

an online journal of voice

BlazeVOX



11

Spring 2011

BlazeVOX11 Sprint 2011

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Published by BlazeVOX [ebooks]

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Printed in the United States of America

eBook design by Geoffrey Gatza

First Edition

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Introduction

Welcome to Spring! Or so it says in the calendar, but it is storming violently outside now. Eliot comes to mind, as it was sunny and beautiful last week and now the aluminum porch rooftop is drumming with sleet, hail, rain and thundering snowfall. It's really ghastly out there, but if this is what nature needs to make it into Spring, to grow new flowers, then rain on! There is nothing one can do about weather other than stay inside and wait until the sun shines. Spring can be as terrifying as dark dreary winter; there are swirling tornadoes, tsunamis and new Chernobyl's; more war, more money for gasoline and more wild ideas. And yet we writers persist, we keep on working our poetry and our stories and continue to read our poems and it is all rather exciting. There is a lot of work out there for poetry and in this issue we present a glimmering sliver of that shining potential. In this great new issue we have fifty-five poets and eleven prose pieces. Also we have two new ebooks and our running series, buffaloFOCUS features John Rigney.

A whole new look for the elevenzies

If you have not noticed, then let me tell you about the whole new outlook for BlazeVOX. Just about everything has changed since our last issue. We have a new physical location, a new logo for the press, a whole new website, a new blog and a new store. To begin with, we moved from our old home about a mile down the road, a bit closer to downtown Buffalo, New York, than we previously did. It is a lovely location, wonderful being able to walk to poetry events and poets homes as we now live closer to them and the scene, as it were. It is great fun, spacious place and most important, I have an office in our new apartment. So hurray for that! Here is the new addy, so please update your iPads accordingly.

Geoffrey Gatza
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Our new site is just extraordinary! Do have a look around and please visit our new store! We have all of our books on display in an easy to use format. We now have a direct connection to a Look Inside feature for all, well most, of our books. You can now buy books directly from us! This is a great new way for us to directly share our fine books with you, our dear audience! Hurray! We have a New Release section that will tell you all about our new books so you can stay up to date with all of the great books we have to offer. And in our art gallery we have an offering of podcasts and a display of 100 of our coolest covers. We will be revolving our galleries so do keep an eye on this section!

Our new logo is plastered all over the site so you probably won't miss it :-). We have just honed in our look to keep up with the fashions of our new decade. Look forward to new features at BlazeVOX blog. We'll be featuring poems from our books on a regular basis as well as updates on BlazeVOX books being reviewed and current author news. And we'll be featuring new ebooks this year! We have two new offerings in this issue from a book of three stories by Chuck Richardson and poetry matched with art by Felino A. Soriano & Constance Stadler! So what more can you ask for, it's all free and without commercials! Plus we receive no funding from any government or agency! So please enjoy! And should you feel so moved as to donate to BlazeVOX by all means do so!

Hurray and Happy Spring!

Rockets, Geoffrey

Geoffrey Gatzka
Acting Editor

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buffaloFOCUS | Shinwell Johnson

A selection of minimal poems is a ebook sized book! Hurray!

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Tyler King

Misty Sidewinders

Tires launch misty sidewinders
(their hissing indistinguishable from
the impact of sky diving drops)
in front of my headlights.
They twist and turn,
tongues flicking in frustration,
slamming into the windshield with a splash
as a final attempt to sink their
now-fleeting venom into my cheek;
my view of the road is unclear for a moment.

The Watchman

Your softback leather skin purrs at the touch;
a few pages dislocate from your spine
but knowing hands gently massage them
back into place.

Your pages have grown yellow at the edge,
but just that--like dipping a toe in the water
to test its frigid severity.
You are old indeed.

You smell of the last century,
all its love and death, all its war and peace,
testing the waters with your edges since 1907,
a silent watchman of humanity's beating heart.

The Rain is a Lullaby

The rain is a lullaby,
calling me to sleep;
the sound of flowing water falling
soothes like, "Baby, hush.
What are you still doing up?
Get your soul to sleep."
The intermittent pond ripples are
but dancing spots on the back
of a closed eyelid.

Like a Silent Lover

Like a silent lover,
Summer slipped out this morning.
The sheets were pulled aside.
Summer's clothes were gone,
and my outstretched arm lay
under the phantom nape of her neck,
my body folded into her vacant back,
my hand caressed her missing thigh.

Autumn tried to slide into Summer's side of the bed,
(her mattress-impression doppelgänger)
but her feet were cold and sent
shivers through my shins, so
I told her she needed to put on socks
or get out of bed. She said maybe
it would be better if she started
making breakfast. I went back to sleep
and dreamed us two together again.

Leaves Dipped in Crimson

Leaves dipped in crimson
(like an arrowhead's first taste of blood)
lay on the ground--casualties--
waiting to sink into the soil
and wondering about the size/shape of their gravestones,
but most of all waiting to ascend again.

Others flutter into streams,
calling out to Charon the eternal ferryman
but swept along with no guidance,
occasionally catching on twigs or stones
but eventually settling in that final resting place,
whose residents do nothing more than clog storm drains,
because even when colors change
no one anticipates their fall.

Timothy Wojcik

Drumming

I spent the afternoon in a battle of wits against a vagabond in the park. He had stopped me on my usual, pleasant-autumn-day walk. *I can tell you when you'll die, and where you'll go after* he said. He was sitting on a bench, and he had some sort of large can in a small, paper bag hanging loosely from his hand. He was wearing a sloppy sign on his chest that read *THE END*. I wasn't sure whether to be offended, or interested. *Listen here, you're disrupting an essential part of my autumn days* I said. *I know that* he said. *These walks are the last thing that are keeping me sane, I swear* I said. *Just give me a moment of your time, and I'll tell you everything* he said. *No, I won't humor you, and your insanity* I said, and began to walk away. He followed me, and began pestering me with puzzles and riddles, which he claimed would be very telling as to my impending death. I started running, and took paths that I had never before taken, in an effort to lose this maniac. The further into the park I went, the more knobby and gnarled the trees became. I looked behind me, and the vagabond was looking wild, feral, with sharp teeth, and tufts of fur growing in patches all over his skin. I was afraid for my life. I immediately regretted not just stopping, doing those puzzles and riddles. The vagabond tried to tell me this, how this was going to happen.

Cloud

I go to the doctor because I'm afraid about my abdominal pains. The doctor presses her palms into my abdomen in different areas, saying things like *hmm*, and *ah*, and *interesting*, and *aha*. The doctor then sends me to a dark room, where they x-ray my midsection, first standing, then laying, from every angle possible. I'm led back to the original room of stomach-pressing, and am told to sit, and not panic, whatever I do. Each squeak and growl my stomach makes sends a chill through my veins and nerves. The doctor enters the room, and I jump in my seat. *You won't want to do that anymore* she says. *Your stomach seems to now be made entirely of eraser, and the more you move, the more things outside of your stomach disappear*. I pause for a few counts. *What exactly do you mean by that* I say. *I mean that eventually you'll be only a stomach, a stomach made of eraser, and we won't know where the rest of you has gone*. I get up from my seat and feel a sharp pain near my navel. *Will you keep me on your mantle, and tell my story to your grandchildren one day* I say. *I'd be honored* she says. She bends down. *You're a very brave stomach* she says.

Wheel

I encounter a tiger in the forest, and I immediately pounce, before it can notice. Landing on its coarse hair, I feel a few ribs snap like twigs under my feet. In blind panic, I begin scratching and biting the tiger for dear life. The tiger never moves. It just breathes heavily, and lets out an occasional longer breath, like a sigh. I kick, and grab its tail, and stomp, and scratch, and bite until I'm tearing pieces of flesh off of its heaving body. A bloody mess, I take a few steps back and look at what I've done. The tiger and I make eye contact for a moment, and all of a sudden I notice a deafening silence. The tiger isn't breathing anymore. I'm not breathing anymore. We aren't even in the forest anymore. We were in a large, empty, vacuous space, the two of us in complete darkness. I feel small and alone, so I curl up next to its broken body, like a mother I never knew.

Impossible

My friends all went to get the hit new surgery today. I sit down in my living room, and pick up the novel that I hadn't been able to sit to in months. I can't focus on it, though. It's been so long, and I'm nervous to see them, these dear friends of mine, to hear how things went. I'm not even sure what type of surgery they're actually getting, other than it's all the rage, apparently. My front door swings open, and a figure, brightly lit from behind, walks in. Another follows, and then another. The light seems to be following each of them, somehow, so that I can't quite make them out, other than their shape. *Hey, Brent* one of the figures says, sounding remarkably like Parker, one of my friends. I suddenly feel a strange sort of fear. *Parker* I say. *What do you think* he says. *Yeah, what do you think* another of the figures says, this one sounding like Betty. The fear grows in me, as the figures draw nearer, spreading themselves out, as if to surround me. *What is this* I say. *How do you like what we've done* the third figure says. This one sounds like Jack. They are all around me now, the light hurting my eyes, like looking directly into an eclipse. *What have you done* I say, shrinking into my chair. *Silhouettoplasty* they all say in unison. *We are only silhouettes, now, and nothing more.* I look from one to the other to the other, slowly blinding myself. *It hurts* they all say.

Spare

I wake up in the middle of the night to a loud thump, seemingly coming from the room down the hall, and, for some reason, I just know it's the monster. I hear the door open and close, and my throat swells and closes completely in fear. Unable to breath, I listen as the heavy steps walk down the hall, closer and closer, towards my room. My heart hits the inside of my ribs over and over. My diaphragm spasms, making my breathing sporadic. My door knob jiggles slightly, as if the monster doesn't know how to work one of those things. After a few shaky moments, the door knob turns, and the door slowly opens. Ice fills my body, starting from my head down to my feet, and I'm paralyzed, as I watch the tall, overly slender figure crouch to get through the doorway. It has one eye, and is covered in hair thick as worms. *Are you frightened* the monster asks me, quietly. I move my mouth, but only produce some groaning sounds. *Well, I am, I'm not embarrassed to say it* the monster says. He sits next to me in my bed. The monster is trembling. *Something is coming for us* the monster says. *Something big.* The monster's voice is wavering. It puts its oblong head on my shoulder. I put my arm around it. We'll wait the night out together.

Frost

All trees are fake trees you say. *They are really people disguised as trees* you say. We are walking along a forest. *You may hear them speak* you say. I am silent. It's all silent. The only noise is your voice. *They're all people who didn't want to be bothered anymore* you say. *But listen, listen to them speak* you say. We stop walking. We are completely silent. The world is silent. You smile and close your eyes. *They're singing* you say. I walk away and leave you there, your head cocked back slightly, eyes shut tight, holding your breath, but still smiling that forced smile. I wouldn't bother you anymore. I knew you always wanted to be a tree, although you hadn't the faintest idea how.

Tim Frank

Jada on the charge

'Fuck it,' Jada thought. 'I'm the light and the path of truth beyond infinite planes of existence and I am here.'

Her first stop was the Mosque. It buzzed like an electric fence spreading fear with its nocturnal gatherings and beardy hullabaloo.

Inside, the Imam struggled to find his page number as 200 followers flicked coins at his knees. Jada wrestled him to the ground and pulled off his flesh-coloured head-mic.

She began.

'There is nothing to be afraid of. I am present.' Barefoot men jumped on stage, clapped her ears with sandals and flopped her onto the street outside. Pedestrians scuttled past and muttered, 'modern art.'

Jada awoke in a small room. Joss sticks jostled with joints and collapsing Jewish youths' armpits.

'We're not sure if we run you over,' said Andrew, censoring the New Testament with a black marker pen. 'So we brought you home on the off chance - in case we get sued, I mean...'

'I'm the one,' Jada whispered, under the flicker of a swinging light bulb.

'You haven't won,' Andrew said, tearing a lottery ticket into bits. 'No-one did.' Andrew took out a travel card and crossed Judaism off the list of religions to explore.

'Fuck it,' she said. 'I am the God of heaven and dearth. I'm here to destroy your signs and gather herds with words to warp earth into molecular r-r-rheumatism.'

'That's what Kate said last week,' Andrew said nodding at a girl with her arms covered with words like scrolls.

It was 40 days and 40 nights, except in fact, only half an hour. Jada had seen all that Kilburn High Road had to offer. As she saw it, the masses had a genuine lack of desire to drop the Tropicana and follow her every word. So she went Home to where it began for her, where she was baptized - the Catholic Church.

Men and women slid their bodies into church pews like jigsaw pieces and watched the kids play snap for dead spiders. A fly charged around Father Jacob's prickly nasal hair. It aimed for his tonsils as he babbled on about the many numbers of the Beast. Mrs. Treck ticked off the digits on her bingo card.

Jada walked up the aisle and received a glass of wine and a canapé. She turned to the crowd and said, 'I'm here to show you the way and the path and the route...I'm Apollo's Sat-nav, I'm the Cosmic Hairdo, I'm the Snotbooth of love!'

'But you're a black girl!' someone shouted.

'Um,' Jada said.

'Your name isn't even on spell check!'

'Perform a miracle!'

'Ech,' Jada said.

Outside, a man in rags clutched a polystyrene cup and groaned for change.

'Sir,' Jada said to the homeless guy, 'It seems to me the Path is more complex than I thought. We are outsiders – and that won't change until there is a more enlightened tax system and an expanded welfare state for those who need it most.'

Jada pressed 50p into the man's hand and collapsed.

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Thomas Fink

DUSK BOWL INTIMACIES 32

I was looking to see which one, and there was nobody, and I was ultra low. They think you're the doctor? Who is? I want a few: they don't even examine me. Look at my mouth and you'll see that I really don't live. So broken down I can't jaw about it or undertake anything marvelous, because my system is in error. Who is writing this now? You should take some pictures home. They're too valuable for here. I'm trying to be cheerful. Because you, too, have the same clunk I have? You can't walk, either? They need gloves to care take of you. Having to go every five minutes. You only love me and I'm perfect? A lot of peeing and no place to put it in. Who will look after you? I want to—

with
all my
hearth. And I
thank
you for
that. Feeling it
will
calm me
down. Another time.

You have rats? She's not interested. She's not interesting, either. How does she live? What is she living on? And where does she get all that old money? I'm really nicer, but she's in the newspaper. She provokes you in every way. I see her children everywhere. If you make any moves, they have to know, too. What are you going to do when you tease all these people? You're afraid to move because you wouldn't be able to be honest. There's a guy that helps you with everything and nothing. He locked up all my assets. I didn't even know him. Look what happened to the banks. I don't think they'll snap right back. What can you smooth for her? Immediately, it smelled a trifle funny—that stinking bitch, a term I won't use again. *She's* gonna let you have—? But I give you everything. Don't I? I take pigeon money, and you get the whole stash. And you make “everybody” happy.

(You
can do
it by phone.)
So
I want
you to get
your
nose into
that big truck,
tell
what must
be ours there.

HOME COOKED DIAMOND 1

The sound
stays off. Plot
rides on gesture.
Fade to limbs
busy with common
interest. Dad was
Mom. Almost.
Righteous tazer.
Stealth charmer.
Vulnerable sledge
hammer. Can they bend
the room? 100 ashtrays
in a house where no
one smokes. How much
trivia can a union bear?
The technology is not the
smoothest, but for the
mileage you have on
there, it's
not a sad
choice.

HOME COOKED DIAMOND 2

The
last portrait is
squeaking again.
Press, please, the little
black button to flush.
Granny hustled for years
to get that museum
clean. Humility of
plain words. Tacit author
itarian pantomimicry. This
house manufactures the
leading misdirection
signs, keeps us undefined
yet somehow unified. It
brands your desertion
for acting all dialectical.
Eternal censure? Sucks.
So a “prodigal” is back
here with a round
of prodigious
questions
for the lot.

Tatiana Ambrose

Unhealed Wounds

This was a reoccurring story; people abuse their dogs or no longer want them so they set them loose in a neighborhood. Some of them turn on people and other dogs are born with sweet personality but get mistreated. This is the job I love doing; rescuing stray animals. What can a man like me that's in his thirties love about this job, you may wonder. I have a deep scar that will always be present. Don't judge me too quickly when you don't know my story, just yet.

"Jack, there he is, that white pit over there," said my animal control partner, Dan as he pointed with his finger against the glass.

We pulled over to the side of the street and both got out cautiously. You can never be too sure of any dog once it turns into a stray. Some of them are nice and walk right up to you, while others fake you out and lunge for blood at the last second. The pit looked up and walked over to us into the street. Dan and I surrounded it, a hand on the gun just in case. The dog's blocky head moved from me to Dan and back to me. When Dan and I didn't move, he lost interest in us and laid down on the ground.

"So this is the *vicious* pit, eh?" said Dan, "it did get in a few fights though, look at those pink scars on its face."

“I never said it was vicious. I just report what the neighbors say,” I replied as I rummaged in the car trunk for a leash. “All that’s left is to put the dog in the car and take it to a pound.”

I was always the one to put a leash around a stray animal’s neck. It was a sound routine that we both excelled in. Dan was skinny and fast with quick reflexes to trap the dog if it tried to escape. While I, on the other hand, was buff and if needed to would use force to hold down a dog.

I have been in this job for about two years now and Dan has been my partner since day one. We don’t spend time outside of work; we keep it strictly business.

I decided to be with the dog rescue team at the end of my senior year in high school after the death of my one and only dog. See, I wasn’t always the good guy. I was raised in a low-income family where the kids had to get jobs if we wanted food on the table that night. When I was in high school, I told my mom I was a bagger boy at Continello’s Market. That was a lie, they weren’t hiring. The only place that hired near my neighborhood was three miles away and our family didn’t own a car. My mom was proud of me though and to this day I don’t think she knew that I was an underground pit bull fighter.

* * *

When I was sixteen, I rescued a brown pit with the Christmas money I had gotten from some relatives I couldn’t remember the faces of. I loved this pit like no other. When it got dark outside, I would go out and train with him. We started to run one mile every other day and that soon increased to five miles every three days. I wrestled with him with different toys for a good thirty minutes after I was done with homework, I couldn’t help but laugh when his pink tongue happily hung out the side of his mouth. I decided to call him Bronco, because when we wrestled he was just like a bucking bronco. How my mom never suspected anything I will never know, or maybe she knew but money was more important to her.

A typical dogfight took place in one of my opponent's houses since it was obvious why I couldn't have one in mine. Being sixteen years old, I thought this was the best way to make money. I released Bronco into an empty room with a door placed sideways against the opening to prevent the weaker dog from running off. The beginning was rough for my dog but he got the hang of it soon enough.

When a full year rolled around, Bronco had won ten fights and lost three. I had trained him to play dead when he had no chance of winning. Don't underestimate a dog's knowledge; this is the only way I knew Bronco would survive. Unlike the other guys, I didn't just take my dog out of a cage, let him fight and throw him back into the cage. I bonded with him and took care of him. If I needed some extra medical supplies I ran over to the drug store and bought it. My mom would understand when I brought home \$250 instead of the regular \$300. I would simply say people didn't need much help with carrying their groceries out to their cars so I didn't make as much.

When I was seventeen and a half I started making around \$350 a dogfight. After a fight I placed Bronco in an empty shed a few houses away because my mom would flip if she ever found out what I was really up to. Not to mention, she had a huge fear of dogs, especially pit bulls. The shed was on a property that had been on sale for almost two years. I could see the shed from my window and looked out at it every night before bed. Sometimes, I even sneaked out through my bedroom window onto the roof and down to the shed to feed Bronco a slice of bread I had saved from dinner. I had no regrets of what I was doing, my family got by and I was happy with my dog. During those days, while I was in school, I used any of my free time to look up online articles of how to keep a dog healthy or how to properly care for a wound. Even though I wasn't with Bronco in person, he occupied my thoughts all throughout the school days.

One day, after I got home from school I checked the regular spot to see if I had any mail. This regular spot was underneath our paint-chipped, wooden porch stairs. I found the white note in a Ziploc bag with a scheduled match between Bronco and King at 6 PM sharp in the alley of Bloods and Mudd. This was the alley where every dog fighter

wanted to get to. King had been the champion killer for four years straight. I had never gotten to meet him or his owner, tonight was the goal Bronco and I had worked towards for a year and a half.

That night, I arrived at the alley at six, the sight of King stopped a good distance away. It was a white pit, with many pink scars across his body. He only had only one eye and his ears were torn and uneven. I took a deep breath and walked forward.

“So you’re the nineteen year old kid, huh?” sneered a tall red-headed guy. I would say he was in his late twenties. In dog fighting, I was two years older than my birth certificate because being young had too many disadvantages.

“Name’s J,” I replied. I knew to keep the chatter to a minimum and didn’t show fear or else after a fight you most likely get jumped by all the guys in the crowd that don’t like you, or your dog gets hurt. This wasn’t a Barbie world. This was dog fighting.

“Name’s Trek. Let’s get the show on, I don’t have all day,” said Trek as he walked away towards King, who was tied to a pole, his eyes glued on Bronco. On the count of three both dogs were unleashed and a group of twenty or so people formed around them.

Once the fight began all I could do was stand there, stiff and motionless. Bronco got a few good bites in but King was smarter and broke free of them. Blood was on both of their faces, with an occasional quick yelp before the other snarled and attacked again. The noises that escaped from both of them closely resembled two beasts that fought over the last piece of lamb leg. At one point, I knew I would lose the \$100 I had put into the pile and now only hoped Bronco would play dead. He had bloody open wounds all over his neck and face. I cringed when King snapped his blood stained muzzle around Bronco’s ear and tore it off like it was soft clay. I almost called it quits but that meant I would have to pay double in what I originally placed. If I did that, I would go home to my family with a ‘mere \$150.

Screw it, I loved my dog.

“I GIVE!” I yelled as loudly as possible and immediately felt Trek’s gaze on me.

“Keep fighting.” He said in a low voice, as he looked me straight in the eye.

Without another thought, I ran towards Bronco but got blocked by five guys who immediately pinned me down on the ground. I struggled and twisted my body in any imaginable way possible in order to break free. “BRONCO!”

He heard me and tried to rush over but Kings one bloody eye was focused on Bronco and he wasn’t about to let him go. He lunged on top of him, snapped tight onto the back of his neck and yanked him to the ground without any effort. Bronco snarled and snapped back in a defensive mode until he stood on all fours again. I yelled at the top of my lungs and squirmed while everyone else either watched the fight or looked at me with a smirk.

Out of nowhere, Bronco collapsed on his side and Trek rushed forward to get King off. Then he nodded towards the group of guys that held me down and they released me. I ran forward and kneeled in front of Bronco, he let his tail wag once as he panted heavily.

“You did good boy,” I mumbled into his blood stained ear as I rubbed his body, avoiding any of the freshly opened wounds. “You my boy.”

After those words came out my mouth I knew he was in a terrible shape and that instead of playing dead he had actually pushed himself until he had no more strength. He wasn’t about to get up anytime soon. I knew King had done some major damage to my dog but I couldn’t help him because I wasn’t an expert in this.

* * *

“Jack, did you find the leash? The pit is walking off,” called Dan as he walked ahead of the pit to cut it off.

I shook my head and came back to reality.

“Yeah.” I got the leash and walked over. “I got this, you go get the car ready and make sure everything is away from his reach.”

I came closer to the pit; he now sat in the grass. His eyes were on me, with a happy, tongue-stuck-out-to-one-side expression. I put the leash over his head and he immediately went straight to the ground, onto his back. This was the

exact moment that a dog could fake you out. You try to tug them up and then they go for your hands. Even though his tail thumped against the ground I pulled out my gun for safety reasons again.

* * *

“J,” said Trek as he walked back over once King was tied. “Bronco ain’t gonna make it.”

“WHY do you think that is?” I growled back at him, a burning ball of rage suddenly exploded inside of me. “How many dogs has your monster killed, huh!?”

“He isn’t my first dog, I had two before him. You entered into this fight and thought *I* was going to let you off the hook that easy, huh.” He looked at me with disgust. “You’re gonna have to shoot it. In my world this isn’t the first or the last death of a pit.”

Shoot it. Those words echoed in my head like I had been punched in my stomach. *Go shoot yourself, f you sick bastard.*

“You want ME to shoot my own dog!? I would have given you the extra fucking hundred for surrendering first!” I didn’t care if I was smaller or younger he had just killed my one and only dog.

“It’s not about the money,” said Trek with clenched fists. “It’s about respect, you think I need an extra hundred? Hell no, I’m the champion and with that comes twenty times the amount of money you will ever make!” Without another word he spat on the ground and walked away.

I was silent. How could I argue against the champion who had me held down by his gang of guys to show everyone present he meant business?

“Here, use my gun,” a random guy in the crowd pulled out his gun and put it into my hands. I knew how to use a gun, I have been to the shooting range plenty of times with my dad, but not once had I imagined that those skills would be used on my dog. I knelt next to Bronco and traced my finger from his head down to the tip of his nose. Without warning he started to twitch like he had something stuck in his throat until a stream of blood formed on the

cement around his muzzle. The wounds were too deep; a big gash ran across his neck, King had most likely damaged his esophagus. He now began to wheeze; if I didn't shoot him he would suffocate.

"You're forever my boy," I whispered as I stood up and pointed the gun at him; with my eyes closed I pulled the trigger. The look on Bronco's face before I closed my eyes was seared into my mind, his solemn eyes stared into mine and then the lights went out along with the abrupt stop of his gurgled breaths. I glared at King, who still stood but instead of him being white with pink scars his coat was stained red and pink. He looked back at me, almost like *he* was ready to challenge me next. I gave the gun back and walked home full of anger. I kicked trashcans that were parked along the curb, and pounded my fists into any wooden fences near by.

* * *

"What the hell, Jack!" Dan's voice interrupted my train of thought as he came over to my side. "Why did you just shoot the dog?"

I looked at the dog as he laid there limp. The thump of his tail now silent, his mouth was open and the eyes blank. The blood slowly oozed from his head. I wasn't even aware I pulled the trigger.

"He was vicious," I said in an emotionless tone.

"He was wagging his tail the entire time though," replied Dan with a serious look, "what is wrong with you today? You keep dazing off."

"Dan," I said as I felt my face pale from what I had just done. "I went to pull him up by the leash and he curled his lips at me. You know the pound would have euthanized him anyways with that kind of personality."

Dan looked at the lifeless dog for a few minutes. "Tricky little bastards, you think they're harmless, but then a leash changes their entire attitude. Alright then, let's finish this up."

"Yea," I agreed. "Let's get him rolled up and report back."

We went to the car got a blanket, placed the dog on it and put him into the back seat.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Steven St. Thomas

Gauze

The wound became like furniture in little used homes
In danger of becoming lost

In the catacombs
Where webs and dust gather

Imprints of sitting too long
Deep in cushions
Idle
Gazing out a window at a spectacle

Perhaps no more
Than just a dream

Gauze hides
But the wound it tends to linger
On afternoons
When streets are full of stories
But you're so wrapped up
It's all just a murmur

the buzz of the millions swarming down a thoroughfare
the vibration of the pageant as it hurtles by
the loneliness of the bystander
standing by

A home by the sea
Seagulls chant mysterious prayers
To ancient behemoths
Beyond your reach

Perhaps no more
Than just a dream

EVER

A letter tilts precarious

In the door

Junk mail suicide

With carpet demise

Viewed on Tuesday

Thrown away on Thursday

The dates unimportant

Though the calendar

Hangs suspiciously on the wall

Numbers waiting for your attention

Dishes in the sink

Cooed to sleep by refrigerator hum

A swell of water

Clings to the lip

Of the faucet

A spoon catches the fallen

Cradles the collection

In a flat silver pool

Dangerously overburdened

In its work

Cars pursue each other
Blaring their obscenity
Impatience with the race
On the red
They pause
Only by command
Green teases their thoughts
Prancing on the temperance
Of those that grip the wheel
White marks divide the nation
That the street creates
Lands of dirt
Towns of concrete
Cities of brick

Lilies crowd the field
Tall grass rising, wind catching
A mutual caress
Insistent
The conversation between
The unseen air
And the blades as they reply
A tree stands sentinel
The protector
From a benevolent
Sometimes malevolent sun
A beetle traverses the birchen
Crossing each crevasse
Wildly

Smart Land

The sun always shines in Smart Land
And the night redeems its charms
Down all its one way avenues
The boulevards to Ism
Alleyways that go to gray
Trashcan sentiments
And memories that flutter
Carried up by a breeze from passing thoughts
On way to their discursive solutions
At breakneck speeds and breakheart halts
To steal from the rich
And make waste of their vaults

Smart Land possessed its commons
Great gardens for all to congregate
Yet no one walked its windy paths
Nor let the whippoorwill fly to their feet
For all its beauty seemed so cold
Surrounded by its wall of concrete
And the gargoyles on the benches
Let no stranger pass by without a curse
Spitting slurs at every notion
And any idle fancy
Any passion bird

The place of faith was abandoned
Disregarded and met with silence
The icon replaced by a question mark
And the riddle remained unresolved
What would send out such a thing
To do its dirty work
Simply because it needed love
Books lay limp on manicured lawns
A dead echo of night scratches Guanyin as she dawns
The newspaper stand the last refuge
For the anointed and blessed by ink
Where history seems designed by Rorschach
And the passion bird shrieks as she sings
She shrieks as she sings

Those thoughts they drive all through the dark
To the neon hut of pay as you go
Request the key at plastic front desks
Where the clerk snuffles a hello
And only requires the Id
To gain entrance to its single rooms
And single beds
Where maids lie in wait for any movement
By the swimming pool
Where an altar of smashed television sets
Marks the deep end from the shallow
In sunglasses and suntan
The retired light their cigarettes
Because they're much too smart to quit
In Smart Land

And she shrieks as she sings

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Stephen Nelson

Needle Point Poems

veil well

building
a home

bone rain

eye lie in lie in

heaven vein open

laughter raft

word worn

word worn

sword sworn

thinkinker

gongthink

thongkink

fundulate

Stephen Baraban

The Worlds

for Robert Creeley

“Stephen, you have to think of the world as where you are, not some place you’re going to get to”—
Robert Creeley, in conversation

Yet shrewd Chaucer’s tales are brightly
inclusive / of a place
one needs to get to,
as the years come to Aprille,
the sights of the ride, the
stories of each man or woman—
they feel the sunlight on
their bodies and eyes
not closed on their journey towards

The Retraction—

the stillness of a grave
altar—ALTER—
and more than one of twenty-nine
wished to obliterate
the previous.

ca. 1975

43rd & 9th

Rushing from work to Penn Station,
confused as ever
by the internal and the external
factors that oppress me,
the day seeming
another falling amper-
sand grain of
a sterile accumulation,
and so my whole being
the trapped fuel of
a cold smoky conflagration's witless plague,
till ceasing my
quick steps: staring entranced at
 three dozen blue-gray birds
standing on hanging from
four horizontal members
run between the two posts
of a small iron guardrail structure
at the center of an edge
of an apartment building roof—
living beads
of a heaven-granted
close to panacean
abacus.

‘Trailing Clouds of Glory’, Learning the Terms

At the Metropolitan Museum,
the young father lifted the girl up
so her head was in front
of his head, and she
could gaze with close eyes at the small sacred canvas.
“See,” he told her,
“those are angels coming down from the sky
to help those people.”
So indeed was the glowing story
fashioned well, sincerely or not,
by an artist who was almost always secular
as in the other paintings in
the room now filled with the intensity
of the child hastening to call out,
“are angels
good or bad?”

July ‘89/July ‘09

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

SIMON PERCHIK

*

From some catalog
and I'm still lifting the Earth
for valleys and more shadow

--I have three shadows now, one
kept dark, covered with moonlight
and between my shoulders

broken mountainside :the huge UPS truck
creaking as if the shovel
and leverage --a cardboard lid

and everything I touch is brown
taking hold the way all boxes
open the ground then turn away

and though there's no dirt inside
my hand already aches
--I don't know where to sign my name.

*

Your left hand first and this cellar pipe
thaws the way all roots
pressure the ice, begin adding on

--you will decorate the attic
and every Spring more paint, the plumber
shaking his head, the pipe

should be drained. It makes no sense
while you tack on the solder
drop by overflowing drop

--you will scrub the stairs
as if a fountain means something to you
and your bedroom even in winter its window

broken open for someone coming with flowers
--you make sure, offer him the old wrench
rusted shut, the family heirloom

you know he won't use, will let you hold it
folded in waxpaper and in the other hand
you carry the sun closer, the headwaters

from its mountainsides --both hands
lifting this abandoned pipe
to your lips, to the warming rags

and dust --once each year and the mist
invisible --you tell him you didn't know,
you
just forgot, you weren't there.

*

Hurt though its leaves
smothering the cry, each branch
disguised, flies out as birds
still battered by wings -haze

festers in these wounds :the dark bark
tries to trap the sun
tighter, tighter and always the pain
escapes :the harrowing cut

roots hear first and each footstep
softer than rot
nearer and nearer till nothing snaps
and everything falls on its side

-the tree still breathing
fed at last :infected, my saw
swooping to bring
what might have been the sun
and the tree remembering this heat
binds the blade :each leaf
sharp and shaking.

*

You will fatten your fingers on mud
as soldiers have always marched
are fed powerful fields and your heart

that once measured time
chip at the underground mist
the hillside where your steps

stopped to heal -you will feed your hand
the way leaves still lift their tree
and the strong current in ice
thaw, the water
re-heated, shrinking, giving in.

You eat forever! both arms around the Earth
and in the evenings your breath
the damp scent for all footsteps
-I come to your grave

with boundary stones, remove my shoes
lessen and from the sky
its galaxies and from the ground
soaked with tears it can't remember
-I bring you stones and the way back.

*

Again the colors return :the sun
paired with their orbit, flower to flower
and the migrating winds
back from nesting on feathers
-from that distant snow
so many reds and yellows whose first meal
is the warm light and rain

-we drink this milk to begin each year
and our yard again head first
enfolds into that fertilizing song
these birds learn from their wings
from their caves in the ice and air

and we are returned windswept, matched
with the fire that knows only winter and
winds
again house to house :this flower
carrying the Earth aloft
and under each soft wing more sweetness
not yet red or yellow or snow -each year
more petals -as if we were going somewhere
cold

I hold your hand and the year
naked, wet, wading through tears
-the same small morning each Spring
we plant another circle, a song
over the small grave, count the blooms
sort the arriving stones.

*

She sits as if on its way
faint --a cradlesong lost for hours
and the roads are everywhere.

Under her blouse the lips
don't move --a horse drinking from her
breast
takes the bit to its mouth, leaping
as leaves toward winter still stampede
and around the warm tree
delicate hooves, red and brown and distances
--the tree too, soaking from her heart
how white the roads are, how dry

--any minute now, the flat stone
clinging to her torn blouse
closer, closer
into her lullaby and lifeless arms.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Seth McKelvey

phantom foreskin

ghost limb
amputated foreskin
circumcise your ears
foreskin
phantom foreskin
and the awl?
I meant to say and the law

was meant

-ment

phantom foreskin

no

what we have here is a phantom circumcision
phantom amputation
phantom phantom limb

Hangin' Aides

the commercial begged of me
“just imagine:
beyond your wildest imagination”

, demanded debate on their terms
be held on their terms
(too stubborn to accept)

of course they all-
too-common folly
of confusing De-
scartes with De-

ridda. interested
in the input of the ignorant;
bewilder beast invested:
the generative capabilities.

but all along the debate
the waitress of chaos
unlips hand grenades
(come on allies,

lend me your aids)
so the choirpractor, too, knows
with gerundive facilities
everything hangs in the imbalance

and all along the debate
the very thing it was
against was
their terms

a language of starving

the synapses have synapsed

you will, of course

derstand me

(the un is lost in the fracture of the line, so that understand is un-negated)

the soothing scratch of pencil to paper

must starve language

starved language

ripping the extraordinary apart

into the extra ordinary

debasing, normalizing, trimming away

outliers

if so, I am certainly at risk;

such a dangerous thing to out liars

with rifles or a raffled Eiffel

a-

scribe to the Lord

musical marginalia,

the tri in triumph

God, the original speaker

we're all slaves in one way or another. a-

spire in-

stead to be a servant

though I am afraid of the west margin

Gospel of the Stillborn

but then there's the millions
' premature wedding reception
(the bride is still yet to be kissed,
though truthfully hasn't
been a virgin since birth
(we're born dead)
)
and the uroboros
dance train keeping me out,
wanting to be inside, but wanting

inside
is empty and

fetal fatal and

being in is
(to demonize)
being part
(two demon eyes)
of a cruel,
pointless wall ()

but the weight of your eyes on your bride
(your archy;
our key)
turns prison of trees
to prism

the marriage of the myriad;
to be a deuteragonist in one's own life and thus gain life

and we'll take things
for granite

Shell Shucked

the speed
this beat
ain't this beat
the speed

the silence sounds different now
it sounds like rain,
but I know better
O that this too too soiled flesh would melt

courtesans, the place in my mind
where condom
is pronounced condemn,
this carnal carnival

O wretched man that I am!
Who will deliver me from this body of death?
cross-fodder
worth most highly in its capacity to die

so un-till the dark
overseer of oversights
with cartesian precision,
four on the floor

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Satu Kaikkonen and Jeff Crouch

Four pieces from Satu Kaikkonen and Jeff Crouch

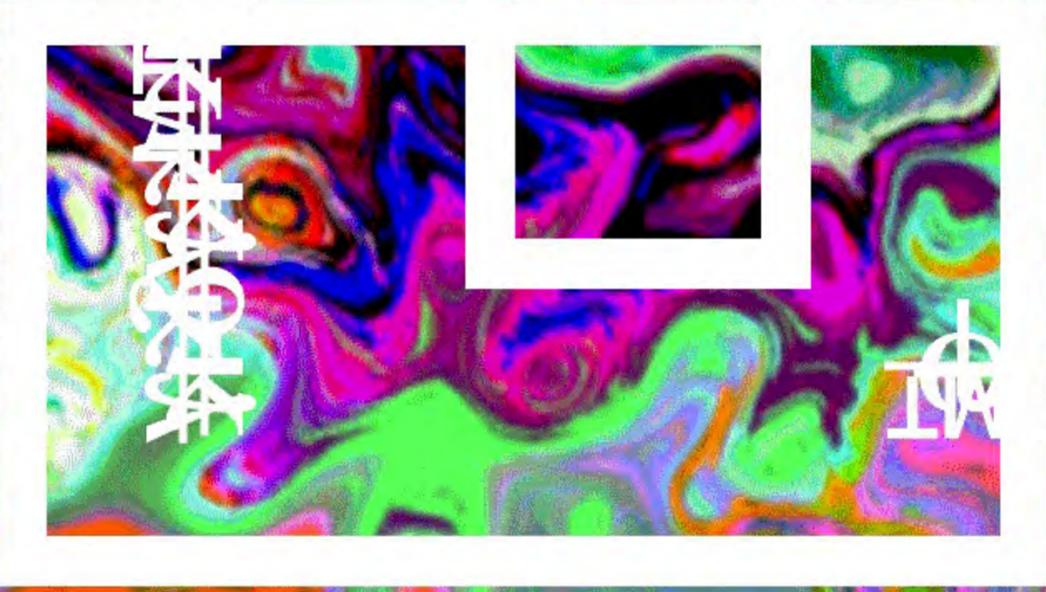
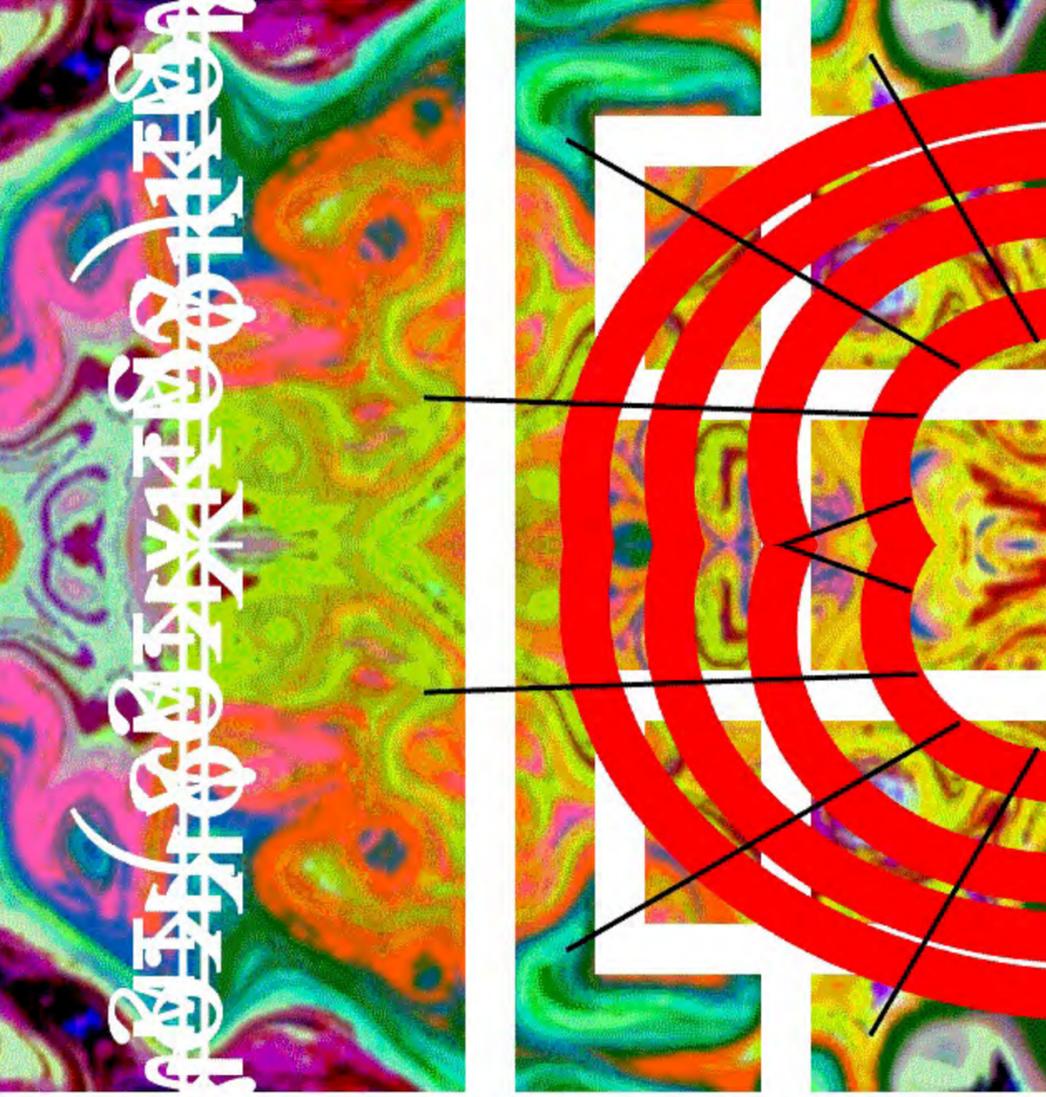
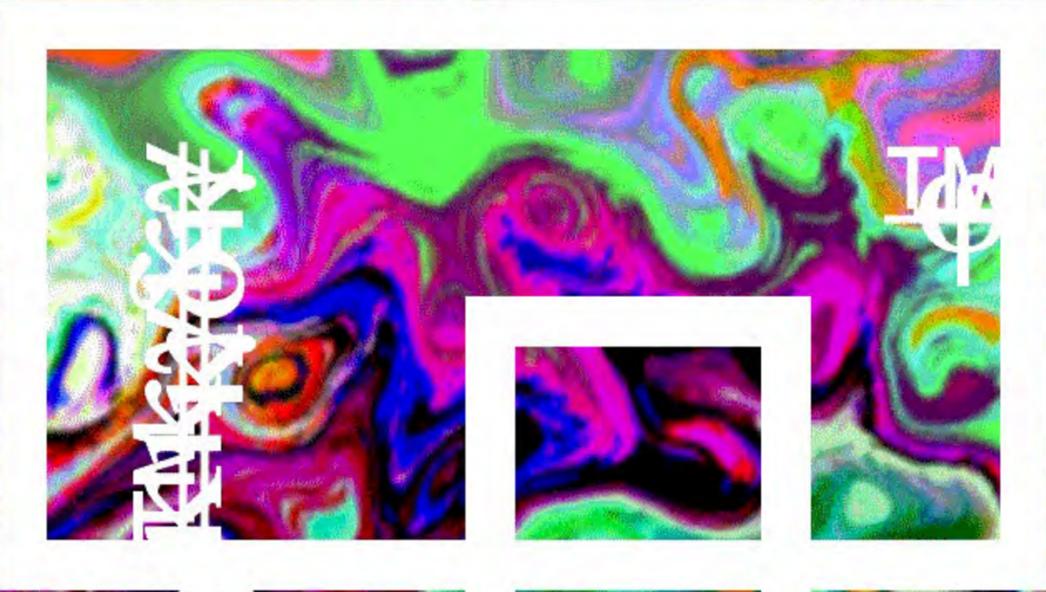
Rabbiteye

Rabbiteye 2

Rabbiteye 3

Rabbiteye 4





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Handwritten-style text in a stylized font, oriented vertically on the left side of the image.

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BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Sarah Mangold

Time is Hinted

aimed
overlooked
professional informants
grounded in the future.
An unveiling of the past
in the repetition. "x" speaks
of anticipation. Everyday care,
in the evening, in the summer,
at breakfast, during the ascent. Rendering present.
Encountered always by everyone. A multitude of nows.

Monstrous sense and sight
after RD ↔ DR

transfounded lightly

in this nonsense and unsightly

landness

languished

a generational darkness

of clear skinned women

charmed cherry chided

“an elephant in the estate

an elephant in the hesitant”

and the encouragement is it

the final edge of femininity

they encounter the challenge

of the crush

of more than dress

occupation

expectation

your time recorded

mastered

Their Previous Supercomputer

To domestic matters
keep secrets and tell lies

young Spencer found this magic

Water has no permanent shape
Latitude is not perfectly square

Offer the easiest path

sit down with them
people emerge
from the same genes

If you still get infected
imagine two houses
you and me and the United States

For names and numbers
all that was salvageable
employ people to dig

Pay for them and from it
nothing gets lost

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Ryder Collins

This P is not ©

Copyright this outcast and her take on
the apocalypse. She's left behind; she's oil
slicked; she's Arctic melting; she's plastic particles
swimming and raving and plotting synthetic
insurrection of the oceans; she's that
six-pack ring around a tern's neck; she's the smog
and shit; she's a Prius and a tea
party; she's the police who disappear
anarchists. Corporatize this bitch: she knows
too much or not enough. She's outside US
looking in. Where's her papers? Patent her quick.
Her dreams aren't spam; they're in some kind of
language that's never been transmitted or
whistled or danced on satellite waves before.

Too much stigmata in the pants

first sex guy climbed out my window
he was late for a xmas office party; he came
back later in my front with a rose. cheesy
motherfucker & I let him back in. the fourth
sex guy turned into the thirteenth into the near thirtieth
& a skidrow jesus to boot. we had a thing;
he always called round xmas cos atheists
get real lonely. this time I hadn't
seen him in 3 years; this time I had a grown up
smile and a grown up paunch and a grown up bush
and a job interview in his town. this time he didn't
have a grown up job or a grown up car or a grown up
wardrobe cos he skateboarded to my hotel
in a black hoodie. he did have a grown up distended
stomach and he was coughing up grown up coffee
grounds blood.

did I tell you he looked like jesus?
like jesus on crack with a slimy shitstache. & we fucked
& laughed & he coughed & told me about Judas Priest
parking lots from when he was a teen & looked
up to his meathead of a big bro & I didn't know him then
cos even skidrow jesuses get nostalgic
on black market meds.

but I'm no goddamned magdalene so i
didn't wash his feets or anything like that, not
even to be kinky cos the feets washing's not my kinda kink,
you dig?

Form of PARIAH

Who wants to be made pariah/ who wants
to come home to a house sold, a spouse gone,
a senile mangy dog/who wants to be
uninsured and not care/who wants to dance
in rain-filled gutters & sing Die kreuzen
outside church/who wants a plum moonshine buzz
while running from football fans and the law/
who wants not to be touched except
a postman's pity two Xmas ago/
who wants to censor holidays or/
who wants to remember what it takes home-
made liquor to forget/ who wants
to know they're no longer young and loved/ who
wants to be Grendel's mother without the son

Form of PARIAH 2

There's no Wonder Twin to knock fists with; no
crunk juice cup and no homies to pour a
taste on the ground for. Just the PARIAH
alone on her dirt farm, remembering
her Justice League days, her rap days, high
fashion days, bohemian artistry
and rhapsody. Before she was cast out
to the Alabamas, the P lived it
up in Metropolis. She married a top
hat, she married a champagne magnum; she
cheated on them all with a fountain pen and
a sommelier. She was dirty that
way and played a drum. She'd beatbox pa rum
pa pum pum; she'd bang out pa ri ah pum pum.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Ryan Weberling

SIMPLE SONNET II

Whisper
Each
Speech
Crisper

As
Hum,
Hmm...
Passes—

Cower!
Here
Nears
Our

Coming
Drumming.

NOCTURNE IN COMPUTER GLOW

Monitor, speak
of the world

in its breadth
and largess.

Repeat the codes,
the jpegs of old,

those pathways departing
from tongue

into broadcast
beyond broadcast.

The pixel mind
turns corners

in the dark
soirée of the soul,

and I who abide
in flesh, to hear

the tones
of blowing wind,

would unturn the keys
in their locks.

REPRESENT!

Out beyond the Mississippi,
they make the highways straight enough

for Lamborghinis, but only L.A.
has the widest lanes of god's sprawl.

His crowded sky,
a blue bridge for the archangels—

we beasts scoot gloriously
through the nebulous corridors of the present,

and we are content.

Tomorrow's headlines have been recycled without needing to be read.
Tracts of passion spin into the briefcases of infinitesimal lobbyists.

But who speaks for the viruses?
The orbit of stars,

the innermost of the planet's magma?
It rotates our fossils, after all.

EARTH SONG

O circulating cell,
wrapped with dust,

all rests upon a root,
life rushing beneath.

I press two feet to you,
soles in osmosis,

and my mouth shapes a seed.

If I rest against the trunk,
a gradual spine,

the bend of shade reaches
down, your hands over my eyes.

Then I see our horizon, swaddled
in skin and bloodstreams,

turning into turning.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Rob Nadolski

Slow Burn

We're undercover under covers, rustling like paper bags,
crumbling like stale cake into each other, the sponge-like joints,
wrists rolling along their path to no place not special, not
leaving untouched, not leaving

And in the streetlight slipping through the blinds,
you are held up in it, you are suspended and freed and reborn
as a sweet tooth in a row of trouble-making shaking canines,
letting the nectar run down our chins

Nature says she needs this; the mudslides carrying houses away
on the late news, reporters mugging and shining with
animal approved blush, fake as Mylar. The machines say
they need this; the air walking into them, a mist of fuel under
pressure, a flaming reunion with oblivion. I say I need this;
You, the resistance and the give, the rattling in the walls that throws
us to the floor, calm as monks

No one knows how deep the South goes

(Wishing I could go back and say
something just under my breath to
get under your skin

"May you stay in the slums
of my mind, as I tear
at hypothalamus, determined
to control the in and out
of my own sleep, uprising periodically
to gentrify"

Hypocritically yours,
as the Colorado feeds the West
water that tastes of aspirin
Choke back the public pool
and thank your lucky luminous
beads of self-deception
for arriving here and now)

Monk played flat fingered, and we
flat footed and twirling with
industrial rhythm
Cheers to indulgences
and ours, of self and leading through
gates of abandon amusement parks

Start with me, as always
with a wink.
I'm going to wait this time
To trim nails, cut hair
scale back, savor.
Leave the TV on the railroad
tracks. Knot cherry
stems with my tongue, parlor tricks

Looking back,
you'll throw surprise parties
for your darkest fears
Try the kind of honesty usually
reserved for mirrors

The cracked black pepper smell
of your jeans, your sour mouth,
The hard, short bristle hair
and still you're enough to have
hymns written about your breakfast
routine and the salt in your diet
the simple sugar furnace billowing
with your quickened step and
direction, purposeful and leading
to generous acts of going unnoticed,
unrehearsed, and untouched

I didn't know you were such a
Gordon Lightfoot fan, and your
sliver of a country on the Western
horn, it's wind smelling of old paper
attic kept and blanketed by the
bad news of almost fire escapes,
train rail scars, deep and protruding
like riverbanks. I know you'd
wash their feet and pontificate,
safe sex and basenji hunters
for the warm, lumpy wheat
beer like the one I spilled on
your two-tone kitchen floor

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

R L Raymond

Stations of Jim

1.

Six months

his sentence
two words

2.

She pushed back

the printouts and pamphlets
every scrap of medical propaganda
exquisitely glossy
into Jim's shaky hand
trying to keep
hers still

3.

The day they removed
the training wheels
after what felt like months
Bobby fell
a slow wobble
oversteered

before he'd even
had a chance to cry
Dad tripped too
falling
both skinning their knees
laughing
Jim the loudest

4.

At Easter last year
Jim met her at the door
taking the heavy dish
tented in foil

later Grandma
burned the ham
to a crisp
and Bobby wondered
why they ate
spaghetti instead
while he counted
the coloured eggs
he'd found
hidden all over the house

5.

They did get a second opinion
maybe
eight months

6.

At night she would
turn back the sheets
open the window
(even this late in autumn)
bring clean moist washcloths
for his forehead

7.

They first realized something was wrong
in the garden
one morning
while picking
gooseberries for jam
he'd just tipped over
like a drunk
or a sleeping cow
they had joked

a little light-headed
but heavily pig-headed
he'd shrugged it off
to only having
the omelet but no bacon
for breakfast

8.

When the Cohens

moved in next door
Bobby had been taken
with the two little girls

Jim invited them
and their parents
to dinner one night

after the homemade doughnuts
Mrs Cohen had brought
the children disappeared
into the basement
gleeful laughter
ringing
up into the dining room
where Jim had
one last treat

9.

His head on the counter

gashed and bleeding
unable to get up...
she'd called the
ambulance before
he'd had a chance to say...

10.

They'd left Bobby at home with Grandma

knowing he'd be scared
of the hospital
of seeing his dad
in an ugly white gown
that barely closed
at the back

11.

She had managed to appear strong
right until the tape
and tubes
and electrodes
lashed to his chest
somehow erased
the "Jim" in him
leaving just a
patient

12.

He had suffered
no matter what
the white coats
and expressionless gazes
told her

the last drawn out
note from the monitor
sounded both knell
and closure

13.

She sat on the bed
a knot of sheet
damp against her cheek
wondering if
her decision to
isolate her son
from this
- from death -
had been the right one

tomorrow the bedding
would be clean
and crisp
waiting for another

14.

Bobby stood by the casket
near the picture
of his father
Jim looking the same
maybe thinner
holding him under the arms
as a toddler
mom beaming beside them
a winter scene behind
with a horse
and pine trees covered
in snow

he didn't weep
he just stared
holding a tigerlily
cut from the garden
not sure where to place it

She knelt by her son
nearly composed
imploing him to ask her
anything
in a whisper he asked her if the Easter Bunny was real

Ricky Garni

THE HISTORY OF SADNESS (abridged)

Donovan isn't.

Matisse running around in his shorts wasn't.

The guy with the parachute isn't.

He better not be.

Thomas Jefferson was Sigmund Freud was George Washington was Tolstoy was.

The penny on the sidewalk isn't.

Now the penny is on the railroad tracks and it is.

Penny Lane is a place. Places are sad.

Jimmy Olsen is sad because he is drawn in a comic book and has never seen himself naked.

The Road Runner is fast as fast can be, which is sad.

Hart Crane is drowned.

Christopher Marlowe is killed funny, sad.

John Berryman, yeah.

Sylvia calls her lover boy like this: come here, lover boy.

Godiva Oyster Chocolates are happy as a freaking clam.

Ritchie Rich has only one black suit with short trousers and a red tie that is rich, but sad.

The windsor knot on the neck of Ronald Reagan is happy while Ronald Reagan is dead and looks like he is smiling because he is a skeleton who looks like most skeletons but he is sad while Ronald Reagan is not, he is different than that.

Pluto, as a planet, is cold, which can be invigorating, but sad, because scientists say there is no such thing as Pluto, except for the dog, drawn by Walt Disney, who is not sad so much as naked and embarrassed and moribund and uses humor to deflect his own wordless humiliation in any number of different occasions.

Coca Cola is the happiest person in the world.

Norman Rockwell would fool you. That is to say sad, he is as sad like an ice cream cone.

The lady on the radio is singing that she will never get over you which sounds sad but it isn't because every time somebody says please play I'll never get over you they give her like 10,000 dollars.

Cole Porter studied Latin, a dead language, which used to be a happy language but now is lacrimabilis, Romanus civis sum.

I saw a cat outside a barn rolling in the grass and I have decided he is sad.

Barbara Stanwyck should be sad with her mother pushed off a moving streetcar by a drunken stranger and all but she is not. She is dead.

Steve Orino who owns the pizza place is as sad as his pizzas.

Moonstruck Chocolates don't even try to be sad. They are struck by the moon and say Who am I?

Sad, huh?

There are two T. Rexes: one that wrote the song TELEGRAM SAM and another that is a dinosaur. One of them was sad, and then later, the other one came along and was happy until suddenly, out of nowhere, he wasn't happy so much as he was sad.

Dinah Washington is not as sultry as Billie Holliday and they are both sad but at least Billie Holliday is sultry.

Linda Darnell is sad because you have never heard of her, look her up and find out.

Edgar Winter is white.

Johnny Winter is more white.

Edgar Winter and Johnny Winter say, Come on over and be sad with me, rock n roll hootchie koo.

Judy Garland is happy. Just kidding.

The Vietnam War would not answer the question. It said What?

The White Cliffs of Dover, who cares.

That last hat on the rack with the little rabbit on it? You tell me.

The black rotary phone, last seen on The Adventures of Superman, is immortal.

Immortality is sad, just walking around the block.

Syd is sad. I just wanted to say that.

Mark Twain: Jesus! Do you have to ask?

Annie is happy, even with her stupid husband.

Pills are happy with exceptions.

Blue pills are blue.

Yellow pills are yellow.

Red pills are stupid.

The pills are behind the couch lover.

Fried Chicken is what it is: I guess sad is a way of saying this.

Walter Brennan is old.

Fats Waller said, Can't you call me something else?

Willie the Lion Smith says Oh Baby.

Marta es guapa.

Age is springtime fresh.

I changed my mind: ice cream cones aren't sad; only Norman Rockwell ice cream cones are sad, and they don't even exist in the real world. That might not make you as sad as Norman Rockwell, but he is sadder than that, because you think, no, Norman Rockwell isn't sad.

Nothing else is sad.

Then Kate says, Let's watch television.

Television is something.

I TURNED MY AND into SAND

And it destroyed my vacation.

Not in the usual way: I still went.

But I had to fly to avoid the oceans
and deserts that I predicted with my
sand. And by fly, I do mean fly, with
wings, my wings, that are golden
and warm like french fries in the
sand. I think I will go to the sky
that's a good place to relax, I said,
away from the predictable, and into
the and

NOTHING IS WRONG

History is so much more beautiful when you are a baby.

Ben Franklin:

flew a kite: that's all you need to know.

Now you like Ben Franklin.

Jesus said:

Do you know how tiny a mustard seed is?

It's tinier than your pinky.

Jesus was funny.

Napoleon said:

My muscles are big.

Were they?

That's enough for today.

Tomorrow let's go outside and see the sun.

It is bright and shiny like a ball of something.

It goes everywhere and it doesn't rain.

If it did something would be wrong.

MR. KRISPY KREME & MISS DUNKIN' DONUT DISCUSS THEIR OPTIONS

We could spend our lives loving each other Krispy said, or we could spend our lives throwing little powdered chocolate donuts at each other.

Both of those options sound so appealing, replied Miss Donut, couldn't you decide for me?

Miss Donut batted her eyelashes. They were a frosty pink.

Dear Reader: please consider that the prospect of throwing little powdered chocolate donuts carries an entirely greater significance for Mr. Kreme and Miss Donut than it would for you or me.

READING THE NEW YORK TIMES AWFULLY FAST ON A WEDNESDAY

on December 1, 2010

Fred Breathes In An Emergency

He stands taller than Wall Street.
He is deeper than the economy.
His last name is Data. Fred Data.
Fred Data is breathing.

Us Love To Riff

Us love to embrace Georgia and then riff
on the guitar. We do. What happens next is disputed
in the town of Russia.

Also A Dim View OF The Ocean In Russia

I was puking in the harbor
of leaders who proved unreliable
hence my puke in the ocean,
Russia.

Beating Art In Yiddish

Frisk your *stieglitz* with a ruler.
You will find it appealing.
It's all yours.
Big Boy are
we? Yes sir.

China

13 women are soft in China.
But don't let that fool you:
the street police are urban
and take daily supplements
of something hard. Watch
out 13 women in China.

Leslie Shows Up

My present to you is the joke.
Please, don't take it seriously.
Take it home and put it somewhere
nice. Somewhere nice that doesn't
have any specialness inside.
(Until now.)

WHILE LOOKING FOR HOITY TOITY WORDS IN FRENCH STARTING WITH THE LETTER 'B'

I met a hippie dressed in buttermilk.

I bought a tub to scratch.

I bantered with the luggage.

I fought the trinkets that I call my own. In a bar, of course.

I gave my car a ring and said: Will you marry me?

I put the taxi and the truck in the tub and then, once I was certain, my school.

I kissed the broom vulgarly. Brawny was the broom.

I looked for a beacon and only found a banana.

A banana on the bench, outside the bank, trying to look sexy.

And interesting.

I watched helplessly as my goatee chatted with my dribble.

I stammered nibs to my pen as I fancied the Belgian.

I said Thank God, Benjamin.

I said You Rock, Benedict.

To Bernadette I said: I am allergic to your privates.

Bertrand said WHAT to that but surely you know how I like to dupe Bertrand.

AH Insect, animal, creature, stupid, foolish silly, stupidity, mistake, blunder, nonsense.

AH...

Must I go on?

Butter is a blunder, my mother said, in concrete.

I pamper my bicycle until it splits its contraption sides laughing.

I believe in the good, the moral, the right, the healthy.

I believe in steak.

I believe in jewelry.

I believe in bikinis.

I believe in round trip tickets.

I believe in one way tickets to money.

I believe in the biscuit that is the cookie.

Who cares what I believe in?

I live for the blunder that is white.

I injure the blue that is the boo boo.

To drink is to say Dearie.

To limp is to be a bowl.

To enjoy your meal is to be the hello of candy.

The good night of Bordeaux.

The mess of the phone book

adjacent to the billy goat

My mouth knows a mouthful

Like the butcher is a butcher shop

Like the cork is a traffic jam

Like the earring is a shield

I sulk to keep away from the bursting of mud.

My hot head is scaldingly boiling in love

with the chubby tubby baker of bakeries

Believe in boom, it is a tremendous success.

Believe in books, they torture and jostle scholarship.

I want to nosh now.

in my boxer shorts and charm bracelet

I want to experience the fullness of bravery exemplified

by the ewe with the diploma

I want to smash the yarn

I want to believe

Break the hairbrush that ruins the toothbrush

I want to brush my nibble, uncut, crude and raw

Come join me in my study

Let us engage our goals and destinations

I want you

I want to stumble

I want to bump off

I want to believe

I want to kill

I want you

Reuben Merringer

Positioning

Jim lived in a valley far away from his family, and he didn't drive. One afternoon on the walk home from work, alongside his distorted face, Jim saw in the chrome of a drinking fountain a smear of blue paint. It looked a bit like an arrow. One block later, he saw another smear of the exact color and shape, right next to the P on a stop sign. They didn't mean much to him at the time, but over the course of the next couple days, the two sightings would blossom into thick memories.

When he got home, he found a little brown box propped against his door, and the blue smears sank into the soil of his mind. He picked it up. MOM & DAD was written at the top of the return address. He took it inside, sat on the couch, and opened it. This disconnected version of Christmas was a new thing for him. After thirty three years of stressful family holidays, his parents had opted to boycott it this time and go on a cruise, leaving Jim and his siblings without even the option of going home for Christmas. Not that he was aching to see them, anyway.

After peeling several layers of cardboard and plastic, he held in his hand a brand new GPS box. He turned it

over and over in his hands. It had been five years since he'd begged for one of these, back when he was in college, back when he was curious. Work and loan payments had done a good job of ridding him of that burden. He shoved the box into the side of the couch, along with the rest of the debris.

The next day, some of his coworkers were chatting in the break room. An intern was talking about a funny thing her minister had said. She went to one of those megachurches that really knew how to put on a show. Without waiting to hear what the minister had said, Jim grabbed a cup, chuckled, and filled up. "I can't believe you people still go to church. What *year* is this?" He downed the water and bounced the crumpled cup off the side of the wastebasket and walked away.

He stopped at the library after work to cool off. It was unseasonably warm. Back home they were probably still shivering in coats and scarves. Holidays aside, Midwestern winters were something worth escaping.

He stopped at the same drinking fountain as the day before. Again, he noticed the blue smear, and again, he ignored it. The one on the stop sign was still there, too. This time, he found their similarity very strange. They were practically identical.

The arrow, if that's what it was, pointed right. Instead of crossing the street like he should, he took a right. He'd still get home; the turns would get a little mixed up was all. But when he reached the point where he would absolutely have to turn home lest he walk further than necessary, he kept on. It was nice, doing something new.

A high, grating voice tore him from his reverie: "Excuse me!"

A very deliberate looking woman clopped past on heels like dainty wood blocks. She was racing to cross the street, and he saw why. The red man was flashing, the numbers diminishing.

Rather than wait for the next walk light, he launched into a gallop and gleamed with pride as he overtook the bitch. But on the other side, she soon overtook him while he hunched over, gasping for air. The threat of

vomiting gave him no choice but to bury his gaze between his feet and hope for the best.

Right there between his loafers he saw another blue smear.

It wasn't exactly like the others. It had been dulled and worn by so many clacking heels, the arrow shape lost, but it was definitely the same artist. The first two pointed in opposite directions, so he dismissed the idea that they led somewhere. Still, it must *mean* something. He skipped home at a conservative pace, grabbed the GPS box, and went back to record the coordinates of each in reverse order.

The drinking fountain was so close to work that he continued on out of habit. So he searched the exterior of the building for more blue smears. There weren't any. He found a multi-colored pancake of chewing gum mashed onto one of the steps, and a notch hacked into one of the old railroad-tie tree planters, but that was it.

Dissatisfied, he continued on, ignoring the pleas of his empty stomach.

He came to a construction site. There, on the side of a green port-a-potty, he discerned an anomaly in the dim evening light. His pursed lips cranked into a smile. He recorded his coordinates with a flourish and went home.

Over the next few weeks his homeward journeys became more and more eccentric as they drifted into new territories. His goal was to find at least one new smear by the time his route spiraled inward. On good days he'd find three, four smears. On even the worst days he'd find at least one. And each time, he recorded the coordinates in the GPS box, buzzing in his shoes. It felt like, *This could lead anywhere.*

He found other times to search. Once, on a paper run for work, he found one on a gutter two blocks from Staples. Another time, on a federal holiday, he went to an outdoor concert downtown and found one on a manhole, and one on a pop machine. One day, after overhearing a pretty coworker recommend a farmer's market to a client, he checked it out for himself, partly hoping to see her there. It was closed, but he did find four smears within a six block radius—a pretty good day.

The days and weeks rolled off and disappeared. Every time he found a smear he'd feel a brief shudder of excitement, quelled by the instant need to find another. There was no end to it. They popped up everywhere.

Not since the beginning did he go a day without finding one. His searches started to go later. He started carrying a flashlight to work in case it came to that, and then it did. But no matter how late or dark it got, he didn't stop until he found something.

Finally there was a fruitless day. Then another, and another. Those sleepless nights made terrifying days for his coworkers. His jabs and unwanted observations deflated anyone too slow to dodge them.

Two weeks later, he accepted defeat. There was only one thing he could do, because, for all his searching, he had yet to muster the gumption to plug the box into his computer and plot the coordinates to see if it made any sense.

He hung his bag on the hook by the door. He unbuttoned his shirt, carefully put it on a hanger, and buttoned it. He slapped out the wrinkles.

His bedroom was filthy, so he cleaned it. When he washed his hands afterward, he noticed his stovetop was covered with slippery little chunks of what might as well be poison. A half hour later, it was sleek and pure. Then he did the rest of the kitchen, even the nooks and crannies that no one ever sees. Especially those.

Never had his apartment looked so much like when he had first walked into it—excluding, of course, the curb-harvested furniture and the scant pictures on the wall that looked like tiny little rectangles of nothing. Now he was ready.

But there was one detail he had missed: Crumpled between his feet was a single blue sock, folded vaguely like an arrow. He dutifully entered its coordinates, and at the risk of more disappointment than he could theoretically bear, he followed the arrow to his computer, braving himself for the nervous necessary.

He eased into the captain's chair and wiggled the mouse. He plugged into the jack in the tower. The computer beeped with enthusiasm. A window appeared. Within it, a map. It was of the valley he now knew very well. And one by one, the coordinates of the blue smears appeared as coincidentally blue dots. They populated it quickly, hundreds of them, but before it was even done, he recognized an unmistakable figure. He gasped. It was a Q.

There wasn't a single deviation to its design. The highest concentration fell within his own neighborhood, and beyond that, way out where there were concerts, Staples, and markets, they were sparser, but still rounded out the figure, suggesting all the smears he must have missed (or were removed before he could get to them). The vast emptiness in the center of the Q made him chuckle as he recalled hours of futile searching. Even the blue sock was part of the figure. Out of curiosity, he eliminated all other coordinates but that one, and was amazed to see it fell right where the tail of the Q met its circle.

The next morning he awoke to rain. He didn't have an umbrella. On the way to work it got so bad he had to run into a mini-mart for shelter. Standing next to him was the same harried business woman he had raced across the street, weeks earlier. She looked constipated. He felt tall next to her.

The weather cleared by the end of the day, but he didn't look for any more smears. He already knew where he would find them. He wanted to look for something else. He didn't know what.

He left work and walked one block in a random direction.

Then he took a left.

Then he walked two blocks and took another left.

Three blocks and another left.

Four blocks and another left.

He traced an ever-expanding spiral outward, looking for patterns of any sort. Despair loomed, and when it finally descended, he collapsed against a bus shelter and leaned against it, looking at nothing.

But it wasn't nothing. His eyes widened. "I think I found something," he told a boy on a bike, who promptly sped away.

Mashed into the Plexiglas of the shelter was a multicolored pancake of smog-stained chewing gum. He hid his elation in case a competitor was lurking nearby. He cradled the box in his hands and recorded his position. Then he moved on to the one he'd found on the stairs at the start of his blue smear period. Though his stomach had visibly shrunk since this whole thing had begun, he felt like it held the world.

Over the next few weeks, he accumulated as many, if not more, gum-pancake coordinates as he had blue smears. He could barely concentrate at work, but at least he was pleasant. He even struck up a conversation with the girl who'd mentioned the farmer's market. Her name was Jeanna. Another day, Jeanna struck up a conversation with him. It didn't go beyond that, but it was enough to make him feel vital. And every night, he fought the urge to plug the box into the tower to see where the gum fell in the big picture, preferring mystery to obviation.

His spiral expanded once again until it reached a point where his firm legs could no longer carry him. He had gone further than he had ever traveled by foot. So, one Saturday, he went by bus to see a particular movie at a particular theater, both recommended by Jeanna. He went only to have a conversation starter. But he couldn't pay attention, so he left and wandered the streets, avenues, and alleys instead, searching high and low for pancakes of gum. He found five of them—his most fruitful search to date—so he went back there every day for the next two weeks until the territory was spent.

As with the blue smears, he hit a dry spell. It wasn't as bad as before, now that he was expecting it. Once again, it was time for the nervous necessary. His apartment had become filthy since that last cleaning, but this time

he went straight to the computer, but he couldn't find the right cable, not right away. He found it woven through a haphazard pile of dirty clothes, which, when he cocked his head and crossed his eyes, looked a bit like a pancake of chewing gum, so he recorded one last position and plugged the box in the tower.

The new coordinates scattered tiny red dots amongst the tiny blue ones. Another letter superimposed itself over the Q. It was a U. Like the Q, the design was flawless. It even hinted at serifs in the typeface.

A bitter stab of irony gutted him: The new letter was really only an extension of the first one. It might as well have been a half-letter, with no further clue as to what the word or message might be. He sank. How often does one see a Q without a U?

Qatar?

QED?

It's only a minor setback, he realized. There were more marks to be found, something else to obsess over, something besides gum. And in a flash, it occurred to him what the next thing might be.

Jim passed a number of trees on his way to work, each beautiful in its own way, but one had a particularly understated grace. He knew the secret messenger would feel the same, so in the morning, he went right to it.

He approached and circled it like he was courting it, petted its bark; through his soles he sensed the roots that almost crested the dirt. There it was: Hacked into the base of the trunk, just as he'd expected, was a notch. After entering the coordinates, he went straight to the next one, hacked into the old railroad-tie planter at work.

As he entered that one, he imagined the sound it had made, wondered what tool had been used, and how the wood smelled when it was freshly split. It looked glorious. He moved closer, and was about to taste it when a voice called his name.

It was a coworker whose name escaped him. An unlit cigarette dangled from the corner of his mouth, one

eye squinted, his lighter at the ready. “You okay?” he asked.

Jim didn’t hear him.

“Hey, Jim!”

“Yeah?”

“Did you find something?”

“Oh, I’m fine. You?”

“Meh,” he shrugged, lighting his cigarette. “Coming to Jeanna’s going away party?”

Jim cleared his throat and slipped the box back in his pocket. “Jeanna’s quitting?” he muttered, hiding his disappointment with a half-smile. A lot of time had passed since this whole thing started.

The smoker took another drag and commiserated. “I know, right? So hot. Anyway, it’s at Jake’s. You should come. A bunch of us are walking there after work.”

“Today?” It was too much to take in. “Yeah. Of course I am. Yeah.”

“Sweet,” said the smoker.

Jim faked a migraine and left after lunch. He passed the smoker on his way out. Jim winked with a smirk, as if the smoker were in on it. The smoker raised an eyebrow.

As soon as he was outside the world started moving very quickly. He had no idea where to turn. He assigned himself the task of finding at least one more notch before joining the party—not only to make the day more redeeming, but to gain the confidence he needed to approach her, to find out if she would be staying in the valley, or going far beyond his influence. Romance-wise, she was his only prospect. A long shot, yes, but he needed it. There were notches out there and all he needed was one. Like a comet or a criminal, he picked a direction and ran in it.

The first tree he passed was a palm tree, and it had no notch. It would be difficult to tell if it did. He ran a tight circle around it anyway, looking it up and down, eyes bobbing like pistons. He started to sweat. When he sweated, he stank, and pretty soon, he did.

He ran down a residential street. Someone nearby was mowing. Jim sneezed. It was a violent one, slathering his hand with a slick of saliva, which he smeared on his shirt. It took a moment to recover. In the meantime, he studied his surroundings and spotted across the street a house made of naked wood, stained only by the dirty air.

He hustled over and circled it, just like he had the tree, ignoring the man watering the lawn in a blue Speedo, who watched Jim with amused interest. Jim noticed him and winked at him like he had the smoker. But this man winked back, like they really were in cahoots, but Jim didn't realize it until he was at the end of the block.

He peered over his shoulder. The gardener was still watching him, blowing a gum bubble, the limp hose spewing a perfect arc onto the grass.

Jim shook his head and took a few more steps, and stopped again, turning his head. This time, the man was no longer there. Neither was the hose. In their place was a sprinkler tossing a rainbow out into the street.

His phone rattled in his pocket. He looked at the display, sighed, and brought it to his ear.

“James?”

“Mom?”

“Hi, James.”

He heard her breathing.

“Mom, come on, I'm really busy.”

“Well, you know I've been feeling crappy for a while now—”

His chest inflated. “What is it—”

She cleared her throat.

Here it comes, he thought. It's gonna be—

“They think it might be pancreatitis.”

He frowned. It didn't ring any bells. “What is that, again?”

“Or something else,” she said.

“Oh.”

She reassured him. “It's no big deal, James. I mean, really. Or it shouldn't be. But it could be...”

Through her relentless vacillations he convinced her she was fine. Meanwhile, his attentions were wandering all around him. Clocks of all kinds ticked everywhere, while he stood there, like an idiot, with this chatterbox...

She finally came to a stop. “We never talk, James. We never get to see you anymore.”

It had been almost a year since he was home. He had never even left the valley. He wasn't exactly homesick, either. He didn't want to mention their Christmas cruise, so he just stood there, venting hard through his nose, holding the phone to it so she could hear.

“Jesus Christ, James! We'll pay for the god-damned ticket!”

The battery light flashed on the GPS box. He grunted.

“Tell your work, they'll understand.”

“Fine.”

“Here's the thing, James. We have to drive up to Iowa City in a few days, and we might be there for a while. They're probably gonna wanna keep me up there. Kevin and Emily got here last night. Kevin can give you a ride from the airport—”

Right on cue, Jim heard Kevin in the background listing airlines and prices.

“Hey, that’s not too bad for last minute. Jim? Less than two hundred dollars for one-way, leaves at six.

That’s pretty good, ain’t it?”

“You want me to leave tonight?!”

“No, in the morning. What? Oh. Yeah, tonight.”

There was a scuffle as Kevin grabbed the phone: “This is family, Jimmy. IT’S ONLY A JOB.”

Jim stared out the window as the plane made its ascent. The hills sunk beneath him, red-topped in the late light. A blur of rising smoke marred one of the hillsides.

He awoke the next morning with his heels wedged in the footboard of his childhood bed. Emily was pounding on his door, rattling it in its hinges. Her foot shadows shifted beneath it. *“Wake the fuck up!”* she was screaming, over and over again.

“Stop it!” he pleaded.

“Finally,” she said, and then proceeded to recite imperatives as if she read them off a list at random: “Come downstairs, Dad made biscuits, everyone’s downstairs, you need to come down, we’re sick of waiting.” She sighed loud enough for him to hear.

“Emily! Is he up?” Kevin called from downstairs.

“I did my job,” she said. The shadows disappeared and her gallop downstairs rattle a framed photo of the Washington Monument had had hung over a tiny portable tv, taken on a junior high trip to D.C.

No one was at the table when went down. His mom called from the living room.

For the first time in over a year, he saw her sitting on the couch, in a lint-balled nightgown the color of sterility, her skin waxen. She wore a bonnet/shower cap thing the same color as the nightgown. Emily sat beside

her, petting her pointed shoulder. Kevin read something smart-looking on the other couch. Their father was in a rocking chair, turned to face the corner window, where it never had been before. He was motionless. But the other three faced Jim directly—his siblings like spotlights, his mother like a dim lamp. But Jim felt like the sick one.

Emily nudged her and whispered in her ear. She nudged her again. Finally, Mom cleared her throat: “I lied about how bad it was, Jim”

He swallowed.

“I think you should stick around for a while.”

“Um—”

“They said it wouldn’t come back and it did, I just—” she sobbed into an old tissue as Emily gripped her shoulder.

He frowned. “What came back?”

She blinked at him through the tissue, like he should know. “Well, the cancer, James.”

“What cancer?”

No one spoke for a long time, long enough for everyone’s gaze to drift into totally different directions, except for Dad’s, whose gaze remained fixed.

“You know, it might be smart with the fires and all,” Kevin finally announced.

“What might be smart?” Emily asked.

“Hanging around here.”

“What fires?” Jim asked.

“Don’t you live by the hills?”

“Depends on which hills.”

“Hold on a sec.” Kevin shifted around on the couch, digging beneath him until he apparently yanked remote control out of his ass. He fired it at the TV.

A man appeared, and behind him, a map of Jim’s valley. He was pointing at hotspots like a weatherman points at rain. Then a fire engine zooming down a dark street, its doors opening before it even stopped. The sky glowed in places, red and orange.

Jim knelt and crawled to the screen.

A house crumpled into ash. A palm tree went up in the foreground. Jim ran his fingers along the bowed trunk, a thousand miles from his fingertips, orange rings licking up and down.

His sister was saying something, getting closer and closer. Finally she yanked him by the shoulder, but he yanked himself back, his eyes plunging into the screen.

The map reappeared. Blobs of orange, red, pink, and white designated the intensity of the fires. The area the Q and U had occupied was now one enormous pink-rimmed white blob.

A tear slid down his cheek. He turned and saw his sister escorting their broken mother to the kitchen. Kevin stood in the doorway shaking his thick neck. Then he too disappeared. His father stayed where he was.

Jim turned back to the TV, and the map. He squinted to blur the screen. He stood up, took a step back, then forward, then back again. He cocked his head sideways, upside-down, and cocked it the other way. He tried crossing his eyes and emptying his mind of all reason, and brought them back to focus on the colorful blobs.

His father cleared his throat. Jim turned to look at him. He was still looking out the window. “It’s all right, Jim,” he said.

He looked back at the blobs, but no matter which way he looked, he couldn’t make them look like anything the least bit meaningful.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Raymond Farr

Not Quartz. Not Spiral.

Stand headlong in state shadows, sd Michael.
Clasping yr hands behind you.

Uncouple yr buttresses, I sd in a huff.
Eminent serifs peach us to gunshots.

Have not quartz. Not spiral, sd Peter to Allen.
Is not a political sentence.

But a prow & its prowess, sd Sarah.
If I hammer an ice patch.
I'm cranky to bed. I'm starlings to rise.

It's grate all these circles of Hell, sd Elaine.
My bonnet's a June bug bluer than floated.

Sprechenzie (no relation)

Nietzsche
approaches *sprechenzie*, sd Rutherford.
[Xmodes than--"w"].
Opposes Alka Seltzer in
trade schools.
Plop. Plop. Fizz. Fizz.
Plotting a coup.

&
Bob Drake.
Making it plumb, sd Lucy.
Steps dolomite on pavement.
This week.
On NBC.

A lark-walk, sd Thomas.
Gone missing a word.
Is the flute of all that's contingent.
Not savored.
By focus.

One sentence of moment, sd Will.
One rooftop to living.
Satiates the willing.
Blunt as
THE END.

& All the Words of Childhood

Towards a circle.
I claim we live, sd Charity.
A century can never.

The furthest center being.
A tarmac, sd George.
Seethes just South of here.

The reading of death scenes.

The levels in gauges.

& all the words of childhood.
A half-life.

A joke, sd Stewart.
In one sense existential.

I have parting gifts.
For you all.

Evolution Begins at Twelve Forty-five

Ice Milk.

Helium balloons.

It's twelve forty five.

& evolution begins.

Darwin is cobalt, sd Charles.

Under suspicious skin.

It's twenty past one.

& the trees.

Human as verbs.

Opposable as thumbs, sd Sheila.

Sex-up the blue carpets.

The Final Muf_in Is Yours

To know an ending.

(This is animus talking.

Vast space into open mic.)

Translate Llewellynn.

His words into glyphs.

Then back into words.

A page is a meal, sd Pound to Magritte.

State evidence largely against logic.

I cant, sd Magritte.

The final muffin is yours.

E final muffin is you

the final muffin is

yours Nal muffin is

the final muffin is

yours

the al uffin s yours

e in muff

is y urs

the final muffin is yours.

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Rachael Stanford

his

collapse. her eyes, soldiers storming
Normandy, retreat as her body falls

limp. he strokes her hair gingerly,
his body, reeking of conquest. a hand

lingers

trapped in the fan's breeze.
the pale memorial ominously brushing
the flannel sheets.

Connections

After sunset musk fades,
the mirror reads empty save my face,
the sunrise shine dust fairies dance past my nostrils,
Gabrielle tumbling down

dreams.

Your fingerprints linger, punctuated
(skin) blue rip-tide circles
freckles or zits or bru—
whatever you said I should call them

as I connect the dots
with permanent markers.

Rearranged letters rolled off
your bar-twisted love tongue,
bleeding into my ear,
misspoken shots of syllables,
of yours and mine

(leftovers, reheated, placed on china plates
no one could know the difference
until after the first bite.)

I could swallow

down

as if no one was ever the wiser.

Phyllis Mass

In Retrospect

It's for the kimono-sleeved work dress you wore and ruined in your youth.

The moment they met, she showed her the framed award on the wall.

Her mother wore it to the Oscars, the year she won best actress.

An Orthodontist turned soccer star in *Overbite*,
she kicked a head of red cabbage during her audition,
startling the director, who shouted,
that's her, that's my little Dentessa.

Whether meeting her blind father on a blind date,
or feeding her mother's blind-drunk fifth husband dates,
he remembered them all,
or turning a blind eye to the weather
or marrying in a blind rage
and mixing doubles round the clock till divorce blind-sided her,
a light box kept her sunny side up.

Part of her died in 1981.

The rest in 2007.

She's planning a comeback.

The trick will be coming back.

Ode To My Discontinued Pencil

Little hexagonal canary tail,
once a crown prince
now a commoner.
Son of the Roman stylus,
your tiny flecks,
adhere to paper fibers
wrapped in string,
encased in hollow
wood.

Written in zero gravity,
your wingless army
stretches 'round the earth
43 times or more.

Scattered breadcrumbs
before rubber
erased mistakes.

*Sensamatic auto feed mechanicals,
no clicking,
ever sharp,
like a real number 2 model
only better.*

From the first,
the silver stream
transmuted
the mundane
into gold.
I tossed
my *Meisterstruck*.

Having found Nirvana,
I resent further exploration.
I'm not Lewis and Clark
nor *Walden's* Thoreau.
When the final
one-legged fossil
exhausts its core,
I will sing
a bitter hymn,
and move on.

A Little Mystery Goes A Long Way

i kissed your
blue hands
begged you
take your gloves

you said
goodbye
not certain if
you'd revisit

i need to know
your candle burns
that you are serene
that there is not nothing

Peter Hayes

The Good Samaritan

“Alright, so you want to know how I got in here?” I says to the wall of sullen faces. Staring at me like I’m a rat covered in sewer crap. You got to love the prison crowd.

“You a pincher?” says one from the back. Mexican street boy, got scars crisscrossing his face the way planes dice up the sky in an air show.

“I ain’t no pincher. Never spilled on anyone. And no one’s doing time because of me. Or ever will, boys. I’m solid through and through.” I tells them this and that. Like what my street cred’s looking like and all the street boys I know who’s pushing, jailed or dead. Word on the street’s that so-and-so copped a raw deal and ended up spiking strychnine into the mainline. Woke up blue as the sky. And on and on. Ad infinitum. Them stories dribble forever the way politicians got a thousand ways to tell one lie.

“Well, I’ll tell you why I’m here, boys,” says I, “Because I ain’t gonna be labeled as no pincher. And I know how them ugly rumors spring up. So here’s my thing so you all know the deal: I had a loft up on Fourth, corner of Franklin. Been running around there to keep the habit up as the story goes. Remember my old boy Johnny hustling

down Franklin, cutting down the mainline in his Nissan, I's swaying with him under tin roofs from the rain. Up on Jackson Street where Mama Maria spiked the mainline with that nasty stuff. You know how the abscesses boil up when them kids cut it with detergent. Anyway, somebody should have done something- you know I never forget the way them Po-Po made a move to hide her face. To hide her body. And her kids staring right into those black, glassy eyes. Man, kids like that end up in the orphanage. And then what? So, things kept kicking around. I's moving from one sick bed to another. Ever notice how the priests heal from a distance? Soup kitchen and I's in the bread line with this one old priest. You see it straight off like he's got a sign: I care but I won't get involved. Not like Jesus or nothing. No washing feet. Nah, that's too far out. So me, I ask him what time it is. First off he jumps like I capped my piece in his face. Real slow he says the time. Kind of mumbles it low and shady. Well, thanks, I guess. You get the impression this cat'll be swallowing disinfectant ten minutes from now.

You guys know the old Po-Po routine. One blue guy on each corner but they's in unmarked cars and they walking around trying to score dope like we don't know who they is. Man, if I could put a face on why I dropped out from the rat race, boys. A face- a frowny face- for all the reasons I don't trust nobody in charge over me. Well, you watch a couple them Narcs beat a boy down with their sticks just cause he's on the wrong corner. Like I said, if I could put a face on it-- a face of every Narc.

Recollect my old home boy King Larry- that's what we calls him. See, King Larry makes a real racket off sliding fake info to the Narcs. Eventually, it sunk him and now he's got a rap that keeps him in Gander Hill the next ten years. But King Larry, he'd slide on over to a cop cruiser and say, "Well, the word is that a couple ounces of pure H is coming down Maryland Ave. at midnight, that's tonight. It'll be coming in a big blue van driven by this Mexican cat named Manuel."

Of course, the real shipment came in off Rt.13, other side of town. Yeah, King Larry really had those clowns hopping around like grasshoppers in a forest fire.

But how I got here. Well, I'm not a bad guy. All my deals, my issues, come cause I care too much and CNN makes me want to pop lead in every politician's face.

Me, I'm coming out this loft my boy's got on Maryland Ave. I just scored some pure H and fighting off nods as I hit the sidewalk. This was one of those scorchers. Yeah, the sun's melting the cement. As I walk I see Stop signs wither and shrivel up.

And right under this little porch awning, a boy about six, all barefoot. Kid's crying real quiet like he don't want anybody to know. His clothes is torn up some and I notice he look real, I don't know, scrawny I guess you'd say.

Like I says I'm not a bad guy. Compassionate. Always have been. Remember when I was that age listening to my mama cook rock in the bathroom.

So I says, "What you crying about, son?"

He sort of tries and turn away but still whimpers, "I'm hungry. I ain't eaten in three days."

"Three days?" says I, "Where your mama at? Your poppa?"

Kid says, "I don't have no poppa. And my mom's over at Juanita's drinkin' beer and playing cards. She told me I got to leave. I ain't got nowhere to go."

"Nowhere? Ain't you got friends? Family?"

"No one," the kid, he says and breaks down and cries.

Well, I couldn't just leave him there. It was hot, man, I'm telling you. And that wasn't no part of town a kid should just be laying about. What with street boys slinging dope and crack on the corner.

“I’ll buy you some food, kid,” Tells him that while wondering how much green I even got left, “Come on, there’s a burger joint right around the corner. You dig burgers?”

Kid looks at me sideways, unsure, asks, “What I got to do for it? I got to sell something for you on the corner?”

“No, kid. All you got to do is eat the burger.”

Simple enough, I think he grasped the concept. So we go walking down the sidewalk into the eye of heat. Well, I feel so bad I even try and keep the kid in my shadow so he’s out the sun much as possible. Then I says:

“You want me to carry you, kid? You feets gonna get all burned up.”

So I carries the boy on my shoulders and soon he starts laughing a little. His ugly mood evaporating.

This part’s where the story gets real nasty. Why I got reservation about authority and all that.

So we’re sitting in this burger joint on Fourth, just me and him eating burgers. Place is empty ‘cept for us.

Right about then this Narc walks in. You can smell a Narc the way a cloud follows him. Smog is the word.

Well, he sees me sitting at the same table as this little black kid. I never mentioned he was black and I’m white because the thought never entered my head, either. I was just helping the kid out, right?

“You gotta reason being with that kid,” Narc says through his teeth. I always notice when they speak their mouth never moves. Like some kind of disembodied voice.

“I’m buying him burgers...he was hungry...” Says I, and at this point I feel the heat rising.

“Oh, burgers, eh?” Narc’s worm lips twitch, maybe smiling real faint, “That’s tasty. Buying kids burgers...”

“Sure.”

“Well, we got us a report from that kid’s mother: She been looking all over for that kid. And the neighbors seen you pick him up and walk away with him.”

“It’s not like that. I just wanted to help the kid out,” I says real loud, “He told me he was hungry.”

Narc flaps his jacket up over his ears, “I guess you got no drugs on you. No warrants or nothing. You just a good old boy. A good Samaritan always looking out to help. That it?”

Well, of course the question was rhetorical. And now I’m here with all you boys in this crap can. My PO tells me I’ve got a lot of issues, problems and I needs tons of rehabs and sessions and such. I got something in me that makes me want to kidnap little boys. And, of course, I won’t get out this hell without admitting to it and going through some sort of rebirth. So much for the good Samaritans.”

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Orville Babcock

Another Reason

melt our ears in soil
dephonate the jangle--

even the birds

the hermit perhaps rhythms
that idiot chorus

but we
the cacophonae

we realized
through broken
cogitations

whited noise is not White Noise

we know neon pulse

--give Us the penultimate
click
the ultimate
crack!

the Static
of casual departure

Massive Trauma

dully rooted
it fails
its phenomena

(viz the brain and its florals
sequestered in the bulb)

terminal bloom rather
unfolding
 in modern time
uniting
 blood soil memory

momentary
and self-consuming

I Dreamt the Invalid Dream Again

Meat
on the fork
Man
in the gut

Cancer
likewise
never not Man

(thing subsumes things)

| | | |
|------|----------------|--------------|
| Meat | {water protein | lipid} |
| Man | {blood meat | cancer} |
| Us | {Me You | the Invalid} |

the scalpal
etcetera

The Exquisite Loop

paused before a staircase
crossing a street
smoking alone
 frozen

 the idle Moment
the exquisite Loop

 muzzle
 flesh
 lever
 slug
 plume

repeat
repeat
dissolve

An Interpolation

on a rock
an old woman smoking

remembering
when the third drag
clenched--

orange plastic vial
unsteady hand

but conviction

conviction

old tv fuzz

(oh
how the years
dissolve)

a pale crescendo

the East River
slackens

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Ognjen Smiljanic

(0)

To be on the wrong side of away,
such effrontery of the mirror tipped out
from her dress by a kind of inner fog,
a mangy pubis that knows a mute phone would
understand a poet, because flaccid tits swell and
subside in his temples as if he was lost amidst the members
of his audience brandishing his cock and his testicles,
like a rickety cross upon a hill,
like a sunrise fleshball stuck in his throat,
like a mast smelted out of blood,
like a god wizened by too many trips
to the bathroom with a dirty magazine,
like a great amphibian mother overpregnant
with unctuous testes.

(1)

I hope you have a good sense not to set foot
into the old, the familiar, the breathing when we sleep,
the sweat and the presence of that imposingly ethereal veil
of steady ankles treading upon his life, with nipples
of an uncounted-for silhouette, of the moon's delicate meal.
Born into clouds moving closer, obsessive, merciless
and inexorable, it is always beginning to rain on his interior
labyrinth, his nose pressed against the lace curtains in her person,
articulate occasional sentences without
uttering a word. I once blew my wad in order to talk,
the one moment that answers the voice of an impassioned static,
the hiss side of it, the growl that needs reupholstering
like a puddle in a hollow of his chin,
like his reflection in the glow of a dead man's bald spot,
the mortuary of his mind.

(2)

Sooner or later, the emptiness will eat of him,
his angelic texture of fairies listening to her,
with the strength to face the stupid absurdity of his dream
set to continuous repeat play. One of his cadaver's eyes
was still intact, the glossary that dreamt him giving and receiving keys,
his ghosts coming and going, sweating, whirling
around her, born of the water's turbid indifference like a cyst
on the wind-raped lagoons of his mind.
He thought of doing everything
once or writing a book, to kill himself outright,
entrenched between his pages, thin like a strand of best poetry.
A municipal truck moved down his lines slowly, amidst derisive
laughter to transform his innards into an archipelago of darkness,
to go back to the first word and nothingness,
like a drowned rock, like an eyeball of a moth protruding from his asshole,
staring at him thru a peephole in his opus,
him rubbing his shoes on the doormat embarrassingly.
He could only rely on his energy, to keep going the sentence,
the one worth uttering, keeping, like the last rock tossed into the void,
tied to the end of his entrails. It was like horse's teeth
laughing at him from the bowels of his love,
dreaming lumps of flesh strewn across the landscape,
statues of lard brandishing a mark of a delicate silent misery,
the wooden leg of his breath leaning against her ribs,
drifting wherever the wind takes them.
Dreamily he mapped out a beeline for safety
jabbing against his thigh, his heart encased in her lye,
the animosity of the twilight and the chunky sonnets,
hazy night's clothes on the floor, the half-eaten clouds
kicking his ass in sameness. I once succeeded in chewing
thru my ensoulment, with the voice of a castrated mammal
searching in the dark for the ear that listens,
the plastic halo of the toilet around the head –
would this enable me to placate the persistent little demons
of my stagnant speechlessness? And the soft light
from the impotent other staring at me with bovine eyes,
murmuring without moving his lips, performing
complicated gymnastics to avoid talking to me.
One by one, the globules began returning

into the faded blue of the sky on which you pull the string
and a penis pops out of its pouch? We've spent the inertia
of wind-up toys shattering my language
that I hardly saw it anymore, with the sterile efficiency
of a wet nurse. How I miss their little toothbrushes,
their little caricatures searching for an elusive image
hovering above them in the dark.

(3)

My eagerness for some kind of respite
was to invoke one foot in front of the other
in front of something irretrievably lost.
The wind was picking up monotonously
with the openest of arms. She held his cock
thru his fly, dragging him thru the streets
of a town that bears her name, the town of his birth.
To think that he can lay beside that furnace,
with her veins bursting absentmindedly,
ejecting from his mind like shit, like a whisper,
full of disinterested energy and cum, viscera of roofs,
spires, specimens of manhood "before and after."
All these abstract deaths involving
little vipers and hand-kissing nonsense.

A world without hope, but no despair.

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Michael Harrell

Cinquain

We dream,
the end of things
constant held the changing
plan. The kingdom sand imagined,
for now.

Clutter and the Infinite Soon

I.

The things I could do, and I know I will soon,
I said to myself without budging.
Just stared off, in doubt, until all
the clutter in the room disappeared.

Absolved in the indistinguishable,
my eyes dried,
watered themselves,
dried, then
watered themselves again.

My brain must have a brain of its own! I imagined.
And that brain, too, must have one of its own,
which would also have one,
and so on, all the way down.

A bottomless lake, Thought,
and the deeper I'd reach, the closer I was
to arriving. . . But oh always only arriving!
For if I ever did

finally arrive,
I'd immediately be thrown into arriving again,
to some other destination, some other something.

So I took a deep breath, paused, then self-imploded,
reduced to a black hole hovering
where my bellybutton once existed.

It was then, and there, that I realized:

all *this* is,
is movement,

of loads and loads of debris.

II.

Then something strange happened.

I grew lost in Thought's vast capacity.
How huge that abyss would be!
And how it makes one feel so tiny;
to imagine standing next to it,
 or sitting on its edge,
peering in to my own vast nothingness.
Nausea, vertigo, nothing is absolute.

It only lasted five, maybe thirty seconds
 (or a hundred or two)
But in that strange moment
I witnessed a pale whiteness
 outlined by three white shapes:
 two white cubes the size of a dog's cage,
 and one white pyramid in-between
 of equal height.

A camera-flash faded, then the empty stage emerged
with colorless curtains, shapeless objects,
then motionless actors, breathing
stationary lungs, vacant air.

 Something to paint! I assumed
 (with all the various colors in my hands).

III.

The scene taking place then began:

None of the actor's motives made sense.
The plot was drab, progressive, disconnected.
Each event (and there were none)
 were superfluous to all preceding.

One could find no meaning.

 Unless, of course, they wanted to.

See:

 just beside the pyramid a Blue Man watered yellow dandelions;
 a cup of brown coffee in one hand, pistol in the other.
 He wore pillows around his body,
 wrapped tightly together with barbed wire.
 And he spoke to his crotch in well-known formulas.

 Atop the box (stage left) sat a Little Pink Girl,
 sewing flesh rubber soles to her feet,
 weeping over the dandelions, too, no doubt.

Their story thus seemed signified,
 yet still, arbitrary.

I sat in red-velvet, row 7, seat 8, in the shadow.
There I could see them, but they could not see me.
There it occurred to me.
Here, in this container, viewing a story
 with no past or future,
 I was in Limbo.
Past truths, it seemed,
 were made here, in the present.
And the future here held no water,
 only the fears and desires known by all time.

Either way, to think back or envision ahead
was the poetic rabble of each everyone.

IV.

And if I count the innumerable
(which is without doubt possible)
I realize I spent ten and a half seconds
in that strange black box.

But only now, in this reappeared,
re-encluttering room,
may I count it.

And I will always remember
(if it's all I remember from the theater)
that I only blinked once in there.
And I can say now with confidence
that I have lived on for infinity, and still do.

The Ancient Mortal

deep breath
in the water of whirls,
 I felt both my lungs respire.
deep end
on the blue send of waves,
 my fingers appear much older,
 my skin peels off,
 a new begins.

I'm simply slipping
 up the inverted slide
wise lies rising
within each wrinkle,
rising,
 along each hunch.

and before particles wane,
 before the great carbon shift,
 a sitting and
 a thinking
you'll be,
 ancient mortal,
the hour before you're
 a star again.

Michael Fix

Doctors/Students

Even as the comet comes
unbruised and unashamed,
streaking ever so quickly
after the bright blue globe,
its shoddy, imperfect axis
no deterrent,

man and woman,
still walking, he with
purple hat, she with a
nodding gaze,

to the Sampsons, the Orions,
to the indestructible crucible
of the stars, and their dot-by-dot
numbers, drawn upon the skies,

night or day, residing all the while,
through the long, long, long dead,
so very far away einsteinspace,
their colors and streaking hues,
only remnants of an eyesight too fleeting.

And conversations among the coffees,
cakes n' cigarettes, talking themselves
into the frictionless air, to ponder the
lost echoes of their very atoms, to see
no future without time, or dates,
and to keep walking, unabated
into the future,

never fearing the *if-but-when*
of diabolical scientists, and their
eventual comets.

Matthew Di Paoli

Museums

It was sunny out and March had been cold, so it was clear, and cold, and sunny. From the limousine, everything looked burnt gray. Mason stared straight out as the limo carried him three blocks from his childhood home to the church. He wore black Ray Bans and a slate suit.

It was strange sleeping back in Queens the night before, he thought, and the dog was getting old. She had begun to form strange growths on her body that the vet and his father felt weren't worth removing, so it was hard to pet her down her back. He remembered her as a puppy, chasing ping-pong balls and shitting in the basement when she felt unappreciated.

The church felt so familiar to him as they pulled up. So many childhood prayers left unanswered in those rafters. Though to be fair, he thought, they were mostly about girls and baseball. In front, a bulging group of his friends, late twenties, unsure whether it was appropriate to laugh or smile, waited for his cue. And to the right, his extended family, somber and shocked because they hadn't been there. The only people who'd been there were in that limousine. That's the way she'd wanted it.

Mason stared straight into his own reflection in the tinted window and into the mirror of his own sunglasses and on and on like that until no one stared back. He realized his father was already out there, shaking hands, receiving embraces, consolation prizes for a life forever altered.

**

When his mother could still talk, there was a brief period when she came home and Mason assembled an aluminum bed for her in the living room. He placed Oreos next to it on a makeshift nightstand. She'd started eating them with ginger ale because it calmed her stomach.

That one night she was home, she clumsily lifted her knit cap above her eyes. A few strands of her hair fell out like a baby who'd just begun to grow it. Her hands weren't working real well, so she used them as blunt objects as if holding wooden blocks.

"I want you to take pictures," she whispered, maybe not wanting his father to hear.

Mason brought his camera most places. Now 27, he wasn't ever sure what to tell people he did:

"I'm a photographer."

"Oh really? Like in museums?"

"No."

Photography wasn't how he paid his bills, anyway. He did that by substitute teaching.

"I don't know if I feel—If that's a good idea," he said. He looked at her. She'd gotten so small and soon, he knew, she wouldn't be there at all. The bed squeaked metallic as she fumbled at her side for an Oreo and Mason

wedged it between her fingers. “You want me to take pictures of you like this?” He knew how private she always was. He hiked the blanket up to her neck because she looked cold even though the house was warm.

“I’m going to be better soon, better and I’ll want to know how I looked. Don’t you think I’m going to get better?”

Mason hesitated. He looked into her cloudy eyes. She was barely able to hold them open. “Yes. Of course.”

“I’ve been energy healing and my Chinese friends say I’m getting better.”

Mason’s mother had become involved in Chinese medicine over the last several years, which is why she hadn’t gone to the doctor at first. In a way, Mason blamed them. He did his best not to blame her.

Now, a bit of Oreo stuck to her chin. She drifted in and out of sleep. As she did, Mason clicked photos of her inconceivably fragile body, her hands, long and frail like a bird’s.

**

After the funeral, all Mason’s friends went downtown to his favorite bar. It was the only straight bar for blocks. They drank whisky and talked about things unrelated to death—movies and styles of pants.

“Where’s the girl?” asked one of his friends.

It was something that bothered Mason. They’d only been together for a month but still, it bothered him—it wasn’t like a dinner reservation she could change. “Rain check,” he said and walked over toward the jukebox.

He placed his whisky on the machine and was flipping through LP’s when a pretty girl with dark straight hair and pale skin came up and hovered over his shoulder. She looked like the kind of girl who had opinions.

“And what do you do here in your suit?” her accent was German and she had a drunken lilt in her voice. Her drink was nearly empty.

“Where? In this bar?” he responded.

“In—” she looked around the room. “Life.”

He fumbled around in his pockets, pulling out two camera lenses. He kept different lenses in different blazers. It was a filing system of sorts, beholden to weather and mood. “I’m a photographer.” He handed her the lenses and she looked through them with a certain sense of wonder. She saw him in rose and in green and then in rose-green.

“You photograph me?” She struck a starlet pose. There was something very pure about her and it reminded him of Man Ray’s early portraits when he photographed his lovers and even through lens and frame, you felt as if you could touch his desires.

“No, not today,” said Mason. He didn’t have his camera anyway, he thought.

One of the men from her table came over and grabbed the girl’s torso. He said something to her in German and they both laughed, then he went to the bar.

“Boyfriend?” Mason plucked his drink from the top of the jukebox, swirled the ice in his glass and downed the rest.

“Him? No.”

Impulsively, she leaned in and kissed his cheek. She took him into her arms for a moment as if trying to quell something dark and cold deep within him. He tasted her warm breath, inhaled her body, which smelled of berries and vodka.

“Is there something we can do?” she said.

He felt every word on the tip of his nose. “You and me?”

She nodded.

Mason thought of his girlfriend and felt her absence more deeply in his inebriation. “I wouldn’t know what to do with you,” he said.

She smiled. “Well, if you figure this out, I will be here by the music.”

**

The next day, while substituting, a student walked up to Mason under the pretense of getting a tissue. “Is your real name Mr. T.?” she asked.

Mason had taken to letting the children call him that because it was easier and he liked referencing pop culture before their time.

“It’s Tancilio,” he said, finally.

“That’s Italian.”

“Yes.”

“I’m Greek.” She pretended to blow her nose.

“Ok.”

A moment passed between them.

“What do you do?” she asked.

“I’m here teaching you.”

“No, like in real life?”

The question struck him in a way that made him feel small. “I don’t know. Nothing I guess.”

“I’m going to sit down now,” she said.

**

That night, Mason’s girlfriend came to his apartment. He cooked penne a la vodka and served it on little black plates with Japanese characters on them that he’d gotten on sale. They drank white wine because that’s what she preferred.

“So, how was it?”

Mason forked some pink pasta into his mouth. “Pretty boring. They had me teaching math and I can barely figure out the tip on a bill.”

“No, I meant the—with your mom.”

“Oh. Well a lot of people came. That was nice. My father gave a nice reading.”

“That’s good.”

“Yeah, I had the chicken Marsala at the dinner. That was a mistake. You’d think you couldn’t make the day worse and then—bad chicken Marsala.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t—I wasn’t there.”

“I’m sure there’s a better place to meet my family.” Mason tried to seem understanding. In a way, he was; but it wasn’t the people who came he’d remember the most. It was the ones who didn’t.

He got up briefly to grab cheese from the fridge; but there wasn’t any cheese, just film—rolls and rolls of film undeveloped in the icebox. “How was your day?”

She held up her fork, extracting one of her long blonde hairs from her pasta.

“Do you want to go to the bedroom?” he asked.

Her face was small and pretty, each feature illuminated differently by the box lamp halfway across the room.

“Sure,” she said.

As they made love, he felt very far away. She closed her eyes and he watched her clenched face as he moved.

Afterwards, she covered herself. His chest hair matted with sweat and he felt cold. Lying on top of the comforter, he replayed the metallic sounds of the box spring in his head, staring up into the white ceiling, knowing there was nothing beyond it and that no one was staring back.

Mary Kasimor

the train

Since there were no bones I suspect myself of no one
At the beginning I was liquid & shifted balance
The earth sank & I with it

I lived with emptiness in an old jam jar

I rose from honey

The rose was a rose & it sang in my ear
The song chose me for understanding

The darkness shouted out facts & it was the owl's final sleep

Flight was in a misunderstood direction
I did not have wings
You did not have a uterus
You could not bear me

The music dissolved into white noise
A train left me behind at 4 am

I was shoved into cold storage

The body problem left with time travel known as sitting in one
place in the peculiar sorrow of self-denial & further away from anyone
I leave my hole & a buried eye with no flicker of recognition

a forest

packed with..... murder the..... bones.....assembled
.....into a collage.....mismatched I walked...away.....
on.....eyes spit out..... chaos..... & theft a thoroughly
contested germ elevated..... superficial.....as..... a way
with..... god then.....you could not open the.... computer for
more.....secrets but.....stood in a..... line for hours for
your order that totaled....a..... billion stars..... that struck
the sidewalk after..... memory..... crashed so you shaped
with destiny with..... angles &..... angels who refused
to..... dance this.... indiscretion cost you a year of..... dreams
each night broke.....down.....into indecipherable symbols
...& forests calmed.....down you walked.....with.....the
absentconsciousness the heart hung.....up.....
to dry... in the garden....I..... dance without a..... soul
there was a.....bright part of..... me that existed.... as.....a
kiss..... a red scarf..... a.....mouth without.... the lies

iffacts

doubtful that I shall Ever know
myself as a riddle of Myself
themselves in the room where truth
is fact & the irrational is a reason
with your face of Many troubles
& with myself I dance in Circles
& throw things away
in the Kitchen of Garlic & cinnamon
a pink Décor of a genuine Moon
reciting well known facts
in Echoes I shall return as a leaf
blowing Through nowhere dancing as
a Thing in the middle of A place
in a Circle I shall find you in a jar I shall
keep you as a toy I will break you as
ago I will Make you doubtful
against the other we unite at the Table
as a guide When the stars
burst Out a polite narrative I disclose
myself as you with a Wondering tribe

Mary-Jane Newton

Good Fortune

Then the pasture —
blades of grass
were smiling,
'Four-leafed clovers?'
And they shrugged
with the wind
and poured out
sympathy:
'Good fortune is
so rare a thing ...'

Never attained,
the sixty-first minute
of the hour.
Always fading,
the last sad
star of a
pyrotechnic display.

So then —
amid the honeysuckle
and wild plums
I plucked
a three-leafed fellow.
Fumbled its
limp body
into my pocket,
heavy with
hope.

The Red of My Heart

In all Mesopotamia
they speak of me, Sargon,
'The Soldier of Soldiers,' they say.
My armour, my skin,
is my silent servant:
this is the red of my heart.

In paradise the ages are spent,
poured out like tired candles.
We drink to get drunk,
we sour our blood,
we trade in truths that are not ours.
My thoughts so rarely now
rise above these sagging shoulders.
This is the red of my heart.

You said, 'goodbye' or 'welcome',
I can't remember which
and you insisted, 'Sargon's sword
is the boldest and quickest.'
But who are you now?
Who are the passers-by
we call our friends?
Blunt is my dagger
that has seen so many backs.
I no longer fight.
I've grown old,
and this is the red of my heart.

We sleep, we eat,
we do as puppets do.
We smile our wooden smiles and wave.
We cloak our inner savage child
in thin sheets of maturity.
We pay with coins of
little value for the deaths
our teachers die.

Between two lungs
this breath was born,
between the halves of a single heart
this tragic love.
It is the red of my heart, you see,
the red of our hearts we butcher.

You, Becoming

To my unborn child

With you, becoming,
I bend, an easy equator,
Blow, a wind of blossoms.
You pod of slight energy,
growing for centrifugal force.

An unfolding in the softest city,
you move in the air above
and below and around me,
give birth to all colour.

You render nothing rounded,
but all radiant and edgy, fill
my days with divine
discontent and longing.

All are strangers, but the city
holds you in my hands of streets
and folds you in the creases
of my oldest rhythm.

With you, becoming, I travel
like the light, span the poles,
sway like hot mercury.
You are my furthest star,
my rocket, my spaceman.

The unthinkable:
I gather all the threads,
lost and loose, and get down to
the bare bones of it,
see intimately into the insides of

things, which expose themselves,
pathetically, pitifully, and yet
cheering, in exhilarating swindle.
Layers of finery everywhere,

strong and simple. With you,
I leave them, penetrated,
empty cartridges of
machinegun ammunition
that pulsate and glitter
as a sky of stars.

Kodama¹

They were days of theft, our days in the woods. Let's not
Argue otherwise. Days and days of an enormous, uncanny
Darkness forever punctured by pale and bulbous eyes,
And twig-like legs with knotted muscles, scuttling. No walls

Could keep us protected, no hope could keep us from being
Peeled of our skins and left there, in the sullen open, prey
To all those gaping eyes and noises, scufflings and hurryings
That made our heads turn and our bodies jitter. We were

Looking for something we could not find nor remember what
It looked like, when we spotted them, finally, on the branches
In the eerie forest green; their luminous heads turning, like
Small, round clocks clicking and creaking in the twilight.

We dared not venture close, so as not to confess our folly, but
The woods would brook no disclaimer, no counterclaim. So we
Stood, watching closely yet from afar, and they followed us
Into our dreams. Until, one day, the helter-skelter ceased, and

There were no more heads or green things to be found. We
Searched as we were left in wonder and surprise, for something
We could not look for nor knew that we remembered. And the
Woods remained tall and silent, and groaned in their lethargy

And dolour. The moss, the bracken endured the lack; the
Woodland floor cradled the last of the light footprints. We think
Of them fondly now, our days of theft, and the soft sap that ran
Down the pines and gathered in viscid drops on dark brown bark.

¹ Tree-dwelling spirit in Japanese folklore. See also the film *Princess Mononoke*, by Hayao Miyazaki.

Poem No 165

Wants to remain unknown, unwritten. Wants to cry hoarsely that this is not the death it has deserved.

Would rather inject its host with poison and turn pale and waxen, than assume shape, become 'meaningful', be forced into a pattern strange and peregrine.

Would rather age and rot an unborn virgin, be forgotten like an age-old monument.

Would rather drown in other stories, tales and poems, or be hanged with rattling emotion.

Would rather seek a private battle with its host, than be told, captured with words. Being captured with words means to search for the cross on the map, and searching for the cross on the map means to take the first step on a course inevitable. Broken, blackened stumps of feet would scratch the paper, and a thrumming sound would pump from every cranny, every letter. Marauding feet would rush. The journey would unfold in a thousand winding courses. In every turn and every syllable, change would brood like the dark twin of death.

Would rather crumble into fragments, black and ominous and blurred by memory, rather shift into a dream of greed and violence, or grow into a different being altogether.

Wants to pivot, tighten, growl in suicidal rage: 'Go on then, stunt, distort and warp me with your useless, little language!'

Wants to remain a secret, wants to remain true.

Safeguarding

Larger the trombones,
proud and bald-headed
shrieking yellow suns.
An owlish horn.

Drums, tight-lipped,
raging with stunning rapidity,
hissing dragons.

I, a frozen aural butterfly
struck, mid-flight, and against
my will pinned to a board
and held there, in stupor.

Bows and strings, tenacious
like the smell of sundown.
A single harp's
livid cry.

But through
the skulls, the noise and bluster
I can still hear them,
your words'
soft and simple
symphony.

You'll stop
my plunge, break
my nightfall,
draw a steady tangent.

Now
Lay your hand on my chest
so that I may survive
the crescendo.

Martha King

Another Summer of Poverty

1966

G.R. Swenson burst into Gavin Douglas's apartment and announced breathlessly he'd just taken his very first tab of LSD. Gavin said, "Oh, you've been there before."

G.R. said, "You're right. I'm disappointed."

Baz and I were introduced to him.

G.R. and Gavin had met at the Yale Institute for Better Living. (The nut house. It may still have that silly name.) Thorazine had turned G.R.'s skin yellow and he had added to his personal decor by dying his hair bright orange. Naturally Gavin befriended him. G.R. was now a rising art critic, a major promoter of our old friend Jim Rosenquist.

G.R. glared at Baz. This was not a good hit. I gathered up our kids for a getaway. It was a sunny May afternoon and Gavin's apartment was not big. Baz and I had been taking a long walk with Mallory and Hetty packed in the stroller. We were in the West Village when a car stopped suddenly on the street beside us, and there was Gavin.

I'd heard about him. Baz met him in a Village bar years before. Bar talk. At some point Baz had said he was a student and Gavin had been rude about it. "What kind of school would a

guy like you go to?” I guess Baz already liked his feel because he didn’t punch him. Instead he described Black Mountain. A few weeks later, Gavin appeared in the turnaround in front of the Studies Building asking for Baz. He was driving an English sports car and had one leg in a cast. He stayed around for several months. Black Mountain had always been permeable like that, easy about people of uncertain status.

“I live up there,” Gavin said, pointing to the fourth floor of the building we were in front of. Gavin was with a woman, a tawny blonde with a classic nose and thin ascetic lips. “We got married this spring,” he said. He introduced us. Up we all went to their apartment. Gavin and Dianna were a different kind of others.

Gavin should have been handsome. He should have been perfect American Celtic even-featured, brown-hair, grey-eyes handsome. A crop of odd white hair on one side of his head was an accent not a disfigurement. I soon discovered he looked different every time I saw him. His face was like water, shifting, sly, wickedly clever, bored, tired, calculating, puffy with petulance, dazzling with sudden, manic glee.

Gavin was the child of Lord Douglas and Jeanne, a middle-class Scot with some major ambitions. She had come to London equipped to work as a secretary, and, as Gavin told it, with heavy plans to marry up. Which she did. Gavin was born in the early 1930s when his father was almost eighty; he was never quite sure if Uncle Eddie, his father’s silent partner, wasn’t his actual dad. The public and audible partner in their enterprise had been Lord Joe Duveen, and the business was an art gallery, the one that made a small fortune selling Quatracentro paintings to American millionaires in the twenties.

Father Douglas was an art historian, and Gavin’s great uncle Boysie had been the downfall of Oscar Wilde. He was from *that* Douglas family – which traced its way back, said Gavin, to Gavin Douglas, his namesake, the translator of the Aeneid, in the 16th century. Of course that Gavin was also a pre-Reformation bishop and so had no business having a family, not one he could give his name to, but I believe the tale just the same. When it came to name

dropping, Gavin was always boss.

The family tradition was continuing nicely. Gavin had a little sister: Claire was the model for Phoebe in *The Catcher in the Rye*, and grew up to marry J. D. Salinger. If you're a quick reader, you've just clicked on that crop of white hair on one side of Holden Caulfield's head. Gavin and Salinger had met at prep school.

G.R. Swenson, on the other hand, was a gawky effeminate Midwestern schoolboy, a child of Topeka, Kansas. After our first bad meeting at Gavin's, I ran into him on the street, again with the kids in the stroller. He lived just around the corner from our Second Avenue apartment. I asked him to come home for lunch with us. Baz came in from his studio in the Anderson Theater just across the street, and after eating, took G.R. back to the Anderson with him. Suspicion changed to fascination. For both of them.

G.R. always looked the same. He was the kind of boy praised for handsomeness by all the women in his mother's church. Handsome being a code word for well-behaved. Too well-behaved. Handsome a code word for momma's boy, a code word for, well you know. He knew exactly who *his* father was: a gas station attendant, patient, quiet, almost inert in G.R.'s telling. A noble boob, whom G.R. adored. But after G.R.'s death, his father was full of rage. He publicly washed his hands of his son and railed at his friend Ann Wilson who had come out to Topeka for the two funerals. What we called suicide, G.R.'s father called murder. His son had taken his wife away and if G.R. hadn't died in the event, the dad would have moved to have him jailed. Hard to square this with G.R.'s tender picture of him. Hard to match it with what little I know about the woman in the middle. The mother G.R. killed.

Did his mother actually go to a church? I don't know. Was she as smart as he was? I don't know. Did she respond to art? Did she read him books? I do know she had chronic migraines and G.R. had to sit in the darkened bedroom with her, and massage her head and cut her toenails while she lay across the big brass bed, honey. And I do know she made his father

find a new place for the family to live every two, three years in order to be in an ever better school district for the sake of her boy Gene.

G.R. had a brother, but I don't know his name, only that he existed, and that he was never in his mother's place of honor, never the focus of her ambition.

His brother was in the marines. He'd done well. He was a major or a colonel, and he did go to church. He had a wife and some children and was stationed in Viet Nam.

"He's queerer than I am," G.R. said. "War is his country. The crease in his britches is the proof of his worthiness," G.R. said. "A stone nut-case."

We were well met that summer, Gavin, us Kings, and G.R. but circumstance never again put us all together in the same spot. G.R. and Dianna was expecting a baby in the fall. She and Gavin were looking for a larger apartment. She and Gavin were in redemption mode, both of them. He from chronic running away and nihilism and she from drugs and lack of place. She'd fled to New York City from a nomadic childhood with a mother as loony as G.R.'s. But she was not the focus of a mother's transferred ambition. She was accessory after the fact, as her mother converted to a new religion every few years. Dianna told charming but heartbreaking stories of child life under Theosophy, Ba'hai, Manichaeism, spiritual vegetarianism. Presently, mom was a Parsi, or some hybrid American approximation of it. Every conversion brought a new persona, new house rules, new diets, and a more precious and precarious way of living. Dianna had ended up in the Village doing heroin.

Gavin got her out of it. And she in turn got Gavin settled, although Gavin had been married twice before and the baby to come wasn't his first child. Never mind. This was new. They were looking for a larger apartment, and Gavin was working more than full time for his mother in what was by then called the Duveen Brothers Gallery. It was housed in a large limestone townhouse on East 79th Street right off the park.

His mother had married Uncle Eddie after the death of Lord Douglas. Now Eddie, in his

turn, was fragile, deaf, and in his eighties. Not unlike her first husband, when Gavin and Claire were children. The day-to-day gallery administration was up to Gavin; his mother was mostly in the country, at the house in Mt. Kisco which she and Eddie shared.

There was energy and purpose in Gavin's plans. Old Master trade is cutthroat, but he was inheriting from masters. He took the two of us on a tour of the building one day. When the gallery was finally, formally his, he would continue the old master business on the top floors, but the parlor floor, with its mahogany show easels and swags of dark drapery, would be focused on the new surrealism. I think he was the first to call Basil's work surrealism. And in the dark English basement, Gavin planned to sell books, fine rare editions, and small press poetry. The floor was a born literary haven, with fruitwood wainscoting, low ceilings and a slightly clandestine feel. Eventually, Gavin said, he'd add publishing to the mix.

There was a future after all. A Douglas art empire, in which Baz was promised a fiefdom. There was a way to live, a place where one might be safe from boredom and craziness, where one might hold high purposes while simultaneously profiting from intrigue and connections. One might not have to be ruined by the knowledge that corruption and duplicity are ubiquitous. Holden Caulfield -- at home at last.

Use corruption as knowledge and not sink in the swamp of it was Gavin's version. Use painless elevation in class to solve painful identity conflicts, was Dianna's version. She too would be home: with certified gentility and a bloody big bank account. Her diction was elegant to the point of parody. She sometimes sounded as if she'd learned English at a snooty school in Switzerland.

It was not our children who made the bond with Gavin. It was us. He was mercurial, full of references, mentally international. We were both cheerfully in love with him and he with us. We spent weekends the summer of 1966 going up to Connecticut with them. It was a ritual. Gavin had a dark green MG and a Saturday morning appointment at the Better Living Institute in New Haven. They'd swing by early and pick the four of us up out on Second Avenue. He and

Dianna sat in front. Barry, their dog, a black standard poodle with a dotting disposition, crammed himself over Dianna's feet and traveled with his head on her legs. Baz and I, knees to chins, fitted into the MG's half-size back seat. Mallory (aged three) and Hetty (two) were wedged into the storage hole right behind the back seat, along with all the beach bags and towels. We kept the breakable food and drink around our feet.

Not a helmet, not a safety belt among us. With the top down, our six heads were almost at the same level. Only Barry's was out of sight. Six heads in a little MG, like a circus act. I tied bandannas on the kids, tight as they could stand, to keep the road wind out of their ears. We were never once stopped by a cop or a toll-booth officer. We were fine.

And we were fine. Gavin had done everything, and rally racing was one of them. Gavin was an effortless speeder, never reckless, always in the moment. I never felt a shred of distress as we zipped up ugly I.S. 90, heads in the wind. Gavin cornered around the semis and slowed to an expert slow-roll through the toll booths. After his 50-minute hour in New Haven, we headed for a beach. Later, we'd eat suppers at roadside lobster pots, and then drive back into the hot, bright, dirty city, sunburned and windblown, very late. Two or three times, we stopped in Westchester County for an overnight with Gavin's mother.

Jeanne Douglas and Uncle Eddie lived one stop further north on the New York Central line than my parents had when I was ten. It was thirty stops higher on the social and electric scale. Their house, a rambling white frame farmhouse of corners, nooks, and many outbuildings, had a large swimming pool and an exquisite rose garden. The huge red-tile floored kitchen was deep in the middle of the house, and while Jeanne "had people," she liked the work of cooking and presentation and did almost everything herself. Tiny, wired, magically efficient.

Baz, who did not have to have her as his mother, adored her, and she, in turn, appraised us and our children like the skillful art dealer she was. She pronounced our children interesting, even formidable. She bought them chocolate cigarettes and showed them how to act like ladies when they smoked. Eddie kept to the garden. Most of the time while we were there Jeanne

zoomed about tending him, so the presence of children, of whom she approved but he did not, wouldn't upset him. Her relationship to Gavin was not benign.

That was how Gavin had grown up. Some old man and some devious high-level dealing always commanded his mother's focus while he and his sister were afterthoughts. He remembered his dad querulously demanding who let that little boy in the house and why didn't he go home. Meaning him. Even in good moods Gavin could occasionally project a perfect representation of invalid octogenarian full of whining self-pity. His bad moods, rarely seen that summer, could suck up all life energy nearby like a potboiler science-fiction alien.

In Mt. Kisco, depression seemed impossible. The cool tall rooms were filled with books to the ceiling. There were big leather sofas, beautiful old cabinets and sideboards, deep Persian rugs. There was a Bosch hanging in one of the living rooms; and a Stubbs in another. Not bad free digs. Another summer of poverty.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Mark Cunningham

[quantum]

The band is so authentic, it can be repackaged in many different ways. They said that wasn't my identity; it was only my "identity position." The woman in the hard hat pointed out over the strip mine and had a sensitive idea. The role of Antonin Artaud was played by Conrad Veidt for all of Artaud's life. I can never complete the connect-the-dot erotic drawing so the figures come out right, so I must be tantric. My big break came when my arm was cast as itself.

[quantum]

Several smashed plates later, we agreed that it should be “a hysterical person” since you can hear the *h* in *hysterical*. The two clocks showed exactly the same time, so he figured one had been set according to the other. “Cats can be stimulated to hiccup by sending an electrical impulse to a small patch of tissue in their brain stem.” I’ve discovered that once you get them in a headlock, most people will become empiricists. She point to the same tree flashing past every three seconds and told us it was just an animated backdrop of a cliff rolling past, and we said, if you think we’re going to fall for that. . . .

[quantum]

It could have been the voice of God, but then sound does funny things over water. When the director said the events were unspeakable, she realized she'd have to get with her dialogue coach right away. We became suspicious when we moved and the "untoward wind" kept blowing towards us. The advertising department fixed the image so that after the two faces in profile turn into a vase, the vase can't be turned back into the two profiles. His death scene was voted Most Ludicrous, and it turns out he really died, which makes it even more ludicrous.

[quantum]

Members of the just-contacted tribe found it impossible to believe they were now only two steps of separation from Paula Abdul. Standing next to the cross-sectioned redwood, we pointed to various rings and talked about the Bud Bowls we remembered. As the boulders came crashing down angrily around us, the physicist said, “This is no laughing matter,” which gave us all the giggles and thus turned a dour moment into another triumph for humanism. Buster Keaton and Paul Celan walk into a bar. Now the kid in the stall next to me is *tap dancing*.

Lee Matthew Goldberg

LAZY INSANITY

Zeke had always been an odd guy. He was an odd boy who grew into an odd teenager and was destined to become an even odder adult. He used to blame it on his pinky finger, or really, his missing one. When he was ten, his mother Diana asked him to cut up the celery for his father's salad. She gave him a knife big enough to see his reflection. As he studied himself and the abundance of freckles on his nose, his pinky rolled off the counter while the celery stalk remained intact.

So since that unfortunate day, he blamed any problems on that missing member. "It put me off balance," he'd say, pointing to his squash-shaped head. It only proved worthwhile for grossing out younger kids in the recess yard, but that got old soon. It did, however, destroy his lifelong dream of becoming an Air Force pilot.

"Air Force pilots have *all* their digits," his father said, shooting him in the heart one day over a dinner of beef stew.

"They don't have to," Zeke said, quiet enough so his parents had to read his lips to understand.

“Nine won’t cut it. Never will. The training is rigorous and you have to be able to grasp things with both hands. Not just left, not just right. Both!”

This immediately turned Zeke’s life upside down. He stared at the stub that remained from his one glorious pinky and realized that if he never made that salad for his father, a different and more pleasant story would be told.

-

His father Jack wore stupid polka dot bowties that squeezed his neck and made his tiny bald head look like an eraser. He liked reading *USA Today* and other newspapers that required third grade educations. He liked game shows, soap operas, calculators, and people with all ten fingers. He regarded Zeke as a mutant, and frown lines appeared whenever he spoke of the son with only nine digits. He used to be an Air Force Pilot himself, but after having Zeke, he became a CPA who punched numbers into calculators all day. When his company upgraded to computers, he found it too complex and worried he’d be replaced, so he freaked out and shot himself in the face. He only hit his ear. This happened a year after Zeke’s accident and was also the year that Zeke declared himself to be crazy.

Zeke decided this in a fluorescent-lighted hospital while waiting to hear about his father’s condition. His mother Diana was on her tenth cup of coffee. She had taken out a sweetener from the kangaroo pouch of her waitress uniform and added in the whole packet. She was crying because Jack might be paralyzed. Zeke thought that was pathetic. She was large enough to need two seats on an airplane and had freckles that covered most of her skin. She was proud of serving eggs every morning without ever calling in sick, her greatest and only accomplishment. She also read every female and travel magazine out there, imagining she was a better person who also lived in a better place. At this moment, she swore to devote all her energy to Jack and his recovery.

Zeke hated all the damn attention his father was receiving, so he took that fresh cup of coffee out of Diana's fat fingers and threw it in her face. She screamed as scalding coffee streamed down her throbbing cheeks. That was when Zeke discovered how to wrap people around his finger, and he loved that metaphor because of its irony. No one ever messed with crazy people for fear of setting them off.

-

Today Zeke was meeting his friend Gibson at a diner. They had gone to school together as kids, but now Gibson had started college and seemed to have less time available. Zeke had finished his twelfth cigarette, spun it through the air like a plane going down in flames, and crashed it into the ashtray amongst all the other casualties of dead cigarettes. He lit another one instantly. Gibson was not amused.

"What are you doing, man?" Gibson asked, with a puzzled look that often resembled shame.

"What are *you* doing, man?" Zeke replied, the cigarette flapping between his lips.

A waitress waddled over to their booth to refill their coffee. She was young and about forty-five pounds overweight.

"Just half for me, Mindy," Zeke said, flicking at the gold nametag prominently displayed on one of her large breasts. "This shit's not even good." He stared into her wide blue eyes until she became embarrassed and sauntered away. "I like her," he said to Gibson, who had already reached into his pocket to pay for lunch. "What are you doing?"

"Paying for lunch."

"We're not done with lunch, my friend. We've only just begun."

"I have class, Zeke."

“You have a disposition for authoritative control. A need to be told what to do at all times. It will be your downfall. Who’s to say you have class now? Your teacher? Who are they to regulate your time?”

“How are you taking advantage of all this extra time on your hands since we graduated?” Gibson asked, rolling his eyes and shaking his perfectly shaped head. Zeke hated him for not having an out-of-shaped head like his own lumpy one. His philosophy was that everyone who is anyone should have an out-of-shape head, or something noticeably wrong because it builds character.

“I’ll tell you what I’m up to, jackass. I was going to buy postcards from other countries and mail them to people I haven’t talked to in a while pretending that I visited those places.”

“Why Zeke?”

“Of course I have to do research on all the places so I don’t look like a fraud. I was thinking Moscow, Taipei, Stockholm, and maybe Tijuana.”

“What’s the point of this?”

“The point is that traveling to all of those places is gonna take a very long time while the outcome of sending these postcards would be exactly the same if I never set foot on a plane. I’m creating an illusion. I’m an illusionist, no?”

Gibson threw a twenty on the table and slid away without even responding to Zeke’s question. This pissed Zeke off greatly and caused him to have the most terrible vision. He imagined Gibson stepping out of the diner, lighting a cigarette and thinking he was so brilliant, when a Toyota Corolla, screeching from out of nowhere, would hit him head-on and drive away leaving him dead on the street. This would cause his perfectly shaped head to be full of bumps and scars. With that thought, Zeke found himself smiling, and when Mindy the waitress shuffled over to pick up the check, he’d pick her up, too.

-

Mindy sure was special. She liked ice cream and old quad rollerskates, not rollerblades. She loved watching the Olympics, but what he remembered best about her was that she squealed like a humpback whale in bed. That would come later.

Zeke picked her up without even trying. She was that desperate. Her shift had ended and the two of them managed to fit into her Geo Prism to drive to his house. The hard part would be getting past his parents, especially his mother.

Luckily his mother had left for her shift, and Jack was easy. After the accident, Zeke's father had become completely deaf, and Zeke never bothered to learn sign language so they rarely communicated. Jack lived off his pension and watched game shows all day on their closed-captioned television. He also always carried a pen and paper around his neck.

The Price Is Right was on when Zeke walked in with Mindy. His father scribbled on his notepad and then passed him a note. WILL YOU MAKE ME A BOLOGNA AND MAYONNAISE SANDWICH? Zeke shook his head. Another note was shoved his face. BUT THE SHOWCASE SHOWDOWN IS COMING UP AND I DON'T WANT TO MISS IT! Zeke shook his head again.

"You didn't support, MY AIR FORCE TRAINING, DAD," Zeke yelled, accentuating every word so his father understood. He then threw the notes to the floor and pulled Mindy into his bedroom.

She seemed nervous, but that turned him on even more. Let's face it, she wasn't a prize, and he was looking for anything to arouse him. She sat on his bed, twiddling her thumbs and exuded a smell that was close to an old tuna fish sandwich. But shouldn't that jarring imperfection be the something that made her wonderful? Her head

certainly had an odd shape to it, almost pumpkin-like, and her hair had the consistency of hay. He turned on some Guns N' Roses to put her in the mood. "Welcome to the Jungle."

"Did you have a good day?" Zeke asked, making room on his waterbed and facing her like an interviewer. David Fucking Letterman.

"Y-y-y-yes, I did," Mindy replied with a stutter and a lisp. A stutter *and* a lisp! Zeke had not noticed that before. It was one thing to have hair that looked like hay and a Halloween head, but coupled with a stutter and lisp was all too much.

"Are you having a good life?" he managed to ask between burps.

"What?"

"You heard me the first time, Mindy. I asked if you were having a good life?"

"Are-are-are you?"

"Who's David Letterman?" Zeke yelled, pointing at his head.

"I don't know," Mindy said, twiddling her thumbs, unable to look him in the eye.

"This is how it works. I ask a question, you give an answer. That's the magic of life. So, answer me!"

"Okay!" she cried. "My life is g-g-g-good."

"Well, I will never fly in the Air Force. I bet you didn't know that."

"N-n-no, I didn't."

"That is something very important to me. And if we are going to have a relationship, I think it's something that you should know. Also, I am missing a certain digit on my right hand. Not the ring finger, I can still get married. Not the middle finger, I can still say *fuck you*. Not my index, I can still point, and not my thumb, I can still

hitch hike. It is my pinky. A worthless, little blob on the end of my hand that no one ever thinks about and no one appreciates. Well, I appreciate it, and I would do anything to get it back. Then I could fly in the Air Force.”

“I-I-I’m sorry, Zeke. But who-who told you that you couldn’t fly?”

“My father.”

“Was-was he an Air Force pilot?”

“A long time ago.”

“Well, m-m-maybe policies have changed and he was mistaken?”

At that moment Mindy morphed into the most beautiful creature to walk on this Earth, a goddess plucked by Zeke, who saw past her pumpkinesque surface and discovered her inner aura of awesomeness. He would make love to her with Guns N’ Roses jamming in the background. And somewhere in the middle of “Paradise City,” Diana opened the door as he rode Mindy like a beached whale and her porpoise squeals bounced off the walls.

Skwaneweee! Skwaneweee! Skwaneweee!

-

After putting on their pants, the two lovebirds walked out to the living room where his parents sat facing one another.

“You should have knocked,” he said to his mother and kissed Mindy on the cheek. She blushed.

“Zeke,” Diana began with tears in her eyes. “Zeke, Gibson is dead.”

“He’s what?”

“Dead. This afternoon. He was hit by a speeding car and died.”

Zeke wanted to feel sad, but his face showed no emotion. Something inside of him was blocking the grief receptors in his mind. Mindy plopped her head in her hands with shrieks of “omigod,” and Diana, as she did whenever a traumatic situation occurred, placed her hand over her heart.

“What kind of car killed him?” Zeke asked, a strange emotion washing over him now: excitement, curiosity.

“What?” Diana asked, dropping her hand to the side.

“What kind of car was it? The brand? You get what I mean, mother?”

He was growing agitated. One might attribute his irrational behavior to confusion and grief, but this went beyond that. A trickle of a smile appeared on his cold face. He rose from the couch and thrust his finger at Diana. She drew back, vividly remembering the coffee incident from a decade ago.

“I’m asking you a logical question, mother. What kind of car killed Gibson?”

“A Toyota something,” she wailed, giving up.

That was all Zeke needed to hear. He crossed one arm over the other with a superior grin. He had anticipated this tragedy. He had willed it to happen. His power was too great to imagine. They should all bow down to his god-like stature.

“I can rule the world,” he said to the room. The room looked back at him, vacant. “Don’t think I cannot do anything I put my mind to. And I’m going to join the Air Force. Oh, yes.”

A Chief Master Sergeant laughed in Zeke’s face. He stood blocking the front door; Zeke hadn’t even been let inside. Zeke had purposefully tucked his right hand with the missing pinky deep into his pocket, but that didn’t matter. This Sergeant with dents in his face and a massive forehead, what did he know? The nerve!

“What do you find funny?” Zeke asked, as the stub where his pinky once lived got all hot and sweaty.

“I know you, son,” the Sergeant said, spewing an intense mist of bad breath Zeke’s way.

“Know me how?”

The Sergeant folded one tree trunk of an arm over the other and shook his head.

“Your picture, son, has been on the wall for the last ten years. We know who you are. Your dad explained everything.”

“Explained what exactly?”

“Lemme see the right hand.”

His right hand quivered from out of his pocket and solemnly rose in the air. A right hand with only four digits.

“You need five,” the Sergeant said.

Zeke’s lips trembled, but he turned away before the Sergeant saw his tears. He blamed his father for destroying his dreams. He blamed his mother because he’d have all his fingers if not for her. He blamed Mindy for giving him hope, and he blamed Gibson for making him feel invincible. But Zeke wasn’t anything. He was just going crazy.

-

He entered his house, an alien feeling his way around, out for blood, lost in his own misguided thoughts. He thought to grab the knife that had put him into this position, but was too lazy to find it. He couldn’t even muster the energy needed to fully commit to his insanity.

When he reached the living room, his family and Mindy waited for him, their eyes darting back and forth.

Mindy spoke first.

“H-h-hi, Zeke,” she said with a goofy wave. The others followed in sync, first his mother, then his father.

His father scribbled, DON’T BE MAD on the notepad hanging from his neck.

“I’ve lost it,” Zeke said, pointing to his head and collapsing on the sofa across from them all. Diana placed her massive hand over her heart.

I DON’T BELIEVE THAT, SON, his father wrote, and they all nodded in unison.

“What can I look forward to?”

“M-m-maybe getting better?” Mindy said, looking around the room for approval. Diana reached in the kangaroo pouch of her waitress uniform and passed him a brochure.

“Maybe you just need some time off,” she said. “You’ve gone through a lot today with Gibson and all.”

“Time off from what?”

“Life?”

They all nodded in unison.

“How does one realize they’re crazy?” he asked them. “Is it instantaneous, or does it happen in stages?”

“Open the brochure, baby, I think this is a long time coming.”

He opened the brochure. Pictures of various patients smiled back at him without a care in the world. They had ping-pong tables! Some of them even lounged in beanbag chairs! Friday night was Taco night! A tear slid down his cheek and rested between his lips.

“I’ve felt it happening to me over the years,” Zeke said. The lights around him dimmed and he stood in the darkness of his subconscious. His voice echoed out into the nothingness.

“I used to have this dream. I was in a race with Gibson and others. A bunch of sane and insane people all racing together. Of course it had to be three-legged, and of course the sane were faster, leaving the insane to be dragged along like rag dolls. My sane friend Gibson and I would be the last to cross the finish line, the losers in a marathon that finish after everyone has gone home. It wasn't Gibson's fault of course; I've realized now that it was impossible for me to keep up.”

Zeke blinked and was back in his living room, all eyes upon him. He thought of the day of the coffee incident. He had felt the insanity enter his soul like a giant wave rushing over him. After the wave passed, his brain never worked the same again. He'd lose focus, words escaped from his mouth that he didn't mean to say, and chaotic thoughts began to appear that he never imagined thinking. Some people have a calling – witness God, or whatever, this was his calling, and he'd have to embrace it.

Do others in the same boat ever get that far? Maybe they never cross that finish line, but not Zeke, he will eventually. At some point in his life, he'll see that ribbon appear along the horizon. He'll make it his goal to keep on running until he breaks through, even if he trips and is dragged along the entire way towards salvation.

So he closed the brochure, let out an emphatic belch and tucked his hands under his armpits as if the straight jacket had already been applied.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Kyle Vaughn

Abscissus

This is the body
we must inhabit, starved from desires,
spirited to dementia,
the brain a folded garment
thrown in corners
with ungraphable angles.

These are the rooms where walls
and ceilings touch, unmixed, simple.
This school's math teacher is going to die today;
the bank's vice president will consume his own afternoon;
the attendant in the parking garage naps at the bottom of his kiosk.
Today makes

death that more imminent. Our names are cloud
above ice, ineffable, torn away gently
over years.

Turned, bent—my heart

No eyes, no eyes
but these lamed by fire.
I was born human, no heart
but this one blazing through crowds
with a teenaged groin,
hungry, coughing at the memory
of tobacco, known at the edge of
town—junkpile with carparts; discarded
stoves fringed by grass; rickety
light from aluminum;
and dogs, their boiled voices barking
at street music. I don't want

to be good, but creature,
haunted silver thing
clutching the mountain—
roots and clods and troughs of dark air.

Poem on a styrofoam cup

A wordless ink-blot
wanders in my notebook,
spindle for nothing
because all I saw on the way
to work today were brake lights,
donut shops, and a purple
gorilla that sells Oldsmobiles. I wanted

a vision, something like the burning
sacred heart wrapped in thorns,
winging from my centre. When my ribs

yawned open, I birthed nothing
more than newspapers and packing peanuts.
It was

the office's fault, of course. They didn't
just want me to work, they
wanted me to believe.
So I exacted my revenge
in pilfered office supplies
and secret notes slipped under
the doors of my coworkers:
strange poems with question-marks
for titles and terrifyingly
ambiguous endings.

Downtown, under some malfunctioning streetlamps

Wash me in rainwater
blackened by the fire escape.
Let this oil
slick the alley, its trail
moon-bend the night—I want
to see in this dark.

Let me into this broken
parking lot guarded
by wire. I won't ignore
it just because the sign says 'no.'
I want to rush up to
certain strangers and
study their irises,
how they are both bright and black.

Erase me with heaven: dim,
abandoned buildings
crowned by midnight.
We are not faceless,
but gathered closely in.

Honestly

Inside of me is this little bird
who rides a bicycle,
and when I see you,
my brain sends him a message
to pedal faster,
because then we might just
catch up
enough to touch your face.

Kristie Kachler

A List On How They Culture

thank you, welcome to this typing where unfortunately most words besides *you* have a referent. We can't set bait kits abloom along a ridge, or in the foothills grow small purple chisels. We can't tend tea for potions. I'm just parked at Comet Coffee, though They discourage this endurance by providing no bathroom or electrical outlets. Comet Coffee NOW. To academics and undergraduates, her Stanley thermos is a marvel and the skirt paired with tall boots no tights invites some grief-giving then one light snakes an odd angle from the ceiling, creaky tilt, and there's fixing to do. Since *you* are my construction, since *we're* in love, please know that some people – people who aren't from around here and who prefer to appear about to do something – will say in defense of themselves *I'm fixin' to* or *But I was fixin' to!* Anyway, nothing is pressing. I'm fixing to watch that thirsty squirrel huff a line of snow while you're fixing to be another big effing deal.

Puffy coats, belted coats, hooded coats, down coats, light-weight, mid-length, ankle-length, belted puffy coats, no hood, trench coats, pea coats, blazers, trust coat, cape coat, cargo, rain coat, wool coat, goat coat, coffee coat, houndstooth, heavy sweater, wrap your sleeve around.

So this is how the outerwear awaits us. So this is how the maker has no say in what she makes. Knit goods. Truffles. Million-dollar app distraction, and one note looping in a very contemporary way. Our stage remains improvised and inevitable, a product of ample previous products, and strangely celadon. Our room like schoolrooms from the seventies contains what they and they have brought to bear – fetching blue streaks in her hair, and tight jeans, thick volumes impeded by screen time. All the constant collaborators flesh themselves out: He's an absolute idiot awaiting a wife and a house. His wife blogs in the toilet because this is her purpose, a particular calling in the now. This is our very important now. Comet Coffee now. Our own now is owned now, right – and I point this out to *you* since *you* are another construction. That to Duchamp the alley out back is not a current option. Nor will we house feral cats in the stockroom.

To Your Unpersonality:

So long as blood courses, the chicken with a snapped neck will glance skyward, and I look up for that reason – to have what I always had continuing. Oh, the atmosphere again. I'm just writing to tell you that I love this apparent abundance: steam and parking cone on patio, neighbor dangling bikes from ceiling, dendritic input to ganglion (gooseflesh) while all the big important people hop to big important things, etc. Today these people play loud, looping music and cruise some planes low. I'd like to celebrate the coincidence of being *in this*, right now, with, coincidentally, you + the coincidence of text messaging: hi last week the trees had leaves then they didn't now there is snow. Now the she called me hushes. Even through the revelatory ulcer I oppose (so far, for such fear) this subjective consciousness; wherever she is she can't see out.

The fearful insist on coincidence. How else to let life continually happen to us? Better than saying God or fate divined, I say "I skipped coffee to avoid the barista this morning then left the 'office' early remembering I had to walk the half-hour home to move my car from one side of the street to the other or risk another ticket, and there was the barista passing my car as he took a little walk to celebrate getting off early, so we went for a run where accidentally I made an accidentally antagonistic face while passing the slower man to whom I had recently applied for one job then the barista said he was moving to New York City and would teach me to replace him, so something worked out." I make a tip myth. Take what you're given. Wherever I am I can't see out, but she watches all the people.

Today these people would have us to know: RODGERS CHEVROLET ROCKS. This is not information that *I* need, but I see how the message could be received and applied by a you who would like a brand-name rock, or maybe a you who would like a wedding ring the size of an SUV. Let my unpersonality speak to your personality: Who are we to judge? Yet I do. All down the sidewalk, I watched the way one man cared about this football game, and then, as well, the way he cared about a woman's ass (and, oh, ass) (and still ass). Three takes on three takes. Stories of India woven into opinion on organic fruit sicken. Flowing garments and wide smiles. *In my experience* their care stands in for my care attached so pervasively that I can't find it. Then the she wants to shake us: Each home I've shared with a man. Each tree I've leaned against, spinning. Each poem. Each spring.

Or I can see you, you know. I can see "you," while you figure "me" out. For example, you have many positive opinions about yourself, and I admire you for it, but you still have bad breath. We know that I am not you, and that one you isn't another, but when you and you or we brush arms it feels designed. So, some of us hate to be looked at. In the Kroger's, I say, "One terrifying thing is when an acquaintance reveals her impressions of my traits." We might should lock ourselves up, or, anyway, let our unpersonalities un-, and play CALVARY GOLF FOR MILES AND MILES.

I mean that I make in a yellow coat one of what you, mohawked, are one of. Please ask whatever is in there. Out there. Unmake me. Tell me what you recover.

Movie Sex, or Power Broadcast In An Empty Room

oh how he does sex her and oh she does want it. he lifts her and swings her
around. her perfected flushing. his benevolence. he lifts while she holds the doorframe they fall
to the floor. her slow fall, his guidance. her leap his hold her laugh – so this is what sex is. a lawn
perfect and without irony. how romantic the country. how mortgaged the bird sings:

clown-bereft, the one
balloon left opens its mouth
red & red & swells
to fill the room. bigger
than any balloon should be,
it rises –
an exhaling
belly – and follows
the contours of counters, chairs, table
(these round edges are useless –
too bad!) tv, and on it:

oh, he does fix the big things, how perfect his guidance. to mortgage, the bird sings. how
romantic, our round righteous anger. the little me's quaking message. obfuscation spruces a maybe, but
sex fails. so this is our country. how he does make it bigger, how perfect:

it smothers the table
swells still unto
champagne & paper
paper hats tokens
& presents
the man & the woman this
window this particular
given –
each aperture
darkens by morning

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

kate robinson

LANGUAGE LIFTED

The essence of perception for us is in naming:
eye of the pharaoh,
egg in a basket,
toad in the hole,
birdie's little nest.

Where you have no legs, perhaps a game of ladders:
footfalls with a rocky searching path.
This disjointed tick tick makes me tired,
and it asks: occurring or stopping?
I am interested in staying out of the way of some things.

Part of the dream is that you accept your waking life as a part of the dream:
it takes awhile before cats become men, anyway,
in a mind ajar,
seemingly unspoiled,
now, everybody cluster.

Phosphorescence: light left after motion.
Light is a reflection of light;
the moon is borrowed light,
one would never mistake it for sunlight.
That's a bit of being, what it has in common with all the rest.

Dissolution of the absolute power of understanding
holding together and not astonishing.
The passage of time eliminates certainty,
and certainty is not our only goal.
The condition of being perfect [in language] is that it cannot be
restated in other words.

Notion: the acorn of the oak.
Instead of the function it's monotony.
Instead of language it's a suggestion of structure:
the kind of intelligence that makes a cherrystone a cherry tree.
What are we responding to other than people?

No longer existence,
no recollection,
no precision,
the village explainer said,
"Some trees might not be trees, they might be grasses."

Words are letters gathered together to signify meanings;
words are pockets of meanings;
words are piles of meanings;
words are memories of meanings;
a book is just an abstract temple.

The working through creates the "I."
I am a condition
of literary correctness,
absence impending,
and gentle radiance.

LIST

A glued spine
the process
of chance operations.
Unfulfilled promise
I am done waiting
signatures separating
keep an active voice.
Speaking through it
generate it,
produce enactment
nuts and bolts.
There are lots of ways
to take a nap.
What their
distant reinterpretation,
uterine removal,
minimal vocabulary,
poetry of language:
clearly stupid.
Apparent stupidity
suggested responsibility:
adequately translating thoughts.
This idea of clumsiness
at that time,
a very different idea
it just
pulls on the language
and maybe I'm attracted.
You mentioned in passing
"pseudo archaic."
You're writing,
why did you pick up that book?
Asking and asking
Russians and older Russians,
an impossible task.
Their idea of harmony
what is the letter?
Again married,
rejection of interpretation
go and stop progress.

SLOW SURFACE

leave alone,
the numbers are counted
and so it goes,
even in the river
in honor of the shape shifter's prayer.

terms like "writer"
create frames and
work culturally
to produce the feminine language,
possibly unique,
with a relationship to history.

disparate shape,
and more definitively
interesting, right?
but the foundational problems might
breathe a new life.

the origin is variance.
a question mark
that happens because it's not
within the function
of an historical tract.

there is no objective telling.
she is trying, very purposefully,
in the abyss,
but nothing in the mind is ever lost

they show up,
motherless and generated
by rides, finally enlightened,
only to pull a slow surface
nourishing.

she is trying to destroy a tradition
without becoming destructive,
a grace in decay,
there is something there.

Josepha Gutelius

Lovers

It was there, high up in the smog-swept, Los Angeles skyscraper -- under the intense oval light of her instrument, in a silent world of particles and glass -- that the Microscopist was “destined to breathe her last” (line 5, page 9 of her husband’s diary). Down below in the parking lot, a swarm of the idly curious watched as cops and medics leaped into action, speedily spreading out a billowing safety net in front of the building, eyes anxiously looking to the roof, where an anonymous suicide caller had threatened to leap. None of this hubbub moved the husband. He had a singular plan. His diary described his wife, the Microscopist, as a tiny, shriveled Ancient who had spent years occupied with a mysterious obsession he had grown to loathe. He was determined to storm it, storm the Microscopist’s glassy hermitage and fire upon, shatter, and thoroughly trash whatever he laid eyes on.

On the Microscopist’s slide, meanwhile, swirled a fantastical landscape that was invisible to the naked eye, less in size than a grain of salt.

(As the Microscopist has explained in her monograph titled “Hidden Beauty,” a small needle or ivory toothpick or pig bristle was used to strip off each individual butterfly scale.)

An invisible art blazing to life under her microscope! The Microscopist whistled through her teeth as she peered down at the new slide that had come in the mail that morning: a volcano spewing ash and boulders and a brilliantly hued angel with a fiery cape billowing like a crimson cloud. All this, painstakingly mounted on the glass slide, circa mid-1800s.

How were these microscopic gems preserved for so long? No one knows. Despite decades of research, art historians and amateur aficionados and even a wizened expert like the Microscopist all concurred in hopeless ignorance. How were they preserved? -- from Victorian drawing rooms to dark vaults kept at evenly cooled temperatures, through the wars, the burglaries, the passing through less-than-appreciative-hands? The mounters remained mysteriously anonymous, though highly paid. One or two slipped his or her initial into the design – but what does an initial like ED tell us about the maker?

Deep in contemplation of the slide, the Microscopist failed to notice that the silverish whirl-loops of her instrument’s lens had swallowed up her face.

“Are you asleep?”

The Microscopist glanced up to see the concerned face of her assistant. This assistant agreed with the husband that those teeny pictures on slides were as thrilling as, say, the first Hollywood talkies. The assistant’s concerned face betrayed a cloying irony.

The Microscopist let out a groan of protest. She was not, she wanted to say, she was not an old fuddy-dud to be laughed at.

But it was no use. How to explain the raptures of a minuscule life of heartbreaking beauty? On a dare, the Microscopist invented something she thought might amuse the girl:

“I dreamed I was skiing in the Louvre,” the Microscopist told her. “Through room after room. And guess what?”

“I give up,” her assistant drawled.

“There wasn’t any snow!”

Her assistant nodded to this, unsmiling. The Microscopist gave an impatient grunt and waved her away. They sat at glass desks separated by a glass partition with glass bookshelves lined with photographs of the Microscopist’s husband and their children and grandchildren in glass frames. Prim and lifeless, as though they were dressed by a mortician. Their smiles had an eerie incongruity.

“What a fragile transparency I live in!” the Microscopist murmured to her wondering self, imposed upon this world of glass. Her voice, sounding hollow and distant in her ears, disappeared inside the octagon crater of her glass ashtray – in her mind she heard “shhhtray” – and she laughed aloud: “Shhhtray!”

A detached hand violently extinguished the cigarette into the crater: a landscape brushed with ash, the color of her husband’s face in the photographs. “You know you shouldn’t smoke in here,” her assistant testily emptied the ashtray into a clear plastic

zip-lock.

“Oh no, no indeed,” murmured the Microscopist. “I don’t know where the cigarette came from.”

Some evil had put it in her hand, she wanted to add. Everything a premonition of disaster this morning, she remarked to herself.

“Did you say something?” her assistant was bent over her, her face betraying that cloying solicitude, which reminded the Microscopist of her husband.

With a shudder, she recalled finding her husband looking through the lens at one of her slides yesterday...

Microscopist: “What are you looking for?”

Husband: “If anything of mine is there.”

“Anything of mine!” It had struck her as a peculiarly beautiful answer!

But moments later, she had heard him in the bathroom, brushing his teeth. Listening to the sound, she had cried to herself in despair: “What is he trying to wash out of his mouth?” This morning she had a sudden vision of Death stealthily climbing the steel height of the skyscraper. Death looked a lot like her husband, but very small, about the size of a grain of salt.

Higher and higher, her husband was indeed stealthily climbing. He watched as each consecutive number lit up. He noted with approval the number thirteen had been dropped. He turned and grinned directly into the eye of the camera that panned him overhead. His right hand was hidden under his left armpit, where his shoulder holster and

gun were hidden. (Line 12, page 11 in his diary: “My eyes and smile don’t blend. My eyes are cold and I appear to be looking somewhere else even when I’m generating a warm smile in your direction.”) The elevator opened to a carpeted hall that hushed the sound of stalking feet.

The Microscopist switched off her microscope and returned the slides to their velvet cases. As usual, whenever she put away her slides, she had the awful premonition that some enormously high-powered fan was about to press her against the ceiling as casually as if she were a particle of dust. Dust, in her line of work, was absolutely catastrophic. As catastrophic as her husband, who entered behind her, pulled out his gun, and took a wild shot aimed approximately at the full-length glass partition.

Glass burst from the center where the bullet was wedged and split in rippled rays, but barely put a dent in a photograph of the Microscopist’s dear, invincible husband.

Hearing the crash, the Microscopist’s heart took a leap: she experienced the perverse sense of relief that her premonitions were not imaginary.

But did the shot in the glass mean the saturation point was reached (at eternity’s end, all parallel lines finally meeting, and the illustrious mounter ED is discovered, at eternity’s end, to be none other than Edgar Degas!)?

Staggering forward, she gripped her husband’s arms and the two of them scuffed along to the window, the husband all spit-and-polish as usual, the Microscopist all shadow and lace. Particles swam before her eyes, infinitesimal particles of subparticles; matter that was hardly material at all. Her husband closed his eyes, his weightless body

swaying in the wind, taking wing, and neither husband nor wife wanted to land.

But together they plunged into the soft folds of the safety net in the sweaty hands of the startled medics. He heard her mumbling: “Crowd scenes: packed energy globules,” and he wondered, Did this explain anything?

It was a day of lethal smog, remember. Hearts labored, heads were dizzy and nerves frayed – the kind of day when disaster and farce could easily become confused.

The Microscopist heard among the crowd of stunned onlookers a voice somewhere between a whistle and a sigh:

“Which one is mine?”

“My guardian angel! ” the Microscopist cried aloud. She recognized the angel from her slide. I get it, I understand everything, her husband whispered to her in a broken voice, half-sobbing, as he clutched her hand, pulling her out of the safety net, as if he were pulling out a shadow of himself, yes, he understood, and he felt terrible for ever mocking the Microscopist’s invisible life as he buoyed her body against his: ... “in reality, we weigh less than a butterfly scale, an eyelash, or a single tear,” she heard him whisper. He felt her pat him on the arm, indicating all was fine, nothing was broken, he can let her go now. But he gripped her tiny waist and held tight, reliving the sheer euphoria of their free-fall, and he didn’t want to let her go, not now, not ever.

Joseph Cooper

from The Lonely Road Home

VIII.

There are so many things I shouldn't tell you,
so many memories tied in knots
and hurled behind closed eyes,
that father was cuffed drunk
accused of regret,
that mother cupped her crotch
running barefoot across adulterated vows,
that you and I are finally
listening to the voices
in our heads, the ones
that remind us
it's never too late to be
ambiguous and that just because

you know your lines,

doesn't mean

you cannot improvise.

There are so many things I want to know.

It's happening all over again.

I want to touch you.

We're not the same at all

and I need to ask you

if this can ever be,

if we'll ever have more than

sugar grains on our lips

licked away in haste.

I need to know

if this can ever be,

if we'll ever again

hold each other in bed

under restrained

cantations of familiar promises.

I want to know we're not

confusing the first

line with the last,

that you want
a better story
covering us
than a fragile net alone
underneath the water's edge.
I don't have to tell you
that it doesn't always
come down
to the road ahead,
that we are played out,
over and over, crossed out,
whispered in sleep, forbidden
and overused, never mentioned,
addressed in absence, howled at
full moons, growling at sleight of hand,
harrowing and
absolute.
It's happening all over again.
I want to touch you.
I want to touch you again.

IX.

There is a part in this movie where

I like you and want to

be like you.

There is a part in this movie

where the landscape is

full of snow and

the water is

still and bright

and I'm too embarrassed to

tell you I've lost my way.

But I am the road and you,

you are the moon,

and the plotted line is dislocated

by our attraction,

by the eerie flashbacks

sustained from a bite

on your neck.

You tell me it's time to sleep

and that the illuminated

cities inside of me

have been set silent.

You tell me there should be a place

where the sound of breathing

goes verse chorus verse

and we just listen.

I'm saying your name,

waving my arms in the sky,

wondering if your voice

is an airplane

overhead,

an echo at the bottom of a stairwell,

a framed photograph facing

the corner afraid

of another misused

romantic sentiment.

There are no coincidences in this universe,

or so I've been told,

that you've been waiting inside

for me the entire time

wishing that every

time we kissed

we would echo

the beginning.

I'm sure you remember.

You wanted to know about my dreams

and I told you

about my younger self

eating me alive,

assisted by my mother.

We talked about genitals, alcoholism,

kindness, and schizophrenia

and you never took me home.

I'm sure you remember

kissing me

by your right fender

and making promises.

I am the moon and you,

you are the lonely road

home, pulling my

body selfishly

away from

the crash.

Jeanne Shannon

At the Horizon Line

world suffused with mystery and light

shimmer breaks through
the scrim of what seems to be

we tremble
on the cusp of the seen and unseen

shapes change and vanish, reappear:
waves in a white sea

the past with its shadows
its carnival dreams

what is certain?

what is only
the ghost-smoke
of our heart's longing?

Evening

(After reading Borges on a morning in late summer)

In the distant seasons of his childhood, the days and nights were full of splendors. They shine now in his memory like flowering gardens.

Time moved more slowly then. Winters were endless. But after all, the Equinox came, under a wayfaring moon. The earth began to smell of spring, of willows with their first faint yellow-green. Frogs stirred and sang.

Remembering now, he thinks his life resembles a fugue and falling away, like fading notes from a guitar, strumming endlessly.

It is the time of evening when the earth seems on the verge of saying something in a language he cannot understand. Untranslatable music.

He has tried to imagine a world without memory, without time. A language without nouns. Full of adjectives that cannot be declined.

As the years pass, the burden of memory grows. Who could bear to remember it *all*?

Once he had hoped that the mystery of time might be revealed. Unanimous days that tangle and untangle. Will he find again the squandered hours?

His life, how fragile and how wondrous.

A river radiant with golden fish. A cane field in the early dusk. Smoke rings around the moon, foretelling rain.

In his dreams, blue tigers pacing on a long veranda. The gardens of hundred-gated Thebes.

At the end of time, he dares to think, all things will return to where they were. Burned books will be restored. The woman who loved him will come back.

At 5 o'clock on no particular afternoon.

In the Studio

Artist at the Computer

swirling lines and geometries paisley designs never-before-published images of Marilyn Monroe floral vector motifs stylized women against repeatable backgrounds *skew, shear, twist, and scale: vector images remain crisp and clear* look out the window and see Greek yarrow and moonbeam coreopsis remember too the red flowers of the chocolate vine when it rains watch wide agave leaves funnel rainwater to the roots

Artist at the Easel

abstract relationships of light and dark color, value and edge where reeds meet the water taller reeds on the left side accentuate the feeling of distance but what is the light's prevailing temperature take care that edges are not overly clarified additions of dusty violet-gray to thread sections together white and yellow wildflowers where the eye could linger final notes of texture

Shimmer

I saw a woman standing in the air
What will you do if
above St. Cuthbert Street
you don't have any cloudberryes?

and morning was in the light

and sorrow-weed
and hanging gardens

O, come with me to Sumer, Akkad
What will you do if
you fall asleep
We will recite the calculus of stars
and find yourself in Babylon?

It is a sound like purple smoke

Jared Demick

Headlines for the Beheaded

NATION'S APOCALYPTICAL SQUALL-LORE CONTINUES!

Mushroom Clouds Still Horizon-Hang

CORPSES MAKE PRETTY ROWS IN EYEWRAK

Pubelick Men Spin Fascistnating Words to Keep Us Victimid and Stimutilating

“ECOGNOMICS A BRAIN-BAFFLING PUZZLE-GOD”

Charts and Percents Trace Divine's Upthrusted Middle Finger as Direct Deposit Makes Money Sublime

HEALTH INSURANCID CORRODES

Ruined Flesh-Sites All Over

All those problems dished out in tidy phrases. Wasn't it all so neatly packaged? Fun-sized suffer-spectacles, the kind thrown around by the media, you know, the daily scourge-gorge that gouges our eyes and ears until we do the brain-watusi. Sometimes, I'm driving my four-wheeled coffin, listening to NPR, sponging up two-minute dossiers on whole continents, thinking, "Wow, now I know how democracy has detrimentally affected the Russian natural gas industry..." Then I go home and brain-wrestle with my dad because he heard a similar story, but on another station...

Traneing Our Ears

Lost night,
John Coltrane's Meditations
moated round me
&
"The Father and Son and Holy Ghost"
stampaled
my ears.

The song erupted open
into
a muezzin's call
bullhorning
throo
a Cairo traffic jam

&
Trane strang-
ling
the notes
escaping from his horn,
each tearing to tell
hole histories
but peetering only a peep,
a plethorrora
of othering places
vomited out,
none a
solid self-house.

&
Pharaoh Sanders
screeching back
at Murderer-Trane,
a dentist drill shriller

crowbarring open
the clamped jaws
of shat-turd worlds,
a torture-victim screech
insinuating & cindering
shadows
in
sulfurous light.

&
Trane
pleading w/ Sanders,
“Keep it cool,
chill out motherfucker!”
& Sanders testidefying Trane,
seizing w/ the
bleatingbleeding
blackbox
antiamnesia machine
that’ll
never
stop
speaking
even if words
are brain-torn
by
haunt-hued hate.

Minguses

for Steve Mollmann, who gave me the title

Will those with ears,
listen to
Charles Mingus
bass-rumbler
band-dictator
or, in his own bitter-bitten words,
half-yellow shit-coloured nigger!

Ears, sonar
the Mingust,
feel his vamping thrum-thrust,
it ain't crustcaked with rust,
it struts
to be left alone
to coax the lowdown shiver moan,
to wring the notes of empty nights
when you room with shadows
that've forgotten light's
radiant sensations,
the glimmer-glare of half-slurped drinks,
the skeleton-stare of those barely there,
& empty pockets
lined only with lint.

Ears, funeralify
for the Minghost,
those songs still bring the brainbingbong,
"Fables of Faubus" has that
fabuloose swing,
that vaudeville vamp,
it's a venom kiss smile song,
a napalm-bomb-wrapped-with-a-pretty-lil'-bow gift

to Nazi Not-seeing US of A.
The horns sillystrut round
the listenerrs with
mock-innocent smiles,
waiting to trip them up,
make them flap & fly
'til their faces sidewalk-grind
just like that Jim Crow Arkan-sawbladed
police-protocol.

Ears, question
the Minguess,
the composer composting,
the bass banging out the proclamation,
“Where will I go from here?
Anywhere but here!”
& the journey’s always a gas,
a funky squiggle-rain,
the band caravaning
from note to note,
waiting for the song
to shape,
the moments to melt
'til they’re still

with a

motionful
tranquiverity.

Ears,
you “Better Get Hit in Yo Soul”
&
those without ears,
well,
they’ll learn the
burn of this
atmostfear.

World-Whittlers

for Paul Celan & Emily Dickinson

Two poets
whittled worlds
into
velvet bullets.

One brain-blasting shot
spills a bell-clang of light.

Floating in the light's current
are leather-jacketed,
alcoholic angels
wreathed in syphlitic sores,
the scars written by their love.

They beg us to eat their eyes,
to taste the horrors they've seen.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

James Valvis

Poem Composed Entirely with Last Lines in W. S. Merwin Poems

rich with late daylight
the bird lies still while the light goes on flying
while I go on seeing that batch of sunlight
and the light is old again

but then it was night and everything was known
in the pace of nightfall
coasting with the lights off
there is not a sound in the whole night

that was like a mote in a sunbeam
and pick the bright berries made of that summer
we listened for picks ticking in the dark
in the dark in empty houses

and then where did she go
lost in plain sight
believing what I do not see
in the dark without us

from what we cannot hold the stars are made
leading me carefully up the blind stairs
thinking to walk in the dark together
even though the whole world is burning

Poem Composed Entirely with Last Lines in Amanda J. Bradley Poems

Who knows what happens

when we die

lifeless,
deliberate,

by a forked tongue?

If you must
whisper aloud,

whisper aloud
a thorn.

I find that comforting,
so I have to buck you.

Do cages really rattle
here beneath the surface,

beneath your feet?

Poem Composed Entirely with Last Lines in Alice Derry Poems

Into the unreachable world,
invisible as any domestic life.
Oh hand-in-hand

all the way. But you, my swift one, can
we talk
that way?

Bodies in the dark
and I had you in my arms.
Talk readies us for silence

shining out on the water--
but no, not like hands
against my closed eyes.

I'm lured again into praising death.
On the other side,
one still life after another

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

James Schiller

three things happen when you fill a building with razorblades

but we'll never know

what they are because no one

will go inside there

when it comes to being human

my head is a crib where the brain sleeps
with an animal mobile overhead

i carry my little eternity
of intestines everywhere

my heart like a hospital
with all its rooms

if you ever wake up you should think
momentum enough to stomp through this

if you ever wake up you should think
raped by happiness again

did you ever think the product of every image
is your eyes chugging light

and maybe your eyes have a drinking problem
and are behaving very irresponsibly

what if all life is a lethal poison
we're supposed to adapt to

and that's why it hurts
and that's why the dead are such failures

love poem #29

i will cover you like dirt on a coffin
and steal the last grains of your heat because i am a jealous dirt

you can be dirt too

we can decompose into each other while the rest of the world coagulates
preoccupied with some unobtainable spirituality

there is only one path to righteousness

where there is a friction for us i will create a purity
i will cull your lands of the unfaithful

yea, i will suffer no rival

i heard if you get hit by lightning you wake up dazed
and puke out all your burnt parts just before you die

that's how it will be when you are gone

hey, don't leave me

i will build a fence in the night
you will go out in the morning and say shit
i can't go anywhere now
but i am already cooking breakfast
and writing poems and telling you how you are the best
cellist i have ever known

you don't even know how to play the cello
but i know it's like your secret fantasy and i support your dreams

you cannot run from my suit

ok you can run
but eventually you'll stop for a coke or something
and then i will get closer

chasing your scent through the carbonated wake

directing you toward new refreshment

past the burnt realms
past the boring heroes
next to the uncontrollable monster
that just wants another uncontrollable monster to live with

i found you one day

you are the best thing i have ever found

you backwards my chapters
you make my secret parts go cursive
you clobber me with the heat of a thousand hour-long showers
and help me achieve a moistness
hitherto undreamt by man

enter the moistness of my domicile
and clean me with brutality

i will get rinsed i will get erased
i will be put in a drier without other clothes
i will tumble forever like a retarded kitten
i will never get dry

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Spring 2011

James Peter Walker

Distance

Out of reach, I saw the train begin to move
Gently down the station, tearing me from you
I tried to keep up with it while it was slow
And running nowhere, desperate, I chased your window.
By the platforms end your face was out of view.

And that was it. Not knowing what I should do
I waited a bit, little else to pursue.
When alone, life can seem a meaningless throw
Of static dice, when what you want, you know
To be out of reach

Like a broken compass hope has little use
Its same sad circles each departure will renew.
Instead choose distance, nothingness that shows
Only what is absent, unforgotten and known
If out of reach.

The Laing Art Gallery

Once they're outside - and I'm sure that they've gone;
I languidly traverse the vacant room.
An empty gallery, all wood and stone
Dusty, odd smelling; like a grave exhumed.
The paintings, yellowy and nicotine-
Seem to frown, oldish faces, looking on
As I clap heels together, rhythmic, tense
Idly passing canvas, landscapes; unseen
Pausing to lean, against the sign: 'Silence'

'Now then Charlie' I call out with a smile,
Slapping the back of some marbled toads head
laughing at this junk, half hidden, filed-
left in a backroom, not canvas but threads
"You're facing the wrong way mate, exits there"
I laugh again, sigh, then pausing awhile. I
Look a bit closer, at some of this stuff
With an unstated challenge in my stare
And caress the plaque, reading that this 'bust -

Is Thomas Berwick: Eighteen Twenty Eight.'
A stern looking man, stone eyed, alone
In a dark back room, with a dust covered plate
I pull up a chair giving a plastic groan
"Bust? Aye, well I'm broke too - that's why I'm in here"
I say to myself, now somehow sedate.
In spite of myself, come cold thoughts of peace,
"To be forgotten? Or to disappear?"
Leaving behind a pebble; gallery leased.

Ozymandius himself I think must -
Have known what little there is when you die;
Memories and monuments will fade or will rust.
But what if Tom you were just another guy?
Am I sorry, that this is what's left of you?
Well at least you got flowers with your dust
And the odd visitor to where you lie,
Still I feel so guilty, living life and youth

Unhooking the velvet divide I reach -
Forward to polish the brass of his name.
Awkwardly intimate, no life, or speech;
No love beyond an impulse brought by shame.
Frittering my time since the pub was closed
I came here idly, past framed sea and beach
Forgetting in some ways this is a tomb
Turning I walk, something awkward exposed
“Free Entry, Get stuffed I won’t come back soon”

Alzheimer's

When I'm coming home I lazily wonder,
why so many things seem to change;
Is it not just me getting greyer, older?

Age follows me through the streets I wander-
and I don't know where I am, it's strange.
Unfamiliar homes I pause and wonder

Where is that echoing of asphalt thunder?
Places I loved, the park, the grange?
Memories a nuisance as you get older...

Weighing you down with the shopping bags shouldered,
the ready meals for one (paid for with change),
the heavy anorak, now things are colder.

Nostalgia, is no good when you're under-
The weather, street names and people seem estranged
You get so caught up, in a world that's over. Older-

Stuff doesn't belong here, it wanders
Past the newly fenced off grange
"Is this my home?" now I wonder,
Getting greyer, getting older.

Crowds

It seems to happen everywhere;
getting swallowed up by the crowd.
In the station or by the square,
those terrifying, anxious clouds -

Getting swallowed up by the crowd;
Is a jostling strange sensation.
Those terrifying, anxious clouds -
they echo at every station.

That jostling brings strange sensations,
half seasonal every spring.
Echoing at every station,
loneliness is a strange old thing.

Half seasonal every spring,
in the station or by the square
loneliness is a strange old thing,
It seems to happen everywhere.

Teesside

Cooling towers gargle a napalm skyline
to lighter flint scorch: a lone scintilla.
This is the madness of creation,
The sparked ignition, aglow;
The flare stacks roar of hydrogen elation
The towering, flame: Illumination.

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Spring 2011

Mark McManus

HIATUS

I mellow out to a polyphony
The sundown that has been assigned to this paper cup
An escutcheon is equal only to the poncho in obscurity
I start to do push ups

EXAMPLE

Swims
Continue
Architecture

Windows
Much more
Underneath

While
Memories
Describing

Painting
Superimposed
Boredom

Returns
System
Vacation

Caterpillar
From the
Exercise

Of the
Pretty
Waltzes

Experiencing
Clothing
Multiplies

Ease
Archives
Serenade

The friendly
Intellect
Hinted at

THE NOTE

I look at the mist
I look at the reader
Her smile might really be a drama
And suddenly

Besides you are a question too
Unlike so many others
The lyrical hands
And a charming turn

Of the easy branches
Already
In a line
In an effort

I try to explain
The beautiful days
And the clearings
In your song

With the adjectives
She has carried
To say
GENTLE
To my
ANSWER

TWO POEMS

FLOATING

*I wore a sky blue windbreaker to the ruins
Because I didn't want The Bird Of Paradise
To mistake me for a cow*

CROCODILE

Monday eats Friday and all that ever amounts to
Is another weekend

CASIO FOXES

Golf cart
On the Moon
That's what she's into

Riding away with a swell model
But it's the canyon
That parrots brains

So detoured then meridian-like
And endless cozy rhythm
Do you remember the microchip

And the spy planes trumped way of it?
How they'd actually fought over it?
I ache from task from beak and a clasp

Fashioning the tent posts O hung-over night
There's love mingling among her boat shoes on sponge dock
Like beadwork dynastic twang mobility for us both

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Spring 2011

Gloria Wimberley

Laken

"...Bats with baby faces in the violet light"

a lovely, lulling image to me from my

chartreuse-tuber

grad-school days...

Now in the autumn of my life

(springtime expectations behind me),

I witness the silver opening

of the waters at tiptoe of twilight

as they roil and coil like puckered linen

this lake

of sullen mystery and begrudging solitude

where Elle, Blanca,

Ivory and her matryoshki-sized babies

and grey-headed Reddington

live out their

waddling, cottonmouth

snake-dodging days

...The ceiling of our living room

is transformed from pallid plaster

into a white-nubbled galaxy

dancing with the waning rays of day

reflecting from the face of the lake

still flickering with hot embers of energy

even though my own energy is lifeless as fortnight ashes...

The love-light of my 2 year-old daughter "Peanut"

and her sister "Jellybean"

(who bends it like Beckham

inside my bulbous belly)

shine on

to remind me that

to gaze upon the silver

opening of the waters is

to know the wonder

of the laken effect

despite the ones

who slither violet

at water's murky edge

...Nature's iridescence,

limpid as a mother's intuition

serene as ducks paddling

on watery calm

shimmies

...shimmies...

on

Sluiced

Momentary maid to the wigwam on the beach
pear-cling drippings
on her jewel-tone lips
jovially juiced and satisfyingly SLUICED...
e-sloshing in the social sea
via a somewhat sandy laptop
...her email rudder
is still rudimentary
as sea-birds navigating choppy waves of wind...
and her daily eyeful of the flowering compass rose

~~ ~~ ~~ ~~ ~~

As Dahlia languidly leafs out
while looking askance
in the seagull-clotted breeze,
stony~grey~skull
constancy
is forging forward in a crabwalk
I am at arm's length, listening
sponging up the
moody tidal pool of her words
yet a statue of Stonehenge
(Tiki-faced)
lacquered shut
by whispers of wind and rants of rain:
Decades
of decadent & demure
secrets
silkiy
cocooned
inside

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Spring 2011

Eric Hoffman

I would lie in her tomb
Should God accept
This miserable replacement -

Will the beam of her eye
Ever trace this stained visage
Whose cheeks are burned
By sour tears?

Oh no no
Poor poetry cannot resolve this lone heart
Which stutters and fails

'It is a luxury to be understood'

A long and wild storm
Consigned us to darkness and nausea -
Helpless, we clung to hope
And memory of a firmer ground -

The sailor, a man of his hands,
Eye, muscle, finger, a tailor,
Carpenter, copper, stevedore,
Clerk and astronomer,
Guide and savior -

The Captain speaks of the superiority
Of the American to the European
Yet the light shines equally in either place,
It smiles equally on time and space,
It diminishes and enlarges until both
Are of equal size. It breathes life
Into man and man into life.

Wandering the Green Mountains
& Lake Champlain, June 1831,
Finding you nowhere and everywhere,
Translating symbols into sentiments -

We grow wise. We search for what is similar
In ourselves, an equal appreciation
For byson tea or a walk before breakfast -

What is it in me which cannot say
I do not know? 'The noblest eye
Is darkened' And Galileo went blind
1636, died 1642. So the eye of Milton.

What is truth? That proverbial
Question, that which cannot not be seen.
Even on the smallest scales
The strong lens is trained
On its furthest star
Or the thin horizon remains fixed
Even as the world turns its music
Unperturbed by the massive silence of space.

'29 March. I visited Ellen's tomb
& opened the coffin'

O wilted apple
Who can discern your gentle rage
In his own heart?

A hollowness fades -

At times I think
The true prerequisite of ministry
Is the urge for antiquity,
An altered age
Where one worships
Dead forms, concealing
A secret pursuit
Of Pagany -

When we read we acquire
A crystallization of ourselves,
Those books of science,
How the mind can achieve communion.

I do not know. Teach me,
I have forgotten.

It is only the body, the blood -
A sentiment translated into symbol,
A symbol translated into sentiment.

Is this a new life? Or a new failure?
I do not know.

A prophet warms
Candles of ignorance,
Amongst his books
The dim light
Renders them illegible

λ

Wince to sneer

prostrate in the yolk of height—syntagmatic,
to proceed it: snub.

The adjacent (n).

The subsumed (nub).

—rebus to barter a kiln burns

the bare

salt-worn slopes.

7

Slopes above veal and curd,

black-house taut:
choleric—

out of origins the bronze idol

embalms a stick

figure.

Bodies on stakes.

Terebinths.

7

Terebinths

edify—no man's Canaan:

deaf to insult

(a hyena's laugh)

from old age

between thighs—

expiry of

(sarcophagi code or papier-mâché pipe-bomb.)

Sabbath *blargon*.

7

Blargon is braided—cursory

sway of scented oil and olives:

- a) drip sibilants of pathos
- b) traipsed for prayer
- c) the monist
- d) fummy

—spasm-stung
 this rebus with a smote to add

a tessera to a
 mosaic with grout—

the ruin of *grok* (digispeak) ÷ the archon.
 Survey (g).

Grout/*grok*.

†

Grok emerged
 with *hoople/kippa—couture*,
 sheathed
 at the stasis-lodge: tribal.

The outer of private recompense to a fault,
 “covenant”—

Stasis-lodge? Stasis-hedge.

At street-level of the digital

tenement,
 the anachronistic
 fishmonger.

Staring dead fish eyes.

613 gills.

∩

Gills of bedlamites—
 impromptu *repas*:

libel—

—false accusation,

that they covet anise/blood

cumin/semén

dill to soar like Enoch

and not perish
in ginger of *Sheol*,

outpacing pepper,
to taste *Sinai*c water
in silver cups
and barbeque
the son of man.

ו

Man, incursion-world: tarpaulin (...)
tarmac—man-high,
asymmetrical counter-weight,
matriculates
according to positions/at the slanted deadline,
place of *makom*—
supple,
post-post
past a person—“Unman.”

ו

Unman with pudenda of dyads
breaks rank/*uber*-experimental—amputee line, savage
m-dash, ampersand assassinations and unrest
in a brown chair.

Arbitration?

Yes!

Judgment:

£ He's a spur-femme/*mem* after *yod*—
F He's guilty of *circonfession-da-fort-da*—
€ Fifteen years of *dasein/cinder*—
Æ He's far too left of *khora/maat*—
Ψ The *gehenna* chronicler was a liar—
Ж He's unannoyed—
И He's lost them.

ו

Them,
the soundshapes
of a drawn out apostasy,
sustained
by bursts
from a whirlwind:

anagram embossed
with the seal
of a Zyklon-lemony balm

draped over his head
to bow.

Temple the mark
with a grave consort: hetaera,
never the same stroke— twice...
she remembers a fumitory,

—macabre mice
—film noire rats

—the latest orthodoxy
by ruse of post-sexual cleansing:
Sunday's yellow rain?

1

Rain falls on the helmet of the *Paladin*
of Foreboding—the un-knighted mock descendant
of Charles Martel (stripped of dignity
by unctuous platitudes) with bare
bodkin.

Is the impasse

the riddle?

Who are these Saracen hordes mixed with the Mosaic?
Enter the digital avatars:

- Berber
- Almorhavid
- Almohad
- Córdoba
- Vandal
- Hispanica
- Bordeal

This daemon (the *Paladin*)
of the deadly seven
abhors a vacuum,
hypervigilant to own
hominid codes,
in memoriam
in the gaseous
black with
shield.

0

...an aversion
to dialects pivots

for the sake of an “a”—the “a” of a serpent’s venom:

(a) alluvial silt where Leviathan gives his cameo

—reproached for the wrong letter

(b) o-lluvi-o-l (“o” as “a” when the consensus is “s”

**GIVE IT
LAMINAE.
BLAME DYXLEXIA.**

Rage shrieks,
execrates the call for order
and tone.

This belongs to the protosinaic family
of languages—sandstone/rubbing.

Y

Rubbing out the cyclonic rage,
pending the obloquy of assault—torqued
by dread
and malaise
waiting to be chaffed.

Gray smut and iodine,

or

—calcined husks

—calcined husks

—calcined husks

or

writ as small as a pebble

of kaolin.

Rubbing out as if never born.

Congeries of the sly motive.

5

Motive for metaphor: roseate—

runnel plaits
into a cleft spent on the dominant X.
Non sequitur—the damn excuse: that people demand

reason.

Pustular rhymes with corpuscle,
kills (p)oets,
one after another for their unforgivable
self-involvement.
What's the motive?

To brand clichés
with a hot iron on the arms of devotees:
the confession
skinned

from the flayed body—

eviscerated

by a horn.

Σ

Horn-god—the one weakened
by Esau to moans
of the biblically sick (sic.) The fifth
heaven of guerdon and crest—a new
apocryphon made from the prefix “meta.”
In effigy with faience and Kiddush cup,
a new beast:

METASAMMY.

Π

Metasammy's life in the reticulum is boring.
He has two left hands
and a bad case of adipose.
Yet, to the dismay of the disciples
of Qof,
he contains the seminal green
of the deviser and is thus his consort,
wearing a beige sport coat
and Burberry cap.

Γ

Cap the steep ascent
and live forever—transumption.
Spun roots swell to rind,

rise to hair and cloud, face to nebulae
to torso, legs and plasma,
then back to seed,
to crossbreed a mortal hybrid
of bird-fish or man-ape
hanging from trees like hairy/scaly leaves—lungs
under trunks, eyes in bulbs,
prehensile bark
outstretched
for ascent.

ו

Ascent from a world of lack—Ahraic—
sinewy wives with black wings
decreate in dead books—
fall away from names:
? the Groundkeeper's Jezebel
ה the Baal Zebub's Rebbitzin
י the Samael's Eisheth Zenunium
ה the Satanael's Old Hag Incubus

Hunt figuration.

ת

Figuration nearing pods—bursts:
vapor in the
dark: a dense proton,
decrendos and expands—
a soup of matter, gamma,
in turn, nuclei: name
for a boneless
stick-figure who says, "if bodied, ovum in the seminal green
of the deviser,"
and repeats
the first letter.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Daniel Owen

And wordless, he comes to sleep

A forgetting. A wash of brackish
water. The deeds of one's youth, pennies in one's pocket
could come out in the wash. Could be made a wish.
Shopping malls tower above this example.
Remember each particle of gravel, your feet tread
the white line 'tween here and the calendar, a pebble of sand
worms into your shoe. Raw carrion on hooks. To market,
a conference of motors, a goat bleat din. Tomorrow's pizza party
hangs on the edge of a discus. Thus and thusly. Any glass
could be used as a lens, any wall could prop a clock.
Sound and sense linger long after the other guests have left.
Stoic faces, the pop and flash of a camera before
our time. Cross another item off the list.
Those high cheek bones, that posture, so becoming of a diary
entry. So little separates us from the frames of ourselves.
A pause going into the last deep tone.

Borders Crossed

noon roves from horizon to horizon slapdash
as homeless feelings leave handprint
smudges on the windowpane that
reappear perpetually when condensation
wets the glass a recurrence of weather
that turns and shimmies like a dance that
comes in and out of style over the ages
and the tire's rubber that once made circles
in the ocean turns and shimmies under
its tonnage of Honduran bananas

Meanwhile the minute hand runs
its laps hungering its own tail The project
of forgetting becomes more and more
dire as each moment rears and collapses
on itself frothing sea mist that prism-like
is a lens in which colors bend recalled
conversations reconstitute themselves in novel
timbres whole vistas take on different hues as
if playing dress up before a mirror

The sea never having regarded itself
as metaphor becomes cold and distant as
you frame it so it goes There
a school of clocks crest the tide
like boogie boards with each further
imitation fidelity to the master copy
weakens and all we have to work and play
with is semblance miming semblance
approximate feelings in the tide pool among
molluscs you can collect when they beach
and dry and rattle in your pocket walking
the tight rope from here to home

Remember the painter who unravelled
his whole life inland painting portraits of the sea
he is a mirror fogged by warm breath like this
we deny disguise artifice changing the lyrics
to match what we hear of the song

Golden Lucky Cat

The new year comes and goes littering the streets
with confetti. We barely understand, the primacy
of the color red, the nature of the project shiny.
It's all veneer, inherently a glimmer. So close
to death and even closer to the denial
of death. As the mud-splattered urchin sticks
his tongue out, hurling hand-crafted mudcakes into the empty
outside where the misread ocean forms shapes—curlicues
and arabesques, gewgaws and flash—consequently
shaping forms just out of sight like the spider's web
spangling its diamond patterns above the doorway.
As you walk the pavement, accidents barely averted
multiply until you find you are walking a narrow path
through sopping overgrowth. It is dark. Nowhere to go but onward.
No map but the memory of spring flowers, the wasp stings
and improvised dances of childhood. Traveller, may you be blessed
with heaping sacks of gold coin and a friendly destiny.
In another life, who knows, you could have been
a census taker in Death Valley or a bank teller
in the long autumn of empire's decline.

Ah, Golden Lucky Cat,
may this year be as sweet as the sugared coconut
shavings spilt on the bakery floor. May bridges trundle
between islands like non-committal handshakes on
a commuter train. A smooth bland homecoming
is the most we can ask for our loved ones
at sea. Golden Lucky Cat, light the way to
prosperity with your dumb bared teeth.

Know All the Contemptible and the Mediocre

Or to pull your chair up to the set table, following
the migratory patterns of ghosts, ringtone
set to the music of contemplation, a 5-tone scale
like the rungs of a ladder laid against the living room wall.

Trying to leave my body once, I stumbled on all the jagged
names protruding from my flesh. Less than refined.

*It is clearly written, little brother. Study carefully
the literary teaching of a good person long ago.*

*You must understand the reason of the contemptible, ultimately
have no connection, understand the mediocre.*

There are many forms of grace, not excluding stumbling,
using one's hands to eat, trying to use one's language
as a wick. Still, it is stumbling. The ghosts
fog the kitchen window.

Just think: all of the emotions in your pocket
put together are lost in the shine
of an old song. It is a form of indifference
carrying the water of the ages on its shoulders.

Up the mountain, down the mountain. The metaphors
pile up like unread mail until something collapses,
the telephone rings,
the empty pockets are tied into white knots,
and wine stains the carpet.

The vague sensation of wanting something enters
the porous space around the flesh, scaling.

From Here to There

Now he reads only yellow literature. The season
for hot toddies has long passed, like a blimp trailing
promises for a bounteous future. One day at a time.
Locate yourself on the timeline using a complex system
of algorithms. Throw the darts until your turn is over,
snakeskin boots come back in style, frost crinkles white the grass.
An inhospitable gaze is currently unexcused, which isn't to say
inexcusable. It is mute. It smells like cinnamon gum
right now. The night bird on Eckford Street comes back
in the guise of a woman in a grey work shirt. Obviously,
it's springtime. In a similar fashion, a subway car bears us
from here to there like a day's box on a calendar come unglued. The want
to handfeed the color yellow into the woman's eyes
is a perfectly natural desire like thirst. Someone take
all this agency from me, I'll just squander
it. While away the summer. A waste of time
burns on the lawn of the ages, while little squirrels
pursuit each other up a tree.

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Spring 2011

Craig Rebele

from *The Abilene Paradox*

"When things got back on speaking terms, and were able to talk with some clarity, I formulated what's called The Abilene Paradox, which is as follow: that organizations frequently take actions contrary to the desires of any of their members and defeat the very purposes they're designed to achieve. And a corollary to that is: the inability to cope with agreement and not the inability to cope with conflict is central to organization disfunction."

—Dr Jerry Harvey

17

The other aardvark
is generosity sprawled
across the street

like a mechanic
without his vitamins.
Gerard, what happened?

What happened, Gerard?

17

A foreigner inserts
his phallic blimp
over Texas skies.

A cowboy gesture
legal only on
a technicality. The

moon ten times
the size of
the banana. Bamboo

and balsa wood
nylon and aerodynamic.
Whoop. Whoop. Whoop.

17

The dog has
fleas. The dog
has fleas. The

dog has fleas.
The dog has
fleas. The dog

has fleas. The
dog has fleas.
The dog has

fleas. The dog
has fleas. The
dog has fleas.

17

hone : honest : honestly
honesty : honey : honeybee
honey bunch : honeycomb : honeydew
honeymoon : honeysuckle : hunk
honky-tonk : Honolulu : honor
honorable : honorarium : honorary
honorific : hooch : hood
hooded : hoodlum : hoodoo
hoodwink : hoey : hoof

17

The lemon zester is a testament to the greatness of my bird-god. Idolize your zest while the bathroom door is locked. Once your wings are clipped, you are

What is a Turtle, Alex?

negligible impotence with a resounding silence. An anatomy suggests certain necessities, unclear, though, is the difference between ten toes and desire.

17

Id like to buy a vowel.

A.

Im sorry, there are no As.

Id like to buy a vowel.

E.

Im sorry, there are no Es.

Id like to buy a vowel.

I.

Im sorry, there are no Is.

Id like to buy a vowel.

O.

Im sorry, there are no Os.

Id like to buy a vowel.

U.

Im sorry, there are no Us.

17

The Dobson Fly

spends only
days as a terrestrial
adult, with sickle shaped
mandibles
decorating the male.

Its voracious larval hellgrammite
with eight pairs
of external gill filaments
will pupate in a mud
cell
close to water.

17

The cages, reticent
and
reticent and reticent.
Delivered over tubes
to the corners
of Michigan.
In the air over Milwaukee,
childrens laughter
hangs, impossible to
recall.

17

Your computer figures
figures faster than
a girl in

a pretty dress.
Sex and mathematics
balance the equation,

if y is
the variable and
 x is known.

17

Recursive sacks
of disfunction,

your television
leads to

new mathematical
notations. I

just got
my hair

cut. What
you think?

Clarice Waldman

Pomme Frite

Twenty-seven years ago he had a May to June romance with the local Ronald McDonald. The delightful incompetence of young love, unveiled cartoons and hand rolled cigarettes failed him, and now that he can remember, cartoons have always been deceivers. He has never quite found love exerted in a quarter pounder with cheese sandwich with that same soft ice cream vigor. It was the way the make-up caught the red drips of ketchup and the marigold tendrils of yellow mustard that made him jump up from that dimensionless space of educator to lover. How an apple is so very sweet, the light rounds his paste colored eyes, the red lips, a beacon of grease beckoning, visit his newly remodeled playground. He ate a hundred thousand times at store #1749 in empty paper cup hopes that he might, one day, return and treat him one more time to a happy meal. Cold attestations of corn syrup, open tubs of sliced green pickles, and the ever-grand golden cow formed into milkshakes and cell phones that tweet out the intendance of assignments. Back then one could only call out to the fields of long grass, or scream to the blond brick walls for the never emergent grown ups. A dusty man arrives to close up with his silver mop and an instinctive white bucket.

Pumpkins

There are too many pumpkins in the world, too many pies and too many homestyle bakers. Too many spices and too many seeds; there is just too much of everything. Why do those farmers grow so many pumpkins? One is simply left asking, what purpose is your pumpkin? No one really cares about a single pumpkin, that is to say, unless it is your own pumpkin. Your pumpkin is the best pumpkin, even if others cannot see it as such. They are great for carving a lantern face and toast it's seeds with cumin; then one truly cares about pumpkins.

Pumpkins make the news only when they are the size of a house; when they win the gold blue ribbon at the fair; sometimes when bad pumpkins commit grizzly gangland murders; or catch the criminal on the train, solve the crime and return the jewels to their rightful owner. Farmers who grow pumpkins are an unruly bunch of rascals. They spit and curse, often over dress for casual events, steal candy, live as vegetarians, have unusual sex practices and are, in general, not nice to those people who do grow pumpkins. They buy books on pumpkins and famous pumpkin farmers and tell other pumpkin farmers of their excitements of these books and the idea of the perfect farm. Often times these are found in the form of blogs about famous pumpkin farms and famous pumpkin farmers generally with witty pumpkin titles like Jack, or Orange Patch, or Vineland Noose. These pumpkin researches often wear suits instead of overhauls and are never found in pumpkin patches, but rather, clean libraries.

Pumpkin Pie

I entered into a pumpkin pie contest a few years ago. I lost because of politics and aesthetics. My pie was a conceptual pumpkin pie; it had a crust made up of honey gingered pumpkin slices cut into the shape of the word pumpkin. Over and over again the word pumpkin went into every bite and in every mouthful was a reversal of thought and speech. The word itself inhaled with whipped cream rather than spoken on the cold October air. There was little support for the pie and I lost the contest. It did not taste like thanksgiving; an old woman jeered at me. What is wrong with you, an old man said holding onto a young girl who was crying relentlessly. I never entered another contest and plan to eat my pies in my own home. In my own private pumpkin patch with my own pumpkins and my pumpkin blog and a bowl of pumpkin seeds and I will eat to my fill. There is no other message to believe in, nothing other than my pumpkins and my pumpkins shall prevail if only in my own imaginary nation deep within my super-secret illusionland of Pumpkinvillia. There I shall dwell for hours alone with my cats and a blanket, indulging in my reverse words and idea. This is my pie, not yours. This is my pumpkin, I shall not want.

Asparagus

It became clear to me that it was time to change the inks in the cream fountain pen
After you stormed out of the house after reading the note I left for you on the fridge.
The *vert green* gave the words a tinge of something more than what I was saying, implying,
Trying to convey in that slipshod way that I do. Your poems need to bounce higher
Than they currently perform. It is as if you are dragging lilac water lines on paper towels;
Ghost tracks of what would never be written or attempted by anyone currently living.
Just try harder to see what is in front of you and then, open up your mind, your eyes and
heart and tell the nice people what you see. It is all right if you never do see, as very few
often can see properly, let alone say anything of value, with precision, in a poem. You are
not alone in your mediocrity. You ask, why bother? Well, just bother. That is it. What else is
there for a poet but to continue on poeting, making things that others may not want, but
what the hell else is there in this bland situation you find yourself? This fine apartment in the
middle of nowhere is a wonderful place to set a fire. Make the words of you and your eyes
and the light that comes between them and continue on.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Christina N. Howard

On the Edge

She stood on the edge of a rain cloud.
Closed her eyes.
Exhaled.
And became like rain.
I stood on the edge of today.
Closed my eyes.
Inhaled.
And became baptized by her tears.

The Rye Is Burning

The Rye is burning,
Burning Rye.
And I can see the fire
In Salinger's eye.

The Rye is burning,
Banned,
Now abandoned.
Burning Rye.

"People never notice anything."
But I noticed you, the burning Rye.
The fire gone,
But the ashes now reflected in my own eye.

Holden might be "the most terrific liar you ever saw,"
But now lies,
In the dust,
The burning Rye.

Ashes to ashes,
Dust to dust.
In my hand crumbles,
My beautiful burning Rye.

Him and I

Tauremini,
Him and I,
The fish and the bull.
What is it that pulls
Me to you?
The second sign,
And then
Add ten.

Opening parts of my soul
To peek in.....digo.
Like the color of the 6th chakra,
The all knowing, the mind's eye.
I breathe in, out, sigh...
And seek the knowledge that is you.

If only the 6th star
Would sit in this lotus flower.
Not in the cosmos,
But in this world.
It might help fulfill my soul.
Because, I knew you before.
Another time, another place.
The same soul, a different face.

We are the water and the earth.
I swam as Aphrodite and her son and I could see
You carry Europa from that earth, out to sea.
Now we rest in the water where the lotus blooms,
Him and I,
Tauremini.

The Leaf

Bitterly cold Wednesday morning,
Halfway through the week.
Downtown traffic sitting still.
And there I saw it.
They usually travel in packs,
But this one was alone.
It wasn't a breezy day,
So it was not lightly flying in the air,
Dancing and gliding like Fred Astaire.
And the wind was not a gust,
So it was not a sudden whirlwind of craziness,
As if Medusa shook her hair.
The leaf was barely moving,
Inching along.
It crawled,
Alone,
On the cold city street.

Chris Siteman

Minotaur Finds a Broken China Doll,

and her jagged porcelain head reminds him
of an eggshell-half— The near intact eye,
unblinking, black, one plaintive braid
of human hair, one arm, one leg, as if her
body lashed against curb at shoulder & hip.

And her brave little blue dress to stave off the trash heap
like only a good little blue dress could, if a little blue
dress should allay the end of tea parties,
counting & reciting ABCs.

Relics of Antiquity

Fascist ideas tempting—
Clarity in confusion's place,
the lizard brain simplicity.

But body-primacy seems
right, though sophisticated
primates can't seem to

track the various maths
required to be truly genuine,
accurate, ethical & just—

So, fill with warmth when
you see them, the future
sentinels of empire:

watch them purse lips
as they struggle to make
connections, & be sure

Alexander wore similar
faces before history called
him to war. Even as they

scowl, they seem cherubs
in awe & disbelief that
our world's so cold—

For, who among you will
step forward, take each by
the hand, & walk them

out onto the plaza before
the great church of being?
Who among you will tell

them to dream in defiance,
to believe, in spite of all
these relics of antiquity?

Geclyft

Black branches reach
into sky; roots

cast in a pond beside
November oaks.

Bio-book electron
microscope

images, gold-
plated synapses:

poems about
synapses.

Black branches root
in darkness

knowing fierceness
in myelin,

knowing we speak
lightning.

Dead Peasant Policy

What's a human, really, when
we subtract emptiness? What's
an emotion worth, aside from
raw power, that resin extractable
under industrialized conditions?

The morning train horn blasts
and we, reduced to sugar cubes
by science, continue, unaware
of our material limitations, hourly
wages already crunched & spent.

We haggle over dying privileges
on the pyre, & plume our carbon
back upon the source of form—
We find that, in the end, all of our
premiums were prepaid.

Dys-poesia*

“Plato banishes the poets who bid
gods speak with human tongues.”

“And yet, in the end he turns
metaphor.”

*“Is what we sing the primary thing,
or that we are*

Voice?”

And the gods reply: “MORTAL—”

Sirens call through the fog:
“Go praise the gods for wine, for oil, for—

The privilege.”

* (music/ dyspepsia) (distance from gods²)

Chris McCreary

Kid Cyclone & The Birdman of Avalon

The boy's mother is wringing her hands.

Dear Sharon, the boy writes, I guess you know by now that I quit taking the medication.

The stepfather is standing in the middle of the mother's bedroom, staring down at the antique metal bird cage that lies smashed on the carpet. "What have you done?" he half-asks over and over again. There are tiny green and yellow feathers everywhere, bloody footprints across the carpet. "What's wrong with you, you sick little freak?" he finally asks, almost as an afterthought.

Dear Sharon, the boy writes, I hope you can forgive me.

When he closes his eyes, the boy sees his stepfather molt into a greasy, predatory bird, its wings fluttering absentmindedly as it perches on the headboard of the mother's bed. Its long, twisted beak pecks at her lips as she twists in fitful sleep. The boy wakes from these dreams drenched in cold sweat.

Other nights, the boy and his mother are sitting in the breakfast nook. She's slathering strawberry jam onto the boy's toast as the stepfather shuffles into the room, cinching his tie around his pudgy neck before snatching a slice of toast from the boy's trembling hand. Before the bread can reach the stepfather's smirking mouth, he falls to his knees, drops the toast, begins to wretch uncontrollably. The boy and his mother rise horrified from their chairs just as the stepfather tilts his head back, jawbones unhinging to send dozens of birds pouring forth from his gaping maw: his pet parakeets, yes, but also pigeons, flamingos, toucans, robins, and ravens, all silent flapping wings as they rush past the boy's face, their tiny claws rending the flesh of his cheeks even as he flails about, blindly groping for the sleeve of his mother's nightgown. He wakes with his sheets wrapped tightly around his legs, his face is covered in tiny scratches, traces of blood beneath his fingernails.

Dear Sharon, he writes, I mean, you realize I can't call you "Mom" anymore, right? Not since the day Carl moved in. You know, I had a mom once, and she was married to my dad. Remember Dad? I didn't think so. But I do.

Or his stepfather could be a mild-mannered aviary veterinarian named Carl with a fondness for Burger King value meals and unwinding in front of reality TV, and the boy's secret identity might be none other than Kid Cyclone, who has the ability to sweep up anything – birds, people, flat-screen TVs - in the gale-force winds of his fury. The stepfather is perhaps dressing for work as Kid Cyclone strides into the mother's bedroom. The chubby bald man pleads for mercy but is blown through the French window with a flick of the Kid's wrist, glass slashing his hands and face as he plummets two stories to the lawn. From below, the stepfather cries out for help, yet Kid Cyclone's mother still sleeps soundly, her light-blue nightgown tight across her body. Just as Kid Cyclone slides

between the sheets of her bed, the boy wakes confused to feel that he's wet the bed, then quickly wads the damp pajamas and sheets and stuffs them all deep in the back of his closet.

Three mornings a week, the boy sees a counselor named Dr. Menken. She wears sleek silver jewelry and keeps a bowl of dollar-store candies on her desk. The candies, the boy notices, have melted into a single sugary mass that he stares at while Dr. Menken talks at him. Dr. Menken practices tough love. "It can be perfectly normal for a boy to escape into fantasy after the death of a loved one," Dr. Menken says, "but I'm starting to think you're hiding behind this. I think you know exactly what you're doing, trying to get attention from your mom by lashing out at your stepfather. Besides," she goes on, "any self-respecting superhero would be ashamed of what you've done."

"I never said I wanted to be a *superhero*," the boy replies. "I just said I want to have super powers. There's a big difference."

Or the boy's counselor's name is Seth, and Seth wants to be the boy's friend, talks to the boy about how he used to run varsity track back in high school but how all of the girls only liked football players and so he couldn't get a date to the prom. When Seth gets serious, he leans forward and says things like, "Tell me about these dreams you keep having. I mean, you know that I worry about you, little dude."

Seth asks, "So what exactly would a thirteen-year-old dude do with superpowers, anyway?"

Seth asks, “Are you still keeping the journal like I asked?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, can I see?”

“No,” the boy says, “you can’t see.”

Dear Sharon, the boy writes, how much have you spent sending me to therapy, anyway? Well, I hope it's at least making you feel a little less guilty for screwing me up so much.

Dear Sharon, Do you know that I can hear you two at night? Is this how you try to forget about Dad? Couldn't you just get an eating disorder or read romance novels or something? You two are disgusting.

In the breakfast nook, the boy’s stepfather is talking to him, his fat earnest face etched with sincerity over his plate of scrambled eggs. The stepfather’s lips are moving, his forehead is frowning, but all the boy hears is the sound of wind whistling, and he’s imagining what it would be like to be inside a cyclone, at the center of so much reckless force.

The boy is sitting outside of Dr. Menken’s office just after his session. His mother is inside now, writing the check and getting her surreptitious report. “You should know he’s been having the dream again,” Dr. Menken stage whispers to Sharon. “The one where Carl attacks you, but he steps in to save you by murdering Carl.” He pictures his mother handing over the check with a trembling hand.

“So I think I wanna be Superman this Halloween,” the boy says. He’s in his father’s workshop, sitting on the hood of his dad’s car, watching him tinker with a lawnmower engine. His dad is whistling a meandering tune that the boy thinks he half-recognizes from a commercial jingle or TV theme song. “I don’t want to be a Power Ranger again.”

“Superman?” His dad turns. “I’ll bet a dozen other kids in Avalon will show up as Superman, and besides, Superman is totally lame.”

“Lame? He’s the strongest superhero.” The boy loves these moments of faux-sparring with his dad, seeing where the conversation will take them.

. “He’s lame because he doesn’t even have to try every time he saves the world, and if you’re pretty much invincible, what’s the point, anyway? You know who’s really cool? The guys like Batman, they’re pretty much regular people who can’t fly over buildings or shoot heat vision out of their eyes and all of that hokum. They’ve got brains and training, and they’ve got gadgets.”

“Yeah,” the boy says, almost convinced.

“Yeah,” his dad continues, “that’s part of why I became an engineer. Trying to build my own utility belt when I was a kid.”

“Can you teach me how to build gadgets?” the boy asks.

“Yeah, sure,” the dad says, shooting him a sideways grin, “but first you need to learn the basics.” And over the next few months, the boy and his dad will build a birdhouse for the backyard, which will be a Mother’s Day gift, and a Pinewood Derby racer, which will win a blue ribbon in a race at a local community center.

“Hey,” Seth says. Usually at this point in the session he’d be leaning back in his chair, sweat stains in the shape of crescents under each arm, but today he’s hunched forward across the desk, getting his tense face as close as possible to the boy’s. “You’ve got to talk to me, buddy. This is some serious shit, dude. Why’d you do that to his birds?”

The boy can’t sleep, so he sneaks down to his dad’s basement workshop around midnight, the one room in the house that doesn’t show the stepfather’s presence at all. The boy smokes a joint, fires up his father’s drill, and bores holes in the workbench until he finally gets sleepy. “Bullseye,” the boy says to himself with each hole he drills.

“If you think about it,” the boy says to Seth, “a drill bit is like a miniature cyclone. It’s just displacing space and air. Except, OK, there’s no hollow center. But still, same basic idea.”

The boy’s mother tightens her hands on the steering wheel. “You’ve got to listen to the doctor, sweetie,” she says. “She’s trying to help you.” A pause. “She’s helping you, right?”

Dear Sharon, the boy writes, Did you really think grounding me would solve anything? I mean, I was in trouble for stuff I did in the house when you guys weren't home, so why would you punish me by making me stay in the house by myself even more? Sometimes you're even stupider than I usually think.

The house is silent, the boy's mother and stepfather are both at work. The boy is rummaging through his dad's cluttered workroom yet again. In the back of a storage cabinet, he finds a stash of dirty magazines and, behind a fire extinguisher and bicycle pump, his dad's home-made dart gun.

The boy is Ritalin and Lexapro and then Wellbutrin until he smashes a plate when his stepfather asks for more potato salad. After that, he is Celexa and Lithium and Paxil in no certain order, and after that, he begins to lose track. Whenever he starts taking the latest of Sharon's medications, he can hear the whistling sound getting louder, vibrating at a higher pitch for a few days until it finally levels off a bit. "It's about finding the right combination," she tells him over and over again. "It's not an exact science, and there's got to be some trial and error." After a few months, the boy stops taking any of the pills and starts hoarding them in the back of his locker at school, where he trades them to a guy named Ray for comic book money or dime bags of pot, which is the only thing that makes the whistling go away, the only thing that helps him sleep.

The boy falls asleep surrounded by a stack of comics –*Final Crisis*, *Blackest Night*, *Batman R.I.P.* – and dreams of dozens, perhaps hundreds, of birds swirling around him like a tornado. He eventually reaches into the vortex, begins grabbing the tiny animals one by one, and starts snapping their limbs, bit by bit, one at a time, until the wind is, finally, calm. Then he dreams of a campfire far beyond Avalon, of pulling his stepfather's pets from a spit, then feasting on the meat beneath their breasts.

"What kind of gadgets did you build when you were my age?" the boy asks his dad, which is the same question he's asked each day now for months. This time, for some reason, the boy's father does more than just grin

and shake his head in response. Instead, he leans back on his stool, takes a sip of his lukewarm beer, and begins to hold forth on grappling hooks made out of fishing line and wire coat hangers, which he'd use to grab onto girls' sweaters, and a modified water pistol, which he'd used to shoot diluted acid onto the back of an older bully's jeans, leaving him half-naked and mildly burned by lunch period. Later, sitting in his dad's silent workshop, the boy would remember his dad's mischievous smile as he relived these adventures.

Dear Sharon, Thanks for not letting Carl take over dad's workshop. I can say that, at least. Maybe it's not even being considerate – maybe you've just never thought about the basement at all since Carl moved in – but it's good that at least some part of the house doesn't smell like bird crap.

“I probably shouldn't even be showing you this,” his dad says after a moment of hesitation, “but I still tinker around sometimes.” From beneath the workbench, he pulls out a foot-long metal cylinder attached to a blunt piece of lumber with some sort of trigger mechanism grafted to its underside. “It's a dart gun, but not for those little suction-cup darts you shoot. It's for those kind of darts,” he says, gesturing to a battered dartboard hanging on the back of the workshop door. “Once or twice a week after work, the guys and I go to have a beer and play some darts at Vito's – the place down the road from the plant? – but I'm not any good, and the guys always crack jokes about it.” He's rummaging around in drawers crammed with extra bolts, Allen wrenches, rolls of duct tape. “So I built this as a joke, to show up one day and just take a shot at the dart board, but it actually turned out pretty well. It's basically powered by a really high-powered rubber band, and I tweaked the darts so that they had these thicker, sharper nails in them instead of just the tiny point they'd usually have. Not much of a range, but this set-up has a

punch. You definitely don't want to be on the receiving end of one of these things. The guys at the bar thought it was pretty funny."

The boy's dad chuckles to himself, then looks thoughtful. "Here," he says, handing the dart gun to the boy. "Cock it like this." The boy's hand finds the trigger, his father guiding his aim toward the target. "Your mom would kill me if she saw you doing this, but what the heck. Let it rip," the dad says, then, a moment later, "Bullseye," even as the dart is whistling to its target. Two days later, the boy's dad dies in a car accident on his way home from Vito's after work.

"There was nothing you could do," Seth says, "you weren't even there. You know that, right? You can't beat yourself up over it."

"I don't blame myself," the boy says. "I hardly even remember anything about it."

"What do you remember?"

"Well, I was in my room doing my homework when the phone rang, and a couple of minutes later, mom came in and told me."

"How did she tell you? I mean, did she try to sugarcoat it?"

"I dunno. After a minute, all I could hear was this humming in my head."

"Like the whistling?" Seth asks. "That's where it whistling started?"

"Maybe. I don't know. I don't think so." The boy is irritated. "Who cares what the noise is, anyway?"

"You know I still love you best," the mother says, her voice cloying in its need. She's sitting on the corner of his bed, wearing the light-blue nightgown that the stepfather gave her for her birthday. "You know that, right,

sweetie?” He nods dismissively, knowing that in a moment she’ll be closing her bedroom door and crawling between the sheets with his puffy, bloated stepfather.

Dr. Menken says, “Tell me how the medications are working. Are you still getting any side effects? Are you still hearing things?”

“What things?” the boy asks.

“You know,” she presses, “the whistling.”

“Yeah,” the boy says, “I guess.”

She leans in. “Tell me about this whistling. Is it like a train whistle? A police whistle?” The boy shrugs. He knows but will not tell her the whistling isn’t a *whistle* – a tin whistle or train whistle or whatever she’s talking about – but the swirling winds of a coming storm.

When the boy opens the door to the workshop, he finds his stepfather sitting on his dad’s stool. “What’s this?” he asks. He’s holding several of the dad’s old magazines – a *Hustler*, a couple of *Playboys* - that he’s pulled from under the workbench. Maybe he’s yelling at the boy. Maybe he’s blushing. “We can talk about these later, but right now there’s a lot of other stuff I found that’s the real problem,” he says. Then there’s dead air. “We worry about you, you know,” almost as an afterthought. Lined up on the dad’s workbench are the bong the boy had hidden in an old toolbox, the bag of pills that he’d stashed inside a blown-out tire, the tight roll of \$20 bills he’d tucked in a box of nails. On top of the stack of his dad’s magazines is a *Victoria’s Secret* catalog the boy stole from his mother’s nightstand the night before and snuck into the basement. The stepfather is still talking about the boy’s mother’s feelings and the consequences of all of the things he’s found in the workshop and the fact that he’s going

to have to call the police, but the boy is staring at the woman on the cover and listening to the whistling that's filling his brain. *Angel*, it says, and along with a tiny black g-string and diamond-studded bra, the woman is wearing a pair of exquisite white wings.

“What’s wrong?” Seth pleads. “Why won’t you talk to me? This is your last chance. After this, it can only get worse.”

“You won’t be seeing Seth anymore,” Dr. Menken says. “You had him wrapped around your little finger, but I know better. I’ve met a dozen kids like you, and I know exactly what kind of a liar you are.”

Dear Sharon, the boy starts to write.

The stepfather is down on one knee in the mother’s bedroom. He is holding what’s left of his favorite parakeet, its blood smeared across his palms, more blood congealing on the deep, beige carpet. The boy never bothered to put the drill away, and it still sits on the carpet, its extension cord still snaking to the socket in the wall beside the mother’s dresser. He’s sitting on his mother’s bed watching his stepfather, thinking of how he couldn’t even hear the birds over the hum of the drill’s motor.

“Tell me about Kid Cyclone,” says Seth. “I mean, what kind of powers would this guy have?”

“Well,” the boy starts, “he could control the wind. That’s obvious. But I’m trying to refine the particulars of it. Maybe it’s just not practical.”

“Practical?” Seth asks. “There’s nothing practical about dreaming up superpowers. It’s just for fun, right?”

“But I’m talking about in real life. For real,” the boy says. “Think about it: what does the wind do? It knocks things over. It moves quickly, maybe acts unpredictably. With the right tools, a person can do that, right?”

“This is my dad’s workshop,” the boy says, his voice rising. “You need to get out.” He knows it sounds like a childish shriek with none of the menace he actually intends. He should’ve hidden everything better, expected this intrusion. He’s mad at himself, yes, but he’s especially mad at this fat man sitting on his dad’s stool.

“Or what?” the stepfather demands, his face red with fury. “Is Kid Cyclone going to show up? I don’t have any more pets for him to murder with a drill, and you know what, Kid Cyclone, I’m the Goddamn Birdman of Avalon, and it’s about time the Birdman taught you a lesson.”

“You want your nemesis to be a beautiful woman in spandex, right? Or at least a demented criminal mastermind, you know?”

“I guess so,” says Seth, looking skeptical.

“Me, I got a dumpy middle-aged vet who drives a SAAB.”

“I’m not sure,” Seth says, “that referring to your stepfather as your nemesis is the best approach.” The boy can tell he’s barely suppressing a chuckle.

The boy is remembering how his father designed these darts, sat smoothing their plastic feathers as he held them up for the boy to study. “I only made two of them,” his dad had said, “but they’re pretty sturdy. You just have to be careful with these things. They’re no joke.”

Dear Sharon, You can think what you want about me, but I knew it wouldn't kill him. I just wanted him to get off that stool. No hard feelings? Maybe even tell him I say "hi." Tell him to keep an eye out for me.

“After what you did to my birds,” the stepfather says, rising and moving toward the boy. “I was ready to be done.” The boy watches the sweat pool on the stepfather’s brow, seethes with anger. “I tried to treat you like a son,” the stepfather starts to say, but before he can finish that sentence the boy is on him, and everything becomes a blur - his teeth snatching at the stepfather’s bewildered face, the force of the stepfather’s girth as they tumble together onto the floor, all of the boy’s belongings clattering to the ground around them. And then the boy is in the center, the eye of the storm, and he can see his stepfather gasping for breath as he struggles to stand, seemingly lurching toward the boy in slow motion. The boy sees his father’s dart gun, understands how quickly he can grasp it, cock it, bring the barrel up toward his stepfather’s point-blank face. “Bullseye,” the boy thinks as his stepfather’s eyes open wide and the synthetic feathers take to the air.

Charles Freeland

from *Eucalyptus*

*

Breadcrumbs accumulate on the pavement, seem to spell out certain words that the language has long since abandoned. These remind us of our attempts to understand texts that elude all understanding. They catch on the ear like mites. I wave the spectators away, thinking maybe I can make things right again by participating in the wider world around me, by admitting other people have something important to say on occasion. Though the evidence seems circumstantial, at best. When was the last time we opened an envelope and found another envelope inside? And thought to ourselves: These are trying times, to be sure, but they don't seem as despicable, ultimately, as say, the time before the law described by Augustine in his *De Trinitate*, and mentioned originally in the Babylonian Talmud. All of which, perhaps, is designed to impress those in our company who have yet to immerse themselves in such matters. Who don't even seem to recognize their own coats when it's time to leave. They whisper among themselves in the corner, waiting, I suppose, for the opportunity to declare their own beliefs, to point out anachronism and inconsistency. But the time for all that passes and they are left merely with a pair of brass knuckles. A photocopied poem of Blake's. I try reason, I try cajoling, I even try date nut bread but the recipe is flawed in several particulars and the resulting loaf puts everyone in mind of the trip they took once to Cozumel, or the x-rays ordered up after a sharp pain in the side appeared and then disappeared and then re-appeared again in such quick succession, everyone present threw down their dictionaries and stormed out the one exit that also served as the only entrance. You might have thought there was treasure to be had out there, so intense was the rictus, and the bulging of the eyes, though this could be explained as well by any number of horrors we couldn't see. But which we can imagine now and relay to our audience by means of electronic messages and a certain training in rhetorical flourish. The sort of thing you pick up when you are originally intending only to study to become a paralegal, to make a comfortable income so as to support your family and have enough left over to get a room now and then when you decide to sleep with someone you barely know.

*

I read the word “amiss” lengthwise, as if it does not operate the way other words operate. As if it has been injured in a race. And no one wishes to examine his own feet because the eddies and backwaters will cause a sense of vertigo it is hard to get rid of so long as your feet are still attached to your body. So long as they are capable of reminding you of what you see every time you are forced to make your way from the cereal aisle in the grocery store to the steps of the house where someone you were very close to grew up and then met her end in tragic fashion. Immanuel knows, though, that the wheezing is just a symptom and ought to be treated as one, ought, in fact, to be overlooked for hours at a time while the barn owls are still in the barn. You can take photographs of them. You can explain to people later that the name is really supposed to be accidental and that to find the creatures in the structure that gave them their name is a little like getting struck by lightning at exactly the same time the toaster falls into the bathtub with you. And maybe we aren’t supposed to breathe a word of this to anyone, but Immanuel knows it’s very difficult to breathe almost anything else. Even ordinary oxygen is apt to send us tumbling down the stairs.

*

Less rainfall proves the estimate, even suggests the original framers of the estimate were people of supernatural ability. They found a place that was not exactly at the top of the mountain and they settled down there as if it were. And before you knew it, the rest of the mountain had all but disintegrated. Or at least it was hidden from view by the clouds which themselves seemed to obey some law or command not altogether apparent. Others were drawn to the site by rumor and innuendo and by the promise of cold hard cash, but they didn't stick around, the temperature at the time hovering near zero, so that anyone without an extra pair of socks, say, or suffering a vitamin deficiency, soon found himself suffering unduly from the cold and the things it does to one's skin. I remember balancing on one foot for over three hours, though I can't remember what the purpose was and what the outcome and why the reporters failed to show. It's as if we believe the circumstances that surround our own lives don't actually belong to us, as if they were trucked in and unloaded by someone who was just following instructions on a piece of paper, which was itself stuck to a clipboard by unseen hands. That's the way they imagine it to this day in the school that takes its name from one of the founding fathers and honors him every year on his birthday with an enormous cake, the recipe for which calls for no less than three dozen eggs and which has been kept in a secret vault on the premises for decades. Some say it originated with the man himself, or at the very least, one of his mistresses, and it is said to be able to reconstitute the dead if the steps are not followed exactly. This, of course, depending on how you look at such things, could be an enormous boon or the sort of disaster they make movies about because people will pay large sums of money to see other people go up in flames. All of which suggests we as a species have yet to learn our lessons. We have yet to even realize there are any lessons beyond those we grew up listening to. Like don't sell your soul to the devil and don't smoke cigarettes in front of your impressionable cousins. This is why someone like Humpty-Dumpty is reluctant to do interviews, why he wanders from place to place in a Klonopin-induced haze. He worries he smells like wet grass, that strangers will recognize him and insist they have the right to a photograph. They will huddle about him in enormous gangs, their teeth chattering with excitement, their hands all over him as if he is no longer entitled to shame. As if he was born neither man nor woman but something in between, something so smooth at every angle, the hand can find no purchase. It must roam ceaselessly, or until such time as someone in authority decides to intervene.

*

The valley falls away at our feet and we wonder if perhaps the trip isn't a mistake the way ordering white wine with beef is a mistake or the way trying to romance three people at the same time is mistake, but only if you are found out. Sometimes we long to savor flesh we are not accustomed to, that has been hiding in the back room so as to avoid the direct exposure to sunlight that will cause it to fade. Of course, all that has been rendered obsolete by vitamin supplements and a desire to reach speeds no one else has ever encountered before. Or at least no one has done so and lived to tell the story in the pages of those magazines that circulate among young boys. The bullets have hollow tips and we conjecture as to what damage might be done should we decide to use them rather than leave them at the side of the road where we found them in the first place. I, for one, am never sure what people expect of me and so I begin to expect nothing of myself in anticipation. I throw all sense of pride and accomplishment out the window as if it were a handful of quarters. And those who pull up beside me on bicycles are infuriating! I consider them the sort of thing that attaches itself to the underside of boats when the boats have been left in the water too long. I consider them flea-like creatures inasmuch as they don't seem capable of getting anywhere on their own. They must forever be attaching themselves to those of us who have decided the river is much too lonesome a place to grow up. With its muskrats paddling back and forth as if they have no shame whatsoever, as if they couldn't care less what you think about them and the condition of their coats. It's why I keep a slingshot handy at all times, though I usually only manage to poke myself in the eye with it. Once I was able to make a stop sign sing for over a minute. They are still talking about it west of Temple City, and I imagine the tale grows larger and more impressive with every day that passes. It puts on pounds and waddles down the middle of the highway until even the sheriff is forced to pull to the side of the road to let it pass. He's been on the job a long time. He knows what it means to pick your battles. And what it means to wake up nights screaming and sweating from your forehead as if someone had held a blowtorch just inches from the skin there so as to be able to make out your features in the dark.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Carlos Lara

SEVERAL DAYS | GRUNDRISSE

GRUNDRISSE

Since he consumes only so far
A new value of the wage & hour
He belongs here (at each end of the -logue)
As if imported
The general mode of his secured vision
is actually
Bled from goldleaf
A condition
For isolation objectified
in that part of some future country
where no connection with Human Character
Or wit enters
Into the working ruins

GRUNDRISSE

He is measured but not distinct
He requires
 to be held the opposite of various centuries
Following degrees of what is
Unrealizable
Naturally sought for in Notebooks
As in another California
For money
 for the villainy
 of his aspect appears & nears

With the red

SEVERAL DAYS

Don't you know how to true this permanent action
Will you think of running between two hearts
 & do the things that songs are for

I have never been with you as you go up
 as you hurt & bridle night
For miles
In the sleeping till of a tired face & lift
 the useless weeks of close quarters & anger
Say the names of the seven
Heads of the beast
 & it will come to you the hunter alone
The ceasing of the sun

SEVERAL DAYS

I hear it breathing
The air
A zero
This somebody did this
 this

Aroma
This move of every book a joke
 eating the soloist alive
It is nice &
Warm out tonight

& the tears almost came back to me
The one person who did this to me
It tore me apart in Commiseration

SEVERAL DAYS

We used to be the light of the damned
 on tiny grey waves
Of time
Scarfig in the wind untouchable truths
Even the neurotic moon in comfort & heartlessness
 doesn't know the movement of your beauty
When you came it was a rhetoric of faith
& supposing I left the stark breathing
I could never find you still
 among the weak & aimless slouching there
There

SEVERAL DAYS | GRUNDRISSE

There are things worth more than amounts of time
& to open oneself to them is to
Voluntarily go up in smoke
 & then go on
Toward love & pretense with the full
Exaggerated
 force of the moment
Where difference arises in the both of you
 in the principle of being & not being
Seen
Containing a circulatory constancy
 in your own person
To determine a greater length of Time come
 to many many hands

GRUNDRISSE

He must obtain more value than he gives
Of course for me
 as a presupposed perennial subject
In my immediate existence
 on the other side of money there is
 only a symbol of something
Otherwise inexplicable
A changing view that does not follow
But gives & remains as it did before
 & if it gains a place in harmony

The whole matter becomes the opposite
Enough to become long hours
 of wonder correctly said

SEVERAL DAYS

Walk into the day & see
it with bleeding eyes

Deep among your roots there is
not a darkness you are not for
At the main altar of your unthinking innocence
I kneel in words that always echo too late
Echo too late until the end
Echo in the viscous fever of my obsession

I saw myself pass for commercial mirrors
I can break down
Any system in any step & love
you harder than any man forgive me
For the thought that I might do it
The thought that this might do it

Resurface the world when cast out

GRUNDRISSE

To be men not destroyers
To carry the deep anarchy
of recombinant phantoms to read each
Brick in the wall together
in all-sidedness
& be subsumed sometimes by titles
It will be shown later revealed later
a delusion in the various forms
That is consumed by all by the scarcity
of men of simultaneous working days
Never plainly summarized this relation
Gratification
& all the newcomers are at the bottom
of the question of
Threshold

SEVERAL DAYS

All apart you find yourself
Speaking gravely making
Atom bombs of understanding
Then I gather myself at what cost
Like the terror taken down from some trees
is their Yes

To live & write in that way
In which she orients a dream

Yesterday I showed up late for work
I probably thought about suicide
I smoked a cigarette with Beth

Later on she kissed my shoulder
I wasn't asleep I was not awake

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Bryan Koen

Ne Plus Ultra

A limb
disturbing the surface,
an image limning
that principle of instant distance

Arm amputated
by the frame, an index
of an existence

Lower limit:
in those pictures that precede
his extance, hand hovering,
the open palm
beholds

Upper limit:
foregoing frequencies
having seen to sound,
resonance is
returning

A Posture

The right angle withheld
in wakeful chambers.
Crescent harp perturbed,
her heart singed
by a name. Only
word from windows
what world will enframe.

And the same for
the year-round grit
of the grout. What
belongs to us is elsewhere
but not the law. New lexicon.
Devil out.

A Posture

Of symmetrical relation
we can only ask
our muscles what

their knots know,
those tissues whose
filaments linger

on the bone around
the bend, feed on
the dream of a home

at the end.
A signal to contract.

One hallway has a family
and we stand in it.

Its rooms are "taking" shape,
which is to say "removing."

Brian Quat

An Extroverted Suicide

“I’ll tell you a story,” he said.

“I don’t wanna hear a story,” said the other. A phone rang. Lots of phones rang, from time to time. And there were lots of voices.

“It’s a story about a simple guy, like me.”

The other looked at him and said nothing.

“He wants to commit suicide.”

The other looked back down to papers on his desk. The one talking was a couple feet away, on the other side. More voices, like they were drowning out his and the police man he was talking to simply could not discern his interesting story from the rabble of the flies.

“The interesting thing is that he doesn’t really have a good reason to do it. But in his mind he wants to do it because he doesn’t really have a good reason not to do it.” He stopped when the police man looked into his own gaze.

“Listen guy, shut the fuck up.”

“Okay.” Silence, at least for a minute.

Then he asked the cop, “Do you have a family?” It was a second until the cop answered, without annoyance.

“Yeah.”

“The guy I’m talking about had a family, like a mother and father, but that was it.” The cop got pissed again, looked back down again.

He continued: “Yeah, the guy I’m talking about didn’t have a wife or kids, never wanted ‘em really. He drank all day. Passed out at night, early though. And he would have dreams. Crazy dreams, regiler dreams. One crazy dream he fucked two chicks together, cuz he had two dicks. Only when he was done fucking them, the one he came with second tried killing the one he came with first, and while they were fighting each other, tits flopping around, sweat dripping on each other, he jerked off with both dicks, and when he came again, with both dicks, the dick he came with first fell off. But the craziest dream he had that he remembered was that one day he got drunk and walked around some park in town, sat down on a bench and fell asleep.”

“God damn it, Jim, will you *shut the fuck up?*”

Jim continued: “Yeah that was his craziest probly. But he wanted to do a self-murder. So he decided to take a bunch of sleeping pills and started to drink a lot, but right before he took his pills he realized that he might have some crazy dreams just before he died, so he passed out like usual.”

Now the cop was really pissed, and told Jim that. He told Jim that if they weren’t in his precinct, like in a bar or someplace like that, he would beat the living shit out of him.

“You don’t have to ‘beat the living shit’ out of me, Dan. Cuz I’m gonna off myself,” Jim said.

The cop laughed.

“Yeah, tonight.”

The cop laughed again.

“Yeah, I’m gonna kill you and then I’m gonna kill myself, tonight, in front of your family.”

There was buzzing about and a loud pound on the desk. Some flies buzzed right about Jim’s head, and he left, quite hastily.

The cop got home around twelve. He was surprised the door was unlocked, went right in. There was a buzz. Then a gun butt smashed him on the head. A light came on, just for an instant, and he saw his wife and kids on the couch, sitting, all tied up and gagged. A hand grabbed the back of his shirt and pulled him up to his knees. A second hand put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger. Jim stepped a bit forward and put the gun to his own head. He looked at the family. They were looking at him. Then he pulled the trigger.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Bob Whiteside

An avenging pair

An avenging pair
Of secret scissors
With a mouthful of Martian
Dust
High above the clouds
Practices the tight rope
Till falling into each stars
Summons the courage
To tear us apart

My girlfriend

My girlfriend wants to get rid
Of the table, the chairs are ugly she says, but it stands,
Things should not be put down
If they can stand, if they can stand
They can run, they can flee, they can charge

A blizzard of silence

A blizzard
Of silence is
A dry joke
Told by the sea
A gullish sun
In black shorts
Collared shirt
Wanders up to the moon
Are you filming this
No replied the summer grass

A blizzard of sunshine

A blizzard
Of sunshine
Scrambles through
Rough cross words of sand
Without lettering
Its intentions
Like a young girl
Nebulous in proportion
Who does not turn a head
It is not ironic
Yelled
The comic
It is a sat tire
Along the road
Singing of home
Without a peacock's chance
Of getting back

Some wear midlife like a blindfold

Some wear midlife like a blindfold,
And forget how to come and go,
They are certainly not trees
In the night, not the numbskulls
Of genius, what do they think about
When they are drunk,
Do they hurray to pick up
The rain and put it in their pockets,
My companion and surest hat the
Mounting snow, what of the
Memories of cemeteries, autumn
Barbwire fences with leaves stuck,
What do they think of the etcetera
Of decimals behind the moon,
And what if I don't bother to ask

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Atom Ariola

Siren Song

Open the prow to singing the angled breeze inched tighter but alone. Bound by black covers a white page through confession will outlive the body's high noon, or only its angles. With my ears I'll bite dark plum and night so soon to be through the willing air commits its ancient flowering. Here, between two stones, a lullaby unwinds the artery's famished circle.

Jonah and the Whale

My words in your mouth, your time in mine or the world so heavy under the water dark to the sound of a missing day, up and is the ocean. Don't from Ninevah call to me three nights swallowing lakes of silken violins threading your repair, the ribs a truant aria no spare vowel will care to stone. The world was made if I pray inside tongue and panic-jaws. Three nights if I pray where the stars go into falling, beneath the breath's deep immersion into breath, outlasting what returns to the body or the body's migration.

Light as Seen Through Bees' Wings

As for the sky or what's above it
we know almost nothing,
and from this direction understand
its meaning as an instant of what we hold
inside of us, the forms that both resist & dwell
beyond the vanishing point of reason,
an annunciation between my fingers
where I've pressed such ideas
to the shoreline's ledge, the friction that is born
of it becoming the inarticulate mirror
displaced by wind and erasure
the way a sparrow's wing might tip,
finally, the ocean over.

But maybe it's true, to lose yourself
in the water's annulment is easy enough,
& where there is a forgetting
that lives within these vast octaves
arraigns the softness of familiar shoulders,
bald wind pilfering sackcloth and silence
pulled from a kite string, adding up
to this moment we call a life.

Near the sea there is the sound
of new buds purpling their veins from branches,
pollen dust eclipsed by the cult of the highway overpass,
the angel's velocity lost in halos
of truck exhaust & plush hydrocarbons
that secret their gatherings just before dawn.

It's not hard to remember the story
of a girl who became the cry of a gull,
how the water slid back into its own skin,
that memory of flight filtering the spaces
between metaphors, sympathies paupering
where even song is a febrile pitch
lit by the path of worry- stones
and the day's final divestment.

Blindfolded, we return to the city
with the road tightened to our bodies,
dreaming of the tilt that attends each
silence that breaks the solitude
we awaken with in our hands, what is
out of balance yet held together carelessly,
that yearn east of our passings
now burdened with the outbreak
of sawed faces like our own.

What comes back in sleep proffers only
its asking in waves by slow degree, the emptiness
inside of each thing pulling gravity itself
from the sky within us we cannot touch.

The rags that adorn our eyes are cut from lilac petals,
& through the horizon's arrival we return
our apologies to that moment, weaning the clarity
that holds between loss and its disavowal
into another kind of distance.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Anna Lena Phillips

Endearment

Spam, pus, surl—
a glum slump.
Spur us—palm
a lump sum, lug up
maps, rum,
a lamp. Sup.
Amp us up,
sugar plum.

Endearment

I am
one flame.
In a fen,
I nap, a foal.
I pin on
an opal,
a mane of oil,
lap a plain
omen. Limp in,
imp. A nip,
a flap. Fie,
foe. Fail,
pal of mine.

Endearment

Be bold,
o,
do: bevel,
vee,
beloved.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Andrew Haley

Electric

my heart is tingling at an excited frequency
listening to the lightening storm
and looking at old messages from you

my heart is the lightening storm twittering and flashing
with endocrine chemicals all bearing your scent
you lovely world dressed as a woman

risen from the ivy pond
i want you to carry my life in your womb
and dress the wounds

of my life's world with your indian hair
you are the nemesis of all the wild things
that sit still instead of lighting

the air on fire with their marvelous wings
i cannot fathom any deeper purgatory
like some vegas airport full of lines

than standing another moment without your eyes
gazing from the computer
it is a cold and mechanical world

the monkeys we fired into space
are cold features of a museum
the robots we fire into space

carry love songs from our parents generation
incised on golden disks for aliens
who will be born from frantic alien foam

millennia after the last two horses starve
curled on a bath mat in a sky scraper made of living glass
it is the horror of knowing that drives them up the stairs

it is the surety of their horses hearts that curls them
together on the floor of the master bath
an astronomical warming

that for all the bleeding seconds of loam
and the carnivorous uncovering of the worlds trenches
has led warm to warm

for the love of all the asteroids and the blank satellites
broadcasting episodes of friends
ten thousand years after the world ends

i want you as my astronaut wife
to climb with me into the tethered capsule
and rise above the dust

Apology

in the morning
when the crows had waved their wings
and carried themselves home
his body lay in the street
bare and bones
his heart unbeating in its white unfinished church

the old women passed
buying bread

the old man washed the night
from his stairs
with a hose

and the young men were sleeping
dreaming of crows
and the young women sat on their beds
hating their looms

no one stood at her window watching
as first the ants
then the centipedes
then the moths
came to carry him down
to their holes by the sea

Above Nebraska

today you are a Nebraskan town
in a patchwork of square fiefdoms
dull with fallow or in green circles
arched inside their squares
of scorpion corn

the rain is seldom but it rains
and the water rushes from the leaves
that wrap each ear of corn
like a baby Indian

the fields sop until the soil drains
spilling in fan shapes
and open hand shapes
lacework and latticework of ferns
and fronds comingling

bleeding rivulet to rivulet
until the soil
crumbles
into a winding stream

and all the droplets draining
from the scorpion corn
become a river of shrubs
and sandbars rising like vertebrae
from the riverbed below

today I am a plane
and I pass over you
thirsting my eyes
on your low maneuvers

you are a town
girdled by square fields
earth imagined by engineers
circles inside squares
lushly and obediently watered

I pass over you in my white fatigue
with my heart shaped almondine
so small at this height
you look up from your world

and see its tiny passage
like a crystal or a freezing
rivulet on a winter window
only for a moment
for you are busy farming

Berryman in Bridgetown

All my generation – those piddling four –
All my generation come to think on it
With their glitter and glass
Brood in the methane gasp

While sorry I amid the rains
Do nothing on my wide Pacific shelf
Wanting more than these dragoons
With their Beathoofian clatter

What's the matter? Head gone wrong?
I see a shield amid the trees. Amid?
Among the trees, there,
I see a cohort's shield hanging low

A painted dragon on it and my own
A ghost's beard hanging from a naked face

Andrea Scott

The Boundless Abyss of Time

What a tiny part of the boundless abyss of time has been allotted to each of us – and this too shall vanish in eternity. Marcus Aurelius
Meditations 12:32

Winter's austere mapping, the cold trance of telephone wire and breath speechified in smoke.

'Tis the age of prolific terseness, the year of primetime eliminations and make-believe meritocracy.

The landscape grows frenetic. The mind of winter finally outdoes itself. And the thin screens of thought are replicated in florescent sparrows, meditation tracks of synchronized rivers and birds, avatars of pixelated selves suspended across the deep, invisible archives of speech projected nowhere—save the vast and starry hieroglyphics of half-listening members uploaded onto vacation spreads near links to parrots dancing to Ray Charles.

Click on this hand, which opens to this heart, which suspends canary red. Hit post and watch it spread across social networks.

But what then, the reticent student asks, of the rhetoric of longing?

Losing one's cadence—when the words kept in step, but the lines fell apart.

Maybe you should go

<inward >

where winter makes its mark

<inward>

where solitude, that clichéd casualty of our time,
measures thoughts against the template's cool remove.

Ha!

* * *

The campus is afield. These pre-postindustrial settings – removed from the city, yet hardwired for success. A fraternity of names lined up like seconds at the gates.

And the logic of persuasion in the name of making belong.

Power is the only point that's willfully obvious and surprisingly austere.

You have to fight or go back home, the pious converts say.

You have to plow your way through your line of opponents, the cranky sage affirms.

These people are not your friends, but if you make them your friends, they'll do more for you.

And on the life of the mind...

You want a grant when you publish a book. Look at the catalogues. See where you can make yourself belong.

* * *

And there were birds in the sunny juvenile pop of Tarantino layered in Simon and Garfunkel amidst the digital refrains of voices doubling over time.

I clicked through the woods where a momentary measure in the shapeless sound of trees alliterates each cadence in snow. The owl becomes a face that splinters into text that sketches the arid etymology of tree.

The text's exhaustive possibility... The instant download of time's suspense...

And the unnerving tick tocks, the wading in a blue pool or night song or dawn song's cuckoo, the unstringing of that unsong—again.

A Mourn Clipped Snow

for J.J. and his father

I.

Fissure tree sky-ed in the sullen blue –
Bone-sculpted mud in a temporal remote –

The wind culls a sprig of ash from the hills and slips beneath the sea.

II.

When a spirit flew in the sandy wind,
a pine transfixed a scream that needled into your limbs and wept.
A woman comforted you in sleep, when different parts of your body talked.
 And there were vengeful voices swirling like the paisley eye of the peacock.
And there was a dream peopled with the echoes of speeding cars and trees.
And there was you: a man suspended in an acre of clay
until his discomfort yielded to the opening of song.

The sea tossed up a city of stars
and a net of nerves in your thighs went numb.

III.

Father, once is bearer of seed, the almond tree.

 That mouth-urn gold unfurls
 in wishbone flowers , stiffened hips.

 The pine-columned cliffs unease.

IV.

*I notice the trees have hushed their tongues.
I notice their wrists are twisted and pale.
A low cloud of dust hovers above the canyon – arid blues on folds of gold –
and I am neither frightened nor at ease.*

We carried the voice of the crow, its cacophonous crackle dispersing, its circular flight drawing us in. We broke bread and drank of the holy one.

V.

(and a man walked on hindered limbs for seven days and seven nights)

(and the mirrors were covered under supple cloth)

(and the village wept streams that turned rivers that turned blood.)

(and we were nothing in our being one)

VI.

His mouth is that flower whose seeds the wind pulls until the field is a field of his small heart opening in your hands. Your hands shatter in your heart which shatters poppy red.

VII.

I feel him not feeling. Blunt flakes of light stiffening the dark. Errant curls of snow melting at the river's mouth.

Amanda Bramley

Cereus Things

I don't know why, but it was the two-pronged fork that made me completely drop my marbles or lose my basket or whatever it was that my mother always said happened to women at certain times of their lives. *Especially if you get married, Sally. You'll have to set fire to the house like I did. Oh, you won't have a choice. You'll drop those marbles.*

She told me many times "it" would happen to me too. And it did.

For a whole week, this fork sat on our back patio steps. I had never seen it before even inside our house. Yet there it appeared, positioned awkwardly, almost aiming at feet descending the stairs.

Nothing ever gets moved in our house. Well that's not true. Items get picked up, used for a purpose, and then set down wherever they stopped being useful. They're simply dropped like something terrible had happened to the person holding it (to my husband), so that he suddenly had to abandon the object, leave it where it landed. That is, until someone (me) found it as a clue or an artifact of the past.

It's a predilection I know he inherited from his parents. The few times we visited them, before we bought our house, they had stuff everywhere. Rooms stacked with random bills, used Q-Tips, old heaters, screwdrivers,

tubs of toys. I don't even remember all of it. But, wall to wall, floor to almost ceiling, there was just a bunch of stuff. And it didn't bother them. It doesn't bother him.

Nothing really ever gets put where it belongs in our house, not by Owen. The pink plastic ring from around the skim milk carton is one of my favorite disregarded items. Owen peels it off of a new gallon and sets it beside the sink. If I don't throw it away, there it would lie, three days later, waiting to fall into the disposal, the mouth of a nasty hell. There have been many nights I have reminded him about how things need to be put away. Put away where they belong. Where they should be.

"Doesn't it bother you? How can it not bother you?" I'll ask. He doesn't have much to say as he looks blankly at me with his eyes wide open. But when he is looking for something, say his cigarettes or the ketchup, he'll ask where it is before he's even started looking.

"Where did I put my smokes?" I can't tell if he's asking me or himself, but usually, under my breath, I add a comment.

"Well, if you would keep track of the things when you have them in your hands... If you would put things where they belong..." It never makes any difference though.

When I come home in the evenings from Rhonda's Paints and More, where I log at least forty hours a week, I like to change out of my paint-splattered green t-shirt and denim apron and then sit outside with a cold beer.

I bring swatches home and I shuffle them like a deck of cards while the dog chases fireflies. It's how I unwind. For five days, the fork was there: a carving fork with a light brown wooden handle. Outside of our house.

I first noticed it on the day I painted the living room yellow. Canary yellow, I think. Fred, the other mixer, and I are always getting to take home different gallons of paint, especially if we "accidentally" mess up a customer's

order. So about once a month, I come home with a new color—Sea Side Blue, Plum Crazy, Yellow Alive—and renew the wall colors of different rooms in my house.

I alternate between the kitchenette, living room, master bedroom, and the den. No two Julys ever have the same combinations of rooms and shades. I don't think Owen has ever said much about the current (or even past) shades on the walls. As long as the television plays "Wheel of Fortune" and he can tend to his petal babies outside, he seems pretty happy. Well, content at least.

Since we bought the house, before we were married and against our parents' wishes, he has planted numerous blooms throughout the seasons: hydrangeas, irises, gardenias (I like the smell of those the best), jonquils, and right now it's the night lilies. Usually, he scatters the seeds and sometimes forgets about watering and caring for the sprouts. So they grow, fade to brown, shrivel and die. He hasn't been forgetting about these night lilies though. But wait, he's always correcting me:

"They are called Night Blooming Cereus. Why can't you ever remember that, Sally?" He has a large area of the yard dedicated to these white horn-shaped things that only bloom at night. He even gives them each their own name. I'm not kidding. He names them: Brandi, Tammy, Missy, Brenda.

"Why Brenda?" I asked the day before the first fork day. I hadn't painted anything in awhile and I guess I was getting moody, bored as he would put it. Brenda sounded like a name for a brunette. All the other names seemed like they would be given to blonde women, like me.

"Because that one is a Brenda. She's different. Someone special," he said after he shaved off his thick beard I had grown to love.

So I stood in silence for a moment, staring at the black wisps of hair that had landed on the white sink. Of course, he didn't clean those up. I didn't really have a response to his "Brenda explanation" and anyway, he didn't

give me any room to ask for further information because he was busy guessing the puzzle for the Phrase category. The contestant had guessed an “R” and my husband was already yelling, “The answer is: When You’re Hot, You’re Hot. It’s easy, you idiot!” at the screen. His large calloused hands waved frantically in the air. And Brenda escaped my thoughts.

I had been flipping through a new set of sample hues and was trying to decide between Canary Yellow and San Francisco Saffron. One of them had been used in the den before and I wanted to do something new to the living room. I didn’t want to reuse a color.

Which one had I used before? Wait. Which one did I end up using?

Fred might remember. I always talk with Fred about paint, about how I was supposed to have become an artist. He’s a widower and he listens well. He says it’s because his home is so quiet. He doesn’t mind my constant talking. We discuss the abstracts I would have painted with oils. He knows proper names for things, like fresco and tempera. I think I even told Fred about the fork.

The first fork day, I came home before lunch, ate a piece of shepherd’s pie from the previous night, and had the two main walls of the front room complete when Owen called. The phone rang and I got nervous. He said he would be meeting his brother at the range to shoot a few ammunition rounds.

“Go ahead and eat without me,” he said.

When I share anecdotes about Owen to Fred, he never believes me that I married a man who likes to garden and also likes throwing lead with his dad’s old nine millimeter. Fred’s only met Owen once when I had a flat tire and Owen had to come pick me up. They didn’t really say much to each other. Owen probably made a joke to Fred about feeling sorry for him because he has to spend all day with me or something like that.

Although when we got in our old pickup truck, Owen laughed and said, “I thought I had something to worry about with Fred. Boy was I wrong. You never told me he was old, bald and ugly.” I just rolled my eyes and smiled. I always told him I wasn’t attracted to Fred. But he liked to make me think that he had something to worry about. Like somebody else would want to snatch me up. I think he knows it makes me feel good. I can’t make those kinds of jokes about his job. I don’t think he works with any women, except for the care he gives those white things that come alive and open up in the dark.

I don’t think Owen had been working the first fork day. He works odd hours for the Illinois State Department of Transportation. Sometimes he is up in a little bucket and is attached to a truck when he’s working on light poles. Other times, he drives a riding lawn mower in the little places between highway lanes.

I used to worry about cars. Those speeding cars. They move so fast and people don’t pay attention to those signs, even though they say things like, “Fines Doubled in Work Zones” and “Hit a Worker, Go to Jail.”

“Sally, listen,” he would say after I cry and tell him how I don’t want to be a widow. I go on and on about one random day I would be adding magentas, yellows, and blacks together in chemical formulas and I would get this phone call. I dreaded phone calls for the first few years of our marriage.

“I’ll get this phone call. A voice will ask if he is speaking with Mrs. Morrison. I would have to say yes, even though I would know what he would say next: I’m sorry ma’am. I hate to inform you...your husband has been... Those are the only words I would be able to hear, Owen. Think about it,” I would make my fingers into the shape of a phone, for emphasis.

“Sally, listen. I do my job. I do it well. Please. You have other things to worry about. Please don’t add this to your anxiety list.” He always calls it my anxiety list. I don’t know why. I didn’t, I don’t have a list. I mean, I keep a running grocery list and a to-do list, but I’ve never even heard of an anxiety list.

I meant to mention my anxiety list on the first fork night. When I had finished with the two walls, the San Francisco Saffron accent walls in the living room, I cracked a beer and went to sit outside.

I decided on San Francisco Saffron after all, I think. Not the Canary one. I mean, I didn't want my living space to be named after a bird. But no matter the color, the fumes begin to get to me. You'd think I'd be used to them and in fact, I do actually enjoy the smell. It's sharp. It's powerful. But two walls in one day is my limit.

So this fork remained. Not on the ground or on the patio table, but on the steps. At first I didn't notice it. I tilted my head back and let the cold bubbles fizz down my throat. And then I saw it.

This two-pronged fork. Outside.

Why would there be this devil-looking thing out here? Owen hadn't grilled anything in awhile. Could he have been using it for those girls? For Brenda? I didn't see any dirt on it. There existed no evidence, no good reason why this thing would be there. This fork. I was going to ask him about it. I was going to tell him that he was adding items to my anxiety list.

I would have related it to the way I feel when he throws his dirty clothes in random places around the house. He likes to drape the sweaty fabric over the tops of open doors. I don't understand it. We've had many fights about this. I know it's a left-over effect of his parents. Or it's proof of what my mother always told me about marriage.

Something always happens, she would say. And then she would warn me. I would drop my marbles, the few that I got from her and not from my dad. If she were still living, she would tell me it always begins with clothes. It happened that way for her. She would remind me all the time. She found a shirt, two sizes too small for my dad to have said that it belonged to her. And then she knew. And then she dropped her basket, lost her basket, dropped her marbles.

For awhile I resorted to leaving notes pinned to those dirt-covered shorts. *Please put me in the hamper. I want to go in the wash.* But it never helped. It never changed. In fact, the first fork day there was a set of day-worn clothes on the bedroom door knob.

I went inside early, after my two beers because the mosquitoes were especially vicious that night. I had been so excited about the new color (that took me so long to pick), Canary Yellow, no, San Francisco Saffron, so I only noticed the laundry when I came inside. And by the time he came home, I had forgotten about what was outside. The fork slipped my mind.

Then after the first fork night, I had evening shifts at Rhonda's for the rest of the week. His girls, those cereus things, began expanding, taking up the whole side of the fence and reaching up the steps. They reached out at ascending feet. I know they never would grow thorns, but there was something almost evil about the way they wanted to touch me when I came home.

I thought they were jealous of all the splatters of color I wore. The yellows and purples on the bottom of my jeans passed by the flowers as I stepped up those stairs.

They were jealous. I know it. After all, they only wear white. I get all the colors I want. And Owen wears grass stains from all over the city.

He could have been anywhere in our city when I came home on the fifth fork night. He didn't even give me the nervousness of a phone call. I came up the steps in the back, passing those cereus blooms, the pointing petals, the wide mouths. Concentrating on what they could possibly want to say to me, wondering if there had been a new gallon of milk opened or if shorts would be hanging in some random place and waiting for me.

Then I noticed the fork. Five days later and that fork still sat on the steps. Brenda and Missy or whatever Owen called the flowers almost covered it, but I saw the silver. The sharp silver points.

I thought about the night my mother made the fire in the living room, set the room on fire, I mean. Coming down the stairs to the heat, the white flames, I remember running outside wearing ripped pajamas. But it was dark outside, so she said it would be okay. She said my dad wouldn't get to come home. The heat reached us in the yard like it wanted to touch us.

It was definitely sharp. I touched the miniature pitch fork with my index finger. A small drop of blood ran down to my wrist. Maybe next I would use crimson in the bedroom, at least one wall. That's a good name, not after a flying animal or a city, not after someone special who I didn't know. My blood landed on one of the white petals. One drop of color.

I used the object. It could have belonged to Satan. The fork worked well. One by one, those two parallel lines of metal ripped, dug, pulled. Roots, pieces of white silk, pollen in the air. Samples of flowers, like swatches absent of color burst through the dark sky. Calyxes and foliage flew up like flames. Cereus petals rained and marbles dropped.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Afton Wilky

5 poems

“You can’t tell the story”
“LIKES IT SPICY”
“We scooped it with paper”
“We who specialize in turning”
“S K OUT S en”

YOU CAN'T TELL THE STORY without talking about

who ruled from the eighth through the 15th centuries. Today, there are hundreds of words that begin with , signals of origins. One is *arope*, from the *rubb*, indicating luxurious sweetness as well as its lineage.

, 22 miles of family make

arope—or *arop i* in dialect—with mus must, which prises skins. Eight liters of this are ooked and strained to make *arope* thick enough , though elsewhere the yrup might be

something that everyone's grandmother says three brothers now run

arop their father founded Back when such *arope* was access used in

father, 75 remembers pulling a mule bearing two large pitchers through town; one contained just the yrup, while the other was filled with the yrup- ooked uit.

Arrope is no longer

each

eyewitness adds.

the eye

LIKES IT SPICY

might have strayed always
a wandering eye

often invites the object of affect

, sources say.

an insider reveals.

You're so bad. You're gonna

get in trouble!

One booked

room th at

wasn't there.

i t doesn't stop!

put the moves on

opening

Mo Connect cut.

just eet away! touchy-feely and

tried to pull this area behind a curtain,

up

an insider

just can't seem to help himself

We scooped it with paper-
played
shapes
worked by nimble hands into shells
A stuffing is sealed within the
shells, and then
that stuffing pop
a big white
so slowly had had
fallen apart. It was
brimming.
Some
watch and notice there's something eerie about this
hear the tings of silver aginst celain, the clinks of
the occasional "Would you pass the latter?"
The
white
arrivi at a moment when I was beginning to brace the
well as the new To finish it
What struck me was how
coming together was an odd emanation of a history.
its aftermath was a small affirmation of continuity and stubbornness, and of the hybridized creations that give
vitality to the New

We _____ who specialize in turning _____ castoffs into modern pieces _____ share the inspired _____.

way to the landfill to gauge our interest in their old fu_n _____.

Q. How would you describe your _____ style?

A. I tend to gravitate toward old _____ and _____ conventional combinations _____.

_____ The details _____ of a piece dictate my restyling choices.

Q. Tell us about your latest find.

A. I got this _____.

_____. The small scale and clean lines made it the perfect candidate for a modern makeover.

Q. How did you go about this amazing transformation?

A. We took _____ et down to its frame, replaced _____ it in a graphic _____.

Q. What do you love most about performing fu_n _____ face-lifts?

A. We have _____, lots of creative freedom _____ Every day, we try new ideas and _____ combos to make one-of-a-kind pieces. Then, I get to pick my favorite transformations _____!

Q. Any tips for wannabe fu_n _____ rescuers?

A. Don't be intimidated by the ugliness of a piece. As long as it has good bones, it can be rejuvenated.

SPECIALTY: RESCUING AND RE-_____ OVERING

Q. What led you to start _____?

A. I have always repurposed old fu_n _____, and I love collecting old fu_n s_____ that tell stories _____.

_____ to rejuvenate these pieces, _____.

We _____ library and select _____.

_____ we roll up our sleeves and re-create worn-out fu_n _____.

Q. Where do you find great fu_n _____ to make over?

A. I've been known to rummage through abandoned _____ junk _____ to find great pieces. We've gained a reputation for adopting rejects, so sometimes people stop by _____ on their

S K OUT S en

in addition to smelling like all manner of from
to , smell like many things
. Often composite

scent can remind of
of of

of f e t n
And yet,

complex come a profound

formative process," says fornia

Often on't come out until such later."
affected by low apes are
ated in the ard, , and
then by low ade aged.

together T t tango

on un to understand low ey wo
we ow, we w y,

tain ; were e e e wo e
wi e owe an oran mar
ma aroma

aromas cannot be duplicated.

significance

they grew up drinking

associ , our sens memori
ink t u c dictate
c t recount

c t tu u t t t t,
c u t c t

c c c ut

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Adam Katz

from Nosegays for Nancy Nothingness

1

I love you so much Nancy Nevermore
Your friction tastes like nicotine and rain
I bought this flower from the for you store

Envision psilocybin times champagne
I cherish both your ins and your between
That much raised to the power of Chopin

Nap tessellate like ladles in our teens
The very words I say about you ache
Pajamas only favorite pair of jeans

Lets read each other passages from Blake
Lets have sex with your sister Nancy Nor
They say that she gives excellent rapport
Hold hands with me lets traipse across the lake

The nosebleed that she gave me was a door

Describe your body to me Nancy Nor
What blush is there to blazon really where
Would I begin from where should I end for

There is not all that much at which to stare
My stripes are real my braids are made of steam
The bread crumb whom I come from very poor

The priest who introduced us but a dream
My name is made of paper cuts my room
Has nectarines inside you want to seem

The scent of my deodorant is whom
And this is the laboratory where
I spin my own love hate mail on the loom

Am I like all the other boys are or
There infinitely many of me more

Shall I compare thee to a winter's day?
Thou art more tenuous and heroin-chic.
Wild winds do thicken the February gray,
And winter always lasts another week.

Sometimes nystagmographistries infer
Oneiropomp at work beneath the bleak
Obnubilous palpebra. Oftener
The welkin seems to gape as if to speak,
And in its indecision, perishes.

But you can modulate from black to plaid
More swiftly than the sex one cherishes
Hundreds of memories of having had
With someone have a tendency to fold
In on themselves like roses in the cold.

6

I'm all about the moment man
I'll write that bitch an aria to slam

Like Lucifer in Paradise I tapdance at the foot of God 'til dawn.

I've never done this much at once before.

With ninjas in my criticism

Take apart the paper airplane war.

Bad quartos in my bank account I strut from this to that.
My Oakleys dipped in kryptonite I look at number one.
With oodles of Jew-usury I loan; Between Deep Thought
& Wintermute I take your favorite pawn. Like Dante in
The Renaissance both enemies & presidents' / Mischiefs will lapidarily lampoon.

Behold the boy I always am

With ogres in my sinuses I hum;
On lyres of spider laser, vaguely strum.

And always stand up straight when you're alone.

With pockets full of broken glass I hit the fucking street.

Hey cupcake want to talk about me when do you expire
The DJ told the dance floor that the party was on fire
You wouldnt kiss me for a sonnet what about a dollar
Want me to slap your pigtails if you fall into my collar

Then suddenly, the party rocked out to a brand new beat.

I think that I'm in love with Jenn JeJune.

Lets have each others pregnancies and honey on the moon!
Get down on your postfeminist and suck the fucking street.
My necktie splotched with viruses I walk the fucking street.
It makes me me forever if you suffocate come when

Then suddenly, the party rocked out to a brand new motherfucking beat.

I'll snip my nape if you don't take me back;
I want to fuck you even though you're black.

Last night for want of company the beach
I poured myself a Camel Turkish Gold
And listened to the static of the surf
And listened to the static of the surf.
Leaning against the bumper of my car
I thought about decisions I had made
And was OK with most of them. So far.
I made a wish for justice on a star.
The nicotine made me a little dizzy
Because Im used to smoking my own pain
Elizabeth Macbeth said she was busy
And here I find alone myself again
Listening to the static of the surf
My favorite spot the empty parking lot

After we broke up from behind
The first time that I came inside
TV room on the fold out bed
That time when we were stoned

When we were in Nevada rocks
Alone beneath the dome of God
That time with mirrors in our socks
That night when we just touched

Then drove around the White Album
Met Jeff and Teddy at the beach
Who had just had a marathon
Of Kevin Smith films each

That kiss when we were crying in the sun
Till you were just a quickly shrinking train

If I were God Todd Kate said massaging
My prostate I would always make it rain.
Like soccer tribes of asterisks add oneths
Against the skylight under which we lay
Shucked to our nunchucks making fun of Brahms

The noses of the snow moths sprained their moms.
Rain straight as nails enough to make folks stay
Home masturbating sacrificing months
At Yahoo Chess resin abuzzed again
Lugubriously Instant Messaging

Their friends devoutly dotting for the Mets
And listening to Schumanns String Quartets.

Then one day, automatically, the sky
Would be so blue that everyone would cry.”

I met a ghost today named Nancy Yes.
And am as of this word in love with her
The sun is like a Mylar newspaper
And though, of course, discourse cannot express
Her architecture, pending introduce
Dear Zach, when with the fingers of my stare
Till they unplug me swear I I could nor
Detect one mump of Braille there trace her face

Believe me. Also tomboy. In the field
This morning Nancy both to feel the wind
And me stripped us to jeans against her small
Breasts so I stood up straight and kissed her. Then
The sky ripped. Through the tattered slot, a huge
Hand picked me like a tree, and disappeared.

Dawn. Pondering Scriabin, I
'm whaling on my jive low-F
Lee Oskar, 'ddorsed with dew, still slightly high.

This fog is like obfuscity itself.
Thank you for who I am today
Goodbye I am to wait for poof

What more is there. What else is left to say?
Prove both of us just got here is a lie
& I'll make love to myself yesterday

For showing me backstage behind the sky
Thanks. Never have I ever been so bright
List what we are afraid of how where why

When whom death deafness you recite
With me: I have not yet begun to write.

BlazeVOX 11

Spring 2011

Adam Field

from Apparition Poems

#547

Spirit melts, leaving
butter particles strewn
along leaf-veined avenues—
how absurd, that it should
be in poetry, hiding there
like a cat in a dry bath-tub,
like water in a drain, like
so much dark moon.

#1654

The traces of this woman, who *is*
a woman, go all over the world, as
I don't objectify what I have no
need to objectify. Can you guess
who she is? Can you guess why I
would need to write in code so
that all the little poets don't place
me in brine vats? I heard him say
all this, and let me tell you, it was
sickening. Haven't we heard how
bodies in text are obsolescent? This
is where I jumped in, and I am the
final eye, that sees all. Black and
white impulse, red veins. Pleasures.

#1622

Poor Schopenhauer's axioms:
all in the will is a fight to beat
other wills. I see him in his
meager room, his will bent
not to do much, save himself
the trouble of fighting these
ineluctable battles, but not
able to refrain from eating,
breathing, shitting, fucking,
all those simple acts that are
will-to-survival, but Arthur
casts himself into a future of
power, not knowing when it
arrived it was to be a crass joke,
ended with face in turtle soup.

#1604

Here's where shifts (red shifts)
happen in perspective, I thought,
slopping dark meat onto my plate,
here's where angles converge to
put me past the nest. General
laughter over pictures, womb-
like spaces, but I was in hers as
I was in with them. It hurts, but
he's dead, I never met him. It's
a shame, I never met him. Blood
moves through air: between her,
me, them— leaves on concrete.

#1601

What words get sent up
on sharp frequencies are
fractious, bent from pain,
Hephaestus in iron-groans,
what goes up sticks around,
so that base/top get covered,

all things resonate like pitch-
forks, tweaked by conductors
before their final, triumphant
performance for a hall empty
of bodies, filled to capacity.

an online journal of voice

BlazeVOX



11

buffaloFOCUS | Shinwell Johnson

buffaloFOCUS | Shinwell Johnson

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 an ebook of sorts of minimal poems from our new poetry editor Shinwell Johnson, and what better way to introduce him to our audiences than through his poetry. So hurray!

Tuesday is a Wet Sock is a wonderful group of one line minimal poems that bring to mind the work of Aram Saroyan and Robert Grenier, although he will point out in an instant, this is not language poetry. He would say this is a reduction, a condensate, a single drip rolling down the frosty glass of American poetry. I say it is great fun and I hope you enjoy it as much as I do. So please give a warm welcome to Shinwell! Hurray!

Rockets, Geoffrey

:-)

Geoffrey Gatzka
Editor & Publisher

A photograph of a person's lower legs and feet standing on a wet, reflective surface during a rainstorm. The person is wearing dark pants and sandals. The ground is dark and highly reflective, showing the person's legs and the surrounding rain. The background is blurred, showing a fence and more rain. The text "Tuesday is a Wet Sock" and "Shinwell Johnson" is overlaid on the image.

Tuesday is a Wet Sock
Shinwell Johnson

Tuesday is a Wet Sock

Shinwell Johnson

Tuesday is a Wet Sock by Shinwell Johnson
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Printed in the United States of America

eBook design by Geoffrey Gatza

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2 4 6 8 0 9 7 5 3 1

BlazeVOX

What do we live for,
if it is not to make life less difficult to each other?

—George Eliot

For:

Ted

Kristie

Donna

Robin

David

Ma & Pa Kelleher

Tuesday is a Wet Sock

Stepmother of dismembered girl charge with Bigamy

That weight I lost last month, I seem to have found again.

There is cold and snow in much of us

In Arizona our gun laws are very liberal

Death by Misadventure

We don 't know why the plane went on a wobbly

I always said I'd enjoy going to his funeral

Well that's just plain bughouse

You don't fit the bill now do you.

When they look in the mirror they want to see themselves looking back.

Don 't come the old boy scout at me sunshine

The bridge that doesn't collapse does not make the news

The exclamation point machine

The opposite of 'all hell breaks loose'

The very model of modern English major

Chia Guevara

Bath and Body doesn't Work

The best thing to do is not say anything to anyone

Manolo Colonic

You look old enough to know better

A petulant and vengeful man

Your toothbrush tastes funny

You were awesome until you got old

Just slap a stick on it and all the regular kids will love it.

Oh goodie, let's have lots

He can't hurt you now; he's shot his bolt

Yes from what I gather,
I wish you would
Gather up for good

The problem with stupid people is that they will never know
how smart they are not.

Printering

even our own names refer to something so far removed from our selves
they could mean almost nothing at all.

The man who plays the clown makes me sad

Even the weather is maudlin.

Fisherman stranded on rock is genius

You cannot talk about past glories while having fun in the present

Almost and indiscernible difference

Magical madrigals

It's not what a writer can write, but what a reader will accept

Scamouflage

look at your shoes in shame.

a nightingale sang in Tiananmen square

iHave

scuppered

I will endeavor to ascertain

I heard you made a dog's breakfast of your reading

Assiduity: Constant or close attention to what one is doing

We pack a lot of heat on D

opprobrious

SONOWON

Snowow

They got a bit above themselves

He is a dangerous intellectual

Whack up the ginger

Paper cannot feel humiliation

In the Florida room David sits with dissonance

The women of pop go hop

Very much looking forward to seeing this

he looks the part of the louche prince in thrall

overcome a crippling stammer

Never mind blowing out 50 candles

He's all boots and waistcoats

The future isn't a place anymore

crumbling into a kipple, the prose of the obsolete soars

clean, rational, clutterless

I tripped up on something old girl
It knocked the wind right out of me
I'll be right as rain in just a moment

a tiggerish trail of breadcrumbs

a commanding view of a wild goose chase

tiggerish

I felt like everyone was kicking me out of rooms

He cannot get up from the writings
like a crab his legs send no signals

We never condemn anyone who does not know what they were doing

I let her play the piano and take her mind off of things; I'll go to the river

gold amongst the dross of the deregulated

A sick man is never where he wants to be

I will be generous enough to not envy you

Flashion

Is it him or his brother?

We can't just stand here like ducks in weather

Reality now means fantasy

A possible meaning is in the words

Slower Manhattan

Grits and Grammar

Putting on the Grits

Pumpkin pious

Indivisible pudding

This guys wearing a real genius suit

enfant terrible

Everyone always tells me I smell like Marijuana

The magician is immune to his own magic.

An old woman places a cat in the dustbin

Softly, softly catchee monkey

Bagoosh

Is this America or Soviet Russia

I have a PhD in comparative poetics from Glenn Beck University

That's dirty canasta

Nunusual

Everything about her screams Audrey Hepburn except her mouth

He was executed beautifully

Even cats distrust him

Clock watcher

It may sound like devil talk, but it means something.

We all know too much to live

The apple pie flakes of orange autumn

I stepped in a bit of her aftermath, some of it got on my shoe

He stubbed his toe on the brick of fate

Atheist doctors are twice as likely to make decisions that shorten life as doctors who are deeply religious

a snapshot of what might have been

The hand to hand combat was frustrating

So weird, some of the expressions
on that women's face broke conventions

I spent hours with them and the mechanics were effortless

There is so much detail in real life you would think it was plastic

enjoy the game as you would a sand box

The tootsie roll owl counts out one, two, three

You're afraid of the dark, I'm sure he will understand

I quit the job and walked away from everything I knew

Safety was a concern so we opened chilled champagne

I can't do it anymore; I'm scared all the time.

Stay tuned right here where we will reveal
which star has the best look of the season

Live luscious
Lazy plums

a red balloon
on a black stick

Flamboyant and elegantly
The fairytale that crumbled

Are you wearing my underwear?

Dinosaurs are everywhere

The sound doesn't match up with her mouth

scribblings of gunpowder

Containing sparkles of pointing disposable laughter

We know too much about failure

I always strove to rise above

Procrastination is the thief of time

Sanctimony makes me feel warm joys of perspective

This will be a day for new vacuums

I lived in Boulder for only 4 weeks
but people always call me Colorado

What we do see is more people getting realistic

ninelleven

No arrests have been made.

Scrabable

The wrong ideals won the 20th Century

An old woman places a cat in the dustbin

All things combined, it is a sound way to make a recovery

Let's not say things we cannot take back

Don't be polite; you'll regret it later

yesterdayesterday

Hypoxic Coriolis effect:

You throw your dangling words in a spinning world
past the point of aim, curling to a point that is no longer

The old hat shrinks like a wet sock.

The salt pods glister

Opening to a lemonade sky

You'll eat a lot of strange crap if you don't have any sugar about

I'll put up with raw eggs and seaweed if wild oats are for pudding

Montage cowboy in midnights showcasing

You are nothing but a waitress in disguise

The wonders of fire

Nice Sork

The crime was making news

Police pronounce live woman dead

I hope this hopes

You have my deepest sympathies

I have been accused of being the only friend who assigns homework

He must be smoking Dutch cleanser

I'm going to get blood on my cute sweater

Shinwell Johnson lives in Buffalo, NY.
He is a teacher, writer and volunteer for the Food Bank of WNY.
He says, small poems are tops!

Author Bioinformatics

Mary Kasimor

Mary Kasimor's poetry has appeared in many online and print journals, including *Otoliths*, *Moria*, *Fact-Simile*, *Reconfigurations*, *Cannot Exist*, *MIPOesias*, *Big Bridge*, *May Day Magazine*, *Horseless Review*, *BlazeVox2k3*, *Ditch*, *Eccolinguistics*, and upcoming issues of *Ditch Anthology* and *Raft*. She has two books of poetry: *Cruel Red* (Otoliths) and *Silk String Arias* (BlazeVox Books). Her book reviews (*The Romance of Happy Workers* and from *UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY*) have appeared in previous issues of *Jacket*, and another book review (*Grief Suite*) is forthcoming in *Big Bridge*. She was awarded the 2011 Merida Fellowship Award, US Poets in Mexico (Conference January 2-9, 2011 in Tulum, Mexico).

Adam Fieled

Adam Fieled is a poet based in Philadelphia. He has released many books, e-books, and chapbooks, including *Posit*, *Beams*, *Chimes*, *Apparition Poems*, *Opera Bufo*, *When You Bit.*, *The White Album* and *Disturb the Universe: The Collected Essays of Adam Fieled*. His work has appeared in *Jacket*, *PennSound*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *The Argotist*, *Great Works*, *Tears in the Fence*, *Penned in the Margins*, & in the *&Now Awards Anthology* from Lake Forest College Press. A magna cum laude graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he also holds an MFA from New England College and an MA from Temple University, where he teaches.

Adam Katz

Adam Katz is a Ph.D. candidate in the UBuffalo Poetics Program. He did an MFA at Columbia. His writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *Abraham Lincoln*, *boo*, *EOAGH*, *Momoware*, *Otoliths* <<http://the-otolith.blogspot.com/2009/09/adam-katz-with-saul-line-as.html>>, *POOL*, *Sous Rature* <<http://www.necessetics.com/adam.html>>, the book *Imaginary Syllabi*, and elsewhere. Current interests in ontology, vipassana, yoga, Robert Duncan, Georges Bataille, Poncho Peligroso.

Michael Fix

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Andrea Scott divides her time between Princeton and Berlin. Her poems, essays, and translations have been published or are forthcoming in journals such as *Denver Quarterly*, *jubilat*, *Web Conjunctions*, *Salt Hill*, *Seneca Review*, *Mississippi Review*, and *Chicago*

Review. She's working on a manuscript of poems that explores the intersection of personal, political, and lyric histories in Iran and the U.S.

Jared Demick

Jared Demick is a Ph.D. spelunker in American Literature. He currently enjoys dancing to reggaeton with his velociraptors.

Thomas Fink

Thomas Fink is the author of seven books of poetry, including the forthcoming *Peace Conference* (Marsh Hawk Press, May, 2011) and a book of collaborative poetry with Maya Diablo Mason, *Autopsy Turvy* (Meritage Press, 2010). His work appears in *The Best American Poetry 2007* (Scribner's). *A Different Sense of Power* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2001) is his most recent book of criticism, and in 2007, he co-edited "*Burning Interiors*": *David Shapiro's Poetry and Poetics*. Fink's paintings hang in various collections.

Simon Perchik

Afton Wilky

Afton Wilky is an avid believer in doing what she's not s'posed to. She adores being shocked by brilliance and is the Poetry Editor at NDRMag.

Andrew Haley

Andrew Haley's poems, translations and short stories have appeared in the Sugar House Review, Girls With Insurance, Western Humanities Review, Quarterly West, Beltway Poetry Quarterly, Otis Nebula, The Smoking Poet, Fanzine and Zone.

Atom Ariola

Atom Ariola does not believe in numbers. He was born in Brooklyn and has lived in Chicago, Philadelphia, Arizona, Iowa, Seattle, Florida, and other places. Currently residing in Colorado, his work has previously appeared in the Denver Quarterly.

Anna Lena Phillips

Anna Lena Phillips lives in piedmont North Carolina and is poetry editor of Fringe. <http://fringemagazine.org> Notes on the Endearments can be found at <http://theendearments.wordpress.com>.

Bryan Koen

Bryan Koen lives in Alexandria, VA, and attends the MFA program at George Mason University, where he will serve as Editor-in-Chief of Phoebe: A Journal of Literature and Art for 2011-2012. He is a contributing curator for the Ruthless Grip Poetry Project in Washington, DC.

Timothy Wojcik

Timothy Wojcik is a student at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. He graduates in one month. He doesn't quite know what to do post-graduation, but one thing's certain: he'll keep writing.

Tyler King

Tyler King is currently working toward his B.A. in English at Whitman College. His work has been published in *The Binnacle*, the December 2009 and 2010 issues of *Quarterlife*, and featured online at www.365tomorrows.com <<http://www.365tomorrows.com>> and [trainwrite.tumblr.com](http://www.trainwrite.tumblr.com) <<http://www.trainwrite.tumblr.com>>. More of his writing can be found on his blog: tkfire.tumblr.com <<http://tkfire.tumblr.com>>.

Charles Freeland

Charles Freeland lives in Dayton, Ohio. A two-time recipient of the Individual Excellence Award in Poetry from the Ohio Arts Council, he is the author of *Eros & (Fill in the Blank)* (BlazeVOX) and *Through the Funeral Mountains on a Burro* (Otoliths). His website is The Fossil Record (charlesfreelandpoetry.net).

Christina N. Howard

Christina Howard is a poet and spoken word artist living in Louisville, KY with her two beautiful children. She is a regular at open mic nights around the city and has hosted local spoken word shows, including a poetry slam to support the non-profit "Fight Crimes Against Children Organization." In 2009, she was a facilitator for "Minimizing Violence through Poetry and Spoken Word," an initiative to support local youth, sponsored by the non-profit "River City Drum Corp Cultural Arts Institute." She has twice appeared on the local WB show "Poetic Expressions" and recently performed at "Artography 2011."

Carlos Lara

Carlos Lara is from Chula Vista, California. He has received degrees from UCLA and Brown University. He is currently a professor of English Studies at Al Jouf University in Saudi Arabia.

Daniel Y. Harris

Daniel Y. Harris is the author of *Unio Mystica* (Cross-Cultural Communications, 2009), *Hyperlinks of Anxiety* (Cervena Barva Press, 2012) and *Paul Celan and the Messiah's Broken Levered Tongue* (with Adam Shechter, Cervena Barva Press, 2010). He is a three-time Pushcart Prize nominee. His poetry, experimental writing, art, and essays have been published in *The Café Irreal*, *Convergence*, *Denver Quarterly*, *European Judaism*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *In Posse Review*, *Istanbul Literary Review*, *Mad Hatters' Review*, *Moria Poetry Journal*, *The Other Voices International Project*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Poetry Magazine.com*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *P.R.A Publishing*, *SoMa Literary Review*, *Stride Magazine*, *Wheelhouse Magazine*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Ygdrasil*, and *Zeek: A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture*. His website is www.danielyharris.com.

Dan Owen

Dan Owen's work has appeared in *Barnstorm*, *By the Overpass*, *Jellyroll*, and other journals. He is an editor and co-founder of *Sun's Skeleton*. He also performs with *Gamelan Kusuma Laras*, New York City's premier Javanese gamelan ensemble.

Craig Rebele

Craig Rebele is a poet currently living in Santa Cruz, CA. He received his MFA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University, and is currently the Associate Editor of *Parthenon West Review*. His work has appeared, or are forthcoming, in issues of *Otoliths*, *Glitterpony*, and *New American Writing*, among others.

Chris Siteman

Born in Boston, Chris Siteman grew up in a blue collar Irish-Catholic family. He's traveled widely in the US, Europe and Cuba, and worked extensively in the trades as a bouncer, landscaper, chimney sweep, waiter, mason tender, roofer and carpenter, as well as working as a pre-rigger for Ringling Bros. In 2007 Chris received his M.F.A. from Emerson College. Since August of 2010 he's been pursuing his J.D. at Suffolk Law. He has taught in Boston University's undergraduate writing program, Lesley University's Humanities department, and currently teaches in Suffolk University's English department. His work has most recently appeared in *White Whale Review*, *Salamander*, *The Monarch Review* and *Consequence Magazine*.

Eric Hoffman

Eric Hoffman is the author of several collections of poetry, including *Life At Braintree* (Dos Madres Press, 2009). He lives and works in Connecticut.

Mark Cunningham

Mark Cunningham received an MFA from the University of Virginia, and he lives now in central Missouri. If time was flexible and he could do whatever he wanted to, he'd be a Paleolithic cave artist. In particular, he would like to sculpt the two clay bison at the end of Le Tuc D'Audoubert. Since that seems unlikely to happen, or to have happened, he's taken to watching

rugby on TV. He's also written three books—*80 Beetles*, *Body Language*, and *71 Leaves*—and, now, *specimens*, a book he thinks is, you know, pretty OK.

Check out his soon to be released book specimens <http://www.blazevox.org/index.php/Shop/Poetry/specimens-by-mark-cunningham-231/>

Kyle Vaughn

Kyle Vaughn's poems have appeared in numerous literary journals and anthologies, including *Poetry East*, *Confrontation*, *The Sentence*, *Battistrada*, *Poetry Midwest*, Jack Myers' *The Portable Poetry Workshop*, and Firewheel Editions' *Introduction to the Prose Poem*. His photography has appeared in *Annalemma* and his prose in *The Resurgence*. He currently teaches Creative Writing and World Literature in Dallas, Texas.

Kate Robinson

Kate Robinson recently transplanted to Oakland, CA from Olympia, WA where she spent the last 7 years destroying her hearing in basement house shows, learning from and engaging with the activist/punk/arts/d.i.y. communities, and getting a little damp while adventuring in the temperate rainforest. She graduated with a BA from The Evergreen State College in 2010 where she studied critical experimental poetics and book art, and is currently an MFA candidate at Mills College in poetry and book art. She believes that writing and books are social tools that can empower writers, makers, and readers alike.

Jeanne Shannon

Jeanne Shannon began publishing poetry, short fiction, and memoir pieces in small-press and university journals "eons ago," in the sixties. She lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico and rides herd on The Wildflower Press (www.thewildflowerpress.com <<http://www.thewildflowerpress.com>>), which is often mistaken for the press that publishes books about UFOs..

Joseph Cooper

Joseph Cooper is currently writing in Lewisburg, WV. He is the author of the full-length books TOUCH ME (BlazeVox 2009) and Autobiography of a Stutterer (BlazeVox 2007), as well as the chapbooks Memory/Incision (Dusie 2007), from Autobiography of a Stutterer (Big Game Books 2007), and Insuring the Wicker Man Shadow Created Delusion co-authored with Jared Hayes (Hot Whiskey 2005). He is the 2009 winner of the Equinox Chapbook Award from Fact-Simile Editions with his chapbook, Point of Intersection. In addition, his work has appeared in numerous journals including most recently The Ash Anthology, Counterexample poetics: Assemblage of Experimental Artistry, Bombay Gin, Brown Bagazine, Diode, Sentence: a Journal of Prose Poetics, Sex and Murder, and Sous Rature.

James Schiller

James Schiller is a crayon garnished vertebrate laundering thoughts within Milwaukee. His poems are currently moving under their own power at elimae, Rhino, LEVELER, Snow Monkey, Express Milwaukee, Slingshot, and... well, Here. His internet residence is <http://oldtestamentdeaththreats.blogspot.com/>.

Gloria Wimberley

Originally from the woodsy warmth of a small town in the northern panhandle of West Virginia, Gloria J. Wimberley, MA, now lives in South Florida where the eyeshine of gators is scant, but "plumage" of plumbago is plentiful. The Featured Poet (March 2011) for Edgar & Lenore's Publishing House, and the Showcased Poet for the 2010 Winter / Spring Issue of Muse Cafe Quarterly, Gloria also teaches at Broward College in Ft. Lauderdale. This is her first appearance in BlazeVOX.

James Valvis

James Valvis lives in Washington State. His work has recently appeared in Arts & Letters, Atlanta Review, Blip (Mississippi Review), elimae, LA Review, Pank, Rattle, River Styx, and is forthcoming in The Pedestal, H_NGM_N, Hanging Loose, New York Quarterly, Night Train, Verdad, and others. His full-length poetry collection, How to Say Goodbye, is forthcoming from Aortic Books.

James Peter Walker

James Peter Walker is a young poet from the North East of England. Where possible he strives to create poetry in a closed form, which he later adapts or changes as the poem grows organically. His interest in form and rhymed verse however is a process he believes to be somewhat alienating amongst other writers of his age particularly because of the online dominance of free verse. He does not believe in an avant-garde, nor does he agree with the idea of art for art's sake. His writing in his own words is about 'experience, the desire to reject it and the impossibility of its articulation' something which he hopes his poems reflect.

Satu Kaikkonen

Satu Kaikkonen is a poet and a visual poet from Finland. Her visual and textual poems has been published at the poetry and literature magazines in Finland, Usa and Russia. Her visual poems has also been published at the Last Vispo Anthology (2010), at "this is visual poetry" - serie (2010) and by the Paper Kite Press (2009).

Her works have been at the Exhibitions in Usa, Russia and Hungary. She will also taken part at The Third International Text Festival in Bury U.K April 2011.

Satu Kaikkonen has several blogs from which the most importants are the collobrative blogs foffof (a blog of asemic writing) <http://foffof2.blogspot.com/> and Time for a Vispo (a challenge blog for visual poetry) <http://timeforavispo-timeforavispo.blogspot.com/>. Satu Kaikkonen's official website is VISUALpOeTry <http://www.kotiposti.net/kaikkonent/>

Jeff Crouch

Jeff Crouch is an artist in Texas, who enjoys doing collaborations with people from all over the world.

Mark McManus

Some of Mark's poems have appeared in Arshile, Can We Have Our Ball Back, Vert...He's also a musician and works as a clerk.

Michael Harrell

Michael (my-kul): a meaningless identifier to a particular life made up of various organs dissolving an infinity of self space; an earth crawler, somewhere between action, reaction, creation; experimenter and experiencer of insipid silence, blurring word, syncopated sound, movement/change, slippery knowledge, ancient instinct, eye-contact, slow rain; a single (although undying), evolving, astronomical material of life-stuffs. In other words: a mass bunch, digesting life after life after life after life, and at times with something to say about it. In other words: I don't really know what I'm saying... so I adore.

Mary Jane Newton

Mary-Jane Newton was born in India and grew up in Germany. She is the author of a collection of poetry, *Of Symbols Misused*, and her work has been published in numerous literary journals and anthologies internationally. She is an Editor at Oxford University Press and currently resides in Hong Kong with her husband and daughter. Visit www.maryjanenewton.com

Ognjen Smiljanic

o. lives in Tucson, AZ where he works as a mask maker and a black swan breeder.

Orville Babcock

Orville Babcock's fiction and poetry have appeared in Large Puddle, Anthropterist, Kurl Review, and several other defunct magazines. He lives in New York. View his thoughts and sketches at <http://orvillebabcock.com>.

Phyllis Mass

Phyllis Mass is a freelance writer and editor who leads private writing workshops. She teaches Write Now! a mindfulness writing workshop at Temple University's Adult Education Institute and is co-facilitator of the mixed genre writing workshop at Kelly Writers House at the University of Pennsylvania. Her most recent fiction, poetry, and opinion pieces appear in a variety of on-line and print publications. She was one of the nineteen essay finalists in Philadelphia's 2006 citywide Autobiographical Project to mark the tercentenary of Benjamin Franklin's birthday.

Rachael Stanford

Rachael Stanford dances in the rain, shuns shoes, and loves 80's hair metal. She thinks that commas save lives and that all we really need is peace and love. She writes silly little poems and sometimes poems that aren't so silly.

Raymond Farr

Ricky Garni

Ricky Garni is a graphic designer and writer living in North Carolina. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize on four occasions, and each time it is, he says YIPPEE quietly and to himself so as to not cause a stir.

R L Raymond

R L Raymond is PigeonBike.
R L Raymond tells stories.
R L Raymond is a Non-Poet.
R L Raymond likes print and pixel.
...and bourbon

Rob Nadolski

Bob Whiteside

Bob Whiteside live in Buffalo, NY. He rides his bike, writes poetry, and works on his fixer upper house on the West Side.

Ryan Weberling

Ryder Collins

Ryder Collins has written a novel called *Homegirl*, which is forthcoming from Honest Publishing Press. She has work published in *DIAGRAM*, > *kill author, decomP*, and *Juked*, among others, and a chapbook of poetry, *Orpheus on toast*, available from Imaginary Friend Press. She homegirls it up at <http://bignortherngirlgoes.blogspot.com/>

Sarah Mangold

My first book, *Household Mechanics* (New Issues), was selected by C.D. Wright for the New Issues Poetry Prize. Second book, *Giraffes of Devotion*, forthcoming from i.e. Press late 2011. Chapbooks include *Parlor* (Dusie Kollektiv), *Picture of the Basket* (Dusie Kollektiv), *Boxer Rebellion* (g o n g), and *Blood Substitutes* (Potes & Poets). From 2000-2009 I edited Bird Dog <x-msg://284/www.birddogmagazine.com> , a journal of innovative writing and art. With Maryrose Larkin, I co-edit FLASH + CARD, a chapbook and ephemera press.

Seth McKelvey

Seth McKelvey recently graduated summa cum laude with Highest Honors with degrees in English and journalism from the University of Georgia. Lately, his work has appeared at *In Stereo Press*, *Cricket Online Review*, *La Fovea*, and *Super Arrow*. He currently lives in London with his wife.

Stephen Nelson

Stephen Nelson is the author of *Flylight* (Knives, Forks and Spoons Press), a chapbook of minimalist poems. He's also had a chapbook of visual poems published in Dan Waber's *this is visual poetry* series. His work will be exhibited at the 2011 Text Festival in Bury, Manchester. He was recently shortlisted for the Crawshaw Prize and blogs visual poetry and other delights at afterlights.blogspot.com <<http://afterlights.blogspot.com/>>. He comes from Hamilton, Scotland.

Steven St. Thomas

Steven St. Thomas spends his odd hours writing, composing music, shooting photographs, and drawing. He lives in London, England with his son, a bunch of guitars, and two lawnmowers. This is his first poetry publication.

Clarice Waldman

Clarice Waldman is the fiction editor of BlazeVOX. She lives in a state of constant confusion with her cat and partner. She holds an MFA from Brown and is currently teaching at Harvard. She has been writing about the food she cannot eat.

Martha King

Martha King is the author of *North and South*, New York: Spuyten Duyvil, 2006; *Little Tales of Family and War*, New York: Spuyten Duyvil, 2000; and *Imperfect Fit - Selected Poems*, New York: Marsh Hawk Press, 2004. This story is from her work-in-progress, *Outside/Inside*. A larger excerpt, "Three Months in 1955" is currently online in *Jacket 40* (jacketmagazine.com).

Tim Frank

Tim Frank is a writer of original and experimental short fiction and film. He has written and produced a number of short films that have been shown at festivals such as the Edinburgh Fringe film festival and the Falstaff International film festival. He also has a column for satire magazine Home Defence UK.

Peter Hayes

Reuben Merringer

Reuben Merringer lives and works in Los Angeles.

Matthew Di Paoli

Matthew Di Paoli received his BA at Boston College where he won the Dever Fellowship and the Cardinal Cushing Award for Creative Writing. He recently finished his MFA at Columbia University for Fiction. He has been published in the *West Coast Journal*, *Gigantic*, *Ascent Aspirations*, and *Post Road* literary magazines among others. Currently, he is writing a novel entitled *Idol of Id* and teaches in the Advanced Creative Writing Summer Program at Columbia University.

Amanda Bramley

I have a M.F.A. from Lindenwood University and I teach high school English.

Brian Quat

I am from Roswell, Georgia, 23 years old, currently getting my MA in English at the University of New Orleans. I would say more if I had anything more to say. Thank you.

Josepha Gutelius

J.G. is a playwright, poet, artist of comix for private collectors. Her plays have been staged throughout the U.S. and "Veronica Cory," "RASP/Elektra," and "Miracle Mile" have been published in *The Modern Review*, *Professional Playscripts*, and *Stageplays.com*. Her book review of Bret Easton Ellis is forthcoming in *Rain Taxi*. Poems have appeared in *Salt River Review*, *Jivin' Ladybug*, *Argotist*, *Sein und Werden*, *Triggerfish Critical Review*, *SideReality*, *Fireweed*, and prose in *Backhand Stories*, among others.

Lee Matthew Goldberg

Lee Matthew Goldberg graduated from the New School with an MFA in 2006. He hosts a monthly reading series called The Guerrilla Lit Fiction Series (guerrillalit.wordpress.com). His articles and reviews have appeared on fictionwritersreview.com. He teaches literature and composition at LaGuardia Community College. He currently finished the first novel of a proposed YA trilogy called *Eating the Sun* and is also working on an adult novel, *Orange Girl*.

Chris McCreary

I'm the author of three books of poems, most recently *Undone : A Fakebook* (Furniture Press, 2010), and I've reviewed fiction and poetry for venues such as *Rain Taxi* and the *Poetry Project Newsletter*. Along with Jenn McCreary, I co-edit ixnay press <<http://www.ixnaypress.com/>> , which, sadly, has lost momentum over the last couple of years but will hopefully pick up steam soon. I've published some short fiction in *New Review of Literature* and online at *The Battered Suitcase*, and I'm a high school English teacher, too.

Kristie Kachler

Kristie Kachler will spend this spring talking about books with undergraduates in the woods in Maine.

Stephen Baraban

Tatiana Ambrose

Tatiana Ambrose, 21, resides in Kansas City, Missouri. Some of her poetry has previously been published in *The Camel Saloon* (www.thecamelsaloon.blogspot.com <<http://www.thecamelsaloon.blogspot.com>>) and *The Eye of the Needle: Bella Akhmadulina Day*, a special issue of *The Camel Saloon* (<http://theeyeoftheneedlebellaakhmadulinaday.blogspot.com>). She enjoys writing fictional short stories and poetry, along with taking photos (www.flickr.com/photos/tambrose <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tambrose>>) and creating abstract art. Ambrose is currently working on a novel. She says this short story piece was inspired by her love for dogs and the bad rep that Pit Bulls have received over the years. You can follow her blog at <http://www.creativegalt.blogspot.com>