

Spring 4-1-1999

Columbia Poetry Review

Columbia College Chicago

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Columbia Poetry Review

Columbia College Chicago

Spring 1999

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Contents

Barbara Guest	Unusual Figures	1
	Mahogany Daylight	2
Kerri Sonnenberg	Inventory	3
	Landscape #4	5
	Om	6
Jeffrey Little	Stormin' the Heavens w/Bat Hooks, Hal	8
	Tomorrow's Stone Age Marimbas Today	9
Deborah Landau	Billboards and Other Signs of Loss	10
Steven Lapinsky	Witch Hazel	12
	The Return of the Paper Wasp	13
Donald Revell	Just Having Owed	14
	A Bird Sick on Pavement	15
Craig Gore	Oyster Roast	16
	American by Birth, Southern by the Grace of God	19
Gregory Golden	Slain Men and the Zen of Killing	21
	Repercussions of Bella	22
	Vials of the Revolution	23
Gary Anderson	Stealing Poems	25
Jane Miller	The Sea is Light in a Passing Shower	27
	School	29
Steven Sherrill	Poem for Maxwell Street	32
	Real Estate	33
Ivan Ramos	Black Bean Soup	34
Jim Elledge	Two Epistles from Orion	35
Nikki M. Pill	(Isn't)	37
	(Margins. A Life Story.)	38
Matthew Heinze	The Buffet	39
	Electromagnetism and Its Effect on the Brain	40
	VS.	41
Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum	Dear GR	42
Cheryl Siler	Airport Road	44
	Such Low Men	45
	Reverse Pangea	46
Roger W. Hecht	& What Exactly is Beyond My Sight?	48
	Sometimes We Worry	49
Barbara Campbell	The Tyranny of Three	50
Raphael John Buckles	Whirligig	51
Cin Salach	Evolution	52
Mary Kasimor	Spring Equinox	53
Dean Brink	Fish Folds	54
Paul Hoover	The Tower	55
Ryan Philip Kulefsky	If Dandelions Bent Objectively	57
	Don't Be a Slave to Debt	59
	First Seven Days of December	61
David M. Sheridan	Grammarless and Nude	64

Greg Purcell	To My Beloved Self These Lines are Dedicated	66
	A Claim for the Cold War	67
Jenni Grutzmacher	Lingering in Virgo	69
	June	70
	Eggshells	71
Connie Deanovich	The Spotted Moon #10	72
Sarah Schuetze	Gypsum	75
Ron Koertge	Literal City	76
	Miss American Poetry	77
Philip Kobylarz	Boreal	78
Stephanie Dean	While the Man Sitting Next to the Pole	80
Harryette Mullen	Wipe That Simile Off Your Aphasia	81
Sharon Darrow	from <i>What She Wore</i> I. White Gauze Gown	82
	IV. Raspberry Tank Top	83
Matthew Roth	Centrally Located	84
Steven Teref	Water from Hands	85
Elizabeth Weaver	Raphe, Between	86
April Sheridan	Migration Gate	88
	[Delay Considered Effects]	90
Natalie Orr	Oh, Sarcophagus	92
	Swim like a Swan	93
Greggory Cullen Wagner	Of Distance	94
Katherine Solomon	Two Dreams for the Great Aunt	95
David DiGangi	Lucid Dream #24	96
	Like Pharaoh's Pillow	97
Gary Head	Slain	98
W. B. Keckler	Shopping with Orpheus	100
Robert Vivian	History of Light	101
Bernadette Gieser	Carnal Fig	102
Alan Fisher	Rain is Human	103
Curtis L. Crisler	Jay B. Stands in the Mirror	104
Josephina Gasca	Hard Science	106
Christine Sneed	Fifteen Hundred Clowns in One Room	107
Michael McColl	Heavy Equipment	108

Columbia Poetry Review

BARBARA GUEST

UNUSUAL FIGURES

A person stands in the doorway. Someone
else goes to greet him.

They establish a calendar of meetings,
apricot color.

Once they arrived together
in a cab
of electricity,

cool heat, desert air.

The author attaches herself
to those figures
peculiar to her asking.

They are needed by the pageant of creativity!

The usual height and
dots of activeness.

Is it from the basket shrub?

*Lightness of feet,
circle of grey, of green overlap.
What language
do they speak?*

MAHOGANY DAYLIGHT

Morning,

morning

fills in the edge of the rose,

mahogany daylight early
daylight.

A large man and woman (pass
under the window),
dressed in envelope shades.

They dwell in letter boxes
of our town.

A poem,
(the shape of those boxes),
in a desk with a rose
indentation, *Mahogany Daylight*.

KERRI SONNENBERG

INVENTORY

in the name of
a five-year plan
and spurs

you left the known
for the less familiar.

in the course
a swollen neck
and now return.

three bathrooms later
a catheter at twenty four.

with letters and years
absence and terrain
you said and wrote

suffused with collapse
and a laugh, each call
imbued with departure
or circumference.

we are rinsed of nuance
as distance is made near
and lymph is confused.

itemized, we have
conversed over six states,
a plate of brownies
and Bukowski.

(an eyelash in my book)
but this is about
you, not me.

perhaps after tubes
and transience
you can begin
a continuum.

versed in broth and things
not adverse to swallowing

you call
and I say weather
but mean cancer.

LANDSCAPE #4

Because autumn
has elapsed
and the tape
refuses the leaf
pinned to a windowpane
in its former ochre
we allot this moment
for remedy.

Fluent or not
in the scent of snow
the anatomy of a drum
something stifles
as a cloak or cause.

Once a top-
heavy seeping,
color
a culmination
old age.

A sap unhinged
a pause mid-stair
a stir of calibration;
dust accrued
and bric-a-brac
some months more
potent than others
in rendering gray
almost complete.

Indoors with cookies
and misgivings,
we'll look to the yard
nude of its present tense.

OM

today began with a tangerine
it stopped time in its shambling
inserted fist into gut
and took off running

this citrus mantra
launched a rakish beckoning
all things hollered
holding their colors steadfast
vulnerable to questioning
and me
searching the meat and teeth
in every surface of thing

a run in with the real;
frayed day, shape
fragrance of doors
slamming . . .

but to be aware of all
things and their essential lunacy!
so much was taken on faith
until the tangerine!

this all comes upon me
as a barreling freight
I know it can not be
constant and maintained
and as I begin to wish it
the recognition of things
ignoring each other while
in utmost unity
is chased away and I
can not prevent the dissipating

now I see—
the dark and light
were only bluffing;
the stones white
and I . . .

a perceptiveness
of all skins shed
always before now
mislaid

An often grasping
broken clean
so to hell with
a plastic evergreen
the reliance upon ceilings—
all deceiving
until today
begun by
Tangerine.

JEFFREY LITTLE

STORMIN' THE HEAVENS W/BAT HOOKS, HAL

scientists postulate that ours is a wandering universe,
that beneath its baseboards a helix of duckpins & old
bowling shoes orbits around a pin monkey in a bluish

ampule of light. he's spinning out tales to a brownie
troop about string theory & the first fishes, about how
w/only an apple core studded w/twelve barn nails we

can remodulate that split second prior to the big bang
& make our passage on a free-floating moon, change
to a galvanized hex head screw & the outcome shifts

accordingly, it's an alchemy of bedouin intricacy i've
slaved over roosted on a stool that's ten centuries too
tall. a hybrid remains incalculable to the end, it acts

as a free agent in a formula based on traffic patterns
& the cotillions of atomic decay, swerves right when
the wooden boat takes note & soon melts into stride.

TOMORROW'S STONE AGE MARIMBAS TODAY

w/a stick i scratched out lines into the earth like i
was the late-night weatherman for the shoshone,
i pulled a piece of wind out of my hip pocket
& held it to the light—these were different times,
they called for different measures, the mountains
they were hooded w/a diaphanous teflon veneer
& the snows sizzled & strolled down in streams.

we closed our blinds to the blizzard of ice cream
trucks which plague the arroyos come the winter,
a system of grids scarified w/wind shears & odd
electric notations nesting w/in a system of grids,
fables were spoken but no one here remembered
to believe them, or when the bells would begin
their bells-about-town, tin hut & a hailstorm hit.

my lines evolved into fish bones of affiliations,
everything explained everything away—*the sky
turned white in the middle of the night* & moons
bobbled about pissing off the tides, i was wearing
a natty three-piece fugue state the better to view
the end by when the channels swelled w/the last
of the ochres ever to claim this canyon as home.

DEBORAH LANDAU

BILLBOARDS AND OTHER SIGNS OF LOSS

I

I'm going to have an accident
because the Calvin Klein underwear man

hangs over West Hollywood
cocky as a weather vane.

On public radio, an aging author
describes "the appalling distraction

of sexual attraction." And look:
lounging above Sunset Boulevard

huge as heaven,
his gaudy flesh.

II

Unlock my skirt. Unfasten belt and seat.
Skin unzipped, clothes, hair—

III

Mounted there,
bite-sized and shaggy-haired

I enlarge
against a backdrop of smog—

rigged
to his miracle

the erogenous buildings
in the late rise of heat.

IV

His hand never graces the back of my neck.

Strapped at the crosswalk, I'm unremarkable.
Last glance of passion, a man I'll never know

who stares and stares from the rented signboard
flashing his predictable come-ons.

Only sign of God: this rapturous man above the traffic
stupid with beauty, his own delirious power.

STEVEN LAPINSKY

WITCH HAZEL

She'd end up either successfully gray
or unhappy with a smoker's voice,
like the ones who dine alone in restaurants,
getting angry because the coffee isn't hot enough,
bitter to the point that she no longer had eyes
for anyone at all
because her boyfriend finally died and she could not be with me,
because I'd, too, be dead.
Using a cotton ball, she'd rub witch hazel over my face
when I visited her after work, bringing her soup
which she would re-heat in a small pot
on her gas stove, as we exercised on the mat she called a bed.

Only now do I think about it, after several sets of push-ups,
when the testosterone is wailing its way through the nadi
of my body like the wistful ghost of some ascetic wanting
back into the circle, and all sense is a blood-rush headache,
and I care about nothing except beating the hell
out of the world.

THE RETURN OF THE PAPER WASP

Every year at least one wasp
comes through my screenless window
to die with me before winter.
This year, I dodged him, flying over my head
as I carried a drink from the kitchen
to where I was writing
contemptuously to a girl
who'd rather end her life than be with me,
though we'd been easy with each other
in stiff cotton sheets
doing our own version of origami,
thinking of her like Honda thought about Ying Chan
in the Yukio Mishima novels.
He ended in the bowl of the ceiling lamp
above my bed, the warmth killing him,
a tightly crumpled bit of paper
before I switched off the light
turning in for the evening.

DONALD REVELL

JUST HAVING OWED

Just having owed

Regard to cross

These shears of snow

I am for all purposes

A walking tree

I'm sore

I move precautiously

Scoring a child-likeness

Subjecting dearest love to too-dear scrutiny

The snow stays good as new

Woods again

Make suitable windows

Simple squirrel

I see Eternity marked you before me

A BIRD SICK ON PAVEMENT

A bird sick on pavement

Begins tombs in Arcady

Fast jeep passing hollers

SUNFLOWER

Does he know me

Save a little of my time

Yes yes a little star

Up where I see you

Making a difference beginning

Tombs in Heaven too

I holler too

SUNFLOWER

The difference is

The bird gets better

CRAIG GORE

OYSTER ROAST

under our house on stilts
everyone showed
fishermen and their wives
surfer bums and their beach bunnies
drunks and their whores
bunch of bushels
hotpans full of
melted butter
and cocktail sauce
and those stubby little knives
they used to pry open the shells
tubs of beer with ice
and fifths being passed
from picnic table to picnic table
ones my father pieced together
from construction-site wood
I walked in between them
passing plates of cornbread
hush puppies
and lemons for tequila
everybody talked at once
and let the buzz hit 'em
women played with
my white hair
saying how cute I was
one lady was wearing a shirt
way too tight for her load
double D's staring out at me
men slurped down oysters
as they were hypnotized
by her movement
from side to side
as she laughed and
leaned over the table at me
"how old are you?" she asked
"ten" I said

she ran a leathered hand
over my smooth tanned skin
her eyes all bloodshot
face red with booze
she dipped an oyster in butter
sucked it down
juice ran down her chin
she wiped it away
stood up and said
“come here, I got somethin’ for you”
her husband was
sitting next to her
and just winked at me

followed her around back
behind our big toolshed
as the sun set
and the shadow of cedar
masked us from the crowd
she wrapped her arms around me
pulled my face into those breasts
flattened my features
“you know, my husband’s cheatin’ on me”
“I’m sorry” I told her
“not your fault honey”
and squeezed tighter
slid her hands down
my back lower until
I tried to wriggle away
but couldn’t
then her husband walked around
the corner of the shed
and I thought safety
but he just smiled
sipped on his beer
and walked back to the party
she said “don’t mind him”
as I pulled free with all my sinew
like a little rabbit
I ran up the dune next to our house
into the woods
low hanging pine
scratching my cheeks
dark like a cave
I ran through black dirt

til I felt far enough away
and dropped to the ground
laid on my stomach
and caught my breath
could barely hear
the party through the woods
everyone was laughing
I figured at me
then I heard my father
yelling my name
echoed off gnarled tree trunks
and I didn't care
just laid still
for so many hours
til every last voice
went dead

AMERICAN BY BIRTH, SOUTHERN BY THE GRACE OF GOD

walked in the trailer
looking for the dealer
he was sitting in a rocking chair
swaying just a little
in the dark
hard leather arms matching
the wall to wall antiques
some inherited
some stolen
wearing a ballcap that said
TRUCKING USA
long hair and beard
flowing out from the brim
saw a AK-47 propped up
by every window
asked him why he had so many
he grumbled "gettin' ready for tha race war."

passed his wife in the kitchen
hide tanned and weathered
making chicken
fried okra
and lemonade
a row of bourbon on the counter
two bibles on the table
she told me one was real
then smiled
said the other was carved out
with a .32 inside

backroom walls were nothing
but shotgun racks
and grayed pictures
of civil war dead-eyed ancestors
had a grenade launcher hanging
from the door by a nail
said "keep six thousand rounds under my waterbed"
then opened his dresser
pulled out a paperbag
full of garage sale pistols
revolvers and semi-autos
all brand name and well-oiled

I picked one out
a stainless steel nine millimeter
felt its weight like peace of mind
took out a wad of bills
peeled them off to him
he asked "so how's Chicago?"
"It's alright."
"Ever see Oprah?"
"No."
"Gotta lotta niggers?"
"Yeah."
"They got grits up there?"
"No."
"How bout sweet tea?"
"No, gotta use sweet n' low and mix it in with the ice cubes."
he sneered "aww, fuck that place."

walking me out
he offered supper
I declined
so he opened the door
said "don't forget where ya came from."
I nodded
stepped out on the rebel flag doormat
down rickety steps
dogs in the next lot
started barking
and choking themselves
tied to trees
with grocery-store rope
past a row of pick-ups
to my car
felt the unforgiving steel
tucked behind my belt
the 65 degree weather at Christmas
finding protection
in low country.

GREGORY GOLDEN

SLAIN MEN AND THE ZEN OF KILLING

In truth,
this is the story of kin made mad,
Chaos, and a blood-hungry ox:
The Evil Doctor Shao Chao Ho.

Ire was born
of sick gooey mass and form.
It oozed in acid bubbles
and begot
the spew-cub that would grow
into the enormous doctor Ho
et al.

Rapist Thrillers. Pedophile Playfuls.
Hate-Violence Lovelies. Jew-Killer Dearies.
You who sent our hearts aflutter
with rat breath beauty and tactical venom.
You who gave clarity to the otherwise foggy colloquialism
two-bit auction-bid mentality.
All Of You.
Shao Chao Ho.

Crime scene reenacted.
A police van steals away to trace his paths.
The door was left ajar. That's all.
As high as you were, you left no clues.
A body, your colleague, streams that crimson elixir
you were so jealous of
as he cools to Zen on the lawn.

The papers made unnecessary uninformed commentaries;
the neighbors witless quips and queries.
The second daughter avows vengeance and confusion.

When they took you into custody,
you swore slain men don't tell.
But now your spiritless conscience quails
in the wake of what your Chaos made.
Know this, plea-bargaining Ho—
Sometimes those who kill are next of kin.

REPERCUSSIONS OF BELLA

She was somewhat older than fourteen
When we thrust ourselves into her unexpected
Uninvited party crash wilders taking turns in unison

Strip to threadbare ravaging. In savagery we accused her
of what we were. Slut. Ape. Whorish lizardskin loincloth.

Call it what you will but I call it civil as long as she keeps her mouth
anything less than screaming. To this day she is still bleeding.
She never could take a joke. Take it like a man. We're coming
and we have no plans on leaving. She was at least fourteen,
but not quite ninety-two.

VIALS OF THE REVOLUTION

Sleep slips into
your husk to drown
an arousal of suffocation
in freefall
butterfly jitterishness
that vacuums you clean through
your mattress in a tidal
swirl of semiconscious slop
as you grasp a futile attempt
at denying the hangman
and listen to the radiator
scream its B-movie scream.

We remove you
only for a moment without
waking or disturbing the specimen
of humanity
or at least without
making it believe
that it lives
in anything less than a dreamworld
or a nightmare wonderland
of some long forgotten
flux encounter
that exists in the depths
of malfunctioning memory.

The table is hard
and coldfisted
and some part of this thing
must recognize the need
for evolution of experimentation
and realize the pain
of existence for the sake
of replacement
but still be ignorant
of the exactitude of the probe
it hosts
in this violent slumber.

Clay skin slits
open to reveal a potpourri
of throbbing anatomy
that is so primitive
and yet feigns complexity
in some self-important vanity
to insure a safety net
against dying of worthlessness
and forget the centuries
it denied itself
and everything it named
in its own name.

GARY ANDERSON

STEALING POEMS

I stole another book of poems
today from Barnes and Noble.
It's easy. I don't know why

more people don't do it.
Maybe they do. It's not
the kind of thing you go

online about. I just walk back
to the poetry section. No one
is ever there. I pick out three

or four little books based on
author, title, cover, or whatever,
and then I sit down on one of their

cozy couches and see
if I like any of them.
If I do, I swipe it.

Today I swiped Mary
Karr's *The Devil's Tour*
because I liked it.

I nonchalantly slipped it
into my backpack and
crammed the others onto a shelf

somewhere in the store.
I think it was in Games or
else Addiction & Recovery.

Sure, my fingerprints
are all over them,
and I would never deny that

I handled the Octavio Paz or
the Mona Van Duyn, but
they can't prove a thing

unless they search
my backpack, in which case
I'm in big trouble anyway.

JANE MILLER

THE SEA IS LIGHT IN A PASSING SHOWER

Sweetness makes us forget
the time we aren't gods.

Clang of iron
skillet and tin dishes.

It starts out dry in winter
and never rains or snows.

We go into town
for flour, sugar, and beans,

and for a book
we find the time

to read images and messages,
which see as we see burning

sands and mountains and Geronimo
bloodied by Buffalo Soldiers,

never knowing what hit,
like fragile corn by drought.

When men and women walk again
the springtime of the world,

climb the canyon, die
by poison and by firepower,

they awaken as someone else living
in Paradise with an empty cup.

From then until now,
the sea is light in a passing shower.

SCHOOL

An Hispanic gentleman familiar
with piñon in the adobe fireplace
shovels on soft coal
which pours acrid smoke
through the ventilators in the mirror-image
apartments of the evacuated
Los Alamos, New Mexico Ranch School,
straightening slowly. *Bueno.*
Kitty Oppenheimer's name is on a list
of wives waiting for her maid to arrive
by bus from the valley this weekday morning,
and is awake enough in her log and stone house
on a quiet road partly shielded
by shrubs and a small garden
to smell the regular disturbance again.

•

She and her husband haven't the time
to advise the janitor of his error,
or to enjoy the pine-covered promontory,
or the Rio Grande Valley, or hike the old trails
of the Valle Grande,
or even to gaze out beyond the fence and the military patrol
toward the Pajarito Plateau,
because they live in a magic place which vanishes
in the blowing dust of construction this summer,
and they can only retrieve it
by getting beyond the sun behind the Jemez skyline
along bad roads ten miles back
by hairpin turns and precipitous drops,
and that is impossible now. It is dawn
and a long day ahead, the nearest railroad
sixty miles away, and the many secluded
canyons and mesas host experiments

beyond the broad two-mile long mesa
which spits up the bus this morning.

Buenos Dias.

Here is pregnant Anna,
firm and big as a gourd.
Anna is using the money
for her family, who cannot believe
the price gringos will pay
so she can ride the bus into the country
a few hours a day to polish the laboratories,
resident quarters, and dining hall.
Anna has heard that Kitty's husband is lost
in a mountain snowdrift or in the desert.
She knows because everyone knows
he is searching for a secret
site three hundred miles south
in the desolate Jornada del Muerto, near Alamogordo,
where anyone goes who wants to
die for a day. *Dios Mio.*

Anna loves Kitty because she is fair
and Kitty loves Anna because she is dear.
They come from far away and meet
between the familiar and the unknown,
to which Kitty's husband gives the name
Trinity, from "Batter my heart, three-person'd God,"
a line little understood
and which might otherwise do some good,
muchas gracias.

We fly straight in at medium height
at rather low speed over the city
and drop one bomb with the energy
of fifteen thousand tons of TNT,
killing more than a hundred thousand people
and wounding at least a hundred thousand people.
We destroy the medium-sized city.
It is not a question of one bomb.
It is a question of ten, and then

one hundred, and then a thousand.
and then, maybe, one hundred thousand.
We know or, rather, do not know,
but think that it is not a question
of ten thousand tons
but of one hundred thousand
and then a million tons, or ten million,
and then, perhaps, of one hundred million.
When Grant, at Appomattox, looked beyond
the slaughter to nature and to time
he could tell Lee to let his troops keep
their horses because they would need them
for plowing in the early spring.
Oppenheimer himself drops by briefly
during the celebration at the school
on August 15th, 1945, after hostilities cease
of a sudden, as planned, after we drop
a plutonium bomb on Nagasaki
and a uranium bomb on Hiroshima,
only to find a level-headed young scientist
vomiting in the shrubs,
to whom he says, and who can in no way
emerge to consciousness to hear him
nor be able to entertain the instant of brilliance
required to recommend him to us
and to this place, much like the future,
in which the poor body is defeated
and the spirit transformed,
where all has been reclassified
and all are being
informed of our acts,
“The reaction has begun.”
Jesus Cristo.

STEVEN SHERRILL

POEM FOR MAXWELL STREET

I am in love again. With black boots, tongue
of splintered sticks and five scrolls of parchment.
Klezmer she sings, meaning *vessel*. *Vessel*
of the soul. In love.

In love, I am colonized by song—
from the belly of the goat, from bullrush.
Hammer and stop—Your sovereign tongue,
sheaves unbound, singing

everything I've ever wanted to say
in language I do not know.
In love with tectonic plates pitch and heave,
a quaking in this

holy land, my heart. Take from me all, all.
Leave nothing, save the ear. Anvil and drum.
Here I am, *goyim*, again in love
Klezmer she sings. Sings

tum bala-, tum bala-, tum balalaika
and I swoon. I want only this: to take
exile from flesh, to find refuge in bone.
Vessel of the soul.

I am in love again. With black boots, tongue
of cracking stones and salt. Pray for me—

REAL ESTATE

Something about the plaid La-Z-Boy sitting upright beside the expressway gives me pause. It's legitimacy, perhaps. I half expect to see an ottoman the next day. A lamp or TV tray. Before long a whole people checking, under Ethnicity on the application, Commuter.

The Indian boy is cute but his piss smells of curry. And besides, it's one of those things that appeals to me in theory only. As a concession I tell him about my motorcycle crash, how I didn't think of Jesus at all as I rolled over the hood of the Buick. But afterwards—

This I've heard and accept it as true: there are satellites orbiting the earth capable of seeing me, at the kitchen table, nick my finger and bleed all over the dish of cucumbers I'm peeling but have yet to salt. Our attempts at omniscience comfort me.

I spend my days among men who think esoteric is a fancy word, and struggle with my p's and q's. What I'm trying to say, all I'm trying to say boils down to geography: I see us as contiguous. Contiguous. Forgive us our trespasses, or don't. The rhetoric of real estate

weighs heavy on my days. Talk to me about fence lines and boundaries, about taxation and closing costs. The deed you hand me stinks of sulfur but I kiss you for it anyway.

IVAN RAMOS

BLACK BEAN SOUP

I like Carne Asada

Aquacate

Mole

Frijoles

I love black bean soup

I speak Spanish only at home

My mother calls me Maya

I don't mind . . .

I listen to rain

It reminds me of nothing

I have a tattoo of a sun on my left nipple

So does my dad

He says my ancestors were GODS

I can't hear him The T.V. is on

oh well . . .

my oldest

brother

died

when I was

born

my mother

says

I

was a

miracle

she always

c

r

ies I can't

Had a threesome

no big deal

Been in love once

Got a kid Don't know his name

I think I'm in love again

she's married

oh well.

JIM ELLEDGE

TWO EPISTLES FROM ORION

I

To a Planit Mostly Water & Its People To:

I ast & ast!

I ast you construct a musical Wepon from a tibitan prayer wand in form of a cross I drew this on a zeroxed Go-Houzah like I am writing on now I ast local, state, & federal Police do this 15 years ago & they concidered the miletary was the wrong agensy to construct a musical Wepon & format it. Instead, the local, state & federal Police closed there eyes for a man in New york to distribt & sell maryjuana & ilegal drugs when he made Cross'es in the form of a prayer wand A tibitan Priest showed me the Cross in the form of a tibitan prayer wand My 13 millyon year old frend that advices me continuously told me write this to you & plants to animals Inamate objects talk to me a lot It is secrets I tell you What I have said here is in Police files I tell them to My brotherInlaw who constructs & manages workmens welding Nucler submarines in Iowa was told by my father: the Navy & Coast-guard was the wrong agency to construct a musical Wepon My brotherInlaw was a Military Police Officer in Viet Nam & served the Navey both

He likes to box

II

To the Therd Planit from the Star (That Yella One):

Weap Shakers Eviry Were!

I can not pay no bills I am 80 years I own my house-land place to live In my house there is no tellephone NO-T-V No radio No tape player I am diverced Live alone need a mate I am \$ to death Ground Hogs peter me I vegetabl garden try to raise some potatos I try to get leaves pile them up Save my urine to pour over them Who cares people think they are too good for their dung excretments Our dijestivesystem takes all of the nitorgen out of food we eat cow manure got nitorgen in it to mke food plants tneder & jusicy Should be well roted I get manure as best I can Weeds grow big by (near) my leavespile Further away they are small & little In Africa one tribe eats meat & are big Distant-away another eats vegitbles & they are small & little bit This tell a lot about food I eat mostely vegitbles Milk butter some eggs cagelaid eggs cageraised chickians are no good turkeys needs lots of fresh air & to run lose to be good meet To do sweeps is a soure burden to me after 15 years I am empty of win No values or benefits to me from congame sweep stakes I feel they are just suckerbate for honest believers I drink no coffee no wiskey Also No tobacko No dope No bad word talk Pray for me I believe we are all together in Mortal earth plene Responsible for each other & Pray for me one another & reap our doings & Pray for me in death we all answer for adams falts

Som days I am lusaid

NIKKI M. PILL

(ISN'T)

comparing tongues or
damage. shallow

romantic bruises inside
ravenous whiles.

soul-sick water
locking explanations

into desperate meanings.
your embarrassment

that i lost
in the

pile of sliced
parrot wings.

promises spoken in
braille. nervous

dust. red in
your house.

old salt inside
a silence

your eyes will
never know.

(MARGINS. A LIFE STORY)

without those strands
evening would have been enough,
but the sizzle of strange lines
smudged into a face on the sofa made
windows stare longingly elsewhere.

the family sups.

silence makes its gags
and ardor folds later into
pockets of post-gloom.
somewhere. somewhere.

mirror, mirror medusa coils.
beneath that greyer logic
cells expand, pinken, speak
in sincere latin. nothing

blazes like dry sinew,
smote and quenched with a
hydrochloric voice, promised
and seen and refracted.

speak. speak. quicken
the valleys. between clay
and gristle, water and crone,
haunted music-boxes shut up.

MATTHEW HEINZE

THE BUFFET

Boredom
Era of futility
They huddle around
 your box
in disbelief
(a box of their own)
for you were only in
third grade

Dark clothing worn
solely in the case that
this might happen
sharp seams, new
shoe polish, gowns
like storm clouds,
hanging low to the
ground like fog
Black fog

A hymn and a sob
or two
Dinner at the White
Eagle
A toast in remembrance
in a room all to themselves
Bright walls,
clinking, the blur of
conversation
No one is good at it
not in these clothes
They've disabled
themselves in front
of mirrors

ELECTROMAGNETISM AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE BRAIN

Electricity in the brain
explains the light bulb
in the bubble over my
head

A good conductor is
rendered dizzy
within the duration
of a microwave
softening butter

Feeling the presence of
a supernatural power,
you turn and see nothing
but do hear voices that
in fact amount to
conversation

Gathering firewood
anticipate a fierce January
snowstorm
snow two feet high in some places
travel is impossible

Funny how it's July
you think
A snowstorm would be
highly unlikely, well,
perhaps in a natural state
However,
in a supernatural state,
it's quite likely

A toaster might fly
across the room and
crash against a wall

To you that may seem odd, but ah
the things that electromagnetism can do

Toasters are merely superficial

VS.

Spoken out of line
drawn down the
center of a well
lit room
Even the blind can
see
They understand the
red carpet treatment
and the unexpected
testicular exam
Yet everyone failed
to notice the last
page
Graded on a curve
above a steep slope,
no guardrail,
plenty of accidents
We just happened
upon another
happened to count
on the same passage
So one could say
“yes,” an accident,
coincidence, circumstance
Synonyms provide
a variation for
the next and
the accidents occur
at a more frequent
rate, however ignored
Road repair makes
for revenue
and complaint and
excuse
I need revenue of
my own
and who doesn’t
Who says they need
more than the next
More variations and
synonyms, forms
of currency and conversions
for all to understand
even for the mathematically
impaired,

‘cause they understand the
difference between on and
off, red and black
at least most of them
do
Things equal out and
I end up in the same
place
whether I start the
week in English or
Italian, a cave, or
a loft
at any point in the
fluctuation of my I.Q.
and regardless of
emotional states, Delaware
New York, Louisiana, Florida
or New Mexico,
I still don’t know
a way through
or my way around.

JEREMY ERIC TENENBAUM

DEAR GR

dear gr
etchen. hellos. i was
just now mentioning
to Pietyr of Left
Bank fame, you
know; it is 12:46 &

the play re
sumed with Lolita
in the role of Carl
Orf sans the uncome
ly goatee & it

is seven of march ninetee
n ninety-six is 12:47 or so
Europeans write; i am
so sorry i didn't call yr

dance di
tracted me, desdem
ona shrt of brth in blue tights & fal
setto applauds to thine own self. hellos. de
ar gretchen it is t
ime for a new style this

one is tight!
at the cuffs yr
mother agrees w
ith me & the last act of "
Carmen" but Pietyr

dear gretchen: pietyr dis
sents he says to thine o
wn self is a bit much Oh

the dress-ups! the autumn black ties bowing
over the varnisht parquee & fire-
flies wilde! on the hem & mown lawn, ja! an
ev'nin tea; it
is 12:57 the mail

will come at noon
or one
p.m., wearing a leather jerkin, &
the letter will read:

dear gretchen & dear not unkindly, vast, holy. hellos. i will be
at the Concessions where Milly of La Rue St. Jean sells cigarettes / bubble gums / tapioca
pies & she loves me! and I love her! we have
never met 'formal' but the wedding's in June Oh
spangled garland or bougainvillea, orchid, the padre presides
: will you, sincerely, the
aisle dance / with a skirt of blue orchids, your beautiful two-step fire-
fly thine-own-Self? dear

CHERYL SILER

AIRPORT ROAD

He over shot the Knights of Columbus, an ominous shot at the missus, the
rank of the spill was obnoxious,

the overshot

mid sizzle in his U-turn

splatter

why in god's name did he take it that fast

Carol's Hungarian meatballs, purported for the usual potluck cavalcade
where lunch the Saturday spindrain troubadour hooves, stang from the
comingware hotpadded between her sheer hosed ankles; third degree and no
stop to aloe by

at the claviform intersection outside Detroit like an uptight Windsor Knot,
their samsonknit trunk opened up alongside carnation peddlers; up to their
windowwell-ruddy-leafstrewn cheeks and into the dimpled places where
frogs fall in

and wait all day

saving up for one scalding leap of energy out

there was a time when he'd rescue them, or at least try to make up for things

"sorry honey," husband drives on, his good Thelonius attempt despite the
discrete witchworn stench in which he found himself a habitant; an
overboiled stuffed cabbage supplanted in a forestful where toad-licks mire
in paprika jetsam, acres and acres abed

and in their separate suspicions

they wonder if he burned her on purpose.

SUCH LOW MEN

A clothesline sheets an unimaginative wall—
throws a silhouetted loser over he who shuffles.

An unresponsive audience
needs to be let out
and the neighborhood is down and riddling carpets diamond red
in color and in shape, not heart.

A thud muffles high held cube clunk glasses
and in a weary wink of lids, there you have it,
opponents show a quartet of queens
besmirched by another
delivery guy again;
the kind of guy who needs to be taught
a thing or two about seeing
a guy about a horse.

These are inner people
so low and so main driven that they find
privacy only
by losing to their two-way mirrors.

They even lose embroidered
napkins to the floors
where to launder is to press
stains in further.

REVERSE PANGEA

I. Pangea

Whose wand waved centrifugal
at your water covered rock—
the one with the dormant
molecules of life.
Or did they wake on their own?

You'd been making it look easy
to restrain them under gas
but take a look at that spew—

it seems a liquid form of lava's piping
up through crevices
you didn't even know you had.

II. Poles

I drifted from the couch
and never looked back
and until now, my path
has seemed unfamiliar.

But isn't that the bottom
of my high-heeled boot?
and over there—
isn't that my ragged mitten?

And strange how I sense
after all these years
the presence of my favorite time of night—

a protocol curling
up beside sister Thebes.

III. Reverse Pangea

Maximum drift
reciprocates Hecate's
original island design.

The poor old crone's been molten
jigsaw puzzling
for six hundred million years.

I'd like to survive through the ages;
to circumambulate
her reworked shores—

to enjoy the organic
simplicity;

here is ocean,
here is land.

ROGER W. HECHT

& WHAT EXACTLY IS BEYOND MY SIGHT?

the poets today are dwelling a lot on how they mishandled their parents' death. at which my thoughts take a violent turn. my mother knew more than she ever told us. even as she gave away her books she bought more, which made the details misleading. now i've expanded my visual vocabulary. now she inhabits a watery place, in the muck & mud of the bay where we poured her without a bit of irony or ceremony & stayed drunk much of the rest of the week. i'm thinking of returning, of looking her up. i'm looking up. she watches from the window as we rebuild the backyard fence to her satisfaction around the remnants of her garden. that this is a metaphor will not occur to any of us until much later. first her hands were worried, then her hands were inconsolable, & later her hands waved like paddles i think to ward off the morning's death. & later still we pour her favorite scotch into the water where it mixes its sheen with oil in the hard atlantic sunlight. how insane, then, it must have sounded to her to hear me cry in the long distance over the death of a suicide friend while she was at that very minute dying & denying it. more specifically, that is the detail i missed.

SOMETIMES WE WORRY

the odds against one in six babies. & one in ten babies. one in two babies, especially if they're boys. against babies of mothers over thirty, of mothers & fathers whose mothers both caused long suffering, then suffered long deadly causes. against babies whose parents first smoked dope, then made an addiction in worry. smoke sifts in from the rooms below. birds shit in the attic. dust & asbestos cling to the air vents, to the ceiling of the basement. the floor boards' inconsistent grooves split. that indistinct howling: cats or kids? kids' faces on the faces of milk cartons, on TV, especially if they're statistics. or maybe they were born too early, then went away, then came back. when it's humid, like now, they congregate under the streetlights & tell cruel jokes generations old, genetically encoded, culturally scripted. ones about babies, dead like them. new graffiti down the street on someone else's fence. signals battle for our attention. no one notices the missing until one is reminded. last year the neighbors found small arms in the back of a truck. legs were under the house. headless shadows under the trees imagine the pieces coming together. sometimes misread, other times miscarried. we know the numbers lie, but still the future forms around them.

BARBARA CAMPBELL

THE TYRANNY OF THREE

Each morning my daughter finds herself in
the bedroom mirror. Poem, configure
our life together. Now, the house asleep, the city
asleep under gray rain and the willow's yellow

branches poem include a bearing wall, an aqueduct
and orange poppies pushing through the earth
Poem, ruin Eden, ruin Athens ruin the beautiful
cities, include the music of his face, the advent

of his face preserve Baltimore, where in
Westminster my love lies asleep. Call today faith,
the twenty-fifth beef tallow, call the seventh
lachrymosa, poem, a fig tree reflected

in a copper window. Decry the birth of Simon, all of May
is elemental, decry the birth of Peter the indwelled
fig tree, trunk and fruit indwelled with wasps
“the advent of his face” a crawling knot awash in tallow

In Bill Cass's painting *The Visitation* the four hundred
illuminated figures are missing; the girl who sways
and sings on the car's hood is missing and the kitchen
bathed asleep in light, the thaw we often spoke of

the rain beats missing myself myself myself
S says *in no uncertain terms*; C: *feel this*
Poem, quiet the mind hum and pulse my flesh
is punished your flesh wrung of tallow and paint

Poem set quick two seeds in the earth, each morning
my daughter becomes another figure, goes missing, poem
tally the four hundred and weep the birth of Peter

RAPHAEL JOHN BUCKLES

WHIRLIGIG

I work with this rich kid
always has some girl
the latest is an older woman
he lives in a high building
I think he has a lake view

he begins to talk some more
about getting laid or something
I tell him I'm going out
to get a gyros
in Sacha's neighborhood
there's a place
you can get a free sandwich
just for pronouncing it
correctly

on my walk
I pass
a makeshift cross
above a port-a-potty
may god
move your bowels
I scratch these words
into the blank
of an old parking receipt
with a pen
that had run out of ink
and watch a man
talk to himself
his cowboy boots
2 sizes
too big
plant foot slide
plant foot slide.

CIN SALACH

EVOLUTION

It's Thursday and someone's testing the new church bells
so every few minutes it's Sunday. God's in the air and
out of the blue, I'm moved to begin tracking my religion

in feathers—watch them float randomly down, land randomly
here. Looking up to witness their journey, I'm surprised how
far they've traveled in seven days. God's breath sending them

down, establishing faith and gravity. A noticeable pile has
collected at my feet. Proof we didn't crawl out of the ocean
in the beginning. In the beginning we just fell out of the sky,

squawking, flopping, wondering about the architecture of
nests, looking for the right building materials and something
to hold us all together. Something like skin. Or skin.

MARY KASIMOR

SPRING EQUINOX

the view is redundant wild flowers to sit on
 heavy-
handed as ink the results would astound you
and the nonsense of the questions
 grow lilacs
in the garden is the fool
 it should be enough
when the air is purple
 royalty disrupts the peasants
with gifts of thick black bread and thick-
 soled shoes
and the fields
are full of mud that fall off the earth
when the horse
 and air are silky and slow as desire
 of the blood stirs the fire moves quickly to the sun's
slow wit captivates the dancers
 oh yes
 it is a passage
 to another hidden place writes on the wall
to deadened wits where the joke dumb
 and thick
are the walls out of the cold on a winter's day
the yeast hesitates
 a fermentation of grapes
the lentils are light and counted separately

DEAN BRINK

FISH FOLDS

The salmon run turns
on a limb of the Pacific

remote missions trailing
great harvesting nets

sluicing sea spittle,
sonar battens down

pound for pound
blip for blip

national hatcheries spawn
stakes for lawmakers

to rush cutters
until it's in the numbers

for towns marked by tarred pilings
barnacled green gray freighters

to lay up docks
sealed in tetanus

let shore fall to tides
air sift through to fish

graceful in a slow count
coursing in locked arcs

metallic buoyant bodies.

PAUL HOOVER

THE TOWER

Between seeing and being,
the voiced object rises,

a make-believe project
that's barely even an object

in the strict rubric's silence,
an instrumental utopia

empirical as a hook.
We have risen senseless

where monuments mean:
a run-down curve of stone,

landscape as duration.
Glass contains the gaze

in perpendicular zones.
Stacked against a river,

the three functions of pleasure
are structural in nature,

since the act of watching
inside closed space

exaggerates mass, thickens
expectation with an edifice

and a question. One imagines
bells, but hearing is too far

in a slant of stairs that says:
antiquity is revelation. We

eat lunch. In the bordering
distance, mythology takes

its tour. What urban idyll
is this, with its tall strict

patterns sacred as a table?
The sign is in the hand,

panoramic in the head,
from which we see darkness

in the corners of each world.
At the south of being,

people stand like code
in the narrow history

of this infinity's rise.
The diligence of stone

is stern as the mind.
Wind is like an eye

striking the edge of things,
packing them in like candy,

to be themselves and god.
Island remains island.

Time is simple and flagrant.
Useless as desire, written

like a city, the tower is there.
Memory is the base

building toward a glance
and ending on a platform.

A simple infinite derrick
itinerant as the world.

RYAN PHILIP KULEFSKY

IF DANDELIONS BENT OBJECTIVELY: A LIVING ROOM ROMANCE

Daddy said
I'd been

a bad
girl.

In the
Eastern spring,

all fresh;
she cries

for money,
all night

for mommies
last forgot

to raise
and change

America. Sagging
temerity

for salmon.
Painted cuffs.

Undercutted corners
kosher kitchen

stew, sniff.
Young constructivists

debate "who
killed Trotsky?"

space, balance
precision.

Parallel the
hour is

baking lamentable
Russian waft.

Undeniable
neck bones

fronting inconstancy's
fireplace

Vermont, the
ugly waitress
dances.

(Trigger happy)
dissention.

The deaf
are magnanimous

with isolated
gesticulation.

she did
not answer

fantastically
quiet. Nocuous

politics.
Seven Hasidim,

tardy, dressing
for synagogue.

**DON'T BE A SLAVE TO DEBT:
AN UNAUTHORIZED STATE OF THE UNION**

We can
stand.

Therefore,
need

intuition.
This new

ink

for cocks—

(simply meaning
birds.) Gravel.

“Old age”

specifically

and still
growing

fingernails;
clear polish.

Un
obtrusive

language

seemingly unaware
but

minimal, negative

mumbling, davening,
charting.

Deathly.

Piffle.

In Friday's
sugar ice-cream

cones.

This is
about

losing,
carnation and

wool vest
breath pockets

or need.
Four

handkerchiefs.

Casting the
electric

of trees.

**FIRST SEVEN DAYS OF DECEMBER:
VARIATION ON A THEME BY YEATS**

DECEMBER 1

“When I have kids,”
says Mom, “they won’t
even be allowed
to play with guns.”

December is always
a bloody time.
The landscape gets older
and goes unnoticed;
the best performances
and best times under
one roof. Handsome Johnny,
who arrived 10 minutes
too late for the parade,
sits in his smoking corner;
now a grandpa with penumbras
in his journal. The war continues
on his pupils.

DECEMBER 2

Estelle has only one breast.
And because she was never famous,
falls asleep on Christmas.
She only tastes the coffee cake
and does all the laundry.

DECEMBER 3

Johnny eats his purple heart
for breakfast and smokes
another cigarette while Estelle,
a beautiful woman inside
what Grandma used to be,
curses the cancer in her toe.

Drinking decaf, unknowingly spills
on her retirement check.
Impassively, both are stupefied
by the brilliant laborings
of the day's down parking lot.

DECEMBER 4

A boy, much younger than Ryan,
fantasizes with dog tags
and a coat. Grandpa's left iris
has been stained green lead.
"My whole life has hung too long
upon a partial victory."
Johnny's medals are stashed
in a box.

DECEMBER 5

He ran track in high school
because he could not afford the sky—

DECEMBER 6

When Johnny caught his lip
on the outstretched fingers
that bound the elephant's cage,
poetry was invented for him
(March 4, 1942). He carved his face
in the sand a good twenty years
before man walked on the moon.

DECEMBER 7

Grandpa murdered fatalism
in the Normandy procession.
Today he was born. Estelle
doesn't sleep very well
because her insides have fallen
through and nothing is on television.
St. Louis has been tagged

with a gold star sailing A-B-A
for eternity. Bombs are made
everywhere there is meat, except
in Central Park where Johnny first
cracked the lens of his glasses
and Grandma rode the merry-go-round
holding strawberries.

DAVID M. SHERIDAN

GRAMMARLESS AND NUDE

Dear Lover: I think we
are at a new stage in our relationship,
that you can speak to me without
punctuation, loosen your
syntax and let your words stand exposed
to my gaze, grammarless and nude.
Your vulnerable meanings stand
before me in the earnestness
of fragmented sentences, their ink
pale from lack of sun, their letters
puckered from hiding behind the habitual garb
of subordinate clauses.

My eyes consume them tenderly, pausing
at the surprise of the rare typo, a touching
blemish that makes you somehow
beholden to me: I have purchased you
with my readerly forgiveness,
with my tolerance of your warty
misspellings, your rash of adverbial excess.
How I read you!

I naughtily articulate your
syllables, my tongue lingering
in the white spaces between your words, licking
your margins, wet
with correction fluid.

Don't edit yourself for me, my love.
Spare me not your awkward constructions,
the cellulite of verbosity. I want
you as messy as thought itself,
as raw as the splutters
of babes for whom language is new and weird
and full of danger. Your mistakes jump out
from the page like nipples, stiff
with their own boldness. I pinch them
between my lips and they leak
their milky signification into me,

filling me with meaning and sense, writing
me and maniacally revising me, as if I
were a poem you were composing—you,
a ruthless bard, some e. e. cummings
who has come to steal my capital letters
and mess with my syntax. I am
yours, lover, writer. Sentence me as you will.

GREG PURCELL

TO MY BELOVED SELF THESE LINES ARE DEDICATED

after Mayakovsky

I spent an evening with clothes on, hot as a blast furnace.
I watched the city grow weak and a pot of water boil.
I convinced myself of something that I could not defend,
& still grew handsome, handsomer, enviable as a clock.
Tick Tock I said & my jowls shook.

I took a great lover named The Magnificent who looked
just like me, acted like me, had that same casual paunch
& chiseled face, but who sprung cheap knives from her back
& made her pretty self bloody in bed in her twisting.
Cluk Cluk she said and wore a blond wig.

When I finally passed out my List of Philistines & found
that it included 5 billion names including my mother
& the pope all staring right at me & clearing their throats
of thick gobs of spit
I stared right back & laughed & laughed & laughed!
HO HO I LAUGHED! & sent them rioting back, back to the
age of Napoleon!

A CLAIM FOR THE COLD WAR; THE COLD WAR WAS A DISCOTHEQUE

It's over. So let's give my dream
Of the smoking plywood carnival
A bit of mental distance

Before we erect the plaque
And start in with the bake sales.
Between the man and his test site—

Between his mind
And the earth it razes—
The imaginary bomb

Comes as no surprise.
It stands up, shakes,
And cries behind the door

Like a crowbar. Tomorrow
We will dance in time
With the Cuban girl,

Though she is bored like us—
& into the back corner of the world
Which is a dancehall,

Which is also bored,
Humming along with the music
Of the stopwatch and the cane.

Did the world end to please me,
Switching on the light to show ribbons
Of simply ketchup at the sluice-gate?

I think it's a sham—
No real light starts as fresh air.
Then dubiously burns through the sky

Like a lockpick's magnesium charge,
Or a white plate of armor—
It was a false-bottomed bucket

Full of president's faces
Which spattered in a dance
And flushed the dancehall

With bibles and hatchets, ripe grapes
& weathercharts, where
A thumbtack places—what, the *bomb*?

A *picture* of the bomb? I am afraid
Of nothing. Industry concurs;
All faces are smiling & raised

High above the hands that raise them,
The southwest highway changes its name,
Ignores the sound of discourse

& the listening to the hum,
High of discourse, rattling
On the plume of billboards, whistling

Dumb, a song about warheads.
They are tonsils
Buried deep inside a throat

Humming the same song
Into the same lit floor
As the spotlight turns.

JENNI GRUTZMACHER

LINGERING IN VIRGO

nighted in Brussels—
darkened train car,
a girl with a gun and
an olive.

varnished, tepid
ideas of ambiguousness
in nudity,
without leaves.

still scattered
a mind as anxious as
glass,
morphic and feeble
unglued

wondering if skittish equals
boundary,
mobile equals frequency
and aptitude
(behind keys and master copies)
falls just short of
genius

JUNE

sixing in similitude;
like let's still do and (just for example)
a compass,
cubic, wavering
where are all the exotic birds? to summer flown
from your eyes bent to the wind
a squinting—

having traveled still this far
I am reminded of the motion of
God.

your fingers, never so Holy
as around the gear shift,
letting it out,
pulling it in,
sandy and boyish—
your mischievous face.

“they’ll always try stopping you”
as we gust past,
this insatiable dryness
air whipping back in dusted frozen
our being good as gone . . .

remember saving this one for your wallet.
that one moment,
tents half-pitched, lakeside
and between bony high school legs
(ruddy with knee-ness and socks)
a fabulous silver trout—
its dark eyes to the sky
and all its magnificence
just beyond our heads.

EGGSHELLS

finding this so hard like swooning—
if this were a room with a gun i'd feel even,
more inside that space
you've invaded
(and our little secret that it was upon my invitation)

so like a girl, being this slippery.
knowing the secret insides of exotic fruits
their pulps and heartbeats twirled
tinged, entangled in mesh
a guttural bathing
so,
please show us your gashes.

everything in water
sparse and surviving without
wings.
there is just this last idea that life is so fragile—
a moment of losing
a scalpel, pulling something aside
from out of me,
water
and breath.

CONNIE DEANOVICH

FROM *THE SPOTTED MOON*

10

her laugh and
his whistle are
an adequate indication

fat's place in
this civilization from
spoon to speech

long robes commemorate
the anniversary of
the monkey's death

the explorer returned
to her party
soaked by growth

she remembered to
tell them a
new vertical thought

it dawned on
her she wasn't
a con artist

and would never
be a cardiologist
or lady either

certain questions are
answered by rivers
passing through air

fluorescence has no
place in this
wilderness only moonshine

fluorescent sign at
a construction site
Is This Progress

a little boar
is like a
little rough dog

enough wheels and
an entire village
can roll away

on the tongue
lies the ability
to diffuse situations

sunny and thinking
that soon it
won't be sunny

always remember the
white silk pajamas
that began ambition

privilege in the
form of a
much larger cell

the white mouth
out in the
daytime like me

why did the
artist walk across
the rickety bridge

a form of
sensuality is asking
visually oriented questions

it's easy to
see the word
transparent right here

the man would
gnaw off his
own heavy stress

parting the leaves
is part of
the medicine's prescription

empathy mistaken for
inaction but really
the best response

once the garden
had green corn
now it's brown

there are many
happy upcoming moments
unless disease comes

my being calm
not to be
confused with perfection

to you tossed
a colorful spiral
filled with magic

SARAH SCHUETZE

GYPSUM

Bird caws calcium
causasoid. *Laso*.
Minerals aproned
and scarfed down heads,
soil spun mares.
Romany snake,
(hydrous ssssss).
Oh here we go
again, 4 times
again, plastered
harping satin spar—
Lindra. Trade
me *gazo*
too wet,
condensed with
evaporated water,
then hang me for walls
and dark skin,
vines full with
nylon thread
in the clean room
where the dead are laid out
(*de dur drom si te zav me*)
with mufflers and jacks
left out past dark
are hidden by scareder
fairer women
who've said
the broom cart
might getchya.

RON KOERTGE

LITERAL CITY

When I took the cat to be neutered
I had to take the analogy, too.

So now I'm mad. I might just go
straight from the vet's to Literal City

where I'd buy a car with no horses
under its hood and find a love who

was not like a rose. I'd just come
home at 5:00, watch a little rueful

TV, alcohol in moderation, then out
with the cat who reminds my

literal wife of no one with his
stealth, guile, and rapacity.

MISS AMERICAN POETRY

At the contest in Atlantic City, my poems
are surprised when a sestina isn't a nap
after lunch. And they're amazed that
blank verse is about anything at all.

Things even get sticky at the mixer. A tall
judge leers. "So you're free verse. I've heard
about you." He leans in. "I have a huge
thesaurus." Up in his room.

On the big day my poems know that World Peace
is the answer to every question, but in the talent
portion, it's hard to see their wisps of irony even
from the good seats. Clutching the Congeniality
Certificate, they fly home.

Waiting in the town square are the local
magazines—smoking, revving their engines,
combing their considerable hair.

PHILIP KOBYLARZ

BOREAL

All symbolism is silver.
Gray lashes of a peacock's
tail and the girl who stands
beside it. Lavender sash
and slight of hand
of her bracelet catching
for a moment the sun
and reflecting it, away.
Temptation and the stones
tossed around its plinth.
Lepered angels
inhabit caves of lime
and mineral falls under
the map's borders.
Broken cross worn
as a pendant by
the bonfire. Prayers
from the busy nuns
are getting stuck in
their headdresses. Steam
of their breath like rosaries
unstrung and dangle towards
incense or heaven. Autumn
at the convent. The clouds

are portents of snow. Coffins
in the mortuary ask only
for linings. The candle
waits by the window
for the fall of angels' down
with its good idea of a flame
sputtering—

STEPHANIE DEAN

WHILE THE MAN SITTING NEXT TO THE POLE MY LEFT HAND
HOLDS LOOKS AT ME BECAUSE HE HAS CAUGHT A WHIFF OF MY PERFUME —
AND LOCKS EYES ON MY LIPS
AND I PRETEND NOT TO NOTICE

If I had not had to stand
on the 7:00 train

I would have been reading
or
writing,

and,
comfortable,

I would not have had to look around to satisfy the boredom
in my eyes

I would have never seen the double pink
cinnamon of the sunset stretching above the
cityscape from which I'd just come

nor the faces of the sleeping

people

the blond lady in white
mouth open
deep shadows
half moons—
bags beneath her eyes

superimposed

on the sunset
as the smog stained
brown doors
closed.

HARRYETTE MULLEN

WIPE THAT SIMILE OFF YOUR APHASIA

as horses as for
as purple as we go
as heartbeat as if
as silverware as it were
as onion as I can
as cherries as feared
as combustion as want
as dog collar as expected
as oboes as anyone
as umbrella as catch can
as penmanship as it gets
as narcosis as could be
as hit parade as all that
as ice box as far as I know
as fax machine as one can imagine
as cyclones as hoped
as dictionary as you like
as shadow as promised
as drinking fountain as well
as grassfire as myself
as mirror as is
as never as this

SHARON DARROW

FROM *WHAT SHE WORE*

1. White Gauze Gown

The world is
semi-automatic,
a window,

burning, holding up
the sky. Parcels
lance the bloom,

these words. Believe
me, were I
walking past

I'd stop. Throw
matches to earth-
worms. Patterns

of snow, castilian
ruins, and a plain
black bag. Dance,

frozen lake—see
the old fish
woman, the exact

sliver taut
with meaning.
How deep

do reflections
splash the walls?
Courage and a tomato,

a dialectical
interpenetration.
See for yourself:

That's what matters
after all.
I confess,

like you,
I have one
very sore eye.

IV. Raspberry Tank Top

Nor losses,
nor increase,
but longing—

the world is
blind, chimes,
and sirens,

no holidays,
no masks.
The penchant

for darkness
and climbing
sheer will—

and last
of all
the pearly

wisdom of lace,
the web
hydrangeas

(only blue
ones) try
to break;

merciless, rose
at its height
pierces fire,

the wailing,
shivering press
of your own

time stretching
its neck out
and yawning.

MATTHEW ROTH

CENTRALLY LOCATED

Convenient how everything is more
or less two hours from here.
Yes, CementLand USA,
the world's largest ball of twine.
Yes, too, the island nation of Cuba,
where expensive cigar smoke cures
what ails you, and all day you hear
the *switch-switch* of machetes.

Heat then? Two hours.
And the cold glass of milk.
The six-foot rabbit
and the five-cent cup of joe.
Also your mother with a spatula,
or your mother's grave, tastefully festooned
with those ornaments you made
by melting plastic cups
full of colorful beads in the oven.

The oven too?
Oh, yes, the oven.

Even the electric squirrels
are close at hand, so close
you might begin to make promises
to God, if only he'll let you
hold one burning—trick fire in the net.

If only you owned reliable transportation
we could go there together.
If you could measure the day
and the hour with that line of starlings,
clinging like beads of rain
to the shiny, black telephone wire.

STEVEN TEREF

WATER FROM HANDS

the earth's
arthritic pirouettes
slow
in aimless theater

aura machines
in scroll burnout

static snow
over green
gravity

etymology of meat
where possibilities end

bravery descends by ankle

a body
between falling
rasputinously
dies

a flood inherent

a waking burn
in glass

girl gets out of bed grown up
boy checks his watch: 12 noon

ELIZABETH WEAVER

RAPHE, BETWEEN

It is unusual to find you here,
in the dishwater swamp where
a mermaid's slim fin body,

useless for curvature, hangs
in the shallows like a seedless
tadpole clementine—hybrid, green,

Granada-grown. It is strange
but not very strange. A life
surrounded by mirrors,

mirrors over and under, behind
the shoulder however you turned.
Aluminum sardine and concave

lens. The chain mail halo,
rhinestone spaghetti straps.
How blessed it is and sour to love most

when the flesh is sick, oneself exotic
in its brine at waking, scalloped in primitive
wool and linen, long sheets

and suede mules and missing
heels. If you ask for one straw,
why not ask for two

so you do and your rectangle
measure of night will
serve as the doormat

your feet have particularly
molded into—footprints
in the wet something. You forget

yourself, beyond the absolution of dust,
passing remainders on your rosary:
the prayers the list does not mention

and you do not say. Here,
in impostor galaxies, the saturnine
mist of your native ear,

what's a tooth without the meat,
what more a shadow than a cast
obstacle, receptacle of nothing.

APRIL SHERIDAN

MIGRATION GATE

Heat, passage,
the wrong place for forgetting.
Losing sense in sand
mind full of
a message to be written.
At the same time
the ground freezes next to a rock
two feathers in a hole.
Are you sitting there too?
Being written at the same time with paint
index icon courtship
simple systems for removal, the random book also closed
the numbers they arrive in become too full
 inside the cover
 everything passes the eyes everything
 without washing
Feeling the same twice in one place
remember the walls
for staring and later
the holes in them.

Where we begin we knock
but there were no signs or
we can't read them or
they had all been removed.
And that is how we felt about being failed.

I went wherever I wanted and found
contact control we had to wash them separately.

At the top of the stairs wind-huge
it's passing and soon safe to emerge.
A piece of nothing absent space
head in low clouds and opening now
not treasure but gift.

Once upon a time
being born was all you had to do
now names dissolve
and I hate to say lost, but now you fall down the steps
having a brain was all you had
and even that was shook because it never was loud enough
I had to tell them my secrets
I could laugh I said really I could.
contain convince how much is absent once you recognize it.

The way things lay always unmatched and painful
leaf upon leaf inside bag
This piece that you know how to lock up
even yourself walking
becoming more captive all the time when you find this thing you find
the one that swings open prefers stillness.

[DELAY CONSIDERED EFFECTS]

Delay considered effects
daylight between intervals

learning what lamp is
to that outside light

Sewn to the side of structure and measure
what are boundaries made of?

System of observation
to demonstrate tragic aim

The development did not lie in shortcomings
You forget two things

Lost, as much as, bound to distort facts.
The distinction is necessary

even in an arbitrary framework
or fictionalized history

journeys appear identical
with concern for memories reduced or

to justify possible outcomes
old things— years of dirt gathered

The simplicity of forgetting activates
the confrontation itself

The sequence of learning
does a “normal” circumstance arise?

Frames which make explanations
results of conditions

built in effectiveness
The time for opportunity

while a shift is made
ashes of character retain

in some detail—functions as
keeping a vault

to unlearn and remain unaware of.
I wish you would believe me.

Paralyzed or two rocks thrown in
amid this skeleton

*Bones, you know where they have been
in the bag. Wisely.*

stretched to allow for adjustments
if the element in conditioning modifies

deprivation following
a shift

Response in such situations?
Reflex or restrain

Too vague these songs confuse me
Same as your earlier complaint

In other words, an element redundant
Distinctions (of course) blurred.

NATALIE ORR

OH, SARCOPHAGUS

In September, there were a lot of ladybugs inside my bedroom. Three clung to the outside of the ceiling light filled with little dead bugs for at least thirteen days. It wasn't at all fun like being seven in the baby pool, rescuing the drowning ladybugs in clear plastic cups to watch them swim a while, until they'd split their dots apart revealing black wings and magically fly away. From this I learned that I would never actually fly and there was a limit to how many ladybugs could be comfortable in a cup.

What's angelic about the misanthrope is that he seems to listen to the most inanimate conversations. Unavoidably, he finds some meaning in their plight, despite their intellectual polarity.

The debate of fork or spoon for macaroni exists in only the immediate moment that the cheesy noodles touch the bowl or plate.

About every three months, there's a lot of dust gathered on the frame which forces me to again look at the picture of such a natural child who will never grow up.

The misanthrope sits in coach, and cannot help but realize due to the tight seating that the stewardesses seem to find interest two rows up in a baby who is neither speaking nor crying, but rather cooing quite wordlessly at the reading light.

Some enjoy riding on the Ferris wheel. The different perspectives as seen from all points of the circle can create new imagery, or rather imagination, to foster a healthier look on life once one's feet have touched the bastardized ground.

After waiting for twenty-five minutes, I decided that I looked run-of-the-mill and put on some more make-up before he arrived. I don't know why women care what old boyfriends think of their looks when they've already seen them in the morning.

Gargling, the misanthrope thinks how far he's come in the world. Though he is presently unemployed, he knows it won't be long before his genius finds a niche. It's all of the stupid people taking up the unemployment with whom he feels he would rather not be associated.

If all is fair in love and war why must books be read by those who forgive and forget.

SWIM LIKE A SWAN

Growing youthfulness every four minutes
she notices a hole
somewhere at the center
of the part
where she finds womanhood in significance and grace

all of her endowment admits that she has drowned
in this silly molasses

but touching her eye to the gene pool
she engineers no escape
if manmade shore equals epiphany

such a blouse and skirt of it all
is life for her

little help are her elders now
with their lesson's mold and golden ax

just a bee sting
peaking out of the colors like Easter egg dashes
which are sometimes worn to bed
and mostly in the summertime

GREGGORY CULLEN WAGNER

OF DISTANCE

after Don DeLillo

Is all that will be known of where we haven't been still
pasted in mud clay of elm and maple walls logs stacked
to the rafters the roof views a farther news

spoken when the axe bites to gather feed and fuel
beside a wagon with no wheels no river abandons the way why
would anyone stop here might it have been the dawn

sky with petticoats on incomplete without a suitor
for the new day a cantor for the new mass a procreator of hair
dressed in dirt vestments

whose idea was it to stand still in the revelation of light
no broader than two or three paces broader than ten or twelve paces
as broad and as wide as the number of paces required

for the rest of your life things will flash and die the elements conspire
against us what does the wind know of distance
the sun know of day the clouds know of shadows on rainy parades

of earthbound transparencies who waltz anyway what does it take
to pick up a rock toss it higher than mountains at that fool yellow moon
faraway nightlight of well furnished tombs the bully of wolfmen

who taunts little dog laughter truant dishes and runaway spoons
kitties and fiddles and bovine balloons who dented this imperfect circle
and called it a heart a slapshutter window

shattered apart by the impatient crave for more
seasons and psalms and thunder and calm blessings
JesusGodAlmighty where are your poor

bone jointed troubadours of blood woes song
who build busted branch second chance twilight teepee fires
content to watch planets which don't seem to move at all?

KATHERINE SOLOMON

TWO DREAMS FOR THE GREAT AUNT

Judy was telling me about the old Tati: how she liked to kick dogs.
How she tried to burn down her nephew's house. How she whuffed
when she laughed like a plugged trombone. So we didn't listen
to music—but we sprinkled the sauce with arpeggios
of sesame and clove. And as we talked the cookbook
that was just another nuisance
littering the kitchen counter caught on fire and fluttered
its white pages to the floor: bright notes
that smelled like pot roast, chocolate cake.

A little girl who'd come asking to borrow some garlic
stood in the open doorway while flames like awkward puppies
came tumbling
to greet her. We asked if her mother could spare some Parmesan cheese,
or a fire extinguisher, perhaps
a magnifying glass to read the ashes and the smudges on the tile.

But just then a woman in a plaid shirt with plastic pockets
full of bread dough patched over each breast jogged
in slow motion
outside the patio doors, kneading her chest with furious hands,
and calling over her shoulder: *unless you walk into the woods to see
what seeds make what sounds, what trees
have let loose their birds, how will you ever know
what calls to you?*

So we kicked the black tatters of flame
into the hall, burning
our feet on their bright edges. Then barking
and chirping, we danced. And we sang, how we sang: *Oh!*
What a lucky girl I am! Oh, what a lucky girl!

DAVID DIGANGI

LUCID DREAM #24

riding the back
of a splintering spine
you tuck the word
deep
inside your wicker basket
 dorothy
 scoliosis
even crooked seasons
stand erect
in the light of your falsetto

Oz whispers
garnish the word with ruby lullaby

and that word
cradles
autumn's syrupy nectar
 chicago's gauze
it vibrates
and stirs on the tongue

the damn thing carves its way into
lips
a juicy adjective
 I think
but crusted on the edges

in chicago,
word=colour

with
a roll
kick
thump
crash
of thelonious tone
the word
is muted into
december nevermind

athanasia . . .

righteous athanasia.

LIKE PHARAOH'S PILLOW
for pharoah sanders

his brass
so humble
it savors wind,
 kisses the tangy wet wood.

his saliva
so thin
it innovates africa,
 cradles the ears of cirrhosis.

his air
so righteous
it sighs gems,
 genuflects the torso of jazz.

his pillow
so god
it sleeps perpetual,
 wombs the heads of pharaohs.

GARY HEAD

SLAIN *for Bridget*

My heart enjoys
your little
sun—smile . . .

. . . we kissed
and then *moon-crashed*
like cold desert
lizards.

humping—
—silver and humping
hunched *over*
like crying
spoonbacks
pushing
ice cream and shadows
past
your lips.

. . . And three
blocks and a dozen
clouds Away . . .

Churchbells
are
daring to
mingle like spirals
of white - *lace*:

slashing
your bright
face
with
names for
places only I
know that
well.

knuckles
kneading
knuckles needing
on
lime spines and
clawing groin
and *rain* and *pollen*
make toys of our
hair—our lashes.

Should I love
you more
as my chin
chisels fear
from your
thighs?

I fall
clown-jealous
as your hair
cuts into
my *shining*
Breath.

We Will—
like mAD
siren fOxEs,

stain the *Great*
night with
our own
starry
infestation—
and then—
a kiss—
—*before*
we die.

W. B. KECKLER

SHOPPING WITH ORPHEUS

faces of collectibles
talking back

the initiate's mystical
layer of skin

may feel the singing animals'
absurd medicine first

Sheep already rich in starchy fantasy
may simply follow the bell's
(power of the dead)

flunking pow-wow
we feel extreme heat

for viewing the body
an animal that bears
impaired divinity

needs this river of pitch, apparently

where reflection ends
& the boat rocks,

tethered to singing copies

ROBERT VIVIAN

HISTORY OF LIGHT

The stone said, How were you cast out into the light,
the first day?

The branch said nothing. It teetered on the last echo
of wind.

The stone huddled into its corner, became round and perfect,
like a tiny basket of fishes.

The stone did not speak anymore,
did not even utter its surprise at the first fall of snow.

For millions of years it was like this until the stone
cracked into sand and the branch became a miracle of light.

(The slow hands of the clock fix their place in the cosmos,
and move on.)

The branch breaks all by itself.
In the middle of the branch is a light too small

for the birds to sing, and the light (The light)
is all there ever was, raying out into the darkness between death and music.

BERNADETTE GIESER

CARNAL FIG

pink pussy
shaved blue—
eyed raw nymphal
cat
cunt
Lolita spitting large
frothy saliva wads
out of windows
brown crescent-moon-
nipples
curved toward teeth
meat
palm
bulged
to
the
bulge
hair on cheek
ear pillow-gag
pig-grunt
door-slam
look up at me you
filthy
man
handling
me
bite
shoulder
bite
arm
bite
blood-smiles
two fold
I fold
enfold
woman of—

ALAN FISHER

RAIN IS HUMAN

—*Could we step out of the rain?*

—*Of course, we have been wet for days.*

he has pulled truth
like a shade
leaving dark rooms, cold
walls
and charcoal silence
talks a universal confession
milled in spent breath

—*I don't mind selfishness, it's just how selfishness appears.*

thumb meets temple
with melancholy
rub

—*I want to be an unsuccessful altruist.*

we step to storm
sober
aware
I've forgotten my
slicker in the
porcelain ping
of rain

CURTIS L. CRISLER

JAY B. STANDS IN THE MIRROR

(Having a Talk w/ Soul)

A time, once, then.
A time I repulsed, hated, my brown skin,
Uncle Charlie's afro,
My little sister, being so yellow
Banana-beige girl, so near white/
Accepted crossover.

A time, once
I hated history/ the smell of history's books—
Slaveships w/ overstuffed, crammed, African bodies
Bought/ stolen for profit. Lives crammed in couple of pages.
I hated white kids/ those private school types
That looked through me, something transparent/ glass.
I recoiled, became their nigger,
Outside of me/ away from myself.

There was a time, when,
I saw my mother for real, first time.
Her brown eyes, like mine. Me,
In her. I cried for some not there father
Like a bastard. God smiled, gave
Me missing puzzle pieces. Put
Me back right/ me back on track.

I apologized to my Uncle Charlie . . .
My brown lips kissed his dark lips.
I apologized to my little sister . . .
My brown lips kissed her yellow lips.
I apologized to my brown-eyed mother . . .
My brown lips kissed her brown lips.
I forgave me on a summer's Saturday night.

I got naked in a 60-watt bulb glow.
In mirror I manifested me,
Big lips, big eyes, nappy hair
On my brown framed body. I cried
I laughed. In me was
Uncle Charlie, my little sister, mama,
Those slaves crammed on couple of pages.
I kissed me/ tasted salt in cleansing tears.
I forgave me on a summer's Saturday night/
Wrote poem 'bout epiphany/ restoration/ renewal.
Broke God's commandment, killed nigger
fucking w/ new reflection
mirror un-leased to me.

JOSEPHINA GASCA

HARD SCIENCE

You asked me to devise the formula that would alter the results of the
experiment
In turn rendering the decahedron circular and reversing the negative sums to
absolute positives.

But as a result of the cosmic reactions of the interchange
All that had been soft and fluid for you
Petrified into the newest element on my periodic table.

CHRISTINE SNEED

FIFTEEN HUNDRED CLOWNS IN ONE ROOM

here hugely, widely, decidedly so
are men who have big shoes to fill—
what can you tell me about this good life
a reporter wants to know but the clown
doesn't take him seriously instead he says
I love the backwards upside-down e
you can find in the dictionary
I love the jump rope used to hold up
my pants because first it was a clothesline
I love that I can look around and see
a thousand different men who had potatoes
instead of peas with their lunch today
I love the vines in every overgrown
garden where a gangster has buried
his hoodlum gold
I love the sorrowful, little-dog face of
the famous vampire bat
no really says the reporter but the clown
is on a roll, he's clowning through the room,
squirting his flower into the face of every
smiling-frowning man he sees
Laugh it up! he yells to the crowd and
everyone knows for certain what he means

MICHAEL MCCOLL

HEAVY EQUIPMENT

Beautiful huge rusted iron weeds.
Red with flashes of blue and the weeds
as high as the steamshovel's little cabin,
our train passing.
I would like to build you in my tiny studio
and place you, myself, there in that field.
I salute you, I want to start you up.
Very modernist, I know, and I cried after seeing
all the happy children at the windows.
Broad luck clambered, jugular,
fast for that time of day.
A little hunk of chocolate fed to your salad dog,
immense in his sloppy affection.
Bellwether (stool pigeon) limousine
country boy legs of the rich lady.
All over now.
Said he knew too much
in his solar plexus
to be able to see stars.

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