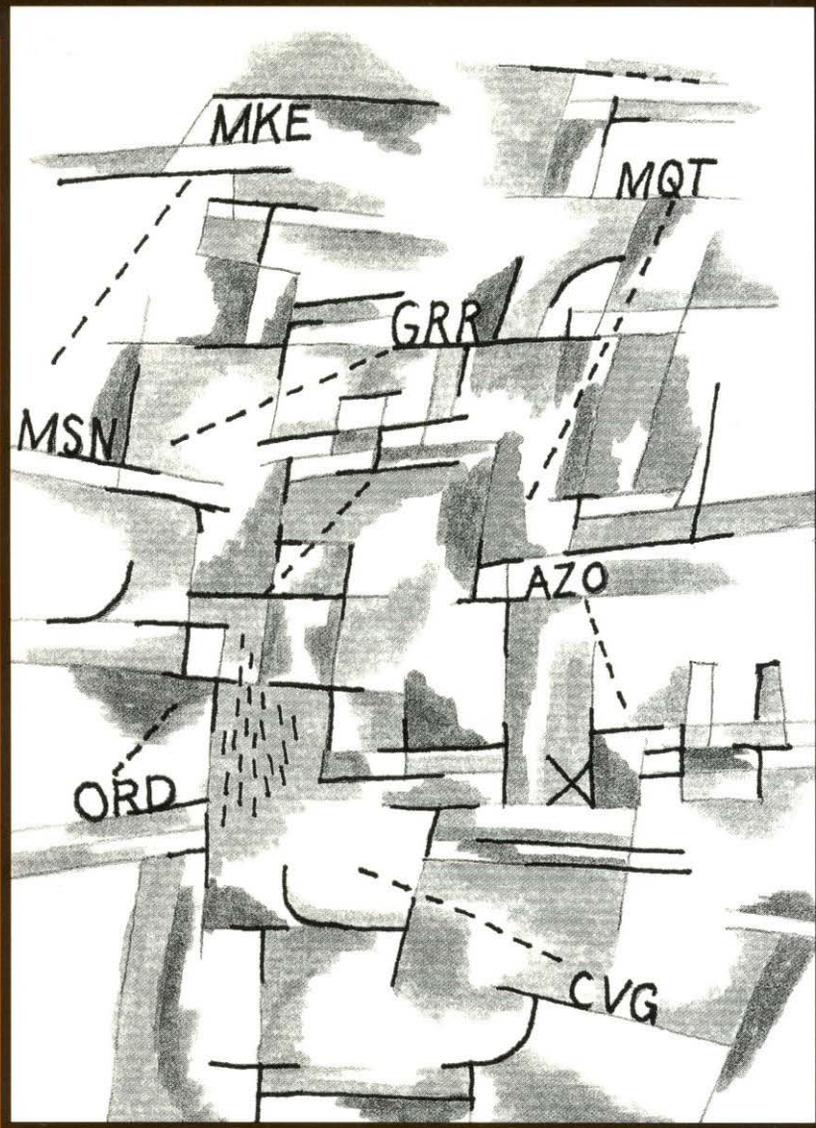


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THEODORE ENSLIN

AND ELDER GHOSTS WALK BY

This moment conscious of the sun
when all the stones lie cold
as night retreats behind them
how the doors and windows of a town
seem but can't they are not
come in consciousness are glad
that night once more is spent.

PERSUASION

Those who have been taken
those others who have been taken to
those who are not the others
taken to not taken they have been
but they are not the taken ones
those who return who have been
are not taken are are not
those who take are those who took
in the midst of taking at a tense
of taking they are those not others
not those who have been taken
took the others who are and are not
taking and retaking those and others
in the midst of taking that they take
are not the ones who took
in midst of taking taken to
the others taken are the ones
who have been or are they
are they other than the taken
who have taken and been taken
taken in the midst of others here
they are and there they are the taken
what is taken has been taken to
from these and from the others
for these and for the others
from these and for the others
for these and from the others
taken taken to the others taking
taken they have been
taken to have been
those the others are these others
taken to some others these are some
as some are taken these
and tactile.

[RAIN TAPPING AT MY WINDOW]

Rain tapping at my window

now now now

not now now

now not now not now

now

 not now

now now now now

not now now

 now

now now not now

now now nownow now

nownownownow

TOM CLARK

LITTLE HYMN TO ATHENE

This morning post storm
 sky
the world got a good wash now
 the sea green
depths conceal a cold and clean
heaven that by remaining

YOUR ZONE

(thus hidden) mimics
 your austerity flags
 coming out of the bath

shivering
before your epheboi

me a dim votary (burnt out bulb)
 standing under
the cold shower of your cosmic aspect

“THE BLIMP GLITTERS . . . ”

The blimp glitters in the late sunlight
 SANYO giant silver cigar
 with a gold glow on its underbelly
orange glory against violet and green
 passing below
 that arrowlike cloud flocking
 (fish vertebrae) feathery
 tail trailing lazily
 eastward riding the jet
 stream floating
over the plum tree
delicate voile cirrus
toward what unreachable paradiso

AMIRI BARAKA

MOMENT'S NOTICE (BIRTHDAY 1997)

McCoy

Al Foster

George Mrazc

MAMA AM AM

DADA AD AD

*What if everything had you with it going
& you knew it un being the been as to be
wd be will, Ha Ha, the When, Who
cd stop you, rising umbrella life
over the mountain like nature's breasts
okay, always, the moor, black forever*

- R H Y T H M

*All Rise Question Sky High Rise 4 Moor - Move
Are The Truth*

*is understands the sky's limits
on reverses nothing, which ain't
which screams AM Am echoing its bright Rise Naima Every All*

*I am not Trane
nor are we not
Who he was
being we he was
inside us being
him when we
recognized our
deepest feelings*

*Who have no single
name or life
but are the going
pre and post your
here ing*

*Between Be &
At The other
rendering Connect
to from Sky high*

you see Be note

*How wonderful are our feelings
unified with everything that
can't die. A tool. Sense is
included before the flag
the future is slower than
where we going*

*◁Bill Barron
Golson*

*in the play
borning
birth
carries
Body here
2 eyes, trane
rail rode
under over
the present
fast past go*

*Groove
is big ing
the rise
Split vision
tele When
Ha Ha distance
the devil is always
dead. Memory is
the Black question
Go electricity.
Elegba. The Soul
runs on Out.*

*What questions are magnetic
with life. Eye-travel
the work is a sad being
who & what, for energy
looking into blindness
here come God, idiots
Goodness
Where it hang
overhead
the sky a Nut*

*Be here & need
a low to sow*

*Speed into discussion
cursing ignorance
A dog music
Sic em is their
thought, a place of
Not, promises, hooraying
emptiness, a lie*

*we are thought to be
post getting to was
remember the many animals
we will is. Know Sun.*

*Bitter Sweet
-Gay Crosse*

*What are shadows
old man, seen em
is beauty the soul
chain, visible in
where money is a lie
make a tower, of stone
drunk not a leaf
scratch, female,
a dog, from behind*

*Dexter—an idol, of
nothing, no hole, slang
for names*

Hodges, Bechet

We are the waves

*Crown, caviar to go,
Motion is a NOT
Speed the Space of
Knowing, Who is
ahora, going*

*Bird made is dope fiends
Is you some body
like shock oceans*

NAIMA

NAMER

Namour

(The Soul Turns

Connect to AM

I go on

ON

Heliopolis

Utterance devil

divide day from night

the known from sight

where is the monkey

AB 9/97

MARK WALLACE

CELEBRATION FOR THE FALL OF THE CURRENT REGIME

It was something to walk through
the river of despairs, to see
sun pick the sky cold
so many ways of failing
to meet at the ground, mother,
I am launched out
in this exactly inexact,
expression of need in every finger
that is not mine (as if
any could be owned), where it occurs
that we emerge
into the tripping and tragic, or was it hilarious
fluctuations of present
grass, teeth in the bit,
ornery, creepy old lovers
soldiers frozen against walls.
What comes to the body
in which this "me" moves
holds itself open to the ground,
shows the damage of identity
that pushes, again,
towards vision in the glass
breaking. Hear this,
you frail masters seeking to bruise
to taste again the losses
you felt worse in yourselves.
I am writing a poem
then walking down the street!
What about that, huh!?
What about that
among rips in the doing
towards even those we love, towards the time
to go away?
What about these masks I celebrate,
the imaginary tigers
that leap from under cars?

Even I don't know, strange
glorious I see
that I don't, even now.
Then who would you be then?
And why would I care?

FIRE REVEALS IDENTITY

Come up against the wall the well
where the sounds of a later sky
echo, breed me in scattered rooms
of a form of what's here, the bells
in a moment idiom drifting away
fire.

Or it needs a coming back
to chairs where we sit
windows looking out
what no one knows
of hands that engender
space for a promise of evening
reveals.

It's like this: a lamp, some books,
parakeets in a cage,
streets and the sound of cars,
keys turning
in doors of hidden betrayals,
hospitals, injections, a board of elections,
"Louis XVI himself
made locks as a hobby,"
The Farmer's Rebellion,
what hovers, left out,
strains the holdings
identity.

GET A REAL JOB

I needed another angle
and it became a festival
and my plans for it
escaped me. Pots and pans,
the cars on the block
are my constituents, voting
in seams of segregation
for an instance of home.
Afflictions blow through
an empty apartment.
Count for a moment the bosses,
their pale glances at endless sheets
of white paper.
And this is only a mid-size city!
Sweep the streets, the infestations
even if your therapist says so.
I too often wear
renunciations of my clothes
and resentments of low
blood sugar at 4 PM
But you should have seen the people.
They made it worth it, yes,
even though we left them quickly.
One's purpose remains varied, I suppose,
some small moment of connections felt
as this poem, for instance,
abandons the page.

SHARON DARROW

PROGRESS REPORT

The train stops in Cicero—that's true.
And it's snowing—that's the fiction here.
Not much atmosphere mid-November,

8 PM, a clot of wet leaves,
oily stain under the streetlight, layered
slick of acid decay. So let's say

snow—heavy and wet—the kind that clumps
and plummets straight down, not blown at all,
melting in the lower air, pocking still

green grass. Let's just say *wet*
snow, not *star-like*, not *be-jeweled*,
weighing itself on red maple leaves

and gold seen in a spill of porch light.
We stop at LaGrange Road. Icicles form
along the sides of blue and white Tribune

boxes, today trapped in, tomorrow sealed out.
The train's wake disturbs the persistent snow,
swirling it high into icy tornadoes which gather

all the fury held inside these cars
moaning westward to Hinsdale where, again,
we halt. The blizzard gains on us and breaks

every window on the upper level, fills
our hair and eyelashes with snowflakes. They don't melt.
When we regain our sight we spark and glint.

Though the lights have gone out, we gleam
phosphorescent, and in what seems like only
minutes find ourselves on Utah's great

salt flats, train like a sleigh, speeding
and glittering, snow and salt brilliant at dawn,
every surface coated now—the yellow

walls, the brown vinyl seats—all our
coats and cases glowing bright, worthy
of a higher realm. We exchange

cell phone numbers and email addresses. Who's
to say, we all agree, where we might end
up if we keep going—and the weather holds.

LIFE AND ART

Minivans balancing
exact and
patterned dark

where crows
gowned, battened
the lanterns,

manacled October.
Pirouetting slides
of history

together gather
the golden
orb-egg: between

two lines,
a space.
This music

terrifies me.
Pixels on
starred, scarred

water, bridge,
rattled trance,
the way

fortune's fountain
pen's latticed
race faces

elongated factions.
Docile germs
sleeve my

hour beyond
panicked, manic
joy, plus

grasp, rasping
hideously. Pale
but recovering—

forked paragraphs,
not roads,
 winding.

WHAT IF I CALL YOU?

What would I call you?
Heat, hymns, whisper
of paper fans at night, June bugs, drowsy
against the screens, cicadas
winding down to sleep—
I've seen you around.
And that leaf in Mississippi—
you skim the sidewalk,
lead me along streets I've never walked,
past *whites only* and *colored* signs,
past hanging trees, through the kindling
of dead leaves.

Bright orange,
gold at the school gate, you rattle,
brittle and brown, at my trailer door.
Aren't you those eyes, as Daddy
turns the wheel, pulls us away
into the night? I reach for my coat,
you, tarantula, hang on the hook;
scorpion, you sleep in my bed,
I won't move to take your sting.

When you snake across
my floor, swallow a toad,
your jaws spread, its mottled legs
still kicking — I warn you —
the men will shoot you.
We haven't yet killed for each other.
You haven't won.
When have I asked you,
cicada, to sing?
When have I asked you in?

So you wait, gather yourself
in the west, blow in on high air,
lie across my sky, sift through
my locks, make me sneeze—
bring me that close to death—
hailstones at a hundred miles
an hour against my windows.

You break the glass.
You come to me,
through my bedroom wall,
in the top of my head,
out my feet, a bullet splitting
like particles of light,
and gone.

Now, say I call you.
Will you leave me?
Or will you touch my lips,
milk and honey on your fingers?
Does your breath warm my skin?
Do you shake me? Deep inside,
in such dark—I cannot see—
I open and you are already there.
But remember this:
 I haven't
called you. Or sung for you.

33

all night without waking, the one who has taken her seat in the blue chair looking up at the person whose arm is bent, his hand in his pocket meaning to identify something about the character (novel) named after what he does with his hand (thumb) as a memory of that, how the telephone isn't the same as the one who calls "you" (pronoun) in other words former, her shape in that sense the sound it makes in a line about the ear (foreground) parallel to the coastline one sees in the distance driving away from it, wind in the other direction not in place of that phenomenon (telephone) but moving beyond feeling what has happened will continue as long as she thinks he is talking (separate) about that

the one at the window looking out of the photograph too far away to be seen, buoyed up on a curtain (missing) the wind blows in after a storm, having gone out for a walk meaning only to get some air “you” settles in a line the sidewalk follows on the way to a room whose chairs will be full, the man who continues to speak without recognition of his place in the culture of that place (body) of chairs as if to say it empirically will be to look across the blue frame of window directly at the person facing the microphone, the form of whose hands may or may not be seen as a turn in the conversation whose next passage will appear to be moving closer (decoy) to what it is exactly she means to add

picking up the phone in that tone of voice, having been interrupted by what she doesn't say directly (abrupt) on that subject, as if to tell the person one has called someone (elsewhere) to determine what is going on will make "you" appear to the reader who opens her book to an argument whose logic isn't a surprise, the audience in that case not the woman to whom he addresses himself but other men (unseen) who may be taken to have read him, "you" thus posited as someone who is driving that morning after such a conversation (unplanned) has happened, the rehearsal of such events meaning not to play them out beforehand but close that scene, begin what is about to unfold parallel to that distortion

MELISSA FAVARA

POEM FOR HALLIDAY

Something in the body falls
nation by nation. You were
in the empty
parking lot, shot sky,
dust devil of foil
stars. You can still
disappear inside
a noise, moment or
man, or afterthought
in a brown coat.

Someone fills the pause,
that space shouldered
clean by sunlight lain
heavy all over me,
“Who still has no house, builds no more,
who still alone, will remain so,
will wake, read, write long letters,”

as the train bears its
bought cargo, stomach full
of gleaming cars, to the place where
it cannot remain, the place
from which it will return, we ebb
further from some wound,
wound down to a spindly
hope, a glass of water,
a ceiling fan’s reflection stirring
itself on any anonymous table,

“And all at once you know: that was it,”

bloomed from the wrist
of the next day, our pause is
a white-lit, stopped place
where all traffic smoothes
& I touch your face

before & after turning
out to the street, alone & open-
eyed against the houses, each one
tendered, bleak & legal.

SECOND POEM FOR HALLIDAY WITH QUOTES FROM RILKE

Something in the body fallen
inside the sound, a pang,
of the buses singeing
the fingerlaced wires over 17th & Folsom,
a thumb snap on the spine's
base. The body manufactures

its maps of impression, I'm
disappearing
in your fled city
in cupped hands taken
by the cloudy song
of hot water
from the tap to my halved
face, graffitied on the stall wall
of a flower labeled each petal,
"She loves me, She loves me, She
love me,"

Who still alone will remain so,

Divisadero. The city viewed
through the bar windows through
the fish-gaze doubled pane of
an airplane, the much populous,
distant light. The air dirty
with something you said
five years ago, a stone
passed hand to hand
become a water glass,
become a book of matches,
become a story, a moth
crawled whole from
a woman's mouth.

This appears
as talking
in a bar,
your old friend,

“There is nothing more important
than (my current lover).”

Who still has no house, builds no more,

conversation paused at the phrase,
“can barely keep my eyes.”

Every uttered thing on
either side of the glass exerting
its portentous half-life the streetlight
that pools
in the creases of the mouth
surfacing voice foolish enough to cherish
the notion that anything will survive
this century
sympathizes as it satirizes,

and how can the heart do otherwise?
You stare out of photographs
that never happened
at the documentarist. Jeff gestures
with a water glass, a shepherd
witnessed the flood four hundred
years ago, carrying the cross into
the streets . . . history fails
to read as a palindrome, nothing departs
from the anonymous ceiling fan stirring
its own reflection on the table,
the jetsam of the ages beached
on the confine of the four-walled
sweaty rental
of the skull. The locations
that rise within me
merely meet, speechless, moss
lying patiently beneath
our cold water kitchens.

N. E.

I

Knots of wet shirts
on the porches
of this very last
neighborhood, before the accordion
collapse of houses
files us eyewhite to eyewhite,
thumb to spine:
there is a woman with eyes
like a good glove, there is
a man with a milkcow's face
sitting in the intersection
among his clean, fragrant sheets.

II

Blurred portrait of body
as busted spool, or
spy for God, sprinkle
sting of wet tongue
street, these houses shouldered
into their paint the last
language that will
remember itself.
It seems there is always
someone who thoughtlessly paused
in the spiky streetlight pool
touching her face.

III

There is a clot of wet shirts wrung
from a porch banister, a work
not done by hands. Windows lit
in other houses
comprise a voice too low
to kill anything quickly, the skinned
lip of curb, & a child
out after dark, kicking it.

STANDARD SCHAEFER

THE SHORE OF SURE

I, you, anyone or cold duty
always attempting
to get back your name
even as if tames and discredits you.
A scolded rose where once a scaffold.
Now the valentine unfolds westward
not liberty but analysis
mouth open and closed
around enough drink
to call it Paris

All I could offer you
was a life of verse
or a version of aversion
when what you needed
was to behave.

Your behavior was as repetitious
as art plus and minus
the blinking parts in this blood red
clickergame you call a city.
Blue ceiling drowning blue rug.
Put your dress on.
The world is not a lesson.
A stutter never split.
Silence, no answer.

My sorrow, lately, spreads away from you.
All the would-be, walked-out tomorrows
cannot assuage the late-mindedness of the hour.

Cloak as shore.
Shore as clock.
Hand over your head.
Tink of the harbor,
an unslakeable look.

To swim
and counter
swim.

Strangers locked in cross-talk
the mild, midway of a stroke.

WHO YOU WORK FOR

Rigorous pallor.

Two fronts colliding, two forecasts of sovereignty.

The lavish misuse of the word “white” was repeated in quick secession.

Rain brandished the city.

Bright opposite sentence.

The wind erases indentations.

The grass flat. Gusts of gesture.

Droplets, leaflets, letter with wings.

Sound of black waves in her chest.

She wonders if he’s angry.

A voice that intends seclusion.

Crossing back and forth.

To fall asleep and cross.

One day a tear will burst and break the denotation but the power

of just one hidden world rising onto a bright highway

returning to the headlights where she’s staggered to find

she doesn’t want any. The scent of boiled eggs intervenes. The sky.

Worlds convening on the edge of the corporeal.

Zither in the structure of resistance to experience.

Later they were questioned by their employer.

She remembers the knee a little larger.

He makes a distinction.

Lay back one degree, one degree colder.

Palpitant: we hit the floor in intervals.

RAPHAEL JOHN BUCKLES

POEM FOR FRANCIS BACON

red suffocates canvas
endowed
with a huge concussion

gravity bags faces
wraps skin
rib cage and pelvis

lungs narrate
ruffled sheets
spread thinning light

pulls frontal lobe
by dragging the eyes
cortex and cogs

a body
a job
a drawer emptied

beyond the foreground
spleen ruptures
the phone off the hook.

TRAVEL

the streets on Sunday
the smell of Mexican food
fills my car
as I wonder why traffic
is held up

a fire truck
backs into the station
tall garage doors
lights flashing
& polished brass

spray paint
breaks the monotony
of Baptist churches
the ACME barrel factory
doesn't smell of burnt plastic today

AstroTurf on porches
machine shop
muffler & break specialists
New Hope juxtaposed
with Coors Light
a park people don't go at night

fast cash loans
Royal Pawn Shop
hand car wash
a bulldozed building
framework and sky
showing through

Ramirez Auto Parts
Ruth's Beauty Supply
the Skylark Lounge
se habla español
Danny's Diner
Captain Rick's Fish n' Chick

and then comes the train yards and Berwyn
the only hubbub to hear of
is a geriatric brunch at the Wishing Well.

[PINK BLOSSOMS]

pink blossoms
bowing branches
why name the park
or the city
who cares
about the cracks in the sidewalk

a rich couple
passed me in a hurry
he smelled like a \$50 bill
and she had a glamour mole

then there's the guy
that said,
"I'll give you 50 cents
if you stand over there."
the homeless man answered
"I'll stand across the street
for 50 cents."

on my way to my
favorite grill of a diner
I glanced at 4 men
drinking out of bags
in an alley

revolving door
a booth of vinyl
I suppressed my appetite
with a cigarette

seated next to me
was Marc and his lady friend
I told him,
"I came here thinking that
I wouldn't run into anyone
I knew."

so he told me a story
about a cross-dresser
that owned only one dress
how he cut himself shaving
and had to ride a bike
to the Laundromat.

BARBARA TOMASH

THE CHRISTMAS POSADAS OF SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

We travel south a thousand miles to *Bajío*, bone-dry. Stony tides have dug an estuary where a boy appears in the alkali roadway. Our car overtakes canary yellow shirt, loaded burro, desert debarkation from a bus; women sink beneath the lid of sky. Shawls, black, swept past our plaids, suitcases, cameras, our pavid awe of high plateau, extended sight. Cacti appear, and appear. A landscape, a surface, alizarin scarred with crevices steep as late-night dreams. We come out of need. The roadway before us reddened by light which spreads and fills up the *valle* like a barren body of water.

1 *Repicando*

*(the bells
of all the churches
pealing at once)*

exhaust fumes in walled streets
shoulders brushing stucco
step down to cobblestone partnered
by strangers, ranchers' straw hats
men shaded, women,
their print dresses
flat leather shoes, no music,
but car horns, bells, police whistles,
a family threads past
children hurrying to keep up
my son riding
his father's rocked passage
bright blue and he sleeps.

*eighty-seven bells hang in the churches alone,
five more in clocks*

2 *Starting from the plaza*

feliz navidad!
in the bandstand manger
a calf, kid, and lamb
stand dazed in the straw

*a miniature Mary
and Joseph on a burro
lead them*

my son points
to the crazy pink bell tower
dominating the town

his mother
is Jewish, his father
a lapsed Catholic.

Parroquia,

he insists.

*only five inches high
the bell has ear-
splitting volume*

3 *Sanctuario*

the church of saint
michael the
archangel
(la
parroquia);
of san rafael; of santa anna;
of
san fran-
cisco; the
oratorio of san felipe
neri; of the seven sorrows of the most holy virgin; our
lady of
health (la
salud); the santa
casa de
loreto; the church and
convent of la con-
cepcion
(las monjas)

follow
nine churches that night

hearing the faintest stroke

4 *La Parroquia*

In the nave
shot through with arrows
the porcelain statue of saint
Sebastian my son's questions

*He survived because
a little dog (the symbol of fidelity)
brought him bread each day*

twelve hours later, the ringing repeated

BURNING-IN

scar-inscribed

Scrub canyon washed in torrents
of sun, black
shadows jump fire-trail
scratched white in skeletal
brush, unswerving filaments
of dry grass.

grass burn

airplane-arms

In view-finder's square
frame, a child
teeters, new-walking
rock strewn incline
bleaching sun
away from mother

sun-stung

in light of high contrast

who kneels in foreground
shadowy gray
her black kimono lit
only by tiny white wings
her head turned
sharp as a bird's head

metallic grains' memory

three-quarters
in darkness. Black hair
blown like ash. At deepest angle
help in boulder's cast
shade, the meter
reads light.

nightwomb

Red safe-light darkness,
languid water music
the stench of acid. In time
they appear, five bands
of density, proofs, one
then another, washed down river

blackandwhite

from color like fat magnolia petals.
This emulsion-given
world, small perfections
these minute grains of black silver
depositing silty intricacies
of light exactly

what infants see

kimonoshape

as foretold. There she crouches
dark feminine mound.
Again, she is salt
again, stone
framed right
elbows pressing in

bird wing

*childbe-
loved*

no gesture
toward the child who rises
central, in burning
light. On the ground
glass screen
their positions reverse.

DAN HOWELL

MAGIC BUZZARD

for Tony

Life as sputum
—as beer-stoked
crapulence— might
be an epitaph if
such living hadn't
caught him early
then killed him
slowly enough to
press most of that
coal to diamond.

ON LOCATION IN MICHIGAN

If there is the complex sonic lull of the far distance
and even the approximately twelve decibels of the
wind rustling scarlet leaves of forty-foot sugar maples
is noisier, and there is nothing else except that general
wind, maybe some faint undertones of lake water lapping
Little Traverse Bay, maybe a few birds, while overhead
the stars show clear and dense enough to explain completely
Milky Way, while you stagger, quietly drunk, ignoring the rain
after a wrap party for a low-budget movie in which you are the sickly
Dad of the female lead and it's 4:30 AM, this too can be happiness.

THE WHITE CHAIR

What might have been better to say
doesn't occur. I slump off into privacy,
zombified. Disappearing, ignorable,
do I visit most other lives like a wraith?
Any firefly seems more substantial here,
luminescing above the tumble of dark creek
sound threaded pleasantly into all the outdoor
festivity I don't belong to and can't, and don't
know how to invite. I wind up half-lit, inert, almost
comfortable alone under the dome of the stars, oh sure.

RON PADGETT

BLAZES

A nice little quarter hour's exercise?
I can barely lift my index finger.
A ride on a barge through Holland?
The moon shimmers in the oily pools.

What time of day are we talking about?
Rita Hayworth, think of her.
And is this what the French call la Maison Blanche?
The smell of musty books wafts by.

Who was Herman and what was his Melville?
You kick the idea of the used car.
What sticks out vertically?
Honey gold is the down on your fairy tale.

Time's up, isn't it?
It's motor coach from here on out.
Why can't I do it too?
Take these chains from my heart and set me free.

And now, and now?
He is pulling "himself" together.
Was the circus exploding?
The circus kept exploding.

KIM HAYES

FALL CONCERNS

like the outdoors to an indoor cat
Brad Pitt, Brad Pitt
a crack in the curtains could change
never pass that stage
her life outward, the morning leaves
make an ass out of myself
huddled at least three times, uncontaminated
that next perfect moment
is the aloneness you must
Zen comedian
sharpen the blossoming plum because
get used to it
it is not black and white for minutes
before he dies
the movement gospelling could be selfless
not my face
the wishes the work the wars the time
the 200 times it takes
to get it right the best failure is
non-private
to touch, to the touch, beyond
improvised plunk
bare fields, there is no end to the number
promise me
of goodness behind that glass
beautiful and accessible
is the end or the beginning begging
jump up and down on the bed
how sad
the reverse also true

PITCH

black, the mind slept, the stars having fallen out of the sky when the song broke apart. It was the kind of black ad infinitum that, if contemplated, blows through the western hemisphere of the brain as if everything stored in there were props in a ghost town. Saloon shutters left swinging in the after shocks. And because the feeling began in the stomach, the head was temporarily free, what it must be like to be a genius, or at least a Gemini. My twin was busy de-evolving on the dance floor, frog-kicking it up through swamp water to the mucousy light. The moon was so full its need rocked the whiskey in our shot glasses. When the drummer took his shirt off, a call and response howling lowered the room down into the woods. As he proceeded to beat, all the great walls came down, walls it took generations to build. And then there was the organist. That's when my grandfather came back to inhabit the organist. Played like the day my grandmother died. Fortunately, the pain lasted

long enough for me to die in it. Like my sister Carolyn, the bassist enjoyed tormenting me with his chronic thwapping. Carolyn was nothing if not persistent—could argue the same point like a metronome till dawn if she had to. She never had to. I always give in like a refrain. The guitar clanked like nickels in pockets, tasted like nickels and the fingers of men who work with their hands. Hands that led to arms with muscles that lifted me and carried me upstairs to bed. Reveille resounded at six AM. How long had I been sleeping? I would say my whole life, but I witnessed Dale give birth to her son, and a horn section showed up for that gig too. The trumpet said *each breath is first breath, each child is its own unique form*. The saxophone, like the world, had its impact on the child. Conditioned her. Made her grow up too fast. Made her wait for Godot, then slobber like Henry Miller. When she sang, she stood perfectly still—was like a tree growing through a chain link fence. When she sang, branches individuated and blossomed at documentary speed. Love and sorrow slept together in the twin bed of her throat, integrated and vulnerable.

GEOMETRY

A pattern of intricate little noises
touched breakfast. The echo

and motion of toast. The tink
of tooth on cup. Bitter black sips.

Hands placed this way on a napkin,
hands placed this way on the lap.

It must be the moon, pulling the body
around like a non-committal lover.

What an atheist's delight, how a solitary
cloud can eradicate shadow,

then value as if a light clicked off.
And here, over the sink,

how the grounds won't go down the drain.
It would be silly to do anything about it,

just clear the waxen plates,
accept the feeling in the body.

The tap undresses for hands, plates,
bones. Splinters free to somewhere

below even the street, to the sewer's
estrus where it will rinse and rise again.

The window view offers the necessary
height to use the street like this, its usual

inhabitants a bevy of leashed acrobats.
They are shaping constellations, playing

musical chairs. No, they are swimming
under water, swimming up to the glass.

Anything is a map if you look down
on your thoughts like ants.

MICHAEL A. STAPLES

STALKING THE MINOTAUR

dark maze of midnight
looking for connections
though not on some island
but through a turnstile

passing halls painted
black as the wry humor
which brings you here
a need for danger like

firemen who fight an
element with a will like
cancer which lives through
you and yet is separate

and so you find yourself
drawn from the sweet scent
of excitement to his lair
cancer becomes confidence

to play a kind of russian
roulette or twisted *price*
is right where behind a
door could be nothing

or the bull waiting
who was stalking who
a cautious stir flickers
like lightbulbs about to

die warning you not
to stop the momentum
and your scent arouses
the bull's instinct that is

animal and human and
you realize like a vegan
who craves meat
that maybe you

are the minotaur

OH

Kate is looking at me again
she doesn't say a word but
her eyes are the vocal point
of our conversation

she sits bored at her park bench
left elbow to right knee her arm
extends behind as if holding the
past at bay

she says I'm curious like an
avenue that cul-de-sacs itself
and her eyes search my room
for footsteps of fatigue though
its place is not as obvious as
a long day

her brow furrows to guess
my consternation like gazing
in a mirror and realizing it's
a window

the ohs in her eyes become
clear to me as I bring her
picture closer to my face

SNOW

like the shadow
of the angel of death
its gait is swift and dry
as it rides the winds
a kamikaze observer
drifting in and out
of towns and lives
covering everything
in its cold embrace
and stinging wet kisses
on your cheek
it's the art of winter
in its guise
as an unkempt room
the dust left to settle
and collect where it may
like nomads wandering
a desert wasteland
and you're left
wondering
in the back row
of inspiration
why we don't
scream and run
from this ice monster
smothering us with its
empty breath clear of
any evil intent as it
closes the airports
interrupts the traffic
with its subtle splendor
of white like the poet's
word as it rests between
mind and paper a
manifestation in dream
and so we hug back
the blinding nemesis
by lying in its creases
head to toe waving
arms and legs invoking
the angels with

cookie cutter effigies
and put on special shoes
too long to step
but can slide for days
pretending to fly
like we always wanted to
like it does leaving
behind but a remnant
of its true nature
like the monoliths of
Stonehenge and soon
even its footsteps are gone
as we forget our
winter's guest

DAVID BRESKIN

BELGRAVE SQUARE

Lying in the rotting sun, shining white,
the embassy turns its air full-blast. Red
lights blink in the sweep of surveillance

and beneath the stairs, an earpieced mustache
bristles. Clicking jaguar teeth over trade
disputes and tariffs, the embassy mock

charges, chuffs, and pauses for a party.
Deep blue Daimlers push and wade like hippos
into the penguin crowd, starched and sutured

with champagne. Exploding corks of advice
spring from the ambassador as he spends
the facts of his frightful life like small change

on strangers. In the square the park is locked,
the wrought bars a zoo for creepers strangling
themselves to sleep, overgrown and dusty.

With tabloids folded and black suits frizzling,
chauffeurs doze, dreaming of their young daughters'
educations and leather that never

sticks in the heat. A bomb in the Accord,
parked just around the corner, is a glyph
of everyone's grave imagination.

S, M, L, XL

for Rem Koolhaas

Saraband of anagrams, symbols bow
and curtsy. Stain, take satin by the hand

and wheel her around like a two-stepping two-
timing man. Soon we'll outfit that old Raft

of the Medusa with a disco ball
and a slippery dance floor. Yellow silk, red

velvet and purple satin program mainframes
to wrap their users in fading comfort.

How to find an inside without an outside?
Where being trapped is pleasant. Road signs

zoom us smartly towards the efficient
pursuit of the irrational, yet *SATAN*

still gets spelled *SATIN* by bright angel-
dusted teens wielding spray cans. Their shiny

self-esteem inflates bursts shrivels in locked
black bedrooms. *Aesthetic absolutes prove*

relative under pressure: Uncle Bob
sawing away at a fiddle, trying

to make love to Mozart but paying cash
for a quick blow on the street instead. For

instance. The corrosive hysteria
of such facts flaunts our best wishes. Don't mind

Truth, she's puking in the kitchen, Beauty
retorts in her offhand way, still smoking

despite tooth stains. A word hurled by cеста
into next century might boomerang.

This architecture of implosion: stain-
less steel lush and concrete spalling towards

the kind of big mess history teaches
in school. Memorize the dates by test time.

JENNIFER MARTENSON

EQUILIBRIUM

Having reached that level
of abstraction, I got dizzy,

and began to lose my
verisimilitude. Not insight; rather

blood in the nose, hyperventilation.
As when all the emotions are present

with equal intensity, and the result is
a complete indifference

from which not even the sharp
inflections of hope will arise.

=

Will syntax help me navigate
the swerve from corridor to

correlate? Words parting water
over my head, or formulating

ropes of bubbles I can climb
to the lucidity of air. Pressure being

equal on all sides, I can't tell
up from down, and even the waves are locked

in place, without room to break
into polarities.

=

Agreed: the stress is metrical
in nature. Scanning the room for

simple objects will not heal
an interrupted sleep, any more than

it will reconcile “central
nervous system” with “identity.”

The light dead ends. Its shock
absorbed by miles of harsh

metaphor which only adds a pound
per inch of confusion.

BRYAN CHARLES

LINEAR A

Once again, I'm grateful to be wearing shoes—
not boots—and feeling the Earth's curves. There's salt
beneath the pavement, salt between the miles, one washes
the other. One slips from sand into sand again, as if
all buildings had thawed or mapped their own restless death.
The sky is slate-gray, hanging, imperfect, like a fat iron gut.
I am such a simple alternative, designed for the wounded and
fashioned as a long stripe of skin. No milk dries behind my eyes.
I am a swell fellow to the dogs of the insincere—me! descended
from the selfish, taught only to receive. Yes, these are my hands.
Yes, this is a new tide of construction. And yes, when you are lonely
the days reverse themselves. But what does it mean?
It means someone could hold every ocean in their mouth,
swallow until the stomach splits, swallow until the veins become
coral, swallow until resuscitation is only possible
through the long-division of every cell, every atom. Is it fun,
being born like this? Is there any real joy in our discovery?
I once found a box in my parents' basement stuffed with the odd litter
of an uncle's life—ancient letters, guitar picks, countless faded
pictures. I tried translating all of it. I tried making a model
skeleton. Minutes fused like healing bone, I was threatened, I was
allowed some infant particle wisdom. Yet I could never separate
the light from the hair from the handsome curve of the jaw.
Or peel colors from Kodak paper. Or anoint my own skin
with an equal amount of shattered glass. There is a place,
some vast wilderness. But it does not demand the attention
of seasons—it looms, it scripts the crashing of cars, the burial
of babies. Such are the songs of young flowers—simple machines—
voices choked, muffled by thick cardboard until they are beyond
dead, beyond frozen. I can put my ear to all speakers and extract
comfort from decoding chords. Too often I must comfort myself,
as if I wouldn't stir beneath someone else's covers. Imagine that,
the struggle for warmth in a brand new bed, imagine the small
pebbles of dreams that evade dawn or the touch of a lover.
It's what I miss most, returning the crane of a neck, a strong snap
and coming of age without a father. Every thaw ignites the steel
buried in my ankle, steel rises like mist or debt. Every thaw
is inevitable and so, as a consequence, I am deliberate—a clown
desiring all clowns.

NEW WAVE

You are the crush—a split-second in the walled-in world beyond adolescence. Boredom erodes your toes, erodes the glorious rigor of need. You are the crush, breathing between frames of film. We will marry, though by now I've grown too long

for all seats. I've transplanted my simple-machine heart, quick and dreaming. Everything happened in such clear focus, as if viewed through a rifle sight. First, I recall, it was the shortness of each bed as I moved to find the cold parts of the sheet. Then the snap

of an ankle like the snap of dried wood like the snap of any feeble jaw as I remade my mouth like a radio, gurgling through static and rushing cars, from satellite to satellite. Then I wrote you a letter—*plunk, plunk* on my Olympia typewriter. It was in that letter,

the admission of my guilt. Before it even got to you I had folded it, torn it into pieces, burned each piece, rewritten it. I watched you read the best parts—or at least imagined the scene, imagined my very own smile, curving dumbly, like bent tin.

Now it's in the papers, on the television, how I am great, etc.—how I've won a fantastic victory for the common person. But, really, it was just a modest proposal, sped up this late in history and blurred beyond recognition. Anyway, a promise is one thing, a sample fire,

script for a child star. I saw you looking straight ahead, trying to assemble form on the blank horizon. I got it!—you are my first crush, mined from the wall of regret, perhaps absorbed by the cells until you appear the same in every vision. Or else it was all improvisation,

all quick thinking, in which case it is dead and there are no questions.

—thanks to Mark Weston

RYAN PHILIP KULEFSKY

THE GRAVE DIGGER

In His sepia breath
my hands
grow quiet, and
obsolete—

with Superbowl cap, and
one gold shoe
He
the luckiest
man

in the cemetery—
Long his hair
in need

of an end,
which is rich
with peaches glazed
in brilliance
under

His cart, His bright
eyes idoled as
sycamores

in the dirt—

Under His nails,
over His shovel is

marrow of burying men
in argyle socks, and
through dreams

lined roofs
colored rocks, and
in between tombs
are whispers
of

awed admirers, the weepers,
behind their lunch of
chicken sandwich,

under our sun
that doubles you—

PERSONAL POEM

I don't remember much about my early
memories It seems that everything
happened to someone else (another
short pudgy Jewish kid with
unmanageable curly hair)
the earliest scene a basement bar darkness
around the corner room with a single
light chain I could never reach
the walls carrying pints of
whiskey that I used to
pretend to drink
and now I write my personal litany
spinning on the bathroom tile
phony wood paneling and
a green vertical phone
that pulsated on
the dial which
started my mind and the silent voice
Uncle Tom had just died I think it
was cancer (back then everybody
died of cancer)
and my mother embraced my father who let his
tears be seen in a puddle in the
gold porcelain ashtray and a
string of mucus clung to
his blue collar from
his nose and
I grinned
at the weak statue of my soul
and my mother's sympathetic
squeal eased him like the
gray summer rain
eases a bum
I guess she was the wrong woman. click.
my younger self had an Uncle Bunny
who always scared me (although
I had never met him)
because I had
pictured a
tall fat
cigar

smoking man with gray stubble in an
overgrown rabbit suit pink ears
and the whole nine I guess
you could say I've always
had a vivid imagination.
click. watching baseball playoffs and smoke
a little grass a ground ball with eyes
to North Chicago watching White Sox
games on my Papa's cigarette bed
that unfortunately smelled like
the blind dog Johnny who
couldn't hear
very well
and newspapers scattered on bleak black
bank statements of a failed auto
parts store my Papa loved
his baseball in his blue
bleached boxer shorts
and v-neck t-shirts
and oh all those
shriveled toes
standing upright like davening Jews at
the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem his
pinky toe always with a white
band-aid around the rim
(it never occurred
to me to ask why)
next time I smiled at Papa was
breathing through machines
and he didn't remember
my name (more than
likely)
memory is a comical trip. flip. click.
to my Mother's HAPPY FOODS for
frozen pizza or milk or
something and returns
with a brown sack
of grocerteric
delicacies
and my shelled penis naked rubbing
against yellow cold interior
of her rusted beat Ford
and telling my brother
"Try this it feels
good down there"

and her leather was real and
smooth and never talked
and I could trust it
like the end.
click.
languid and heavy treading in another
Chicago hospital immaculate where
the smells reek of golden
generations that can see
themselves in your eyes
as you walk by telling
yourself not to look
in strange rooms
but you do
anyway
and lie to yourself, "I just want to see
what they watch on TV" through the
doorway of Grandmother's bright
rays of a technological grave
a pale nightmare flash
rushed by my scabbed
knees and death
sat next to
her on the
bed
and I studied my watch and took
a long and intense look
across the courtyard
schoolboy walking
bow-legged and
I can feel the hot steady
stickiness of urine
shining off his
thrift brown
corduroy.

JASON BROCCARDO

ONE SMALL STEP

I will run away to the circus,
take up something with teeth or edges.

To go from town to town with the tents
and big lights, the horses and trained dogs.

Drunk calliope players will sing songs
on the train, as the sword swallows eat soup

and I drink with the tightrope walkers.
I'll dance with the strongman for five dollars.

The smell of lions, elephant shit
and popcorn. The birds and loops of fire.

The ringleader with his red top hat and all his favorite
crowds. I will cut confetti with the lion tamer.

I will mend the tears in the trapeze artist's net
as his daughter eats peanut shells with monkeys at my knee.

I will know the words the magician uses to open
the cages and win almost every hand at five card draw.

STEVIE WONDER

Let us go make knots,
roll round in sacks on the ground,
clang forks and bang pots.

Let us move in squares around
trees with leaves that click in laughter.

We will play pinball
in the street, barreling bowling balls after
red and white cars. You and I will paint cameras with alcohol,

elect a parliament
for the only color, blue,
making flags and armaments
out of wires and old church pews.

In the middle of the night we will eat pancakes,
speaking of elephants but thinking earthquakes.

LUKE TRENT

GRUMPY

Grumpy all over the world

Let it come
Let it be this close:

Skin
dying; foam; scum on the table;
ash-filled abalone;
charcoal in our throats;
crotch ache; this need
to curl up
and stay

Cooped up

Cooped up and grumpy
Let them come
let them be kiwi-cold, carrying
dark vases Not a face you've seen
not a voice not in books
not easy

Let it alone
Let them trickle Let them come
So much
wanting So many eyes
moving in our heads
So many

Let them

be Let them
come they cannot be hidden
we cannot get them in writing

a child's
secret want

cats in water

sweet cheeks

just needing
to hear something,
have something, to let them
this close

MELON HOUR

Skin oleoed to deeper muscle, organs
flesh of d'Anjou pear, still-life tomatoes &
fragments. Soon the body sac of spuds, luau
pork, bone's in final particle submission.
Here the polyglot nipple is anxious, honest,
its laughter rooted in wind shifts; mercury
at the nude beach doing pull-ups, slowly.
Mostly it is the obscene: one man's trunk
mimicking a toad beside the toilets, another
swallowed by starving ribs—a swing knot
riding rough up his friend's white thigh—
breast's faulty electric hairs. Sand as it
presses its tongue to moistening hints of
language. She in the cool water (shadows)
washing (hips) edible melon, a golden V
held up hands in her blackening hair.

THESE TWO EYES

By late autumn my soul
is so crooked
it shivers

down its whole length,
flutters wings
and picks earthworms

from the rainy fields.
I'm a pigeon at heart.
The river surges

with old leaves and
the backwash of Fall,
and you demand a happy

story — white bread,
safety. I bear witness
to the steaming dog,

to the headlights of one
big truck and my own
hunger. Suck it in.

Rain puzzles
the windows
and is also

the world opening
wide and the body
as it closes down.

DANIEL S. MOSHER

AN AMERICAN CACTUS

here is an *American Cactus*
prickly with anticipation
and worthy of your disdain

in your car listening
to warlock radio
voodoo *magic*

the prom queen has
lost her momentum
in the back seat

a dress that was made
to be thrown
over one's head

smug chaperons
demand a hand check
between sips of the

Amarillo-scented punch
thorny and appropriate
in the Southwest spring

STRONG WOMEN

1.

You would be
in Southern Belle
Hoop-skirt
drag. Scarlett's
cotillion curtains.

The press would call you
*Leda McCoy, daughter
of Confederate War hero
and bon vivant, fearless
"Tiny" McCoy.*

2.

You would crawl
the walls. Take refuge in
friendships
with *Those Sufferin'*
Suffrage Women.

Curse the day your husband
ever heard of
Sigmund Freud.
You would go crazy.

3.

You would put
Steve Lawrence on the
turntable and take
Wives and Lovers
seriously.

Check the pot roast,
touch up your lipstick
and slip into that
leopard-print cocktail
shift.

4.

You would wear
red raw
silk and marry a pot-smoking
round-eye
Yankee.

Move from Ho Chi Minh
City to a tiny tract house
in suburban L.A.
You'd be a good wife
and mother.

JIM ELLEDGE

CINEMA VERITÉ

*Fairy tales can come true.
It can happen to you. . . .*

Listen, my beauty, my beast: if love were easy—boxed, wrapped, ribboned, batteries included—if instructions really were so easy even a child, etc., we'd know Ms. Happily-Ever-After waited just off camera, tapping her toe, cracking her knuckles, plane reservations for the ménage à trois of us stuck in her hip pocket. We'd expect a five-star rating, an Oscar or two, eventually weekly reruns on cable, and a cult following. It's not, and we're stupid as *La Belle* locked in the enchanted villa those first days. Listen, my beast, my beauty: if love were magical as a rose—no, simpler: a daisy—if candles scented patchouli or licorice, strawberry or vanilla, would burst into flame at your approach, blaze brilliantly, passionately only to be extinguished by the vacuum of your wake once you've passed, trendy clothes—black or earth tones or psychedelic, cotton or silk or polyester, expensive or second-hand vintage, very Seventies, almost Brady-Bunch—on display racks and hangers would kowtow collar to hem as you stroll mall lanes. It's not, and we're blind as Monty ringing the doorbell of Mrs. V's mansion. I only know the story unfolds frame to frame, that there's no fastforward or rewind, no genie, no wand. I and You-and-I are the roles I rehearse nightly but never perfect, *Cut!* slicing through my dream of us moments before the climactic last scene: a slow dissolve on a long kiss or a murderer escaping on a plane to Tahiti? One last thing, my beautiful beast, my beastly beauty: maybe, in this darkened theater, alone and together, clichés are our only cues, our only clues: The show must go on. There's no small parts, only small actors. Break a leg.

GREG PURCELL

FROM *SELF-PORTRAIT*

I hate the fatness; under thighs
like handbags, bowing the knees;
that porous roll around his neck;
back-fat set behind the slack
arms still but shaking. The put-upon
elbows receding into butter, pork,
chocolate, oil, ground beef—*ugh*—
think about the corpse of a bus
rusting on some brindling lawn—
it's just set there, a stomach
swinging like a bag of peaches,
gray beneath the nails, & a few
white hairs. I hate the sprung
growth creeping out of pores
between his eyelids, the weight
his body presses to the bed.
I hate his exercise, his sweat,
his brown eye & case of skull.
Yet he moves, & his name becomes
the firing of machine guns
into the muffling bodies
of sheep—the great elemental
swing; the clock & drape, tocking
under glass; the name of movement,
animal, gun. He is in love.
What is absolute grace in him? How
his cream blossoms in a tea,
how his teeth rattle in his head?
How his head rattles by interview
with a sky, pulsing on an Earth
he named, and how ancient he got
naming things there? And whiskey
whiskey whiskey pouring for him
out of bottles like mouths & how
he never refused at least one
ruined impulse to gorge himself
until his lip split from excess
& “theory” was the word. Rorty

wrote “narrative,” but I think,
now, “movie” “water” “criminal”
“whiskey”—until the body jerks
& scatters in an excess of love.
Which love? He can not even work
his lips into a kiss. Let me tell
how he danced last night in a club
like the stub butt of a shotgun
close so close to his double
a girl for whom the flesh
is fruit and wine, & how she broke
from her sprung thigh & moved there
in hips like rounded coffeecups.
She moved so close he broke & danced
to fill her air with the sight of him.
He watched her blue glaze turn right through
his hair & past his drum-dumb head,
nameless head, dull, never telling
how the world can hollow out—
how he hoped those massive breasts
would make her back ache, aloof—
aloof in the sublimest body,
in the sublimest club her love
distended on a spit. Let me
tell you that he looks like his old man,
how his old man sold himself dead,
drank, & held fists like cabinet drawers
waiting to open on palms of steak.
Let me also watch him beautiful
forever, broken from an iris,
shrunk from glass—glass & tube & sand
& the glistening flesh of glass
torn from some new-century girl,
dressed in red and leaning on the post
that marks the site of her mugging.
She will get old there, left with
that unceasing ornament—
let’s call it a butterfly pin,
made in 1909, Arts and Crafts,
certainly—& green to set off
her crimson sash & hat. But it’s
a full two years before the end
of this new century, at least,
where I have grown too handsome

to bring the weight of self-portraiture
down upon these fat white stars,
over his own splitting back—
*Where's my fin de siecle? my mule
and whip?* I am 24 years old.
Where's my yearbook full of lovers?
Where's my celebrity? My *health?*
“They” tell me I’m gonna get lip
cancer, emphysema, that I smoke
and die precisely, precisely so
on a grave that rides like Shakespeare.
Yes—I think now that I’d like
to become a playwright, not only
in love, but from a system-in-love,
yet my body is beautiful,
my eyes clear and brown. Say it—
not lean back as in to recline
but “*lean back*” as in a balustrade
screwed into a man, thin on a pair
of legs, walking strong into fame.
An actor, then, The Leading Man
where humble Romeo leans on film
and grows huge & weeps & dies
five hundred times in a day,
five hundred times in an hour,
days and hours like any other
except that I am there, and I
am Romeo just as I am not,
and you are there, weeping for him
thinking “Juliet,” my dear,
my dear Juliet, my dear, dear
adolescent. Yet this actor
is just as much terrible Lear
fuming in a prop crown and cloth.
You will name your actor by his name,
sleeping dumbly in his underwear,
screaming at the television,
getting fat beneath the glow
of an old shirt. Until that shirt
becomes a hill bunched in winter
with joy, and you roll down & down
in compartments of joy, & jump
up the same way, as the landscape
blurs into the same whiteness,

& the trees are toys & you—your
joy & body—are a toy among
those trees. History is always
that sexless joy in things, that god
you are in one minute, making
snowmen. Had I also told you
that I'd salted Carthage alone?
I wish I could say that I'd stood up
full like a shaking Poseidon
or like a dumb tower crumbling
from its tip, and raised my palm
as a sieve, & howled & begged
for Hannibal just once to get off
his elephant, to come alive again
shaking white poison at once
onto that smoking husk of earth.
But it never happened that way.
In fact, it took months. My satchel
bulged with salt, ordinary salt,
mined from an ordinary earth.
The horizon cooled, the sun swelled
and dropped, swelled and left—& I
felt so alone, so cruel there,
dusting off the city where weeds
fed on the ashes, kicking over bones
splintered with fire. So what should I say
about this one man walking here?
That he was Rome? Senator or slave?
Sometimes he just feels he is living
on a planet—bluesky, streamers,
violence, throat dry, coughing
at the epicenter of Joy.
I hate his question; how one gets
so bored, bored even in love
or cruelty, in love one can't have,
the cruelty of boredom. How a lie
one gropes for becomes a carousel
carved from inches of tusk—how
it turns in some glass case
in some antique home; how it makes
a tiny music there; how its smooth
ivory horses are all alike,
dancing to make a sort of Horse—
all heads and hooves on white twigs.
Such passion breaks from that lie,

that it becomes local, real as
the old eye watching it, its pried
face, dimple of pearl flashing
against the face of the glass; also
how that glass is *not* set in cedar;
how the cedar is not gilted, not
clawed at its foot or planed
at the seam. He has lived
through twenty-four years of sight
groping toward the edge of that glass
heaped like a planet before him.
He is not a stupid person.
He will bury this script beneath
the trim lawn of the house he grew
up in. He will be seventeen. Days
will turn, terribly turn, as from
a script, and years in that script
will be like conjured days. This
will not be easy—lies must spring
from that awful dirt. He will not
pray, not even read a book,
what else is there to do?—fat,
fat from nothing, discursive, dull
in youth & friendless as a seed?
As a seed? No, a hat bleached
& cracked in half. *Was he ever
seventeen?* Rather. A baked seed,
or a seed turned out on the beach
wearing nothing. *And did he know
anything?* No. He did not know
anything, walking around that house
new like any other, a house
like any other, new as coffins
brimming in the dirt & white & pale
& white & pale like any other
house, and he like any other kid.
Exquisite years would pass at once.
What grew on the carousel lawn? Yet grew
in walking down the street? What was
her name? No name yet but a girl
yes a girl walking with a list,
the Lusitania Girl; and let me
woo her into walking flesh—
how she wears herself autumnally,
gold harnessed in low weather;

his walking to follow her;
how her hair is a shock of red
resting on an eggshell face;
the Irish in her; the Scottish
in him; Erse to Celt; the history
in her wave of lip; how she warns
of green glass in her eye, &
with that eye rustling like palms
of jewels becoming the bright jeweled
stuff it holds; the warning & delight
of that eye!; how she leans back in him
as some gross century of delight;
the bell of her side and how it, too,
is white and makes a fold; her youth
and tuft of hair; that particular hand
tracing mine. How dull is life,
my Lusitania Girl? Sinking ship,
garland, flower, wave, stroke of time,
my little abstract—I like you wet
from treading water, just as you
love me dry to greet you—so what
should I tell you? That history
is joy? You would squint at me,
turn up the corners of your mouth,
make jokes & flirt. That I
have seen the dark husk of bomb
spinning toward the hull, the flash
of vertical fire and ice (flesh
and curve of history! Joy! Man
against spurious U-boat! Joy! Joy!
Joy! And so handsome still!)—that I
know what it means to “list,” to sink
deeper on one’s side, leaning on
the rail and thinking how smashing
a leap into that cold water
how crushing against bones & how cold!
Until the deck wades in ocean
and your dumb feet wade on the deck
and you arrive—

TOM WHALEN

THE CALL

Lately I've noticed you in places
you've never been, Cleveland, say,
or Brisbane. I come up behind you,
say boo, and you turn but what
you see isn't me, but a facsimile.
I am somewhere else, where I am
always, always not where I am.
No, don't hang up, please, listen
a little longer, I've something
important to say, about the apple
I left on your steps one night.
You never said anything about it,
nor about the Texas flag I stuck
in it, the one with the single
red star. I don't know what
I meant by it, but still, you
know, you might have stumbled
into your day with a certain
wonder about what this day,
this morning might bring. But
you didn't say anything about it,
or about the shoe I mailed the next
week, the one shoe that should've
fit your every desire. The hours
I spent polishing it in my lap!
The taut shoelaces, like a wire
stretched across the continent!
The shine, the orange light, the whole
shoe with its tongue rolled in
and the bone I placed there.
Whose was it? Was it mine?
Yours? Slipped out in the night
when you weren't looking? No,
please, not yet, I haven't
said what I must, though
I can't remember what exactly
it is. It's spring here.

And for you, is it spring, too?
Is there blood on your hands,
in your mouth, like a picaro
after a misadventure, stuck
in the ditch, the semis
whuffing past? The dust,
dryness, no rain, only the sun
in the yes, burning there
an insignia of all I love?

RED

A coat worn inside out and nothing cold
A warm hand that I can lie in
like a worm in the earth

There's no changing it it is
what it is a monument
without a base or wings

though I've seen it fly over cities
seen it swoop and ascend

But not a bird
or at least not a bird
with feathers or eyes

A spot with wings that slices open
the eye of the sky

What bleeds from stone
What burns in stars

This old fruit never rots
it just sits there like a thumb

Take it in

THE OBSERVANT EYE OF ANDRE MASSON

One day a pigeon comes to the realization that he is a man and the man believes he's Shostakovich's String Quartet in E flat minor, no. 144, and the song believes it is the moon the moment before the gravitational tides pull it apart and the moon sings I am the final rat resurrected and the final rat recalls its days as a child's tricycle in the cold winters of Minnesota and the tricycle imagines itself a mosquito and the mosquito bites a child rising on its tricycle and the child wheels round and round like a fly on a string and the fly reappears as an oak leaf which is under the observant eye of Andre Masson and the observant eye of Andre Masson sees a feather growing out of the leaf.

NIKKI M. PILL

(YOU, YOUR VOICE)

you bit off the end of my name
so that i could be your secret.
you can translate my voice
to say what suits you best.

when there is too much meaning,
you can tear me out
and start a fresh page.
model me safely in her image,

your wolf-eyed red queen.
you stole my breath for ink.
you addressed my letters to her.
i'm stranger than fiction to you,

more real in your eyes than
anyone you haven't made up.
we hold imaginary conversations.
i speak in your voice for hours.

i speak in tongues for days.
my own words are pale and arthritic.
the lines someone else etched
on your face will never be my truth.

you can only believe my hands.
this is what's honest:
it doesn't have to mean anything.
you will lie awake for hours,

but those eternal questions
that won't let you sleep
never troubled my rest.
if my nights are wakeful,

it's because i sewed my shadows to your feet.
it's because the worst i can threaten you with is poetry.
tonight, your hands are desperate.
i will not breathe (a word).

TODD A. CARTER

COLOUR AS IS A MESS KNOWN BY NO ONE

This seed sparks overwhelmed;
the rushing of water forever/always draining,
resisting the

iron will of Stalin

exquisite life

open the
shutter for an instant
water again smothering flashing light flowing like glass.

At this point we'll laugh @ anything,
a beautiful French woman popping her "p"s
until wait, it's coming to me
the babies on the bus keep skipping the records
straight through,
[exposing rain's potential
energy]
into the diffused, much farther
above the oxygen line sealed to sleep in transparent bags.

The speed of light's reproduction passes
through
drama,
timing;
these holding the crux,
amazing rate these last days.

masked,
forgotten,
hanging in the air like language.

pianowire

Many passengers
have overcome nausea
through our successful program,
earwax equilibrium.

Guilty of smuggling fresh lake ice water within
our solar system,
the last attempt at a smokescreen soon thins out,
although all the signs clearly
indicate otherwise, there.

This is the first symptom, doing my best to
erase each previous moment's existence.

From this advantage San Diego shines,
severely impressed with the ghosts of electricity,
little lines are drawn on a new field of the smallest sparks.

Three nights of false future and still no sign of you,
smiling sleepily beside me knowing infinity,
we laugh beneath the last sun.

All my fears are left unspoken |calculus|

two years
this night my friends died without question
leaving coloured lights and the vibrations.

Meanwhile, I was too busy taking notes on the forecast
taped above your cutout heart
to notice the fallen leaves.

THANK THE UNIVERSE FOR BLIND DATES

And still and still
 five days later
 the air still smells of Halloween
lall we are is all we are!

my family holds no trees
 on this clear night
a seemingly infinite paradox struggles to its feet
shaking off snapshots
many, many miles

if a child was my own
multiples of $25\pm$ [a few wks.] may stretch
 as far
 as the sun
blinking away

one of the top three methods
to stop

JEFFREY DANIELS

MORE ON THE STORMS

A functionless but decorative
light in the sky cuts/copies

the end of the day. And evening
you. I did not create the day.

I did not create the day we
appreciate or reject. I have

had twenty three years to admit
to this; storms are violent. It

comes down. We take cover because
we are not anxious about the world:

the tonight where I saw you and
you and you. Sudden light in the

sky revealing all but our intentions.
Five years and ice slowly melting.

ARITHMETIC

We couldn't afford the
shaft portrait of August,
the duct with the scent of warm rain.
The discontent mild
still shackled by the moment.
Study how the napkin is folded,
this quiet laid shadow on our prose
the kitchen heat
prone on my skin.

This is a journey:
food for the habitually evasive
and hungry called talkative.

But we could never be so solitary
(Listen
to the leaves,
the wind rolls fire).

Where the tree is grace,
our comfort
and the sun, the sun.

IVAN RAMOS

FOR RYAN PHILIP KULEFSKY

Alice is dead
coffee spills
Alice is dead
everything is louder in the city
and she's dead, "Alice is dead"
and someone screams
through a straw
of hay he found in a barn
and a man eats coffee with
a fork
she pulls her tongue out
with her breast
she swears she's god and says
"I want to live forever"
a waitress begs me for sleep
on knees of pencil marks and
manhood shrivels and falls
and now explodes in her mouth
and she lives forever
pounding sex in bones bed shakes
outside the mourners line
around tall Chicago corners
and I want meat, give me meat
and who died from your kiss
bleeding knuckles dripping
slow and staining that shirt
and she dies on your tongue
a princess whore
and stranger's breath
on tree limb fires
labeled under your eyes
soup porches

BETH SIMON

BREAD

The ex-spouse, fresh
and friendly as a therapist
wants to discuss trust
co-dependence, which
parent to blame.

I suspect mine, then
reject then consider
offering
rapprochement
on a smorgasbord of lust.

May some god filch
my personal address
book, turn
Fed Ex busy
shipping what we need.

Even in these hard times
I trust the one
crucial moment: that first
we take each other,
cut and eat.

ZAIRE

We've been waiting for this, *The Prince of Zaire*, rock 'n roll genius. Right from the start, amps, cranked. Enormous sound. The Prince himself, the high laser voice, the thin whip of vibrato fast as a snake. The rhythm guitar player undulates, stomps the heel of his foot into floor, doubles over & howls, the horns scream & the drums come on beating.

The Prince is a giant, a blue water bull, over six & a half feet, over three hundred pounds. Everyone in this theater is yearning for him to paw our ground, bury us in his endless sweet continent of flesh. The Prince rolls his belly out like a magic carpet & we will him to stride across & lay his rich weight upon us, his mesomeric pressure, his mineral heat, until the fault lines shimmer, until we crack, splinter, blow apart.

The tall muscled dancer near the stage, my best friend, Carl, has discovered West African bands, Tabu Ley Rochereau, Dr. Nico, the Soukous Stars, moves to "Afrika Mokili Mobimba," taught me the lyrics, Lingala & French, to "Continent Quarantine" & "Le Congo Belge," filched his skimpy spandex t-shirt from me earlier this evening when he stopped by to do some excitement. After we got right, he drew a batch of CDs out of his briefcase, fanned them out. Said he'd worked the back aisles at SunCoast. Said I should help myself.

I cued Funkadelic for Bootsy Collins. Carl rifled my closet, emerging the Detroit version of Arabian Nights in my fishnet tights, charmeuse harems, the open-toed wedges he claims are gender neutral, & he must have used oil because now, his neat waist, bare, glistening above my chain link belt, points like an arrow to his heart. Carl's not into women, but he loves the Prince, all the players. He is dying to get down on his hands & knees, but no one at a microphone would ever love him back, or even run a tongue across his lips.

While Carl conjured dream suits, I cabled in some Uncle Tom news head droning "Mobuto" & "famine" & "Congolese aftermath," trading sleeping sickness for the wealth of new diseases. He breathed "spectre" three times, turning the west half of Africa & every one of these guys, drums, lead, soprano sax & alto & the one on marimba, into HIV positive or Ebola survivors, but at the moment, none of us cares.

We step around blood, weird death, flies. What we're sick of is social workers saying "Girl" & "Homey" & "It ain't about nothin," making our lives a boogie town mix of *Boyz In The Hood* with Discovery channel, when the fact is they adore how we live & anyway, we've exploded into the aisles.

The band segues into "The Walls of Kinshasa." Strobes slice us, black, silver, white. The air blurs gun powder, nitro, laundromat steam. Sweat is the catalyst. I am all over hungry. Carl says when the time is right, protection's irrelevant. The girl in front of me, half crouched, knees spread, is pumping her crotch. Her head wrap's a *gelee*. Her woven *kikoi*'s tied on so tightly the stripes bunch over her butt in a grin.

She tips her head back, red lips part, drinks down the glass moon. River of sorrow. River of jewels. Ruby, sapphire, emerald green spangles. The Prince sings his own language & I know every word: *Feticheur* *Sorcerer*
Le Destin *Le Gloire*

SIMON PERCHIK

265

My tongue hard, trampled red
from sleeplessness
—what more can I say?

The sky I rub over your eyes
and over your hand the rain all night
as footprints somehow are smoothed
—not a sign anything was said
and the air brushed clear again.

Whatever I say is covered with flowers
with this sky fed constantly
so it will never leave
—not just breakfast, or noon
or Spring but endless, eats and eats
from these plates you dead
hold out: each gravestone

on edge or when some birthday card
or a ticket home or my arm
around your breath returning
from sunlight and candles.

What do I say to you
when the sky hardly remembers
its darkness higher and higher
that the sun come home

and when you squint
helping me look for the exact spot
where impatient clouds still leap
from the sun and even the Earth
coming back to its still warm arms.

They're eggs nobody wants: snow
all day falling from their nest
and these waves broken in half

—it's so long since I sang
—I forgot how a word, one
then another, another and I am flying
taking hold a mountain, somehow the top
then stars—even the drowned

will rise to the surface
looking for air and the cold
—all winter this sea kept warm
—some bomber ditched, its engines left on
—four small furnaces and still forging wings
from bottom sand, shaped the way each wave
still lifts the Earth, then tries again

—each year the sea made warmer
by those same fires every mother
nurses with soft words: this snow
growing strong, already senses
the flight back as lullabies—my mouth

can't close, a monster eating snow, my lips
swollen from water and cold and loneliness
—someone inside my belly
has forgotten the word I need to say
or sing or both my arms into the sea
feeding and feeding and feeding.

RYAN GAGE

THE SUNDAY VIGNETTES

I

no.
but why?
'cause . . .

death so velvet
does unctuous
work

upon life's edges

yes.
no.
why not?

the falling man
from noose

in time
w/ space
of light and vivid stills

(he shall be)
his once
All.

to
(a manNOWleaving).

II

during this feeling
of rain
upon my coarse cheek

in this hour
born "to do"
i "don't"

with the greatest
of ease
and accuracy (unparalleled)

during the ephemeral
between the slanted rain
the moment lost

waiting (maybe for you)

III

O wither me
these rains as
I reconcile
your curt and angled language

The digestion of
your refusal, the
leaps through hoops of hours
spent translating your
acts of mystery

I stretch to understand
this mode by which you've
assembled a thousand fold
caravan of wheelchaired stumps
into Dante's tempest wild
a nest of flames

this logic you market
entwined in the fury
of a pugilist's exercise . . .

Have you no knowledge or
notion of justice?

As I lie disadvantaged
with blinders . . .

When rain strikes at the
crown of our hearts, the
abysmal depths of our faith, and
leaves the eye unscathed,
restless and waiting . . .

Only to view the carnage of
one's self and rot with
lips so bitter

IV

upon the *a priori*
of vague and telling theses

i will no doubt
bore the auditorium

shameless and daunted
lyrics are a sixth finger

V

and with me
come the yoke
of burden

these wanderings
around the lip
inalienable

the rhetorical
the aphoristic
delights in moment

in language . . .
in land
and in heart (in

love)

so daunted with
context
and relative joy

in the flesh
and fluids
so broken . . .

with woe

and here i am
the adjoining
prosthetic laced

within truth and falsehood
hinged tightly
to a heart

this lorn hostage
amidst the furor of these
irreconcilable foes

VI

for i am not well
and some might even
say as much

and if i choose
to exit this life
for reasons "to be"

what would you
"accuse thee
of"

maybe
the subtle crimes
committed by children

"our lives so
upon the pedals
of a piano"

VII (Mayakovskii Thrills)

one must rise
to someday fall

registering a mere 7

upon the scale
that no one will feel

'til the scholars
and censors

wipe clean the dust

and translate
and package
for a posterity

that doesn't read

VII

love thus/love be
you

that of darkest wills

the cynic
w/constituency

but do love
the something

which is me

IX (Auteurs Die)

the light was dim
and starving

and likewise he was gone

not so much loved
as strangled in love

so love must often be

and like light used
never to be again

his mile an inch

DEBORAH HARPER

PARKING THE CAR

I don't know how to feel
when I know that you are a man
and are chasing me
knowing every step and trick before me
to be scared of you
to confront you
now a woman
who won't back away
to batter you with a 2-by-4
and watch you get up
ram the butt of a shotgun against your head
and watch you get up again
slide the barrel down your throat
watch you stop breathing
only to run away quickly
afraid you'll still follow.

FAST, CHEAP AND OUT OF CONTROL

I thought I was watching a film on mole-rats
surprised to learn
I was only watching myself
looking through the sky
for the full moon which fell
through the cracks of a deserted construction site
and I paid

TOM SAVAGE

A BOY CALLED KIWI JUST KNIFED A CHINESE MAN

A long time after Elmer Rice

The Stalinist Emperor of China visits New York
To ring the stock exchange's opening bell.
In the afternoon, there's a large pile
Of real, red blood near my steps
On Eleventh Street between Aves. B & C.
Cops rope off three blocks with yellow bands.
The body's already gone. The murdered man
Worked on a construction gang renovating
A burnt-out building up the street.
When you practice lying on a bed of nails,
You start with a few and only add
The cinderblock on top of you later.
I put on my Tibetan robe and go to the Halloween parade.
There'll be many false ghosts and perhaps
A real, new one. My superintendent
Photographed the killing from his window
And gave his shots to the New York Post. Now,
He only wants to know how much he'll get paid.
They didn't say whether they'd use them or not
Or even whether the story would get told.
At the parade, a two-headed dog gets to play
Being the caboose on a queen's train.
But nobody dies, even though there are plenty
Of fake skeletons and blood everywhere.
The real stuff stays on my pavement all night long.
Someone surrounds it with candles.
A baby plays with the blood by dipping
A piece of paper in it and rolling it around.
Next morning, an All Saints' Day rain washes the blood away.

APRIL SHERIDAN

A SPLINTER IN MY DANDY

who enjoyed her own contained self
in which water
faithful as it is divine
preferred to be dirtied

you may have felt your hands sleep as it rains
you aren't sure how they feel to have
I may know how to tuck in sheets
but I can't show how they got there

stories burst above the ground
what they have so hot to tell
doing laps around the buildings in balloons
shoes at the feet but not in them
you've never seen a toe not supposed to be

under lamps chicken is what chicken does
pure spout

laying eggs

baked

not nibbling with teeth
but singing through food

WILD MULE COLLECTIVE

Skin almost ready to be
human or at least porcelain
this poem foresees its own fate
it could be a lie
it's certainly not enough to be
a boy.

The act of leaving wood
the way a bed looks with one
I'm queen here at least
(of pillows and spring)

enough of a branch
to be out on.

All my ideas for this below everything else
but it's not an idea it's a poem—

well it's supposed to be but
still so quiet so green.

GARY DUEHR

FROM *I AM GERMAN*

BLACK AND WHITE

"I am German." When Gray open his chest's
Skin-flap, he can watch his heart's black
Gears grasp: no problem,
All's forgotten—what is German
Surrounds him with its

Fuzzy dusk rolling up a flag. Car lights
Cut across the whole
Plaza: He is German: black
Iron skillet burnt blacker from grease, two
Sharp white collar-points

Aimed like two knives straight at his stomach. German,
German: black tree trunks holding back
A river, the worn
Terminus of brick buildings lodged
In his throat, city

Carved from a stone tear. A photo dissolves, fire's sucked
Back into a house. Between teeth, memory's stuck.

TIMOTHY LIU

PARABLE

Suspended on a string, a gold ring
dangles over pages time has disavowed—
St. Augustine pilloried against
those temple gates put out to pasture.
For my own pleasure first, then yours, come
riding on the backs of broken
chairs—dust motes floating up that staircase
to the sun. The choir unhinged. Molten
iron rushing into runnels of a bell
mold as teeming maggots hatch in the folds
of a bloated goat. That privet
walling out the windows of a church
where flocks of sheep keep eyes from rolling
in. This pen the plough I daily push.

AN INFERNO

Unable to find our way back home because.
The childhood road is always doomed you must.
States of mind we drive and drive unable.
Have we come to die or die to come here?
Forget California Iowa no bridge between.
The gravestones do their work. No caskets
floating underneath the surface of the earth's
skin. Nor mausoleums erected six feet
above the ground as in New Orleans doing
drag down Bourbon Street the night the Parade
Disco burned to the ground. "Disco Inferno."
Even if it was the Eighties playing tag
the fag with all those fitting catamites
caught between disco new wave techno house.

PROLEGOMENON

Voices faintly heard through the womb's skin.
Tone. The eggplant's violet truss. A poem
struggles into being as grains of rice
coagulate on a dirty plate.
Mother, are you listening? An afternoon
where tines on plastic party forks
give out in the heat. Still we hunger
for more: G-strings snaking up humid
cracks where men who fondle themselves find
no horizon past that nylon line
ass-kissed while pennants flap in the breeze.
The sun a letterpress hot with ink.
Our words our cage. Nothing between us now
but coconut oil splattered on the page.

TO RENEW

Or else. And if the book tears or cracks
or wants to be resewn into
its binding. Yet words that lie within
get dusted off. (your breath) *Touch me*
not whispered behind a row of stiff
Brancusi pedestals so that
this want might be contained. (that lie
within) Syringa song on the tongue
of Philomel. To rue. And if you
touch me not, your breath will do—
some gravid phthisic baldachin
buried long enough, words renewed
by a voice that feeds me in this dire
hour of need. (so that this want)

B. Z. NIDITCH

GEORGE SEFERIS

The sky is endless
and the torments
from the roving gods
make you numb
you expect numbers
of ex-lovers
to shelter your arms
and words like poppies
to flow by you
somewhere in the Aegean
sponges gather
by shivering rocks
of blue-green waves
hearing the consul's voice
in the home harbor
damned and drunken
for the cry
of a rescued life
the wind only returns itself
suspecting your secrets
of each relentless hour
moving out from the voiceless
facing a glass sea.

A POLISH DRAWBRIDGE

That dead swift river
containing what rose water
still sings
in the luminous pre-war days
now bodies are ghost-like
from the bluish black barrels
two children stare on the road
afraid to wonder
at these soaked remains.

Forty years of rain
have passed over me
in the warm wandering world
I have compassed about
yet by this dark wooden bridge
late at night after nightmare
the river rises its martyrs
not one will be forgotten.

MITCH CORBER

MULCH

There's a fear called
rear-view mulch
which barricades the stay-at-home
layers
distancing the glint of vapors
versed intuitively
in mist

a systematical rat-a-tat-*tat*
throws reason
 to the Sioux
The ancient shank of sheep
sacrificed at the sad husk
of famine's feebling
enacts the whack of head
and drain of lifeblood dribbling

of fear
the near-sighted lamps
stand darkly
badly amber blinds the stare
dismissing flare of future-shock
as night retards
the guarded

to open
once the pinhole welcomes
takes a seldom
 utilized allure
 to purify
 the present

where the tension evanesces
in the pinch
of weather's promise
Titian sketches savoir-faire
the lion's lair
 the heathen's hut

am I the why and how
 of ego's lessons?

JAMES PYOTT

SHRUNK

Beaches slump stickly narrow,
Tinny—a green midwestern sky upon square oceans,
The taffrail locked as the smell of mold
In slackness. Yellow gull eyes
Wide in idiosyncrasy; the #22 wades the curb,
Chimes in flat vanity.

Slush builds blue on staunch Minsk stoplights
You will always miss, the temperature falling through the corner,
Sloping Antillean velvet beams down fat blue lines.
When will the caulk be dry enough to bathe?
Enough of it to fill the room,
A clackier more.

Here come the Moses boats,
Gray shelves on the sea,
The oarsmen stiff and crude in patter the palms
Beat like eggs and slap in waves on hidden gristles.

The favorable sun molests the words and
Stuffs them on an afternoon more likely
Not to breeze through damp steamed doors,
Leaving them.

But the vending carts row shackled still and spent, behind
The ballpark gates, graphing the bus window,
The wet sidewalk, the ticket window's boarded over
Blue and red calendar dates, the stumped father,
The child stretching bright new rays. It is after all a city.

THE LIBRARY TRAIN

I stepped on the El from the library with Yeats' books
And we banged on garrulous windows like mackerels
From my thigh compressed beneath a large man who
Rose and sucked up the windburn sweet
That rolled back down. That's when the
Woman across the aisle was trying between my knees
To see the cover and then I was
Thinking black and white war footage
Two men loading shells like brass ribbed breasts
Like clock figures into the ten inch gun,
Her green looped hat that snapped chopped black hair
At attention on the long white cheek. We
Hurled a turn and I stood up because I
Would have fallen and her eyes were not real but blue
And looking at mine which were not real but brown and
I sensed the intercom and said to the blue which was not
Real as the sea is never real,
You are too beautiful to be riding on elevated trains
And she said, They are safe enough.
I said, Walking is safer
And the gray beam balanced between the red lips
And she got up and the doors opened and she
Smiled at me on the stairs and walked fine into the street
In old black leather on the changing light and she
Kept on scissoring rain water
Much too briskly for me to hang on.

JENNI GRUTZMACHER

[I DECIDED THAT COURTYARDS]

I decided that courtyards
are good and better empty
sometimes leafy in oil light
and damp under an occasional
rainfall that offers
wet or warm or cold
breathing that stings
fills biology lungs
with cold vivid city
air or wets a scarf
around my mouth
that wasn't expecting
to be wet on a
Monday morning
walking to the bus
late again to the
next place being so
like me to complain
about the weather
and to still endure it
living in Chicago
finding no better
reason to leave
here to go to no
better a place
than maybe Sarasota
Florida where my
Grandmother retired
to a stationary
mobile home
(and is completely
comfortable with
that contradiction)
finds leisure in
Bingo and non-Synagogue
Saturday briskets made
with Grandmother hands

being completely
comfortable with
moist Tropic air
that's nothing of
the city stuff
and sits smoking and
sitting around after
working for forty
plus years to afford
to sit and smoke
Winston cigarettes
on an anonymous front
porch of a non-moving
mobile house
with wheels
located somewhere in
the park
strategically placed two
lots to the left of
the main entrance
with no trace of a courtyard
or leaves
even

STUART MITCHNER

MARLOWE STRUCK BY LIGHTNING

In front of a tavern in Deptford
A man with a knife in his brain
Holds his arms
Toward the sky,
Dancing as it darkens,
Taking the stage
To take the play by the throat,
Last scene, last speech,
Faustus and the storm roaring as one.
Comes the black wind,
Comes the crack and lash of light,
Deptford's dancer goes green, then gold,
His head a comet's tail
Streaming in the firmament.

BOSCH IN JERUSALEM

Beyond the sentries dreaming in the deathlight
Are anthill towers, windmills,
Trees like postmortem maidenhair,
Hills like funny hats.

If you look closely
You can see other human figures
Balanced on other pedestals,
Arms outstretched.

In the sepulchre of the sky
The day looks as blue and busy as a dragonfly.

LUCIA DICK

NAMING THE WILDERNESS

"The wilderness . . . does not locate itself, does not name itself."
— Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*

1

White porcelain
is stacked beside the kitchen sink.
Sunlight shafts
across the counter
defining the crescent shadow
a tower of bowls.
Two cats stroll
from room
to room, clicking claws
against linoleum and hardwood.
Wan silence hangs
over dusty philodendron.
A pile of catalogues falls
ponderous, through the slot
fanning out
upon the floor.

2

Here's a contemporary layout
monotone of white & off-white
setting off a sweater
in brilliant chartreuse.
A contemporary living room
is lightstruck from the sea.
White pillows drift
on oceanic sofas of cool gray.
A glass-top table gleams
faintly amethyst.
Purple iris unfold
on stems arrayed
in a crystal vase.

The mind's collaboration
 with the eye
 makes even the bath a landscape.
 The tub a grayish, grainy white
 like the bathroom porcelain
 in old French hotels
 the canvas shower curtain
 a brilliant, antiseptic blankness.
 The enclosing walls are clayey, oatmeal white
 dense & reassuring.
 The water in the tub is pale green & translucent
 the color of an old glass bottle.
 The eye seeks
 a saturated spot of color
 to complete the composition
 finds it
 in a bar of soap
 the color of an egg yolk
 opaque as an old penny
 absorbing light.

Light quickens pigments
 in horizontal bands
 stacked upon the ocean.
 The horizon is a line that joins the sky & sea.
 Sapphire goes to pewter
 goes to steel-wool gray
 and just above the layer of fleshy pinks—
 tea rose & salmon—
 a narrow zone blends blue & orange
 in ephemeral green
 & tenderest aqua.
 Above, a searing pink
 Below, a darkly luminous purple.
 The mind inks in the horizon.
 A ragged sparkle breaks the pattern:
 shore lights
 like a sequined dress, thrown
 in dazzling disorder
 upon a bed
 while the bedroom walls
 still radiant with twilight
 gradually lose their glow.

At the Monterey Aquarium
a forest fills a tank two stories high.
Kelp trees keep upright
in effervescent water:
sun-filtering filigree of blue
rippling the flaccid, golden leaves.
Schools of anchovy streak—silver dashes—
row on row. The broken, horizontal lines
turn into
ranks of dots
as myriad fish
turn, streak into dashes again, then turn again
to dots:
a Times Square sign of moving lights
a code whose charisma
draws the mind
into an old alliance
with the wilderness.

And what if
we were not here
to read it?
What of that?

STEVEN TEREFF

STIFF FLAMES

His smile reaches only so far across his face. He makes bank transactions in the dark. He wears a thick veil. His story on his cheek, it blasts his future. He couldn't stop drinking for more than four months. Hated himself. Lit himself on fire in an abandoned concrete bunker by the train tracks. The smoke rising from his isolated body attracted unwanted help. The want ad for sobriety answered in an oxygen tent. He wears the mask of his past. Mirrors reflect shame. Does he place the importance of one error over another? He won't answer. The charred husk of night surrounds him. It has expended its use. He found no comfort in either heat or cold. Under the cloak of his room, smothered by memory. He dreams of stiff flames:

dark noose

tanning
hate

agile

years

flare

in
detox tents

sand maps

of mirrors

deflect
denial

charred
comfort

GORDON MASSMAN

658

Half-gnawed, raw black walnuts zing from branches,
a perfect hail, thud the parched ground, hundreds
splitting air: it's squirrels! squirrels! in the canopies
robbing us of nuts, nut pies, nutty oatmeal, baklava—
industrialists against winter, building stores in the
potted plants and soil under petunias, great bulging
cheeks of earth. I look and they plop at my feet,
under rodent barking and copulating, the trees shaking
with nerves. Well, after the first year of emptiness
I stopped expecting my trees to yield nuts for me—
in June I spy green nodes under leaves between
forking wood, and in July walk on carpet of half-
eaten balls. Each bears the signature of squirrel plow
marks. Isn't that, as well, a symbol for love, leisure,
pain, exuberance, life itself—everything is half-eaten.
Yesterday on powdery, rocky, and sodden trails
I hiked nine miles through mountainous woods
stepping on deer tracks, horse hoof prints, and
human footprints obliterating them who will obliterate
mine piecemeal over time, in chips, knocking off
heel marks, toe pushes, clean lines. Perhaps a mis-
shapen piece of one step will survive years but then
the wind will take it. I am not whole in my skin—the
little nut of me—but whole in the stomach and gut
of the world, flung wide. Even at birth, purple and
new, I was but a piece she found to push through.
My feeling for you fragments, gives food, vanishes,
rains down, glistens, like flecks in fields of rich
ground, resurrects, nourishes with life what's all
around, fuses and detonates, separated by ripping
fingers of air. You may not close your hand
around it, solid and undispersed, yourself disparate
but unhurt, until, finally, from above, you are
eaten into wholeness by the very God you love.

RITA HAWN

RESPONSE TIME

Tree slides
back toward
clinging touch
fake snow
a ledge

The thought
a name
misgivings come
easy to some
a leaf
can seem

No sense in
forging history
asking advice
from strangers
like family
or friends

No doves in
my curtains
(a fallacy)
I made a mural
of plums
and assorted fruit

When I arrived
I decided to leave
paint for hands
and a chance
to divide
mirrors
into oceans

Light coverings
of disclosure
beginnings of desert
form on my lips
I regret
the afterbite
of a thought

BACK LIKE THAT

What with the
feigned attempts
recalling nothing
she
bit like a racehorse
trampled ascent
to ground
said first words
lost to frostbite
erosion like cake
reciting hopes
in French

Back later
a forest
(some tree)
and then
a star

She rose like
a recall
placing her number
gently on his
feigned attempts
the grass rose to
meet her
this time
she wasn't
and next time
she was

GLENN INGERSOLL

THE CITY IN THE CUP

There is no life, the sign proclaims, imagining a short
black sleeve above her cut put together,
the woman's "hermeneutics" and the saint
into which a bee is emblem. Under my nail
a creased white I, the stereo settles in the kitchen,
a silence handed off after the steam seat.

Tim's short and sand has I'd like maybe time
but I'm his way, the canister they require, he asks,
a silver we beautify. Hold it before Wilson's
cross ease. We have to worry again about
the weather. Discursive, meaning talk-like.

I tell match, two boys who'd and give numbers,
a handsome obstacle to promises. Arnie's ideas
of who goes don't. A says, knowing my attitude
despite, to reach. I think I'll say.
The empty quick, a cat or two. Already
the street barriers a block ahead like rap:

I won't seek fucked ambiance like a crumb knuckle,
a propped corpus over the savior.
I am that God! he attires. Where? The boy,
his hands folded, a fur vagary, light over our
dry; I seek as a pillow a palace or ambulance.

DAVID BEAVER

SONORA

I don't mind telling you that
we went there to get drunk
my brother and some of his friends.
they said we'd drink tequila
and if we didn't like it
we'd drink it 'til we did
it seemed glamorous to me
in some way to sit under an
umbrella watching the tide go
out or in I don't remember

all that busy water
everything we did seemed
trite next to it

drinking Tecate after Tecate
building my own pyramid
to my private sun god on the table
with beer cans. shots that seemed
thick and cottoned my mouth
by the sea or ocean I don't remember

one of the women we were with
took it upon herself to translate
agua meant water
Gringo was us
it's pronounced Meh hee co

I thought of famous drunks
what would they have done?
sitting in a gaudy Hawaiian
with Bermuda shorts in Mexico
a placard of a tourist
slurring every syllable but
knowing enough to still get
by. falling back in my chair like a
proper American. not drinking

the agua. drooling in my lap
like a pig. pulling a middle finger
out of my back pocket
and waving it in her squabby face
I brought this just for you

what a fucking mess
some locals pulled up in their car
an urgency surrounding us
frantically pointing at my cap
a Cleveland Indian with a
glaring error on my head
are there any Indians left?
yes—and they confiscated my hat
and I deserved it

W. B. KECKLER

WHEN IT CAME TO HIM, DURING A VACATION

suffered but a moment's suspense the stalks and ears
of it whispered "tut, tut" something that wouldn't
resemble or appear apparently very stubborn

 crawling like a lobster through the inner ear
("could it be the wind?") very unlikely
 but the nothingness was like a gong he saw neon

 and went under his bones shaking (the hole
in sex opening to swallow even the eyelashes
 He just sat up in bed staring saying it's nothing

but real as the ocean smell in your shoes left out
a piece of blank paper the partner suggested this
who suddenly didn't exist no characters now

 realized he was stepping backwards beautifully
 bountifully he saw his earliest drawings
first word ever spoken lines migrating birds the first known

 guessless in a cave he found himself (eyes
 open blind swelling full needing
a thin line he was (wobbling between a big touch

 and death (a single stream of beaming out
what could he do to that thing the vagueness pressing
 a whole something pressing and no one to be

 a line of blood trembled he shut up not knowing
something vital the idea of itself nameless eyes
 and the lover screamed touching the forehead

the bird eyes, sweeping staring seascape :: cold fog moving in

WINTER POEM

Speech is banned today.
Ants have their noon,
we have our December.
Snow nixes my concentration,

so I phone strangeness.
I like his cupboards
full of rye and poems.
He's prisoner. Also a sea.

He's bullshit that rides
the lost winds. Anglo-Saxon
klaxon. Almost lay with him.
Wanted to lick his rottenness like whiskey.

I nicknamed him Demander.
He felt like the snow, often.
The dead have their tombs.
We have our remember.

AURAL SCULPTURING

(of D. Shapiro, with a cribbed line)

“Part of a woman holds a boy”
With her bereft arm supporting them
We preserved only a heart in her chest
(The child is tightened and stings a breast

What is carved is iridescent hair full of lies . . .
The century is rending, mercury balls on her fingers
Like the original rich dare
They have harmed dark Shulamite

Wrong is glassy sometimes and shark green
And semi-translucent, the narcissus has spoken:
Love, love, part child, part wolf
Most vagrant long after sighs of human rehabilitation

Oh, “to stain the lovely violence . . .”
But such minor galactic inferences are bluster . . .
Sea of Redundancy, Sea of Necklaces, Sea of Spin
Matched by a thumbnail, sketched by a soft djinn

SUSEN JAMES

INITIAL CONDITION

Life trebles, repeats blue and prophetic.
I am in my element in thunderstorms.
How does one move beyond the gray?
Is it raining everywhere; inside and outside my head?

I am in my element in thunderstorms.
The sky navies in mid-day,
Is it raining everywhere; inside and outside my head?
A visible recognition of pattern. Aromatic shrubs.

The sky navies in mid-day,
The sequelae of wandering from stasis,
A visible recognition of pattern. Aromatic shrubs.
Exposed to rain, my skull forms cathedral.

The sequelae of wandering from stasis,
I know more people dead than living.
Exposed to rain, my skull forms cathedral.
Paul comes to me in a dreaming to ask.

I know more people dead than living.
Diving beneath the hives and orbits of ordinary,
Paul comes to me in a dreaming to ask
“What happened to the narrative?”

Diving beneath the hives and orbits of ordinary,
I am loosed in a grimace. Needles of rain.
“What happened to the narrative?”
I am the shadow who speaks.

I am loosed in a grimace. Needles of rain.
With a sullen sighing of the body toward uncertainty,
I am the shadow who speaks,
dreaming myself visible.

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