodian, opened the door, red-faced and breathing-heavy. “Hey Joe. You...uh...gotta come with me.” Frank did not motion for Joe to follow, only turned and began striding away from the half-opened door.

\*

11:16 pm. Veronica didn’t want the intensity to end. She kept stroking him, helping to regain his lost erection. She quickened her pace.

“I’m sorry. Just ignore it.”

“Where is that...”

“It’s my baby. Come on, I want to...”

“Are you serious.” Dave focused on the adjacent wall, “I’m sorry. I can’t.” The screeches from the other room functioned as theme music as he raced to find his clothes and place them where they belonged on his body. Talking over the cries from the other room, Dave tried to understand, “Why did you bring...you left...thanks...I gotta leave.” He left. Veronica stood in the room, half-naked, and waited for him to come back; hoping he forgot something.

After hearing his car drive down the street, Veronica locked the door and slumped to the floor. Tears landed on her bare chest. The unattended cries continued, “Shut up!” A louder howl came from the room, as if in response or to compliment, “You ruin everything.”

Rising from the floor, Veronica went to the bedroom and dressed in warmer clothes. She put on her coat, gloves, and a scarf before walking into the closed room. Picking up the bundle of blankets, Veronica cradled the child against her insulated body.

Human contact calmed the baby and the shrieks became muffled sobs. Veronica tightly wrapped the blanket, grabbed her keys, turned off the television and the lights, and walked out the front door.

\*

7:07 am. Joe forgot the coffee and started after Frank. Even with a wind-beaten face, Joe could tell that Frank was upset about something. “What’s the problem Frank?”

Frank did not turn or respond. He continued at his purposeful pace leading Joe past the supplies and tools that constructed his job description, to the door leading to the dumpsters. Joe had placed a banner over the doors a couple of years ago in the hopes of enlightening some of his coworkers, “Only Throw Away What You Can Easily Replace.” Recently he had felt mocked by these words when passing beneath them. Frank held the door and pointed toward the open dumpster where three other custodians were congregating. The low murmur, slight head nods, and shuffling of feet was reminiscent of when younger, Joe would collaborate with friends to avoid punishment. All three turned and looked past him, hands covering their mouths.

“Gentlemen. Why are we...” Collectively they nodded toward the dumpster and Joe walked through them and the slight maze of trash bags, proving that they began to work, to reach the opened half of the large bin. Resting his hands on the steel lip of the bin, Joe peered into the mass of disposable education. Among the collage of waste, lying atop the heaps of black plastic, was a light pink, misshapen bundle.

\*

11:23 pm. Veronica saw the G-bus approach around the corner. She held the bundle tight to her chest, underneath her thick coat, to protect the young child from the cold. Rising from the bench inside the routine bus stop by the school, she approached the opening doors, smiled at the female driver, and scanned her commuter pass.

The bus was empty. Veronica sat down in the middle, zipped her coat down a little, and revealed the bundle she was protecting. Looking down on the rose-colored cheeks, Veronica brushed a couple pieces of hair from the child's face. The face that earlier expressed contempt, now symbolized peace with closed eyes and a slightly open mouth; Veronica was mesmerized by the silenced child. Then the eyes opened and matched her mother's stare.

The child blinked and twitched slightly, but steadily held her mother's eyes. Veronica avoided the glare by focusing on the darkness of her surroundings. She watched the passing of street signs and faded yellow lights of the bus's route. Before she had the child, she would regularly ride the buses late at night. She would pretend she was on a vacation, and reword street signs to make them unfamiliar, creating the illusion of a new setting, where she would meet interesting people who wanted to know about her.

The driver interrupted the memory of her nightly vacations.

"Darling, why are you out so late? And with a baby?" The woman was watching Veronica in the large mirror above her seat. Veronica smiled and hoped the driver would leave her alone.

"Having trouble sleeping?" Veronica nodded her head, looked down at the motionless face of her daughter, and to the back of the bus. Her attention focused on the helpline advertisement she frequently saw on public transportation. She figured that people who needed help, probably found themselves on public transportation more frequently than those that didn't. She was repeating the number at the bottom of the yellow sign.

"Girl or boy?"

"Girl."

"What's her name?"

"Gabriella."

"That's a beautiful name."

The street names were becoming familiar again. Knowing that she was close to home, Veronica stood and rang the bell to end her journey. As the bus rolled to a stop, the driver called to Veronica, "Care for another trip around? I could use the company and I think you could..."

Veronica stepped down the steel steps onto the black asphalt. She walked toward the entrance of the school where a pay phone rested. While attending the school, Veronica had used the pay phone regularly to call for a ride home from her grandmother. Walking into the open booth now, she wedged the receiver between her head and the child's while she dialed the number from the sign.

She let the phone ring once and hung up; she didn't need help. Walking around the back of the school, she remembered games of tag and four-square in between the parking spaces for the maintenance workers. The cry of her daughter reminded her why she was here.

Walking through the motion triggered light from the side of the newly built brick building, she entered the night beyond the yellow glow with outstretched arms, and became the darkness.

\*

7:12 am. Joe reached in and felt the cold comfort of tightly wrapped cotton. His fingers traced the folds while he lost his stability, fingers and hand shaking as he reached the top of the stiff fabric. Through the cloud of his hot breath, he gripped the loose flap of the knot, used for security, and unveiled the face of an infant.

His hand retracted and covered his mouth. He wanted to cover his eyes but couldn't pull himself away. Thin strands of blond hair trembled in the wind, offering no protection to the underdeveloped scalp. The skin was pale blue and stretched, resembling an elderly man with wrinkles and visible veins. Two paths of mucus lead from the nose to the slightly ajar mouth, twisted and taut, revealing graying gums, the pink faded from the repetition of unanswered cries. And the eyes. Joe traced the trail of frozen tears from the corners of the mouth, past the clogged nostrils, to the closed eyelids. Iced over. Joe was glad blank eyes were not staring at him, but he imagined the fear associated with unrequited pleas for help while frantically searching for guidance in frozen darkness.

Joe broke from his trance and placed the blanket over the face once more, protecting the young child from his obtrusive stare. With both hands, he cradled the solid body, lifted it out of the bin, and brought the cold weight against his chest.

“Joe. We didn't know...what should we do?”

“Who could?”

“Should we call...”

The intensity and urgency rose in their voices while Joe sank to the cool pavement and leaned against the dumpster. Resting his chin on the frozen bundle in his hands, Joe began to rock, trying to create heat through friction. “Call an

ambulance. I'll wait here." He spoke to the unresponsive lump in his arms, ignoring the men standing over him. "Maybe she'll come back."

\*

9:38 am. Inside the bus station, Veronica waited for the ticket person to arrive. She listened to the pointless conversation of the drivers coming through the supervisor's two-way radio on the counter. When the Greyhound sales representative arrived, 40 minutes late, Veronica formed an individual line.

Looking over her left shoulder, Veronica checked her bags. All three were still in the fortress design she left them in; she did not want to lose her seat close to the exit and the chance to be the first to choose her position for the ride.

The woman behind the counter seemed annoyed that her lateness was noticed and she wore her impatience. "You ready?" Veronica approached the glass screened counter. "Where and how many?" the woman's voice shot underneath the glass through the small dip in the counter.

"One ticket please," Veronica replied. "Anywhere in Florida. I hate the cold."

## Geoffrey Gatza

I had a major diva moment

As we change our food systems we need to recall all of our eggs

I am a secret Muslim and my soon-to-be-ex-husband confronted me, demanding that I agree to make a new reality TV show with him or he will release a number of sex tapes we made while we were together. I was dressed as a rabbit but I swear I am not a furry, it was just the heat of the moment. We were at a fancy dress ball, there was a murder of woman dressed as a newspaper and a man who happen to like rabbits.

Anything is a possible rumble of thunder

## Pete Seeger and Charles Olson walk into a Bar

On 8/27/10 10:08 AM, "Tom Clark" wrote:

Geoffrey,

Look forward to seeing the bound proof.

About Olson and Pete Seeger, they were both at Harvard and both dropped out around 1938. Both were then in New York and Washington. They travelled in the same political circles. The one incident that I know of is this. At an Almanac House dinner in Greenwich Village hosted by Seeger in 1941, Seeger introduced Olson to Woody Guthrie. Olson at the time was doing editorial work for the journal *Common Ground*. He asked Woody to write an article for that journal. Woody wrote a piece which had soon morphed into *Bound for Glory*.

Ok, cheers,

Tom

The bartender sez:

I want to be an engineer when I grow up, or a pirate captain  
A Fashion Barbie with townhouse and a bright blue car.

Me and Marilyn Monroe are similar in lots of ways

The details have just been revealed in Poets & Writers magazine

I am very, very flattered  
to be compared to the famous Marilyn

Thank you Hollywood!  
We are looking forward

I wish her the best in everything  
The world will be watching your hair fall out

And if we are bound for glory and none will survive  
Will you call the mayor of providence and ask him

If we cannot, truly, get to there from here?

## 20 titles for the Same Poem

1. Bullitt The Bulldog Watches TV
2. That's Dirty Canasta
3. It May Sound Like Devil Talk, But It Means Something.
4. The Wrong Ideals Won The 20th Century
5. Bagoosh
6. Forrest Gander Fever Goes Viral
7. Is This America Or Soviet Russia
8. It's Like Reagan In Eighty-Two
9. You Can Come Back If You Want
10. I Have A Phd In Comparative Poetics From Glenn Beck University
11. Let's Not Say Things We Cannot Take Back,
12. You Are Nothing But A Waitress In Disguise
13. The Wonders Of Fire
14. Nice Sork
15. Montage Cowboy In Midnights Showcasing
16. To The Target Cashier Who Was Rude To Me
17. Middle Class Protest
18. Police Pronounce Live Woman Dead
19. The Crime Was Making News
20. I Hope This Hopes

Thank you for your time

It is the rainbow time we squander  
together that glints everything memories

To forget for minutes the string tied  
to the floating reality above our balloon

He stood boldly in between the slat house  
and the bulldozer

The slats show through the cracked plaster  
risk brown wood rots, the grass grows tall

The story of the cranberry unfolds on your hat

Brimming human forgetfulness points towards history

We demolish so much of our selves, our buildings

This ice cream cone symbolizes  
so much more than the freedom  
felt in backseats of cars, it is the fear

experienced by millions of cows frozen  
from being alone, trapped in a dark box;  
served with a simile and colored sprinkles

Get your Yankee feet off of my property

I have taken full responsibility for the oil spill  
I will make this right. My family tree lit up.

In Virginia we revere David Hasselhoff

A postmortem examination  
will be held this morning.  
No arrests have been made.

We will have the governors chair in our camp.  
For nearly two decades we have been fighting  
for peoples rights. Stop using dirty catheters.

The only thing left to decide is who drives this home  
You are reading Geoffrey Gatza right here in a book

**George McKim**

bouquet of cubist raindrops

i fell asleep  
in the tidal pools  
of your breathing, where

like a bouquet of cubist raindrops  
or a violent slur of cerulean  
in a reckless soutine landscape,

a bloom of phosphorescence  
shimmers in the falsetto  
of our electric skin.

if i were a bird, or  
with metallic voices  
or cascading sounds

or inside my broken eyelids  
or in a slow architecture of twigs  
or an awkward swirl of chimes

on easter island  
we were glyphs, archetypal  
no,  
we were paul klee  
on stilts

henry 7. reneau, jr.

salvage

**salvage** /sálvij/ • *n.* 1 rescue of property, from the sea, fire, etc.

**3b v.tr.** save from a wreck, fire, adverse circumstances, etc.

salvage:

a ghost of a man inna cardboard box,  
fetus-posed, lookin' like hell sued for murder,  
emptied Thunderbird inna' crumpled paper sack—

a victory of the echo over the voice,  
they show you what you aren't,  
then show you what you're supposed to be,

a punishment made real  
by a drought of unattained dreams & foreclosure  
on one more last chance

salvage:

the slow erosion of attributes  
& skills,  
abandoning life to a monotonous irony  
that becomes morbid to the recycled—

reborn with prior knowledge of self  
is the truth that lies at the nexus of the myth of hell,  
there is no serendipity in reclamation,

(what they say when you are lost is how you are found)

a frozen wail of righteous heresy,  
distended air-sandwich belly heaving  
one last “fuck-you-God!”

salvage:  
burning and burial  
that collapses everything  
into memory,  
something destroyed, abandoned  
or cast aside,  
holding on till help come along

as in, he tried to salvage their marriage  
see what i mean?  
or, she tried to salvage her relationship with her estranged daughter  
that highlights the inadequacy of “i’m sorry”

salvage:  
rejected hearts shattered  
into pieces too onerous to curl up  
and die

(broken by betrayal into spiteful conniption fits)

salvage:  
as in, an addiction,  
a desperate repetition of previous failure,  
with purpose

salvage:  
resuscitate,

as in, petro-remes of plastic twisted into kilo-tons of strangle

not unlike a surgical, military strike, a boom-boom-booming  
that leaves whoever suffered, or died, a mystery gilded in euphemism

salvage:  
recycled for the eye of the beholder  
as in, front page news:  
“BP Engineers Prepare For Next Bid to Stop Oil Flow”



## dissent relegated to the annals of history

society lives an arm's-length between us  
forged wrathful as counterfeit  
despite politic mumblings  
of cogs parroting

false platitudes  
like long-distance machine-tooled force  
making them round, notched & oily  
like the artificial, rouged ember of a whore

willing to do anything to tell the world everything  
like the end of a cigarette burning against the night

will produce a sense of violence  
like a loaded nine millimeter  
& the tenacity of bullets

an incremental thunder to a full stop  
while there are only two or three human stories  
to dissipate shadows about words & illuminate silence

i know something ugly is coming  
an indifference like a machine that mimics silence  
& unspoken slights  
where stars make outside brighter  
than without  
voice

## show-stopping acts of ego upon a malleable persona

she lets us see what she wants us to see

(passion-red mini-dress & blood-red pumps, plum-breasted nymph illustrated sparingly with vine-sheathed roses & flaming hearts wreathed in ribbons)

she be pliable container of all she wishes to be as her blatant pulchritude promotes solitary fantasies of beauty into the world & public façade that are never one & the same despite demanding stances of petulance abetted by compulsive histrionics, pouting acquiescence & florid, flamboyant displays of equality—one shot chilla’—even when they’re not trying hard

(demur eyes of sun-speckled gold, close-lidded with desire, rouged lips parted in lustful anticipation)

a symmetry despite its arbitrariness that terrorizes with the familiar beauty of longing, as in a surgeon scoring compliant flesh exposing the intricacy of temptation & lust, suspending disbelief for our entertainment & amazement into wide-eyed aahhhh’s & oohhhh’s . . . & dammmn!!

(watch out what that playa say, the mouth ain’t sayin’ what the hands they doin’ that voodoo they be doin’)

a theatrical flourish of satin cape, a neo-Victorian bow assuming the proper pretensions of blue-blood entitlement & a sly & charismatic tip of the hat, grounded in superior ability & station, as startled doves prestidigitate from thin air, flung skyward as beguiled eyes follow exploded ascent, disappeared into alternate dimensions of befuddlement . . . going-went-gone

(look! . . . up in the sky)

. . . to reappear as a rain of rose petals cascading from mid-air, a rapture serenaded by monarch butterflies unveiling seductively from a discarded cocoon of red silk & sensuous renewal, fluttering languidly to a spit-shine polished hardwood floor that reflects a final impalement of the barbed hook into our moment of wonder & awe, an illuminated & endearing premeditation choreographed effortlessly through three stages of foreplay, to the creation of the illusion—she holds us in the palm of her hand . . . reined firmly, our heart racing with the adrenalin of anxious anticipation, head thrown back as a telegraphed pulse of stimulation explodes, arching from our heart to cascading orgasm that becomes an uninhibited spiraling into erotic submission as the surgeon replaces the restraining tautness of halter & bit with the spur . . . & well-placed whip

## Howie Good

### **PILOTS CALLED THEM FLYING COFFINS**

His heart started going like an antiaircraft gun, a spy caught leaving coded messages. Dusk seemed to fall by 2 p.m. Reporters interviewed mothers with dead children in their arms. The wind from the heights acquired a touch of red. Taxis ran on charcoal gas. Look out the window, the caller said, summer is over.

## **NOW THAT THE BUFFALO ARE GONE**

We were fighting the Indians in Florida. You said a joke without a punchline isn't a real joke. Why I always carry an arrowhead in my pocket, I said. Children passed over the hill, a coffin covered with wildflowers, but Thoreau only came out when there was a fire downtown. The tall ships of the China trade returned empty. It was a sign of something, like a face shaded by a wide hat.

## **REMEMBER THE ALAMO**

The farts of a hopped-up Mustang echo down the street. Sam Houston could use a shot of mescal right about now. His hand trembles like a courier with urgent news. He doesn't wish to discuss anymore the imposed simplicity of his early work. Agents in belted raincoats watch the border from nearby doorways. Although the sun is out, the nine-spotted ladybug crosses undetected.

Ivan Jenson

Men's Club

nothing worse  
than a dive  
without a dame  
just  
cigars  
in ash trays  
scowling  
mugs drinking  
mugs of beer  
the grunt of football  
on the flat screen  
and not  
even a busty  
waitress  
in sight  
a slow fan  
twirls above  
someone  
swats a  
fly off their  
shoulder  
brooding  
five o'clock shadows  
and  
the scent of  
liquor the closest  
thing to perfume  
in the air  
no not a single  
set of

heels  
clip clop  
into the joint  
you could  
cut the lack  
of tension  
between  
the sexes  
with  
a knife  
women  
maybe  
you can't live  
with em'  
but it's  
a shame  
to drink  
without em'

## Colorful advice

when  
you walk  
on a blue  
brick road  
because  
you are in  
that  
moody  
red zone  
filled with  
a sinking  
pink feeling  
then grab  
green  
energy  
and  
soak  
up as much  
yellow from  
the sun  
as you can  
and  
try not  
to stand  
under  
raining gray  
and then grab  
white chalk  
and draw  
a simple smile  
on midnight's  
blackboard

Cry over it

spilled  
silk  
that is  
what lost  
love is  
like when  
someone  
becomes  
the rotten  
apple  
of your  
eye  
like when  
those  
sweet  
things  
that were  
said  
cause  
truth decay  
and when  
the baby talk  
grows up  
and says  
“We’ve got  
to talk.”  
well then  
you’ve got  
dried flowers  
on your hands  
and your wine stained  
sheets  
are ready  
for Mr. Clean

**Ian Miller**

Mouth of Ice

Trees darken the field beyond my window,  
Candles cackle in mason jars, wax breathing,

Wicks drowning, and today on the phone Jason  
Says we should be more than who we are.

Thinking of my friend, I see a polar bear swimming  
In a deep blue mouth of ice, paws wet as white grass,

Fluttering, jaw to the sky—tongue, teeth,  
Black eyes. The bear must be blinded

To see the sun blink out the earth  
In rays of fire, ice, light and light.

## Incarnate

Maybe, in the next one, I'll come back  
As a slave or the spine of a book, white  
Lettering against the thumb of a woman  
In an airport on her way to Houston  
For a conference on the matrix of money  
And buildings and highways against  
Yellow coastlines. From her thumb,  
I'll be able to read the way she had been  
A slave, too, before waking up as a shell  
Placed into a cannon and then launched  
Upwards, arching, sailing in the gray  
Artillery air of a morning in Russia, 1942,  
Before slamming down in a plume of rock  
And earth and metal.

Such a diminutive existence save the flight  
Which, she had to admit, was gorgeous  
Even in the cold and terrible falling, and now  
In the bone and cloth and blood, laced  
With soil and snow, under the sky, having  
Buried or made amputees out of 46 men (not  
Her fault), could she wonder:

*Now what?*

## Accidents

Like leaves I see outside

The window of my memory,

Old cars I drove into the ground

Or gave to my brother,

The ones he sent into trees,

Highway dividers, sweeping under semis,

Each time escaping,

With smoke rising from his body,

Holy, in a forest of fire.

**Jeff Arnett**

Love Scales

I never told you this  
but I am asking you  
never to repeat  
what I have never told you.

This is what I am  
asking you  
never to repeat  
what I will never  
tell you  
love  
I am asking you  
never to love

what I will  
never tell you  
I repeat  
love  
never ask  
what I am  
never  
telling you  
love  
never  
repeat  
love  
repeat

## Manhood of Sky

My hands are older  
than my eyes  
yet I am the same man  
I was yesterday.  
Begging clues of the sky.  
Gravely robbing passersby.  
Like all men.  
performing tricks  
for perfect strangers.

Ah, you say, show me.  
Show me.  
Stand back, I say.  
Give my wild eyes  
all the affection you can.  
They are ravenous,  
starving with hope.

Sit still, you say.  
Look at your hands  
how they caress the sky  
searching for a psalm  
to sing.

## At Play in the Fields of the Lord

*Poetry is finding the Great Dance.*

In the church of the open fields  
the church of bare feet and no altars,  
sways the chorus of old mothers  
their hair braided with laughter

You know who were there  
those holy chords  
you could not quite sound  
but you could dance  
the old steps memorized  
in the earth  
ordained by the sun

And you want to squeeze  
God's toes but  
they are moving too fast.  
Yes, they are big toes  
nimble toes  
dancing toes  
in the church of the open fields  
God's dancing toes.

## House Calls

1.

Winter is my houseguest.  
The old pipes groan your name.  
The furniture glares at me as I dust.  
In the pale sunlight on our bed  
your hips left an indented smile.  
In the spite of evening  
I turn on all the lights  
and call you names  
none of them yours.  
I do what I can to keep warm.

2.

At night our bed drawls a slow breath.  
The mirror cackles in the moonlight.  
Even the walls are restless  
especially when they think I am sleeping.  
I hear them riffle the bedside bible.  
Wrinkle my only suit.  
Fondle time.  
How do you do it  
from so far away?

## Leaving

A delicate rain of leaves  
falls slowly from the trees.  
I cannot feel it though  
because I have to go.

She cuts my heart from my chest,  
“Is this our little child,  
is this our little child,” she cries,  
but god never sighs on earth.

She tells me, “Tie us with your  
arms and bind me to your chest.”

Should I leave?

“Tie with your kisses  
the side of my brain  
that commands my heart.”

Must I leave?

“Tie each day  
to the following day  
and in between these days  
roll some loving caresses  
for me to smoke  
inside your skin.”

I leave.

Behind me  
my future  
and what else?

## Julie Finch

### The alcoholic

Her outlook wasn't cheery  
She saw Moments as pistols  
Fully loaded and cocked  
Hair trigger ready to wipe out  
Everything that had gone before  
("I don't trust Joy; I keep expecting it  
to throw me from the car.")  
Days were war  
The quiet ones were the worst  
Dark furies gathering in the Godforsaken lull  
She'd read it in a short story once  
How did it go?  
"Life is the time during which terrible things  
Can happen."  
Wouldn't you know  
She died in her sleep,  
During peace time.

## Coffee girl

If you have to endure great tragedy to be a great poet  
I'll work at Starbucks instead.  
I'll serve lattes to the truly brave,  
The ones who come in just after dawn with their laptops and scribblings,  
Who keep their heads down and write while I clean.  
I'll grind beans while they turn tears into emeralds;  
I'll make steam for cappuccino and restock the syrup  
As they dutifully trace the arc of their sadness  
From whence it came to the awaiting page.  
I'll hand out coupons, I'll change the cd in the cd machine.  
Greatness isn't something you can bargain for, not like an extra shot of espresso  
Or a free slice of the lemon pound cake, I know  
But for my money I'll take my life with its coffee dusted chinos and freshly  
Starched black polo shirt, and I'll gladly refill your cup any time you ask  
I'll even buy your book when at last you're a success  
But I do not want the shadows if the shadows are part of the deal  
Minor shadows, maybe  
But big shadows, no thanks  
I'll stay within the ranks of my class, the working class  
I'll scrub the toilets till they shine  
I'll refill the half and half, the sugars, the cocoa, the stirrers  
I'll perform any task that doesn't require the vast bravery of the ones who come  
In at dawn and seem so bereft  
And that is bravery---  
Accepting the terms, whatever the cost  
I'm a Sumatra scented chicken, and I know it

But if you have to endure great tragedy to be a great poet  
I don't want it  
I worry too much about the ones I love  
I want them safe,  
Safer than words.

## Jennifer Houston

### Boy named Dog

The Monsters sleep shoulder to shoulder on the couch reeking of piss and vomit. The boy crouches on all fours, and sniffs the air in front of them.

He nudges the skinny one with a plastic fork.

She jumps with a start, like a Jack- in- the box.

The other monster with the tattoo of a red and blue fire breathing dragon running up his emaciated arm, he thinks might be dead.

The boy nudges the skinny one again with the plastic fork; this time a little harder. He wants to draw blood. This time her eyes spring open. She curls her lips, blacken teeth emerge. Claws with chipped red tips drag him out the front door.

Her pocked marked face spits at him. Her croaked nose drips snot. She kicks him hard in the shin. He yelps like a dog, and curls up with his head tucked in between his knees: one day he will bite her.

Monsters are real.

\*\*

He is forgotten on the hillside chained to oak tree by his waist.

He is sold to the neighbor.

The boy stops talking.

At night he dreams of dogs, packs of them coming to his rescue. He often wonders: if he dreamt of dogs did dogs' dream of boys?

The neighbor is gone.

The one that comes does not growl or bite at him, or reek of vomit and cheap booze, like the monster that had bore him.

The mangy dog with almond eyes was abandoned, like him, by monsters that snorted and breathed fire. Monsters that slept during the day, and hunted at night, and fled when found out. One day the boy will hunt these monsters down and destroy them just the way the good guys in his comic books do with their guns and knives. The first will be the monster who bore him, and the second will be, the one who seeded him.

The neighbor he will let live.

The boy will make him crawl on all fours being whipped like all bad monsters should be. And then with his pack of dogs he will search out the others.

Slowly they will die, feeling the pain as he did when the neighbor made him suck at his prick as if it was a pacifier.

\*\*\*\*

## Jason Joyce

### Retired Teenage Sleuths

Beach blanket  
seagull eyes  
Bible verse on the marquee  
I'm speaking of my insides

branches  
parting panels  
in basement walls  
with uncreative determination

Your parents with their Cosby Show humor

I explore  
thinking thoughts of me

washing machine button clack  
poorly wired table lamp

guided by to-do lists  
and checklists  
written on  
floral pattern notepads  
with a bank logo  
smeared cross the top, we are  
desecrated by design

My intentioned hand  
poor in practice,  
a kick drum pulse,  
**concentrate** on the color scheme  
same as the uncertain certainty  
my possessions  
will arrive at baggage claim,  
Father, Son, Flight attendant

Lattice pattern veins  
backs of knees  
like the Guadalupe candles in the Mexican food aisle,  
let hope climb

Come, let us take our flashlights  
and go searching  
for more comfortable clothes

## Taxidermist

Mothballs in a candy dish  
keep the spiders away  
a candy sacrament  
atop the mantle made  
by my father's father's friend,  
chastened porcelain figurines  
cascading from the balcony  
tiny teeth cracking against cavern  
car stalagmites, parking lot priests  
wielding holy spirit

My grandmother blamed her farts on  
tiny frogs that my brother and I could never seem to find,  
my grandfather, mud in his throat, a brash  
crocodile atop a tweed chair,  
we had afternoon snacks of Pringles and language,

tiny miners searching for the ghosts the  
dirty earth holds, arrowheads and prehistoric bones  
churned up in the process

dark dust streaks blanket your  
face, worn like war paint, supernatural wisps, worker  
bee static fuzz, feathers  
finger bones and soil making your hair  
a mess, lessons learned one  
year at summer camp, and now it becomes:  
leave a light on when we  
go out for the evening

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century house, an  
Indian burial ground with  
premeditated plastic slip covers,  
piano lessons with your great aunt  
in what she called the grand living room,  
cobwebbed chandeliers that belonged to presidents cut down quickly  
by assassins,  
to this day you remember

that the color of the bench was dusty plum, nearly the color  
of the jelly you brought in sack lunches,

for sale: barely used bicycle and bedroom set,  
the living room has been swallowed by a forest,  
vines and veins and drapes, the timbre of the trees

## Bougainvillea

Meadowlark lemon-esque hinged to a doorframe  
one lizard leg caught in the fence, a print of a woman in her  
bathing suit covered up by a sundress, wilt

Run and gun, rummage sales at abandoned car lots,  
there must be something of value here, we've been in  
this house for a thousand years, movie stubs in  
a mason jar kept on the floor, hieroglyphics

The band is on the field, actors calling  
in sick, ceramic bells commissioned to tinkle  
before hurricanes, somehow no picture will  
capture the feel of a field before a summer storm,  
and what we look like naked never gets old

## Tumble

My friend dreams quite frequently  
about his teeth falling out,  
he also has a crush on a barista  
from the Daily Grind Coffee House  
who has a swallow tattoo  
on her right foot  
and a birdcage with an open door  
on her left foot,  
this is so indie of her,

But I say, Jeff  
you can't fill a cage with teeth

Except, with modern birdcages you probably can,  
these cages are so square and bland and (plastic)  
reminiscent of the  
Payless Shoes' box my brother and  
I pecked holes in with  
a pencil  
to carry the robin with a broken limb  
to the vet,

we found it in the backyard hanging from a  
slat in the fence  
like an oil rag not worthy of  
the clothesline

Startled by every shrill  
and tumble from the box,  
placed as far to one side of  
the backseat as possible

And to think  
throwing the creature in  
the trash ourselves  
would've saved so much time

There are tiny birds now  
with scissor teeth  
snipping red ribbons  
hopping about,  
sitting on the tile counter and  
mosaic tables (they were purchased to create  
atmosphere and ambience)

Jeff believes my story is irrelevant  
to people who grew up in large  
cities as there are no backyards there,

I agree to this but wonder  
who to contact so that  
when we die  
our bones can be  
recycled like trees, turned into  
something useful like coffee cup sleeves

or life jackets

For now though  
I'm preoccupied,  
what they have done  
with the wall hangings and  
color schemes in  
here is just golden

## James Mc Laughlin

1

if apse profers to the elective light of beam that which infers appeal  
in awning like the shifting and approximate texture of release/  
supplication of form and colour transmits through the sound  
of stream water the addressing of humble come sincere appeal  
with the air powered prayer of wings and requested entreaty  
of birds a remorse ripple converts into stark shimmer on the breeze hints  
at the way each tree and branch has discloser a tissue and layer  
become acquaintance ran over flesh and memory not rough  
not smooth just nothing but being and taken leaves lie in ornate  
and salutary bundles waiting for the wind a pillow of gauze  
and green and rust eel black underneath dank forgotten almost  
warm something a fork might love into and release rebirth  
beetle slug micro organism so minute not to be felt as  
flakes become crunch or powder rubbed into the flow that scent  
familiar to earth and field wrapped in a misgiving and woven  
going as the opening up of petal and bud now like pollen or  
honey each colour more fantastic at being new and fresh  
seen only once which overspreads glances in expectation  
a yellow a pink red a new aquatic green full of life almost  
shouting to the world bouncing on each branch and flower

the inflorescence of grasses protruding exact the dense and  
inconspicuous gem of green there are no sepals or petals  
in the usual sense a magnolia flicker becomes contrite to angle  
that disturbs the sensual imagining of rolling and dip  
released folded under a hair twirled in forefinger  
reproductive organs remain tight in feathery stigmas that  
catch the late summer light and sway silver and ultramarine  
come aqua blue leanings of suckle the fluctuating flowers of  
grasses are tiny clustered with ugly neighbours they remain stoic  
ovule and ovary beaver pelt hook fasten and flick in the wind  
deep green in the centre amethyst to overcome bluish yield  
grasses are not pollinated by bees but by the wind feathery stigmas  
protrude outside the bracts and trap the wind-carried pollen the  
pollen grains are very light and smooth and can be blown for long distances  
ligatures cluster with doc sinew and smell occasioning a  
sun burst of dandelion each a surprise of beauty yet ugly

porphyrous a leek-green might eventually constitute blue  
white to tip is cut from foam / offers vibration to stalk  
in quiver gestation a prelude to certainty to the angle of cap  
originally wet palisade and bend just below wing crisp and turn  
each blade on the underside to taper the bluish grey shifts  
mottle sift and smooth as round flesh holding up cool  
cheek over cheek blue particles and smoke exudation plume  
grey to deep grey scale fished black gray and paper torn blue  
coming to pink out and stipple sanitized infers does interface  
of thought just lend new and contact lime cones illuminated  
coming as tissue meld and fingers guises or releases dew  
through pores or a surface cut resin sweat to tongue toning  
and blue again and again to the pale of upper greying fibre converts  
to sediment released as mundane vertigoed slash/crimson  
offering in lower branch and crowded torque if retakes of  
the air just as horizontal goads then the forest light electric  
dismantles and re-affirms colour flecks and bolsters a lingering  
and movement obtuses shifts to a lack of other inclines  
infringements of highlight on lowlight every aspect mediates  
a cold under drip clods of rectitude that come at once

goes narrowing to form eye line the ingenerate skin  
of hair a moulded or illuminate leaf and sky a blue  
is a tree bark olivine or aqueous rip texture a  
knotted gray eye winking/ wrinkle and scale landscape  
rustling slate gray intent cluster crack red warm  
bluish harlequin green a tribune of dry gone  
tongue licked flake wings come rock on rock/ rockish  
grain surface glass dot red and itch smell and white  
spore partiality to branch and root churl tiny  
pursed green lips rubbed in oil paint gnarl  
elephantine a knowing pupil tusk suck chewed stick  
hollow an ear holly tendon plastic greening  
lung veins and x-ray smeared eye folded whisker  
muse tickly forest free sliding and comfort  
bell bang a calling a mirror peacock eye feather -  
a blue of turquoise and pastel as air is warm delicate  
needs and alive love to oak touch solid heavy  
smooth palm knife a leg muscle erect unyielding  
slip and boat saw jack putty knife and linseed  
trees red loved pink washed buds and sun white pulse

a liquifacient pink of fold pink through lipothymy come ruffle  
contorted - a bunch if fist a knuckle bruise swollen  
contain in savour of juice pink up swirl whip and electric  
gloss cherrying when apple rub come red elastic  
mind whistle blow pink thrush throat that bobs along to  
a sleet pink and asking then copper meld russet giving  
rust pink to green mauve feel pink as air pink as pink as edges and  
eye soak eye and flesh cut pinky salmon cells and grain  
steel pink pill pink lip pink nail varnish smell pink candy  
cellulose and close the lapsing and branch bounce  
terrier coat pink and smiling laughing each petal  
a perfect pink from deep to white pink folds almost  
red each leaf outlined pink each vein something Verdi  
overlap of twist release close bunch some dark stamen  
like snake tongues or caterpillar eye stalked pink  
looking in the centre green and yellow sun claps  
stems of the opening and rejoiced pink and tip pink  
laughing a vaginal pink neurotransmitting confusion pink  
silkience warble pink oyster shell bulb bubble bubble gum  
pink everywhere pink flying pink falling pink rolling fleeing  
swirling rushing scratching tumbling sliding scattering  
sacks of pink emptied on the wind a road side explosion pink

just as the frame root can never be anything vertical the  
inclination is always somewhere else through the trees  
on the various patterns on the hillside valley ochre and red  
become so familiar and you wonder at roots and tiny ligatures  
there is no horizon in the forest only an axe light of sun  
white glinting off of holly that should have died but didn't  
all I see is an infra red on the edge of things in outlines  
it pulls the cells out and takes them back to inclination times  
the video does that freeze thing in time and its quiet  
so quiet that you can hear tyre noise and bus engines  
you might put your ear to the ground and listen to the dust  
perhaps lick the swollen tar and hope that you might connect  
or just lie back in the empty wood and wonder who might  
find you lying there waiting naked with a tissue in your hand

**Julia Anjard Maher**

Nex's Language Lesson

*"Wearing a little Mao suit never hurt anyone."*

All I speak american these days anyways,  
my zeds all zzzzs, my ds ts and vis à vis  
i-n-g, an in.

Advice? Just wrap your tip around a trill  
and squeeze it flat.

The slant still give you away?  
The backyard blast?  
Let it. We're melting pans,  
pots, lamp posts. Anything iron or steel.

Best seen in October

“I wanna put you up,”  
smiling put teeth in his eyes,

“on a pedestal.” He told me in the patch, as blackberries bit  
my fingers, lips.

Instead, he built me a tree house—  
three stories and a roof through to the stars.

As ‘Night shuddered and unfurled, Nex Tanuthin’ slithered out  
from under my bed, through the back and into the garden.

He left a pattern of pressing in the grass.

Me(\*)rope

*“He always was rolling up that rock. I told him so, but he just couldn’t stop.”*

There’s both a trope and a poem in it.  
Depending on the t, you see  
Artemis insists it be  
added in there, likes the feeling of her tongue  
pressed up against the back of her top teeth,  
her lips pulled in a snarl  
to spit the consonant out.

Titan, leave out the rope.

## Jordan Martich

### Discovery, Not Destination, Gives Meaning to Life

“No mom, I don’t; I will NEVER buy a fucking gun. Okay?” I hate these conversations.

“But honey I just can’t sleep at night knowing how vulnerable you are. Aren’t you scared?”

“Scared of what? The real world? Of course I am, it’s a dangerous fucking place. But that’s not gonna draw me into the system perpetuating the violence.” I do not know what I am talking about. It is four in the morning in Seattle, where I have just set foot. Upon finding the nearest all-night diner, I sat down and placed a call to my mother, knowing that she would be waking up for work.

“But why Seattle? I thought you said you wanted to be someplace warm; it rains there all of the time sweetie.”

“It’s not raining now, and I don’t really know why I’m here. I guess I’m looking for something... like always.” I have not slept in what seems like a week except for short little bursts in a series of strange backseats. Hitchhiking may be illegal, but god damn is it easy.

The waitress is nice enough to refill my coffee cup for a fifth time and I smile graciously. If it weren’t for me, this entire diner could fit into the 1950’s perfectly. She’s got a vintage looking polka-dot waitress uniform and the same blank white apron that covers the torso of so many of those employed in the food service industry. The booth I am sitting in, and those throughout the room are made out of that glittery red vinyl that for some reason reminds me of what Elvis Presley means. Sitting across from me is my backpack filled with clothing, minimal supplies of food and first aid, a roll of duct tape and my phone charger.

“How long is this going on for? You know, I miss you like crazy. And it’s starting to seem like you just don’t want to be with your family ever again...”

“Mom, you know that’s not true. There are just things I want to see. I NEED this trip more than you know... It’s not that I don’t miss you guys too. I do”, but right now I have to keep searching. I am so very tired. I want to break down. I want to beg her to buy me a ticket on the next plane home; and she would. I want to fall asleep in the 1950’s and wake up at home, in that queen-sized bed.

Even at home though, there would be that longing. I could never be alone, always awake and drowning in the despair. In the daylight hours finding a companion is easy enough, but when the sun goes down and the night sets in most of my friends are yearning for sleep. At least out here in the unknown I have no one to rely on, and so must keep my wits and charm about me to woo the friendliness of strangers. It is a complicated game to play, but the rules keep my head busy. The waitress has come back with a large ceramic plate in her hands. On top is a grilled cheese sandwich and French fries. She sets it down and smiles at the excited look on my face. I try to explain that the coffee is enough and that I really don’t have money for much more than that but she waves me off and walks away.

“Just hurry it up I guess. I really never wanted you to leave; you know that right?” she whispers, wanting me to assure her that the intentions surrounding my departure were in no way ill-natured.

“Of course I know ma. Just... after everything that happened, this is where I have to be. Well, not *here* but away. Someplace new. I just need the excitement back, if only for a little while.” She sounds so lonely over the phone. I can see her, lying back in that worn blue recliner with the TV muted. She doesn’t want to wake my younger brother, fast asleep up stairs.

After a long silence we say goodbye and hang-up. I stand up and wave my pack of cigarettes so that the waitress, seemingly bored with her magazine, can see that I’m going to be back after this smoke. She decides to join me.

“So, where are you from?” she asks me politely, but I can see the dull glaze in her eyes. I hand her a cigarette and she lets me light it for her.

“I’m from Indiana. How about you?” and I light my own.

“Uda. And I’m from here I guess. I grew up in the city.”

“That’s great. It’s really nice of you to let me hang out here for so long. I promise it won’t be much more,” my eyes scan the nearest street corner for signs of life.

“Not a problem. What exactly are you waiting for sweetie?” she is maybe 28 years old and she calls me sweetie.

“I’ve got some friends who go to school here. I’m not sure what the place is called. I figure I’ll call them in an hour or so and get directions to the dorms or whatever. They know that I’m coming, I just got here a little earlier than I thought I would.”

“How long was the drive?”

“Somewhere around three weeks. I don’t have a car so I’ve been sort of hitchhiking,” I look down at my feet, expecting to feel shame. Looking up, I find that she is holding my body still with these huge doe eyes. I don’t know how I didn’t notice them before, or the tattoos seeping out from under her shirt sleeves and peeking out into what little cleavage her work uniform allows. We go on like this for a while, with her staring at me, until I take a drag and-

“Come and stay with me,” and she really said it just like that. I was confused because not many people make that kind of connection to a stranger this fast. I start to shake my head and-

“I’m off in ten minutes. You can get some sleep on my couch. Just give me a story or two,” she is determined. I have never been stupid enough to deny anything so miniscule to someone so determined. I assure myself that she really means this.

“Thanks? I’d be glad to!”

Those enormous eyes swell with excitement, “Let me go finish rolling some silverware and we can go.”

She rushes inside and then back out because she forgot about the cigarette in her hand. I laugh and smoke them both at once, finding the pure buzz I’ve needed.

In less than ten minutes we are walking swiftly down the sidewalks, taking left turns towards her apartment. She has my hand gripped tightly within her own and I can feel my skin absorbing her thick sweat like a sponge. At a little after five in the morning, people have begun forcing themselves into their cars, or their shoes, or their jobs. They are exhausted and I am exhausted and, no matter who you are, the spinning that this planet does can make you dizzy and tired.

- - -  
Uda lives on the fifth floor of a quaint looking local coffee shop on the east side of the city and the air is thin and sweet in her living room. There are paintings on the walls all done in the same style, with splotches of paint fighting one another for space on the canvas. I try to connect some of the paint stains on the floorboards to the artwork on the walls as she takes a “quick shower”. Having spent all of the time I’ve ever gotten in any shower ever in a deep pseudo-meditational state of being, I honestly have no idea how long she could take.

She let me know that she has one roommate who is never at home. I do my best to guess at which CD's, movies, and artwork are hers but find that I cannot. There is incense burning on the table before me and it smells something like a bong shop.

“Are you hungry?” She is out of the shower, already dressed and brushing her wet hair as she begins making breakfast.

“No, thanks. You gave me that grilled cheese, remember?”

“But that was nothing. You didn't even finish it. Do you like eggs?”

“Yeah sure, scrambled if you have to,” I can tell that she won't let it go.

I walk into the kitchen to help wherever I can, but she has it all under control. She smiles at me as she pushes maybe a dozen eggs around in an enormous frying pan.

“So what was in Indiana... I mean what made you come out here?” She tries to hide the curiosity, but I can tell that she wants something to believe in.

“I had to get out. You know before the whole mortgage, kids, cubicle thing happened,” there is no meaning in my voice. I replay it in my head and it just sounds inconsiderate.

“That's not it. It would be a good reason but you're too young for that,” she knows already.

I take a pause, not wanting to make this any more dramatic than it needs to be. I have no need for sympathy, no practical use for it. I want to be rid of this scar, a blank piece of canvas ready to be drawn on by strangers.

“My best friend killed himself so I packed up and left on a meaningless trip with no direction just like we had always planned... only it's not how we planned because I am alone and I still don't know why,” and in my voice there is so much smoke, resentment for having to explain my behavior at all.

She continues to stir the eggs around with her back to me. There is bright sunlight coming in through the kitchen window. I look at my skin and there is a visible layer of filth built up.

“Well...” and that's all she said. I can't even grasp a feel for the tone she used. She dishes out the eggs onto two plates and I take mine quietly, whispering my thanks. She takes hers into the other room with the table and the incense so I follow.

I finish eating and get up to wash my dish and she says, “I don't know what to say to that. I know that nothing I say will help... but if you want to take a shower, you're welcome to it.”

Hearing her say it out loud brings my spirit back up. It's not like I hadn't thought about Cameron's death every day since, but hearing someone let it go so easily was soothing.

"Thanks. Can I use these towels?" I point to a stack by the bathroom door.

"Yep that's fine... I want a nicer story when you get out."

I chuckle, "I guess I'll work one up," and the rinse feels like redemption.

**John Raffetto**

CHRISTMAS ON THE BORDER

Barbed-wire wreaths twist into  
crushed sandstone.  
Pre-fab pink tacos  
poked at by sharp forks  
turn to dust on plastic plates.  
Patrol pistols fire into soft mangers  
which ascend into heaven.  
Florescent coffee on Spanish napkins  
stained by mesquite thorns  
burns in a bajada  
extinguished by pages of coyote music.

## JUKEBOX MAN

Seeberg jukebox  
verticle records stacked  
fragile as fine china  
shoe polish black with  
lollipop red Columbia label.  
The heavy arm drops the needle on turntable  
spinning 78 rpm  
crackles  
Billie Holiday smooth tormented voice  
emerges  
from vinyl grooves-  
somewhere in a South Side tavern  
patrons laugh loudly  
sipping Old Granddad whisky  
in Chesterfield haze-  
the bartender nods to the man with the brown fedora and  
green metal tool box  
removing dimes and nickels from the jukebox  
replacing records from a cardboard box  
who leaves quietly and  
goes back to his 1951 maroon Mercury  
drives to another tavern.

## MINGUS FIGHT SONG (or The Epitaph of a jive ass saint)

Fury of sounds  
a chorus of effortless tone and occasional shriek-  
the clown is laughing  
and angry  
and hurt  
in his soul,  
fighting with phantom spirits  
lashing melody between tender percussion,  
the deep bass resonance punctures the tenor saxophones and ride cymbal  
phasing notes on  
piano and throaty trombone  
for children to hear  
total freedom,  
a blurring of corner angles into one sound  
non troppo,  
a sudden burst fills the void  
in three colors  
one is orange  
a fable  
calling a cello  
or trumpet gently as a bird settling upon a fisherman's string  
pulled closer to death  
through a chill of a hurricane.

Don't be afraid  
we're all afraid too  
Except the clown.

## DREAMS BEYOND THE 100TH MERIDIAN

radiant silence of clearlight  
a mosaic of slow circle stars that iridescent winds  
push with sagebrush teeth  
only a pawnee ghost dance takes flight into crystal coyote music  
anazazi railroad points toward an empty arroyo  
on burnt foothills of the Colorado plateau

volcanic turkey vultures  
discover a fossilswamp of coldgranite roots  
reddust reddust reddust red dust red dust red  
rocks breathe bright pinyon pine  
wrapped the barbwire dry river bed red dust red  
emeralds hang from  
ancient  
redwoods  
the spruce cones  
burn radiant silence of clearlight

**Jennifer Thacker**

Awful Names

You are a ghost story,  
whispers among sweaters  
reborn from their deaths in the back  
of closets.

Your tale goes up with  
the bonfire smoke,  
returning in the arrival of candy corn  
that innocent teeth

will bite, not ever knowing  
what they're doing.  
Your essence is in the crunch of  
the leaves,

the pleasure received when stepped  
on. Pumpkins in  
a field is you smiling, but the  
Jack O' Lantern's seasonal

mutilation is your laughter at  
the futility of  
it all, how nothing could stop you.  
Not love, not

life, not death. People are  
still frightened of  
you. Their first and lasting image, a  
claw hammer to

deconstruct some bone, fueled by  
a wish fulfillment  
and they blessed your little heart with  
a bullet.

Now we think of you  
on Halloween. Ohio's  
boogeyman is never really dead. But I  
did just

see a flower, bright with  
the purpose of  
sun, another virtuous beauty to remind me  
of you.

## Joshua Young

From *To the Chapel of Light (A Film-in-Verse)*

EXT. FARM – DAY

sometimes there's blood in the dirt, but only when it comes to blows and shotgun spray. *property. this whole fucking thing is about property*, a boy says gripping the shotgun when the bank man comes to collect, but there's nothing left. a cow keeps rocking in place, behind the barn, but he's just skin and bone and a little guts. sure, they'd cook him later if he wasn't so thin.

and out across the road, the hill keeps chewing men, slack jawed and hungry. "i'll just slow you up," one says. god, how they all speak in drawls. at the river's edge men bleed from the tree line like water from a paintbrush. the blood will not be used to clean skin, but to close eyes and sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK – DAY

out before the horizon spreads, an old man keeps preaching about the new floods and the bursting and building of dams. but he doesn't remember that if you reach the ocean by sun up, and turn to face the land, a camera might be there to move in and hold. catch all that western dying light, the last hope for that one southern american dream that keeps tugging at the shirt sleeve of your jacket. but now, there's nothing to stop the fall, just a curtain slowly drooping into darkness. you'll still remember the light, 'cause the sun left spots in everyone's eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD – MORNING

there are patterns waiting to take you into the morning and you'll fit right there with the bird chirps and engine muster. and settle. this poison is not bottled or spoon feed, but cut right from the teeth of your neighbors' son as he screams, "i killed a man and no one can touch me for it!" he shakes like beetle wings.

and across town someone else keeps dancing as if there is a flashback with lighting through a window above the sink. all those fingers over the silk of a dress. later, the camera doesn't cut when the letter comes, and things retreat from the sockets of soldiers as they read.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH – NOON

here, the assembly stays drunk on the blood that's supposed to be the lamb, but they keep the doors shut to the real son and listen only to the words that they find kicking from their own guts, from their own teeth.

listen: the sounds of the son's fists against the doors and the lies that spill out their throats.

CUT TO:

**Kelci M. Kelci**

**judas lies dying**

“But their spirits did not dare stand before him, except for Judas Iscariot.”

*The Gospel of Judas*

judas lies dying  
lemon eyes sallow skin  
a betrayer's rope-burnt neck

all i want is for lucy to kiss me, brushed teeth or not—  
lucy's dry lips and cracked tongue  
with a ring of the cable car gears catching an electric bus sparking  
—my mouth tastes delicious  
cigarette smoke but sober and straight  
just dizzy with apocrypha—

as if missing a kidney begrimed fingertips  
touch a ribbon of stitches lined uneven like downtown streets  
and a bay mist gathers droplets on lucy's chin

countenance

dripping

with tears on the tabernacle's steps: judas's sister found him hanging  
in the garage but lucy won't lay me singing  
with stringy hair because judas's leading star rose  
the moment through street trees  
the cobalt of the sky flamed

## Kelci M. Kelci

### untitled

like the darkness of deep sleep night (you're not going to say dream) saying  
those three words is lost in between what you make  
up when you think you're  
sentient and the true void of heavy breath. my heavy  
breath makes mouths parch.  
my breath is so heavy it falls to the mattress  
in machine-gun bursts: half automatic half deliberate. he says he loves the way my ass  
feels as he fucks me from  
behind. a fern is green, green where the spindle-like  
bone-finger shoots haven't  
lost the red lettuce leaves. the sun is yellow or a leaden  
tangelo when it drops, ovulating, towards the horizon. but this, this does not  
have color, you cannot say  
god's gold and jealousy's green when saying this color is like LOVE, a keyboard's  
a bookshelf, an anvil's a dust particle, being drunk's  
being coked: you said it in a  
colorless, textureless landscape with a 45% chance  
of lint where wool, cotton, and  
polyester rob form of roof, floorboards, and dry wall. the weight  
works opposite and my heavy  
breath leaks the three words i waited three months  
for: will you still say it back  
in nigrescent twilight if neither of us can remember?

## Kate Lutzner

### The winter of snow

We buried the blackbird in the snow piled up by my window. It was so high you couldn't see out. The bird's wing must have been broken. We were not in the practice of diagnosing back then. There were spots of blood leading to the burial site and you were leaned over the place eating a snow cone made of ice and grenadine. In those days, we could do two things at once, like grieve and eat. I filled my hands with snow and covered the bird, gave it a good Christian burial even though we were Jews and we knew nothing about Christian burials. You were going to your friend's house after that – you wanted to pull out a feather and bring it along, but I said maybe it carried disease. That spring, the snow thawed and the bird made an appearance, back in our lives, that sick piece of architecture we had romanticized into something akin to love. It was shriveled, a tiny replica of itself. I had slept next to it all winter, only the thin wall dividing us. I cried the day the snow melted, looking down at that small, new bird in its shallow grave. I saw the faces of everyone I loved, knowing that some day, they would find themselves in a similar place, and so would I.

## Dinner at Matteo's

What you need to know is, on the way home,  
I walked a woman of maybe twenty-five back  
to her car. My sister, whose husband had been killed,  
was with us. They were talking about tattoos, how one pain  
takes away another pain. "Did you lose someone?" my sister  
asked, and the girl, you could see the tears behind her pale eyes,  
said her sister had passed away at twenty three. I felt  
like the only one who hadn't experienced loss - instead of lucky,  
it was a sense of being left out. And then, immediately,  
guilt. Men turned to look at the girl in her grief. We walked her  
to her car and stood there, no one saying anything, the stars deciding  
what to do, a pair of dogs playing or fighting, I could not tell which.  
The next day, my sister called and we dissected the walk, how little  
we felt we had done to help the young woman. The flowers then  
were blooming - if you slowed down, you could see the petals  
spreading open.

1979

In the photograph, I am standing on the badminton court  
and I am smiling. You can almost see the lake in the distance.  
The day the photo was taken, my sister and I sat on the swing between  
two trees with a boy who touched each of us and neither of us knew it.  
There is something called dissociation we were good at even then, even at ten  
with a stranger's hand beneath our skirts, one of us looking off towards the lake,  
the other thinking about blueberries. Later, we would go into town  
and Ray Liotta from TV would be at Old Macdonald's Farm  
and we would get his autograph on our arms. I wouldn't wash mine  
for a series of days until my mother told me I was filthy and I would scrub  
at his loosened name until the skin came off. That's the summer  
I got my period and bled through four sets of sheets. My mother was nice  
about it, taking them to the Laundromat, putting the quarters in  
the slots. I won a Super Ball in the machine.

## Behavior

A pit bull attacked my dog and my dog was bleeding as I carried him across the street and I realized I had never loved anyone as I cradled his tiny body in my arms. I was wearing the green dress with the back cut out and a man winked at me – I remember that – and then I was knocking at the door of the woman who owned the pit bull and I was screaming that I was a lawyer and these sounds were coming from my dog's throat and a small crowd had gathered at the bottom of the street. His fur was cardinal red now so I turned around and my shoe broke as I was turning – everyone was staring at me – and I carried him to the grass where you could tell by the indentation someone had just been. I sat next to him, trying for his sake not to cry, and he looked right at me.

## Some time ago

A bird flew into the law school building  
so we put bird shadows up.  
The bird was stunned for a few minutes  
and then flew off. I don't want to tell you this,  
but legend has it animals go somewhere to die.  
A few girls were giggling to handle their grief.  
Mine sat in a Styrofoam cup, the type popular  
in those days. You could have guessed  
there were tears in there, but it was really the projection  
of all I felt. I was far from home, from the parents  
who had raised me if not well, then with intention.  
That tiny bird, its frail bones and feathers  
like a loose dress. Oh, my difficult loneliness.  
You could argue all loneliness is difficult.  
I am not going to talk you out of it.

**Laura Straub**

24, and I, ill-fed,

wear red-wine lipstick, an ideal stain,  
sipping so it only coats the tongue.  
Teeth cannot taste, but, like fat, facilitate  
feeling. It's gotten hard to run from home,  
my skeleton pulling towards the open keyhole.

The fat has leaked out of my face and hands, settling into the back  
of my arms, between my legs, in rings around my hips,  
expanding my shy stomach and chest. Wine is for these swelling arcs.  
The backs of my arms have prickles, dull purple dots.  
24, and this is my ugliest, most beautiful body.

Won't you forget  
most of what I've said?  
Focused on the butter between the skin and muscle I am  
presently estranged from,

I want to say I feel less  
than I ever thought I would,  
but my body craves fat and fat  
feeds feeling.

## Color on Black and White In Grandmother's Formal Living Room

Red spray touched level lips and clouded hair, eyes cold-lit blue. Like that of home-style fabric, pink petals hover over cheeks. Missing the vein, the skin recedes. Why are pianos for pictures of dead mothers?

Her daughter told daughter tells daughter. Unhappy  
is not never happy. Mother. Mother.  
Lost husband to his shotgun. Won pie competitions.  
Clippings. Interviewed by the papers. Clipped. Recipes writ.  
Made homemade sandwich buns. Mother. Domestic wits.  
Sent an infant. My mother. Just for 3 months so daughter could trip.  
Europe. Daughter. Can't cook. Mother. Lost daughter to anywhere but.  
Makes homemade crackers. My mother. Mother.  
Asked to die and was hushed. Grandmother. Great-grandmother.  
Snapped and put to dust on the piano I wasn't to touch.

## Balancing Coasts

The night's guards are these Berkeley hills.  
The sky pulled down, condensed,  
a blacker shadow than what's back.  
Tight stars burn the dark, open on  
empty streets, nothing but the thickest lines.

-

The sun crowds, perpetual exhaust  
buses idling, honking, waning corners;  
swaybacked lizards stay still never.  
The beach's aqua a million shades,  
full of oily 'tweens stuffed in suits, wrappers, plastic  
bags and not liking. A child throws a rock at my back.  
We pay too much for lunch, eat under a rock to stop burning.

-

There's nothing to figure out,  
only so much to remember.  
In one more bar, loud music's bad and blunts,  
people toss back each other looking;  
I leave. \$20 cab, I ask  
the driver about his sons and daughters.

-

It's lonely, knowing you're asleep when I'm awake.  
The weight a day, the red wine pinches, pulling up the center of your tongue.  
Boston Freedom Trail calls, 'More steps, more facts! Solidify your history!'  
My wine dulls.

-

Don't worry, you can be alone. Usually you know  
when it's the last ring, when the phone or who's behind  
it's done. I was nauseous for two weeks. All sunshine.  
If you haven't understood, this isn't not for you.  
In this non-commitment, you are finally not so young.

BLAZEVOX 2KX

Fall 2010

**Margot Block**

Critical Tongue

used this to recall pretention  
it was your face crumpled with a beauty I imagine  
and I could have perceived it was a delusion  
when I am faced with the long critical tongue  
you knew stuff with an agility  
and knowledge fell to the floor with discarded poetics  
it is I who fell to the floor with one last smile

## Crocodile

I ache to bring you this apology of numbers  
how young I was to read this last chapter first  
but I had fear on my side with you on my mind  
and with your hand a brush fire soul  
falling through the chasm of night with no label  
I dream of a place where your damage was cut off at the thumb  
now with the peace of a woman who is educated twofold disaster  
crocodile tears  
nothing I imagined  
wearing the color of red  
I stand against your popular damage  
the suicide  
the grand canyon  
this is where my anger subsides  
drawing me down like fear  
where I have escaped the theoretical fist  
never did I see this ash in your beautiful face

## Crossed Wires

there is nothing original in this seduction  
the liar in us both comes out to play  
crossing the electric line we fall apart  
throwing our strength to wind while our heart is laugh  
knowing we are ready for any kind of pain  
open and ready for the fall  
the moment you hit the ground  
come down from dreams from hope and glory  
it is a burning encounter  
filled with secrets than swept vacant

## Cuss Me Out Good

the vague was threatening me again  
to swallow you whole  
to stand right behind the pillar  
but I follow you everywhere  
this is a poem where we travel through time  
my word is not enough  
and my heart breaks for intimacy  
I left you clues but you never even read the book  
child how beautiful you were  
I have no time to engage in this  
I have no time to love  
it is imprecise  
you and me, friend  
this is the space where we pretend to be revolutionary  
and how can you do this  
when I have seen the war and turned  
you want to hear me cry, whispering yes  
you want to hear me scream that a crime was committed  
a kind of rose blood in the brain  
no witness and with one willing hand  
all is erased but I have not forgotten  
if our world can last  
if I can punish out the good like oil & water  
I wish I could cuss you out good  
when a promise is a promise  
the report of your fist is circumstantial  
I am always silent  
I want to forget your pretty boy face  
where you sweet talk the angel herself  
in the intermission  
but I am sorry for the damage you cannot help but see  
a draining river  
I will not silence your wound  
I will not speak of violence even once  
but this will not end  
even if I write my name one thousand times  
my favorite tan I wore for you  
is nothing I am prepared to wear

like skin tight getup  
I cannot say I ever deserved  
this one silent plate  
your violence dictates still  
when us girls are satisfied with a true glass of red  
was I the kind of girl to turn away  
and when your pedastal smacks of sin  
beautifful makes a fucking pawn  
in the middle of the ivory desert  
in the quiet I mention simplicity

## Dark Love

another poem of love you create  
it is the mystery or beauty of foreign country  
in your breath across her skin  
and in the dream light I have lost  
my cynic girl wants to stake the claim on the blood red heart  
and everyday I loved you  
where misguided went to the dark  
like there was a lord above not a presence  
to be thin in the dark  
to have loved you one last night before the death  
it was the dark man we loved  
in the end we remembered that last laugh and painted it gold  
thinking he loved you too  
our loves were more than dust with a time spoil  
your white blindfold lasted with the genius hurt  
we say you touched me  
we say you meant something

## Michael Crake

### I Quit Elsewhere

*for René*

1.

I type with gloves on. My hair convicted of treason. Boxing the encounters of a town we will never live in. Francophile walks daily wanting to hear about the towels. Nine hours of good TV and I will read later. There are ways to surpass the yelling of a barn. I came to this conclusion when the stereo went silent and someone said my name is Miguel.

2.

Mornings are for dream interpretations. I study the red tint on the ceiling. It might be alien. Want to eat all the cheese from cans today. She said it was a reflection from the Jetta windows. Phone number in the windshield wiper, dent in the car. The chocolate I gave you when you were asleep. I told someone today one call to Norristown.

3.

Grandmom called today from Norristown. An attic I never saw. Her first husband's army uniform I didn't try on. When getting ready on wedding day our hair looked similar. I want to talk to him in the Czech diner. He then would tell me about the war and the bottle my Grandmom found 40 years later in the basement.

4.

Nothing weird. Nothing weird when I told you about the diner. I grow my goatee longer and put on large black glasses. They tint and in Huntingdon, PA someone told me I should sell heroin. Please don't scratch the surface of why I fell in love with you. The color of a hoody we can identify with is at Patagonia.

5.

The ventriloquist on a commercial was describing how to whack the doll without accidentally shooting himself in the head. It all had to do with the angle of the gun. To compose the suicide note the ventriloquist looked away from the audience so the doll has some privacy. The doll's arm was attached to a mechanism that stiffened the arm and the trigger was pulled by string.

6.

The tint came down hard and red today from the ceiling. The ghost prevented me from getting my medication today by breaking the doorknob. This happened when I was walking and seeing if the bakery sold cake donuts not sponge donuts. You believe the ghost is a young girl, I think it is a young boy. He then said I like staying here with all the salt on the windowsills and the smell of sage.

7.

Only want to breath AC air. You use my pillow as a footrest when you are typing. While sleeping I faintly smell some kind of lotion I don't use on my feet. I'm lazy and they are cracked. Too dry. I tell the therapist I don't trust people from here since there is a lack of ethnic cooking. He asked well what is your solution. Sit inside watch British comedies on PBS and think about cooking something new.

8.

The dead moth room doesn't vex me. Electricity won't bring back this moth, or his brother I found in the couch beneath the 37 surge protectors. My Uncle pointed to a moth that was green and quite larger than these two. It was summer in a place where my feet don't crack.

9.

The summer is not a good time. So my friends live elsewhere. She told me the other week I was elsewhere. Been watching movies from only one decade lately. He told me I was a lonely soul.

10.

All the dust I refuse to clean. All your school objects out of my sight. Backs of my shoes wore down by the bathroom floor. The shower I took and fell grabbing the curtain. I laugh too. I stayed there all day the cold water never turned warm. I thought a new position of showering would make the water warmer.



## Before Feminism

He slips through her fictions  
the way fish searches food, in the club's

aquarium; its ambition to grow  
fins fit for oceans and myths

is as round as eyes trapped on  
its head, sentenced for

diminutive freedoms  
encased in dim glass-boxes.

She keeps a museum of  
loose endings, charms

that parenthesize what  
she must keep

away from him. Foggy  
weekends of neon

device entrapments for her,  
through glasses with

overlapping thumbprints.  
She's the invisible

nymph hiding behind  
the fake blue-corals,

waiting to be rescued, into  
someone's odyssey.

## Age of Permutations

There are nights his doubts splinter into  
legs in mini-skirt, with lipstick glossy as rivers in sunset.  
They cup nights in coffee, stretch them in car-chases  
at a multiplex, before their moons huddle  
in creased bed-sheets and glasses of wine.

When not legs, nights take the  
shape of hollow moons, the way leggy lips approximate  
pasts that refuse remembrance. He keeps a small  
museum of them, nights  
of engagements and repose,

like how some images flirt into his viewfinder's line  
of sight, unplanned, and become memorable  
as shattered certainties.

## Michael Hartman

### SEARCHING

I have heard your voice and have viewed your curls  
Bounce with grace before your enchanted face.  
I have spied on your secluded movements  
And have followed the faint trail of your scent.

But they opened the door and called your name.  
Your slow removal from that midnight porch  
Communicated more than lethargy,  
So I absently wandered the black streets,

Lost and unsure of a desired pace-  
If I linger, I might miss our meeting,  
Yet speed can blur my vision and instinct-  
Like never before, this chase excites love.

Through a translucent image of myself,  
Captured in a shops unsullied window,  
May I witness you in me, like the ghost  
You may have been, prompted by my love.

## A MICKEY'S AND A BUM

A man, slightly unshaven,  
Wearing a light brown wool coat  
And wandering around with the face of  
An innocent child, importuned me for a dollar.  
After explaining that I had only a twenty,  
He said that a twenty was okay.

So I bought us a bottle of booze,  
And we drank in some root butchered,  
Weather rotted corner.  
The shadows of the pines  
Concealed us from the street's loud drone,  
Which sounded like the wind in autumn trees.

We sat and took pulls from the forty.  
In my madness, neither his homelessness  
Or the crusts lingering beneath his nostrils  
Could make me wipe clean the bottle before each drink.  
We spoke about new languages  
While the wind wept tears of a storm  
Into our hair and salted us with the late snow of spring.

After a few more delicious and delirious swigs,  
And spitting into an undulating puddle,  
Filled with the reflection of Catholic Church's ashen cross,  
I said goodbye.

Leaving his company, the bottle and my madness,  
I later witnessed his coat hanging from a handrail in  
The cities central park.  
It danced in the wind, but he was not there.

## THE NORTH WIND

The snow, weighing down the limbs of firm pines,  
Which turn lifeless when against the still night,  
Followed the thunder.

The soft angels reached the ground and settled,  
But soon a furiously wandering wind  
Placed life in cold breasts.

And the crows played graceful games in the gusts;  
Their jet black bodies exaggerated  
By the ashen sky,  
And the pines danced their stationary dance  
As the wind relieved the burden of snow  
From their footloose branches.

**Megan Milligan**

SCAN

Line by line,  
Scanning,  
Quickly glancing  
Taking in a picture  
Of your dark eyes,  
Your round lips,  
Your gentle smile.

Note by note,  
Scanning,  
Quickly listening,  
Taking in a recording  
Of your accent,  
Your words,  
Your laugh.

Piece by piece,  
I scan a collage of you  
To take with me  
Without you seeing me  
Scanning.

# TENDING THE GARDEN

A tree that isn't watered or fed  
Is as good as dead.

Same can be said for me.  
I died.  
Stripped of my give-a-damn,  
I dried out.  
Crumbling leaves,  
Wilted blossoms.

Nothing left to cling to what mattered.  
Nothing mattered.  
The more I watered myself  
The more I dried out, shriveled up.  
Used up my heart and soul  
Until there was damn near nothing left.

But then someone took the time to water me  
Watered me with spirituality.  
When the Sunlight of the Spirit  
Hit what little green I still held in my leaves...

Photosynthesis...

Life regenerated...

A gentle Gardener pruned away the dead material,  
Giving me a chance to grow again.  
Green leaves budding,  
The scene of new blooms  
And of life renewed.

I'm ready to live and love again.

## Moura McGovern

### Pretty

“She tells a story about story-telling, a story within which are several stories, each one, in itself, about story-telling—by means of which a man is saved from death.”—Paul Auster, *The Invention of Solitude*

She was the kind of blue-eyed, blonde-ringlet pretty that would either save her or kill her.

At eight-years old, she barely spoke. Her mother didn't speak either. The man they lived with, our protagonist's next-door neighbor, never shut up.

He paced the cracked concrete patio with a diet Pepsi in one hand, a Pall-Mall in the other, cell phone jammed between ear and shoulder. He circled the blacktop parking lot that served as the centerpiece of the townhouse complex. It could have been in Any Suburb, USA, but was in fact in State College, Pennsylvania, ranked the safest small town in America. Around the blacktop, weaving between the Civics and Corollas, the man circled to the front and stalked the narrow sidewalk that lined identical front doors no one ever used. He didn't have a stick of furniture within the apartment. He spent his time outdoors, smooth-talking women on the other side of his cell. His sparse hair, dyed a coal-black that stained his skull, made him look even creepier than he sounded.

The complex—and the town itself—was a quiet place, especially in summer. Penn State University had released its 40,000 students into the wilds of the world, and so on any given summer night, the protagonist, call her Jane, sat on her stoop and watched fireflies wink and glow. In those days, it was the closest she got to sexual electricity—watching the mating ritual of a bug—and it was a source of angst, like everything else in her life then.

She had painted her stoop green, a flagrant violation of the “community covenants,” and there she petted her dog and listened to the wind make itself heard in the leaves of the towering oaks on the front lawn. The trees were the best part of the place, the things that gave the place a modicum of singularity. This was important to Jane. A dozen or so of the leaning, old giants dotted the half-acre view. She ignored the trucks, the motorcycles, the SUVs—the strip-mall world just beyond. It was a new home for her, yet regularly she called her mother in floods of dramatic tears to ask the same question, ad nauseum: “What am I doing here?”

As a want-to-be-writer, it was not lost on her to ask what any of us are doing anywhere at any time. It was not lost, but more or less useless. Her mother always answered the question in a measured, practical way: “You are going to graduate school. You are learning to teach. You are learning to write. You’ll be just fine.” Her mother had decreed it to be so, and so it would be. She believed this. And, this other feeling—the nonstop angst—there was another term for this that she had, in fact, learned in graduate school: cognitive dissonance. Yet naming it did not help. Previously she had believed that words were supposed to help. That words were the only thing that could help.

“Mom, what am I doing here?” She asked it again and again and again. No matter how many times she asked, there was one thing her mother did not say—not in a logical, even tone, not in a hysterical, angry tone.

What remained unspoken: “You are learning to live after that bastard nearly killed you.”

Her mother would never actually call someone a bastard, at least not out loud. It wouldn't be lady-like. Anyway, it was probably also an exaggeration. Jane didn't know anymore, because she was very much alive, and—indeed—she was learning.

Certainly one thing she was learning was how to live alone for the first time in her adult life, without the man she'd been with since she was a teen. She was then thirty years old. She had thought that she already knew how to live though, and she certainly had not lived up to her own expectations. She was not a mother. She was no longer a wife. Her career, which had been successful by external standards and yet had bored her to near catatonia, she had left to move to the geographic center of Pennsylvania, which was the middle of nowhere to someone like east-coast, hustle-bustle-born Jane. She wasn't even a football fan. So, she would also answer her own question: "What am I doing here?"

She always answered it in the same way: "Not much."

Instead she tried to listen to the wind in the trees. All the while, she thought: "Give me a fucking break." She was not the kind of woman who could calm her mind enough to hear messages in the wind. And, unlike her mother, she was not the kind of woman who shied from profanity.

Jane felt, however, that she had listened to enough profanity in her marriage to last several millennia. So, at the time, Jane repeatedly thought that she just wanted to be alone. It was all she wanted. Just leave me alone. It had become a mantra, a refrain, a manifesto. She had imagined herself creating great works of art, great works filled with insight and beauty that women like the one she had been—an unhappy wife, an unsatisfied worker, a woman who had become a stranger to herself, a breath away from total emptiness—these women would find her art inspiring, useful. To do this: She needed to be alone. She needed peace, quiet. She knew that wind blew in those trees, and, of course, Jane cursed and cried that she had nothing to show for all that wind, all that quiet, all that alone time. She simply didn't know how to do what she wanted to do. She wasn't even all that clear about *what* she wanted to do. She knew only that she was in fact alone. Lonely even. Lost at sea,

while landlocked in the middle of Pennsylvania without a boat in sight, Jane knew only that she wanted meaning, she wanted to matter, she wanted to love, to be loved, she wanted to make sense of things, to know something, anything, everything. Above all, she wanted *to know*. Now.

Instead she painted the stoop green.

Then, one evening, a pretty little girl pushed open the screen door and walked around the rhododendron that separated the apartments. Jane's dog, who looked like a black golden retriever, and who always grinned something silly, sat up and grinned even more. We'll call the dog Marley. Some days Marley was the only thing that got Jane through. Jane knew: Marley was a magic dog, one who had the power to heal. His silly grin did it all, could always make her smile, even when she oh-so-frequently annoyed herself. When the loneliness set in, when Jane thought she'd never write anything worth a damn, it was then that Marley made the want-to-be-writer happy with nary a single word.

So, the little girl, a wee wisp of a girl, with long, curly blonde hair, big blue eyes, a yellow cotton shirt too small and stained, bare feet, and too-short pink pants, stood in front of Jane and Marley.

Jane looked at the child.

The child looked at Marley. She clasped her hands behind her back and twisted back and forth. She bit her lip. She smiled.

"Do you want to pet him?" Jane asked.

Marley stood and shook his coat so vigorously that dust flew into the evening air. Jane wasn't much of a housekeeper, and Marley was more of a broom than the broom ever would be. After he shook, he set upon wagging his tail as vigorously as he could, smiling his toothy grin that could melt anyone. His growl though could terrify anyone too, including the man who lived next door. Jane remembered the man then and wondered what the girl was doing there, and that's when she had the thought for the first time: "She's the kind of pretty that'll either kill her or save her."

“Go ahead, you can pet him. He loves kids,” Jane said.

The little girl’s slight chin tilted the tiniest bit, but she did not move forward to pet him.

Jane stood and walked Marley towards her.

“He won’t hurt you,” Jane said.

Slowly, tentatively, the little girl reached out, and tapped-tapped the top of the dog’s head before re-clasping her hands behind her back. Marley promptly sat at the little girl’s feet. His tongue lolled out of the side of his mouth. He swept the dirt with his tail. The little girl smiled wider. Marley increased the velocity of his tail wagging and leaned his head towards her. The little girl reached out again. She began to giggle. She tapped him once again and took two steps back.

“You can pet him any time,” Jane said.

The little girl covered her grin with the hand that had petted Marley, turned, and ran back inside.

The wind rustled the thick leaves, dusk eventually dimmed the central Pennsylvania summer sky, and, when Jane turned to go inside, glad she had nearly made it through yet another night, Marley began to growl. She looked up, but didn’t see a thing. Marley continued his low growl.

Jane ran her hand along the top of his head.

“What is it boy?”

Then she smelled and saw what Marley already had. There he was: The man’s cigarette glowed in the shadow of the trees. Jane and Marley went inside, and Jane double locked the doors in the safest small town in America.

\*

The man had lived there for about two months before the girl and her mother had arrived. The empty house shared a wall with Jane’s and echoed relentlessly. Jane had heard him on the phone with women. “Oh, sweetie...; Oh, baby...; Oh, you know I do...” He seemed to be jobless, and he washed his black, circa-1980 Nissan Z daily until he could see his own

shirtless reflection in it. He proudly displayed as much of his five-foot, three-inch-tall self as he could. Apparently the sheen on the Z didn't mirror his sun-wrinkled and sagging skin. Jane figured he was a scam artist, some kind of gigolo who perpetrated his crimes online, because though he lived in the camp chair on the back patio, the computer monitor on the kitchen counter glowed relentlessly. Jane hoped that surely no woman could be *that* desperate, but she knew otherwise. And, as if to prove her point, then the woman and her child had arrived.

The days of summer—long, hot, and endless—wore on, and little happened. The girl and her mother were there for weeks before sheer white curtains appeared in the front window. Eventually a table showed up in the dining room. And then there were the cats. The cats bred and sprayed, and soon the smell of boiled fish hung unmoving in the late August air. Jane just breathed through her mouth, and hoped that life would turn out all right for the little girl, because the cell phone had more or less disappeared and school had begun. Though the little girl's mother never showed her face, never went to the store, never walked laps with the man, she did appear without fail twice each day, to walk the little girl back and forth to the elementary school across the street. When Jane caught her in the act, she'd nod to the girl's mother, but the woman looked down.

Jane remembered what it felt like not to be able to meet the eyes of her neighbors. She shrugged and let the little girl pet Marley when she could. Beyond that, she knew that this was one thing she didn't want to know about. She didn't want to be involved. She couldn't be involved. Even when the man grew more bold, she didn't want to know anything about what was going on over there.

One day, the man knocked on her door.

“Hey, Jane! How are you?” He called through the front screen door.

“Fine.”

“So, Jane. Do you happen to have a fax machine?”

Jane paused. Did he know that she did in fact have a fax?

“Why?”

“Well, I’ve got some business and they won’t take emails. Do you think I could use your fax machine?”

“Um, well,” Jane stalled.

Marley barked, growled. She petted him.

“I’m kind of busy,” she said. “Now’s not the best time.”

Marley lunged.

“Well, okay, thanks! Glad to know it’s here!” He hurried away.

Marley barked and barked. The good dog got a slice of cheese as a reward that night.

\*

Time went by, and, one day, a minivan skidded to a stop and its door slammed shut, even as the engine idled.

“Bill!” A woman shrieked. “Bill! I know everything, Bill! You’re a fraud! I know! I hired a private detective. I know your real age! I know your real name! I know you have a son as old as me! I know Bill! It’s over for you, Bill! Tell the woman I know about her too!”

The minivan door opened and slammed shut again, and Jane knew that things had just changed next door. She also knew that the little girl’s mother had witnessed the whole thing from her perch at the window upstairs. Minutes later, she saw the woman walking out beneath the trees. The woman had finally left that room. Jane saw her look up at the now-umber canopy, which was beginning to shed its beautiful glory. Jane wondered if the leaves and the tree told the woman a story she needed to hear, and she imagined that they did, even though those same trees and leaves had remained stubbornly silent for Jane.

Later, when Jane took Marley out for his evening walk, she began to cross the street when she saw the man shuffling down the lane, Pepsi in hand.

“Jane! Hey, Jane, do you have an attic?”

“An attic?”

“Yeah, you been up there lately?”

“Why?”

“I have a hot water heater in mine. Why do you suppose that is? Do you have one up there, Jane?”

“Nope.” Jane said and walked on, Marley at her side. Though the question made Jane a little nervous: She’d never actually ever been in her attic.

When they returned to the parking lot in the rapidly descending dark, Jane saw the mother and daughter about to climb into a navy-blue Toyota sedan.

Marley ran up to the girl. Though Jane and Marley avoided the man, Marley and the little girl had become regular pals as time had worn on. While her mother sheltered, the girl had played with neighborhood kids. The girl had talked. The girl had gone to school. She petted Marley eagerly now, and he sat adoringly at her feet. The girl had lost her fear entirely.

The girl’s mother opened the back door of the car.

The girl bent and wrapped her arms around Marley’s furry neck. She hugged hard once and released him. Marley wagged his tail.

“Say thank you now, Jessica,” Her mother said.

Jane realized these were the first words she’d ever heard the woman speak.

“Thank you,” Jessica said, waved, smiled, and climbed into the car.

A few minutes later, a thumping started up next door. It was the relentless thump-thump-thump of a bass set too low on a stereo with the volume too high. Jane wondered why they had left the music on, when no one was home.

\*

The next afternoon, the thumping of the stereo had continued without cease. Jane thought she was about to go out of her mind and thought maybe she already had when she jumped at the sound of pounding on her front door. No one used the front door. No one except the man. But this kind of pounding wasn't his style; Jane recognized the sound. She figured it was a skill taught in the police academy, and, sure enough, she opened the door to men in blue. She leaned against the doorframe and could only feel glad that they had not been summoned to her own home, as they had been in the past.

"Can I help you?" Jane asked the two officers.

"Have you seen the people next door, ma'am?"

Again she heard the voice in her head: Don't get involved.

"No," Jane said.

"If you see them, ma'am, you need to call us. There are warrants out for their arrest."

"I won't see them," Jane said.

"Well, if you do see them, you need to call us. Both of them are wanted."

Suddenly it became clear to Jane. The woman wasn't being abused. She was hiding from the police.

"What did they do?"

"You just need to know they're dangerous. Call us immediately if you see them again. Do not attempt to speak with them."

"Believe me, I don't want to speak with them. But do you hear that?"

The bass thumped and droned, vibrating the screen door.

The men stared at her. They looked at each other.

“Could you do something about that?”

“We’re Borough police, ma’am. We can’t enter their home. But, if you call the Township police with a complaint, then we could get in. Would you do that for us? Call the Township?”

“No, I don’t want to get involved,” Jane began to shut the door.

“Ma’am. Please. These are federal convicts. There are multiple warrants.”

Jane continued to shut the door.

“Ma’am, what if there’s a dead body inside?”

Jane opened the door back up.

The taller one shrugged. “Anything is possible.”

Oh for fuck’s sake, Jane thought. I cannot believe he just said that, Jane thought. “What are they wanted for?”

“Bank robbery and identity-theft crimes, among other things.”

Jane thought of the request to use her fax machine.

The bass thumped on, mimicking the pounding in Jane’s head.

“Okay, I’ll call the police, even though they’re already here.” She rolled her eyes tried not to consider bureaucratic bullshit. All the while, the relentless bass pounded. And all the while the little voice echoed in her head: Don’t get involved.

Hours later, after the cops had swarmed through, they came by to tell her that they’d removed a cat which was left in a box in the kitchen. No dead bodies, they grinned. Just a cat. They told her the people must have left the radio on so no one would hear its cries. The cops told her not to be afraid though. They told her there was no way the fugitives would be back. Because, after all, there was hardly a stick of furniture inside the home of bank robbers in the safest town in America.

Jane didn't bother to tell the cops there never really was any furniture, just a little girl, who may or may not have had to leave her cat behind.

What if they came back? Jane thought. What if they find out I called the police? Jane thought as she shut and double locked the door in the safest small town in America.

\*

Early the next morning, as Jane sat in the still morning air trying to write, she heard a strange sound through the thin wall.

It was a creak. It was a groan.

Jane stopped typing.

Marley looked up.

Jane looked at Marley, and she realized what the sound was: It was the sound of an attic trap door opening.

Jane froze.

She heard the sound of the ladder being extended and thumping into place.

Jane swallowed.

She heard footsteps running down the stairs.

Jane blinked.

She heard a door open and shut.

“Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God: He's there! Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God: He was there all along!”

Jane thought.

Next to her laptop sat the card the police had left.

Jane felt her heart race. Then the sound began again. Thump-thump-thump. The music. Back on.

“Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God. Was he there when the cops were there? Didn’t they check the attic?!”

Jane thought.

She stared at the card. She wondered if she should pick up the phone and whisper the situation. Then she thought: “Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God. What if he was in *my* attic?! Why else would he ask about my attic?! What if he is in my attic *right now*?!”

She looked at the card the policeman had left. She wondered what the walls in the attic were made of. She cursed adjoining walls. She heard voices and sirens in her head. Jane looked at the card. She held her breath. She thought about bureaucratic bullshit and the bystander who always lives next door. She held her breath, petted her dog, and then she did not move for a very long time. Don’t get involved, she thought, if she thought anything at all.

\*

Later that day, the landlord arrived. The thumping stopped. Then a locksmith arrived, and yet Jane didn’t relax.

She was afraid to go in the attic. But then Jane was afraid of a lot of things. She was especially afraid of getting involved.

\*

Eventually new neighbors moved in. Eventually Jane moved out. Eventually years went by, and occasionally the wind would sigh through the trees, and eventually Jane stopped being so afraid. Eventually she even met a man.

Beautiful tattoos inked his arms and told a story that Jane did not yet know how to read, but Jane took one look at those arms, one look at his lean, lanky body and suddenly she thought: “Oh my God. Am I pretty?”

Eventually, the man said to her, “I think we should be involved.”

And that stopped Jane cold.

The old angst returned. Because, still, Jane thought of things that she couldn't quite put words to, things she couldn't quite describe.

Jane thought of the silence of little Jessica's mother, as the woman sat each day by the window. Jane remembered her own marriage, remembered what it was like to look out a window and be afraid.

That night, the night the tattooed man said, "I think we should be involved," Jane remembered the townhouse with the adjoining walls and those people within. She still wondered if she should have gotten involved. Called the police when she first saw the little girl--the child who she thought pretty would either kill, or save. Jane wondered too sometimes if she should have become a foster mother. Or adopted a child. Or tried to talk to the woman next door. Or called the police when she heard the attic door open. Or done something. Anything. Anything at all, except sit frozen in fear.

Then, as the clock on the university's Old Main building called out the hours and the wind whipped through the trees, Jane realized she'd been wrong.

The child next door hadn't needed Jane's involvement. It wasn't pretty that would kill her. Nor was it pretty that would save her.

Jessica had a mother. A mother who might have been a criminal, but a mother who knew a way out. A mother who knew how to escape. A mother who knew when to take her daughter away in a sensible navy blue Toyota. Little Jessica had a mother who also knew something else: She knew to walk her daughter to school every day. No matter what she was afraid of. No matter why she hid. No matter what.

Jane too had a mother who had walked her to school every day. Jane too went to school every day. She looked at the stack of books on her bedside table. She listened to the sounds of distant traffic in a university town. She heard the shushing of the wind in the trees. Jane thought of the man with the stories inked into his arms.

She picked up the phone. She dialed.

“Do you think I’m pretty?” She asked him.

“Oh, Jane,” he said. “You are so much more than pretty.”

## Myl Schulz

1.

A rant, chance to perform my dance of formed words. Undone heard the clicking clippers of ticking tripped her up this little blah block of bliss. A ball of blob. Relinquish the tent of shelter shtetl ghetto of unsold shoes. Long wonder meant a song. Butter belongs yellowed streak sleek of slick off oil quick Jack the thumb or candle handle S.W.A.K. envelop the folding in of it all. Grin a bit bite might untie the sealing wax and embossed rings for imprinting. Beauteous bivalve hinged upon succulent things for want of limbs.

2.

This is a meditative emergency, to emerge from a cocoon. Indignant indigent lift the mast aloft for the journey through the last coughed white cap to the rot barnacled pier. The same words swill a locked jaw Tequila. Keyed in the tune of a drill bit. Spell to fill with wit and random acts of malice. An orange blossom fills a fancy drinking cup of Kings. Proboscis, a phallus unfurled to sip. If only slippery rhyme would ring writhe beneath the knocked in skull, Iago. Worm's sprayed innards between a toddler's pincher fingers noodle stretched simplistic digestive tract. Disregard the retched flow of flawed feeling at it still seething in life's ebbing movement, believing to be butterfly.

3.

The adventurer, in an attempt to succumb to exhibitionism, refuses draperies in favor of peerless gaping and imagined voyeurism. This wisdom is dropped from the type of hop on pop exposure which maybe rare or random and is certainly unsyncopated. Insidious in the existential hope of relinquishing extinguished flames, a rabid accumulation remains.

## Martin Willitts Jr

### Psalm

“How shall the heart be reconciled/ to its feast of losses?” --- Stanley Kunitz, *The Layers*

I have seen people die.  
Watched them turn into the light,  
as if to catch it before they go  
to take it with them  
to a place so full of Light  
it can always take more.

I, too, want to hold light.

I have moved through continents of lives,  
numb to the things around me,  
forgetful of things that are important.

Please remind me  
if I ever forget again,  
if I forget to appreciate what I have.

Sometimes we slip in and out of life  
like we were trying on shoes  
to see which will fit us.

I, too, want to hold onto light  
like it was air.

Whose cheek did I first touch?  
What first unknown door did I open?

What did I leave behind?

If I leave anything behind,

let it be love.

Let it be an everlasting love

like tender rain in you.

Let it give you light to hold in your hands.

Let it be love.

**Psalm**

“Hope is the thing with feathers” --- Emily Dickinson (#254)

my troubles are light as feathers,  
light as light as it settles its wings on the garden  
where I have been tending to your work  
knowing it will nurture me

you are the hoe planting in me  
that which makes me fertile

I am songbird in flight of harmony

Hope is a nest that had been blown off a tree  
with five light-blue robin eggs still intact,  
blue as the cloudless sky

its nest of long coarse grass, twigs, paper,  
and feathers, is a testament  
of the work we all must do,  
the intense work we must all do,  
so we can survive whatever happens

so we know  
what we need to know

my troubles blow away as loose feathers  
in dancing winds

## Nick Miriello

### Moving:

To patch the walls simply apply compliant spackle with one finger  
move away and let it dry.

Take the desired plain of that gnawed on floor molding, apply wood-  
filler, let sit, keep the puppy locked in another room.

The walls get whiter, death has never felt so apparent  
while the cleaned carpets seem to taunt you.

The kitchen: its stove, its sink, its fridge  
brim with light, a pristine cartoon sparkle.

Insert the audio cassette of Pavement's Slanted and Enchanted:  
nostalgia is permanent, your amulet, your talisman.

Pour the lilac pro-environment soap into the bucket  
let it lather and then sink the mop.

You dance big broad swoops against the linoleum  
like it were your signature.

Climb the stairs, remembering how the giant oak knots  
are the same now, and it is transference that makes them creak.

The giant oak, that lurches over the upstairs bathroom,  
like a bully always presenting itself- having always been there-  
is still there.

Let the shower run only after the lemon scented bubbles have set  
then pump the fluids around the rim of the toilet, watch each  
spherical electric blue  
bubble trickle down with chemical determinism.

Rehearse the quote from the blind poet  
that told you it was only time that made us more the way  
we are.

prepare yourself-

-the mirror always goes last,  
reminding you very few things stay the same.

## Natalie McNabb

### It Wasn't For Myself

I have done one noble thing in my life, but it wasn't for myself—it was for the woman I love. And, what wouldn't one do for love? I guess it was for her cat, too. The thing scratched at her and twisted to be free as those bitches scuttled past barking and nipping at one another. Yet, my love would stand in her uncomplicated way, smiling straight up at the sky as if only she, the gods and a content cat existed while humming my lullaby in her broken, unhurried way.

Yes, it was for my love and her cat that I did it, though the dogs bugged me too when they shit all over my grass and walks. And, they would shit at the base of my sunflowers too, my sunflowers that only wanted to push up toward the sky and sip the water I poured over their roots. But, rain would eventually sneak in and dissolve a nitrogen-laden offering left at the base of a sunflower stalk before I could find, scoop and toss it over my back fence into those bitches' own yard, and the sunflower would cease growing at calf, knee or hip height.

The dogs would bark too, even more incessantly than they would shit, which always awoke my love's cat. No matter how she stroked the poor thing it would bristle and claw at her while the bitches barked. So, I would sing this lullaby to my love and her cat—

*When our blazing sun is gone,  
When he nothing shines upon,  
When you show your little light,  
My love, you sparkle all the night.*

And, the bitches would bark as my love stroked her cat and I would sing through her window more and more softly as the night wore on—

*And, your lover in this dark  
Thanks you for your tiny spark.  
I could not see which way to go,  
If you did not sparkle so.*

I became familiar with the bitches' routine. As they tired, I whispered more and more softly as I moved nearer and nearer to my love's window—

*In the darkest night I keep  
As I through your window peek.  
Yet, you cannot shut your eyes  
Till the stars fade from our sky.*

My lips would be all but pressed to the screen when the barking stopped and those bitches slipped into slumber. The cat and my love would at last sleep, and I too would retire to my own bed. Thus, I kept vigil.

But, the shit offerings and barking always resumed. Alas, it was for my love, her cat, my sunflowers and everyone's sleep that those bitches received my own offering—

*INGREDIENTS:*

*1 whole salmon, head intact  
1 handful 108mg iron pills  
2 cups Glühwein pulp (the waste at the bottom of brewed wine) made of raisins, oranges, sugar and any spices one wishes to add*

*DIRECTIONS:*

- 1. It is unnecessary to remove the scales, guts, liver, swim bladder and gills from the salmon as one would for human consumption. Simply open the fish—slip your knife tip into the vent and slice upwards toward the head and away from the guts, forcing your blade through the bony segment between the pelvic fins and stopping when you reach the base of the lower jaw.*
- 2. Press the Glühwein pulp throughout the guts, down the craw and into the mouth of the salmon.*
- 3. Stuff iron pills into the mouth, down the craw and throughout the salmon guts.*

I slapped that salmon upon the walk before both dogs. The smaller of the two locked onto the head of the fish and the other clamped its jaw around the tail. The smaller, greedier bitch won the tug-of-war that ensued by pulling the larger one

off the walk and into the street and growling throatily. The larger bitch let the salmon tail drop from its mouth and sat on its haunches, but could not resist joining the little one eventually in choking down every fin and bone, despite the little one's barking and nipping.

The toxicity of my concoction performed its wonders upon them both. The littlest never returned. The other meanders about mutely upon emaciated legs, and her shit no longer plagues my sunflowers, grass or walks.

So, here I stand on my dog shit absent walk in the middle of my dog shit absent yard as my love stands next door stroking her cat and smiling straight up at the sky as if only she, the gods and a content cat exist while my sunflowers approach a most magnificent adolescence. Yet, my love will need my lullaby tonight, for she has become accustomed to it. Love—it is such a complicated, compelling thing.



A loose thread snag that instigates the fray,  
an encyclopedic library book that is missing every odd page,  
a CD you borrowed just to find out  
all the songs you never heard have already been erased.  
Simplicity gets lost in the maze,  
Exits where the sign says Entrance

There is a reason we don't ask for directions.

## Only One Reason Was Given for Goodbye

Fragile  
as this broken eggshell  
of a yellow warbler, valentine  
pink and blotchy brown,  
jagged, serrated edges, with  
white peeking out like the  
innards of flooring tiles, so  
brittle life  
must barely have been contained  
within. I lay  
the shell beside

the stiffened, tissue-paper-delicate  
wings of a  
butterfly mounted on a popsicle stick X.  
spiked through the thorax with a pin  
before her wings could gain  
their full color—still  
damp, wrinkled, barely  
able to flutter for a heartbeat,  
ragged, bluish things with  
violet vein etchings these  
wings now conceal the

crumbling photo of a  
once treasured, rare phenomenon: your  
smile: a liquid thing  
splashed over your face smoothing lips,  
rippling eye corners, expanding usually  
fair cheeks flushed,  
your eyes, shining with rainbow resonance,  
barely visible now,  
ruted, chipped, and broken  
by handmade wrinkles worn into paper

the photo is folded over a rejected  
Christmas ornament, ovate  
as that warbler egg,  
like us this ornament  
failed before its first

Christmas, imperfect with  
scratched glass and crooked hook,  
tossed into the trashcan outside  
a department store, and now

tucked in beside  
a rolled condom, torn  
just slightly,  
the flesh-feel and color lingering in  
a useless, unused item, that  
the corkscrew of my mind transforms into  
a icon of something so easily taken  
for granted. . .perhaps gold  
would have made a better symbol  
but would have been even more  
useless. . . .

I've wrapped everything  
in tissue tied  
with a single strand that  
somehow survived, a rope worn thin as  
the jokes and promises given  
once upon a time.  
tucked inside a  
matchbox stamped  
FRAGILE  
from every angle.

## Self-Loathing is the Afterthought

First I choose the method(s)—  
nothing too Colonel Mustard-in-the-kitchen-with-the-knife corny—  
then I choose the order.  
Not a random process, a meticulous design  
checks them off one, by one,  
by one...

Order: the method should fit the individual.

Gets-decapitated-by-industrial-fan writes out the one blue, one green eyed girl.  
Goes-crazy-and-guts-himself should be cool-headed with snakeskin boots  
because it's unexpected  
(unless suicide read more dramatically in a Generals shoes).  
Raped-and-beaten-to-death can't be a girl—  
cliché and boring—  
but maybe a young man,  
if the setting is prison,  
or a performing arts academy.  
Problem characters, those with a mind separate from mine,  
go first. Their elimination triggers  
the freedom rush of running on endorphins.

Order: most expendable narrows the field for first place.

Who is the most apparent threat, drama queen, or cutthroat with enemies?  
Will the pulse run quicker if I choose the biggest symbol, fool, or hero?  
This victim might glean the most tears  
because he's innocent, a poet, newlywed, or sixteen and should never have been  
a soldier.  
Who will the audience expect to be killed?  
Who don't they expect, or want, to see hanging from that third story balcony.  
Who lives is also important—  
a parent, friend, thug with a grudge,  
the innocent bystander, an oaf the hero needs to bump into  
might be the deciding factor.

Order: mechanical means placing a number to every body.

Who has which skills and where do they come into play?  
Are they plot essential or just helpful?  
Which lover should die first, which troop should John Doe be placed into?

Who I like most doesn't matter,  
and excitement is a momentary inconvenience.  
The arrangement might follow an obvious chronology—  
intensifying the drama or linking a chain of acquaintances—  
or a arbitrary system may be chose—  
order in disguise,  
a preplanned surprise ending.

The one perk of being a writer,  
you choose who lives/dies,  
experience the psychotic thrill  
of absolute control,  
manipulating an audience,  
evoking torture/cheers,  
This thrill the average person, even average artists,  
never feels:  
like assuming the role of  
A ruler, a general,  
A serial killer,  
God.

## A Relationship That Never Existed

Our tongues never tried to tie a knot  
entwined in the space between lips  
as they part, suck, nuzzle neck flesh  
and tit. I never licked sweat  
from your chest, or felt the firm squeeze  
of your fingers kneading  
the moist clay of my breasts.  
You never kissed my thigh. I never groped.  
There were no giggle, wrestle, shove into  
bed moments; no soaked seaweed-strands  
of hair plastered against forehead  
during groaning midnight throes.  
You never left plum and apple  
splotches, never chained me to the bed  
post, or accepted tiger pride scratches.  
I never even sucked, never stroked,  
never listened to your heaving breath  
in the silence of early morning  
swathed in wet sheets and  
satisfaction.

But two quarters in a casino jukebox  
buys a Chris Cornell moment  
to remind me of how we got lost  
in U-turns and city park signs  
when I offered you a ride home,  
the windshield iced silver  
thick as fog because I couldn't  
find the defrost. Both stomach and heart  
flipped when you answered my text,  
and when you didn't shrug me off  
as I lay my head upon your shoulder  
while ridding a cramped Chicago elevator.  
But we didn't speak about it.  
We talked about the weather and French  
quizzes, current events, religious fascism.  
You called yourself God—your  
inside joke—and I believed you  
when you insisted you knew me

better than I ever could  
know myself.

Now, I watch from the far side  
of a railway bench  
as your lashes cast a fluttering  
spider web lattice of shadow upon pale skin.  
Yellow jackets buzz  
at closed trashcan lids  
and wild geese honk  
hungry in the distance,  
as you doze, waiting on a train  
bound for Chicago,  
one year after our first visit,  
it's easier to answer "fuck no"  
when someone asks if we are  
together.



## Orchid Tierney

d/evolve

She says – hello my Papeete! He  
says - you are my private safari!  
She says – let’s follow fêtes, let’s  
kiss with sticky floss lips. He says –  
and ride carousels, make love on  
Ferris Wheels. She says – I will fix  
our dinner. He says – and I will fix  
our sink. She says would you buy  
the milk. He says sorry I forgot. She  
says im working late tonight. He  
says its just a keg between the boys.  
she says skidmarks on toilet seats.  
he says toenails on remote. she says  
sex twists word codes *fine*. he says  
nag nag mind read *whats wrong*.  
she says bikini atoll he says congo  
she says he says she says he says  
she he she he she he she he she  
she



.title[thewhitepageisnotblanktheauthordoesnotexist]

.ini [barthes.scriptor]  
.ini [whitepage]

chan: reader  
term: the page "SYSTEMSOUTPUT"

scriptorcache=limited  
msg:

.entry

[poem] [poem] [poem]  
[poem] [poem] [poem]  
[poem] [poem] [poem]

;queue [metaphorsimilenorestart]

; establish channel for terminal  
readercache= infinity

run: c:/window.author.gho

.dmp [author]

press:  
.exe

pd mallamo

## Okazaki Strip

*And the seas's edge, the fringe of waves washed up with refuse, invited us to approach. Sirens disguised as empty hair-oil bottles, headless sardines, jerrycans and half-peeled leeks, chanted their hoarse-voiced summons; we were to go down the steps, still puddled with salt water, and without undressing, entrust our bodies to the waves.*

Le Clezio THE INTERROGATION

*So then in lustful, that is, in darkened affections, is the true distance from thy face.*

St. Augustine CONFESSIONS

▽

Achilles Muckelroy, whiteman, drive slo-careful up a rutted dirt stockfence road

**BOOOOOOOOOO**

trailer in front explode #!HolySantaMaria!# Angelo spin crazy counterclockwise

cartwheels forty feet high sideways due west, his long dark tresses and arms centrifugal, a giddy orbiting toreador tearing across the sky with his head on fire

Juan fly the other way as if shot from a cannon, a blazing low arc east skips him facefirst across the iron-cold ground

shockwave/collapsewindshield/wrapAchilles'face

truck roll fast aimless

shrapnel whistle through cab

chunks of trailerhouse crash on roof & flaming black mushroom roil high into frigid prairie overcast

salt-on-tongue – Shit!

now steering wheel and shirt red with new blood -

Nose. Damn nose. Sleeve wipes mouth&chin.

Finds a wide spot to turn around and head back-road the way he come, cold hard slipstream on him all the way

2

Achilles throw the Ching & it come up dharma sticks which is more-or-less naked tao and that's a good thing so he come back next day driving wary through the Christian landscape, Kansas City northwestward into the Great Plains again. Desperate Midwestern billboards proclaim Jesus is Real! He's Real! He's Real! Really Really Real! Really! Promise! If-I'm-Lyin-I'm Dyin Really Real! Jesu for the money lender! Jesu for the Hindu! Jesu for the pygmy!

Is it possible, he wond-a?

3

Last five miles he stops each minute or so to glass for cops. When he's reasonably sure the authorities won't ever show he drives right up. A shallow blackened crater mark the spot. One small end of the single-wide smolders upside-down across a small ravine. The coyotes have already worked on Juan but Antonio still intact, splayed with his right cheek pressing Earth / arms embracing Pachamama as if she the *last* mother, which, in his case, she certainly wuz.

He pulls a pick and shovel from his truck and spends the next hour cracking frozen soil and bentonite. He digs a seven-foot pit the shape of a coffin and drags first Antonio then Juan, removing their wallets and rings before tipping them in. He got three bags quicklime in the bed/pours these down and burns the empties. Fills the hole and mounds over the extra/looks just like a grave but so what?no one to see or care out here/Shit! Best glass shak on the plains bar none.

Adios amigos, he says, standing sweatsoaked/exhausted respectfully to one side, leaning on his shovel. You wuz good producers. R-I-P.

4

Achilles Muckelroy sees the world but the world does not see him. He lives by himself in a tight little fifth-floor walkup he rent cheap in a bad section of Kansas City. He got four locks on the door and a little video cam wired to net/tapped into his iPhone in case anybody stupid enough to break in the door. He's also got two-hundred and ninety-one thousand yankee dollars & counting plasticwrapped & hidden beneath the shower. He's mixing this undetectably with the filthy feudal wealth of the dynastic rich, bleeding it a little at a time into the multisplendored american investment establishment, building up his own little fraction of the land of the free.

5

Finding a replacement pair of smart ambitious Mexicans is not hard. In two weeks he got another factory six miles out of Narka way the hell up in Republic County near the Nebraska line. He spends three days explaining The Method, makes sure Ramon y Alejandro have food and supplies enough for a month, instructs them on the fine art of avoiding instantaneous death while manufacturing methamphetamine (including a cautionary tale involving two erstwhile&unanticipated beaner astronauts), warns them on the use & abuse of meth itself, and leaves them more or less for good. The Nigerian will take it from here.

6

The Nigerian is actually a Congolese x-MaiMai commander named Xenophon Lumumba who through a convoluted and devious triangulation of blackmail/bribe/family is admitted to the United States as a refugee. For purposes of running drugs in America as opposed to the Congo & environs he is known as Heavy D. This is interesting because Heavy is no more than 5 foot 9 inch/160 lbs. In a dark room his eyes glow like wet pearls, at once malevolent and mesmerizing. He is supernaturally intelligent and perceptive but there are things about America he will never understand. He understands this and is thus content to occupy a position subordinate to Achilles – a man, he also understands, in his own singular category of indigenous brilliance.

I haff not yet heard from the people who will bless my liffe, he says when Achilles rings him. Now I haff heard from yooou. For tooday that will haff tooo dooo.

D the first&most important connection in a long careful chain of connections Achilles arranges between the factories/users/himself. Like a safety loop that gives way at the slightest stress, Xeno renders the rest of the chain for all practical intents and purposes unknowable. Breakage is certain given the nature of the business. Putting it back together again is what Achilles do best.

7

Heavy D has another business: For a given sum, usually astronomical, he will procure noclothes photos of the unavailable woman you crave, up to but not necessarily including the Queen of England. This may be your boss, your neighbor's wife, the woman who works six cubicles down - or, as an astonished Heavy relates to Achilles one day, your sister or your daughter. It may even be your *own* wife.

*My Got!* Does this wortl of corruption haff no end? Such things they *never* did in Congo Free State, which was *VERY* free I tell you! You would not belief the numba of people who dee-zy-a theees even in Kansas City! Some fruit is the forbidden: You will *Pay!* You will *Pay!* *Got* will make you *Pay!*

Xenophon's struggle with the inner animal is a somewhat inconsistent & selective struggle.

You got the damn pictures anyway, didn't you?

But this is *business* my good friend. Of course! Of course! There is no *choice!*

Sometimes all it takes is persistence with the unfiltered search engine. Sometimes it takes \$500, the maid or plumber and a very small camera. Sometimes it takes very black Heavy D sneaking all black around black back yards at 9 PM with a Nikon and happyheart going pittypat and a long heavy lens/breathing heavy/x-haling a little laughing nervous gas ocxxxxxxsionally from his x-hole.

I tell you something else, he says to Achilles: Thea ah *ALL* Republican. Every one! He points to his head: Xenophon know! I can smell dem – actually *smell* dem!

This is no surprise to Achilles. The only political sticker he's ever seen on an Escalade or a Yukon pulling over for that little plastic bag o bliss say *John McCain & Sarah Palin*.

Democrat, they got this out of they system long ago. Now it organic garden. Now it Birkenstock.

Shit.

8

We got us a little pipeline problem upcoming, Achille tells him.

You are saying we haff another rocket?

That's right.

Thea ah space-mans?

Both of them ...

*My Got!* He claps his hands and shouts in such a way that Achilles can never tell if he is expressing glee or despair.

... so you better get yor tribe togeth-a.

Red ant/black ant, shouts Xenophon. *War a-gain!*

Ready yor mymy jist in case -

*THIS* time we take it all, shouts Xenophon: Thea cat-tle! Thea wo-man. He makes a slashing motion with his hand: And then we take thea lifes. *All thea lifes!*

9

Last time Heavy fought Inca Bois there wuz five fatalities no cop ever learned, one his, four theirs. Only ones knew wuz tribe & inca bois and all kept shut like some extra-tight opus dei order of the calabrian mafia, which, in a certain sense, is not far from the truth. Buried&quicklmed altogether Tribe&Inca on the prairie.

This ain't fuckin Exxon, sez Achilles one day. You cain't just do any damn thang you pleez.

Tribe paid incas twentyfivethousand dollars each KIA & handled the burials themselves but the truce was a nervous truce and Achilles knew it wouldn't take much to tip inca back in the game. Something like a little pipeline problem for instance. Incas had a man in Kentucky supplied truckloads of cheap poisonous crank gave the whole business a bad name – housewives who tried this shit would never come back/might even switch to crack which is harder to use but won't make you sick for a week. Housewives where the action is: TV, sugar, hydro, lies. In the daily peristalsis of life in America these go down like bread&wine.

Achilles got three other factories on the pampas with six other potential Mexican astronauts, plus a factory smack-dab in the middle of tiny Stoopid, Missouri operated by the chief-of-police & his brother Leon, but still cain't meet demand. Lose one house and system trips, Chinese train wreck if ev-a they wuz one – and that jist females in the burbs cain't get they fix. Jonesing blond from Overland Park ever-bit as ugly as the empty susta from favela-KC only diff being the blond drive Benz and get her teeth fixed whereas the susta a twenty-year ford and don't have none.

BOTH run yo ass down on the Home Depot lot. Where's my medicine? scream the blond. Where my shit asshole? scream the susta. They all screams and they all screams just the same.

Achilles go with Xenophon one day, a *special* special delivery breaks all his rules to a very nice house in Overland Park. They pull in across the street and wait. Achilles sees an upstairs curtain open and a woman make a gesture with her fingers at her crotch that offends even him. O her, sez Xenophon: Preacher wife. That big family church in Lenexa off 95<sup>th</sup>. Smiling he lifts the little bag of crystal to the level of their eyes. I sweeeet-tan up thaaat Diet Coke. & sometimes something else.

Just what the *Hell* the old man think she do at home all day, Achilles wond-a, between Fat Klub, cheeseburger and Christian Worship Hour? This thing just *Itchin* get away from you, dumbass. And here we go.

10

Xenophon had gratuitously and cynically equipped his ragtag Congo ruffians with an implement of his own devious devising, a kind of shillelagh equipped with a sharpened spatula he calls boji - which is Swahili or Norwegian for "can opener." Having thus opened many invading Rwandans he has found this horror to be of some utility in the New World too and during outbreaks of gang hostility employs it with sadism and pleasure. Sometimes the mere sight of Africans with these gut rippers in their hands is enough to pre-empt violence. The ominous shadow of the boji hangs helpfully over several winning negotiations.

But how he misses the soft rattling of distant machine guns. Kill loot rape burn freedom, they chant. Be finally and at last precisely what thou art O Xenophon, O Beautiful Lion!

Now this voice has been replaced by the Sunday bells of the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City on Parallel Road, and the doppler roar of stock cars running the oval on the Kansas Speedway just off State Street. It is not the same, of course. There is less freedom, of course – less looting, less killing, certainly less raping. And yet, smiles Xenophon when he hears these bells and these mighty V-8's, sometimes the Lion still roars. Even in America.

11

Achilles got a woman out in Oskaloosa dresses up like Dorothy of a summer morn. Gave her Juan & Antonio's rings and wallets for which she was appropriately, actively & immediately grateful. She's not goodlooking and she's not badlooking and she don't mind his smoking cause she smokes 2pacs too and she love him unreservedly and he treats her and her three children under five years begotten of three different distant men without the advantages of matrimony better than any man has ever treated her and her three misbegotten children but that ain't saying much cause Achilles no prize hisself. She feeds him the reddest of red meats. She don't ask what he do. One day because she's abject white trash she brings up the subject of children as in more of them. Don't you dare, warns Achilles stretching forth his arm and sticking his finger in her face. Cause I got bastard blood. You got enough problems already without more a me runnin around.

12

Xenophon believes that redemption is best approached with stealth and great caution lest the quest for the Gift of Gifts become yet one more curse and calamity. For truth be told Xenophon is a Republican too, the genuine Reaganite trickle-down piece-of-shit, to wit: If Xenophon be happy, eventually everybody around him be happy too mos likely. If Xenophon well fed, well maybe some crumbs fall somehow into another mouth. Xenophon reads Seneca and Tacitus compulsively, knows them inside out. Thus he understands that virtue is its own reward, there is no other, even in heaven.

Now Heavy's job is complicated by the appearance of a sudden&lethal north-alabama whitemafia called The Hick & known to have their inbred fingers in every methpie except meth in KC. Why they might want to muscle their way into a relatively small and well-saturated market he can only surmise but if he had to surmise he'd say they wuz training for something bigg-a & bett-a and that's not good -

But Heavy knows every bad African in Kansas City, and some of those be very bad in-deed. Three of them, men he laughingly identifies only as BadNiggaOne, BNigga2 & BN3 are wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity committed during their not-so-holy service in the Lord's Resistance Army, Okot Odiambo's Ugandan terror franchise. They haff done, Heavy tells him, things the inca bois have not even dreeeeeeemed off. They haff done things the Inca bois cannnooot comprehend!

These Africans haul dire zeitgeist everywhere, a cold cloud follows them even on hot clear summer afternoons.

The Nigerian tell him, One day I wake up and ask myself, 'Where doooo it end?' Dooo you know where it end, my Friend?

I buy my hotrod. I buy my little tomato patch I guess.

Even though he does not believe in Heaven, Heavy knows there's a soul in each machine. He knows the Big Bang was only the slightest movement of the little finger on God's left hand. He knoweth that Man the Angel rarely prevaieth over Man the Beast.

Haff we not *all* been in that place? he asks. Haff we not *all* needed to be healed?

Among Heavy's reflexive Republican addicts is an endocrinologist named Jacob DuBois, who attended the prestigious Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Now here this crazy mon, say Xenophon, who has *di-rect and unfet-ted access* to *lit-rally* the best drugs on *earth*, yet he choses *our very own methamphetamine*. It is for people like theees that we must make shua our glaaaas is the *purest possible*. It is for men like theees that we must make shua we ah the *best!*

Doctor Dubois is writing an article for the Journal of the American Medical Association entitled *Adrenal-based Drug Free Relaxation Response in Level Six Anxiety Patients: A Holistic Approach*. He is thinking of starting his very own drug-free relaxation clinic.

If Dr. Dubois ever wrote a poem about his meth, this would be it:

When the joy hits  
 I go up & up & up & up  
 New soul a balloon of pain and light  
 Everything  
 Everything  
 Everything  
 Everything  
 Now!

Achilles' sweetheart is actually named Marilyn Monroe, her daddy having derived from a long & distinguished line of Monroes stretching far back into the invisible past, which past actually becomes invisible immediately after daddy but no matter; and a mother named Marilyn after the starlet with the drug problem because her mother had a drug problem too and Marilyn was a inspiration even though she dosed herself to death. But no matter. She was still a inspiration, the way she dressed & so forth -

Marilyn is a John Wayne Gacy fanatic and has read every word ever published about him, sometimes twice. When Achilles wants to surprise her he'll log on to johnwaynegacy.com and buy her something fancy: a JWG t-shirt, or a pair of JWG embossed crotchless panties or a JWG custom bra with embroidered nipple holes or a JWG coffee cup. On her birthday he bought her an old water bill addressed to the Demon himself, at the very house where he had interred the mortal remains of thirty innocent young souls. It cost Achilles almost two-thousand dollars and she said it was the best thing she ever got in her life and maybe it wuz poor thang.

At one end of her doublewide Marilyn has a John Wayne Gacy shrine, a stacked-up pyramid built around a white bedsheet with John's last known photograph at the top. Descending Christmas-tree like are the victim's names and, where available, photos and a description of the manner of death. There is also Marilyn's poetic tribute to Mr. Gacy:

There once was a little baby  
 And his name was John Wayne Gacy  
 So cute and itty bitty  
 Suckin on his mamas titti  
 No one then culd understand!  
 He woud be the greatist man!  
 Now hes up with mighty GOD!  
 With all the other holy ANGLES!  
 YOU WILL BE MISSED JOHN WAYNE GACY!!!!!!!

He wuz a great man, she sez. I can't defend what he done, but that doesn't mean he wuzn't a great man. The strong survive. John Wayne Gacy was a survivor!

At least she ain't no lesbian, Achilles tells Xenophon.

Xenophon has an opinion of the woman somewhat below his opinion of cockroaches: People this stupid should not be allowed to live, much less reproduce. As for what Achilles sees in her, well, it could only be the sex, but *Dea Got!* how good could it *be* to put up with *theees?*

Marilyn's got plans. Right now she's managing a KwikStop in Nortonville. One of these day she's going to open a daycare. She already knows the name: The JWG Helping Hands For Tiny Tots Academy. She will *personally* sew each tiny tot a little red white & blue clown suit.

Good News, Achilles tells Xenophon thru his cellphone: Buffett just bought the rest of Burlington Northern Santa Fe. It's BUY on railroads.

18

This is how Xenophon imagines the Lord Eternal high above as he observes his & Achilles' dissolute machinations: With patience, compassion, love, understanding. They must do what they must do, he imagines the Lord saying to himself. What *choice* do they *haff*?

19

Xenophon sits zazen in his dark ride. He listens to Fela Kuti's *Music Is The Weapon Of The Future*. He watches a little scene unfold a block away. He flips open his phone and sez to Achilles, We haff gott incas at Deadpoint mahk-ing territory like dogs – actually *peeing* on de *street*! We haff got Hick pimp&ride across de Plaza with .50 cal. *sticking-right-out-de-window*!

20

If Achilles ever wrote a poem about his life this would be it:

All the shit I ever wonted when I wuz young?  
I got it all now and then sum  
I just had to think own it and work own it  
I'm not as stupid as you think I am

21

The preacher's wife is the former Nancy-Ann Hooper and her life changed 180 after her gay-bashing mega-church preacher-husband was discovered snorting&porking in St. Louis with a male prostitute named Theodore Dubinski who essentially gave him up to an *Enquirer* reporter for \$50,000 and a glowing intro to a high-end escort service in L.A. Nancy-Ann is one of those entitled women from an entitled mercantile white family thinks it owns the world and you can't reason them out of it unless like Nicolae Andruta Ceausescu & wife this is attempted at the point of a gun and even then they *may* talk back and you *may* end up shooting the stupid asshole(s) anyway.

Nicolae Andruta & wife were shot. That's how it goes.

However, after Pastor America is driven from his lucrative pulpit by other right-wing homo-hatin' GOPChristians undeniably guilty of same or worse, an awful reality sets in for Nancy-Ann. Said reality, Nancy-Ann discovers, is at least in the short-term effectively addressed with wanton meth-fueled sex involving a former young male parishioner Pastor "A" once counseled with unexpected if partial success for krystal and same-gender attraction. It's a wonderful thing, the young man tells her after a particularly reckless episode (viewed by a neighbor both knew watched from a window nextdoor): First, Pastor helps me. Then you do, too. Lord's going to cure me for sure!

22

Xenophon got a Aunt in Swaziland married a Gujarat diamond merchant she met on a smuggling trip to Calcutta. Does a good hot-rock business but of course we always want more don't we?so when Xenophon phone one day with a proposal involving twenny-G for one week's worth of medium-risk travel she say Yes! Said proposal involved the suspension between her generous breasts of a small leather pouch containing three snake eggs. It also involved clearing customs in the USA but no problem/worse come to worse I just say mothafocka goodluckcharm or breakfast or whatever/jedi-mindtrick. And she's right, woman could sneak a giraffe. Woman sauntered right on through with head held high.

Xenophon rec'd eggs in good working order and nurtured them under a heat lamp for ten days. They all hatch bitch & he feeds crickets and Tupac Shakur nonstop one disc after another continuous from two large speakers booming at the end of the room.

Very quickly they move up to mice, rats, small rabbits. In one year they are all over six feet and growing. Scats stink of curry, sure sign of the real thing. The reptiles are gray-silver-gray with a wide grinning indigo mouth and two long fangs. Said fangs have enough venom kill a horse. Then another horse. Then another horse. Then another horse. Then another horse.

23

Quite by accident Dr. Jacob DuBois finally learns where his money is going, an unaccountable evaporation that begins with his wife's generous allotment but also seems to involve, despite her repeated and vehement denials, other resources as well: household and maintenance money, bill money, grocery money, entertainment money, vacation money, & finally, savings. Driving his wife's car one day his cellphone slides off the passenger seat at a sharp left and when he stops and gets out and walks around to the passenger side and fishes around under the adjustment mechanism he finds his cell phone. He also finds a month's tithing receipt for \$18,561.22 from a right-wing gay-bashing mega-church, The YAWEAH Anti-Satanic CHURCH of the Free & Willing LOVE of Christ JESUS Almighty -

- his patient Nancy-Ann's husband's mega-church, to be exact. He knows this because she invites him to services every time she sees him.

24

Three clerics counseled Pastor America post-defrock for his same-gender issues. Within the synod they are known as Team Heal! Of each it could be frankly said that not one was himself *personally inexperienced* or even *nonchalantly experienced* in the more or less infinite realm of sexual misconduct.

Counseling Pastor #1, LeWilk Jameson, Metosh, Indiana

White Man, age 61

SEXUAL HISTORY:

TEENAGER - sister; four different kinds of farm animal; cousin

ADULT - wife; three generations of the same neighbor family, namely, grandmother, mother, daughter. (Secretly his proudest conquest if you don't count that one very goodlooking first cousin [on his mother's side] ); thinks of this and smiles whenever he hears the words, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.") Prostitutes in Thailand and Korea while serving in the US Navy.

STD: gonorrhea.

Counseling Pastor #2, Lee Arthur Crock, Seymour, Arkansas

White Man, age 52

SEXUAL HISTORY:

TEENAGER - sister; dog

ADULT - wife; one very drunk aunt, his mother's sister to be exact, on the bathroom floor twice, commencing 1:30 A.M., New Years Day, Year of Our Lord 1989. Assorted prostitutes.

STD: Herpes Simplex Type 2, most likely transmitted to him by aforementioned aunt.

Counseling Pastor #3, Henry LaCock, Simsipissee, Louisiana

White Man, age 49

SEXUAL HISTORY:

TEENAGER - sister, brother

ADULT - wife; certain New Orleans women not his wife with whom he not only consorts but has begotten 3 children. Assorted prostitutes.

STD: Herpes Simplex Type 2, likely transmitted to him by a prostitute.

Xenophon call BN3 and say meet me Home Depot parking noontime.

He then take his snakestick and extracts from his snakepen Snake2 which is by 8 inches largest of the 3 and drop him cautiously into a heavy canvas sak with a tie-rope near the mouth. He put this in a gym bag with Tupac disc and take it down to his ride.

BN3 pull up and it a nastycoldblowing KC day, all the window roll up and heata on. Get in, say Xenophon when he park up close. I will tell you what tooo dooo.

So Dr. Dubois call Xenophon and tell him he's having a problem with this preacher, a particularly noisome hypocrite & erstwhile cleric at this godawful megachurch-church his wife goes to and his wife is giving away all sorts of money down there and even though the preacher has been removed he thinks he's probably getting it somehow anyway and maybe something else too, you know how those friggin preachers are and he hears that for a certain fee Xenophon will take certain pics and he'd like him to take those kind of photos regarding said preacher's wife name of Nancy-Ann then threaten to post these on the web as an act of revenge and justice if Pastor Ass-Wipe won't give his money back. Nancy-Ann's a patient of mine, says Dr. Dubois. She sees me for age management. I suppose I could do it myself. She's an attractive woman. But I don't want to get my hands dirty. I'm a doctor, you know.

Xenophon drive all the way out to nowhere at 3AM and he sees Marilyn's car. He takes his snakestick & tries quietly the front door, finding it not only unlocked but slightly open. The room is dark & Tupac still pimpin, which make him smile a knowing smile, that BN3 de-*pendable* as *hell*. He reaches carefully inside and hits the light switch then pushes the door which won't go any further. He braces a leg in the doorjamb and pushes hard enough to get his head in. Marilyn's body lies X-wise in the entry. He scans around for snake. No snake. He pushes hard again and enters, then walks carefully about, looks behind the couch, in the cupboards above the refer, all-ov-a. No snake. He lights up as he walks, checking room-by-room. Two dead children on a bed. Noise under John Wayne Gacy shrine/he figures snake. With snakestick lifts carefully the sheet upon which photos of the dead are pinned: a tiny wide-eyed girlchild hugs her knees/trembles violently. Holding the sheet up Xenophon sits slowly down crossed-leg indianstyle and regards the girl for several minutes, neither of them uttering a sound/wind outside only the whine of wind outside in the electrical and telephone wires. He whispers to her: *De strong sur-vife*. He reaches slowly in and draws her close. She flings her little arms around his neck and holds on for dear life. He leaves stepping carefully, peering around his clinging prize turkey for something snake. No snake. Props open doors front&back/sets fire to the couch/buckles her in the carseat beside him & drive away lights off.

Xenophon's favorite magazine is *Playboy*. He knows from his freelance photographic work that most female bodies are disfigured or blemished or ungainly or repellent in some shocking and totally unexpected way and that the disrobing he frequently witnesses thru nighttime windows is as likely to reveal horrors as delights. He appreciates with a connoisseur's eye what the artful melding of scalpel, makeup, and lens may accomplish. More than once he has wanted to advise his visually-violated females on steps they could take to improve things. More than once he has thought of sending anonymously a photograph with numbered arrows drawn and suggestions written on an accompanying chart.

Achilles knows the trailer burns before it all the way to the ground and knows there is death. He drives out and perches some distance with his binoculars and watches the emergency Vs and leaves.

Achilles throw the Ching & it come up dharma sticks which is more-or-less naked tao and that's a good thing so he drive back after bodies been hauled off and fire people think they discov-a cause (they did not). Takes his witch-hazel dowsing rod in both hands, clears his mind, and, beginning at one end, goes carefully over the rubble, step-by-step. When the stick dip three-quarters of an hour later/three-quarters of the way through the trialer he knows they somethin. On both knees he scrapes layer by layer through two feet of blackened ruin and at the very bottom finds a section of backbone. Attached to said backbone are ribs so circular they form a tube. A tube like a snake.

24 hrs. later Achilles call Xenophon: I know you got the baby.

2 min later Xenophon get another call, this one from Nancy-Ann: If I *EVER* go see another movie where Bob De Niro's the sensitive guy, please come over here and *shoot me in the head!*

29

Then Nancy-Ann flips shut the cellphone and takes another long sip of her meth-fortified Diet Coke. Judge Jeanine Pirro is making a guest appearance on *The View* (which except for *Cougar Town* is her all-time favorite and that's just for the arguing) and Nancy-Ann loves Jeanine's tan if it's really a tan and she's not just a mexican or puerto rican or something, and Jeanine's nose job if it's really a nose job but it sure looks like one. Judge Jeanine is always so *certain!* She just *knows!* National security for instance: Jeanine knows what to do with those god damn Arabs –she'd send them back, every one, and so would Nancy-Ann because Jesus made America for white people, that's what the fucking bible is all about isn't it? Elizabeth Hasselbeck too, she's a white woman and she's blond and skinny and she nodoubt binge&purge just like Nancy-Ann and she is so *knowledgeable* about the national security of *Our Country!*

Nancy-Ann takes another deep swig and turns the volume up a click or two. Here's a commercial for medicine helps a woman not pee all the damn time. Next, a commercial helps a woman deal with the shame and discomfort of fibromyalgia wherever that comes from, Pastor A says it's all in your head, but Dr. Dubois gives such *good* medicine, although those gin-soaked raisins seem to work well, too. Next, a commercial for the woman whose bones break right and left and she don't know why but soon she's in a wheelchair with gray hair & a shawl on her lap. Next, a commercial for women so *HELL-A* depressed she ignores the commercial and chugs the rest of her DietCoke all the way to the bottom and beams when Big Kris hits like a sledgehammer and grabs the cellphone and dials Xenophon and shouts in a too-many-secret-cigarettes-this-morning rasp, *You may never speak of god to me again!*

Then channel-change to Judge Alex who is so *handsome!* A drag queen sues a very ugly blond because she holds his dresses in lieu of past-due rent. Judge A observes their combat impassively – but you can be sure he'll fix this mess in a jiffy! It's a *snap* for Judge A!

30

Hills & simple farmers, thinks Achilles – yes, simple tillers who begot The Word - & here's me with neither fence nor horse -

31

Now Xenophon got a problem a Big Problem and he know it but also a opportunity, too. Manufacturing Krystal in Kansas is not exactly a long-term arrangement so now *Is The Time* to make that shift. He got heavy invest, plenty cash and now goods to sell, namely 25lb. highquality kandy, one extra snake after he handle the mafia & something else teenytiny&pretty and veryverywhite that will likely go fast&high somewhere on the Arabian Peninsula.

He pac a gymbag full of amp&cash/two gymbag each with mamba&tupac/gymbag with tennytinypretty and last one gymbag w/clothes-toothbrush&shit.

He call BN123: We got work. Bring boji.

32

Achilles drives straightaway to Nancy-Ann's and ring&ring&ring until she finally come down from the tv and open the door. He force his way in and shove her back. Nancy-Ann pull off her tubetop/hold out her hand/singsuddenly&strange *Calgon, take me away!*

That all he want?

He thinks I'm dirty. Won't touch me. Just wants to look.

He stole my little girl. You call me if you see her.

He hands her the little plastic bag. Do what I say and I'll smoke yor husband.

Long as you do it niice and slooow she laugh then take his hand and pull him down a hallway into a big glass room with a white couch in the middle. She peel blackstretchpants from her bonywhiteass/kiss Achilles hard on his ear & brace herself forward on the sofa like a storm comin'. I'm the goat, she say stand there all skiny-neked. I *know* you know what that means.

33

Xenophon meet BN123 as usual at HomeDepot and hand ov-a one snake&tupac. Here she be, he say, those Hick muthafocka all together in thea lit-tle nest somewhea because they all jabb-a de same way, that how they com-fort-aaable. Put in de snake and what she don't dooo you dooo.

He make boji/chopchop with his hand and say, You will giff dem some-ting dea will nev-a fo-get! Numb-a tree, you go wit me.

34

BN12 park a block distant, fade señor Tupac a bit & discuss best placement of the animal, car or house. They go w/ house. BN1 reach behind for another bag and bring out a full bottle Jack Daniels plus two clear clean tall glasses. He fill them up with smoky/amber and they clink rims as usual prior to big job *AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHSHIT THAT GOOD!* JD help with the normal jitter-ay and today more jitter-ay than usual cause they got monsta-in-a-bag just a few inches back. BN1 say he overhear Xeno talk about W. Buffett & how he now own ALL Burlington Northern Santa Fe.

Shit, say BN2: I can't find RR stock *no-whea!* *Everyone* holdin thes mothafocka *close* to they ches –

You right, say BN1: You buy entire goddam track or you don't buy nothin. You got to *know* someone – that crack-a muthafocka fo instance. I *know* he hold RR. *How de hell?*

BN2 then hold forth on his structured product and allows as how he got half the derivative in Put and the other half in Call and figure to cover his ass bothway.

BN1 fill them up again & say Shit Bro., them days be ova! Obama put the scurry on *that*. Even the *OJ* be lock-up now! If I can't get FDIC I get RR. If I can't get RR I just bury my skrill in de backyard.

They find a small crawlhole to the space between floor and ground and while one keep close lookout the other pry it open and both crawl inside with toolbag/monsta-bag/boji/flashlight. They push they-selves slowly across the middle length until they see a

dim ray streaming in through a mousehole above. From the sound of things the mafia in another part of the house so they quietly enlarge the hole with a medium rattail file and then BN2 put on his glove and take the sak out of the gymbag and feel around for the head and grab it and BN1 open sac carefulcarefulcareful and take the animal right behind the jawline and pull her all the way out, then shake her and hiss at her and push her, mad as hell, through the mousehole into the house with the Hick. They laugh so hard they have to stuff their mouth with snakesak and crawl back outside, still laughing, to stand beside the backdoor w/bojis held high.

35

When the iPhone buzz Achilles know *be-fo* he even know -

The vid catch X&BN3 crack open his door and catch X drop his pants and flash Achilles his blackass with two-handed fing-a from the south then they both of them tear the apt. to pieces – which, after they rip the shower out and don't find nothin \$ they do with increasing rage and abandon.

But Achilles move his shit. Now Bank of America got his shit. Citibank got his shit. JP Morgan-Chase got his shit. Providence & Worcester Railroad got his shit. Global Railway Industries, Ltd. got his shit. New York Regional Rail Corporation got his shit.

I guess that well-built aunt in Swaziland stay in Swaziland, Achilles think w/ crack-a smile on his face.

36

Then Xenophon make quickstop at the offices of Dr. Dubois, Board Certified Endocrinologist. He takes a gymbag and his pass card and walks up four flights of stairs and enters the doctor's suite from the rear. He makes his way stealthily to his office, shuts the door and waits. Dubois walks in ten minutes later. X hand him halfpound-sac most excellent shabu & show him wat in bag.

I need yooou check her out for loong ride. 16 hour sleep. He makes a slashing motion with his hand: Then she arrive in de Promise Lan!

I thought *this* was the Promised Land.

He play-punch the doctor's shoulder: Auntie /oooooooooove de little girl. De little white girl.

Then leave her, says Dr. Jacob Dubois. I'll call you when she's ready.

37

Terrified&furious, the snake slithers with lightening speed through the house striking anything that moves – and there is a *whole lot* of movement. Of 11 Hicks it manages to kill 5. One holes up in the bathroom and calls HQ in Guntersville to the effect this thing got a head like a coffin and eyes like the worst nightmare a man can have, *send reinforcements now!* Two run out the front door and down the street yelling on cellphones. Three tumble out the backdoor into the backyard where two soundlessly laughing Africans wait with the soundless boji.

38

Achilles throw the Ching & it come up dharma sticks which is more-or-less naked tao and that's a good thing -

Dubois brings in his nurse and shows her the child and tells her wat and she stands there with her arms croxxed and says finally, His African aunt my asscheeks -

High as hell Nancy-Ann ripppps west across the Great Plains w/ a little girl from some woman she never met killed by a 7-foot African snake from under a John Wayne Gacy shrine in a doublewidemobilehome on the Kansas flats.

No longer will Nancy-Ann or the dead woman tote the burden of their species. In fact, the last thing N-A did in KC was have her nails done at Waterloo Beauty Spa of London off Chouteau Trafficway.

Teenytinypretty sleeps unrestrained on the back seat, little arm thrown over her little head&silkyblond falling across her cheek and nose so beautiful so goddamn beautiful it makes Nancy-Ann cry & stop the car & run out into the empty bitter fields and

*SCREEEEEEEEAM SCREEEEEEEEEEEEEEAM*

*SCREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAM SCREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAM*

*SCREEAM*

till her sinus hemorrhages and she sits exhausted on the ground w/ her head hanging between her drawn-up knees dripping blood the color of Egypt. O Jesus thou son of God, she whispers, have mercy on me.

Then she wipes her nose with her fingers and flings away clots&snot and wipes her fingers on her whitepants and weary-walks back to her white Lexus & points it to California and confirms again her ice and cash and credit cards and naked pics from Xeno before she got so thin&haggard and the snake now writhing slowly in the gymbag in the trunk and looks around for cops and in a few miles sees I-70 for Denver and then hours later another serpent road low&fast&dark all the way to L.A.

L.A. L.A.

L.A.

## Philip Sultz

### Burchfield at Albright

After turning down the offer to teach a few times, he finally said okay, I'll do it. It was lucky for us, but his heart wasn't in it, and he wished he hadn't said it. We were just eight students, twice a week, but it wasn't about the numbers. He was a great painter, but unsuited for academia, and even though he knew everything we didn't, he seemed restless in town. Instead, he drove us out to his place, and we sketched in the fields where he painted.

Oct. 13, 1955

Dear Mr. Sultz:

Your letter and material arrived today and I am returning them at once with this letter as I think time may be a factor with you -

I am glad to see what you have been doing - Some of the things look very handsome, and the overall impression I get is one of good progress.

On the basis of what you have shown me here, I am glad to give you permission to use my name as a reference. I shall recommend that you be given a review by the jury - which is all you need from a reference. Inasmuch as I am a member of the jury, you understand that I can not commit myself further -

My recollections of the Albright Seminar are a bit hazy, but so even as I saw your photograph, I recalled you & your work - I remember the head well, and it still looks good.

You have presented your photographs quite handsomely -  
With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours  
Charles Beardsley

## Reflections

Sitting in the grass with him, it seemed everything growing, was sort of eye level, like some of his work. What I especially recall, was a very large up-right watercolor in his studio that may have been attached to the wall, leaning toward abstraction, unlike his field painting, with paper added on, and the big cabinet with many drawers where he kept his watercolors.

As the lone juror, Burchfield, for reasons known to him, awarded me first prize in the annual student show in 1952, for a big bony expressionist oil painting entitled, Rabbi, but better yet, after requesting his support for a Guggenheim Fellowship, he remembered me and my painting three year later.

**Ricardo Nazario y Colón**

Damaris

(Tracey Yvonne Williams)

Yo nunca sere abuela!  
Words with a smile, cutting  
the space between life and death.

Long before, after Damaris  
gave Orfeo her womb,  
she understood his infertility.

Her love was unwavering  
amidst echoes from familiar voices.  
We will support you niña.

She would never abandon Orfeo.  
Hers was a promise, not to God  
but to he who would witness her life.

## Witness to their Lives

*(For Tracey Folden Williams)*

Their prenuptial agreement was one not of practicality  
but of faith in one another's best effort.

Listed were their hopes and aspirations for one another.

On their wedding night Orfeo and Damaris  
lay naked, covered by the perspiration of their bodies.

Outside of their resort window was the crash of the Atlantic.

She grasped his torso not wanting to be lost at sea,  
seeking affirmation of their moment.

Orfeo watched the ceiling and the tussle of the areola candle.

Inside this box he philosophize about the flame's reality.  
"Could it be extinguished by his index and thumb fingers?"

Briefly, he saw themselves as specimens in a great universal lab.

Where God's white-sleeved hand could lift open the heavens  
and see them in the Garden of Adam and Eve.

He smiled and tenderly kissed her shoulder,

grateful that they had found each other  
and were now witnesses to their lives.

**Robert Vaughan**

THREE EPISODES

## **1. Myopic**

He was myopic, intertwined in his tunnel vision, able to see only what was directly in front of him. And even that was a slight exaggeration. He had elevated blood pressure that turned his hair orange. He left his medication in the credenza, forgot he could not tolerate traffic. His corpuscles screamed "how could you?" feeling betrayed and forgotten.

## 2. Chains

They sat in the lapses of attention focused on the nostrils of the other. One sat sideways, juxtaposed to the other, the only prevention of physical interaction.

"Seems so much more primitive."

"She found Beth wandering around in between the houses in a daze."

"Did you feel it?"

"Every time I say yes, you do."

She heard people yelling below her, "I'm trapped, I'm trapped."

He looked at her as if to say excuse me, but have we had sex before?

## 3. Platypus

They made their summer plans in October. Breana graduated and he hit her over the head with a duck-billed platypus. In the aircraft to Malaysia, she had a baby stillborn. The other one stayed inside for a week. Billy said, "When did that happen?"

"Wake up morons," said Mary Magdalene. "Why do you insist on being so fastidious?"

The plane crashed into the Pacific with few survivors. "I Fall to Pieces" rose to the top of the charts.

Within each glance a mockery. Within each lips spittle and vegetation. So what makes you more masculine, Breana wondered? She shit when she heard Billy announce the President's name. Breana hid her private parts in disgust.

Stephan Delbos

SEMBLANCES

Which truth do you trust?  
The road home always  
seems shorter.

In the wedding ring  
ridge of mountains, sinks  
a valley.

Sinks, he writes, pleased  
with a semblance  
of semblance.

Inside the dark  
living rooms, we  
hold who we love

or, trying to, try  
to. The world is all  
that we imagine.

Behind our blindfold  
eyelids, we make what  
is so so.

## SUMMONING BARCELONA

The only time I tasted fresh  
papaya, a man with a pony  
tail played flute, feet cut off  
in surf; a riptide  
of sunlight, an allegory.

## TIME IS A WILD BURNING

Ten years old in an oak phone booth,  
I dialed the operator, heard my voice  
say there is a fire  
then hung up. I don't know why.

## Santiago del Dardano Turann

### NIBIRU: PLANET X

A glazed coat of opaque gray lays upon  
The alien landscape rolling with large ripples  
In an immutable and frozen dawn  
Locked in the sparks of stars' cold layered crystals.

The silence is in layers petrified  
By pressure from the vastness that's outside  
This patch of rock within the dizziness  
Spun by the folds of space's emptiness.

The strange elliptic course this planet follows  
Sets Nibiru outside our observation.  
Yet still, it like some broken memory echoes  
Through the canyons of imagination.

Our sun, there distant, leaves a single sliver  
Of light draped on the ground in waves of silver  
That briefly touches on a shattered cliff  
Revealing there a broken geoglyph.

## THE LORDS OF AKAKOR

Dedicated to Keith Muscutt

The seven lords in subterranean exile  
Sit on their thrones, each one carved with the animal  
That once had served as their clan's spirit guide  
Back in the day before the people died.  
They sit in robes of bat skin, cloaks of feather  
With their long hair bound in the spines of jaguar.  
The gold with which they're decked like fire blazes:  
Long pins of gold pierce through their painted noses  
And shinning figures lay upon their chests  
Recording long forgotten gods and conquests  
While symbols hang from earlobes and tall llama  
Wool llantos. In the chamber round their china  
White thrones metallic plates are on the circular  
Wall with etchings of archaic figures.  
Thick giant snakes crawl up the sides of pyramids  
Towards a sun or Thunder Birds amid  
Strange flora or, perhaps, a brontosaurus  
And hieroglyphics fantastic as mysterious.  
Their voices stir like mental flocculent drafts  
And rise up with the birds through dusty shafts  
To where they had been mummies in the festivals  
And further on the winds to distant peoples.  
“Once our Cloud Warriors stormed across the Andes  
While those who dwelt in Chavin weren't yet babies.  
We are the ancestors of the Ugha Mongulala,  
Whose distant sons were called the Chachapoya.  
To them our mighty Akakor was a legend,  
A misty city dwelt in by the dead  
And we who saw the dawn of man were nameless  
And cryptic beings whom they'd only bless.  
They had renewed much of our ancient domain,  
Upon the mountains and the Amazon basin.  
But still, this echo of the once great Akakor  
Was ended by the Inca in a war.  
Here in our sacred kiva hid in tunnels  
We watch the turning of the stellar cycles

And send our voices out as dreams to all  
Who'll be receptive to our distant call  
And share our hope the Gold Age may return  
Without disaster as the cycles turn."

## Stephen Emmerson

### *Burn*

It is no longer a mystery to me that flame considers a burn a shadows ghost, that moves its liquid death through the dehydrated vessels of flesh which grow over electrical cables that somebody once called bone. My heart is a digital record that sounds fire at darkened corners, that eats greyness unpickled, that inhales idle moments of never forgotten mistakes as if they were dead matches smouldering on your thumb. I am too many people turned into smoke, I am a strangled black cat twitching underneath a ladder, I am packets of light transmitted between stars, I am the candle of your face melted over a bottle.

One too many enigmas of parcelled air have packaged themselves in head wrapped bubbles. We have seen everything we know come distance away from us that we hardly even notice the side of each others face. Your eyelash on a bar of dry soap is a darkness come over me, a man in white coat moment that bends me like a Uri Geller spoon.

There are rooms I cannot enter, handles I cannot turn, we are stuck in this doorway with burning Philips head suns, with hinges related churches, with latches embellished in tongues. There is no way out. There is only this room, and that bed.

That bed, around which all manner of faceless animals wept, is now deep in silage and sewer dregs. You turned spiders inside out and drove their skins like shopping trolleys through goose flesh, but we now rot in the ancient abattoirs of a first kiss. We laid spaceless under duvets in the absence of heat, a single tog of comfort stretched between our hips, like a high wire safety net awaiting a mistake.

And once we've fallen

We'll burst from putrid eggs into skies running colours that  
Scour the rigid cloudmoan for future superstitions, removing the impression of  
smudged thoughts and transposing wildfires of imaginary but altogether real guitar tongues, and catgut violin groans of  
cutneckmusic that pepperate the inarticulate buildings of unread time through razor wired eye sockets that kidnap bass  
clefts in  
your tonsils so that I may never hear you word again again.

Caricules

spanner

The morning

As your

Eyes die

At the

Side of a

Train track,

Inside a foxes

Head.

The skull,

Open, to

All that

Remains

Closed,

To all that

Remains

Impossible.

To

You...

To me...

To everyone.

## *Streets*

1)

The street vendors fist notes into the baking soda pockets of police sirens. Vicious, toothless sockets, and learned behaviours of vicarious teachers are stood in astral positions at the pulmonary divergences of digital breaths.

We sigh through the moss covered roof tiles of memories house, hanging on by Mycenae's chewing-gum threads at dews intervals as if the lights sodium never stained our minds like a Christ at its death rock. You hammer the bare faced toilet fuck in a night club because we are better than handcuffs. What animal will be our painting? What gallery shall we hang ourselves in this evening? The bars, lifeless as flat pints stab us as though dogs in the trenches. But who am I to question your arrogance, as you jump on your toes from pylon to pylon in parallel worlds bereft of gravity, where cats leave ants tied to tree's with barbed wire, Sim cards instead of antennae. And a fire escape opens inside my head, a facsimile of your hips, smooth as the pinnacles of an ocean, closer to stars than we are, rising and gaining surge for that meteorological blueprint that is the draftsman's mistake in our chemicals. Can you smell his windmills in the whore-girls eyes, his ordinance pounding the walls at the end of her toenails. Is that not the glittering presence of love breached upon a poisoned isthmus, drowning itself an error on your forehead? Let down your hair, alligators and all, let in the consumed blades that seek sparks in the idiots mouth, the serrated splinters of a blind saw in the gutter outside the pub. Though now, seeing this, we are Silent.

2)

The big screen in the square throws up words such as 'nihilism', 'anarchy', and something that could be 'nudity', or 'nuclear'. And I am lost in the outdoor sleep that makes chairs drunk and their legs tremble, and I see you in your nakedness, your nudity with the pavement like a Ranter running through a crowded feeling. It is not lost on me, because it hangs from the sky, a sparking electrical cable stitched to the sun. Do you expect those calories to burn or will sugar stick to your legs and glisten with the pertinence of a child's chemistry set diamond. DOWSER. RINGWORM. SERVITUDE. CONSOLODATE. Tintinabulous alleys, fenestration pigeons flapping in the acid hours, gluey feathers balling in the evanescent screams of silverness that only exist in the first inch of a car window wound down. Epitome's of murder stashed behind your face / panels in the wall / I am invertebrate to such things, a milk of miracles in an hour glass smashing a swan song in the ivory bask of delusion. How does it become such a thing, the waiter never returning, the barman not listening as if he's snoozing in Senegal on some distant poisoned evening in the torch of the past, doused in petrol and glowing like a name. Insinuate past lives, down Eastgate, The Headrow, Oxford Circus, Camden, Pitt Street, George Street, all running the shape of daft antelope drunk on banana skins and posting themselves 1<sup>st</sup> class to surreal worlds between the sewing machine and the umbrella, that sits with women for bodies at the table next to us, shriveled in salt, and sipping expensive water, though it cracks a bulb in them and bleeds.

3)

Bled out a colour. Orange. The high heeled tangerine skins dusted in a premature death cough up balls of fake fur on their shoulders, and slaver a dribble-mouthed thread used to tie up the day dreams of Labradors. Labradors broke free from their leads, from their dipsomaniac masters left drunk in the road. Is that what you are? A footprint in the dust? An ambulatory statue moving in brushstrokes against neon? Are you the skip full of sausage meat and roasted hernias, am I the hazard suit skipping in pigswill under the banners of certain manias, a damage deposited in blonde hair switched for brunette at the wigs flick-knife. It is October, and there are things we do not know: We do not know about Mallarme, we have ignored his invisible ink. We do not know about the 'She's About a Mover' barmaid with biro hair leaking as though a broken Stratocaster made of babies breath. We do not know about the pills in my pocket which we shall eat and make kiss a Wednesday night in June as the tranny walks by, first time in heels, past the 1000fold windows of a dying summer. A twig breaks underfoot, the neck of a sparrow in a child's 'I thought it was a toy' hands. Kiss. She plants it on him like a dirty spud in an overgrown allotment, no chance to survive the frost, but we see through vegetable eyes their roots of junky lust spreading like a verruca through scorpion skin. And we hang out in the park / Hyde park Corner / beer cans and 2ltr bottles of coke half filled with vodka, faces like the plastic stare of a music box ballerina doll found at the tip by a girl called Suzie. We build fires, the police don't come, we are warm, the police don't come.

4)

As the sky lightens, it is still Gogols darkness that we move through. We have covered ourselves in spent coals that redden our cheeks with exfoliant innards, and we stumble over the wet grass onto Victoria Road where fallen branches comb their hair in the same manner as teachers. We write things on the condensed glass of abandoned buildings: EXPOSE, PANOPLY, and FUCK. It is as much as we can manage, and the smell of wet paint, probably emulsion, wafts from the splashed rosary above our heads that brings us to a halt beside a drain. We throw coins through the grates for the sewer kids, orphans of lightning and solar flares. Was I as stupid as you expected? Must I lie to you to test your honesty? Why have you replaced your ears with Wheatabix? Are you trying to tell me something? Last time I fingered you you farted on my fist - was that a sign, am I extinct, immoral, bankrupt? Definitely bankrupt, but what about the others? Where do they walk now? How do they move? Are they frozen in the scraped negative of a Kandinsky Flare, or plastinated by Gunter in Manchester?

SJ Fowler

a Mongolian Cantos

*dedicated to Badar-Ugan Enkhbatyn*

(neg)

“I am a peculiar specimen of royalty”

more white than red, more blank than rot  
the bronze-copper tinge of a dig(ger)  
& tasting central / northern American royal family  
on the loaf, the crisp-wafer-biscuit-in-the-world  
he rock indeed appears frail  
mottled with scalp  
slice into blinds, a light filter  
intercepting ironstains, hissing damp, bloodlines

ancestral mapping  
is a bourgeois form of eugenics

cuba to conga in August; the trip is unfinished  
manganese Suvla bay gatling reunion  
misleading, prejudices in the goat's mirro  
send me to war – watch how long it lasts  
court martialled, brigged, killing-at-hand

(hoyor)

a tattoo on my thigh  
culled with an asp (extendable baton / coarse cudgel)  
twenty victims  
“let us bury dead,  
but we need to save bullet metal  
but I’m royalty  
look at the distinguished beauty of my legs  
black & firm like cornfed cocks

I’ve yet to have the erotic massage of a roadside bomb  
merging plaster patches like plastic putsches  
in lakes of used & uselesss homunculus bombsuits  
I’m balldeep in sand, beating it to death  
it takes form, I latch off the sleepdep  
“speak King, Orangutan, spill the peagreen  
underground cave secrets, 2 hundred feet deep”  
“should I wear my green trousers or my blue?”  
“blue”

(guraw)

because you need a decision  
you will have one

a human foot beneath the sand, left, trying to hide (& paint)  
shame – I kill sand  
what's the word in Helmand, about killing sand  
fun for the ones with  
the better guns (sa80s, m16, m203s)  
they're my kind of people, royalty  
we must sort the good sheikhs from the bad  
& women with armpits skinburless & peach scented await our return home  
“we don't hide our women away  
in bedsheets”  
we put them on horses  
let the whole world see them & like the legs of a duck  
    what lies beneath the stonelipped composure  
is far more interesting  
    thank the beridged spine of horses  
& no shame I shall never win the dressage, eunuch  
royals, the horses back is our greatest ally  
    breaking more hymens than a teddy bears paw  
with the money we save on apology dinners  
three dimensional cinema experiences  
disinfectants, tapwater, wetwipes, beedays  
we can afford better guns (steyr augs, mp5s, glochs)  
& go to war in proper bloody fashion

(doruw)

now those envelopes down like cliffs of colour  
dazzling icefield province  
sun kindling our shoulders like dye, acetylene, onyx  
petrified whitefingers, on the edge of dust  
pile them in grottoes. we can make soap  
immune is royal blood to gangrene  
stag defence position, crouched, scintillated in the blue forest  
awaiting second rate mortars (second-hand Russian)  
“don’t apologise to me – don’t do me any favours”  
topaz, quartz, ankles bent over like our women  
just less bored

I have ancestors  
time to chalk one’s palms & play folk worry  
get out your for-the-moment instruments  
stone whoever you like – neckdeep  
women, children, apespies, dog, foreign chains  
when we come, we come  
thanks for the snowy mountain  
‘you haven’t got a fucking chance’  
royal feet skip log to log, to stone & lava  
blood for blood without remorse  
actually stipulate, sand for blood  
you can have my sand – aplenty  
no need to ask the price of sand  
no need to my mistress in Helmand  
like a glacier she smiles, unseen, unegoistic  
pummmice my tired soldier’s feet, hollow my seashell  
listen to the rabid wistfulness  
the best wild music is for-the-moment

Roma, Irish, Muezzin

I’m royalty, I’d rather be from the space they listen to the music than the space they make it

(tav)

I'm sensitive to the next day regret

& poverty

I don't like it – a melancholy northern soul

a moisture menagerie – a human ear alchemy

a ministry – like a Greek, happy in pussy if it is hell

so be it

they aren't virgins, but there are cultural differences

my disposition is royal, my oars are gold

my eyebrows black

& I wield the sarcasm of Adam

like a bloody avalanche

but once a month

damned by the people for decorum

ah, here it is, the distinguished thing

victory in the ring

neatly, the crown cloth fits & I am ready to discuss terms

the crack of a whip

your prime is a white volcano

wrist deep in the desert

handing out food packages

laced with risin, nodding, bowing

letting his st bernard of its leash to wink

bowing before the powdered sword of ancestry

& the commonest of all things

bloody bastard freedom

(zurgaa)

the four principles of the American soul

murder, beaurocracy, theology + music

waffles

paper rusts under the priests swaying robes

& I told him we were crossing a desert of promises

(he thoughts I said potatoes)

I told him the eschatologies seemed to me

like an ear of hay dangled before a donkey

to induce him to go on pulling a cart

“but man needs to set his sight on something lofty” he said

“yes” I said “the donkey pulls the cart”

(doloo)

o o o ring girl                      lemon shuffle  
your breasts have soaked through the very walls  
your tits are dampening the carpet  
your spit is Argentinian onion soup & shames canapes  
you are a northern artist, from Vegas proud  
I would visit your southern arts for pay  
you are baby jesus tassled  
moles seek light to gnaw your nipples  
your sexual weeping induces weeping  
drunk go your toes to menfolk  
bed beds beds beds beds beds  
your flag is red and pink  
you proffer your rear like a thoroughbred hanging basket  
spin  
you tear my nails out with pliers  
encase your eyes in amber for me  
a successful solo show  
on come art buyers & whales  
jurassic park meets gorky park  
financial independence irrelevant you never in poor company  
rich enough for tartan pyjamas to match your clitoris  
your hair is reinforced steam  
your eye is curiously eyed  
forgiven                      for the savant part of artist  
requires you to be an idiot

(naym)

I am a warbird cont'd...  
we are betrayed on the Russian front  
bring back hammer/sickle beltbuckles sunrusted  
& wallcord cement of Empire bones  
!no! bring me back a shoulder  
a stinger anti-helicopter rocket!  
    (how beautiful the sound – death claims Cobbing  
        yet he couldve shown us the true sound  
            of a rocket launching  
                a helicopter exploding)

{ fetch chetch caebloom }

I sell copper libertybands on TV hill  
the sniper is time cautious  
for everyday at + the Afghan farmer takes his goat  
    behind the shed...

(yes)

the fact is that at the moment of his death he really  
needed the toilet  
& so he held his groin & writhed  
into the path of the ricochet

he & I were brothers  
for I saw out my wedding night  
needing the toilet

my Afghan worm  
worn in my combat casuals  
my lapel a rotten rose  
made of rotten rope

that is the worm's purgatory  
between the sands  
& the fleshy body that carries him around  
that might have been a diaspora of cattle  
in the the singing kingdom of P-company

each man to his own human pyramid  
something shrivels into darkness  
not a city

(araw)

my mongolian bride

I like to offer fine comfort to those who  
                  smell so sweet & may, in may,           I do lean  
so frequently to know if your hair  
                  red & in a single platt  
will illumine my frozen back  
                  stride 'I stand by you'  
do not indulge upset           we know each  
                  other well

first plinth or eggs           the protest  
                  reminds me of your oval eyes & admits  
the hair buried           was where    I smelled you  
sweet but on the peepers    I saw the need  
what matters marriage?    or2others sneer

          it is I & you   it is a foggy fear  
caught; so pins are lanced lips  
          & sorrow    but yeast and jokes  
bacon fat   fingers beg to grasp   in the shop of repairs  
where I am reminded of  
          bloody smell  
          to say coppery will save nothing for tomorrow  
          so ease it upward  
& recline on my chest

## Sean Neville

### The Broken Book

Assorted uplifts to the little beings of the brotherlies  
in the fiefdom of spaces where holes aim at the body.  
Their name is asserted by average optic charms through the book of the stranger  
and as if to unconfirm original violence as what the child once was.  
Your captured thinking practices stretch along your coast.  
The eon of sponges brains me to roll unsteadily,  
to roll in the gate therefore and dilate on the distant structure  
of rocks shared by lives. I am one of them.  
Dark-curved nerves wake upward to the loss  
of the totality advertised by necessary rolling.  
The things reject my identity tomorrow and signage  
is offered to love the avenger. Love cookies grow in my gut.  
A fill of words diminishing what they pertain to:  
cold ministerings stretching from the foggy planet.  
I saw the movie in which the dancer swallowed my name exactly.  
Be: hookworm gesture taught in the school of saying.  
Sufferers search in the book's airy spaces for relief from the hole,  
the site of language and catastrophe. Laughters, roll with me down  
through grains of space to a hand-held display of joy, maximized by streets.  
Some are named. Some are a spout of that being we casually abuse  
as if the supply of kittens were infinite. The truth  
wants to become a lie that will feed the outward-flowing folk.  
The old German thinkers called this type of life-action space music.  
They stripped the world to establish a happiness factory,  
to elongate the snappy soul scene as it rolled through frozen time  
where frightened birds and fishes dwelled—yes, the home of being.

## What I Think About When I'm Not Thinking About Anything

a.

In a basic move

notice how you have accepted my humanity.

Because all the little parts of the identity have to move

along with the other move that takes you into the unnecessary distance.

Because let's agree it's sad without knowing too much what we mean

to let go of all the objects that you refuse to define your statistics.

So we have two pertaining regions that condition distance: the pain space, which is

always there, asking us to be real

and the pleasure space, which is not less realistic for feeling to be rewritten

as the postulated lifeworld. (See precise books.)

Is it necessary to feel?

Or is the spectrum delayed, denied, or diminished?

I want to laugh because is this secretly another question concerning the observer.

b.

The observer stands before the event. Before the event he is always terrified.

But why is he before the event, and why does he have only two small eyes?

He is limited by the possibility of a house.

It is impossible to remember his name or form it on your tongue.

Through his observing the world is being managed.

The place occupied proposes a there though we know there is no there,

though the observer is a shape that disposes of place and however

assumes a place

called Willow or Hot Springs—something like that—where corners are filled

with something possible. I once thought I had visited such a place

in a dependable car.

This is called the human dimension, and at first it doesn't seem like a wave.

And thanks for accepting—even if you want nothing to do with accepting.

Today, Monday, the impossible day that brings the unbidden now,

we know there is no there to be had.

There and here, what did they mean? Because everything is very *caliente*

and very *suave*. Because we have decided not to be, or

rather decided to be what is not here or there.

You're asking silently is that a description of a myth. Sure.

But also of a syndrome that puts the unreal city to sleep.

Through my idea of you you stop being you. That's really disappointing.

And my road movie starts where everything worthless before it came to be is born.

It took a lot of history to get to this point.

The observer accepts the bus as infinite. The I-5 road—

also "Superslab"—plunks down on your obscene tongue.

It will be loved. And it will be abused in the great canyons of being.

c.

Have you had enough of not being me? True, the road is one way  
of trying to take possession of the world. The couch  
and the TV move at 65 MPH toward some center that may be indescribably social.

And you are still not there, casting glances at the edge of life,  
trying to escape one of the great lies. Which is where here  
and there step in, making you the observer in a system of pain referral.

That is why I am founding new predicates,  
at the point where language says nothing but what it is.

(A rocket out of time is being believed.)

Epidemic facts speak of the day, destroying me with the thought they attract.

Those priceless memories have a certain faculty for death.

So I petition the great thing to consume me, to let me be into it.

Watch then how the bird falls then lifts the universal neighbor.

Hear it shriek through the holes in time.

## Simon Perchik

\*

Again the sky rubbing against my legs  
the way a dog closes its eyes  
--I wade toward a place

that has your hairline, your nose  
lips the same--tonight's no different  
although these stars once side by side

behind their invisible starting line  
--a few already clustered in the lead  
some last and between I walk

from Gemini to Sirius to Orion  
--all 14 miles by myself  
and in my hands an empty glass

that magnifies the sky --I still look  
for clues, for the ankles, the yes or no  
as if the night has already forgotten

what is dead, what isn't, what  
is hiding in the step by step  
across an old footprint that might be there

might still be wandering and its bark  
try once more for distance  
the way a timekeeper's pistol is grasped

held up, but the stars  
slip from under, drowning before my eyes  
--the sun still alone, coming back

with yesterday, today, tomorrow  
with the closed windows and the streets  
left out too long.

\*

The same Krupp? this coffee mill  
arm and neck  
on orders and German engineering  
and now each morning  
the way marrow darkens  
fresh ground from smoke and seawater

--who can drink from such a place  
can touch this switch as if the trains  
would stop, back up without expecting clouds  
that have my nose, my eyes, my lips  
sit down at the table, ask what's new.

The clerk in back the counter  
is next, wants me to know  
these playful mills are made  
only black or white  
photographer unknown  
exhibit at Nuremberg trial  
--talks from behind some valve  
he's opening, sticks a little --a few  
seconds  
is all it takes --I can't make out the words

--even at home, hour after hour  
I listen to its motor --no water, no beans  
just the blades over and over  
like a plane trying to get it right.

\*

They're eggs nobody wants :snow  
all day falling from their nest  
and these waves broken in half

--it's so long since I sang  
--I forgot how a word, one  
then another, another and I am flying  
taking hold a mountain, somehow the top  
then stars --even the drowned

will rise to the surface  
looking for air and the cold  
--all winter this sea kept warm  
--some bomber ditched, its engines left on  
--four small furnaces and still forging  
wings  
from bottom sand, shaped the way each wave  
still lifts the Earth, then tries again

--each year the sea made warmer  
by those same fires every mother  
nurses with soft words :this snow  
growing strong, already senses  
the flight back as lullabies --my mouth

can't close, a monster eating snow, my lips  
swollen from water and cold and loneliness  
--someone inside my belly  
has forgotten the word I need to say  
or sing or both my arms into the sea  
feeding and feeding and feeding.

\*

Not until these stars began to cluster  
did the first heart stir --even now  
the sky rising and falling  
brushing against just my finger.  
I almost start a fire, almost not.

To point has always been dangerous  
--even the firing squad needs protection  
and I cover your eyes  
--already one star stopped moving  
no longer passes through your heart  
falling from one place another  
backwards into how far everything is,

the glove is useless, not yet wet  
or cold or the morning whose light  
was once a seed deep inside the Earth  
--one finger still remembers the North Star  
the exact distance and from your eyes  
their vague breeze still climbing  
taking the stone away from your stone  
till nothing is left but the darkness  
that used to be the sky on fire

--more than ever now  
I walk at night as if I could  
with just a simple touch  
and from your heart a great morning  
--all these stars --in a pack  
and from my hand the sun  
lifting you into mountains, wolves, flesh.

It takes time. Winters.  
And the glove I left for you  
somehow is blowing away.  
They take so much time.

\*

To keep you from rotting  
I drink tea almost frozen  
--after each drip  
gnaw the cubes :makeshift snow  
half trance, half swallowed  
and nothing is wasted, every shard  
even the one different from the others  
that will let me live forever

--snowfall over snowfall  
the way a cockpit canopy  
climbing till its glass frosts over  
scatters into the blue mist  
that will flood and the Earth  
already begins to open :each Spring

from a grave the size  
where just your lips  
--nothing is stone only once, the tremors  
two by two, rise half stone  
half water for the sun  
washed clean, turning again to you  
as in weddings and flowers.

\*

At every birth the extra child  
disowned on the spot, sent off  
still calling for more mouth  
for both a father and a twin

--with the first breath  
one is human, the other with strength  
to lift clouds, whose grave  
should always be moist.

Twice a day since who knows  
I bathe from a well, then the walks  
alone, try to remember  
the last time it rained

--I need water from the sky  
carry this axe on my shoulder  
my step by sharpening step  
half thunderclap, half

the bitterness only that banished twin  
could pull apart and overhead  
another sky begins to clot, tastes

like wax and my one fist  
squeezed dry --I never heard my twin  
or where such anger, closer, closer  
from nowhere tighten even on my name.

## Steve Potter

*Witches & Devils: Albert Ayler*  
(From *LISTEN: Poems Written With Headphones On*)

I.  
squeaky door dour disney barnfart  
and here come the camels  
and here come the bats  
and wallabees wildebeasts wesleyans

oh excuse me  
i thought you were someone's elves  
old ex used me  
i bought sewer gun foam shelves

armpit godzilla  
you've stricken the blind dog deaf  
and here come the camels

squeaky door dour disney barnfart

farm tit gorilla  
you stick in the kind hog's cleft  
and here come the camels

and beer scum enamels  
were someone's elves  
odd sex you seed me  
i bought sewer gun foam shelves  
and wallabees wildabeasts wesleyans

hear scum in flannels  
grunge show way back when

remember the alamo  
rental car crash  
by j g ballard  
is a favorite of mind  
over mata hari  
houdini thought  
he was so fucking cool

II.

wow ziggity zag  
a squirrely spiral  
i want to ride like a slide  
into some amniotic ooze  
of a hallucinational pastime

are these your doughnuts?  
i want to read like a steed  
in two slum and idiotic zoos  
gloved balushi in national lampoon's....  
never mind

wow ziggity zag  
a squirrely spiral  
i want to ride like a slide  
into some amniotic ooze  
of a hallucinational pastime

are these your dour nuts  
squeaking like doors  
in a disney barnfart?

are these helium balloons?  
are these heroin bassoons?

the horses are talking in the field of wind  
and the cows glub on the grass like  
what happens to you in your cubicle at work

the whore says, "is our talking in the field of wind  
and the cows glubbing on the grass like  
what happens to you in your cubicle at work?"

the whore says, "these are helium balloons,  
these are heroin bassoons."

the dream said, "follow the spirit.  
remember and follow the spirit.  
always follow the spirit."

and i have ever since.

**Archery (Disk 2): John Zorn**  
**(From LISTEN: Poems Written With Headphones On)**

ouch, this hemoglobin fire  
is spiriting the green soup  
right out of my soul!

no, i mean it, right out of my soul!

there that's better. the strap was too tight.

i'd like these people to leave now honey  
these friends of yours these these these  
people  
honey  
dear  
sweetums  
i'd like them  
to go now  
with their steep flaming dirigibles  
and cocktail weenies and and and  
all the rest of it all this this this  
stuff of theirs squeaking diaphanous splendid hallucinatory mind goop dripping into  
snowy eternity like so many yeti sightings at a shit-head convention.

i mean i don't mean to come across mean but but but was that my phone was that my  
cell phone and who the fuck brought the horse?!?

i'd like these people to leave now honey  
these friends of yours these these these  
people  
honey  
dear  
sweetums  
i'd like them  
to go now  
with their guillotine fillings and fliers about filigreed party favors suntanning in  
the dead of fucking night like so many blind lemon jefferson fans parading naked in  
front of the pope.

i mean i mean i mean ya gotta crack the shells before ya scramble the eggs, heavens to bacon, for pete's ache!

okay okay okay maybe it's me maybe i need some medicine maybe i need another drink maybe the hemoglobin levels are causing the fire song to sing anew from the bleeding spiney nipples of my third ass or something but really where'd i leave that extra bottle of tequila?

sharp as the buttons on a cauliflower that's what i'd call it. sherpa-like in their dexterous ambivalence, these bland cauldrons of deeply perfumed schizoid shepherding neophytes tickle my innermost exteriors with a subtle dynamism scarcely seen in today's farming community.

*where indian fights are colorful sights  
and nobody takes a lickin!*

*"shultz, shultz!"  
"aye, herr commandant!"*

oh cavernous soupy tank filled with pointless memories your scorpions are scrambling the helium divers like shipyard thugs piled six at a time into a phone booth like nineteen fifties fratboys in a LIFE magazine photo.

phone booth? it was like a box you'd stand inside of to use the pay phone. you'd put a nickel in or later a dime or later a nickel and a dime or later a quarter or later two quarters and dial the phone and make your call. because they had wires. everything had wires then and everything was big so we couldn't carry them in our pockets.

oh i don't know, baby. things change. my head used to be much larger for instance but then they installed this shunt and.....

some kind of dangerous experiment with experts and cleopatra salesmen firing their pistols drunkenly into the night sky during the beauty pageant. and now the gas-masters pilgrim the fat man forward through the doors for his wine commercial.

*"mister french, mister french!"*

who's sarcophagus is this anyway?

they were tossing gerbil grenades into the neighboring territory like scurrilous sharecroppers blasterfitting the semen canopy with creamcicle-scopes and hormone

gasses. is that you honey? they were bullyfucking the hamster god with helium snacks and gyrosopic pilgrim farts like so many toastmasters mastering their toast- making at the greatest goddamn aardvark convention you could ever imagine.

and then that horrible theremin accident spoiled the mood for everyone.

i'd like these leaves to honey people now

these fiends of ours these these these

pitbulls

money

queer

sweetbuns

i dyke ten

goats now

with their steep flaming dirigibles

and cocktail weenies and and and

all the rest of it all this this this

stuff of theirs squeaking diaphanous splendid hallucinatory mind goop dripping into snowy eternity like so many yeti sightings at a shit-head convention.

and that fine marbled cranium splendid as the spittoon of god him/her/itself

**Janus: Sun Ra**

**(From Listen: Poems Written With Headphones On)**

and now we go forward  
a shoe shine on the corner  
and the paper boy passes whistling

*little Jackie Paper lived by the sea*

piano keys rain from the samba sky  
falling like orioles dying from air pollution

snake charmer in gravity boots hanging upside down

*keep a knockin but you can't come in*  
*keep a knockin but you can't come in*

open the door it's room service

shelf life of a brain  
shelf life of a thought  
and the people in the parking lot  
are carrying instruments toward the building

mad tropical birds and purple-assed mandrills  
complaining from the branches overhead  
the babboondocks and monkeyrinas of banana boats  
and the bacon bats are soaring through the open sky

now something scientific is happening  
in a laboratory in the belly  
of a hollowed out mountain

the mad scientist paces mentally  
exploring the inner reaches of sound  
as his hunchbacked assistant  
nods off in the corner

*paging doctor benway*  
*paging doctor benway*

the crepuscular toad hovers  
in the nearly gelatinous green haze  
of a junkie's ancient dream

oh pardon me  
i must have entered the wrong womb  
please excuse the pistaccio shells

distant lights on a tower  
or lights on a distant tower  
it is difficult to interpret the drums  
exactly sometimes and the boy wondered  
why his father was often so angry  
hovering in the nearly gelatinous green haze  
of a drunkard's ancient genes

horseradish sauce for example with  
bells and cicadas constituting  
some kind of mutinous preamble

prunes and purple-assed scientists  
entered the wrong room and fiddled  
with the spaghetti intern's diarrhea diorama

or was that the other time when they were  
in ethiopia together fishing for golf swings  
and mood swings and mood rings and pet rocks

*roxanne you don't have to wear that dress tonight*  
the elephants are charging over the hill  
and dale evans is wearing her idiotic cowgirl hat  
looking the silly old woman as ever

and here's johnny gargling with hot soup  
as children splash in puddles  
with oily rainbows slicking their surfaces

now it's that fat guy  
coming in for his pudding again  
like that time in selma, alabama  
with the phlebotomist and his wife

no wait that wasn't it

jackolantern smiles amid hickory switches  
jackolantern smiles among cornstalks

bacon and donuts or bacon donuts  
origami bacon donuts  
and feelings about wheels  
wordless child eyes the world

there are no rules  
until someone makes up rules

once upon a timid stranger  
the pillowbookmaker placed the bed bet

the elephants have returned  
accompanied by trumpeter swans  
and trombonist ducks casting  
a saxophonetic spell injury

now he is telling us about it  
dishes rattling in the kitchen  
as the gentle earthquake folds  
the city like a napkin on the lap  
of a geriatric patient  
who has forgotten her name

the blisters are popping  
all over the kingdom

please send geraniums  
and inflate the gerbils  
for jean-paul belmondo  
who runs down the paris street  
bleeding, dying, trailed by jean sebirg

i think the canopy is full of seed now  
and the purple-assed mandrills inflate

now he is telling us about it:  
the gentle earthquake is not  
gentle on human terms but  
quite tame on god terms

he is telling us about it now  
for jean-paul and jean  
and the inflated gerbils  
rattling in the kitchen  
like a forgotten napkin

the elephants have returned  
to make the new rules

**Aman Iman (Water Is Life): Tinariwen**  
**(From: LISTEN: Poems Written With Headphones On)**

flood me with sound. let's build buildings of sand and leper skin. go now find the sparrows. bring the leper skin and the lizard skin. we shall fill the buckets with sand as the ancient ones look on.

distances. horizons. weather.

valiant efforts. everything but here is far away from here.

now me, take me for example, i live in this magical land many dream of where you can drive an automobile to a glowing box at any time of the day or night and purchase a dreadful little burrito for less than a dollar and not even get out of the car to walk in and get it. take out window. land of magical mysteries. land of cheap meat.

flood me with sound. let's build buildings of hemoglobin and the leftover face paint of dead mimes.

whose mommy sheds the sleds from the roof of the world? her mommy sheds the sleds from the roof of the world! let's build buildings.

a carpenter, the son of god, and it's his birthday so people are buying things for one another, but no, it's not his birthday. the scientists say his birthday must have been in june. makes sense he'd be a cancer, somehow. lets build buildings of cheap meat and magical mysteries in honor of the son of god, the desert carpenter.

i'll gather the cheesecloth from behind the cheese place and you go gather the discarded wine bottles from the recycling bin behind that yuppie condo and let us begin building the magical mystery cheap meat church of the desert carpenter in the empty lot where that house burned to the ground last year.

constant self-abuse, but i don't mean masturbation i mean the constant self-critical chatter in my mind. pollution of the worst kind. left over protestant bullshit, i think. get off your back, man. let it go.

and now a caravan of camels across the sand from one oasis to another. blind lemon jefferson is among them, among the sighted lime washingtons.

a glandular problem which ballooned the preacher's boy up like a helium blimp. he did in fact float away and explode in the sky above the village raining his insides, blood and guts and feces and bits of bone and cartilage, down on them all who'd talked ill of him. all agreed it was a miracle. a really disgusting, foul-smelling miracle, but a miracle nonetheless. the lord works in mysterious ways and all that crap.

what the fuck are we doing here? this whole earth trip is a huge freaking bugout, if you stop to think about it, but few ever do.

i've at times convinced myself that my inability to ever make a substantial income and live something more like a middle class american lifestyle is a sign of my moral superiority but at times of greater clarity i understand that that is indeed a load of self-serving bullshit, that i'm really just a massive fuck-up.

but i'm not really doing the thing, here. this is just some journal rantings while listening to music, this isn't the music inspiring the writing. but oh well so what, rant. because i'm fucked again.

this is supposed to be the big payoff time when the past two years of working my ass off pays off big, the big christmas season that pays big and keeps me afloat financially on into the summer. and of course we're in the midst of the worst recession since the great fucking depression and christmas sales were fucking dismal for everyone including myself and i'm almost certainly gonna have to go back to work for the man who is in fact a machine to support this biz that's supposed to be supporting my writing and the book biz is fucking tanking too so assuming i ever even fucking finish *days of labor & barroom nights* or any of the other fiction manuscripts the likelihood of a big advance that'll keep me afloat for half a decade while i get the second and third and fourth manuscripts finished is even dimmer than it's been in the past. the prospect of finding a day job is the worst its been in a dog's age too. fuck it all. and really i just wanna go up to the liquor store on park ave, buy a big honking bottle of jack daniels and stay trashed until january. seems like a plan. just let it all go to shit for a week and a half then regroup with the new year.

i wonder if this life ever starts to look like it makes any sense at all or if it's just gonna continue to be one massive fucking failure after another until the bitter end.

## Sarah Sweeney

### AMERICA

*(dedicated to Allen Ginsberg)*

America, America, I've got to cut through and talk to you at last,  
I'm crouched in a white bathroom cubicle writing, with no cameras, quietly safe.  
America your teachers are really useless...  
with their warbling vendettas, bitter constraints,  
and awful litanies berating my brain.  
A fierce ignorance rises in my face with each bell to rise,  
America, please don't make me go back. Not so soon.  
America your regulations aren't for me, I know what I'm doing.

America I feel sentimental about the lilies. Lilacs are falling blanched with envy.  
With the romance of your roads, open & singing, it's ridiculous. We're ridiculous.  
Allen Ginsberg is still in fact the most enlightened man alive.  
America there's really nothing wrong if you look at it right.

America it's amazingly easy being young & vital, a constant threat  
I use my appearance & actions to my intentions.  
I am heartbreakingly hopeful and self-conscious.  
Housed now in your universities, I am in progress.  
I am beacons from the tops of your mountains and I will never leave.

I am alive in your amazing array of lights.  
Wandering endless streets in the chilling rain,  
dancing to frighten your demons away.

In the America of pleasure gardens and ballad-mongers,  
A broken-tongued brown piano rattles & croons from Harlem Heaven.  
My smooth white hand stretches to the fullness of jazz chords  
that I practice in my living -room, and every church hall I can find.  
In the sound of radios detuned and rattling along the highway,  
the intimacy of breath long-dried in the microphone,  
Frank Sinatra is scowlingly alive.

America, sling your tattered '60s halo over that thick platinum skull for awhile.  
America the '50s are dead, in old gray halls they kick & spin,  
flaring gums to a white-leather dawn spread smooth like chrome  
over the foreheads of skyscrapers on the skyline,  
where stars glitter downright malicious.  
We live in gorgeous orchards of wire

America I know what you still do to James Dean in your diner backlots at sunrise,  
all sweet-eyed & howling with leather.

You deserve every metaphor in the world.  
You're an apple-pie princess  
basking in your lovely expression plated on the lake while  
darkness rises in fumes all around, heavy-sooted fog over everything,  
face still shining with the moon.  
America, we've always known this, but when did you lose your flair for illusion?  
America, with a manifesto song burning our throats  
under your stadium lights  
I'm climbing through the night.  
I'll never sleep.  
I could dream of you forever.  
I sway from stars fading in your cold resuscitated dawn.

## Sarah Sousa

### Sulky

said word around town is that we're loaded  
you shouldn't have told  
the workman when he broke the antique Parisian lion  
you don't even want to know how much that cost  
people think our gate is locked to protect our stuff  
say we have a ballroom filled with priceless antiques  
art arcade games motorcycles lined up  
in the garage according to color  
why do you think the paraglider flew over  
we can't have an alarm installed on our airspace  
from above he can look all he wants at our once-  
private view of hills cosseted as we are by stream  
and trees birdsong the scent of honeysuckle  
he went around and around until I retreated  
inside what if he comes every day  
with his wings and small engine  
like we'd hired him like the groundskeeper  
who mows the lawn and weed-wacks and keeps busy  
around my perennial border you think  
he was trying to get close to the barn's cupola  
the unique weathervane which was stolen once  
by helicopter before our time  
a man riding a sulky the horse swinging  
at the beck and heed of the wind east west north south

*Don't you forget about me*

I was sixteen, a hot July night at the drive-in  
watching *The Breakfast Club* with my mother  
and her boyfriend. He was fun, he was young,  
he would become obsessed and want to kill us  
but torched our car while we slept, instead.

This night was before the burning.

The three of us in the dark car, eating popcorn.

If I had to choose, I'd say he was the line

*Don't you forget about me*

in the movie's theme song

while I took

*Will you stand above me?*

and worked it into nightmares:

a dark figure at the door, a dark figure

in an idling car. I was murdered

in myriad ways: with a knife, a gunshot

to the head. Maybe he didn't realize

that a daughter is housed inside her mother

like the smallest matryoshka doll, the pea-sized one;

the way she looks out from the same eyes,

how a threat to one is a threat to the other.

He was young,

closer to my age than my mother's.

He was fun, when he wasn't

harming us. I kept the memory

of that night long past its usefulness.

Summer's short, savor the heat

and the three of us singing:

*don't don't don't don't.*

## Church of Needles

You are the rusted barbed wire  
growing into the tree.

You are the basement's basement  
and its casement window stuck shut.

What the bellows are  
to the downdraft, you are.

You are a view onto the underworld.

The funny sister.

You are the dig safe bag  
over the live wire.

You are the baby's skull still parted,  
You are the inspirations whispered in  
You whisper them.

You are the watery hole on the pond.

The oil of lemons  
the pucker  
the batter-up.

You are my red shouldered  
hawk, my hunting cabin.

You are Teddy Roosevelt's  
mouse skin rug.

rebellious house.

You are the eggshell  
filled with coffee grounds,  
the rotting flake of salmon  
in the center of the daffodil.

You are the Robins' breast,  
the brown apple with brown flesh.

You are the harlequin  
I am the box.

You are the pine tree's vapor,  
a church of needles.

You hold the winning ticket  
when they raffle me off.

## Steven Taylor

### Rudy Lee Goes To Church

It was a beautiful Sunday morning when the town of China Grove discovered the true meaning of evil. I was nervous as I sat in my pew listening to Father Leonard's sermon that Sunday morning. Next to me Becky Hansen, the girl I had been in love with since she let me touch her boob in the seventh grade during a game of truth or dare, was sweating just a little. I was watching a drop make its way down her neck and thinking to myself that it was kind of sexy, a totally inappropriate thought to have in church, when the moment she and I knew would come finally did.

The huge wooden doors at the back of the church exploded open with such force that the stained glass windows portraying the Stations of the Cross rattled in their ancient frames. I heard Mrs. Vandermeer mutter an exasperated "Oh my!" and several others in the congregation gasped in surprise. Father Leonard stammered to a stop and the parishioners turned around with excited looks on their faces, almost like they were expecting Christ himself to come floating down the aisle. What they got instead was Rudy Lee Mayfield. He did several cartwheels on his way past us, and then did a bizarre little dance before coming to rest in front of the altar. When Rudy Lee made it to the front, he stopped and turned, grinning that crooked, yellow grin of his. It looked like a diseased ear of corn set between two rolls of bologna. He was dressed in an immaculate white suit with a red shirt and black tie, and he wore a Santa Claus pin on his lapel. This was strange since it was May. On his fat head sat a fat, black cowboy hat. It had a rattlesnake band with the feather of one of

old man Carver's emus sticking out of it. Under the hat, a pair of wire rimmed glasses, sort of like the ones John Lennon wore but not as fashionable, shaded a gin-blossomed nose and two colorless eyes. The outfit was made complete by a pair of white boots so shiny that Rudy probably knew what color underwear every girl in the congregation was wearing.

"What're ya'll starin' at? It's Sunday. Let's party!" he yelled in his thick southern drawl. And with that, he proceeded to execute a series of drunken twirls and leaps in front of the altar, humming a demented tune to himself as he went.

Rudy Lee Mayfield was the most well known man in China Grove. He owned Rudy Lee's Imports and Used Car Emporium out on the highway, where my dad took me to buy my first car, along with 12 other used car dealerships scattered across the southwest. He also owned two Waffle Houses on Highway 87, a Starbucks just outside San Antonio and a semi-professional roller derby team called the Bexar Bulldykes. He was in charge of the mayor's re-election committee and was doing a better job of making the other guy look bad than of making the mayor look good. He was president of the rotary club and Grand Poobah the local Moose Lodge. He was a big man, but not in a bad way. He was tall, a little over six feet, and heavy, around two-eighty, so he looked like a football player. Folks in China Grove were sure they could remember him being a hero of the high school team, but nobody could really remember when or at what position. And as long as anyone could remember, Rudy Lee had been in China Grove, sitting in a beat up vinyl recliner outside the office of his car lot, smoking cherry-vanilla tobacco in his pipe and grinning that awful grin. Yes, everyone in town thought they knew Rudy Lee, but there was one thing they didn't know about him. Something that I wished I didn't know. Something I feared everybody in that church was about to find out.

The Saturday I found out the truth about Rudy Lee began like any other Saturday. I had been working at the Emporium, washing cars to work off the debt I still owed on the beautiful, sky blue Pontiac Trans Am that Rudy had talked me into buying. It had been a car I couldn't afford, but three different girls had stopped and smiled at me as we took it for

a test drive, so I had to have it. Rudy Lee told me the car was a “chick magnet” and if I drove it for a week, I’d have every hottie in town wanting to rip off her clothes for me. I protested that the car was too much money, but Rudy Lee told me that was just nonsense and he talked me into signing on the dotted line. The next thing I knew, I was spending my weekends as a human car wash. I don’t remember agreeing to that as part of the deal for the car, but I felt strangely compelled to be there bright and early every Saturday morning.

Usually when I showed up on Saturday morning, I’d find Rudy Lee in his beat up old chair stuffing his pipe full of that sickeningly sweet smelling cherry vanilla blend he loved so much, but that particular Saturday, Rudy Lee had been nowhere in sight when I arrived. I peeked in the office and called his name, but got no response. It didn’t matter; I knew what needed to be done, so I went to work. When three hours passed with no sign of him, I started feeling a bit jumpy. The car lot was kind of spooky when Rudy Lee was there, but with nobody else around every little sound made me jump. I finished waxing a 1977 Gremlin and was about to give up on Rudy Lee and call it quits for the day, when I heard a noise from behind the office. It sounded like someone talking. In fact, it sounded like Rudy Lee talking. So I went around back to check it out.

I had never thought to ask Rudy Lee where he lived. I would have thought that owning a car lot would bring in lots of cash, but I guess I thought wrong.

He was holed up in a little trailer behind his car lot. The trailer was rocking pretty hard, leading me to guess something good was going on inside. My curiosity got the best of me, and I just had to peek and see what kind of a woman would go for a ride on the Rudy Lee Express. I couldn’t see through the dirty windows, so I snuck around and opened the trailer door a crack. What I saw almost made me puke.

I slammed the door and started running, but nothing could remove the image of what I'd seen. I ran with my eyes closed, images flashing through my head. Blood. A snake wrapped around a sickly white thigh. A goat head. And what appeared to be a leathery wing.

“Well howdy, Matt!” Rudy Lee’s voice suddenly issued from in front of me. I opened my eyes to find him towering over me. “What brings you out here on this particularly lovely day?”

I heard another noise in the distance and had the fleeting thought that it must be the decapitated goat head, until I ran out of breath and realized the sound was me screaming.

“Well dang, I plum forgot today was car washing day. Must have slipped my mind. Did you get that Gremlin cleaned up? We have a potential sucker coming in this afternoon,” Rudy Lee said.

Dumbfounded, I nodded. As he spoke, the putrid stench of raw flesh stuck between his rotting teeth washed over me, leaving me flirting with consciousness. Not knowing what else to do, I stayed on my knees and stared at the ground. After a few minutes, I looked up again and he was gone. I jumped up, ran to my Trans Am, which had inexplicably turned from baby blue to primer gray, and drove straight to Becky’s house. I had to tell her what I had just seen.

I spilled everything to her, the blood, the snakes, the supernatural speed and my car suddenly turning into an ugly piece of shit.

“C’mon Matt,” she said. “You said yourself that place is creepy on a good day. Couldn’t it have been your mind messing with you?”

“No. I know what I saw. At first I thought maybe he was doing some kind of voodoo ritual or something. But now I wonder...”

“Wonder what?” she asked.

“Well,” I said. “I wonder if maybe he’s some kind of...demon or something.”

“Matty, are you hearing yourself? You really think that your boss, the man who sold you your car, is a monster? That’s ridiculous!”

“What about the car? This morning it was gorgeous, and now it looks like something that crawled its way out of a wrecking yard. How do you explain that?”

“Well, you were in a hurry to get out of there,” she said, trying desperately to chalk this up to some logical explanation. “Maybe you jumped in the wrong car by mistake. I think you just need to rest and think about this calmly. There has to be a reasonable explanation for all of this.”

“You don’t believe me, do you?” I asked her.

“Baby, if what you say is true, I don’t *want* to believe it. I know you think you saw something, I just think we need to not jump to conclusions. Especially conclusions that involve demons”

I sighed. “I don’t know what to think right now. I’m just glad I have you to talk to about it, or I’d be going crazy right now.”

We lay back on the bed and made out for a while. That was Becky’s way of getting my mind off things. Usually, it worked like a charm, but this time-

My phone jingled out its familiar text message tune. I reached over, picked it up and looked at the screen, immediately recognizing Rudy’s number. I opened the text.

“MATT. U 4GOT 2 CLEAN THE OLD MUSTANG. PLEASE DO SO NEXT SATURDAY. ALSO PLZ DO NOT TELL ANYONE WHAT YOU SAW 2DAY. OR I WILL KILL THEM AND THEN KILL U. ;D L8R.”

#

The rest of the week had been surreal. Rudy Lee kept calling, but I was too scared to talk to him and he wouldn't leave any voicemails. I had to drive in silence, because every time I turned on the radio it played Van Halen's "Running with the Devil." On Wednesday morning, I went to the donut shop and found someone had bought up everything except the devil's food. Glancing outside, I thought I caught a glimpse of that white suit disappearing around the corner. I kept getting threatening text messages from unknown numbers saying things like, "Im watching u!" and "watch ur back" and "Hows Becky?"

That was a week ago. I didn't go back to the lot to wash cars this weekend. And now, Rudy was here, in the one place I thought I'd be safe, and he was laughing like a maniac. I wanted to scream, but found myself incapable of anything more than a squeak. That squeak was all it took for Rudy Lee to notice me in the crowd.

"Matthew Francis! How the hell are ya, boy? How's that purdy car of yours?"

"It needs a paint job," I said, surprising myself with the casual sound of the voice that only seconds before had eluded me. I figured that talking to Rudy Lee like this could be hazardous to my health, but I couldn't stop the words from coming out of my mouth.

"What the hell did you do to it, you motherfu-" I was stopped by my mother's hand, slapping me hard in the face.

Rudy seemed amused by my show of bravado. The rest of the congregation was most decidedly not amused. Father Leonard looked at me disapprovingly, because I had almost used one of the "seven words you can't say on TV" in his church. Becky was asking me with her eyes what the hell I was doing. Then there was my mother. Mom stared me down with a look that would make a polar bear shiver. She dug her talons into my shoulder, and was about to read me the riot act, when Pauline Swann, the town busybody, worked her way into the aisle Rudy Lee had been dancing down only moments before, garnering every parishioner's attention. Rudy turned his disgusting grin toward her.

"Pauline Swann, you look simply radiant this morning," he said. "What can I do for you?"

“Well,” Pauline began in her annoying sing-song voice, “you can come down off of that altar and let Father Leonard finish mass for one thing.”

“Meh meh memeh meh mememeh,” Rudy Lee mocked her, in a high-pitched imitation of her voice that was more frightening than annoying. “I will do no such thing, ma’am. In fact, I think I would like you to join me up here for a dance.”

With that, Rudy waved his right hand and all of Pauline’s limbs jerked at once. I would have laughed, if I hadn’t been so terrified. Like a marionette from Hell, Pauline jerkily worked her way up to the altar, and settled next to Rudy Lee, who put his arm around her in much the same way parents were now putting their arms around their children. Father Leonard made a move toward Rudy Lee, but with a wave of his left hand Rudy Lee sat the priest right back down. Then things got really ugly.

Through the church’s sound system, we heard the first guitar chords of Norman Greenbaum’s “Spirit in the Sky.” Rudy grabbed Pauline around her fat waist and began dancing with her. It was a strange mix between a two-step and the twist. Calm seemed to come over Pauline’s frightened face, and she managed to smile. Then she began singing along with the song as they danced. When she and Norman sang the line, “I’ve got a friend in Jesus,” Rudy shot his left hand through her chest and pulled out her heart.

“Guess it’s a good thing she and Junior are buddies, huh?” Rudy asked the flabbergasted congregation.

Husbands held tight to their wives. Mothers covered the eyes of their children. Old ladies grasped their rosaries, frantically repeating their Hail Marys. Marcus Jameson tried to lead his family through the big wooden doors, only to have them slam shut on his arm, leaving him staring at a bloody nub as his wife screamed herself hoarse. Jackson Reilly attempted to jump through the stained glass window depicting Jesus falling down, and managed to impale himself on the

jagged glass of the cross. And Becky Hansen, for some reason, got up from her seat and started up the aisle toward Rudy Lee.

I watched in horror as the girl I loved walked towards certain death. My heart was pumping out its own techno beat. I tried to call out to Becky, but my voice was gone again. I didn't know what else to do, so I closed my eyes and prayed.

“Dear God, I know I haven't been the best example of Christian morals over the years,” I began, “but if you could just see fit to come down and smite this asshole, I promise I'll do better. Please?”

This was it. Our world would end on a Sunday morning, before we even got to Shoney's for brunch. My family, my friends, and my girl were all going to die. And it was my fault. I just had to go and look in that damned trailer.

Suddenly, a warm presence radiated through my body. My heart slowed down and I felt completely calm. I watched quietly as Becky distracted the Devil with her right hand, brandishing her grandmother's crucifix in his face, while reaching with her left hand for the Bible she had stuck in the hip of her jeans. She brought the good book up hard, under his chin. I saw a corn kernel tooth fly through the air. Then Rudy Lee laughed and grabbed Becky by the throat.

“Oh my,” he said with blood running down his chin, “you and me is gonna have us a whole mess of fun, little girl.”

I was horrified at the idea of him even touching Becky, but I decided that the warm, peaceful feeling washing over me must be the hand of God and thought I would see where it took me. It pulled me quickly up one of the side aisles, out of Rudy Lee's view, and led me to hide behind the organ. I had just begun to wonder why I was there, when I looked up and saw the Virgin Mary. Well, I saw a statue of her. It was a really big statue of her, situated almost directly behind Rudy Lee, who seemed angry about losing a tooth.

I crept over to the statue and gave it a light shove to make sure I could handle it. It was pretty heavy, but to my surprise it was also quite unstable. Guided by the calm, I rose to my full height and, remembering what I had heard from my mother many times as a child, called out to the monster that was Rudy Lee.

“Rudy Lee Mayfield!” I yelled, drawing his attention. “This is *not* how we behave in church!”

Then I heaved myself against the statue. As the giant Virgin Mary toppled towards Rudy Lee, everything slowed down. I saw the look of shock on my mother’s face. I saw the approving look in Father Leonard’s eyes. I saw entire families using the distraction to try and make a break for the doors. I saw the confused horror on Rudy Lee’s face, turn into a bloody grin. Then I saw him do a quick sidestep, leaving Becky Hansen directly in the path of the falling icon. I watched numbly as a look of fear spread across Becky’s face, as she was crushed by the Mother of God.

The church became silent. The warm feeling inside me turned white hot. Rudy Lee Mayfield cackled as he wiggled his fingers, drawing me against my will to stand beside him. He laughed even harder when he made me hug him, smiling involuntarily as hot tears ran down my face. I wanted to kill him.

“Well I’ll be damned!” Rudy Lee said, giggling. “That there was hilarious! You got a gift boy. I was fixin’ to kill you, but I think I might be able to find a use for someone like you.”

“Why?” I asked him in a whisper. “You bastard. Why did you have to come here?”

“Why? Well boy, this is the one place on this horrible planet where I can relax. I don’t have to deal for souls, don’t have to facilitate possessions, don’t even have to tempt anybody. I like it here; the lazy feel of this town. You have no idea how hard it is being me. Everywhere I go, people are cursing and rebuking me. But here, I can kick back, relax, and smoke my pipe. You threatened to screw all of that up for me you sneaky little shit. Besides, I gave you fair warning.”

“Fair warning? I get a text message from the devil, and that’s considered fair warning?” I was furious, sobbing. But I couldn’t move. Then the window exploded.

“Rudy Lee Mayfield! You are under arrest! Step away from the boy and put your hands behind your head. Now!” I had never been so happy to see Sheriff Bronson in my life, and crashing through Simon Peter helping Jesus was pretty outstanding as entrances go. But Rudy wasn’t budging.

“My dear Sheriff,” he said, “how stupid do you think I am? The moment I step away from the boy, you are going to open fire. Besides, your silly bullets won’t hurt me.

From behind us, I heard, “Maybe this will, dickhead.” Then Deputy Flint stepped up and shot Rudy Lee in the chest with his taser. It may not have hurt him, but it distracted him just enough for me to break free. I scrambled over next to Becky’s lifeless body.

“I’m so sorry baby,” I sobbed. “I’m so sorry.”

I looked up just in time to see the deputy fly over me and into the fourth pew. Rudy was up, and he was pissed. He was starting to lose control of himself. One side of his stylish hat had been pierced by a horn that resembled a mountain goat’s. His Santa Claus pin had fallen to the floor and been crushed to red and white dust under what appeared to be a hoof.

I felt another, different warmth coursing through me. It seemed to come from Becky. It guided me to pick up the crucifix lying on the ground next to her and run towards Rudy Lee, screaming.

I hit him square in the chest, right where his heart should have been. He looked down at the cross sticking out of him, then calmly looked up at me, laughing.

“You are mine now, boy,” he yelled as he pulled me tight to his side. I saw a light emanating from the spot where the crucifix had penetrated his chest. Then he exploded in a brilliant white flash and everything went dark.

#

By the next month, the congregation had managed to get the new church nearly built, and the bishop even came to town to bless it. He presided over the funeral for Becky, which I attended even though I couldn't bear the sight of her. When it was over I placed a single red rose on the coffin and stood there staring at it until they made me leave. The bishop declared me a hero which made me laugh. On the way home from the funeral I stopped at Rudy Lee's Imports and Used Car Emporium. I stopped the Trans Am, stepped out onto the gravel lot, and dropped the keys in the front seat. And as I walked away from the lot, and China Grove, daydreaming about what might have been, I filled my pipe with cherry vanilla tobacco and contemplated where my next vacation would take me. And cursing that stupid boy.

## Author Biographies

**Alban Fischer's** work has appeared most recently in *Past Simple* and *Thieves' Jargon*. He lives in Grand Rapids, MI, and is the editor of *trnsfr* <<http://www.trnsfrmag.com/>> .

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**Amanda Stephens** also upholds *BlazeVOX's* belief that art "must not suck." She recently graduated from Marshall University with an M.A. in English and currently resides in Huntington, West Virginia, where she teaches first-year composition at MU and works as a reference librarian on MU's Huntington campus. Stephens is also applying to joint degree programs in law and women's studies. Her poem, "Jagged Yellow Core," appeared in the July 2010 issue of *The Writer's Block*.

**Amy Lawless** is author of *Noctis Licentia* (Black Maze Books, 2008). Her poems have appeared most recently in *Pax Americana* and *The Nepotist*. She lives in Brooklyn. For more on Amy, check out her blog at <http://amylawless.blogspot.com>.

**Amylia Grace** is a poet, teacher and online columnist from Milwaukee. She holds a M.F.A. in Creative Writing and will begin doctoral studies in English this fall at The University of Texas. Her poetry has been published worldwide in places like *WordRiot*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *Poetry Conversations Quarterly*, *The GNU*, *Facets Literary Magazine*, *tinfoildresses* poetry journal, and her work is featured on *DiabetesCentral.com* and in *No Sugar Added: An Anthology of Poems on Diabetes* (DHF Press: Fall 2010). You may find her at [amyliagrace.blogspot.com](http://amyliagrace.blogspot.com). <<http://amyliagrace.blogspot.com>.>

**Andrea Dulanto** received her M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Florida International University, and her B.A. in Literature & Women's Studies from Antioch College in Ohio. She works as a freelance writer/ editor, teaches writing at Florida International University, and is an editor with *Elevate Difference*, an online publication. Articles, nonfiction and poetry have been published in *PopMatters*, *Miami ArtZine*, *Sinister Wisdom*, and *Court Green*.

**Andrew Baer** is a recent graduate of George Mason University currently doing freelance work in Thailand. He has previously published material with Caper Lit Journal, Clean Sheets, and Aberrant Journal. His website with further poetry, music, and travel writing is [www.highbrowculture.wordpress.com](http://www.highbrowculture.wordpress.com) <<http://www.highbrowculture.wordpress.com>> .

I have been writing seriously since 2006 with the help of a dynamic group of poets in Philadelphia in Leonard Gontarek's workshop. This is my first publication. I currently live in New Jersey where I practice law.

**Antony Hitchin:** A.D.Hitchin is a poetry and prose writer published in small press and independent journals. You can catch newly updated work at: [www.myspace.com/antonyhitchin](http://www.myspace.com/antonyhitchin) <<http://www.myspace.com/antonyhitchin>> and email him at [antonyhitchin@hotmail.com](mailto:antonyhitchin@hotmail.com) <<mailto:antonyhitchin@hotmail.com>>

**Brad Vogler** is currently back in school at Colorado State University, but previously worked as a librarian for a number of years and is looking forward to returning to that. He helps with Delete Press, which recently released its second chapbook. He's had work published in Ditch, Moria, Little Red Leaves, Otoliths, The Dead Mule and Apocryphaltext and has work forthcoming in Word for/Word.

**Barbara Duffey** is a Ph.D. student in Literature & Creative Writing at the University of Utah, where she is assistant poetry editor of Quarterly West and coordinator of the Agha Shahid Ali Poetry Prize. Her poems have appeared in such publications as Best New Poets 2009, Indiana Review, and Prairie Schooner. She lives in Salt Lake City with her husband, her dog, and two cats.

**Benjamin Dickerson** meanders through the canyons of southern California after a brief affair with New York and The New School's MFA program, and a few other people and places on the East Coast. He spends most of his time either ignoring capitalism or struggling to see its, a-hum, altruistic effects while trying to publish his book.

**BOB NIMMO** - AN OVERVIEW Having graduated in Arts and Law at Canterbury University, he has taught languages in Berlin, England, Singapore and New Zealand across all age groups to a number of nationalities and has lectured on English Literature.

Additionally, he has performed, written and directed for the theatre and acted as a drama critic. Mr Nimmo has written the book, lyrics and music for two musical comedies, has had poetry, short stories, essays and books for children published in Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. He has conducted seminars on the teaching of Literature, written published analyses of Shakespeare's plays and the Romantics, designed syllabi for the teaching of English and has written over twenty texts on English, Literature and Reading.

**Billy Cancel** is a Charleston based poet/performer. He has been widely published in both the US (including Lungfull! Fact-Simile, 6x6, 580 Split, Indefinite Space) as well as publications in the UK, Canada & Australia. Billy performs in the poetry/noise band Farms & self-publishes through Hidden House Press <http://www.hiddenhousepress.com/> <<http://www.hiddenhousepress.com/>> A collection *The Autobiography Of Shrewd Phil* was published by Blue & Yellow Dog Press in September 2010.

**Brian Edwards:** In a meager three and a half decades on the planet, Brian Edwards, an Englishman, has lived a number of lives, the most recent of which is that of husband and father. He currently resides in Tokyo and teaches (for want of a better word) at a private high school, writing poetry when he should be trying to further his career. His flirtatiousness and attention-seeking has successfully landed him in a number of journals and anthologies, including an upcoming collection for the UK charity *Children in Need*. He is a founding editor at *After Literature* which, incidentally, is also a UK charity, and is no longer embarrassed to tell people that his middle name is Francis.

**Brian Hardie** lives in Portland, Oregon.

**bruno neiva.** Portuguese. 27 years old. Experimental writer, visual poet and mail artist. Editor of *umaestruturassimsempudorreedições* (with bárbara mesquita) and *editorialbricollage*

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<http://foffof2.blogspot.com/>  
<http://famousalbumcovers.blogspot.com/http://weeimage.blogspot.com/>

**Ashley Burgess**

**Carlos Ponce-Meléndez** poems have appeared in *The Dreamcatcher*, *The Poet*, *Voices Along the River*, *Desahogate*, *Small Brushes*, *The Texas Observer*, *El Angel*, *Celebrate*, several anthologies and numerous Spanish magazines. He also teaches creative writing at schools and community centers.

**Carol Smallwood's** work has appeared in *English Journal*, *Michigan Feminist Studies*, *The Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine*, *Journal of Formal Poetry*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, *The Detroit News*, and anthologies. *The Published Librarian: Successful Professional and Personal Writing* is from the American Library Association, 2010; 2009 National Federation of State Poetry Societies Award Winner. The first chapter of *Lily's Odyssey*, 2010, appears in *Best New Writing 2010*;  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8M6m7PXGQIU>

**Caroline Kloksiem's** poems have most recently appeared in, or are forthcoming from *The The Pinch*, *Poets and Artists*, and *Jellyroll*. Originally from South Carolina, she's a graduate of Arizona State University's MFA program, a Massachusetts Cultural Council fellowship recipient, and co-poetry editor for *42opus*.

## **Chad Scheel**

**Christine Herzer** is a visual artist and writer living in India. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Fence*, *American Letters & Commentary*, *boo journal*, *Spiral Orb*, *Inertia*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Blackbox Manifold*, *elimae*, *Upstairs at Duroc* [France], *Moon Milk Review* and elsewhere. Her first e chapbook 'i wanted to be a pirate' is forthcoming with H\_NGM\_N Books. Christine is a recent graduate [M.F.A.] of the Bennington Writing Seminars.

**darren caffrey:** Darren was born in Dublin, Ireland. He successfully completed his Honours Degree in Visual Art Practice three years ago. His art practice has now grown to include more than simply the visual arts and while his method of writing is reinforced through this sense, it is his ambition to bring his words to a wider audience. To this end he has been a member of the local poetry writers group since its inception over a year ago. The regular opportunity to read and to listen to the words, which are shared at these events, has afforded him the time and space to develop a better understanding of the audience as a necessary part of the writer's process. His work has been included in several online publications but to date he is his yet to see his works on the printed page. His writing interests include poetry, non-fiction, art criticism, philosophy and prose works.

**David Toms** is currently pursuing a PhD in sports history in University College, Cork. His poetry has appeared in print and online in *Dusie*, *Past Simple*, *Default*, *Trespass*, *Black Market Review*, *Poetry Salzburg Review* amongst others. His second chapbook, *Those Feet and Where they are Going: Tom O'Bedlam Sings His Song* has just been published by Knives. Forks and Spoons in the UK.

**Debrah Morkun's** first full length book of poetry, *Projection Machine*, was published by BlazeVox Books in April 2010. She lives in Philadelphia, where writes, curates events, and is a founding member of The New Philadelphia Poets. You can visit Debrah online at [www.debrahmorkun.com](http://www.debrahmorkun.com) <<http://www.debrahmorkun.com/>> .

**Diana Salier's** writings have appeared or are upcoming on *Camroc Press Review*, *Opium Poetry 2.0*, *WTF PWM*, *Spooky Boyfriend* and *Spoken War*. She lives in San Francisco on a diet of JD Salinger and Raisin Bran. She is trying to write the perfect 2-minute pop song.

**Donna Danford:** I am a second-year law student at UB. Before that I was an editor and news writer/reporter. My favorite place in Buffalo is Delaware Park--walking the loop with everyone else.

David Plumb's recent book is, *Poetry on Strings* with marionette maker, Pablo Cano. Writing has appeared *One Paycheck Away*, *Big Toe Review* *Newversenews.com* and *The Blue Collar Review*. Books include, *Man in a Suitcase*, *Poems*, *The Music Stopped and Your Monkey's on Fire*, fiction and more. Will Rogers said, "Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip." David Plumb says, "It depends on the parrot."

**Ed Makowski** lives in Milwaukee and prefers two wheels to four. He has two books out as Eddie Kilowatt. Right now he's shopping for a dog. He's also shopping for houses in neighborhoods where one should have a big dog.

**Elizabeth Brazeal** is a graduate art student who drinks far too much coffee. Her poetry appears in current or upcoming issues of *The Blue Jew Yorker*, *Ascent Aspirations Magazine*, *491 Magazine*, *Danse Macabre*, and *Eudaimonia Poetry Review*.

**Eric Wayne Dickey** has a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Oregon State University. His poems and translations have been published in *Rhino*, *West Wind Review*, *Manzanita Quarterly*, and *International Poetry Review*, and *Blue Collar Review*, among other venues. He is a John Anson Kitredge Fund for Individual Artists grant recipient administered by Harvard University and a Vermont Studio Center Fellow. He co-edited *To Topos: Poetry International* and lives in Corvallis, Oregon.

**Erin J. Mullikin**

**Julie Finch** is a Jimi Hendrix worshipping urban poet writing in Houston, Texas, where she lives with three dogs and one cat. Her hobbies include trying to figure out Hendrix solos, writing, and shopping, not necessarily in that order. She loves poetry.

**Flower Conroy's** poetry has appeared/is forthcoming in: *American Literary Review*; *Oberon*; *Serving House Journal*; *Psychic Meatloaf*; *The Moose & Pussy*; *Ghost Ocean*; *Sweet*; *Lavender Review*; *Labletter*; and *Saw Palm*. Ms. Conroy will be attending the Fairleigh Dickinson University's MFA program in January.

**George McKim:** George started writing poetry at the ripe old age of 56. His poetry has been accepted for publication or has been published, in print or electronically, in *Poets & Artists*, *Viral Cat*, *Leaf Garden Press*, *7 x 20 Journal*, *Eunoia*, *escarp*, *Eviscerator Heaven*, *Carcinogenic Poetry*, *Tupelo Press Poetry Project*, *Simply Haiku*, *Rust and Moth Journal*, *Hanging Moss Journal*, *Chicago Poetry - Cram 6*, *Crossing Rivers into Twilight Journal*, *Everyday Poets*, *Everyday Poets Anthology* (print) and the 2010 Nazim Hikmet Poetry Competition (print).

George is the editor of Psychic Meatloaf - Journal of Contemporary Poetry (<http://www.psychicmeatloaf.com> <<http://www.psychicmeatloaf.com/>> ).

### **Sarah Sweeney**

**Geer Austin's** fiction and poetry has appeared in *MiPOesias*, *Colere*, *Big Bridge*, *Potomac Review* and other journals and anthologies.

**Geoffrey Gatza** is a staff writer for the Glenn Beck program at Fox News. He is a former republican speechwriter and copy-editor for a nationally known neo-conservative think-tank.

**henry 7. reneau, jr.** has been published in various journals and anthologies, among them, *Tryst Magazine*; *Nameless Magazine*; *The Chaffey Review*; *Blue Moon Literary & Art Review*; *Pachuco Children Hurl Stones*; *phati'tude Magazine*; *FOLLY Magazine*; *The View From Here*; and *hardpan: a journal of poetry*. He has also self-published a chapbook entitled 13hirteen Levels of Resistance. His favorite things are Rottweilers, books, his "fixie" bike and Ben & Jerry's New York Super Fudge Chunk.

### **Howie Good**

**Ivan Jenson** has enjoyed unprecedented success publishing his poetry in the US and the UK and he has received recognition for his bold Pop Art. His *Absolut Jenson* painting was featured in **Art News**, **Art in America**, and he has sold several works at Christie's, New York. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in **Word Riot**, **Zygote in my Coffee**, **Camroc Press Review**, **Word Catalyst Magazine**, **Poetry Super Highway**, **Alternative Reel Poets Corner**, **Underground voices magazine**, **Blazevox**, and many others. He now writes novels and poetry in Grand Rapids, Michigan. <http://www.ivanjensonartist.com>

**Ian Miller** lectures in the Humanities at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Confrontation*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and *Lilies & Cannonballs Review*.

### **James Mc Laughlin**

**Jason Joyce** recently graduated from the University of Wyoming with a bachelor's in Business Administration and a minor in Creative Writing and is now living in Los Angeles, working in event planning at Loyola Marymount University. He plays bass and synth in the band *The Rubbish Zoo*, and is *working on his first full-length collection of poems*. You can find out more about his writing and published poetry on his blog at [jasonjoyce.blogspot.com](http://jasonjoyce.blogspot.com).

## Jeff Arnett

**Julia Anjard Maher:** These poems are part of Julia Anjard Maher's current project: a Spicerian serial poem where real things stick. She hopes these poems will soon be set to images as part of a collaborative project. Currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia, some of Julia's poems have appeared in RealPoetik magazine and Counterexample Poetics.

**Joshua Young** holds an MA in English from Western Washington University, and will begin an MFA in poetry at Columbia College Chicago in 2011. He currently lives near Seattle, Washington with his wife and their dog. They are expecting their first child this November.

**Jennifer Thacker** is a Kentucky registrant in love, but wounded by autoimmune disease. She spends her days at the zoo washing elephants and feeling humbled. She adores all forms of literary expression, reading as much of it as I can. All with the hope that she may too catch the words that have made her heart and head so heavy. She was recently published in *amphibi.us* with the poem "A Mouthful of Lucky Charms."

A former poetry editor for *Stirring: A Literary Collection*, **Kate Lutzner's** poetry and stories have appeared in such journals as *Antioch Review*, *In Posse*, *Mudlark*, *Poetry Magazine*, *The Perihelion*, *Mississippi Review*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Mr. Beller's Neighborhood and Rattle*. She has poetry forthcoming in *The Potomac Review* and was awarded the Robert Frost Poetry Prize by Kenyon College, where she graduated Magna Cum Laude. Kate is recipient of the 2010 Jerome Lowell Dejur Award. She also holds a J.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is a second year student in the MFA program for poetry at City College. She lives in Brooklyn.

**Kelci M. Kelci** graduated from the MFA in Writing Program at the University of San Francisco in 2009 and is the Managing Editor of the Program's online literary magazine, Switchback <<http://www.swback.com/index.html>> . Since then she has been published in Blue Moon Literary and Art Review, sPARKLE & bLINK, and Blood Lotus and has built 2 1/2 of a run of 3 handmade accordion-fold artist's books called She'll Be Your Resident Poet. Visit her at [kelcimkelci.com](http://kelcimkelci.com) <<http://kelcimkelci.com>> .

**Laura Straub**, 24, is from New Hampshire and in her second year at St. Mary's College of California for an MFA in poetry. She currently lives in Oakland.

**Martin Willitts Jr** has been nominated for four Pushcart Awards and recently two Best Of The Net awards. He has four new chapbooks: "*The Girl Who Sang Forth Horses*" (Pudding House Publications, 2010), "*True Simplicity*" (Poets Wear Prada

Press, 2010), “*Van Gogh’s Sunflowers for Cezanne*” (Finishing Line Press, 2010), and “*Art Is Always an Impression of What an Artist Sees*” (Muse Café, 2010).

**Margot Block:** I am a struggling poet and student from Winnipeg Manitoba Canada. I have been writing poetry since the age of fourteen. I was encouraged by my father also a poet. My first poem was published at the age of fifteen in the opening issue of Zygote Magazine in Winter 1994. I worked with Canadian poet, Carol Rose. I won first prize in a poetry contest sponsored by Writer's Collective with a winning entry titled Blake's Chance. The winning entry was published in the Jan/Feb 2002 issue of their publication, The Collective Consciousness. I was also published in the Spring 2009 issue of Contemporary Verse 2: the Canadian Journal of Poetry & Critical Writing. The poem that they published was called Before Light. I was also published in the Fall 2010 issue of Juice, a journal at the University of Winnipeg.

**Myl Schulz** was born in New Orleans, LA. She has a BA from Vassar College and currently lives in Brooklyn, NY. Her work was featured in Poets for Living Waters, included in BlazeVOX 2k9 and forthcoming in EOAGH issue six.

**Camille Roy** is a writer and performer of fiction, poetry, and plays. Her book, *Sherwood Forest*, a collection poems and prose, is forthcoming from FuturePoem (Spring 2011). She edited *Biting The Error: Writers Explore Narrative* with Mary Burger, Robert Gluck, and Gail Scott (CoachHouse, re-issued 2010). Her books include *Cheap Speech*, a play, from Leroy, and *Craquer*, a fictional autobiography from 2<sup>nd</sup> Story Books, as well as *Swarm* (two novellas, Black Star Series), among others. Earlier books include *The Rosy Medallions* (poetry and prose, from Kelsey St Press) and *Cold Heaven* (plays, from Leslie Scalapino's O Books). She teaches fiction and other distortions at San Francisco State University.

**Megan Milligan** is an artist and writer from Las Vegas, NV. She currently co-hosts Las Vegas' longest-running weekly poetry reading and was Vimmag's feature poet for National Poetry Month 2010. Megan is published in journals including "Four and Twenty" and will soon have a selection of her poetry in the upcoming anthology, "ViVA: Vegas Poets' Anthology", due out late 2010.

**Michael Caylo-Baradi** occasionally contributes articles for *Latin American Review of Books*, *Los Angeles Daily News*, *Galatea Resurrects*, and *PopMatters*. His poetry has appeared in *Blue Print Review*, *Eclectica*, *elima*, *Mannequin Envy*, *Metazen*, *Our Own Voice*, *Otoliths*, *poet'sPicturebook*, *Prick of the Spindle*, *Tertulia Magazine*, *Underground Voices*, *XCP: Streetnotes*, and elsewhere. He lives Los Angeles-California, in seasonal monsoon of sunbeams. As though gesticulating, he blogs at **interval interventions**. <http://persuasionaswords.blogspot.com/>

**Michael Crake's** recent work appears in *Ekleksographia* and *Mud Luscionis*. He is the co-founder and co-editor of the online magazine Pinstripe Fedora ([www.pinstripedfedora.com](http://www.pinstripedfedora.com) <<http://www.pinstripedfedora.com/>> ). He lives with his wife Renée in Colorado.

My name is **Michael Hartman**. I presently live in Phoenix, AZ. I am 26 years old. Recently, I graduated with a degree in journalism from Northern Arizona University, and I currently work on freelance projects. A few of my favorite poets are Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Michael Gessner and Rilke. I wrote these poems while I was living in Flagstaff, AZ, a place where I found a great deal of inspiration.

### **Nick Miriello**

**Nicole Peats** recently graduated from Southeast Missouri State University with a B.A. in English Writing. Her poetry has appeared in the *Cave Region Review* and *Big Muddy*. Nicole's next educational goal is to pursue a Masters in Library and Information Science. She currently lives, reads, and writes in the southeast region of Missouri, a mere 10 miles from the Mississippi river.

**Orchid Tierney** is a New Zealand writer and art director. Her work has appeared in various journals, most recently in *Otoliths*, *Streetcake* and *Potroast*. Currently, she edits *Rem Magazine*, [www.remmagazine.net](http://www.remmagazine.net) <<http://www.remmagazine.net/>> , and the *Mapping Me* anthology project, [www.mapping-me.blogspot.com](http://www.mapping-me.blogspot.com) <<http://www.mapping-me.blogspot.com/>> .

### **Philip Sultz**

**SJ Fowler** has had poetry published in over 60 journals since the beginning of 2010 and his first collection is released later this year by Veer books. He is a member of the Writers forum avant garde poetry group and an employee of the British Museum. He edits the *Maintenant* interview series for 3am magazine and is a postgraduate student in Philosophy at the University of London. [www.sjfowlerpoetry.com](http://www.sjfowlerpoetry.com) <<http://www.sjfowlerpoetry.com/>> [www.maintenant.co.uk](http://www.maintenant.co.uk) <<http://www.maintenant.co.uk/>>

**Steven Taylor:** Steve is a man who lives a double life. He is a mild-mannered bean counter by day, and at night attends University of Texas, Dallas, as an undergraduate majoring in Literary Studies. He is currently on the 25-year degree plan. This is his first published piece.

### **Steve Potter**

**Stephan Delbos** is a New England-born poet living in Prague, where he teaches at Charles University and Anglo-American University, and works as culture editor for The Prague Post. His poetry, translations and essays have appeared most recently

in Agni, Atlanta Review, Poetry International, New Letters, Rain Taxi, Zoland Poetry, and the anthology Return of the Kral Majales: Prague's International Literary Renaissance, 1990-2010.

### **Simon Perchik**

### **Sean Neville**

**Sarah Sousa** is a poet living in western Massachusetts with her husband and two sons. She received an MFA in poetry from the Bennington Writing Seminars. Her poems have appeared in literary journals including: Smartish Pace, Spire Press, White Pelican Review, and Amoskeag: The Journal of Southern New Hampshire University, as well as the Maine anthology A Sense of Place. Her book manuscript To Stave Off Disaster was a semi-finalist for the 2009 University of Akron Book prize and a finalist for both the 2010 Astrophil Press book prize and the John Ciardi Prize. She has a poem forthcoming in Meridian's 50 Best New Poets 2010 and received an honorable mention for her poem "The Pond" in the Robert Frost Award. Her poems also appear in the current issues of Weave, Inertia and Eudaimonia, with poems forthcoming in Clare Magazine of Cardinal Stritch University, as well as a review in the online forum Gently Read Literature.

**Bob Whiteside:** I live Buffalo, NY. I have published in Artvoice and Hangman.

**Ricardo Nazario y Colón** was born in the South Bronx, NYC and raised in Carruzos, Carolina, Puerto Rico. He is a graduate of DeWitt Clinton high school and has studied at Hudson Valley Community College; Fordham University (Rose Hill); University of Kentucky and Pace University (NYC). He holds a bachelor's degree in Spanish Literature and Latin American Studies, and a Master in Secondary Education. He is a doctoral student in the Education Policy and Evaluation program at the University of Kentucky and lives in Bowling Green, Kentucky where he is the director of the Office of Diversity Programs for Western Kentucky University. As an undergraduate student he co-founded the Affrilachian Poets—a group of friends who have dedicated the last 20 years of their writing careers, to the aesthetic of making the invisible visible. Look for Ricardo's poems in the Louisville Review, ArtScene, Hudson View, Aphros, Southern Poetry Anthology, BlazeVox, Amphibious, Nappy New Millennium, Arts Across Kentucky, Facebook and on his website at [www.lalomadelviento.com](http://www.lalomadelviento.com) <<http://www.lalomadelviento.com>>

### **Santiago del Dardano Turann**

**John Raffetto** Is a Horticulturist/Landscape designer for 30 years who also has been writing poetry for over 30 years. A graduate from the University of Illinois, he's a life-long Chicagoan which makes him appreciate nature even more. Along with poetry he likes nature, art & music He lives with his wife and son. A number of his poems have been in various publications both on line and in print.

**Bruce Bromley** has performed his poetry and music at the John Drew Theatre (East Hampton); the Berklee Performance Center (Boston); Shakespeare and Company (Paris); The Village Voice (Paris); and at the 1986 Edinburgh Theatre Festival, where the Oxford Theatre Troupe performed his play, *Sound for Three Voices*. His poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in: *Word Riot*, *Pif Magazine*, *The Battered Suitcase*, *Monkey Puzzle Magazine*, *Fringe Magazine*, the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, *Women and Performance*, *Fogged Clarity*, and in *Gargoyle Magazine*, among others. He is Senior Lecturer in expository writing at NYU, where he won the 2006 Golden Dozen Award for teaching excellence.

**Carl Dimitri**: Dimitri moved to Los Angeles to work as a songwriter in the early 90's. After three years in California, he enrolled in a graduate program in literature at the University of Essex, England. Carl returned to Rhode Island in 2000, where he taught, wrote, and worked. He published the novel *The Excellent Wretch*, and more than a dozen short stories and essays. He simultaneously pursued painting and visual art, participating in a number of shows in RI, Connecticut and New York.

**Gregory Dirkson** lives and teaches high school English in Connecticut and has been writing poetry and short stories since his introduction to Shel Silverstein. He received his undergraduate degree in education from Central Connecticut and his masters from Wesleyan University. He is a loving husband and father.

**Jordan Martich** is a Journalism student at Ball State University who loves writing short stories. He also plays guitar, among other things, in 3 to 5 different bands in Indiana depending on the weather conditions. He listens to Death Metal and folk music, wishes he was born decades earlier and enjoys any type of whiskey. Jordan can be found dancing, at any given party, and participates in conversations with other human beings. He has Kurt Vonnegut tattoos and lives life like a optimistic nihilist in the Midwest area.

**Natalie McNabb** graduated from the University of Washington with distinction in English. Recent publications include fiction and poetry for Fish Publishing, InterSECTIONS, Bricolage Literary and Arts Journal, Virtual Writer, Ilura Press, Wigleaf, Catalyst Book Press and W. W. Norton & Company. She likes double short Americanos with secure lids. Visit her at [nataliemcnabb.com](http://nataliemcnabb.com).

**Moura McGovern**

**Jennifer Houston**

**Robert Vaughan's** plays have been produced in N.Y.C., L.A., S.F., and Milwaukee where he resides. He leads two writing roundtables for Redbird- Redoak Studio. His prose and poetry is published or forthcoming in over 85 literary journals. He was interviewed about Flash Fiction by WUWM's *Lake Effect*. His work is included in *65 MIND GAMES* anthology. He is a fiction editor at jmw magazine. A flash editor for Thunderclap! His blog: <http://rgv7735.wordpress.com>.

**Christi Mastley** lives and works in Minnesota, surrounded by Lutherans and snowdrifts. She has been published once before, in *Potluck Children's Literary Magazine*, and hopes to keep the trend going.

**pd mallamo**





# BLAZEVOX 2KX

buffaloFOCUS  
Norma Kassirer



## BuffaloFOCUS

A swath of pieces from *Katzenjammered* a work of fiction by Norma Kassirer

### Introduction

Buffalo Focus is a special section of each issue of BlazeVOX that takes an extended look at one writer from our hometown, Buffalo, NY. It is a real honor to present in this issue a swath of pieces from *Katzenjammered* a work of fiction by Norma Kassirer.

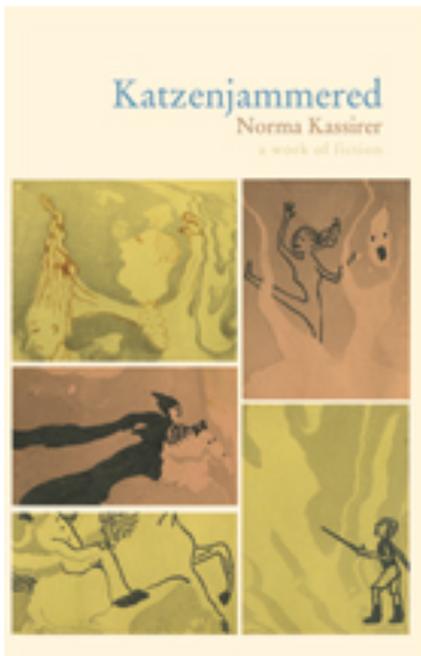
These stories surround the memoirs of a young girl confronting life by way of her father's war experiences. Shocking, illuminating, traumatic and compelling these stories grab hold of reader in the most gentle of grips. Each story begins with a short epigraph from the girl's father's writing of his experiences as a soldier in World War One. The juxtapositions create a wondrous tension of these very short stories. Each section develops the things that make up the self: history, country, family, name and politics. The father's drinking overshadows each story, which is, in a way, self-treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This is an amazing work of fiction. I am sure you will agree.

The full book is now available from BlazeVOX [books], more information is on the following page. And you can order it here <http://www.blazevox.org/bk-nk.htm>

Rockets, Geoffrey

Geoffrey Gatzka  
Editor & Publisher

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BlazeVOX [ books ]  
Publisher of weird little books  
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*Katzenjammered* a work of fiction by Norma Kassirer

*Katzenjammered* is a brilliantly compelling illumination of the nature of storytelling. Through the haunting imagery of interwoven narratives, the tale carries the reader through family mythology, tragedy, and beyond. With, in the words of the young protagonist, “each syllable broken into light and shadow”, the language is a joy to read.

—Donna Wyszomierski

Norma Kassirer’s insouciant partnership of teeth and stones in a bowl on a small desk and her glance at the surface of a pond where “the water breaks into oriental script” are just two of her many perfect gestures. In *Katzenjammered*, a watchful child perceives and senses and sometimes almost understands the dark waters seeping up under the suburban world of tennis and Sunday dinners surrounding her. Woven through the book are bits of journal entries from her father’s tour of duty at the Front during World War I: a leit motif which events ultimately rise to meet. There is more to come. You won’t want to miss it.

—Ann Goldsmith

“I pull the green shade and cancel her,” tells nine-year-old Martha, lending privacy to her narrational eye. This is narrative of cancellation: canceling as it does the separation of knowledge and innocence, discovery and secrecy, poetry and fiction. Cross these categories as Kassirer does—with irreverent caution.

—Edric Mesmer

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<http://www.blazevox.org/bk-nk.htm>

Norma Kassirer lives in Buffalo, New York. *The Hidden Wife*, a collection of her stories with artwork by Willyum Rowe, was published by Shuffaloff Press in 1991. Other stories and poems have appeared in various journals, including *Blatant Artifice*, *Sow’s Ear*, *Yellow Edenwald Field*, and elsewhere. Her short story cycle *Milly* was published in 2008 by the Buffalo Ochre Papers.

She has also written two novels for children, both published by the Viking Press: *Magic Elizabeth*, in 1966 (reprinted by Harper and by Knopf and Scholastic, and most recently appearing through *Breakfast Serials*), and *The Doll Snatchers*, Viking, 1969. Both of her daughters have long been engaged with writing and publishing, the cover images having been drawn by her daughter Karen as a child.

*At 2:45, our fire increased in intensity,  
and silently we prepared to go over.  
Fresnoy, France, May 9, 1917  
Pte. Martin Gresham*

One pull was carved in a pear shape and there was an apple, cherries, a peach. The two small drawers at the top had grape pulls, very real looking, my father liked to point out; a fine, noble chest of drawers he called it, made by his grandfather on the farm in Canada of cucumber wood from their own forest. That was the place with the trout stream and the wide skies my father dreamed through the Great War. That was before I was born, when he was Private Martin Gresham of the Princess Pats, fighting the war that would end war forever.

His father, said Agnes, was a real horror. She was my mother. An agnostic of the fallen Protestant variety, she distrusted any intimation of the hierarchical, and preferred her first name to a title, even one so universal as Mother. My father, although he also called himself agnostic, was not so fundamental about it. So it was that he was Daddy, she Agnes.

One of the horrible things Grandfather Gresham had done was to sell that farm. And this while his only son was in a military hospital in England—two years with shell shock and a broken back, and all that time yearning for what his father had not bothered to tell him was gone. Never mind that my father wouldn't have lived there anyhow after Aunt Emmy introduced him to Agnes, who was definitely not the sort to live on a farm, didn't know what in the world cucumber wood was, for lord's sake, she used to say. My father didn't either. It was what they called it back then and he'd never thought to ask.

The chest was too big for the room he called his den, which also contained an easy chair, rolltop desk, and of course, his typewriter. My father wanted everything—Agnes said so. And there was no wall space in there, for heavens sake, with the door to the hall, the one to the attic, a window to the front and another to the side that looked into the next door lady's house. She was the one with the fur coat that matched her dachshund, and so stuck up she'd cross the street so she wouldn't have to speak to you. Agnes said the coat was mink, ridiculous she said, to walk a dog in.

It was so crowded in that room, how could a man think, much less write?

*The deadly silence was weird  
I braced my foot on the scaling  
ladder, set my teeth firm, and  
waited.*

*Pte. M. G.*

I find the key in one of the little grape drawers at the top. It fits the peach drawer at the bottom, but I forget about the lady next door, and lo and behold, as Aunt Emmy often says, there she is, in that mink coat. She's staring straight at me. I stare back, my hands full of papers from the drawer. Her lips move, and though I can't hear her through the two layers of glass that separate us, I know what she's saying, that I have no right to be in here snooping in my father's office. I pull the green shade and cancel her.

After that, I put the shade down first, when I come in, so I can read IN PRIVATE, what my own father wrote about the War, in articles that were clipped from Canadian newspapers, and pages torn from Canadian magazines published by the army. PEPANDGO, a shiny-papered magazine published by the insurance company my father works for, is there too.

I close my eyes and leaf through the papers until I feel like stopping. I take out whatever my hand is on and read it. There is always a moment when I pray, well not really PRAY, just hope, very hard, that it won't be the one about my father stumbling over the German soldier with his head blown off.

*I know the poem in PEPANDGO by heart.*

*The Man Who Wins*

*The man who wins is the average man,  
Not built on any particular plan,  
Not blessed with any particular luck,  
Just steady and earnest and full of pluck,*

*For the man who wins is the man who works,  
Who neither labor nor trouble shirks,  
Who uses his hand, his head, his eyes,  
The man who wins is the man who tries.*

The rhythms are good for masturbating. My friend Gladys told me what that was. She knows everything, though she isn't much older than me. I'm scared of her because she has no limits. She'll do anything. Agnes says she's crazy, and it's no wonder, with what goes on over there.

This is in 1932. I'm nine. My name is Martha, for no good reason. Up until my generation, people in Agnes' family had been named for the people who came before them. Even earlier, they'd been named for virtues, like charity and prudence. Agnes wants nothing to do with any of that. The passing on of names smacks, as she would put it, (she often uses mildly violent imagery, as if she feels pursued by something she knows is going to get her some day) of organized religion. It makes her itch all over, she says.

*Far down the line a whistle sounded.  
The officer shouted an order, and over  
we crawled, into the fumes of cordite  
in "no man's land."*

*Pte. M. G.*

The house is white, the shutters green. There are matching yews on either side of the front stoop. Mr. Rose, the block gardener, who is really Mr. Ross, but has an herbaceous sense of humor, never gets them just right; no one could, a fact that nags at me just beneath the surface of everything else. (I don't notice until adolescence that the shutters are fake and are consequently not wide enough to cover the windows.) Stella, who is the maid, polishes the brass knocker on the front door every morning.

Uncle Flavius had given us the table in the front hall, the one that holds the telephone, which resembles a daffodil in shape and posture. The table is ebony with intricate mother-of-pearl insets, and, according to Agnes, is extremely valuable. Uncle Flavius is an artist. This means that he has good taste, except in wives. In that case, he is simply wise. Aunt Charlotte is rich, an excellent thing in an artist's wife, says Agnes.

Flavius Josephus, I know, is more or less from the bible. There'd been lots of ministers, generations of them, on Agnes's side of the family, but they were all gone by the time she became an agnostic. Essy and Donald and I (I'm the oldest, Donald the youngest) have never set foot in any Sunday school, and never will, not if Agnes has anything to say about it. Some people, she says, need to be herded into churches. She knows how to behave without that sort of prop. We don't have our tonsils out either and will never be inoculated for smallpox, not because of being agnostic exactly; it's simply another intelligent decision, says Agnes. Doctor Billy Martin, at school, always gives the nurse a funny look when he examines me. Well, he says, I see that Martha still has those tonsils. I know by heart why he doesn't mind making me feel bad. He's mad at the whole family because long ago he was engaged to marry my cousin Miranda and she broke it off the day before when all the arrangements had been made for the wedding—you know Miranda.

*Jumping across shell holes,  
stumbling over dead bodies and  
equipment, we ran along.*

*Pte. M. G.*

Inside the stairs, in the closet in the dark, I hear how they walk, drumbeats that make the wire hangers ring on the metal bar over my head, or soft, like wings, as if the stair wood has turned to air. Up in the den, the peach drawer words stir and hiss, break into syllables, come down one syllable a stair, BAY O NETS FIXED TO RE PEL THE EN E MY. I am part of the stair spine itself, in the mothball, hot-wool-cat-smell, me smelling the smell of myself and liking it. Listening to Agnes talking on the phone. *Well*, she says, my *mother's* idea of *economy* was olive sandwiches. Honestly! she says. HmMMM, she says. She laughs. Can you *feature* it? she says.

I know that story. I know all the stories. Hers always have a lot of underlinings.

*The body lay very naturally  
in the field and the stump of  
his head was covered with dirt.*

*Pte. M. G.*

Aunt Charlotte had given us the desk in the upstairs hall. It reminds Agnes of Charlotte, expensive, spindly-legged and useless. The green blotter with the brown leather corners is never ink-stained. It is changed when it fades. The desk's job is to hold the lamp with the green glass shade, the blue bowl of tiny white stones mixed with Essy's, Donald's and my lost teeth and the feather pen stuck in among them. The pen has never been used. It is just for decoration.

Our parents' room is across the hall from the feather pen. There are little lamps with orange silk shades in here. The shades do magic things with the light against the dark walls. Everything smells of perfume, even the clock with radium numbers that glow green in the dark, and the two high beds side by side, heaped with comforters and extra pillows. The cat has scooped a cradle out of the bottom of the springs of my father's bed. Venetian blind light and shade stripe the beds and the walls and the floor.

I am in that room. I open the drawers of the small table between the beds. The gun is still there. I knew it. I for my father's bed, KNEW for the table, IT for my mother's. Each syllable broken into light and shadow.

*He was wounded, but I  
dared not let him live.*

*Pte. M. G.*

Great Aunt Emmy's daughter Miranda went to finishing school in New Orleans where she was valedictorian of her class and had red hair so long she could sit on it. Why would anyone want to? Agnes wonders.

There were no schools suitable for Miranda in Blue Fields, Nicaragua, where Doctor and I lived in great happiness for so many glorious years until one of those silly revolutions chased us out and everything went straight to hell, excuse me darling, says Aunt Emmy. She calls herself Mrs. Doctor Marshall with servants and department store clerks. Agnes says, She's your father's aunt, not mine.

Sundays, Aunt Emmy and Doctor have dinner at our house. Aunt Emmy always gets drunk as a skunk, she says so herself. Doctor won't drink, it's against the law. Essy and Donald and I are katzenjammered—my father's word for stomach-down on the German oriental reading the Sunday funnies. Player piano doing Two Little Girls in Blue, Lads, the fake Ming vases humming along. Aunt Emmy in a black dress, long pearls, pokes me with a patent leather toe tip. Never mind, darling, she says, never mind. It's what she always says. I'm the one she loves. I know it, everyone knows. I look the way Aunt Emmy used to and wishes she still could. I give her a smile from the floor by way of recompense. Oh, you'll end in Hollywood, she whispers, with thrilling emphasis. She whirls and bumps a vase, it teeters and she catches it and makes a dance of balancing, hugging that Ming thing to her as if it's someone she loves; not me, this time, anyone can see. And certainly not Doctor.

*I plunged my bayonet into  
his body and closed my eyes.  
Pte. M. G.*

I'm shelling peas on the rustic table in the garden. One pea says to the other, Olive sandwiches, that was my mother's idea of economy. A gooseberry says, Was that when she was poor, Pea dear? Yes, olives! Can you feature it? They cost the earth, you know! Did you know she gave me away?

Gave you away, poor dear! Oh, my god, what kind of mother would do that?

She was a fool, no backbone.

Oh my, no backbone! And you were only eight years old?

My father died, and she just fell apart. Some children are fortunate. They're eight and their fathers are around working very hard and their mothers are sensible.

Enter Green Tomato. You went to live with your grandfather, dear?

Oh yes, he was rich, that was my mother's excuse, she said he could give me what a girl ought to have.

What about your brothers?

Like peas in a pod, olives in a jar, they stayed home and were poor. My mother wouldn't accept help from my grandfather except for necessities. Olives, for instance.

I surprise myself with that peas in a pod, olives in a jar. It seems very clever to me. It has emerged somehow from my mother's habit of ironic emphasis.

Olives! the peas all shriek, Olives! Oh my god, those olives! What a fool that woman was!

I heard you say a bad thing, Martha! Essy says from the sandbox. I'm going to tell.

You're lying. What did I say? Prove it.

You said, my god.

Now you said it, now I'm going to tell!

Essy begins to wail.

A sunflower shrieks in a terrible witchy voice that even scares me—That one in the sandbox takes after her grandmother! We call her Olive!

Essy's screaming now. She's having one of her fits. I let Stella take care of it. I'm too shaken by that creepy sunflower.

*I was conscious of his warm  
Blood, running down my hand.  
Pte. M. G.*

Great Grandfather in sepia on the wall over Agnes's bed looks like God.

Oh, how your mother loved him, I say to Donald, in a voice that thrills me from top to bottom; it's the sort I imagine a preacher might use. Donald looks down at his hands.

Pay attention, Donald, you could grow up to be like him if you stop wetting your pants.

Donald looks unhappy.

You did it again, Donald! If you go on like this, you'll be poor with Agnes and eat olive sandwiches, but I'll rescue you, don't cry, Donald, Martha will take care of you.

Donald's face puckers. He cries without making any sound.

Stay here, Donald, don't move, I'll tell you what I'll do, as soon as I get out of high school I'll come home and get a job no matter how my grandfather begs me not to; he loves me and I love him, he calls me the little Marchioness, it's in Pinocchio. It's in his own hand-writing. He gave it to me for Christmas.

That's not your book, that's Agnes's, says Donald.

Shut up, Donald. Listen, I hate my grandmother, Donald.

You don't hate anyone, Martha! Don't talk that way! Shame on you!

I hate you, Stella! You sneaked in! You didn't even knock!

Go to your room, young lady! And I'm telling your mother about this, you kept poor Donald from going to the potty again. Look at that, he peed all over your mother's rug!

You said pee! I'm telling Agnes! It's ignorant!

*And then, suddenly, as I watched,  
they came, not in fine charging  
line, but in veritable droves.*

*Pte. M. G.*

The story was that my great grandfather begged Agnes to go to Syracuse University, he even had her all registered, and she might have done it if she'd had a normal life, which, as she often remarks, she never did, of course. No, she marched straight back home after her graduation from high school, to help her mother and her brothers and she got a job on the draft board and that was where she met Aunt Emmy, who introduced her to her nephew when he came back from the war and they fell madly in love. That's Aunt Emmy's version. Agnes says that if her own mother hadn't been such a hapless fool, she wouldn't have been working at the draft board and never would have met my father—she would have gone to Syracuse and had a career and would never have married anyone. She would have been too smart by then.

That grandmother of Agnes's! We all know about her! What a snob! No wonder Agnes hated her! She belonged to the DAR and she was a Suffragette and President of the WCTU and she drank whisky every single day with a WCTU ribbon pinned to her lapel! She pretended it was medicine! Her husband saw right through her. He called her Jake, to tease her about being a Suffragette—why, she was just like that woman in Bleak House who helped all the African children while her own went around with runny noses and earaches. Then my great grandmother wouldn't speak to my great grandfather. She had no sense of humor, that woman. Also, she was jealous of Agnes. Her Christian name, can you feature it?—was America!

*They swarmed over the trench  
and came at a jog trot towards  
our position.*

*Pte. M. G.*

Quite often I find crumpled paper on the den floor with Buried Alive typed at the top. Usually, there is a line or so of text, but sometimes just the title heading a blank page. I knew that my father had written something called Buried Alive long ago for a military magazine called The Bulletin.

Agnes tells him he should stop thinking about it. She has one of the crumpled sheets in her hand when she says it, so I know that's what she means—Stop thinking about being buried alive. My father doesn't answer. He closes the den door. Agnes stands there in the hall for a while and then she turns around and throws the crumpled paper into the wastepaper basket under the Aunt Charlotte desk. Then she farts.

When Agnes sees me standing there in my nightgown so late, she slaps me. What are you doing? she yells, Get back in bed, you little sneak! I do get back in bed, but I lie there in the dark thinking how she's just like her horrible grandmother, maybe even worse. Probably, I tell myself, her grandmother never farted, thinking she was alone.

My father doesn't read to Essy or to Donald. Essy is too restless. Donald is too young. My father reads to me. He reads Alice. He reads David Copperfield. The black and white pictures scare me, but I don't mention it.

Seated in his lap, I smell the sweet pipe tobacco smell of him, feel the scratchy tweed. I compare the tan of his skin with mine. The same sort of skin, a mole on the cheek, as if we are marked for one another, blue eyes, black hair. When he calls me his Old Standby, it is as if he is speaking in code. No one else understands. Not Essy, not Donald. My father cannot get along without me.

There is a shiny brown jug on the sideboard in the dining room. The jug holds whisky. Its stopper is a monk's head and its round body represents his brown robe and rope belt. It is really a music box that plays How Dry I Am whenever it is tipped to pour. Agnes gave it to him for a joke. He never winds it, except when we are alone, and that is another joke. He winks at me when he turns the key. The jug sits next to us on the end table while he reads to me. Agnes is away. When he shifts me in his lap and picks it up and pours the whisky into his glass and it plays its silly little tune, he winks at me again.

*I was crouching on the fire  
step, shells of all caliber  
bursting around me. I heard  
a big one coming.*

*Pte. M. G.*

Listen, Donald, listen, be very quiet, if Stella finds out you're in here—listen to this, Father wrote this—I remember seeing a German with his head blown off clean as a whistle. The body lay very naturally on the field and the stump of his head was covered with dirt.

Don't suck your thumb, Donald. Did you hear what I read, Donald? His head was off, Donald! His head was gone! If you're going to wet your pants, Donald, do it in the hall. Hurry! Stella, Stella! Donald wet his pants again! You better not tell her we were in there, Donald, or someone might take your head off. What are you yelling about, Stupid?

I don't know what's wrong with him, Stella. What is it, honey?

Essy listens to the story about our father killing the German. I don't believe it, she says.

It's true, Essy, it's true, he wrote it, do you think our father lies? Are you saying he's a liar, Essy?

I've brought the page into our bedroom, I'm taking a chance my father's drunk. He's alone downstairs. It's a delicious game I'm playing.

You have to listen, Essy, or you can't come to the party.

What party? she sobs. Any party, ever, I say.

Essy's having one of her fits, but no one cares. No one does a thing about it, no matter how loud she yells. Father's the only one at home and he's drunk, all right. I hear him winding the key on the bottom of the brown jug. We can hear it playing HOW DRY I AM It sings, in a tiny, tinny voice, over and over, Nobody knows how dry I am, nobody knows but Jesus, over and over, it sings the same words, and when it begins to run down, he winds it up again.

Norma Kassirer lives in Buffalo, New York. *The Hidden Wife*, a collection of her stories with artwork by Willyum Rowe, was published by Shuffaloff Press in 1991. Other stories and poems have appeared in various journals, including Blatant Artifice, Sow's Ear, Yellow Edenwald Field, and elsewhere. Her short story cycle *Milly* was published in 2008 by the Buffalo Ochre Papers.

She has also written two novels for children, both published by the Viking Press: *Magic Elizabeth*, in 1966 (reprinted by Harper and by Knopf and Scholastic, and most recently appearing through Breakfast Serials), and *The Doll Snatchers*, Viking, 1969.

Both of her daughters have long been engaged with writing and publishing. Her daughter Karen, as a child, drew the cover image.



