

C O L U M B I A

# Poetry Review



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# **Columbia Poetry Review**

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# Contents

Gustaf Sobin	Cosmogony	1
	Contrapuntal	2
	Barroco: An Essay	4
Carolyn Koo	Remains	8
	The Criminal Mind	9
	Three Picnics	11
Joe Ross	From <i>Equations=Equals</i>	
	WORD STUPID: terminal	12
	COMMUNAL: alienation	13
	ORDAIN: cost	14
Kimberly Hayes	Gravity	15
	Bliss	16
	Reversed Card Diary	17
Connie Deanovich	From <i>The Spotted Moon</i>	20
Jeffrey Skinner	Tourista	26
	Come	27
	Lament for the Avant-Garde	28
Kostas Anagnopoulos	Two Poems	29
Joshua Taylor	Two Poems	31
Jennifer Martenson	The Obvious	33
	Agenda	36
April Sheridan	Parting Strip	37
	In the Chair, Laughing	38
	Untitled (See if I have like some)	39
Jan DiVencenzo	Matter	40
Davis McCombs	Cave Wind	41
	Flowstone	42
Sandy Feinstein	Backtalk	43
Mark DuCharme	From <i>The Lives of the Baggers</i>	46
	Colonial Monday	49
Paul Hoover	In Which City	50
Dan Sturniolo	Already We Have Turned Back	
	What I Know Sailed	53
	Untitled (Wings labored and roof)	55
	In the Parasite Museum	56
Mark Wallace	From <i>Temporary Worker Rides</i>	
	<i>a Subway</i>	57
Sheila E. Murphy	Geometry	60
	Thighs	61
Arpine Konyalian Grenier	For We Like Sheep	62
	And There's Candy by	
	the Gramophone	64

	You'll Live the Adult Some	65
Paul Weidenhoff	The Dinner Party	66
Terrance Calvin	The Cores of Rotten Tomatoes	73
	Muse	74
Michael O'Brien	Cold & Brown and Everywhere	75
Gary Duehr	Aphasia	77
Ron Padgett	Bang Goes the Literature	78
	The Drummer Boy	79
Charles North	Philosophical Songs	80
Greg Purcell	From <i>The Pragmatist</i>	81
	For Ezra Pound, On His Birthday	84
Rod Smith	CyberLoveDaizy #1	85
	CyberLoveDaizy #2	86
W.B. Keckler	Lou and Laurie	87
	Musical Artifacts & the Cone	88
Joe Meno	Wood Teeth	89
	The Make-Out King Must Fall	90
Raphael John Buckles	Me & My Fancy Pants	91
	Sassafras	92
Peter Radke	Inevitable: Leaping Dogs	94
Daniel Mosher	From <i>Twelve Days in the Life</i> <i>of Saint Hymie</i>	100
Marci Del Mastro	Simple Almost	105
	No Proper Limit	106
Nebojsa Prodic	Ghost in a Dry Season	107
Vanessa Villareal	A Hallmark <i>Cartita</i> Moment	109
Susen James	At Dusk on the Porch You Can Smell the Lake	111
	The Pick-Up	113
Rita Hawn	Untitled	114
	White	115
Myra Kalaw	Dismantling the Hour	116
James Tipton	This Story Is About Fire and Destruction	118
Lorna Dries	The Hecate	120
	The Conciliator	122
Lott Hill	Transformation	123
	If I	125
Jeffrey Daniels	Cruel	127
	Let's Have a Bake Sale	128
	The Confidence Man	129

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# GUSTAF SOBIN

## COSMOGONY

having sipped the  
mirror to a single, ir-  
reflexive bead, a  
no-

breath, saw the cold, slow-  
burning cell-stars  
bunch in  
con-

junction.

## CONTRAPUNTAL

slept in your  
own  
shifting imprint, breath-  
deep over so many successive layers  
of

crushed artefact. ankle, flank, shoulder:  
weren't these, after  
all, attributes  
of

air, what you'd wager  
a-  
gainst your own unmaking? but wrought,  
beaten, first, into

bright scales; the least bones buoyant  
with  
number.

would lie, then, in  
long waves of  
sound, knuckles as  
if wafted, each organ inscribed  
within its own

tenuous register. a world-without, you'd  
called it, hovering  
a-

bout its  
very  
obliteration. ash and amber, jug and

*tegulae*: what drew, would draw incessant from  
under, while your  
fist  
clenched, milky, the

resonant  
cloud.

## BARROCO: AN ESSAY

1

earth but the underside, now, of its  
own, scuttled reflection, dwelt, didn't  
you, in the neither, the  
non-

word, the interstice in which the lips, once,  
drew sustenance from the  
viscera of  
each,

radiant  
emanation. scrollwork, you'd called it, the  
organs wrapt  
with-

in that of  
their very resonance, the structure conceived  
as a single,  
un-

interrupted sequence of reciprocal  
re-

verberations.

had weighed shadows, hadn't  
you? tested air for its

4

slightest,  
resilient particles. in these parts, the  
arm begs

only for echo; the  
muscles, the least outlines  
of

murmur. roll, though, against  
what? read, in the ochreous coils of a  
fresco's

flaking  
pigments, whose  
sustained, perfectly cogent, all-encompassing  
sub-

stantiations?

2

you, but  
you, but the un-  
remitting *replicata* of your own,

in-  
volved self. moved, didn't you, through the  
blown foam of so much  
broken

grammar. there, in  
those disseminated spaces, was  
'thirst,' you

5

wondered, still a word? a quantity? for  
words, once,  
were ladders, scaffolds, the props and stays of  
their own,

ev-  
anescent volumes.

hold, then, to each,  
abandoned ellipse; crouch within the  
wobbling contours of so much muffled  
e-

laboration. for here, at least, once  
happened: heard  
it-

self happen. yes, here, just  
here, for instance, once hung, polyphonous, a  
vaulted dome, and within, a  
bevy of bright,  
ray-

shaken stars, modulated on  
breath a-  
lone. feed, then, on  
aftermath. yes, sip, residual, from so much

vacua. for the hollow droplet still  
re-  
tains, as if  
resonant, its very emission. listen, then; yes,  
listen. glean from the

silence, silences. and, so doing,  
quench yourself on the  
emptiness  
of

each parched, irreparable  
instant.

# CAROLYN KOO

## REMAINS

In bark, sap pulls four  
legs into one fat tip.

In the howl, hear bell,  
whale or crime. In the fist,

a sharp pod fallen.  
In remains, what nouns,

what is proper in bone.  
In the word

for stairs made in mud  
and use, prints stacked in hardening

mass. In the pit—closed eyes,  
open hand: touch

in context makes anything  
the mind. In theory

protection ends in self  
infliction, in house getting robbed.

In time time feeds itself  
in deep, in lull.

In bed we talk in reverent  
tones of legs

in distance,  
in amber, intact.

## THE CRIMINAL MIND

### I

A sentence began and ended in the usual way.  
In time, she'll sit down in the grass to cry.

Though the romance is aggressive, there isn't a grave beneath at least, no earth loose in recognition of transience. Kind angles of light imply impatience, forgiveness, and time itself is a transgression. The scene is not words, unearthed objects alone.

No fault makes a perfect cut to the current  
As we learn from the skull,

The eyes were sunk to begin and he dreamed larger things until, no face remaining, grass grew through floorboards, soft moss in concrete and vines find their way out of brick. In the implicitly tragic rock, what can turn grey does.

I would like to tell you this, but if I did it would not be  
The power of water and sound to crack

Even as I breathe the grey moon becomes green, making *visible*  
*the motions of the mind*, but every day another gesture builds to a  
familiar plot  
(yet to be bought despite the wild medicine growing—  
A cure that allows me to lay my ear to your heart.)

### II

Let's suppose for a moment  
we don't know who to meet at the plane

In which direction to draw, whether the grasped will collapse. To prepare, we listen in the lab to *what time is it* and *when will it change*, *is there time before*  
Flowers bloom into empty bowls,

Dancing divides the air. When we draw close, it is meant to be read as faster: the intimate momentum shown by foreboding drift of clouds, the moon's obstruction to mean blank desire is apt to get lost in the struggle. The coat

ripped away, buttons plummet into snow.

Emptiness at last.

For some, the din is enough.

Everything that *city* or *crow* calls to mind can be mined for connections to put you in a light, a certain light. A lone crow provides the variety of voice needed within minutes. For ten minutes I thought about this, moving around the tree.

Perhaps you saw me and broke the spell.

The words are intact

yet so old they wouldn't hold up to the hard gaze or kind brush. If every print is a song, so many notes could only be heard as one.

## THREE PICNICS

### I

Two blue heron fly up from the pond.  
This imitates light, wings make wind,  
makes tears to smear the static landscape.  
We use the raft until it rots then pause,  
hold breath, drop beneath, pause—  
Open eyes and we're stretched  
wide in clinging green weeds

### II

What the city considers dark  
is dusk here—the throat is waiting.  
We mouth one or two soft words:  
*silence, absence*—and gather  
bread and voices in cloth. In the emptiness  
that follows motion above us the parachute  
finally opens.

### III

We tear the little building  
down with our hands and now stand  
where it stood in the field.  
Wind diffuses out of angles and  
planks make a bridge to protect  
its own ruin. We soothe our raw  
hands in wet grass.

## JOE ROSS

### FROM *EQUATIONS=EQUALS*

#### WORD STUPID: terminal

A calm quietly undone. Like you in the morning, in half recall,  
half disbelief.  
This chain smoked dream, drug induced wonder, mind produced  
wander. Come.  
You soul spoke your crazy energy high, dissolved into breath, and  
made it there.  
Sorry, I've got a head full. Like the only sane response to this world  
*is* madness.  
Your mother doesn't even know your name. You call me, you  
there—I say see.  
This pendulum balance upon the precipice tip. Let's call the waiter,  
order steaks.  
No this isn't the old world lyric and I am not a liar, so you satyr  
stare, mural run, colosseum feast, chariot drive, and toga wash our this.  
It costs and you may choose to pay up—to get in the game, be a player,  
be on the A team, be in the loop, get your say in, be a policy maker,  
decision maker, earth shaker, one of the doers, one of the empowered,  
a real lifer.  
Oh just stop. I can't take your cathode cubicle logic anymore.  
So precise, so divided, so unoriginal. Forget seeing the forest dude.  
You paper burn the chase. Spirit lock on plastic—sun kill  
in designer tan. I can't say this pretty. I can't.

## **COMMUNAL: alienation**

My days have numbers. A pot of coffee and a poem, you there, me.  
This fate we desire, divides, overcomes the exclusion out. Push.  
I this, me talk, is a leftover on the run. I faint see, color colors.  
This is hand wrapped—a conversation with fingers, slow and smooth,  
even. A single malt or take this take me. In, a hypnotic,  
inclusion swallowed. A line bend, a straight steer to formula.  
For the price of a few integers, I know I can count on you.  
Let's galaxy flip, and countdown—space stride between planes. We  
can free fall thought tumble, zero G body dock, mind orbit  
through layers of what. I know our need. A mid-flight minor  
course correction generation. Breathing fumes and exhausted.  
This is a hand hold. A system check. Provisions packed,  
we are fueled, space kid ready. This now then. This  
push past the home pad and frontier grasp our us at  
goodbye speed. An escape generation  
accelerating our necessary. This is liftoff. Velocity out.

## **ORDAIN: cost**

First, throw out all notions of sin. Create or let that space at the end of skin.  
I come back to count the empty bottles. Take stock, flip open want.  
Context, the container of necessity. Form, simply the action of the shake. And  
content, the you to do. A fill up, threatening the breadth of this wide.

I don't want it shorter, just better. Like how I already feel the push away.  
A close come. Very near and dear. But ultimately the thing said, divides.  
Or rather, pushes the show and you to stage, but can't perform. You will  
refuse to be content as audience. The figures front the fire: Priest burn.  
Turn. Look.

## KIMBERLY HAYES

### GRAVITY

Because she was born in the sky  
she wants to know about weight,

how a body would feel pressed parallel  
to hers. Or a list of things that stay

on the ground. When I tell her we mate  
for life, she laughs. An imitation of wind.

I tell her to imagine anchors, orbits,  
shoes, ropes, lids, rocks, locks, sadness.

She interrupts. Takes my hand as if blind,  
as if limbs could guide her there. Hair

lifting in stranded directions, she asks  
about mourning. Believes in the division

of day and night. I have all but forgotten  
loss. Misplaced the weight of grieving,

lost keys. Doors open and shut  
randomly as we levitate over the bed.

Like the moon she always faced me,  
and in this way, was never quite real.

A loose shoe floats by and I almost feel  
like crying, as if something could be done

to keep us here, accumulated and  
hurtling, unhinged planets for a stretch.

## BLISS

Of course *he would* think, three quarters of the way to the supermarket, that I'm willing to take this over the edge. He knows me, my passenger-side perseverance, my stop-the-car-I'm-getting-out-or-else tactics. My need to cast stones, pull threads, pick bones. And I *am* circling, looking for shadows. So when he swerves into the stall, pulls the brake and says let's just forget it, is waving his arms around like an amateur magician, not how ambidextrously my face animates into a full blown frown.

Because I want him to know *why* I want him to know, he is rolling the windows down for air, then up for asylum. Isn't that just like him? Cares more what parking-lot users think than me. I pull up my knees. Re-explain my love of trees, my dream of galloping bareback. He hears a more archetypal screaming, has got the steering wheel clamped to his chest like a thin life preserver. Nothing will do until the sun sets behind the bright orange Jewel sign. First it's the hands that loosen, then slip to his lap like clay pigeons. With the head still hanging dead man's float style, he takes a dramatic last breath. Sinks below the surface in his bucket seat. It's his right hand that can't help but reflex, spastic last splashes, contracts into fist going down. Then just as eerily it levitates, arcs my way like the moon over a dark lake. I take it in mine as it descends.

## REVERSED CARD DIARY

He is cleaning out his drawers,  
tossing T-shirts over his shoulder  
like a string of trick scarves.  
Anything his new self  
thinks is his old self.  
I am doing my usual isometrics,  
trying to move these  
couches, people, houses.  
Rocks, comets, planets.  
Anything that would make  
a serious depression if dropped.

I only bother with the sky at night,  
contemplate black holes  
when manifest destiny ends  
and the falling into anything concave  
begins. The bed, the eye sockets.  
Caves, waves, seas.  
Dreaming, the wooden doll  
falls. Whatever else is left  
joins the sky, held in a black spoon.  
The sky a collection of spoons.

Pigeons. The goddamned pigeons  
nesting in the porch rafters  
next to the window next to the bed  
are doing their hysterical 5 AM  
cooing, cooing  
and you can't very well stomp out there  
and shoo them with the big board  
anymore because she's laid an egg.

It's all happening under ground now.  
Tangled roots. Hard to imagine  
the flowers will ever come.  
Tonight we all lose an hour.  
Honestly, I've been through the ringer.  
My great aunt is obsessed  
with the Clearing House sweepstakes.  
After lunch at the home  
we watch a tornado video,

an hour of live footage.  
You do get to watch the sky finally  
come down and touch the ground,  
but not enough good honest  
destruction. It would be nice  
to see some cardboard homes,  
a toy farmer, or at least a  
mooring, mooring  
cow get sucked up like kites  
into heaven. Aunt Dor is snoring.  
I fast forward to the good parts.  
Determinants and Aunts.

So what if it's spring, there are things  
like tornadoes and floods  
with dogs stranded on rooftops  
to worry about. It's so important  
that everything make sense.  
Watch for determinants.  
If it weren't for that,  
what would we orbit?  
It's Tuesday.

Michelle has no guidelines  
for relationship. There is smoke  
pouring out of that chimney  
like that famous romantic train painting.  
Freedom is a burden.  
She only knows how to stay.

It must have been springtime  
when Hoover proclaimed  
that the end of poverty was near,  
when production ceased like winter  
and families got their stab at  
being close again. Of course  
my grandfather couldn't hack it,  
took stock and slipped off a bridge.  
Before the spring, The New Deal,  
the war. There was no arc  
to his drugged plummet, a drop  
consumed. The memory of descent.  
The still rippled indent.

The cards say I need to get over the moon,  
its neatly charted dark absences.  
Start coming from the center,  
let the sun in the stomach burn.  
I do smell helium.  
It's spring again, its turn.

# CONNIE DEANOVICH

## FROM *THE SPOTTED MOON*

7

Devil's Soup in  
a wooden bowl  
garnished by lilies

tropical gestures confined  
to the landscape  
of a book

those who escape  
have dark rings  
around their eyes

the train whistle  
was buried in  
a flower pot

angel whiteness does  
not exist without  
a wooden case

still too delicate  
to raise the  
scrutiny by fire

wearing the cloak  
of exile they  
stood disentangling directions

in a while  
the word *behemoth*  
attains medicinal usage

the attention seeker  
went dressed up  
in fake psychosis

the word *dank*  
can be a  
substitute for *frail*

her dank beauty  
increased when sitting  
in a desert

was almost gray  
the suffering charms  
the peace unfolded

and many voices  
sang out fighting  
attacks of noise

the explorers often  
sank into a  
kind of hypersensitivity

as if the  
impassable mountains rose  
giving the finger

a possible flower  
is either the  
result or secret

the old doctor  
found no solace  
in admitting wisdom

hold us together  
below the sun  
continue to hold

the Gradual River  
enjoyed an easy  
bullet train existence

the little villager's  
memory was so  
slick anthropologists arrived

rapidly the river  
slowed down then  
just became mud

what's a shaken  
tree compared to  
an island lost

imagine the cruelty  
to the lip  
the horizontal line

upon the bread  
a fly protective  
as a goddess

or playing cards  
perhaps the lakefront  
or else postpone

when the wind  
clears the air  
this same love

to the sound  
of the image  
stronger desires displace

20

sixty saw red  
after prolonged staring  
at the sun

warm heads but  
cool fingertips and  
face flattering shadows

intended to make  
pumpkin soup outdoors  
over a fire

the next village  
men are bringing  
salt hardened fish

a song about  
a seashell when  
it was soft

the explorers filmed  
by friends of  
the absent anthropologists

the river's drowned  
tossed rings of  
feathers in commemoration

reached his hand  
up hoping this  
would help them

salty broth dropped  
into the gaping  
mouths of hippopotami

to be unkind  
to the weak  
results in ostracism

*banning* and *banishing*  
etched into twin  
pans of justice

thought a stripped  
down version of  
history more saleable

often starting as  
the result of  
a prison sentence

between sounds the  
bell is either  
left or right

picked that red  
fire ant up  
and ate it

her working click  
was as familiar  
as her clit

on the staircase  
made of grass  
ascension seen sinking

fly on the  
wall type of  
abuse of privacy

eggs from guinea  
fowl collected in  
folds of skirts

actually had to  
point out that  
the leaves changed

there are some  
people who hate  
to go outside

a pattern of  
one genius leaving  
Poland after another

in the mirror  
the word *lost*  
in the steam

sucked then blew  
on her fingertips  
confident in sunshine

tied two epitaphs  
together then started  
seeking her fortune

color of a  
hope broken by  
a monochromatic life

slipped oysters down  
her throat as  
if playing trombone

## JEFFREY SKINNER

### TOURISTA

Here, when you open your eyes.  
There, when I open mine:  
a postcard that barely contains its sky,  
Doug's hand, smeared, torn ear:

Buena Vista the shutter clicks, valley  
in a box, hard wind  
and the lace tablecloth we brought back  
to give away,

and the doomed family we were close to  
so briefly: six months,  
charred ribs, cold blood of wine in the kitchen, lewd  
hugs half-intended:

divorce. Hear nothing now. The piano  
he wailed, smudged notes  
for a sermon spilled from the bench,  
her ruined leg: splayed nerves,

a mess of wires. Hear nothing now.

*Oh honey you two should be  
here, it's Day of the Dead you know  
and if we don't kill each other (nudge nudge)*

*we'll dance, two cripples  
in skeleton shirts, thinking of you...*

## COME

*Tell me first which opening  
and I will.* Her razor slipped in the shower,  
a pinstripe of red down her leg.  
She was not crazy, her bills were paid.

*There's a lack of freedom in your mind,*  
he thought, and wanted to say,  
but hung up. All that land beneath the crisscross  
of voices, all that American space

beneath wires...Missing the ocean,  
he took forever to dip one toe  
in Gregg Lake. She sat on the stony bottom  
beckoning with a slow water hand.

The sky darkened, yes, as in a bad novel  
and Hey!, aren't those crows storming  
from the trees like sudden rage  
familiar? The same old childhood crows?

No. What goes around just goes.  
The phone ringing as she lathers her hair,  
he on the other end breathing hard.  
All that watered-down blood between them.

## LAMENT FOR THE AVANT-GARDE

Robert Wilson had his students rise  
so slowly from a chair an hour passed  
and still they seemed frozen  
midway, like an opened paperclip.  
Rife visuals: three-story cat legs  
crossing the stage. The imagined thorax  
above the curtained frame  
dipped observers in another version  
of time, this cat a sea-behemoth  
stirring slower feelings up from depths  
where skulls otherwise implode.  
We could, then, go home and rethink  
the suicidal compromises of  
everyday. At least in theory. But  
alas the audience sat mute as funeral  
flowers, but for wheeze and yawn and  
sigh, sound choices from the arsenal  
of passive resistance. The actors  
were encouraged to contribute  
echolalia of their own device, as  
they rose, and what lush rain  
forest human babble they brewed!  
Spewed? Then echoes of well-  
born burial, kings and tribal chiefs  
embalmed with pets, smoking  
paraphernalia, and shells arrayed  
in a fanning gesture around each figure  
let loose the ritual sadness.  
And the aisles were civil when lights  
came up—very little pushing, and bald heads  
and teeth flashed in the lobby glare.

# KOSTAS ANAGNOPOULOS

nobody hears  
voices at the plant  
double space

in return  
echoes do not breathe  
october through december

meaning may  
exhaust the city  
as a list of birds per garden

from time to time  
our windows run  
opposite leaves

when forest returned the nest to the second floor  
nine times of ten in back of night  
behind curtain number three: roads  
    he used to drive

proves several coats are missing  
spectators cupped in your head  
(cost him a lock)

swallows on the stereo  
fade between takes  
a second skin to know

disparity is nowhere near what you thought  
the comforter likes  
the appropriation of a distant look  
    dispossessed trees

# JOSHUA TAYLOR

the sudden  
    in division  
could southern  
            loose  
mute arrival

the lock pace  
            counties rest  
    the thick rails over  
nails        warm describe

    a sibling hush

we slide off all  
the next day  
come falling

    slow nations

    what rustle  
mar the wells  
    like still

bale air  
            easy

after summer  
is west  
the still insistence  
after a milling  
the heard flight labor  
driving

down a small sally the glow  
from night  
after the distance

glass forgets passage  
for a pine halo  
the sill and lack  
a staying of want

by back a rough too sway  
a ran harm at windows knitting  
no sag a tuck a jog and set

down cloudy as houses  
fan and cloak a clock of helm  
door of shine  
throwing shadows at far setting  
hinting at reliquaries with sticks  
eight leaves sixteen pages

at stations  
were fallen  
the press of stay for a sent tarnish  
soft tell of heel dim heather and provenance  
spire morning and rally  
it is all lying

# JENNIFER MARTENSON

## THE OBVIOUS

Any attempt  
to solve the distance from sense  
to likelihood ends on the reckless

ambiguities of touch. The hand  
falls back in a final  
movement of seeming,

obsolete. Does it slant  
into silence, forgiven?  
Or does it become

the knot against which  
the visible bends  
and abrades?

The path  
spreads into the distant  
chain of landmarks always

haunting the edge  
of occasion. Each comes  
to offer the only way out, false

leads that drive us further  
into lateness. This is how  
bodies are shaped

by stories. The late  
echo prolonged out of sleep  
is finally roused to due course

by erratic recognitions  
of the once named.

The view is reluctant. Each  
landing yields to the need  
to be final. The undeciphered

wavers in the moment  
that we leaned  
so practically toward

and had to forget. Had we  
strayed from the inescapable,  
so that our movements

were blank displacements of air  
while the outcome  
settled into its version,

regardless?

#### Meanings

linger in the feel  
of skin. The interval spreads

its divisions, parallel residence  
splitting the field, but the crossing  
is flawed. Equivalence

fills in where the gesture trails off  
beyond the category's edge.  
Wanting to follow directly

into omission, we're stranded  
on these distances from which  
we can only believe. Although

we might follow the heritage  
back to first lessons, the scene  
will not wait for us to return

from the spectacle's vault.  
The known goes on  
conducting the known,

and the misapplied proceeds—  
a kind of burial,  
calming the real,

proof in hand. So we begin  
to measure the rates  
of inclusion, and hope

that this will isolate  
the present from its longing  
to imply.



# APRIL SHERIDAN

## PARTING STRIP

Under what did it happen?  
I just put it down and lost.  
Easier to displace the question  
with this answer  
    under the cup maybe  
with little dry peas going click  
on the table.

Under what did we keep progression?  
From hand to hand passed  
well that was the idea  
but we never touched each other.  
We loved the silence.  
    Or we stood at the open window  
    but the world never said anything.

On the street  
the division doesn't mean anything  
when it's raining  
is the time color changes  
everything moves in the same direction  
    into the storm  
nothing to do with labels or the dishes  
or mountain climbing

What if I could hear the voice  
through a shell  
I'd snap it closed  
    or pick it up and shake it.  
And I could never say  
what limits us.  
What limits us is our  
dresses rising

    or limits already occurring are  
    on their backs out on the lawn.

## IN THE CHAIR, LAUGHING

Those wings were hers  
part of her back  
then flung under cars.  
A part of this night was  
shining into hope then  
stopped with denial  
and leaving it to come out  
like a shishkabob

it loops tender things  
into just meat.

See if I have like some  
a heart riddled with paint three circles  
or a shed where forms float

in case you laugh move less  
animals imagine outlines that vibrate  
qualities of matter beyond matter

the slightly later moment  
when two depart in this case  
accomodate ten narrow mounds  
peer over and imply bribes

taint your findings with expression born  
from places that remain closed  
and move with less effort than saints need.

look on a stretch of arm connect eyes to arm  
stir earth events (a void above air waits) bodily exception  
arrange pose against suprise

distance invites us to feel  
presides over person aura by choice  
lines knot one naked foot to the next  
mood is the tow of figure

# JAN DIVENCENZO

## MATTER

Minerals hauled from dream awhile,  
general earth,  
synthesized in literal time,  
this dawn of names,  
are glass reflecting a hand slid  
under a skirt,  
metal resounding hominal  
spasms of mirth,  
are passengers of gravity  
who solemnly  
behold scenes of contingency  
pass and await  
return through light and surfaces.

# DAVIS MCCOMBS

## CAVE WIND

Knowing it is shaped by  
the size of the passage  
it unwinds through (thus its  
particular form and flue), we  
are not deceived when, on

summer afternoons, it stiffens into  
fog, clusters in the vines  
and scrub brush littering the  
entrance sink—no cough or  
eructation, it is a constant

velocity we read or clock  
(no need to vane it)  
for the scope and girth  
of the cavern, asking *does*  
*it go or siphon?* knowing

its speed portends the cave  
we'll discover, whether we will  
walk or crawl, the breadth  
of its breath, its given,  
how, listening, we step into

the fricative, enter the socket  
and proceed toward the lung  
or bellows one half expects,  
and, breathless, creep through the  
throat of the longwinded earth.

## FLOWSTONE

How the water behaves  
determines their shape and composition:  
stalactites, a rimstone dam.  
Above, great fossil slabs  
slough off in geologic time,  
limestone leached and percolating  
into caverns. At a cubic inch  
per century, this is cave-making  
in reverse. But to what end?  
A caver pushing virgin passage  
out beyond the sandstone lip  
emerges into verticals, hung  
and glinting where his carbide falls.  
Is it for this or the process?  
What an ancient sea set down in even lines  
is worked into a cursive scrawl,  
as run-off through the bedding planes  
recalls  
a steamy day, an inland sea,  
the continent adrift—  
south of the equator but bearing north.

# SANDY FEINSTEIN

## BACKTALK

The plot stops before  
a man called from sleep  
objects to the way  
sound could be written  
in and through (dark) sand,

a line otherwise  
left at the beach edge  
as it builds a text  
analogous to  
the sun coming up

where the dark whispers  
and feeling (alarm)  
will be heard expressed  
in the incomplete  
undertones beyond

(verbal) symbolic  
notation, simple  
concept if it meant  
reading a story  
of another place

to be written not  
in the next sentence  
but in a picture  
complicated by  
a meaning missing

as the wind asleep  
travels the way lights  
set (isolated)  
subject the wave's sense  
to abstract reason

one can understand,  
assuming knowing  
is transformed by sense

clear enough to say  
sound suggests order

form represented,  
as if things  
follow (conclusive)  
mathematical  
rules according to that

complex of structures  
relative to mind,  
(ambiguous) point  
whose values convey  
(nothing) of thinking

# MARK DUCHARME

## FROM *THE LIVES OF THE BAGGERS*

To end up only moving.

    This discomfort on my chin  
Tightens space around me

Not to see

    The contradictory examples

Gathered wickedly like desert lilies

Become our faces—meaning the

    Uncontradictory parts of them

Blaring down, just the same

Transitory.      Natural.

    Only a place where signs are put for me

Am I so unmoved

    Merely to stand

The gun-shy are other forms of      eccentric life

I can't pretend

What are salient parts of lifting

    Inhibits forms of one small lobby

\*

The compressed silences are a hard-edged fact

Bored to tears

By the make-believe bridegroom

In the make-believe ice factory. Refractory puzzles

Being all the

    Sentiment. I can't stop solving

Heating valve      discourses...

I desire you, in one of three

    General

Lookalike problems. First, let me say

It *has* been good enough—though

It will not be      for long.

    Exposed

By anxious drafting procedure—

Were we all plundered

    Documenting light

\*

Not assembling in the consoles  
But torn from them  
    As if absenteeism  
Weren't important, too  
& Worthwhile—  
    Above the weeks, or drifted  
Back to start  
    Like drunken psalms of Yestereve  
In a spinning flash, or flesh  
Rising from the hocks  
Applies light to the seat it (got) nailed (him)  
    A baritone wind  
& All we flew  
    To the other, charged partitions

Freed of messy                    counterbalances

Poise over throughways

\*

    I'm happy for you—without feeling like my own life's affected  
From the other, what it  
Thought was stone—please disregard  
    Routine life—support valve

    Felt &/or impelled (corrupt)—thus suited  
    To our prayers. I told you, *maybe*  
Maybe the wind is forming.  
Go to sleep now. Everything is all okay  
    Way lucent. &, if you have any munitions credits  
    Please go over that way *now*

\*

*Rung out in whispers*  
    A past or captive  
Whistling  
    For my night manager my inherent flaw  
You were always the first (worst)  
A statutory rapture

# PAUL HOOVER

## IN WHICH CITY

Radiant darkness,  
collapsing light,

the full  
catastrophe blurred—

tunnels under  
worlds, another

lifeboat scene,  
the present

absence felt  
like mind's

named things.  
In sequences

like smoke,  
in deadbolt

light, your  
father's back

is turned  
against the

camera as  
he faces

that field.  
Words and

silence are  
uttered like

a surface,  
porous but

smooth. Like  
when your

daughter's friend  
says she

must decide  
between her

father and  
lover. Haven't

you purely,  
places in

the leaves?  
Falling too

darkly toward  
that mouth?

Trembling like  
a \_\_\_\_\_?

Note by  
note, we're

mastered by  
the shape

each wave  
makes, since

what rises  
rarely falls

exactly as  
the getting.

Like an  
anvil on

the table  
teetering toward

the brink,  
the language

of height  
breaks with

weight. Each  
act is

magic black  
as space.

Moral darkness,  
anonymous rot.

You live  
transparent, the

ghost of  
a chance

the light  
inch spreads

to enter  
its name.

# DAN STURNIOLO

## ALREADY WE HAVE TURNED BACK WHAT I KNOW SAILED

...and are vessels bodies always times subordinates  
that help the astronomical  
not come  
with in-between skepticisms  
Washed  
blankly filled  
this vessel is leaving now  
along a line rather defaced  
tufted  
downward toward noise

In foreign seas everything concerns degrees  
to see over  
whatever  
(The pulled will visible)  
and hold on  
Are such residings permanent in the air?

The visible surface is not an opinion  
Eyes as porticos  
slats  
Bone supporting weight  
it means to leave ghostlike

Are our desires always empire?  
Receiver seeing the law  
felt attached  
of every object  
like nursery tale  
or shoe

Generality subsists  
between the coast  
and never having been  
Words ordered and shining  
thrown into whirlpool



Wings labored and roof  
 northern of stone Air said mistakes in location  
 Here falling like stationary  
 failing the bound tagged swells  
 Certain architecture eyelash held  
 was ambushed on the way to clues  
 Switching species on porches wish  
 alone The leaves Table of specialist  
 It was perhaps very little  
 He had signs over the border  
 What came and what went on Mouth of a plot  
 Blind specimen This house kissed the rock  
 You remembered it You will drown us all  
 Pedant Caretaker That means falling  
 The edge seemed ahead of the lifelong  
 Mirrors are careless symmetry  
 sudden in powers Bloodstream ordered behind lines  
 This is the old language a musty embrace  
 Since inclination begins as room  
 as singularity it is a rosebush  
 a picture hazardous attire Asking did not learn  
 from gene of the  
 eyelid carpet beating  
 Migration on the spot Should it be better said  
 Enormous complications Fog lights down  
 Too finicky A week is too heavy Nothing  
 like your mother and father Look  
 I find myself falling I find her little book  
 drifted for feather like raging for months  
 You gave me a chance a kind of din  
 I am tempted to smile Two bodies walking  
 The body can fall the earth will be there

## IN THE PARASITE MUSEUM

Down searches or bound  
space of the always private.  
Stirred in home as public is essential.  
A model for instigation.  
I have installed a bound silence.  
The room is flickering this  
*Failed is always private*  
as we sit in the waiting room  
where the laboratory tools have grown flowers.

Rain is the nature of ornament.  
This blueprint is the nature of ornament.  
And here is the stance of the failed experiment;  
the glass case is now broken glass.  
The iron shelves hold the palm trees  
as they shake in front of the dusty blackboard.  
It is here that the limits of symbolic inscription  
bring us back to the pleasure of reading.

# MARK WALLACE

## *FROM TEMPORARY WORKER RIDES A SUBWAY*

to to to to to to at to to to to

to at at at to to to to at at to to

to to to to to to to to to to to

at at at to to to to to to at at at

to to to to to at at at at at at at

at at at at at at at at at at at at

ever ever ever ever ever ever ever

ever ever ever at at at at at at at

at at at at at at at at at at at at

no no no no no no why no no no no

at ever no no ever ever at no no ever

at at

no no no no no at at at at no no no

to to

no no no to to to no no no to to to

to to to to to to to to to to to to

The basic act is for any  
trial and sentence, rooftop, bus  
we wouldn't have of never been  
no stop, take top tax dollar shirt show  
a passing glance arrested hardware  
not if or couldn't been, bend bare  
bleached banner, a certain fancy never mind,  
social critic brand name bonanza,  
distribute if one as if one, court of out,  
calimbrate emotional bloodletting, sincere fish  
if ever at to ever to, and too,  
the man you took you took to be me  
simply put the sale was fantastic  
third show from the left, no sun from a stone,  
bureaucratic barn burning, don't call,  
we'll call care or carnage care, deepening  
against as pull if any pull, paradise pander  
love calculate, intrepid over shortchange,  
prospect of making you making you sick  
I won't have these grenades in my garden  
genre, simply say say simply, simply,  
here's no money sucker, perhaps upon agenda  
mean no say when saying no, reference  
mistaken swordplay, institutional apartment  
appears as appears, bolster surrogate slaphouse,  
if he didn't care to stinky scheese, recall  
speaking of speech, future water dam in damn  
instructional videotape, terrible termination,  
I loves what not in such or when,  
prove it prove it prove it prove it

angle block

fifteen cents an hour or move  
buckle that bureaucratic belt

phone control  
phoneme fickle fish

bamboozle  
leave the city  
for a home in pastoral imagery

inconsequential isolation  
his best look this week

all right children say "power"

let's go play rusted hulk  
mental tire pop  
what's that rash?

saintly character habit centers  
vague channel  
beanpole's worried sick  
produce save as products  
no New York

looking to close it  
    breathtaking but beware  
        hobbling a portion  
            rungless mystical ladder  
                buried plan a make  
                    it's about time

the greatest blow on earth

despite

## SHEILA E. MURPHY

### GEOMETRY

How is the language a straight line  
(Where in this painting)  
In the company of parallels  
Loved ones lie down

Landslides, premeditated silver  
Scoring game, a housebound game  
Wide highway to be tamed  
Is this the circumspect blue flower

Doctor's orders leave the streets  
A shirt washed many times  
Such brief canaries medicate  
One life, this life, wide lapping pool

Intensity defeats the status of a straight line  
Plywood's non-protective properties  
Blond wood, dark wood, slats becoming homes  
Expensive nails to hinge these particles

## THIGHS

I wish people in health clubs would stop resembling names I've never had. Their bouncing laterals this bounty of material. One personifies remedial undress. Symptoms enough to ploy around. I'm in a little bit of cardboard as regards the bantom weights in scripture. That Euphrates their way toward mice in an experimental cage. Whose background tunes aren't colorful enough to loofa dermy little gauze pulled over frames. The tuba good enough to modify a bowl of something wiggling underneath a patch.

# ARPINE KONYALIAN GRENIER

## FOR WE LIKE SHEEP

what did you tell the executioner? he's let me loose on the stairs  
I remember the rubber tubing the purple clamp the fat hat  
in his hands blind siding my compatibility the hallway  
glass bevelled for weight and if one parts and sinks  
the latest casualty into eyes that should've been  
when he curious of redemption  
stopped

what's left is blood and truncated shadows between us a desk clerk  
pulling for the 12 position a film that neither disturbs nor bores  
the element a polished cup the liquid measured for the desired  
distraction so I spin spin along north south blood perfusing  
in glass bead instruments they say are glue the church  
not the building but the people they say will always  
be there for you don't mind the red  
seldom separating the liquid

still so in the east (the mid-east) the west what does it  
that spiroid mare revisiting every night does it mean  
the repeat offender?

a pack of sutures hound my wound (the assignment)  
common dirt??

I want shoes I want child I want to go east so what's it gonna be  
talk talk up and down the talons of complicity and you in the middle  
an I lit by four pillars at the baggage claim where no smoking sign  
wheelchair and woman with black shoes and white socks holding white  
teddy bear sizzle for idea

I wretch to position according to the book for food for covering  
cut the sheep parts and the sheep still fast-helping  
in the spirit of the latest claim

- which vacuum cleaner should the cleaning lady use?
- this one is a broom type for the corners you want cleaned so bad
- I think we need the kind with hose attachment
- then take this it has attachments
- but it does not have wheels to go around

the time is 25 minutes past Leticia's arrival so trembles the woman  
 you think she's sick she should have yawned then you'd say she's  
 tired now the desk clerk's job is over and up and again  
 he turns with the wheel's ecstasy

- I cannot expect a cleaning lady to drag vacuum cleaner on her first  
 day here

no escape for the eyes the ears the mouth - these are parts of my  
 body that cannot be named to please you and you won't ever know  
 what they need

the hats are on again the sheep exhausted to a shudder *savez-vous*  
 defeated *ce que c'est* at marengo *que d'avoir une mere*  
 in 1800 the shaitan was skirmish

I wretch to position tilting shoulders lifting my hair  
 against a backdrop simulating crowd

another whistle was killed today on the streets  
 and ignored as fluctuation of wind

I have been relying too long on potpourri  
 will you tell me how to sweeten the latest envelope  
 sopped in the script "Does Belgium border South Africa?"

## AND THERE'S CANDY BY THE GRAMOPHONE

of morning's signs replacing the fueling let me some not dented  
not bubbled a munching at horizon the moon a lick of orange  
picked up for wing for bark the novice sweeps under  
the furniture sails for mass  
the wind has shifted

I don't know which little flower will fall next and next to what  
shaded tree stone the horses lifting the aches of this town  
in the evening in the bus a young man his wallet dollar  
billed and butterflied with sister grandmother nieces  
the plaza bell keeps time for them

date it  
total waste  
he loves me now

salving water all day at the liberty market we buy/  
sell/fix white feather ceiling lamps all smiles  
the white marbled sea we slide against  
line in / line out a spinster's  
San Antonio prayer

now that she has a man and floor to slide (music)

## YOU'LL LIVE THE ADULT SOME

Ace Rodriguez acts out a wet sell his daughter deserted tenderly  
in the mo-----rrgue it is morgue... pucker and *festina lente*  
to root nymphed out and later bark only much later  
a child on the first day of the grouping  
where you go in the slow morning  
in labor there you are  
wet

do you know history? knowledge is prayer is curse power  
unmarked on the thorax counting by the qualities of light  
some of us turned

my limbs overlap nourished by age  
and a very young sister is dead

*did I cause this naked some in bedsheets  
my cap flown away my cup and I  
nerving for another sell will I  
think of you in china?*

I smear a hum fly verbs Ace Rodriguez' daughter in place  
her arms the contract for legs granted unexpectedly  
she was inhabited once

a coloured sword as if tending the walls then 12 jolts  
the red referred to below her wings sometimes above  
cheap sunshine in the streets the resolve  
a struck out match I ruminare  
the soil blesses the ground

what more shall I give up  
my wintered grip in  
voluntary...

# PAUL WEIDENHOFF

## THE DINNER PARTY

A vegetable and a range of hills?  
A royal weight.

Try following with which party this could be,  
such as  
entertainment in a city hall:  
“Mr. and Mrs. Blank invite you to take  
dinner with them  
down on the farm.”

Has the table been lighted by lamps or candles?  
filled  
the table  
with jellies, pickles, while a “rube” band plays,  
a small stack of hay or  
mast-fed ham,  
apple-butter,  
cider,  
milk,  
or lemonade?  
Has the light left the table  
as the table’s cleared away?

“We hopes you kin kum, but if’n you ain’t  
able to,  
send words by some body which  
passes our house.”

We left the ballroom scene surrounded by a rail because  
of the popular superstitions that surrounded it—  
try by early candle-light, P.S.  
“might be handy to know

anyway bout a whosa  
‘kummin.’”

A real life-like calf represents these stalls—  
an old-fashioned churn  
decorated with toy cattle  
and above

a haymow and below

we suckle on honey and raspberries  
and sweet potatoes.

Life is descending  
in each bulb of light,  
a center-piece which may itself enclose  
a lamp. Each other

guesses what the door  
could read—

“to Rural Route 7”

and one corner is seen as a fit granary with  
corn and oats  
and millet and wheat.

Which heart may be fastened to the rube's band playing  
has always shown itself a naked spook or two spooks which  
guess

the other's name.

To make the entertainment a success  
our hostess could just kiss

or bare her calves and thighs  
and soon solicit from these  
men (written on thin, silver  
slips of paper)

what price she would

imaginatively get,

not a votive offering to Innana,

but

a scented tart for he  
who finds a silver-foiled ring  
in his dumplings. But first

he must take the ring from in the dough, this done only  
with his teeth.

Now we all sing

Old woman all skin and bone—

um—um—um

Old woman with a bit, with luck—

yum—yum—yum

Old woman is my party's souvenir—

um—um—um

Still,

around our feet such children play as wish to dream



An orangutan devours  
A mutton's leg.

"A tiger and her cubs"

"A rooster and an ostrich"

snakes up and down the stairs  
to where the children have been  
cordoned off from these adults,  
especially from  
our dear hostess  
(who will kiss or caress  
most anything).

Of course the story is simple, and easy to keep in mind:

the betters of the clan  
perform themselves  
for the bested of the clan.

No right  
rings in dinner conversation.

No evil  
conceals itself in our cuisine.

The children have to guess, then whisper to each animal  
what each would have them draw—

says "rooster"

"As you come to my name, and surely you will,  
"and you've fork or knife, draw my own body as that  
"which is carved as the head of a Sioux.  
thus 'Tiger and her cubs'

could speak

"as you come to my name, and surely you will,

"If you've a switch or reed or branch then

"Scroll upon your brother's

"back

"our dinner that we may serve you (take this to mean zebra,

gazelle, adult).

our dinner

gusts over the neighbor's

yard and finds

our neighbors "panging for it."

So, you suppose the Devil—

make the Devil.

"Mr. Devil's comedy amends

"Our naughty baby's cries.

“Mr. Devil’s jolly friends  
“Grow fat with glut and butter.

Now,  
baby cries—

Manna  
Manna not mama.

Did tittle baby diddie dance?  
Go away naughty baby gaby  
Thy Daddie is a rover  
And is as a heart but clover.

Devil  
cries

and asks again for child or  
his manna.

Exit in haste our hostess, who is truly disgraced.  
I am not to have a wife? No wife?

I am a good stick, see, and switch you with it  
I will surely find  
my dark delight.

After reported blows the children come  
to baby’s aid.

A doctor tries to “kill” Devil  
by administering a dose of “skull and bones” cure  
to which this Devil now delights.

“The riddles loll you  
“into sweet forgetfulness  
“that I have killed her

(meaning hostess,  
who will yet recover,  
and yet return)

“and the child. After all, a struggle and then  
“de riddle lolls you all.

“I’m the boy to do them all!  
And licks and licks till baby  
cries—Devil, Devil

make no home of my heart  
and inquires after Devil’s health,  
who, in the presence  
of such inanity, did

find himself naturally  
returning back to Hell,  
or as the children say—  
He dies.

He dies.  
And luck would have it that our hostess with no kiss for  
Devil still could wear Devil's clothes and scare  
Baby and Children  
so that the adults could steal their beer and wine.

This is a house of parties and  
entertainment. Just  
overhead our second ballroom  
where the theme is the Gnome's  
carnival. In many places,  
the mirror's game.

By every branching light conceals green branches which are  
fingers but

permitting the effects to be  
reflected in their "beauty"  
(Thus, a church abbot would  
leave his oaths at the door  
and measure his unnatural organ  
in the caves and grottoes  
found beneath our chorus  
of girls' skirts).

"The hood comes to a point and is stiffened with crinoline."

As is the mountain's stride across  
our fertile plain as is  
the weight of time upon our party—  
some guests will leave early.

In any case, the issue is the weal or woe,  
an apple's bland sphericity  
must find a path of flight  
through the shoes of a horse

(or,

as the evening is hot and on  
the wane the boats of the sky  
leave for the streams of our  
own home, our own home,  
printed streams now upon  
the waves of crimson crepe  
that wind and meander

through every single chamber of the decorated house) . One  
child looks—

"there, there is a boat  
"which in the day  
"found heaven's torrent

“calm, now  
“in this night’s returning  
“the boats of the day  
“have docked themselves  
“by the quays upon the stairs  
“as if

it is at last to be remembered, last to be remembered  
that this night is of our own  
that this night is never done  
that this night is the boat’s  
new course through waves and waves  
of happy sleepers  
(mainly,  
the ones passed out on the stairs  
and in our very living room).

To have left form as an arched  
alcove of vines and branches  
is as this seems a journey  
to a cellar to which  
some have prepared elaborate  
billowy costumes—none  
who enters here may come

unbilled.

So billowy Deus is amongst us as a boy or as  
a girl.  
and we do admit boy Deus...  
and we do admit girl Deus...  
not recognizing theses disguises.

Miss Blank and Mr. Blank

“on entering the house of elves,  
witches and sprites”

are draped in bright scarlet and spun in circles for over  
a year until one specter robed in white wants that we  
should all be assembled,  
circus,  
gnome,  
or Halloween,  
or “rube”

we eat and eat and end on a high note...  
quaint customs  
if you are fond of entertaining.



## MUSE

pianist bleeding lace shadows  
    spilling out the windows, antique light  
    sketches.  
begging dark to retreat   house blessing scent  
                                    in smoke rings  
    burning autumn night geraniums,  
weaving smellbuds puzzling the secret link between.  
    eyelids  
    landing  
        blinking  
        ceiling  
            lamps  
            glisten burns  
pigments of red and green.  
    request lowering  
    sweat glands pouring beer,  
lace shadows still seek out the dusty screen,  
                                    the violet sky hung behind  
                                    tree silhouettes,  
branches scraping the moon, the smallest tree limb  
    sketching.

# MICHAEL O'BRIEN

## COLD & BROWN AND EVERYWHERE

isolation  
bringing distance  
    into  
    focus  
not by  
    absence  
    but  
the change of events  
    is  
what counts the most

    black or blue  
                    with  
paper is therapy  
    or  
    friendship or  
both  
    hats cap  
    my eyes  
        it's easier not  
to look  
at her  
    rubbing her hands  
with lotion  
    but  
her cigarette smoke,  
    that  
    was beautiful

    light and flash  
drown  
between  
priority and  
    given  
    stepping down  
carefully and  
the official

going  
out of  
business  
i found more  
reason  
to put  
silence first  
over  
malice

# GARY DUEHR

## APHASIA

Darling, have you become a stranger  
To your own thought? A barrel begins to prefer  
A mouth. A man on ice  
Vanishes. At the edge of things trembles  
A word, transparent,

Aphasiac, the way a highway line's phosphorescence  
Falls beneath the wheels.  
The way news of a rescheduled party circles  
Endlessly through terminals, or two men  
At a table lay down their twin  
Pagers to watch for a whirl  
Of emotion in a pile of leaves or, off a whorl  
Of glass, a sniper glint of sun.

A vagrant bundled in a thick coat lunges  
And jabs as if to box  
At the winter light, air; the crux  
Of a woman at a window, slight smile

Of a doorman. And all the while  
I'm thinking: You won't ever love me.  
I name every bad thing in order for it to flee.

# RON PADGETT

## BANG GOES THE LITERATURE

Bang! goes the gun. Big bang! goes the shotgun.

Bong! says the shogun.

The sound waves of his bong emanate out into the clear night

That is taking place in what

The French call *le Japon, avec son soir japonais.*

*Pan! dit the fusil. Pain! dit le shogun, pain*

*pour tout le monde. Il prend son fusil et tire*

*sur les baguettes qui volent dans le soir japonais.*

And all the rest is literature.

## THE DRUMMER BOY

Oh what a sleepy night! The eyelids are drooping, the shoulders are slumped, the nostrils are wheezing. And Tommy the miniature drummer boy statue is yawning in the haystack where he landed last night when the farmboy hurled him into the dark sky. And now above the new-mown fields the stars burst into the drummer boy's brain and rain silver fear into his nervous system. He will have to get used to the fact that—oh, it makes me tired just to think of it—the fact that there are so many miles between him and the stars that are so immense but look so small and may not even be there anymore, just as he is not there anymore for the farmboy, the boy who himself will soon be leaving home.

# CHARLES NORTH

## PHILOSOPHICAL SONGS

### 1. Some of Them That Do Fish Will Go For a Midnight Swim

It's not so much the *partis pris* as  
the performance which is then called into question.  
Then back to the dents. Embrace of atmosphere

which isn't the wind that collects on the windowpane,  
the word skidding dispassionately by the way of  
your gown of powder blue light. The cedars slip.

### 2. As Moonlight Becomes You

Refining the swale for the sake of  
ordinary life, which isn't orderly  
but does undergo a pattern of resolute change  
because you supply the necessity: hence

ordinary life which isn't orderly,  
marches on ahead into a swirl of reddening leaves  
because you supply the necessity. Hence  
the moon is rampant, flitting between you.

### 3. Madrigal

Not border or pass—not quite  
    past either, post? Postern? As  
in the past reaching around its  
turquoise plinth despite a coating of melted pine needles  
or are they melting meanwhile the landscape has turned  
    arrow-like to waste.

Distant squawks and pained foothills  
not painted, not *intricately*  
personal at best. Yet a morsel  
off the top of a silo, flung from a train  
closer than phenomenology more rapid than song.

## GREG PURCELL

### FROM *THE PRAGMATIST*

Say he was conceived a step ahead  
of communism, that he predicted lightbulbs  
and motorcars, and say, too,  
that he found nature  
equally disquieting. Anything  
with a sight or smell  
unlike humankind, his measure  
only taken by thumbs, and the larynx—

an abstraction like the figures of a map,  
“And which,” he says, “country is this  
but the sketch of itself?” Thus he rides  
on a flat architect’s sketch; clear,  
primary—red, yellow and blue—unmoved  
by the sweat of railyards, by the men  
who cower under dynamite.

Say everything depends  
on this fellow’s movement, what he does with it

and when he is done there will be images  
to speak of—not in maps, but in the shadows  
maps are, and the bright spaces in between,  
thrown out like thunder in the land  
like a rake across the land  
like a cross exponent using space  
to fill out in, a numerical bed  
to lie back in,  
                  this muddy brown,  
green in the picturesque.

\*

A key stone, blabber-mouth  
made of metal against our tsunami  
“beyond this he neither  
knows anything or can do anything”



An isomorph, the study of  
“propping”  
something which props  
a propper  
prop

he found himself propping a chair beneath the cylinder crook of the doorknob, but the sweat from his hands made it slip. He heard the Master’s footsteps trodding up the fifth story staircase tump tump and he began to count. One second two seconds. He thought about the footage he had seen of South American men jumping from a burning tower, and about how their bodies bucked and swung through the air. He found himself fixed on his count, staring through the locked window pane, as in his last breath the Indigo bunting wholloped

tommyjeans myjeans  
seagrams seven  
100 dinar

“the sciences  
are as such as lie close to vulgar notions”

drops  
off the coast of South Haven

phosgenes  
running into stasis with the waters

the remainder  
“a white drifter, he did it, was good with it”

## FOR EZRA POUND, ON HIS BIRTHDAY

Today I rid myself of poems  
and begin to write about Ezra Pound,  
who wound his way to Pisa—  
three eggs on his back.

He wound his way to Pisa,  
an ugly old usurper, on trim  
legs, probably muttering,  
*economies, idiots, hottentots,*

*windbags!* In the flattest  
Midwestern tone, "*Yeh haven't  
got a chance, boys. Yeh  
might as well give up now...*"

So he slept beneath the stars  
in a chicken cage, his eye bulging  
toward the roof. He saw the bullet  
in his back, the flat plains where

The Race catches itself in the middle  
where it can bounce all over itself  
where the wretched heat swings  
across the brain.

If only I were there! To throw  
a raw pound of sirloin in that cage  
to watch it sizzle and pop  
on the tin floor, turning back chapters

as an act of sympathy—  
to keep him from digging the soil  
with his dry old hands  
and choking on it. Whispering,

*"Greg Purcell is the greatest  
poet in the idiom...give it up, old man,  
give it up!"* To watch the man's eye  
twitching, turning there.

## ROD SMITH

### CYBERLOVE DAIZY #1

the \_possible\_ is only a  
a physical caustic  
burning up all aesthetic &.

a workin class hero is somethin ta be.

the infinite can be calculated

but a large tree  
still strikes a pose

“I” suppose  
prose. Peek must  
rotate time’s money—  
fantasy. The last  
lungs on the lost  
ordinary. Your Yolanda for hire  
lookin awfully mo—red  
& clacked, it’s  
peripatetic ummm  
loyal like fire—legs flower  
Hello. @ 3:20  
time thighs  
tripled  
& tones a locket’s  
privilege, some shun  
silly lists while  
shining on, they’re  
us &  
seem to smile  
abt spins.

## CYBERLOVEDAIZY #2

(or Lisa)

like dimes  
& dreams are drams  
these lambs (cancel that)  
no summer no more  
the secret needs is  
needed & known &  
not knowing  
“ “ “ “

Not Knowing  
As lost  
Is that shown  
Tacet &  
Touched  
Dream #1  
A drug of  
Backdrop  
Love on  
A limb that  
Dreams  
Undone  
Of Lust  
& Sounds  
That  
Swept  
Night  
It's  
Over  
There

Hello. @ 3:20  
time thighs  
tripled  
& tones a locket's  
privilege, some shun  
silly lists while  
shining on, they're  
us &  
seem to smile  
abt spins.

## W.B. KECKLER

### LOU AND LAURIE

In the dream, the apartment shared by real-life lovers Laurie Anderson and Lou Reed is decorated in a dozen shades of red. Suzanne Vega and David Byrne pop in and the gang all start playing SCRABBLE. Someone is filming this as a sitcom. The show is to be called "Love and Automata." It's in German, with subtitles in Swahili. I must figure out who laid out the word "TECHNOPOESIS." Something is chained and howling in the bathroom, but Suzanne insists this is okay, it's just one of Laurie's performance art pieces. I'm not so sure. Then Laurie puts down the word "ZIGGURAT" and Lou's "BURPEE" crosses it, until David tells him "Brand names aren't allowed," at which point Laurie rises and splits David's skull open with a nearby ax. After a moment, she quietly apologizes to the players remaining alive. Lou explains in hushed tones to Suzanne that a "burpee" is a Nepali monkey, and not just the seeds...so it's okay, it's playable. Then they all gather to peer into David's opened skull, where little switches and gizmos are sputtering amid the brain tissue, which resembles an overripe orange. Suzanne uses her remaining Scrabble letters to compose David's epitaph, "VIRGIN," also earning bonus points for emptying her shelf. Then Laurie says, "I guess he was a Talking Head after all," in that cool d.j. voice she uses when she's doing performance art, and they all crack up simultaneously. Afterwards, they repair to the kitchenette, where Laurie makes the whole gang toasted cheese sandwiches and plays Mom in an apron that reads, "KISS ME, I'M THE HUNGER ARTIST!"

NEXT WEEK ON "LOU AND LAURIE": Allen Ginsberg loses a prayer wheel in Lou's walk-in closet and Laurie splits his head open with an ax.

## MUSICAL ARTIFACTS & THE CONE

the “flat” character coughed  
the “round” character expectorated

---

juvenile beheadings  
Biblical marquee

---

“*Are you in love?*” she birded  
robin clashed with glass

---

(Eastern music as lacking harmony)  
a wooden bowl sits atop a mountain

---

movement with that intense concern  
a tuning fork faces the sea

---

their legs split / devilish Wycliffe winks  
miter of a megaphone

---

the music waits in space  
against the archaeology & planets

---

many crystal spheres embedded  
painting as a “process,” not a purpose

---

the “flat” character expanded  
the “round” character published

---

mute        jade        king

## JOE MENO

### WOOD TEETH

Making the ladies at the Five and Dime  
then in walks Dickie the Virgin—full-grown loser with  
scabs on his eyes  
then there's nuthin' to do but have it out right there  
Why?  
something to do with his brown wooden teeth and the  
crucifixion and me occupying his younger sister's skirt  
beneath the holy eyes of the St. Therese—yarn-crocheted—  
ceramic statuette she had hanging over her sofa  
deep and soft as—ahhhh  
without a word but  
“Well, Dickie, looks like I've got a special on ass-whupping today—two for  
the price of one, eh?” and him rolling up his sleeves and the ladies stuffing  
panty hose and the fake eyelashes and the control tops into their purses and the  
cross-eyed mestizo behind the counter yelling something in broken Spanish,  
“Perdido!!!!” and the old lady in aisle three nearly having a heart-attack on all  
our accounts and the poodle she had under her arm finally makes a break for  
the door and Sugar Rey asleep at his broom near the knick-knacks and curios  
of all our beheaded saints snaps awake and the Devil drunk down the block  
gives a shout and we set into it right there like a jailbreak  
the fisticuffs do fly  
enter my almighty elbow into Dickie's scabbed eye  
my spirits soar  
so do my teeth  
straight from my head and all over the Biblical frontispiece and Good-nite,  
Irene, could not make that scene got thirty-six stitches and a cold glass of  
styrene and some new wood teeth and ol' Dickie walks out with the ladies on  
his arms—walks right out through that shiny glass door and it all goes to show  
you the harm and defeat and the how and  
the who and the why  
the full-grown loser is no virgin tonight

## THE MAKE-OUT KING MUST FALL

Me and you  
you and me  
we would be a peach  
a soft device of dew  
a deluxe fruit for pilgrims  
—quiet and full—  
but I am a damn-foolish man  
with a blood-soaked hand  
cursed by the Devil's own  
hooded tongue and uncharitable teeth  
his earnest words have put a hole in my skin  
a wound so steep that  
everything I've touched has burned  
everything I've touched has turned  
into cold maple syrup or  
    an empty skeleton-foot  
right in my grasp  
just like my old man  
he was killed by highway thieves  
he sold Lucky Strikes out of the back of his car  
he was the Make-out King  
his curse was hard and made him roam  
he didn't have a home  
except for the Bel-Air he tried to keep warm  
no, we shouldn't talk  
we shouldn't even speak  
that same spur that makes you tremble  
could make me fall  
but you—oh plum—you're all the things  
in a little snow-man's song  
you fill me with kisses and moments  
of long legs of yarn  
and bright blue bouquets of spoons  
some sweet silver stockings all soaked in milk  
and a big chapel cake that might have the impression of  
your hips  
don't hitch me to your lips  
please don't un-hitch me from your lips

# RAPHAEL JOHN BUCKLES

## ME & MY FANCY PANTS

His shirt said  
“Quit your bitchin,  
truck drivin  
ain’t for sissies.”

and I thought

Hot Damn  
Hot Diggity Dog

there’s a guy  
that has no problem  
ordering a butt–steak  
and onions

familiar with  
tractor pulls,  
mud bog racing,  
chew,  
diesel engines,  
and carbon monoxide fumes

a real  
two–bit  
spittin quitter

just what I needed  
in this city of  
pigeons

some one  
to pull the chair  
out from under  
my ass

help me realize  
I ran out of gas.

## SASSAFRAS

Doggone  
whipper snapper  
Damn  
spring chicken

flat tire  
apple sauce  
hard cider  
or  
sour mash

biscuits  
n' gravy  
with a pinch  
of cayenne peppa

cause grits  
ain't groceries  
can I get a  
hallelujah

and what kinda blues  
do I got?  
and how far  
can I get  
without  
the dust my broom shit

and she's gone  
left me

with the  
broken-hearted  
no woman  
lonely  
somethin somethin  
deep fried  
catfish  
on a skillet  
bar hoppin

house rockin  
blues

and at this time  
I would like thank  
Mr. Langston Hughes.

## PETER RADKE

### INEVITABLE: LEAPING DOGS

In all manner of things possible,  
in the ordinariness of lives lived  
out past Keslinger, the old church  
two-storey, clapboard in the belly  
of the land with the wooden pole  
outside smoothed to marble by the  
elements that turn in the many moons  
and seasons, the snows love laterally  
across open fields out here.  
Herd the deer closer to the timberline  
towards higher ground. Rarely collect,  
settle in trees bent a certain way  
from meeting decades of the same wind.  
Gathering miles out to come and slap  
semis bound for the interstate, hold  
heartbeats expectantly and howl at  
houses. Where the grandmothers  
unfold briefly upstairs from their  
comforters, a soft rattle of a snore  
in their throats, the white hair crumpled  
but softly bunched by the back of the hand  
and the face, lines that still speak  
of a beauty accented  
in the arc of the hallway light.  
Watching and being watched in ways neither  
comprehend, equally mysterious but  
cognitive of the same sentry of sitting  
cats just inside the door, the variance  
of the days showing in their eyes.  
Knowing as they both would  
without moving from bed to window that  
distance and space become functions of  
speed and time and the whole of the earth  
offers its silent prayers  
while the storm builds to the west,  
clouds stacking on themselves and hours  
later the harsh winter sun would blind

the children, remembering  
what it was like to have the heart of a  
child or kitten; testaments to the territory.  
Alone in the company of their cats  
they are slow, tiny, lithe things.  
Content with their own continuous universe  
having outlived the usefulness of their children.  
As with all mothers when they have borne their  
kin, given their milk, deity, strength and their  
civility, warned of a world  
that hid behind its promises and rewarded  
action more than that which had been produced,  
they become invisible—things asked curiously about.  
When the single, larger star moved more  
slowly than others from agate to indigo  
fallow gray to gunmetal before dawn  
they smiled into clothes.  
Embodiments of something essential,  
coalescent of the feline and feminine,  
the sportive with trickery and humor  
that knew beyond every creak to the floorboards  
to the house, the chatter and scramble of  
starlings and squirrels on the roof, the rub  
of which branches against the roofline;  
mulberry, birch or black walnut and that  
heard within the voice of wind and winter  
there is the reminder of secrets shared.  
A calm acceptance built up forgotten.  
Nostalgia held for a particular past when  
even before the rains would stop  
the birds could be heard, wherein summer  
would be no more summer than the snow which  
will melt this afternoon.  
In this physical life  
these are the things one never gives up loving.  
Long after the drunken husbands  
railed against the fields, the westerlies  
that each year eroded more and more topsoil,  
pushing newer stones up to their feet after  
the first frost.  
The irony sublime: being closed down by so  
much open, flat country. Hardening from within  
as the very earth with bellies bloated with

blood not yet bled,  
standing in galoshes in the curve of tilled  
rows looking away past the gathered strength,  
nobility waiting, beckoning to just be  
bumped up against. Never belonging,  
never breathing in the heavy moist smell  
of the turned soil  
blown from the fields by the very currents  
that cast their angry words back against  
the sides of their houses. A voice, sound  
if moved into it of what almost became an  
extension of the conscious; a oneness of  
still spiritualism given of open land.  
Years after the shirtless road crews came  
and re-surfaced the sinuous roads with  
asphalt so black and shiny that when it  
shimmered in the summer heat it would  
pinch eyes, even when dwarfed by  
the big yellow of their machinery.  
And after the convertibles  
drove by under the clear August nights  
honking, calling out festive, romantic,  
the husbands would begin to disappear  
in their own flesh, swollen by television.  
Paying homage to the ghosts of Howie  
Morenz, the Chicoutimi Cucumber,  
Catherine Street and the dark,  
broody presence of  
Richard skating his tight circles on  
Forum ice believing this joy  
would last forever.  
A feeling of removal from real concerns  
that seemingly lingered longer afterwards—  
a presence out in the fields, something  
underfoot as the peripheral shadows of  
scurrying cats along halls, kitchens or  
the unbridled energy, motion of hockey  
players felt but not captured, rendered.  
Next to the hunger to experience a thing  
men have no greater hunger than to forget,  
bowing to usage to their icons bleeding  
on weekends in front of them in tiny boxes,  
prophets frozen in eternal mystery. Men

lost in their fields as airmen.  
Aimless, without a single claim to land,  
shot down over wartime. A step away from  
the doorsill between worlds, between  
hoarfrost and harvest,  
of choices made and actions taken,  
defining their pasts wrestled through,  
keeping the stillness comfortably at a  
distance. There one moment, absorbed  
the next like dogs seen in between yards  
leaping fences.

Gathering in hems, the wives left loyal  
to this unhappiness understood time as  
an event, not a sequence, that beds grew  
smaller and that chaos required submission  
for there to be art. Never hurrying,  
never appearing to wish for anything else  
than that place one would be even when  
the sweet sour smell of sweat and sickness  
collected around their televisions,  
the men emaciated with their anger,  
breathless, emotionless and fearful  
barely audible in the confession, "If  
that I could I would be gentler still."  
Returning in black, the long walk from  
the station wagon to the waiting cats  
on the porch this much is known of their  
husbands:

what separated dread and beauty  
conspired the neat houses, neat  
fields, sweet roads and clean  
churches, that their failure to  
become saviours through the years  
of myth-making never clarified  
who the victim was, who remained  
unseen and misunderstood.

Freed in this profound stillness,  
outlasted by cats, they take their rightful  
places as photographs on the wall  
ogled at by spoon-faced grandchildren.  
There are no easy lifestyles of distractions here.  
No televisions, no forget murmurings of  
dreams of alcohol where the only

utilitarianism of the man who drank was  
he became a fixture of mood and presence  
in kitchens that children and wives moved  
sparingly around the hard shadow by till evaporation.  
Late night in front of the television sets,  
shaking, holding their wet faces in strong  
right hands, climbing into the silence  
and its taboos.

Combining sound and memory in these warm  
rooms, once there were towns, wide  
lots between houses, open space for the  
wind to gain momentum.

To live with windows open one doesn't  
hear the snow, only the causality; the  
grate of snowplows on pick-ups, that subtle  
shave two slow inches off.

It is the haste of a perfect world that  
cannot wait two days for sporadic sun,  
a warming curve to melt farmlands  
into subdivisions.

And what is this sound, built around us,  
caught in the trick of light in late afternoon  
sun? The cynical, disturbing honesty  
of the hearts of old women with old cats  
with clear eyes. The delight of the  
voice, the meow agile, alert, amused.

It is the music, the melody line to the  
composition, the narrative of the dreams  
of lovers forty years back one hot summer  
and the strays arching, dancing across  
August windows and kitchen screen doors.

In the fine stillness of sleeping  
with other bodies, years after the allure  
of sex has been left behind  
the simple want of security of children  
and kittens is found  
to dance with the nonsense of toes and  
stay barefooted longer, knowing  
without thought or sight that god alone  
above an extinct planet exists.

What is heard is a slow, rounded furred  
inference in their tones napping. Sounds  
curling back on themselves like sleeping

animals seeking safety and anomaly;  
the heartbeats of warm mothers gathered  
in the right remembrance of careful lives.

## DANIEL MOSHER

### FROM *TWELVE DAYS IN THE LIFE OF SAINT HYMIE* (Mama Cass died for your sins)

Sometimes when the loneliness  
*really* gets me, I can eat for days.  
I'm getting as big as a purple

war wound on some unknown soldier  
dead: comparatively speaking.  
In the *War of Big Relationship*

you get a purple heart. Or a  
purple hard-on—if you're lucky  
eggplant heart. Throb.

Beats eating all the  
groceries I just bought  
for the week at Dino's

Market. Dino's has delicious  
deli and I love mayonnaise on  
black bread. Coffee and

donuts at the Xylophone  
Luncheonette. Titanic  
Serbian woman behind the

counter. Her husband cooks.  
Thin as a lightning rod. Day  
Two: Donuts. If my life were

a Broadway musical, it'd be called  
*Bongo Drum JuJuBe Daymare*:  
all cliché-ridden lyrics set to

toe-tapping melodies. A hit!  
The life of a man in too  
big rubbers. Too big for his

britches, but he'll never fill  
his own shoes; hand-me-downs  
from his father, a lonely

indifferent man. Repeating  
pattern like tacky 1970s  
wallpaper. Paneled

rec-room. *Faux* fireplace  
Popcorn and grape Kool-Aid on  
Friday night—Chitty Chitty

Bang Bang and Willy Wonka  
double feature. The boy is  
eight years old waking up

screaming from an Oompa Loompa  
nightmare: scary as nuns.  
Is that why I wear so much black?

Celibacy doesn't appeal to me.  
"Masturbation is a habit, like  
black clothes and clove cigarettes.

Beat Nouveau," he said, a long silver  
cigarette holder clenched between  
his yellow teeth. "New Beatniks

wear chiffon." Day Three:  
Mmm. Stuffed Jalapeños -  
deep fat fried and sassy!

I paid \$70 for a pair  
of black satin pumps in  
a men's size thirteen. I keep

them in my backpack just  
in case Halloween comes around  
or some exquisite man with

a foot fetish. My friend Julio  
says Mexican men dig drag  
queens. A hint? I told him

I have big shoes to fill. He says,  
“Fill them with champagne!”  
You know what they say: “Big feet...”

Pink pickled eggs are the only food  
I can't eat with a straight face.  
Day Four: *Waffle Watusi*.

Doing the breakfast dance in  
my underpants. Hot maple  
syrup to a disco beat and

a big floppy pimp hat. Great  
with a stripe-ee Speedo. Try these  
on for size. But, size doesn't

matter, does it? You say  
you'll give me \$50 to pose  
in a Speedo and pumps

while you beat off? It's a deal!  
Cure for boredom at least if  
not for loneliness. I knew they'd

come in handy. “Compatibility  
ends where freeloading begins,”  
but then I'm a rather

expensive date. If you don't  
fuck a man on the first date  
there are thousands of others

who will. Who needs to buy a  
cow with all this free milk?  
Day Five: Grilled cheese samitches

and nachos—extra cheddar.  
Lactose intolerant; anal  
masochistic. Bite your own

hand just to feel *something*.  
Shoot yourself in the foot,  
purple heart. More cures

for boredom. If I had been  
born independently wealthy in  
1890 I could've been a great

writer. Or at least a great  
character in a Henry James novel.  
Independence or Dependence is

really a matter of perception.  
This city is full of independent  
people who hate themselves. They

too are waiting for the phone to  
ring. For a letter. A wink.  
Oh—to be *desired!*

Go down with your ship, eating  
caviar and water crackers on the  
bridge. Listen to the screams

of the panicked passengers, Skipper.  
Go down. Eating. Celebrate  
the catastrophe. “A toast:

to the death of boredom and  
a wish for...glub, glub, glub, glub...  
Day Six: Skating once, Skating

twice. Skating chicken soup  
with rice. Make a donation  
to Chicago's seven neediest

cases. You have plenty to spare.  
Gangster good looks will get you  
pretty far in this town. At least

a dinner invitation. At most  
a Mercedes or a town house  
in Logan Square. Six-foot-four

country boys with big dicks go over  
nicely in a community that values  
such things. Squander your twenties!

Self imposed exile at thirty. Your  
friends don't like you anymore  
anyway. A cure for boredom

at least if not for loneliness.  
Wear a tie in the summertime—  
that'll throw'em off. You can

always hang yourself with it  
later. I keep returning to  
the Xylophone Luncheonette

because that's the only place  
I feel at home. Homely. Just  
another patron of the artistic

burgers and fries and a Coke.  
I did drugs and ruined  
my life in my twenties

just so I could write about  
it in my thirties. How's that  
for self-sacrifice? A toast:

to the death of...glub, glub, glub, glub...  
Martyrdom is *easy!*

# MARCI DEL MASTRO

## SIMPLE ALMOST

by way of hill,  
to house  
or home.

sound fills and  
soon  
a room builds itself

inside you. hand slides  
under,  
picks you up,

places you somewhere  
else. she counted on  
so much here.

opened drawer,  
filled tight.  
once again,

you. seems obvious or  
simple almost. never  
changes.

## NO PROPER LIMIT

Heightened awareness  
of this strain. A choke  
hold brace. A broken leg.

Is chopping wood so  
dangerous? Didn't futures  
begin this way?

(A house and in that  
house a room and  
in that room a bed.)

And futures began in that  
bed. Sheila and John and  
Sampson too.

Now Ruth, mother to these  
three, died at sixty-nine. The  
father now seventy-two.

## NEBOJSA PRODIC

### GHOST IN A DRY SEASON

My brother by my side was known  
for his notorious smile with the young ladies. He  
had a certain way about him, his stride  
almost a way of living. I looked up to him and  
his sweet soul, even though I was the oldest. That  
morning we gathered our friends and played war  
in the woods. Make believe guns made out of sticks, shirts  
that were once used to cover our backs now played an important  
part on our heads as helmets made out of  
cotton. Henry, a skinny goofy looking kid that lived  
down the street from us, came running up behind me and  
my brother; he was firing his stick. He stated that he put  
a bullet in both of our heads, and that we should fall  
to the ground and be dead. At this point of my life I knew  
better. Death was not a part of me, and I did not accept it.  
“No, Henry, you just grazed my left ear.” Without any discouraging  
thought I opened fire on Henry. My brother pointed  
between Henry’s glasses and pulled his trigger. Noises that  
sounded something like a machine gun came rushing out of  
our bodies. Spit flew on Henry as he tried to reload his  
weapon. His belly ripped open by my spray of bullets,  
over and over again blood came, but he was still standing.  
Within seconds I could see the whole army coming up around the  
trees and the soft bushes in the distance. Shirtless soldiers colliding  
with us. I could feel skin and hot breath screaming. My  
brother and I killed all of them, but they  
kept on coming. War is hell. As I looked I saw  
that some of these soft warriors had painted  
faces. Blue black and mostly red paint smeared on their cheeks,  
drenched in their hair, imprisoned between their fingernails. I loved  
it. But years later I became bitter. In the real sense of things, my  
beautiful brother was killed in Vietnam. Now my memory  
of him is just his pale body resting in that decrepit box. At night  
I do not sleep, I’m too frightened. Nightmares of the colorful  
little army keep reminding me that I should have  
held on tighter to his hand, should have hugged him

longer. Something that I did not want,  
wanted me. I stand in front of my window looking  
out into the darkness, into the woods that once was. I can still see  
them. I wonder how many ghosts look back? I wonder which one of  
them is you?

# VANESSA VILLARREAL

## A HALLMARK *CARTITA* MOMENT

I look at the “Husband” section at the Hallmark store and I’m having a hard time picking just one for you. Where’s the card that says, “To the husband who comes home every night and yells, ‘Screw you. I’m the boss.’” Where’s the card with pretty lillies on the cover that says, “You’re nothing but a *puta*. Do your job and make me something to eat.” There should be a section called “*Pendejo*” next to a “This-is-my-house-not-yours” section. As I walk through each row I doggie ear each card I pass just to piss someone off and then my concentration’s interrupted with thoughts of you yelping, “Don’t let the door kick you in the ass,” which forces me to rip up every card that reads, “*Para mi querido esposo.*” Twenty years married and I still can’t find a card that fully expresses my hate for you. I wish I could kiss you for every time you came home smelling like Paco Rabanne instead of Corona. I want to give you a load of *cachetadas* and tattoo my hand over your entire body for every time you call me *puta*. I birthed five of your children and a “stupid ass” is the thanks I get. I don’t go to Tiffany’s—I buy my designer gold at Lucha’s on 26th Street. I don’t buy *arachera* at \$5 a pound—I buy it at Gueros for \$2 instead. You should realize how lucky you are. I’m a *chingona* that any man in this world would kill for. But the day I leave you I won’t need another man. I’ve been alone

for all of these years and I've done a damn good job by myself, Mickey Mouse T-shirts and all. I'm not looking for anyone's pity. I'm here because I choose to be. But the day's coming. The day when I'm going to hang *calaveras* all over the house like *piñatas* and cover your bed in sugar skulls and feed you *pan de los muertos*. This day's coming and you're going to run frantically through the house looking for me and you're going to open up the front door and see me driving away in a BMW with my daughter. She'll be stroking my hair and calling me *querida* while I throw our wedding pictures out of the back window. A true Hallmark *cartita* moment—picked out carefully, for you.

## SUSEN JAMES

### AT DUSK ON THE PORCH YOU CAN SMELL THE LAKE

The weather takes hold of veins and ardors  
invitation to lie down among  
    sticks gravel disheveled grasses.  
I do not wind my clocks or answer the phone.  
Through black iron grillwork  
I hear their ringing.  
These hands which once cupped light  
    now dip water.

After dark, there is a wing.  
Put through and through the silence  
we all are phantoms  
abandoning language  
for a more resistant strain,  
repetitive tones of rain  
the long transgress into;  
forgive my intrusion,  
the soliloquies of ivy.

Sometimes we must all sleep without provocation.  
Diverting gazes beneath skin  
to search for the whole truth,  
I skinny through barred windows  
    to sit upon the sill.  
75 watts north of recognizable gesturing  
I have kept a burden of secrets.

A dream of shattered glass;  
    windows, lenses, lips  
always the same willow.  
When the body meets a memory  
kneedeep in bone,  
afterwhile the heart bleats away,  
alters its combustion, its correspondent surface.  
It had to come to this,  
no longer casting shadow or reflection.

Nevermind what went before, I did not die.  
Making love in the crowded graveyard  
quells the odd cold.  
Bends air April and silty.  
Resists closure.

## THE PICK-UP

Most arrive huffing in groups peering from beneath the stiff lips of blue or purple umbrellas. October is taking its time to dismantle. They have come armed with witty conversation, and quest for more than a quick Tango. I have appeared to prove myself still human. A sort of fog is rising, billowing like nostalgia. The season is pure sorcery. Three times I wish the night brighter. I want to be in love again. My eyes are driven woozy with discontent. The third time he asked, I pretended he was you. "I go by the name of \_\_\_\_\_, in secret I am \_\_\_\_\_, to remain sane I sing." I surface in language, swimming upstream. Why must it all be so cliché? Sometimes I choke on the moon residing in my throat. His hands were wild with praise. "I am sorry. I am not myself tonight," I mutter apologetically. Are you a movie? he asked wanting to direct. He thought he could change my life by merely altering the lighting scheme.

## RITA HAWN

### UNTITLED

You like me  
with my hair  
in flames

like some angel  
wrapped in  
foil

a gift under  
your bed

my hands  
clenched

you begin  
to tell a  
story

with your eyes  
closed

everything you've  
ever said

wraps around  
my neck

morning is smoke  
poised like  
ashes

full length of  
windows

cool cheek  
on your side

## WHITE

I have no objection  
to a screen

a pale egg  
for a kiss

a planted new life  
is kicking

blue stones  
the pulse of your neck

into my sleep

# MYRA KALAW

## DISMANTLING THE HOUR

### I

An afternoon unannounced  
announces the arrival  
of a train gliding forth  
in a hissy fit  
bellowing eye to eye with the rusty exits  
and the bloodlines marked by poles and wires.

There she moves as if on schedule  
red brick on isotope  
walls stained like coffee and cherry  
pungent with holiday spirit and the release  
of action chronicling last night's temperature.

### II

In the afternoons the evenings an empty chair not full turns its back to the  
beehive but leans its head to the curlicue appearing on the southeast corner of  
a mirror there where a nail there grew sticking its head out like a black dot so  
opaque its shadow cuts the wall in half—

### III

*pull my finger pull my finger*, she howled.

I tell her there are only two kinds of good people: the farmer  
&  
the miner.

we'll never be either.  
So let us recoil in our sleep.  
And in our dreaming our tongues slip powder into each other's  
into each other's  
into

#### IV

The chair's silent drooping into the unclean hour  
is received by the strokes that compass it.

The chair's silent shinbone, ankle bone, funny bone,  
backbone sticking to the stone of a pendulum.  
Hanging by the tick-tock, my bow-legged love  
sways its knotted limbs, scampers to a strangle,  
consumes the days with a flinch of the shoulders,  
eats them with the hands I've just shook...

#### V

If I move from this position,  
I will not love you less.  
So I look down on the parquet floor.  
With my eyes on the nails and the strips of wood,  
I think of your sweater—  
    the one I'll clean the floor with.

#### VI

—It was Summer.  
Summer with her slice of lemon  
on an open wound, her squeak of dawn,  
and her screech of noon. Summer can be squeezed  
out of its juice. What's remained  
can be baked into a pebble.  
Aim it at Goliath. Throw.

#### VII

Morning breaks the backbone.  
It arrests you in your sleep,  
sends a shiver down the empty  
doorstep, and is picked up by a child  
on his way to school, who will put a hand  
across his face to block off  
its utilitarian embrace.

## JAMES TIPTON

### THIS STORY IS ABOUT FIRE AND DESTRUCTION

...no quiero hablar sino como es mi lengua.  
Sal a buscar doctors si no te gusta el viento.

—Pablo Neruda

This story is about fire and destruction,  
about the failure of all those who tried  
to strangle me in their entrails, whose hearts were ashes,  
whose bodies were lies, whose words were  
labyrinths of seductive and decaying light, who,  
like smugglers in the jungle stuffing cocaine into  
the corpses of little children, thought tenderness  
was something to be devoured.  
Appropriate choices for fire and destruction.

But it was something in *me* destroyed,  
and through that fire something not destroyed;  
it was spirit surviving, living for years on rat shit,  
lost on a sea with no shore, where bloated souls  
rose up with wooden eyes, like mockeries of wives,  
waving to me, reaching toward me with their sunken hands,  
plucking pieces of this body: eating these legs I loved  
when I was born, eating these very hands  
that wove the light together my initial days on earth.

At last only one part of one ear remained, but  
in that part the soul now concentrate  
contained the genesis of the whole;  
the evil that had fed on me had left  
to find its fill in other, more fattening, waters.  
I slept a very long time. When I woke  
I heard some voices, as if a thousand years  
away, but human nevertheless, voices sounding  
shore...and hope immutable

On that strange sand I flopped about  
like a goblet of mangled flesh,  
listening to words, like air hammered home;  
like banquets of food out of fairy tales,  
like milk to feed a warrior, words  
that filled this solitary ear like  
pollen out of heaven, words that  
walked on earth with breath imperishable  
and deaf to those who sought destruction.

With spring the ear grew fat and then  
the head grew back, like a blessing that has made  
a long journey; the heart, the heart began again  
to move, to thump without a form, and then  
took root in empty air and blossomed into body;  
these feet, that looked at first so far away,  
began to walk; and drop by sacred drop the blood  
returned; all the efforts of the damned  
turned into simple dew that vanished with the sun.

I think I'll name a few of those who helped me through  
the furious water; I'll name the bell that rang each breath  
when once again I learned to speak and clumsily spell:  
"*Is a bel*," a bell heard on the sea, and *James* and *Douglas*, *Robert*,  
*Nicholas*, saints to me, and holy sisters *Mabel*, *Nancy*, *Marilyn*, *Geri*,  
all children in this fairy tale I live, where magic rises up  
and catches me before I have been torn  
too much to bring the body back.  
Despite the dark the dawn is always being born.

translation:

...I do not care to speak except as is in my speech.  
Go out and look for doctors if you don't like the wind.



in boiling water, pushing children  
out of kitchens, not knowing when  
to make them work because her mama  
ruled the house, made extensions  
of the stove and needle and being  
    something borrowed  
she had to pick and choose  
    what she would.

### III

A bathing suit or a blown-up  
boat

her feet are picking through—  
some game where the sand runs off  
the toes with the tide, some shark's  
got another thing coming

    and her sister has a pail  
the boys are going on a crab hunt  
    they've got flashlights  
    and turned-up caps  
and she's got  
    this water  
    something blue.

## THE CONCILIATOR

For the very tall  
there's the problem  
of logistics  
and he had flat lips  
two pieces of slate  
slapping the face  
no matter that her legs  
reached only his knees  
she would curl  
up to his rib cage  
and light like straw  
and fine like sand  
and every other  
way she could be.

# LOTT HILL

## TRANSFORMATION

### 1. Being Forced

Chris Sotta said, "I am not yet homosexual,"  
which he meant not to hurt feelings  
and then he added, "I don't like to close doors."  
He claims the Romans had their influence on Britain  
and Justin says this country is just like ancient Rome.  
Someone else claims he practices ethical behavior—  
he was just taught that way;  
he never had those thoughts  
like the people who have been enslaved.

### 2. Principles

Slave is defined as one who has lost the power  
of resistance, or one who surrenders himself.  
Justin is angry that the Reagans got hold of this country,  
how awful it sounds now, although it worked very well  
at the time. Chris says he's always felt small,  
thought he could find comfort in knowledge  
but something was removed,  
anxiety fell in its place.

### 3. Expression

Promiscuity takes distance.  
Chris thinks it's built in to most men.  
He's never fallen in love  
and compares it to drought, heat,  
rains and rat-skinning contests.  
Infatuation is just a daily delight  
with the momentum of a shotgun.

#### 4. Lonely men

Chris likes to meditate,  
blurring distinctions in a mental vista;  
that's how he reached his sincere vow of chastity.  
Justin gets oppressively jealous.  
He didn't make love until he was sixteen  
and found it humiliating,  
an irretrievable step.

#### 5. Tomorrow

Chris says the future has vanished for us,  
denial is futile. He is afraid of death.  
Someone says death is a transition or an awakening.  
Which part of your body could you give up?  
Justin says there are rhythms, symbols  
like Greek gods because the culture is unsteady.  
There is not a provable thing as completely safe sex.  
How do you manage to be optimistic without hope?

## IF I

For J. Neu

Gave you an answer,  
opened my own words and looked  
down through gallons of ink  
dabbing and blotting black  
over white, what would it  
establish besides love?  
Stitched eulogies of past fiction  
now come to mind, how I  
once wrote a love story where  
the greatest lover was located  
postmortem, like the dreamer's  
aching heart was examined  
yet not returned to his body. What  
answer would it be? A porcelain  
trust, transparent cars of a  
train where every passenger that  
ever rode was reviled,  
noted in lines of five,  
tallied and compared with his  
intentions. I have too many  
out-dated ideas, like an antique  
narrative for an old government,  
tomes of unabided laws and  
outrageous demands. This isn't supposed to  
whelm you into agreeing, I only  
hope to establish a point to  
agree on and avoid the frequent  
tangents we both have. I feel  
weather-beaten and warped like  
hardwood against the ocean. There's no  
antidote or easy serum  
to swallow to ease the  
wear. I know  
epigrams that I could  
arrange in chronological order and  
read to you, but none would  
erase what's already been said.  
What is one word I

recall when I think of you? I feel inclined to say *love*, but you're not buying it, and the only one I've got left is *mine*.

## JEFFREY DANIELS

### CRUEL

The more important  
characteristic of a line,  
being its direction, can  
imply virtue. Or recess  
to a horizontal straight  
suggesting landscape.

Straight line, not being  
a generous example of a horizon,  
we still appreciate as  
demonstrated in art, hand gesture,  
both automated and natural motion.

Still, clearer in landscape,  
the line is no longer event,  
but simply contour, tracing  
the vacant possibility of now.

And now a line from one point  
to another can curve or straight  
but I don't think any of us really  
expected you to say that.

## LET'S HAVE A BAKE SALE

Art was nice.  
The afternoon was approached  
at salient angles, and now I  
really wouldn't mind  
if we slept outside, made a tent.

Retrieval is what seals  
a scenic America from a  
recognizable city. Standing  
room only, please feel welcome.  
Tonight's show is dedicated to...

ninety percent of millionaires who  
have earned no college degrees. No grits &  
gravy. One hundred and forty-five  
thousand mixing memory and  
sometimes nostalgia.

## THE CONFIDENCE MAN

This is a toaster.

The sides are light metal. The base is plastic. A sunburst design on the side, only ornamental. Each edge is curved to mislead you, but the form is that of a box.

The lever will trigger a succession of mechanical events. A numbered dial suggests that toast created yesterday is toast created today. Crumbs accumulate around the rubber footing.

A collection of vintage toasters is shelved about the cabinets with at least two from each period and genre. Frayed electric cords provide color like birds liltng on an otherwise cloudless dawn. This is a chair.



Gustaf Sobin	Carolyn Koo	Joe Ross
Kimberly Hayes	Connie Deanovich	Jeffrey Skinner
Kostas Anagnopoulos	Joshua Taylor	Jennifer Martenson
April Sheridan	Jan DiVencenzo	Davis McCombs
Sandy Feinstein	Mark DuCharme	Paul Hoover
Dan Sturniolo	Mark Wallace	Sheila E. Murphy
Arpine K. Grenier	Paul Weidenhoff	Terrance Calvin
Michael O'Brien	Gary Duehr	Charles North
Greg Purcell	Rod Smith	W. B. Keckler
Joe Meno	Raphael Buckles	Peter Radke
Daniel Mosher	Ron Padgett	Marci Del Mastro
Nebojsa Prodic	Vanessa Villareal	Susen James
Rita Hawn	Myra Kalaw	Lorna Dries
Lott Hill	Jeffrey Daniels	

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FIRST AIRPLANE THAT LANDED IN DENVER, *photographer unknown.*

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