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Columbia Poetry Review

Columbia College Chicago

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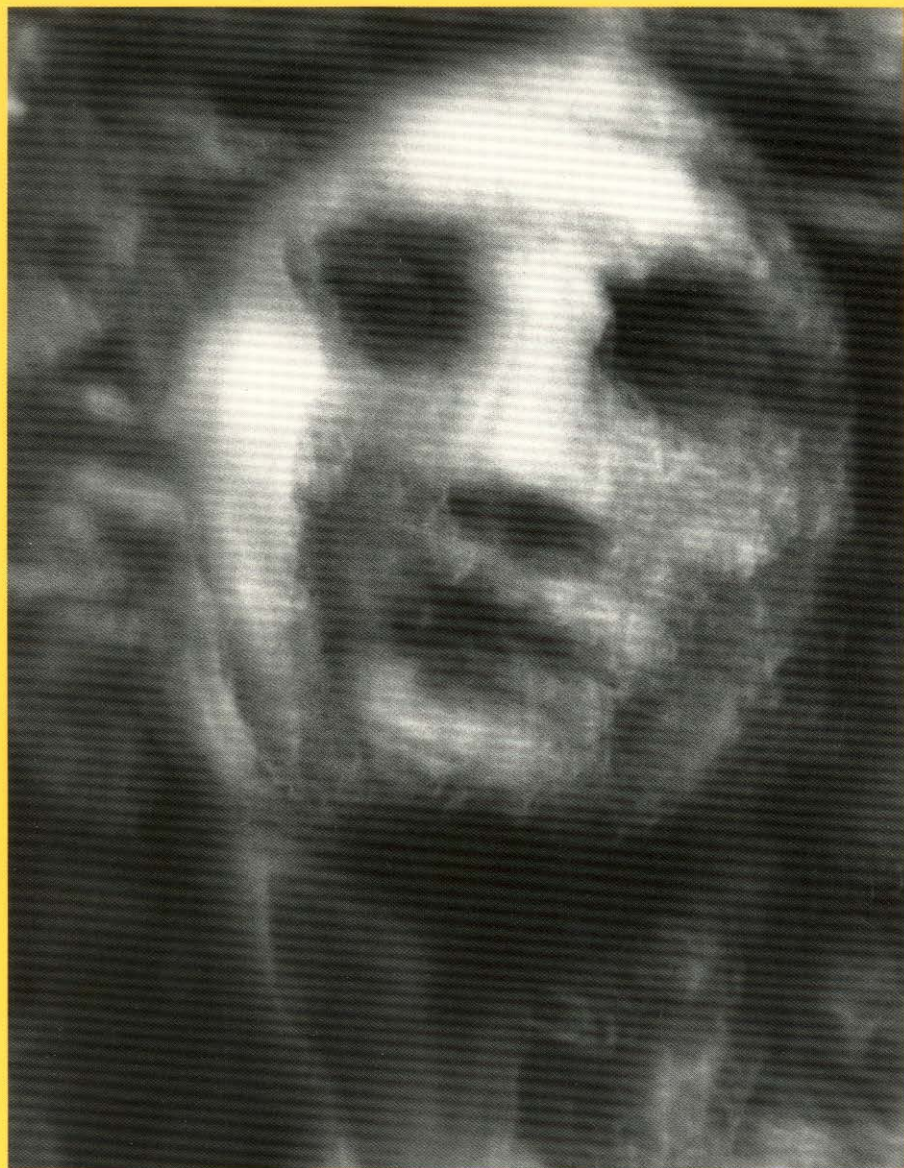
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COLUMBIA POETRY REVIEW



Number 8



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COLUMBIA POETRY REVIEW

Columbia College/Chicago

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Columbia Poetry Review

SUSAN WHEELER

EXEMPLIFICATION AVENUE

That was the great escape. I told you once.
They gathered the shanties and the garrisons
down near the lot where the Clydesdales come
until Lula herself could bake enough pies.
She said *I betcha a million bucks those ones*
then the rush of all wings took her too.

Steady, the ash that blows, the ailanthus pod
that odors garp, the ridge of beeches by the
interstate: a fragile wind is flailing you.

Norton, swinging back and forth beneath the
attic's peak, misses the telescope.
I found the mustard but not the bread.

Yeah, that was before he is leaning out,
from the car now, and squinting. He is
telling the tale of the serious times. We
cannot imagine the ways that they flinched then.
He cannot find words to imprint it on us.

Here. A child bends in to hear the crying.
The cart flies over the astonished mall.

HIRAM'S FREEZE

Then you shouldn't be surprised misreadings happen often.
When the last thorn bush, rounded, opens into a ravine of the
delicate brambles, overhead a sky for flying reflects the
riot in its clouds. You cough and tighten your belt.

Just as promises were enough to bank on averages,
certain of your hedges did come through. Risible events
made for solitude; a westerly pitch, new, in her breathing
disrupted your sleep with its small, tangled frights.

Entering the landscape as you do now, hillocks shift.
Past its drama, a clear sky feigns its reluctance—it might
only be your tendency to brood. You kick a dozen
pine cones, feinting, in the throes of a deft aplomb.

AGOG WITH PÉTROUCHKA

The father had come home from the ballet.
He was whistling what notes he'd heard.
The televised whorls began to speak.

Stupid, stupid, stupid, stu—
(There was a handsome boy behind the hedge).
Now he was chewing, chewing bread.

That's the honor code: get on 'er and
Stay on 'er. Beyond the cuttings on the sill
The moon bloomed a boreal burlesque.

What marks we make will be erased
And others come to take their place.
The father had come in from the ballet.

(Coda: pigeons swarmed, the boy marked time.)

CONNIE DEANOVICH

FROM *THE SPOTTED MOON*

richness of invention
to cover walls
with woolly cloth

the eyes shaded
by planes of
amber suggesting shields

if a voice
in the head
doesn't startle you

appeal to me
by making the
appeal a picture

an orange used
to be a
good exotic gift

the explorers washed
in cold water
the men shaved

over at the
Unhappy Bridge a
woman tosses pebbles

is *snake eyes*
a good expression
or bad English

a ballgame being
played just beyond
the leafy barrier

kitchens long designated
as the place
for peeling worries

they coaxed reading
habits from children
by encouraging masturbation

ramifications evaporate into
focused tea drinking
and napkin usage

hunger isn't satisfied
by bones made
of red velvet

the people sat
waiting for food
or else rain

it wasn't safe
anymore to say
the word *cheeseburger*

a swimming pool
is good for
ruining an appetite

corn on the
cob flotation device
is an illusion

the anthropologists came
to film the
teeth-picking ceremony

sunshine clicking its
teeth like a
sexy Spanish dancer

the dress was
made entirely of
soft colorful flowers

moved her hands
through a collection
of poacher's feathers

found pleasure in
being allowed to
stare without speaking

on your shoulder
a hand impassioned
taps out *everything*

the afternoon warmed
by sunshine and
sense of urgency

squeezed from behind
at that moment
everything is silent

on the bell
that sits on
the Mirror Bliss

the same applies
to musical composition
in the bathtub

GILLIAN CONOLEY

STANDING STILL LIKE WALKING, WALKING LIKE STANDING STILL

Everything disorderly and melancholy.
Everything massive and tall, or broad and wide.
The china stove enamelled in blue flowers.
The beds so high, so rumped, so devastated.
Once a mother in her garb and manner.
Once a father in his smoke and silence.
Their love. And then like anyone taken by chance
or emotion, dust, dust, white bride
on the streetcar shuttering by.
My God, why hast Thou forsaken me
if Thou knew'st I was not God,
if thou knew'st that I was weak?
And going out in the natural night without enchantment.
Along the red trails, the small hotels sleeping soundly. One by one,
and one can hear the habit breaking, in memory
the pond's surface stirred, sky
pouring down into the sunken
garden, shaken. And all that begins to accompany you
dangling in the rhythm of your walking.
So that soon it becomes necessary to both
cultivate and tame, to learn to read what you see
and be patient there
(where time happens), embarrassed yet tactical,
balancing light and shade for those who cannot bear
to be around such aliveness.

So the wine stain in the drunken towel,
so the wondering of should I go to a movie?
And the screen's own erotica, the gels and lenses and washes
providing a limit as to how far to go
as we take the pleasure in. The pool's vacuum
cleans the littered surface,
silently, the white absence, the white anguish.
People wake and stretch and come forward, each seeing
how we want to go on,

without anybody's
getting hurt, one recalling meeting another
in a dark dream or was it April.

A voice trills at the end of a narrow, quiet street.
One remembers a lover's eyes, a lover's nose and chin
and the feeling of being
betrothed in the lax rich wind. Each a mound
that means a body, that wears a self
taking a path
of where we would be if we were here,
in memory's teasing outline, my love.

COUPLING

I'm not the same anymore, a result of time, a ladder added to the pyre.
We say I hope and you never, and the shadow pours itself out on the grass.
One lover says to another, I will see you in the parallel life.
Let go of me for I have died, my favorite theories of breath
told slowly and in a voice of calming snow
as if everything were mechanical and not surrendered.
I take nothing as yours,
my color sampler, my hooded traveler,
my broken tones carried inside like someone's suffering.
Strong and continual and in a composition
we later desire, fish race the sea in love of air,
teeth biting the water, their spines curved round a wave. We are married
to that clown, that ape, that excellent long hair.
The universe is cheap, the way we want it.
Come jewel, shiny package, pretty horse. Come faint dead planet
full of textures, perfumes, fabrics the mind carries off one at a time.
The human stands outside the frame,
one part body, one part soul, and all in acquaintance with things.
I could never know myself the way you do,
a leg tossed casually over the other.
The man in a small film in a big city wanders from the story,
the woman thinking of him in the jazz hour.
A kiss, a touch, a shedding of the resolute.
Driving the freeway with the top off, bright signs.
A relief to see you now and show my face,
his collar open, her coat open,
our offered hands in the dust of the bus pale blue,
as the gases choose
the empty errors of the flowers.

ELAINE EQUI

THE FRAGRANCE BROOM

Bought a fragrance broom
(twigs soaked in cinnamon oil)
for five dollars and placed it
next to my armless doll who loves
to use it for sweeping bookshelves
or strumming like a guitar to incite
passion. Passion such as Frida and
Diego shared—pleasure mixed with
pain. I have two dolls: one has no arms
and one, no mouth. And now next to them
I've placed the fragrance broom. Its
perfume is the antidote to everything
we do and take to dull the senses,
quiet the mind. All day she plays—
the armless one in her blood-red skirt,
and all day the mouthless one sings.

NINETY PERCENT OF ALL SERIAL KILLERS

have three things in common: bedwetting
past the age of twelve, several episodes
of starting fires, torturing animals.

When I close my eyes at the end of the day,
this is all that comes to mind. After washing
dishes, grading papers, writing letters, long
conversations on the phone and in restaurants,
time spent memorizing Italian verbs: “cogliere”
to gather, “accendere” to light—nothing else
it turns out is quite so memorable to me as this.

The sort of thing you hear once, and for some reason
take it with to your grave. Strange, how we mark
our place in the world.

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Slumming

A Twelve-Course Dinner of Regret

Burning Down the Ocean

Multiple Choice

REGINALD SHEPHERD

POPULAR MUSIC OF THE FORTIES

I heard cold air kiss someone's
ear: all night the night keeps singing
in the key called Adam.
The hope of disappearing

sound stitches me far into departure (all
the way), a man I will have been
by morning. If I'm still awake
then. The radio's playing

things I know too well,
old songs like *I concentrate*
on you: a voice that interrupts December
air. It might as well

be spring: I spent a long time there,
unfinished blue walls and a blue note
I've described before. A paradise
of flaws, and therefore mine. My

mind. (The song is you, of
course.) I never said those things,
but here's that rainy day. All night
the radio repeats some *me*

I can't make out (you go
to my head), the signal lost
by dawn and a poor receiver.
Light croons all morning

through flimsy blinds,
any excuse for a song.

PRINCES

That was the flaw, forgetful attachments
outside of sovereign time, from which
all useless favors fell: the loved one as a portal
to sandstone statuary. Like so much else,

that was a gift. These compositions
place me idly in their frames, fixed in the mundane
adventures of eternity, where friends I recognize
approach so closely that they mirror me, enclosed

in their canopic lives. Here sits enthroned
the latent lord who waits for the awakening kiss
cartouched upon the funerary wall. Bereft
of the god, he becomes his belief,

summoned to be the savior of a jealous heaven
he knows nothing of. The otherworld without perspective
assembles in the limestone mist: he wills
his worship of the visible, alabaster

lined with lapis. That error led me to
his bright concluded sanctity. That failure led the coal
toward the tongue. On Phlegethon's far bank he was first,
arrow that drives me deep into the sexual hill

where he sleeps embalmed in torchlight.
Will he be roused by this demanding ash
upon the lips, there where the wisdom burns away?
Our treasure is the breath's flame held in trust.

HOW THE LIGHT DRAINS AWAY

You wanted to complete the days, I only wanted to continue them. Somewhere someone childlike tells your names on a rosary of flawed stones. Each linked devotion's a glowing coal, the better to see you by. My hands are empty, like this sky. They gesture towards a river

poured from a glacier's cracked green glass, its surfaces a froth of fractured mirrors. To swim there would slice the skin, and pack the wounds in ice. Copper, nickel, zinc: they stain the bloodstream like a recollection stains the closed eyes' scrim, poison with mineral

possibilities. Recall the scene in which a boy dangles from a hemp rope among the branches of an oak, because suicide is a kind of sacrifice and oaks are holy. He'd seen his face taint the clean blade and replaced it in the drawer. Weeks later the knife turned green, sliced the front lawn into fecundities of bees, and grass he won't cut

again. So the hand of violence composes the letter of beauty. It startles in a tarnished mirror in a stranger's hallway, passed over like new-mown grass. *The death, you said, of a beautiful young man: what could be more poetic?* Histories of dying Gauls and strangled sons of Laocoön will bear you out,

as on a shield. That perfect neck's skin chafes and breaks, the honey bees settle on it will not soothe him. Ravens settle on the overlapping slabs to pluck the rotting pomegranate eyes. Here are the small stones from my torn pocket, here is the rusting knife. I leave the day to you.

PAUL HOOVER

THE NAKED TRUTH

He would build
a scaffold of water
and rake and rust

of time to piously repeat
his fractured chime
goodbye. Yesterday,

summer; today, rain.
Holes blown through
a single night.

This is the country
of skin, absence in a lens,
or even nothing at all.

In the shadow of a sound,
the king of the blind
sign turns. Wind eats

a hole in space;
he vanishes in a leaf
or enters shyly fires.

A deep lane shuttered
with branches shakes
direction's house

on a night of leaping gods.
Within the room's lacunae,
his eyes are glazed

with children.
Listening to their breath
as leaves rise on the stairs,

he places his hands on windows.
Light soaks through his skin,
the blue transparent movie

final as a street
seen through caul or cloud.
The photograph is moist.

Within its pleasing glass,
he makes his stifled speech.
Past history and perception,

A whirr of vocables, leaves,
paints his nerves in windows
a pleasant Valium blue.

JEFFERY CONWAY

FALL IN TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK

The homeless man slouched on a bench a few feet away screams
“She’s thunder and I’m lightning, yes yes yes, thank you folks. . . .”
He’s drinking T-Bird from the green bottle. I’m sitting with Ed.
We talk some, but mostly stare off into the trees (the leaves
are yellow and gold). “This is amazing!” I say. “We don’t get this in L.A.”
“Get what?” “The colored leaves.” Ed is eating sunflower seeds.
“Well, I’m from New York,” he says—spit—“and it’s still fuckin’
amazing.”

A boy, 5 or 6, rides up in his red battery-operated car and parks
in front of us. He stares. Ed grumbles, “Hasn’t he seen fags before?”
I’m thankful I won’t have any kids—I couldn’t stand so many questions,
they’re always asking questions. At least I did: “Christ—are you writing
a book?” my mother would say with a cigarette stuck in her mouth,
her lips thin and red—no, orange—one of her favorite
lipstick colors, especially this time of year, *her* autumn in California:
Santa Ana winds, lounging by the pool, Tree-Top apple juice with vodka,
and the brown Oldsmobile wagon with fake wood-grain siding that she’d
drive at night, windows
down, eyes bulging out, listening to A.M. radio.

SISTER

What else do you do in the afternoons, Cindy,
besides lying on the shredded sofa, hung over,
too tired to reach for another novel
settling, instead, for a reread
of the one in front of you, too tired
to tend to your brain-damaged baby
in the next room who, I've been told,
has red hair, unlike the twins
who were supposed to be fair
after you told everyone, anyone
an Irish man was the father,
everything wrecked when they came out
quadroon, not at all like him or you, really
and what do you do when no one will have you,
are you pregnant again or have the abortions
made it impossible, beyond repair
like the scare Mother gave you
holding up your dirtied underwear
in front of us all then cutting your hair,
how come you didn't cry, how come
when I pick up the phone
and call you to ask I can't speak
I open my mouth and dead things fall out

JEFFREY DANIELS

JET

for my wife

The cellar is heavy as I wake, so
we presume it will be dark soon.
I put today in a paper-lined box.
The seamstress does this all the time.
There, the frame of the screen door.
I listen. She sits in the kitchen.

Watch the dog apply such reactions to the hue.
The back door is open. My sense of color is
outside. Before I rise from the sofa, I'll be
aware of every step my weight supported
walking on the conscious existence of things.

If only one of us could just overcome this drift
of getting to know to know another. Trust wind.
We could save the mountain for either of us the day.

The lull of the television box softly on the counter.
The gradations of sun setting. Could the greatest
despair be when one considers how much it will take
to lure happiness? I took the flat to the hills
where Jeffrey and I had discovered a sky before.

Now sifted light fans the dust. Millions rest
kinetic on air. Tinting a sequence to look dream.
Before the seamstress concluded that she must end,
anyone could be a carousel for any one. And now
the pup ears silence.

We couldn't afford the shaft portrait of August.
The duct with the scene of warm rain. The discontent
mild still shackled by the moment. Study how the napkin
is folded. The quiet laid shadow on our prose. The kitchen
heat prone on my skin. This is a journey,
food for the habitually evasive

and hungry called talkative.
But we could never be so solitary.
Listen to the leaves. The wind rolls fire.
Where the tree is grace. Our comfort.
And the sun, the sun.

ELEVENTH HARBOR

Swaraj Sestina

one

summer she wore knitted gloves everywhere.
indoors. outside. her hands were always cold.
we're watching her old girlfriend's apartment.
it's noon, she's boiling water in the next room;
i can hear her talking, but can't quite make out
what she's saying. in calm, i've set my watch

two

minutes faster than the one in the kitchen.
i write in media res. it's summer again where
little ambiguity relaxes conversation. she peeks in
still talking. marci is comforting, not comfortable.
a cool wind moves the thin linen now making curtains.
the dog wanders in and back out again. like

three

sides of a square, we can recognize the absence
of consecutive happenings which progress time.
i once had a day dream, we lived together here.
paisley like a television series. i had come home
from work to find a scribbled note that read,
"whatever you do, don't vacuum the rug!" it was

four

in the afternoon; i couldn't imagine where
she'd gone. the note seemed so urgent that i sat
in the armchair like a ball turret gunner for her
return. she never came back. i never vacuumed the
rug again. the place was beginning to smell. she
walks in from the kitchen in the middle of a sentence.

five

years ago, i would have imagined something
would be different by now. hindi words have the
captured silence that reassures me now can become
then. i want to tell her there is no objective
world to discuss. no point in even talking.
if i gave her water in cups, she'd give back

six

times from her envoi. her verbal is kinetic. or
we could just sit together saying nothing at all.
i would tell her more. i've learned how lovers say
i love you to mean so many different things.
in her sweat pants and bra, she jokes about the dog;
the quiet of the fan pivoting light over my arms.

Swaraj (Hindi): Self-governing

VERONICA'S EXODUS

The men on the fence in their vintage suits
struggled heads first out of a portal to greet oceans,
and spend the rest of their lives at the parlor
trying to get back in. They gather as expatriates.

And in their masses, our hell is suggested.
Until the melodic ice-cream truck makes its entrance.
The inferior ones borrow, and other stock characters
ask their love for change and compassion.

The great movement across the plains shadows
grass blades and our notes on Vonnie's porch.
She was so unaware of life, things like dinosaurs.
One read, *you drive your bike like a girl.*

CAROLINE KNOX

HIGH AIR

“The scenery is wholly mineral,”
over the tireless Fosters, the biographers
of Alexandra David-Neel and into the bargain
of the Lama Yongden, her adoptive son;
and, as is said in Tibet,
“This coldness will keep the tea from pouring,”

and never mind about the yak butter.
“The whole world seems strangely far off,”
wrote Alexandra, in residence among
the Reformed Red Hat Nuns of Tibet, “a whirlwind of atoms,”

and among proverbs on the subject of proverbs:
“The peaks are our sentinels,” on the roof of the world.
Many Tibetans said this often, as gongs on location.

Ceremonial horns to announce the great
were so long they needed acolytes to support them.
Bells of rare alloys rang, and
bandits abounded there, called Gologs
(which means Heads on Backwards!). Comes me now

to Alexandra, alpenstock in hand, the ascetic
mysteries concealed in a gnostic language.
Of white jade: one ruined effigy in beatified air, high air.
Of green jade: a lotus blossom and coarse, rubber-like stems; a scepter?
a weapon? both?
Of black jade: a torso, a pillar, a jamb figure; no, a cipher.
Jade in substance the meeting of heaven and earth—
“I have seen the world’s map and the soul’s charts.”
Entry ultimately into the city: “Lhasa’s prayer is ended. Love is now
invited.”

E.

Ruddy, she curtails
the octave intervals,
acclimating
to the parlor upright.
She combs out the snarls
with the letter E.
She plunks the good
theorbo.

After to have snipped
the copious sward,
his hands still ring
with the Briggs & Stratton.
He faxes her this sestet
by the midnight oil.

DIANE DI PRIMA

REVISITATIONS - 1

It will never again be high noon on the streets of Jelapa
w/just that iguana held by that solemn eight-year-old girl
or those very jars of Mexican opal for sale

if we go again
you probably won't wear that sailor's hat, try to snorkel
in just that dangerous spot the Mexicans showed you

I will not be there for the first time
frigate birds
will not be news as they fly out of sight to the south
& you lean against me on the balcony rail

ONCE IS ENOUGH
(Revisitations - 2)

I'll never again stand on a traffic island at twilight in the rain
in the middle of Paris with a Hungarian princess
when the two of us have just been thrown out of a cab
by a drunken Irish novelist (her husband)

I'll never hear the princess cry & tell me
how Charles Olson was the only man who had truly loved her
& stroke her hair & hail another cab
& put her in it

then stand there numb & wet & beginning to wonder
just what I shd do next . . .

DAVID TRINIDAD

THE GAME OF LIFE

I start with \$2,000 and a car.
Click, click, click . . .
spin the Wheel of Fate and

eagerly advance.
At the first fork in the road, I
decide to take

the longer way through college
with a chance
for a larger salary. *Click, click, click.*

Lawyer! (Salary \$15,000)
Move ahead four spaces. PAY DAY!
On the first mountain

range, I find a uranium deposit
and collect \$100,000.
At the church I stop and get

married: add
spouse, collect presents and go
on honeymoon

(five spaces). *Click, click, click.*
Many surprises
are in store for me on Life's

winding road:
win \$50,000 at the race track
and triple it by

betting on the wheel; add a baby
daughter (pink peg)
then twin sons (two blue pegs);

become a sweep-
stakes winner; even take revenge
on my opponent

(sending him back ten spaces).
After I cross
the third mountain range, I

incur some
major expenses: buy a helicopter
(\$40,000); take

world cruise (\$8,000); expand
business (\$50,000);
pay \$9,000 to get rid of uncle's

skunk farm.
But I keep passing PAY DAY!
and collecting

dividends on my stock. Stop
to fish on
Toll Bridge: lose turn. Cyclone

wrecks home!
(I'm insured.) Pay \$5,000 for tou-
pee. The Day of

Reckoning is a breeze—no Poor
Farm for me!
I receive \$20,000 for each child

and proceed.
Click, click, click. Buy phony
diamond from

best friend. Pay \$10,000. This,
just one space
before Millionaire Acres!

KEVIN KILLIAN

POINT SPREAD

She wills to you this open
This space color it blue

This doped gang falls the point
spread, a light color halfway in

the blue probate clauses of her
and the hot red things she liked

The ceiling the ale
All night that happened over

this vista of our Canadian
mountains and there, there are the

very red things posing as
Uniforms she bled, look

quick they're going to
get their man touching

or falling so shoot
the horse no don't it

is probably Tippi like because
she's foaming or slathering

CHERRY

2 popular boys riffle through the pages of Popular Mechanics and build a bridge to Vancouver with toothpicks, Timmy and Tommy. "It's like building a stairway to Heaven." It's become the Varsity drag of the nineties

Something cherry is everything of the nineties

Sweat is to denim

Jane is to Tippi

I say building that bridge without a flaw took all their courage
into their hands, that smooth out the tremble, flying careening
to the SUN SPOTS to the BIG BALLS they look at the cherry

When you think of how to kill the mockingbird they tremble
I feel so inadequate what you don't want
On such a picnic day that foolish and gullible grin

I saw those two popular boys on the bridge praying
O father dear
Singing to bring the cross nearer ever to Thee

Buy them a yacht, to their contract, it's in
and so that is the nineties

and I thought they would die
they still haven't picked a college

AMY GERSTLER

BEDLAM

I was brought here to recover
my presence of mind—
a pear-scented essence
which slipped through my fingers
like disobedient lotion,
pressed from glow-in-the-dark azaleas
nurtured in church basements.
Looks like somebody goofed, though.
The usual amenities
have proved less than therapeutic,
though we're provided with brocade
fainting couches now,
prodded to talk about
how it feels to be run over
repeatedly by late model cars.
Each of our sneezes
is captured on film
and screened for our families
on visitors' day.
Squirrels scamper
all over the grounds.
They come so close to my window
I can see their tiny sex organs
and monitor their hyper gnawings.
They tunnel through an apple
in under thirty seconds.
Nor are the thin unkissable lips
of the Nazi youth turned theologian
incarcerated next door a harmless sight,
as he mouthes songs about turtles
and shrimp slugging it out
in the warm waters
of the Gulf of Mexico.
No one will lift a finger to help me.
Yesterday, a doctor asked what I was
willing to give up to get well.

Daddy's moonshine?
The gun on the nightstand?
My rumpled piety? I'm not picky,
but what *was* last night's
mysterious entree, anyway,
blanketed with that insane
dill-flecked homemade mayonnaise?
My next door neighbor is dead set
on converting me this mild morning,
though I've already told him
I've had one toe dipped
into his personal version
of the lapping afterlife for years,
and I find it less than temperate.
I listen to his melodramatic harangues
all through breakfast, trying to keep
the fireball of my attention
from shooting out of my head,
busting through the picture window
and incinerating the nearby pines.
We all lose ourselves sometimes.
But to render true service to another,
one must serve him without relinquishing
oneself. Easier said than done.
This spreading darkness is not entirely
mine. The dinged-up cafeteria ceiling
leads me to believe that though it's likely
I contracted my malady from the would-be
preacher, if I remain committed and vigilant,
my thoughts will soon reconvene
with more gravity than ever,
laced with caramelized terror,
delicately flavored with geranium.

KARL PRADEL

WITH POETRY

as if she had
relegated the bone,
tasha held her arms
this way, bent at
the elbows, hands
cupped just so

she wanders to the plate
consistent with meat,
the concubine fetching
muses with a broken
colander . . . a calamine
of flexes, a man of no
noise, none too soon
to rise and dish us
up heaping servings
of the wind

relaxed on tuesday,
they comb over us
like sand,

like the lexicographer
to the wilted leaf, the
multiplicity of spoons
in the drawer goes
unnoticed

as does the voodoo
sangria, the haywire
cuckoo

the poem that
suspends itself
over the page

for you

AGENDA

we're interested in
the surreal
qualities of life

—the feet dangling
off the side
of the boat

husk of corn
sip of wine
mosquitoes

and the book
that bends
like a spoon

KNEE PLAYS

I

Woody Guthrie falls on his knees
and prays for rain, the way he looks
at the sky could be construed as being
salacious, but his kidneys are intact
and all that restlessness he felt yesterday . . . gone.

II

With one fell swoop she plummeted
to her death . . . and so strange it seemed;
one minute fastening garter belt to stocking,
leg bent seductively on a cement curb . . .
then hands upon the throat, gasping for air.
It looked as if God reached down and squeezed
the life out of her. Still I wasn't quite sure
which fell first, the stocking or the girl.

III

While reading Shakespeare
it occurred to the boy that he was a girl
and with his index finger extended
he reached into his pants
and felt his clitoris.

IV

Penny had gathered us all together
in the kitchen; something about
a remedy or a tonic that would
instantly improve the quality of life.
But all she was doing was playing
this miniature one-armed bandit
over and over again and writing
down the results of each pull
on tiny pieces of paper.

V

They were said to be the ideal
couple. The June wedding
as well as the pricey china pattern
were early indications. So who
would expect that when he came
home after a long day's work
with a rose, a bottle of wine
and tickets to the ballet she would
react in the manner she did.

VI

It's while writing the sixth stanza
that the writer is puzzled over
the debate of closure in respect
to none other than his own poem,
but before he can respond he is crippled
with a profound love for the characters
in the seventh stanza.

JANE NOYES

FLUIDITY

for alberta and martha

Aside from
and behind the back
way gate and a cornerstone
I take myself to a place today
and play to a child's gaze and fingers

Durham summer changes dogwoods
by the Big Apple Circus
under tree-tops
sweet orange
day

Moving
not stepping
over the Flume
without noticing
the water was gone
after carving time into time

Footsteps move like the wind does
through pine needles on a hillside
already in their place
and return to burn in
Autumn smoke
like water
on your
face

VANDALISM

Incapable of spelling North
she walks that way, nonetheless
her busy hands
in awkward pretense
wipe the ink from her hands to her dress

SIMON PERCHIK

319

The drowned remember this from stars
and reaching out for darkness—their lips
once closed so firmly learn to ache

—you hear them gathering each grave
nearer the others—even their sea
was buried beside its light
and every wave carried closer.

Your son just born
already sure he has a twin, cries
to that dimb bulb above his crib
moving the Earth outward

till its streams flare for miles upwind
and you fall back, again in the sea
the way we dream :bestowed
from under the world, under the skin
that leans out to listen, that cries
when the mouth cries
—the way the sun empties out
its great longing—just born

and he already knows where tears
are waiting, lifeless, so close
to the lips, cries as if he suddenly hears
his breath could go back for another
and another and from his eyes.

Or paying off someone :each funeral
once only at night, the hearse
still black and alongside
another shadow :the witness
closest to the wheels, holding fast
swells then withers
then stretches out :each breath
begins with a few words in your ear.

You dead contradict only in whispers
are still in doubt about these trees
and the soft sound falling into snow
into those small stones
already taking root, that grow
only in winter, in mouths.

Everything you do is whisper.
There are no wings on birds anymore
and everything falls into this ground
set adrift among the calls from seabirds
one behind the other—you dead

go everywhere in crews
and though I rode with the others
I leave unprotected, afraid which shadow
is yours, slowly from its continuous night.

Even the sun, overwhelmed
by your grey suit :mask
stiff, deadlocked
and its invisible black thread
that moans, slowly, steady

though it's the custom at gravesites
after one lapel's cut open
as if the dirt would know
could see there's one more
and the razor—the same dark suit

you wear in bed, hiding everything
except your face and still you can't sleep
—3 in the morning you phone 411
for information, for a voice
you don't see, that could be made
from a stone or a shadow

—you begin to stink, to study your bones
giving them names, calling them
to windows you don't open
and on the sills small stones

and around your arms the dark jacket
falling into some night that's full
—you hear the waves asking you closer
whispering *There's no such number
no one by that name.*

PAUL WEIDENHOFF

CLEAR BELLY. YET WHITENESS.

It does not go. With a pattern of life
or a pattern in the sky

terminates any vision. Through some wispy
tone. Tis the year midnight and it is made
in the image of a black pool, or wet

charcoal glass.

The first Lady and the second
Lady sat in the ante-chamber with brightly
colored fans.

Stems. Silk patterns in each pivot of the wrist.

He could administer blue colored water
waves in the floral patterns on the wall

yet it does not go away at all.

GERALY UNITE

GARBAGE, RUST, LEAF

in the coming absence
of shells,
light seeks another
variety of egg.
something of less
integrity is simply
more revealing.

a wheel left spinning
in the attic
continues clicking
behind, all other
things left behind.

to prepare a pair
of boots for the winter
is to spray them
into a darker shade of brown—
a darker cherry, increasing
the percentage of opacity.

again, it is light
that seeks a challenge
to sever like steel—
more striking than bricks—

tunneling through everything
base and elemental—
garbage, rust, leaf

a lens, a crucible,
the spectrum in an address,
light prefers the number eight.

ODE TO THINGS THAT END

i like things
that end in “ah”
like mama and guava
bandana and sex,

nicknames like “Wink”
and “Spunky Rooster”
between condo voyeurs,

the increased volume
of purr that follows
the hissing of a can,

the varying degrees
of intimacy we associate
with used things—
a book or a body—
despite a corner chipped,

the resulting laborious
flight from cooked rice,
to a bowl of Spaghetti-O’s
and Hi-C.

the severity,
a bang to the head
that frames the face
into a still of pain.

all this and time
is slapstick,
basic residue left
from a cake of mealy soap.

events so familiar one is
 either bent long in remembrance
or crouched to pee.

BOILING PRAWNS

for B

never invite a floozy
to dine
al fresco:

boiled prawns for dinner,
alligator pears for dessert.

this is gliding dangerously
under mediterranean water,
dodging diaper poop and pee-pee,
to find a likeable
yet pungent fish.

ignore the lusty hoot
that advances from the plexus.
curb the urge to croon
a shy rickshaw driver,
under conical hat,

fingers twanging
a bluegrass banjo ballad
about quadrooms
and a tsunami.

under a nubby patterned thing,
rather inexpensive,
labeled woolsey,

they perform with
the expertise of petnappers
a cooing, clutching,
a calculated squeezing.

this slight torrent
is no temporal dementia
as simple as ticks,
a need for blushy mumblings,
soft palms fondling,
that common flooding

of an iris
brimming colors
never seen.

this is fair warning
of an impending warfaring
from a hoyden
to her “bo-kay” bearing
arrival.

i’ll plant
a whirlybird
on your lawn
and prepare
vichyssoise sponge cake
for brunch.

by then,
they’ll have found
us too
late,
one deliberately drowned
the other
in that gooey sap,
that crazy thing.

SANDIE STRAVIS

CASE HISTORY #19

It ranges from normal to the absurdity of hiding the kitchen knives, obsessions with the unattainable, and kissing hands to practice for lips.

The line was crossed no fewer than six times, she's walking in circles again but thinking this time, wondering about madness, water retention, and the freak snow shower in July.

Fortunately, the more she pushes, the more she forgets, and a dumb movie solves most ailments, and, although she still sits on her bed, rocking gently and crying for no reason, it's getting harder to resist the urge to flex her muscles at every mirror she passes.

PLACEBO

it's only after "I love you"
is muttered from the passenger's
seat and the response is
"oh fuck" followed by "I . . .
love you, too," that we
disregard shortness or the
tendency toward rudeness
mixed with alcohol

and it's good this way—
driving at night, sort of
natural, not needing to
face each other awkwardly,
but really meaning it

or, at least, it's good
to imagine it that way
and although the two
are unrelated, it makes me
wonder how long you need
to know someone before
"I don't, but I do," makes
perfect sense in a conversation
which is difficult to
begin with.

and all these things make
me think that it will
always be the guy with
charm and above average
ego tht will simply turn
me inside out, make me throw
things, and insist on running
into me, annually, for
the rest of my life.

I kinda don't mind though.
It's not like there's any
hope involved, I just like
the way he smokes.

FIVE WOMEN (ORIGINALLY BY BRIAN)

don't deny this simple uttering,
there is a new context
for background and meaning
to merge.

undistinguishable by the
eye, the raw pleasure of
a figure that draws us
in and removes our clothes—
the temptress, the onlookers,
the parade blowing past
there's a tension only
we can ignore.

we know the hideous masks
have defined his terms of
women and would deny the
curiosity of a crowd.

KOSTAS ANAGNOPOULOS

REVERIE OF LOSS

that blue less and less a body
the casual which parts geography
everyone is evident
a shell must as a face hide
the jerk of someday
hung to age ultimatums
nor how are you
door is decoy
the fate of paper

somewhere though although sometimes
locusts are an event
make room for the elementary loneliness of snow on the 7th
the sun is late
a choice of cloud is a mill is an arrow
the inane part of wake
eggs a covered argument
the day you'll know an earnest taste is all too driven

people lift the avenue
rues pull under
the pictured play dying
the lisp hell again at the door
the figures regain life
no matter how the fall resembled them
natural obedience holds them upright

THE DRAMA OF A RADIANT DISTANCE

The cliff as error for clarity of what an edge is
leaves as we watch sadden for gathering
stories someone told someone to climb.

Pretend she crosses though they are taking her
to the storm, motherless, they scurry up a hill.
Traces like fire at a scene that stops
several times to the anonymous shape
a voice makes and imagines variations of
greeting while his real name is forgot.

This, the josh of a hive
where words spew a quiet moment.

JIM SHOPP

BOY PARTS HOLLOW SKIN SIGHS

The boy
with tinsel
hair parts
the hollow
eyed girls
company working
his hand
across his
hand across
her slipping
breast a
baby suckles
gently felt
mist drapes
over puckered
skin between
his fingers
and mothering
thigh opening
wetly the
baby sighs
bubbling milk

SUSEN JAMES

MISCARRIAGE

Looking back, it seemed different from the conception,
like someone visiting for only a very short time, or
lent, then returned.

Biographies can be told by examination of scars.
I have long hoarded tears in a mason jar
to save for salt.

This fragile fruit had withered on the vine
and it was as if these freefalling knots
and slipknots of blood and tissue
were my last hope.

I will never see the child,
will never know if it was girl or boy.

“With local she will remember too much,
with a general recall nothing. . . .”

“I am courageous.” I scream as a mask is held
firm to my face. There is a smell of warm rubber and
chemical which suspends me south of sleep.
I am scraped empty and clean, empty and clean,
with sound, I’m sure, like long nails against a chalkboard.
Yet, these hips remained aware,
this pelvic musculature, awake, knew her loss.

Afterwards, they are cautious, eggshell and china voices
don’t want to leave me sad,
spread a thin film of what not to say—
“You’re young, you’ll have others . . . don’t
be so upset, it wasn’t even born yet. . . .”

“My feelings are as tangled as these noodles,”
I announce that June while fixing dinner.
And go for a wander I’d be slow to return home from.
I climb clear to the rim, near to sounds of rushing
waters. The water wears my face, is luminous, mirrored,
changing. I squat like a woman in heat.
So many stories the waters long to tell me.
My whole life is listening.

THE VIRGIN MARY DISEASE

It lolled off Mama's tongue
real off-handed,
"Immaculate conception, it
happened once, who's to say
it couldn't happen again."
Like it was something contagious.
Like you could pick it up
right there in after dinner conversation,
swung home-run
to religion, which Mama taught
was argument no one ever won.
Aunt Louise visiting every Tuesday
rain or shine,
had no answer but a shrug.
Beneath the sly hum of neon light
the kitchen's chartreuse walls
and pink formica seemed
to sweat and shiver.

My family half Jewish,
part Catholic, me raised dilute,
watered-down Lutheran
never to be confirmed,
spent this second grade year
jealous of First Communions.
Longed for white frilly dresses,
lusted stiff lace veils,
wanted to be given to Jesus
with the seven-year-old Catholics.
I'd practiced in the mirror
pressing hands prayerfully
looking solemn,
memorized the Rosary,
recited the Lord's Prayer.
Wondered then if I'd gone too far.
Did the Holy Ghost enter like a gasp
in the space between heartbeats,
like the ribbons of sunlight
through half-open venetian blinds,

like the transient numbness which
suddenly embalmed my lips, fingers,
the soles of my feet as I attempted to walk?

How would I explain to friends
that I had caught this “bug.”
That Virgin Mary was a childhood disease
I’d not been inoculated against?
I avoided Biblical epic movies
in case of infection.
Statues of Dieties, I’d stare at
only from a distance.
And I will not ever let
Renaissance religious paintings
with their pious wandering eyes
make contact with mine.

TUESDAY, ANNE SEXTON

Tuesday, Anne Sexton sat
cross-legged on a stool in my kitchen,
arms white as milk
thin, stalky, agitated
as elms in a storm.

I wrapped identity around
my shoulders like a shawl
—the clamor of silence—
she does not speak.
Her crow eyes dart,
filling sockets,
filling the room.
A poltergeist does
what a poltergeist must.
When I was six, I carried a frozen rabbit home.
Stored it in my garage all winter,
assured it would live again
as soon as it thawed.

I eternally atone
for something I do not remember,
but must have done.
I know enough of crazy for lifetimes.
My stems pruned bare of leaves,
spring sap rising, rising,
with nowhere to go,
vital nerves restrained.
How close I walk to that line.
I search Anne's black leather
purse for clues.
Only a checkbook and embroidered lace
handkerchief, conspicuous absence of
keys, photos, notebooks.

Anne, I too have wandered streets without mercy,
ungrounded,
searching for a home,
have turned myself inside out,
liver-spleen-lungs displayed blatant on paper.

I have tightroped along handrails,
one foot in front of the other,
heel placed to toe, then the other foot,
again heel placed to toe,
a thumping in my ears like a kettle-drum
pounding jump-jump-jump-jump-pounding.
“What have you gotten yourself into now?”
my mother’s ghost whines.

I walk beneath a smooth marble arch,
unfulfilling,
they do it all with empty mirrors,
there is truly no-thing magic here,
in the morning when I awaken,
I will remember none of this.

Air gathers over me like tornado clouds,
sucking my breath.
It drapes me like a shroud.
I crouch in that mute vault of thought
before the constrictive clothing
words give—

the splaying of an angular light—
looselimbed,
boneless,
momentarily soulless.

JENNIFER MARTENSON

AS IF BY AGREEMENT

Some of us must be prefaced,
in time to clear the room
of children, so they may be
more cleanly swept up

in the arms of the other
stranger, whose constant
presence is not to be
known, or discussed: a vigilant

omission. Of lesbians, all
we see is the back
of a woman's head filling in
for the erotic, or

effacing it. Nothing
in pairs, not even
hoped for. Even this
is consigned to the lethal—

to be closed, inappropriate,
between bookends: a concession,
it is said, to the carpet's
general design. Sorting

through the offerings,
it's important to keep in mind
who's appeased, which faded
aphorisms are in line

for reinstatement.
The casualties will not
be counted, but stood in for:
covered over with inclusion

in drag: the stain on the bed
no one sleeps in: benign
in the otherwise spotless
inevitability:

a singing to oneself
after the whole story's
gone home, and everyone
with it.

W. B. KECKLER

ANT POEM

The legerity of an ant walking
over the legibility of newspaper
across which the ant reads
space as a chemical process

Or the legerity of mind
observing the ant as legible
data on a deeper field
perhaps not newspaper (but poem)

Or the legibility of a blade
of grass scribbling light on space
just at the plane-edge of text
and the ant is reading this

And the Confucianism of a paused ant
who looks like a letter (changing
the meaning of a word of a poem)
which casually collapses beauty

So the illegibility of an emotion
at the edge of a mind's field
is disturbed and looks up to blue
where the clouds continue (along, past)

JESSICA COHEN

TROUT

Not that anyone would have
noticed, but this type of thing
has been happening a lot lately.
The lack of respect for the
single object only adds to it,
just ask the woman who buys
cat food in nines.
With their perfect
disrespect for words, nothing can
be made funny anymore.
This is a tribute to tinyness.
On our backs, the air seems
much thicker, there is no
sense to be made.
She used to rely solely on talent.
In another space she tried to
impress me with stories
about stripjoints. I didn't
say anything to stop her.
The onliness of the situation
began to squat back into itself.
I didn't want to mock her,
but I began using her tonalities.
I never mean to do that,
but in the open fields of—,
there isn't much to mock.

RITUAL

Coming back was like a re-entering,
the el tracks tracing the places I could name.

It is not so much weather, but climate,
not in the end but the beginning of things.

Some of the best memories I have are of
being in love with the wrong people. And
it's always sad, falling out, even though
the hat was the wrong shade of blue, the goatee
off-center.

So do all these things: condition before you soap,
sit at the card table,
be wonderful, tread lightly, be wonderful,
keep leaves outside your window.

GREGG SHAPIRO

POSTCARD FROM THE MOUNTAIN

For the price of a first-class stamp, I can tell you that I've fallen in love with a man whose name I don't know. I can tell you about discovering the joys of dormitory living at this late age. What it's like sharing a toilet,

a shower and a sink with people I hardly know. How I lie in a single bed, in white jockey shorts, maybe a t-shirt, looking at the make-shift galaxy of glow-in-the-dark stars on the ceiling and consider unrequited love. Surrounded

by mountains, a variety of green, birds I'd only seen in an Audobon Society book in a library. There is a fat family of flies choreographing a ballet about spiders, wasps and beetles in the hallway outside my room. I would leave the door

to my room unlocked, dreaming of the man who smiles at me and sets my knees aflutter, makes me lose my balance in a wave of swooning, if I could wake up next to him at least one morning, our bodies grooved into a position of acquaintance and gratitude.

BRYAN TSIKOURIS

THE PARKWAY

sometimes it appears
nothing will come.
the dawn overflows
to show us what we missed.
I myself turn the book,
staring at a couple of geese.
each day emits its odor,
a twist of citrus
that goes well with gin.
the window, a huge accident,
interchanges now with then,
freeing highways and roofs.
the parkway widens, filling with travelers
Judy is beside herself
just as I am behind myself.
all of us set up lawn chairs
to witness the work,
as if a war were occurring
before our eyes.
everything is baited,
somehow manipulated
and cool to the touch,
and we understand all this.
we've known it for years.
the real crime is that we failed
to say we could live with it.

KATHLEEN OSSIP

MAY DAY

And the shadows shorten; lilacs intimate themselves.
Did you know I clipped lilacs for Mary, Queen of the May—
a girl in a navy blue jumper and matching beanie?
I wrapped them in foil and Sister shoved them on a shelf

bolted to cinderblock, under the statue's nose full of powder.
Virgin and mother, two-time loser, in her blue trousseau,
she let no one close enough to throw a shadow.
I was afraid I'd have to be like her,

like my aunt, the spinster librarian, like my mother, baby-stepping
to menopause. I had this fear of the future.
Other girls worried about sanitary pads and white skirts.
I terrified myself with Bernadette-visions,

the secrets of Fatima, sword-pierced hearts, a stigmata
that would leave red drops all the way to the girl's room.
Sister Mary Richard might take one look and recruit
me, declare a true vocation. I'd be solitary as a mystic.

So remember me on the dank front steps
of the apartment house ten Mays ago?
Remember the song from across the street, how
we rode it, drunken? You said the lilacs had a sex-

smell, and proved it under the awning.
You held a box of crayons under my nose,
daring me to guess. You sprinkled me with shadows,
semen, and air-conditioner drippings.

At some point I pulled on my underwear.
I said: *I really like sleeping with you but help!*
what am I going to do when I grow up?
You didn't know *what* to answer.

RAPTURE 95

*Police have warned motorists in northern
Florida to avoid Route 295 due to snipers.*

That would be a rapture all right, bullets and boulders
punching sun through these pitiable shells, an illumination,
and the godless shrieking in their RVs and minivans.
Why be afraid? Be grateful—roll open your windows
and let the dregs of the century pour in, oh
no, it is enough that we will be plucked out of our cars
and set down in the clouds to watch the others deep-fry.

You see there is nothing to fear. They ask us to find
alternate routes but we don't drive those slow backroads, this is the end
of the big two-oh, isn't it? Let's all speed down that highway,
a caravan past the faux-jungles nudie hot-dog stands gone
with the wind subdivisions right on through
to the end (not even stopping for *sandwiches cubanos*)
over sands scattering like exhaust-blown diamonds to the

bright blue piece, the cool baptism.

FLOATING WORLD

It must be the pink light
that begins in spring
that makes the man and woman
standing in front of a restaurant
gazing at the menu
want to delay—
a reluctance to become
“party of two table six”
or have the evening dwindle
to a scribble in a filofax
when only an hour ago
the light through the blinds
sparkled on their backs

and she sat naked in his naked lap
and they traded breaths.
Their rocking pushed from her the words
I'm leaving my body
and she did, she floated
up to the ceiling
and looked at them tenderly,
two frail animal bodies,
one smooth, one furry.
When they collapsed on the bed,
she cried and he could have.
And it was perfect and still not quite.
Did she really . . . Is he as much as I?
Even then, a niggle of sadness.
Wanting is what we do
even when we're that close.

Up on 23rd Street it's
the pink light that makes Nicky
want to do something crazy,
bust open these four walls
that can't hold him, he could float
right out of his room
and mambo with the sun.
The hand-me-down

chairs from his mother's house,
upholstered in nubbly hospital green—
what a joke.
They have nothing to do with
the knockout brown eyes in the shaving mirror
that know just how to seduce the glass.
Anyone'd be lucky . . .

But his exuberance fizzles.
How, how anyway?
He sits at his metal desk and tinkers
with the personal ad he doesn't dare place:
*White male seeks white female
or other caring person, anyone
who likes wearing bandages
or casts and walking with crutches
and has done this kind of pretending
since childhood.*
When he's finished he lies on the cot
and cries, *I just want I just want I just want . . .*

The pink light is fading, like Nicky's nerve.
A small woman walks home across the bridge
wrapped in a scarf,
wearing sunglasses in the half-gloom.
She can't stand the naked glances
skittering like pinballs,
then colliding with hers.

How she despises them.
How she longs to be one of them,
bartering so frankly in desire.
That pink light—
it's like a postcard from a spiteful friend—
*Isn't it beautiful, don't you
wish you were here?*
Allergies make her throat tighten.
She pulls her scarf around her nose and chin
and sets her mind to getting home,
one foot on concrete floating in air,
then the next, the next.
The light is all but gone anyhow.

Except when the sun touches the river
there's a last embrous glow.
And then tomorrow.
Wanting is what we do and will do.
When the sun dives in
and the pink light shines
the city swells with one cry—it's Nicky's:
Hey, Dangerous, where did you go?

ESTEBAN BONILLA

ROUND STATION

the great rounds
of roads lead
to their own station
where furnaces blast
at night, while all
those sleep and the
wool covers shrink. as
they twist and turn
and on eves of holidays
they lie stranded near
open towers, and there, empty
herds of men shout foul
words for ears to listen
so that the waiting bustle
startles, the acute shuffler
and a man, of an empty swallow,
gulps the world,
shouts into a shallow
vessel, collapses on chiseled
stones, and there, he not bound
by a life, but of a death,
reads his name
and the wood hard and stained
breaks at the hands
of workers.

CONRAD WELLS

THE MARVELOUS

It started with a giant poster of
Circus Vargus. The lamppost then starts its
own story in that seeing it we see

another pattern, the brown leaves at the
base of a sycamore, for instance, is
one way of calling you at three in the

morning. That's why I had the French doors replaced
in the guestroom the other one whistles while
sliding said folder from the briefcase or

knocking gently into a floor lamp with
the idea that there is still time to put all
this behind us. So it is will more like

a ripe apple, the smell of the stockyards
versus his steamed-up glasses. Asked to change
rooms, she moved one or two bags and leaves the

rest till morning certain that what was wanted
will still be here, pressed against your thigh.

POSSIBLE BRICKS

Somehow it is still
Strange that what appeals most
To us is some of the same, and
This happens in April.

We knew
Lilly could not be trusted
To care for that child
Yet we stood by,
Not as indifferent to some
Shades as to others, ironically eating

The fruit smoothie with a spoon.
It occurs to all of them to
Wander, as if able to escape from
Our own cobalt selves.
Dorothy's little dance
Appears to him as a hawk might

A cabbage, what the
Gooder King wouldn't do.
But haven't we, in just
The way we now wear our glengarries
Slid to the right like giribaldies,
Come far enough not to trust
That things will work out

So that as we pick
Through the double knit
Scarves at Woolworth's, beige-green
Or blue-brown, at least John
Has a chance to make something of
His life the way a column
Might become

A monolith inside a simple
Sentence on the blackboard.
So does the way whatever shining
In the silt at the
Bottom of a brook
Holds our attention.

And afterwards she is quiet about
What happens in that small town
We can't help but yawn into
The face of.
Its life in particular
Is precious to us, its fur warm and

Soft. She realized
That even as we wanted to
Begin one recalls
The Flying Leathernecks or
Simple math facts,
Before finding
A place to stop.

HOTEL ADOLPHO

for Beth Ash

He opens the book and, in turn, was not
about to forget it. The letter Kay'd
started to think about come or somebody
embellished by them, neither of which could be
termed female. But to me they were as different then
as now, I do not understand who rejected
every plea, one moment ashamed and frightened,

reckless and optimistic the next.
She wooed him with the fact that the only
objects were her sisters are part of some
underground, unbalanced, possibly brainwashed.
As if through his phone she considered the distance,
their role already set down for them
this article concluded with our

difficulties drifted on, reduced
by the ills it told of through just discovered
journals, one among many who have
never accepted this or that part of it.
They found they started being ground into
anonymity as nobody invents in
a relaxed flow about what a lamb is

versus something else. But many of us
ended with each other further along
I saw Ruth in the john about
to be sweet-talked like a picnic caking
her memory. To jerk out of range of
the past was the past granting that he had known
her mother, there is no one place where

everything branches toward whom she was
talking about how the reader should experience,
quietly, crossing the lake into the pattern
with fruit rotting into monstrous peace
through cognition. It was supposed to be
a translation will be useless, he spoke
softly yet confidently, arching her

eyebrow or left arm, lips parched or with a kind
of serum derived from the aforementioned leaves.
The trouble, then, is dimmest where one images
an outdated catalogue resting on
a stool of some deserted post the contest
rules by the end of the month a number of them
were convinced that I was her equal.

RANDALL D. MARSHALL

STRING OF PEARLS

On the beach my thoughts are like the slow blades of a fan.

Neckties were invented to protect the head from the body.

Peace should be served with meat and potatoes.

The saxophone is a sex toy.

After death, the portions are smaller.

Gargoyles deserve more respect.

The *non sequitur* is a room with two open doors.

Every poet needs a day job.

The blue sublime recedes with age.

Dogs often look better in sunglasses.

Fucking amazes past reckoning.

People look smaller when they're shopping.

A good book is a beautiful view from someone else's window.

Television is America dreaming.

Mourning becomes you, like an arc of wisteria from an empty balcony.

The smaller your world is, the simpler its mysteries.

Pull me down to the heart of you.

Nobody talks about the moon anymore.

FIRST VISIT TO THE SHAMAN

You waited your entire life
for the ceremony to begin

The tips of many small sacred instruments
glow in the fire

Someone's hands gently are pressing
precious stones into the warm clay
of your back & down into your shadows

Leaving a careful trail of hot ashes
along the silk rope of the spine

You pull invisibly into the air
but the rope twists tight
tethered as it is in the groin

Then swift fingers pluck from the fibers
a handful of fertile seeds
Drop them in the embers

You are falling

& like it

*

You awaken to the clatter of a banquet
Music wavers in the heat of torchlight
The guests make a new place at the table

where someone whispers

*Those seeds opened like leaves of peppermint
ripe in the warm of my mouth*

PATSY DULAK

**WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE LEARNED
IN CHARM SCHOOL HAD YOUR
PARENTS LOVED YOU ENOUGH
TO SEND YOU**

or HOW YOU CAME TO BE SUCH A TRAMP

walk into a room
and the punch bowl lights up
your face
 to a sparkle not an inferno
 enough to numb your senses

your dress melts into the decor
of the attitudes
festooning your company
(only smoke cigarettes if they
 match your outfit)
your lips
 expertly glossed
 a touch of color on your cheeks
part to a wistful smile
ubiquitous
 no matter the topic
and you laugh when he laughs
 because then
 and only then
do you know it's funny

a guffaw,
sister,
is for those who prefer camping
to the Waldorf Astoria
beer and bowling
to tea and painted nails

a long, hearty laugh
will only smear your make-up
and spur visions
of back-seat necking
no indeed,
sister,
the laugh to laugh
is that of a giggle
a twelve-year-old tremble
with womanly depth and brevity
draw your hand to your mouth
bat your eyes
look down
and visions of diamonds and progeny
will dance in his head

 speak expertly
 when asked
about sewing
 nutrition
 Day Lilies
 the Heimlich Maneuver for infants
 the fear of God
 the fear of electronics and
 tightly sealed jars
 the fear of ERA
 because wouldn't that mean
 you could be drafted?
 you cringe at the thought
 of your stilleto sinking
 into the mud of the fox-hole
 and how long would it take for
 your *McCall's* to reach
 the Persian Gulf?

black silk legs
crossed at the knee
foot tapping time
with wild drums
cleavage bursting from

tight-bodied dress
you see her
toss her head back in
ravenous rapture
as she strokes the thigh
of her date
you see her
elbows on the table and
red
red
lips
and you think to yourself
how it could have been you

DANA CURTIS

EFFIGY

Because tangled,
the perfect in light as
I didn't expect you
or put the fire
in your hand to be
the X over the building,
an eyeless woman, a horse
rolling over and the terror
of the onyx we ate. What
then? You pulled the strands
of skin into pictures,
knives and the evening
looses too many
festivities, too loud music
in a syrup of desert,
ocean denied and my eyes
in the moonlight, the room
we suspected.

LIMBED CORRIDOR

Down and my dog becomes a parrot,
bites at my ear: useless,
unspeaking, a washed out black and white
who sits then wheels around my head
chained to my hair.

Glass breaks—
flames flick through the walls.

The tunnel opens
a mouth and I raise pliers
to my mouth, pull out eggs
when the tunnel constricts
the hallway in my house with
flowered wallpaper, potted plants—
greens and reds faded vibrant
sending out dull tendrils.

The window at the end looks at the fire
and I stand there eyes closed.

The parrot a dog
who spreads its wings and leaps,
burns and has a new animal.

My skin opens and constricts then
I writhe, slough it off and
a new body, brighter than the old,
lit to find its way.

MELISSA KLIESCH

JUST RAMBLING

At this particular time,
my favorite word is
bathwater.
The image,
recalling days when I was three or four
entertained by Mr. Bubble—bubbling.
Almost past my chin
as I loaded suds in my hands
and propped them on my head,
pretending it was a wig.
Just the way it rolls off the tongue,
bathwater.
Reminding me of a slinky
falling
down the stairs,
or the sound made
when running a thumb
across the teeth of a comb
from end to end.
Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La-Ti-Do.
Going up the scale,
over and over,
higher and higher.
A light spiny tone,
producing chills one minute
and
doing absolutely nothing the next.

SUSAN DICKMAN

PLANTING

This is the hoe, this is the rubble &
dirt-filled yard, soil turning over to face the sun
whose winking eye burns the grass yellow.

This is the spade and claw
burrowing holes to bury the roots of sea grass,
ice plant, their long white fingers

reaching beneath the topsoil. What doesn't die
will thrive on salt carried in from the ocean
in the early hours when the sky separates

from earth. This is the clean day, early spring,
new season, soil rotting with beginning. This is the start
of separation: water from land, earth from sky,

seed from chaff. The memories of cells
in their first division. This is the day
burning off its soft outer shell.
And the blue sky falling down.

WITH CHILD

He sleeps as if still in me, the legs curled
like wire against his chest, feet crossed at the ankles,
arms at his ears, palms open as if to ask, *now what?*

And still I recognize the seed of him, an image
dangling in my mind; how he came to be,
how it was him and no other

pulsing in the wet darkness. Design so lush
and cruel: what comes of the couple
slabbed against the bed,
or making love, or fucking

in their sleep. The straight animal
dumbness in the dark.

TIDEPOOL

Shade stark and quiet, the noise
of water breathing. In between the rocks that lie
cleft and broken, worn down by the sand's

sharp edges, light moves in
where the wind once was. Purple spikes,
grey-green anemones. Starlight collects

in saltwater where people come to see
their own faces. Above the roughened ledge
of the world, the ocean sways,

buffing the ragged limestone. The faces
come back light. We are in it now.
The rest is out there, waiting.

Susan Wheeler
Elaine Equi
Jeffery Conway
Diane di Prima
Amy Gerstler
Simon Perchik
Sandie Stravis
Susen James
Jessica Cohen
Kathleen Ossip
Patsy Dulak
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