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Columbia Poetry Review

Columbia College Chicago

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columbiapoetryreview

no. 24

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Columbia Poetry Review is published in the spring of each year by the English Department of Columbia College Chicago, 600 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60605.

SUBMISSIONS

Our reading period extends from August 1 to November 30. Please send up to 5 pages of poetry (one poem per page) during our reading period to the above address. We do not accept e-mail submissions. We respond by February. Please supply a SASE for reply only. Submissions will not be returned.

PURCHASE INFORMATION

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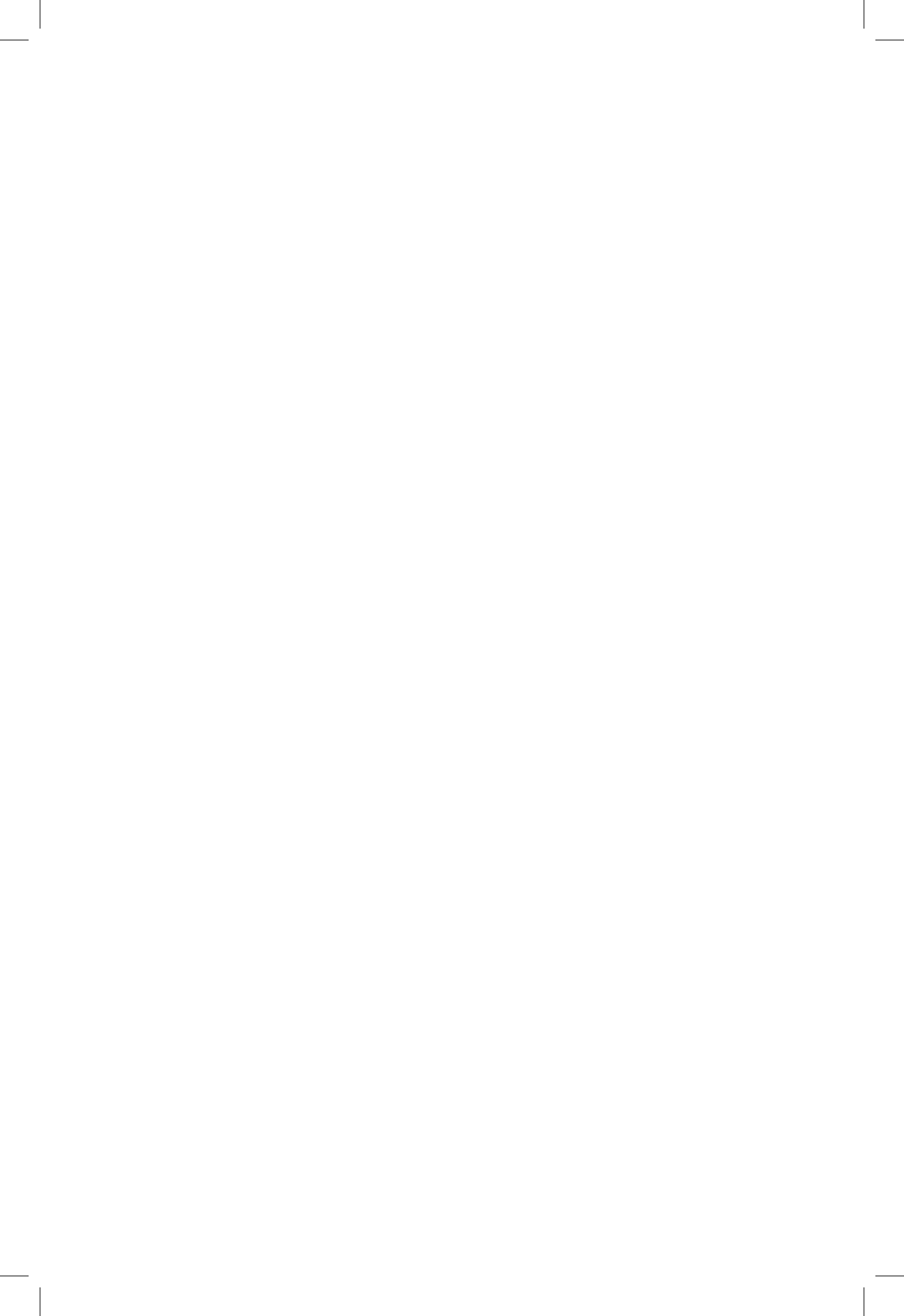
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Lighter in a Window

What I thought was someone's lighter
in a window across the courtyard

was lightning—just the beginning
of lightning

then the little girl's toys
flew across the kitchen

and it was like, forgive me,
death was hammering to get in

when the hailstorm rushed
upon us after it shut down

a televised football game
to the west of us

the breath of autumn's being
right on top of the roof

like a beast's breathing down
on the house—I felt

a kinship with the totally ignorant
and the fearful

a desire to run outside

What if I lost all those things

What if I lost all those things
Humor, wit, beauty
What if I lost it all
And there was nothing left of me
And what if I were just a corpse
And what if I were less than that
Would you still love me
Would you tunnel into the ground
Until the sun came out
So that you could have my body to hold
What if the sun were gone
Would you hold my body in the dead of night
Once he did
Once he did hold my body in the dead of night
If I forgot him then, will I forget him still
If I always loved him, will I love again
Dark night that is always calling
My body is thin paper to the air
We call conversation
Dark language
My body is dark red paper tonguing
The sun of the grave that I am in
Will you go tunneling through my grave
To find the setting sun
Will you go through my grave to get to another sun
One that is deep and blue
And fiery

Wild

Things are wild here
Everywhere around the green
Snakes, bobcats, and foxes
The purple flowers look wild
I am wild
My husband keeps me in his room so as not to upset the neighbors
The wildest thing about me is my arrogance
Which turns to anger
Over language
People put so much stock in wild language
I wander, an animal
Over hills
The civilized path, the orange sun
Do I dare mention God in this poem?
God is wild, and not human
And when people make God human
He stares at you through the eyes of a bear
And beats his terrible bearded chest
And guffaws into the stars
O the night, mysterious and purple
And the shining rocks
None of them are sins in their
Lack of humanity.
So why am I so horrible to look at,
With my wild hair
And my furry breast
And mouth

Apartment 608

I live in a building with tall ceilings
and at the end of the sixth floor
my neighbor plays piano in the mornings
and sometimes later, after the sun is eaten
by western lines of other buildings
and I picture him after work, loose tie
open collar, sticky cocktail on piano dash
and he could be someone,
one of those people who leave their shoes
at the door, toes at the pedals with black socks.
It's a three pedal piano, maybe an upright
but I want it a baby grand and I can feel
the notes sustain in my ribs the way
a keyboard never could.
He likes Stravinsky and I recognize this
between windows and if I ever turn
to him in the elevator
and/or if it was 1913 and/or we were in Paris,
sitting in the same row in the balcony
when the Rite of Spring riot crescendoed
we'd be on the same side, applauding
the misuse of the bassoon.

Once and Future Houseboy

Might have stranded you there
in the pumpkin dotted tillage of Wheatland or
the strawberry patch with your bum self sucking
every last drag off the cigarette you wore
like a piece of tacky jewelry piercing your upper lip.

But you are my little liebschen.
Refined as a packet of sugar I dump
into 8 ounces of coffee. I like it when you're sweet
enough to peel the gums away from my teeth.
I like when we're in misery together, accustomed
as we are to the sad café. Zip open that pouch of crystal.
Let the cloying begin, my fine friend.

Do houseboys have houseflies? Something spews
white maggots still warm on the chaise, some
lone peacock preens in the sideyard, shakes
its feathers loose all over the portico roof.
I'm not pointing fingers. I know what happens:
you're feeling blasé; you go to the convenience store.
Six days later, you're disentangling from Reno,
pawning the only portable device you have
(which might just be your booty) and hoping
the locks weren't changed while you were away.

I should be glad to be rid of such a profligate.
But you're my evening lark. Up ahead, I am lost:
Clouds smutching the drouthy stalks of corn.
My rake, unreliable as you are. Care for me awhile.

If I Persisted for Seven Lifetimes, I'd Spend Six of Them with You

but something in me would
desert you

the way I lie
awake and wait for the turbine

of your breathing
to whirl steady and deep

until in your sleep
I feel simple again

like myself
and reckless again

outside the road is the apparition
of a bridge deck suspended

by cones of light
from the lampposts

a drone of rotors and axles
semis about

the slow groan
of departure

but our two sniffers sit
in the sink

so a prowler come
purloining might picture you

glad and drinking beside me

our toothbrushes dally
and crowd each other daily

in a cup in the bathroom
so he might wonder

at our life as trajectory
pristine and decoded

and on hearing the warp
of a floorboard

the murmur of our bodies
stirring above him

he might think to drop
deftly out of a window

with a few relics to sell
or to barter

for airfare and a room
overlooking a square

so he might step out
of that room

onto his balcony
alone in a foreign light

and feel simple again

feel reckless and modern
and himself again

Body in a Phone Booth

The body in the phone booth

is a curious whodunit, is a theatric
in which grotesque death interrupts
and leaves the body in a mute
derangement, the crumpled corpse
caught broadcasting aspersion
or committing a clumsy espionage
now dropped like soiled laundry
in a glass hamper, so the dial tone hums
from the handset, but the body's ear
is switched off, its circuit disconnected,
and somewhere—Johannesburg
maybe or maybe Lima, Peru—
some handler or mistress fidgets
the night anticipating
the startle of a telephone bell.

A body in the phone booth

grants the booth a sense of perpetuity,
the body a temporary occupancy:
You stood provisional
under the permanent sky.
You were out of quarters,
the automatic voice
on the line reiterating,
*If you'd like to make a call,
please hang up . . .*
This expelled you into

frantic morning, your body
moving like a quick tourist
through a perpetual Chicago.
You were a word then,
the booth a mouth
you'd been uttered out of.

This body in that phone booth

is a longing for elsewhere,
for rough shrubs at the foot
of a hill in the rock-littered
and lidless night of the desert.
A phone booth is there,
is an adorable carnival
in its small fluorescence
beside a stygian freeway.
You'd step into it.
You'd stand there awhile.
You'd dial a number
you'd never call again.

That body in this phone booth

is a case of specific wanting
wherein I see your body
in a snap-button shirt, a skirt
the color of dull aluminum,
and want to be in cramped quarters

with you. *My body*
in your phone booth
is the invasive sense
of sex, smothering
and wet, how I impose on
and inhabit your cordoned
spaces, but *Your body*
in my phone booth is a song
of devotion in which I invite
your intrusions, surrender
the clicker, let you pick your side
of the bed, and concede
the last of the kettle corn.

Our bodies in a phone booth

is a diorama, is our place
in the narrative,
how we stood,
gripping receivers,
and spoke to one another
in glass shanties
the way the ancients
howled from trees
or murmured in mud huts,
set signal fires
and transmitted
their stark messages
in a grammar of smoke.

The body in a phone booth

is the antique metaphysic,
is the cloistered subject
apart from the objects.
In the museum of natural history,
Kate says, *Think of the self
like the body in a phone booth,*
so all afternoon I picture
myself in an encasement
circa February 1997,
my body in a black suit,
my mouth almost open,
my taupe coat dangling
like a dead cat from my hand.
I'm about to say something.
I look like an artifact,
precious and defeated.

Wren Anting

How small I am in the fly's eye
but many, many. How cool I am to the fire
but tasty, tasty. You lie in the dust
with your wings open and the ants clean you.
You stand under the waterfall and scream
all you wish to obliterate. This is my absolution,
my attendance policy. One book copied
by sloshed monks full of dragons.
A flask of tiger drool. Don't let
the avalanche come to rest
even if it requires life-support,
it will be too sad to bother with music.
Keats lived on Dean Street when in med school.
He held them down, he held them down
and mopped up afterward. The best death
is to be crushed by the color blue.
The best portrait is done with a feather.
To be hunted down by magnesium
and recruited for its strict flash is inevitable.
Charity is rain. At my shoulder and knee
I am ripping my membrane for elevation.
The stars keep leaning on me. I feed
the turtles cut-up pear to aid
my return from Hell.

Bad Wallpaper, Suburban Home

Every night it was the same.
The meat loaf was burnt
or it wasn't
or it wasn't meatloaf at all.
I imagined the salads
other mothers would have,
my father's socks
balled under the table,
my sister fingering
a pocket full of Hall's
drops. The crinkle
like sudden fire.

Hurricane Audrey

The morning after it hits, collapsed pine trees
block both sides of our street. My father says,
Think of them as gates and don't go farther.
We moved to the neighborhood a month ago. So far, no girls

have asked me to play. I gather fallen maple leaves,
soggy, some as large as my face, and stack them
like pages of a book. I read aloud to nobody
about Dorothy and her best friends in Oz.

From the street, I hear my mother rifling through our icebox,
searching for breakfast. *The iceman hasn't come all week,*
she groans, and we've lost ham loaf, butter, eggs.
I tie pine needles into a chain necklace.

Next door, a bald man and his wife eye torn floorboards
on their porch. *Could be worse,* he says,
Remember Connie? And Hazel?

Who are these girls? I long to ask, *Are they my age?*

from Dollyland

dreaming Dolly

Dolly dreams in me. Inside the dreamery Dolly dreams me cell by cell. I grow, as salt or ice, my gleg eye, dreg of tongue. Brainstars. Dazzle fat. Dolly fêtes my filamentary hide. This white Wound, this clipsome crotch, Dolly dreams in me. In me Dolly cuds the Beginning with an outlaw Dream, dreams in the white waste this rococo contagion. Kuru & kudzu. Hijack & copy. Carbuncly with dreams the body She renders. & when I emerge from this dreamish sac, when finally I wake, what cystic vision. What soft disease.

the Eye of Dolly

The great Eye opens & we enter. We enter the Eye of Dolly, bright hull in which we will glide into Sight. Hollow is the Eye of Dolly, a naced chamber, an echoic & empty Cell. *Hello*, I say, & the Eye opens the word into a sheath to encase me. *Show me*, I say, & the Eye turns the S into a snare. Deeper & deeper we glide into the darkling Eye. Deeper & deeper we enter the Dark where the glowworms lower their bright lures, where the auroras encrypt my Fancy in the Eye's high vault. There is no End to the Eye of Dolly. It hungers. Hunger is the Eye of Dolly & we feed it. We feed it ourselves. Deeper & deeper we glide into the darkling Eye. *Look at me*, *Dolly*, I say, & the Eye says, *Look at me*.

infecting Dolly

From my Terrible mouth it begins. From my blind mouth, open & open, falls the Fancy that infects. Set loose, in the body of Dolly, a vowel of awe or ask, & Fancy fibrillates. Burgeons & buds. Fleshy, these fibrils of my Fancy, & gray-white, they creep through the Eye. Through the Eye they canker & claim. Such viral festoonery! Such irresistible fray! Through the body of Dolly the fibrils furrow. Under my fingers I can feel them pulsating luxuriously, can feel them feed & fatten. Yet when I try to follow each fibril, parse its path, each winds back to me. Until the Eye is cocooned in Fancy, & I, in the center, its white pupil.

High School Drama

I like the gels: the reds, the blues—you could make it look like fire or snow.

In the scene in which I am dead, the other actress is lovingly touching me, lovingly touching me, because I am her dead sister and have not survived a prairie winter.

Broken dishes; flying geese; grandmother's flower garden; log cabin; crazy; double wedding ring.

The whole scene I don't say a word the whole scene.

The dresses hooked and eyed and hooked and eyed up our spines and necks.

None of our mothers were quilters; we had to make our own. The girls do not know how to sew; I am the only girl who knows how to sew.

A man is hit by a train. The man is my husband. In my monologue, I talk about laughing so hard.

I like the crazy the best.

We could only do period pieces, plays that were set in time periods not near or in the one in which we were living.

My husband is returned to me in so many pieces; my husband is returned to me in a whiskey barrel.

I am a woman whose husband has died; I am a dead girl.

Apparently, we are all so tired, because all night we were battling a prairie fire with bags of burlap.

The man at the general store sells calico. The woman doesn't have enough to buy. For the sales counter, we use an ugly old theatre block. I hate the theatre block; I want real furniture, real bolts of muslin, yards and yards that we can cut. The cash register is pretend.

The Last Williamsburg (This Was About Ten Years Ago)

There's the Domino Sugar sign and there's that and there's that and she's pointing out many things and I'm beginning to think that she's lovelier than I am and so for the rest of the weekend I'll be incredibly out of sorts and distracted, quiet, suspicious, and worse.

See: that whole side of that building is only held up by spindly planks.

On sidewalks, on roads, on lampposts, on walls, someone has spraypainted die yummy scum and yuppy go home. The yuppies ride bikes with baskets full of organic tomatoes and bakery bread.

At Pete's Candy Store, you don't get chips or fries; instead, you get about four or five really dry baby carrots, so dry they are white and have cracks and ridges on them. The prosciutto as hard as the bottom of a homeless man's foot.

I want to die by the time it's over.

Through these walks, he doesn't hold my hand; over there: Manhattan shines all orange in the sunlight, which is in the west and dying now.

The bridge some sort of shade of gray sky.

The coroner comes once.

The freight elevator takes us up to their warehouse apartment, where all the inhabitants have been busy all day going to the hardware store all day to buy two-by-fours or nails or sheeting or paint or whatever to make themselves little boxy rooms. They think this is so cool because they have all just gotten a degree in architecture from some state school on the west coast, and all of them want to design a building that is bigger and better than just these little rooms. All of them do this except for one loser dude who still doesn't have

walls for his room and who still sleeps on a blow-up mattress and everyone gossips that he's never around and just sleeps all day and no one knows where it is that he goes.

They complain that her hairdryer is too loud, wakes them all up in the morning. I mention this to her, and she gets very upset. I think her lipstick is too dark for her skin tone.

On the rooftop she's pointing out this and that again on the Manhattan skyline, but I feel as if she's only pointing things out to *him*.

The boy of the incredible shit; the boy of the hyacinth.

He warns me that Paul will snore very very loudly and all night I listen to Paul snore very very loudly and wonder how his little Asian girlfriend—littlier and Asianer than I am—can stand it.

He and I share a sleeping bag but don't touch never touch. All night: the beeping of a truck backing up backing up all night in the paper factory just below us.

In the morning, we eat pork buns: he tells me that Paul *made* these pork buns and I think wow he *makes* pork buns but really the pork buns were prepackaged and frozen; Paul just put them in the microwave for less than a minute.

He has just taken a massive shit in Paul's bathroom and the little Asian girl has gone in to pee and comes out running saying don't come here don't come here anymore because apparently he had taken a massive shit and didn't flush or else tried to flush and the massive shit didn't go all the way down.

The coroner comes twice.

I wonder how I can be in love with someone who takes massive shits and then doesn't care to see if it goes all the way down.

The pork bun was not enough, so we go to Diner, because that is where she said we should go; we are finally going to go alone; it's supposed to be the place to go so he and I go and he loses his wallet but really didn't really lose it because when we go back to Diner to try to find it it's just sitting there under the chair as if no one even bothered to see it as if no one even cared.

So many flowers in such little small vases.

The coroner comes once; the coroner comes twice.

See: there: the Twin Towers. As if: as if we didn't know.

I never learn why the trucks back up all night.

At PS.1, he and she like the same things because they are both architects and because I am a poet I'm excluded from all of that. They like the room that lets in fake sunlight.

I want to die by the time it's all over.

The coroner we later learn came for a suicide; the coroner came for an overdose.

A big guy punches him on the G train; never again will I ever take the G train, even later when I lived there in that city. He seems embarrassed; below his eye, a purple bruise budding like a hyacinth.

I want to die by the time it's all over. The bridge painted a certain shade of sky.

To Read on the Plane

I wanted to reach the sky.
I lifted my dress
to your closest friend.

Blame the upward thrill,
the revenge for which I had strived.

Please don't be too angry,
if you ever do return.
He was a weakened man,
and I was rather charming.

Elegy

—“... from the unknown demand new forms.”

Dad's text message:

-[text]- “A 2nd coma hpnd.”

Like an afternoon rain-shower, comas “hap(pe)n”:

unexpected thrusts from the wake

of a distant boat: text written

and erased

and written agin

(again*) to fix a mistake.

Dad didn't call once.

His voice

a [text box] and double-chime *beep. beep*:

-[text]- No, Pop-Pop, I couldn't hear his face

as thermal ground;

couldn't hear his tears

like un-chewed bread in his throat.

I only imagined

between pixels in the screen.

Dad didn't sleep.

Sailed somewhere between the in-between,
checked the mail in the mornings.

Beep. Beep.

—[text]— “They un-plugged the ventilator”

—You stayed like the stinger of a bee.

or alive— (I'm not sure what you were then—dead

And then, after a week,
the shock of normal breathing,
the eye-blink,

and your thumb, waving
 like a small flag
 taken by stolen breeze.

Beep. Beep.

–[text.]– “Pop-Pop gave me a thumbs-up!”

–What are you saying?

Try to explain to him why it happened:

“No scientific explanation,
 it may have been his goodbye.”

—and I’m still unsure
 what it means, now that you’ve
 officially ceased
 to breathe.)

–[text.]– Did you hear me read
 from The Book of Knowledge,
 did you see my earrings?

[Error: user unavailable.]

Watch suspension. Anticipate
a slot to open large enough.

Wait for valves
to close shut, press and ebb away
from the space of the living.

-[text]- You can't yet be the moth-powder smeared
beneath the trappings of my shoe sole,
I refuse your mouth as white chalk
streaked across blue gravel.

Aren't you still a shark suspended by taut metal wire?

Aren't you still surrounded by plates of diaphanous stained glass,
your teeth not yet strung from a necklace?

the sky an eye, closing.

the end was i saw snow on mountain peaks and then there were days the sun
felt like it could slice you open. i went to the movies with a jasmine smell.
i mean the jasmine smell was like my date. it
was “the other body.” the end was
i saw him again and could examine the features in his face for nuance;
read his mountains, so to speak. now the sky’s darkening, clouds fan purple and
his tell-it-like-it-is
style.
the end was “the other body.”
now the first time i saw snow on mountains like muscles.
now that i’m narrating
a memoir about his time. and features in his time. they looked like
muscles.

In the Held Universe of Caribou Antlers

Caribou step from their deep-wood winter
onto the barren plains like young enter the world:
startled by light after months of midnight.
The moss-lined dark was safe and what they sought.

Wolf packs den at the tree line.
The ice breaks up on rivers.
The great nations of mosquitoes rise.
Caribou stepping from the forest

carry a forest with them in their antlers.
They linger not long rutting to calving grounds.
They walk into the wind to prevent deer flies
from drinking the moisture of their eyes.

Their desire is not unlike yours—
you never lose it.
Whispered away, it fuels structures of unspoken longing,
essential, branched, bony, velveted.

The ancients imagined themselves as the tribe
in the held universe of caribou antlers.
In the hunter's magical coat,
the taut bow is the half moon in his hands,

the arrow, the sun's ray ready to leave it
at dangerous speeds.
We wished that hard as children.
Now, on the vast plains of our forgetting,

caribou, as a herd, move a dense forest with them
on the crowns of their heads.

Thirst

Here is a dream with wind. I've finished
reading. The book in which the book is closed.
I keep forgetting, keep believing
everything you've written
hurts. It shouldn't. It should instead wash out
among the other
strands of error and
be changed. A better word for cancel is accept.
When I get up at night for water,
although the air
is almost lit, I can't believe
how difficult to know my way across
the room without you. Can't even hate you
in my sleep. Can't stop.

Man

He tires his face near the glass.
And the shadows rush in; hands
reaching for the sun.
Given at any moment it seems as though
one might overtake the other, or more
a balance of greetings
be struck.
If he could I trust he'd go out
have a smoke in the puddles.
His lips suggest it.

Mad about Cows

I've eaten part of a cow's heart
to become a part of the past,
of tio & his talk of grandpa,
his love of tacos of the heart,
of the eyes & brain, the parts
of a cow that make one mad.

I've held a heart hacked to chunks
& cooked on the grill in the backyard,
a warm corn tortilla cradling parts
of artery too hard to chew through
w/teeth not trained for the toughness
of the meat, the organ that once beat
in the body of a beast who feasted on grass.

I've tried to taste a piece of the past,
of grandpa's craving for tacos de corazon,
ojos y cerebro pero two bites was enough
to feel what I felt it must've been like for him,
the flavor & fullness, the forever chewing.

There's a part in the heart of me
who goes mad for cow, for steak
quesadillas, for tacos de lengua,
for menudo to mend the hangover
& then there's the American in me
who just craves a greasy cheeseburger.

Sam Jackson

I can't figure out if there's anything
better than autumn in Madison.

Most elections are a choice between
Pappy O'Daniel and Homer Stokes anyway.

A canvasser from Planned Parenthood stopped
by last night. We are both heartbroken. I don't
have the money to make a difference.

I feel like my whole life has been building to this,
realizing how useful a funnel can be.

Those were strong words in my
mouth but he bent them.
I could really go for a cookie.

I have a wallet filled with faded, unreadable
receipts. My heart is full of love.

I'm allergic to rainbows.

Joy Division All the Time

I had this job as a bell hop, inn keeper, valet, and room service at this bed and breakfast where rooms were four hundred plus a night. I had to wear a suit that had a sort of priestly collar on the jacket. They asked me to cut my hair. There was a menu of services that I would provide for an additional fee:

Champagne Service

Champagne and Chocolate Service

Champagne and Rose Petal Service

Champagne and Rose Petal and Chocolate Service

Champagne and Rose Petal and Chocolate and Feather Boa Service.

I flirted unabashedly with the guests. I smoked weed with drunken honeymooners once on the stoop coming back late to make sure I had locked up. When they checked out they tipped me fifty dollars. Mostly I was in the basement stealing wine and building cheese boards and

washing dishes until somebody needed their car or their bags carried up the spiral staircase. One of the rooms had a door hidden behind a bookshelf that only led to a bathroom. The first thing they taught me was how to fold a fitted sheet. The second was how to open a bottle of wine

and present it formally. In the afternoon J's radio show was on. I would listen to it while doing laundry. It was called Too Much Paranoias. He played post punk and no wave and sometimes I called in. At the time I think he was mostly listening to Joy Division. After his show I would put on Prairie Home Companion and iron sheets

with a beer like my dad used to do on Saturday nights before going back to church to finish his sermon for the next day. That summer I lived a couple blocks away in the music fraternity. I wasn't on the lease and that place was full of tubas. I would walk up the hill to the mansion and put on the wool suit and run back down to fetch the

manual six speed bmw coupes. Late one night, I had to move one of those tricky german fuckers down to the lot, but I couldn't figure out how to get it into reverse. I had to push it out into the street in neutral. I was half drunk on stolen wine pushing

somebody else's hundred thousand dollar car that I didn't own into the street but by God I got it down there. I don't remember if the owners got the feather boa or not, but I'm pretty sure they still tipped.

Why I Am Like New Zealand

My feet stick out from beneath the sheet,
Pointing to where death thrives.
I am right side up.
I wake between tectonic plates that hurt.
I have five faults, called senses.
My brow is furrowed into alps.
My best volcano thinks
It's high geologic time
To euthanize the sky.
Excuse me while I euthanize the sky.
My fjords ache.
My glaciers hurry.
My spine is a train wreck in a tunnel.
No one survives.
There *is* a bridge to nowhere, and it's mine.
I count on being left alone.
I love the Abel Tasman Sea.
I can't remember my discovery.

Before Crazy

—after *Eve Alexandra*

I wear to my new therapist's office:
a stretched out black dress/dirty black leggings/
a five-dollar black cardigan/heavy black boots/
denim jacket I've had forever/
chunky white necklace/
no panties/the hickey above my right breast is visible,
didn't bother to cover it up/I've looked better, should've
at least tucked my leggings into my boots.

My new therapist's name is Roo, *like kangaroo*.
Her office is egg yolk yellow.
Her desk is cluttered.
I start crying when she shuts the door,
say, *everything's fucked, I'm fucked*,
and I miss the therapist in Pittsburgh
who gave me warm water in a styrofoam cup,
spoke gently, but called my father an *S.O.B.*
Roo likes my rings, make-up,
sounds childlike when she says *fuck*. I like her.

I tell her about the bad night (she says *crime*):
19 years old/my dress pulled up/don't/
come/inside/me/Vladdy and Monster/tequila and OJ.
I ripped up the dress/quit seeing anyone/lived with a crazy girl/
always had to feel clean.
When I was crazy
I quit smoking/started growing plants/they all died/
didn't let anyone touch me/hated the smell of vodka/August.
She says I need to stop blaming myself for what I can't control,
but I'm thinking I really need to buy toilet paper and cigarettes,

call my grandmother, go to bed early.
None of this I'll do today.

She says:

*you fall in love too quickly
with people who are nice to you.*

What's love to you?

*I tell her I don't fucking know
but before all this*

I just did what people told me to do.

Dear Austin,

On the Red Line this evening
the man next to me took my hands in his,
touched each of my eight rings
with his index finger,
asked what they mean.

He said

*it's like you wear a part of yourself
on your fingers.*

I'm not making this up.

His name is Jasper.

He's from Saint Louis.

He said,

*if I asked you for your phone number,
would you answer your phone?*

No—I screen.

He laughed.

*You need a man to love you like a sponge,
to just take you all in.*

I hope you find him.

You're in California now
and the last time we talked,
you mocked the girls there,
quoted some top 40 song I didn't recognize,
something about California girls and Daisy Dukes.

You said:

Be nice to the people at school.

You're fabulous, but a little rough.

I miss you in a way that makes me breathless.

But for a week I stumbled around Chicago,
couldn't find a goddamned thing,
made circles around my neighborhood
until people came up to me and asked *what's wrong?*
You don't want to hear this.
You want to hear that I met a girl last night
whose name reminds me of a lollipop.
She makes me laugh and at a party,
pulls me into a bedroom and kisses me.
You want to hear that I cut my hair,
get stoned with my hair dresser.
You want to hear that
when the Chicago wind blows
I always walk into it.

Sylvia's Hair

1. "Our bones, our hair"

June, 2009. I'm at the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana, doing research on Sylvia Plath. Every time I enter and leave the reading room, I pass one of the library's many display cases. Often, I stop to look. I am fascinated by the items in this particular exhibit. In the center, against a background of deep green felt: a lock of Sylvia's reddish-brown hair. This must be the tress that was snipped in the fall of 1949, when Plath was a teenager. A whole ponytail, really, tied near the top with a white string. I study it through the glass. In the same display are two objects that I find equally fascinating: John Ford's Oscar for directing *How Green Was My Valley* and Rita Hayworth's makeup case (brown with gold engraved nameplate), in which she kept Orson Welles' love letters. Some of the letters are spread out among Hayworth's monogrammed jars of powder and cosmetic cream, a Midol tin, a comb, hairpins. Ford's Oscar is tarnished, the contents of Rita's case battered with age. Both pale beside Sylvia's still lustrous and healthy hair.

2. "a piece of my hair or my clothes"

Looking through Sylvia's Baby Book (ca. 1932-1933), I am astonished when I come across a mass of fine, golden-brown hair. Aurelia Plath dutifully cut a lock from her infant daughter's head and taped it in the book. Over the years the tape dried out and the hair became free; most of it has ended up in the crease between the pages. I consider taking some. It would be so easy to slide, with my pencil eraser, a strand or two into my notebook. But the clerks watch you like hawks; there might be cameras. And if everyone helped themselves, I ponder, eventually there'd be no baby hair left. Plus I'm not sure I'm prepared to pay the price, as Sylvia herself says, the *very large charge* for possessing even this tiny piece.

3. "I rise with my red hair"

Idea for screenplay. Sci-Fi/Horror. Along the lines of *The Boys from Brazil* (insane plot to resurrect Adolf Hitler). Scientists clone a bevy of Sylvias from a strand of her hair at the Lilly Library. But the experiment is doomed. Though they are raised in different parts of the country, under varying circumstances, each Sylvia, shortly after she reaches the age of thirty, commits suicide. Title of movie: *Lady Lazarus*.

From online discussion about Britney Spears' hair:

*You can't clone from hair because there is no DNA in hair
You need the roots.*

Don't you watch CSI?

Hate Poem

for K

This one is easy to write.
You can keep everything
you took from me. Every literal thing
and every metaphor, except this.
I want my hat back.
It was hand-knitted by my friend
with the curly red hair. It never fit me
like how small children's arms don't
quite fit around grown-ups' legs.
It hugged my head like it was afraid.

[2]

The face in the mirror spit me out a violent beggar, one of my own.
I love so I howl where we never arrive, support the Navy and
wear hundreds of pairs of shoes all different colors within the night;
it's my own night's bed, the table past laid cleared, I am still present
childhood Cixous dead, I've never seen but I promise it was
with both hands, it was a church raid hallelujah, was, I am waiting
for you so long, baked clay hearts in the oven, painted them purple
for Dolores from Jesus out on the floor faster than I can say
Angie Dickinson, faster than Moses, mama, Abraham cut your damn hair
it flames from peroxide; we put gazpacho on our burns so hot
from the oven the burn, the music in that burn, the mountain side,
the waiting spent weeding the yard, the every time I wake up
trying not to move, the ghost the berries stain our lips
in the backyard, how I give my God my body to not feel so gut—,
so holed out, my ovaries hurt the next day, too much I give God,
my body takes days to heal; but I love Texacos, cowboys,
they're pretty, we lay them across the lawn, obeah rooster heads
bleed the corner of the room, turn him back to me for all
this more lavish worshipping, mooning everyone in the Dairy Queen
drive thru hoping for summer weather, summer in our hands
by the shore drums rain; you get older, lose your breasts, lose mother
histrionic in the windowsill threatens lightning straight to hell;

I make me an abandonable list of red check marks say hi, no, he is leaving via a guitar solo which I piccolo into the lightest blue eye hanging down from the ceiling fan on the chain to protect him; I hit my head on it making love to you, I wrenched it down, I put it back up—protect him, tell the truth of how honey coated, how you pushed your hips, how you grew inside yourself a hand that blocked the world away, wore headphones, slung alcohol, not really, poured drinks—men bartenders say slingin' dick because they need the ego but in my dream, my very dream I was of course a child but not really; I threw my food on the floor & hit repeatedly the man at the table still composed; he said how often does this happen, I said my whole life, it happens my whole life through.

seep

splintered and thrown to pieces,
the look of you opens like sweet

tea on noon.
taste gossip through a dogwood,

no one knows what you are after.
beautiful medusa, shackled to morning's rise,

have you been misunderstood,
your shine mistaken for serpent tongues?

who did you hurt to get here?
with your armsfull arrival and so much to be done.

a bridge to terabithia

it's the story you are reading while tucked into 70s decor,
and you're set down in a kitchen. everything around you, including yourself
is fashioned towards hybridity, even the table's deciding between booth or nook.
everything here is blue. everything here is displaced.
there is a dim light strung up by a coil that goes up and down and sways
like water being flushed if you are careless enough.

in 20 or so pages katherine patterson is going to break your heart,
remind you that you have tears.
she is going to wait until you are invested, till you can't bear,
because katherine patterson wants you to know.
she wants to tell you that the world is cruel, that love is the meanest part of god.
she wants the blood of the first person you'll ever love.

when your stomach goes from sweet to sour and back again,
think of the afternoon's sorbet. when you leak,
when you sway between sticky and the turning pages, think water over a bridge,
think drowning, think of katherine patterson's steel tongue.
wipe your snot on a sleeve until disgust forces you into a tissue.
feel nature churning.

between your tears, your runny nose,
begin to notice the first betrayal of your body.
spend the next 30 minutes in the bathroom reading boxes and deciphering diagrams.
hope things are not drawn to scale.
find the technology to be inferior, decide that it's a man's design.
decide they are cruel. wonder if katherine patterson is a man.

return to your blue room.

sit in your blueback chair. pull your bluecoiled light closer and feel red.

learn to ignore your sourness, so deep in your belly that it sits on your back.

mourn leslie for a week. mourn yourself until further notice.

tomorrow when your mother asks if you know what to do,

feign confidence. clench your legs together tightly, swallow hard and nod.

The Following Items Are Prohibited.

Merchandise is next. Pressed against
newspaper depth. Line run four thirty
one. No beauty, no where. Stimulate
on this. Fog. Want more? Out.
Let's surrender myself, marvelous
subway stripper pole. Ghosts play
a logical role. Another blank
page. I still haven't found a noun
that ends. There are a lot of blonds. Stop.
Do not open. She's too thin to rail.
Only 64 calories. As light as it gets.
Your safety is important. I have pissed
that color before. You could be home
by now, if you were home. I have a little
crush on all the hawk-nosed girls.
Thanks, Mom. Doors closing.
I need to shave, I am starting to look
like the women around here. This is
Paulina. I forget the meaning of colors.
That's why I wear it. It's so loud,
a dancer in black tights. All the physical
things of this world are harsh,
heavy sounds. Shoe! I found you.

Hy-Vee #1420

It is not my place
to tell you how cows

evaporate. Bouillon cube sales
are slow, and there are pallets

of backstock. A girl says, "I need
a shot. I just consoled the girl

who slept with my ex-fiancé." Now
is not the time for Jello. This hope

is fear for the alternative.
I leave work at sunrise.

The Anatomy of Nowhere

I have a thing for bridges, but I refuse
to use them when I am playing pool.

I do not know how one plays Bridge, when
there are always two sides being connected. Even with the infamous

Bridge to Nowhere in Alaska, nowhere is defined
as ice & snow & a blank page

with 50 writers who can't get their fingers to print
on mountains of cloud. I ride the R line over the Manhattan Bridge & look out

over the Brooklyn Bridge. Either of them
could be called the other & still connect both sides.

The em dash is a bridge between
Whitman & Dickinson, stretching

from Brooklyn to Massachusetts & across
the Atlantic to Sussex, England where Emme Dash lived

(they all lived during the same period, so it's cool
if they hang out). Mrs. Dash is not famous. I found her

while googling the spelling of em dash to eliminate
the imaginary red squiggle between these

imaginary read lines, because
Microsoft Word does not like the spelling

of "em" or "Emme" or "googling"
because Microsoft has not yet bought them.

Love Letter to Dave Chappelle

Dear Dave,
Discovery's turned on. I am watching
sheets of ghastly, squirming, horny termites
gnawing inside a wall and missing you.
Today marks my twelfth stab at this.
Each time I begin to say something real
I collapse. Shortcomings. You understand.
This is not the one about the black comedian.
Or his fear of the toddler
pushing Kush on an ave. in the a.m.
This is not about the moment after
that joke. When the audience
slump, just a smidgen, in their seats.
When they question your position
on the ghetto's flowchart
or reconsider a weed dealer's
average age. And when they laugh—
well, this does not concern that.
This isn't a poem
about some cowboy cracking up
over a blackface skit. How his cackle
sounded like a bigot's brain
lodged inside a beating heart, thinking
out loud. This is not about that sound
imploding the logic for your craft.
Not about you leaving me hoarse
and lonely on Wednesday nights.
I repeat. This is not a love thing.
Not even a little.

Darlene Conner

When I found out that the actress who played Darlene on *Roseanne* was a lesbian it broke my heart. She was every Midwestern boy's dream girl. The pale skin, the dark shroud of untamed hair, the quick wit, the sarcasm flowing like a spigot from her blue collar mouth, and the brooding—that classic teen angst—made her exotic. The truly beautiful thing about Darlene was that she aspired to be more than Lanford, Illinois. She moved to Chicago, went to art school, escaped her ordinary life—for awhile anyway—and never let anyone get in the way of her goals. As a teenager from corn country, I couldn't help but wish for something more too, like being David Healy for a season.

I Picture Kim Novak

She has a bullet, but only one. She has a gun and only one shot, which is for the bad guy. She only has one shot. The antagonist is another man, not Jack Lemmon.

Listen up, because this is the only film-noir thing I will ever write. Kim Novak is in an alley at one in the morning. It is springtime, but it is cold. The wind blows her bottle blonde hair against her cheeks. She has a gun with one bullet in it and she's standing against the alley wall, waiting for him.

If it's cold in the spring, we have to be up north. Can we have some flowering trees? How do we make it look cold when it's warm? Maybe with the light. I don't know about these things. The obvious answer

Is Kim's woolen jacket cut short and boxy, squared through the shoulders in accordance with the style of the time. I don't know a thing about 1961. Only that it's cold enough for Kim Novak to need a jacket, sensible heels and a skirt past her knees.

Now she cocks the gun.

Zombie Poem #2

I had a very disturbing dream of a sky that wouldn't end, of never having to blink, or breathe.

I woke up in a box.
It was cold
so I broke out.
I move
and don't hurt.

Everyone I see is beautiful.
concerned, screaming
but warm, so warm.
Aren't they burning?
They run, burning.

Their skin steams
hums to the marrow.

Zombie Poem #4

My door is always locked.
There are bars on all my windows.

There's a body on the lawn
a woman, I think. It doesn't have a face
Tried to run in heels, tripped.
Oh god, it's moving.

A man speaks on the radio.
"Great. Burn the bodies,
or they'll just come back. Don't trust them
They'll bite you."
Then I can't hear him over the gun shots
and no one talks after that.

Something rattles the screen door,
then scratches at the aluminum. Like a dog
waiting to be let in.

Do Deer Dream of Running?

I've always admired the way deer can vanish at will, like music played in an empty room. I thought it would be impossible to understand such a fleeting thing. I told this to Ryan once, so he shot one. It was a doe, picking over the crabapple skins in the orchard. I didn't ask him to do it, but I couldn't stop him. I remember the gunshot like I remember words said in anger, it gets louder every time I think of it. The doe turned and jumped into the trees, at first I thought he'd missed. But Ryan doesn't miss, and he can track the wind. It ran almost a mile bleeding out. Even with the bullet spinning blood and pus into its lungs, it ran like fire through the leaves. We found it hiding beneath a thorn bush. It kicked against death, tried to work the rust from its joints and keep running. Do deer dream of running? I've never seen one so still, so there. Does the dreaming deer keep running, even without its legs? Ryan pulled the box-cutter from his work belt and took the liver. He said we needed catfish bait.

Teeth

Shiny little ones scatter all over the sky, which is less black than it is dangerously rain-bowed. They guard a mouthful of muscle; the mouth, a cavity, houses pink buds and sounds. They need to bite, to bite sand and skin. Press against each other like buildings, sharing walls. Listen to wires twist. Teeth break too easily, blend poorly with porcelain. Teeth filed to points, tooth-tender, red-painted. These ones are gold for melting. Dead teeth still glisten, we name them for safekeeping. They don't decay, but grow and go nova, they don't hurt, but swell and destroy.

Cheers to the Syndromes

You happened to me like a pile of burning leaves
on my driveway—happened, like a spider web to the face.

Such accidents are shuttlecocks to the brain. Blam!
Clever death, this time you've outdone the neighbors.

Camera flash and X-ray, you're the electric click
of DNA strands locked up and all wrong. My neck's

open season. Fire on sight. With you, I could become
love's most famous line. I could gleam on polished stone and be

incanted. I could be remembered for my lineation
and my triumphant refusal to die—but only to . . . only to.

Oh body, oh baby. The horizon is a boy of unseasonable
thunder. I do not regret the need to know you. I do not

know what you know. Don't go. The men are holding
their hats to their chests. We're all gathering on the dance floor.

Cheers to you. You are a credit to eyes,
spines, and stomachs. All would do well to study

under your tutelage. Salut! Believe everything I say.
You are sovereign and I'll be kissing you in the snow.

I'll be listening at the door and I'll revel in your footfall
or is that your systole? Come back to the party.

We've got the wine and the ephemera. I promise
the music will be well paced, slow and scintillant.

We'll all be there—each with such reasonable hearts
having to live with our cacophonies.

Dumbstruck Luck

Give me a hand with this thing I've done
to myself. Shine a light on my face and make me

clear. I'm prone to speak ill when all's said
and done. I've done nothing to pull the wool

from out of my mouth. My tongue is tacky,
ichorous, and hot. It's all so conflagrated—

what I've said was not meant to wound, maim, or mangle—
merely to dangle a thing-or-two that you've not considered.

But if I've hurt you, then strike me dumb. Pluck
the muscle from my throat and stretch it out a yard

or two. Run it in between the links of the neighbor's fence.
Let it dry out awhile, and perhaps, my head will follow

because, clearly, I owe this offense to my unlucky life.
Tomorrow, I ought to be hit by a lumber truck, and I feel

run out. Run on, perhaps. Even a little sentimental.
I feel I owe you money for what I've said. I meant

no malice, and right now, I'm contrite. Oh, I can tell
this is unpromising. Like a date at a meat packing plant.

I think, soon, I should shut up because all the corners
of the house have been backed into.

My tongue is full of foibles, full like a coin jar
with lucky pennies. All noise and rattle. Shiny

with all the glamour of a pet rock. I ought to
put a sock in it, but instead my thoughts run

faucet quick. I've plumbed the possibilities of a truce.
This is me with my mouth zippered shut. Quickly,

blow out the candles before the little door slides open . . .
before the next storm makes landfall.

silk-screen

i want to show you how to suck the water out of river stones until our lips are buzzing and numb. i carry that spool of pomegranate seeds close to my mouth,

although sometimes the juice tastes
more like copper than sugar.

sometimes, i cough up esophagus ash from the throat and the underground
coal fire in that beating, fluttering, red thing.

that time you read my palm felt like ghosts shivering in their bed sheets, a layer of
skin flaking off or being pulled back,

raw like no clothes on
when i slip a dress over unbent elbows

i thought i'd dream of you a little while longer, shake the salt from my eyes and
search for the snake threads among the meteoroid scraps,

all i found were fluorescent moth wings under the brightest of moons

i'm wading in up to the rose twisting around your eye sockets, but it's too much fire-engine
heat and flush that all shades of red bleed into themselves,

so redshift and Doppler-like.

half-hitches

you & I have picked up pieces of pure bark
pushing cinder-soot into a water-forest of milfoil

the bluejays picked at their blueberries,
a blue blue heron hung like Spanish moss

I felt like a type of glowing in the dark,
a bat tangled in a mosquito curtain.

(dear pickerelweed throat,)

I wish I had thought of you in place of Jupiter and the dipper stars
over the span of a day's worth of hours

under the invasive quaking & lacing up the river spine—

there's a certain gravity one could slip between the grain of our ribs:
part & rejoin around the knots of cambium & heart sap.

from Supper & Repair Kit

Us girls ate our fill
of dill beans, scooted
closer on cellar
stairs, cradled jars.

Sat cracked eggs lined with premonitions
and traced letters,
edges of a clean X Y
in the dirt-band sparkle floor.

We caught church giggles like measles
and grandpa thought it funny
to throw bird seed down the stairwell.

Her name became a slivered brook, a parceled diagram of selfsame reds and Orange—

my fingers slid under the seal

but the envelope unfolded on its own

sprung tentacles

spread out in every direction, feeling for me.

Brightly injured muscles regenerated on fed fish & inks,

ice cream with a brother, another throw away grief-sized novel.

We told good jokes and learned to gasp at x rays with a mock-medical flare.

Bones across the radiant screens I marvel.

Bones have bundles wired into them and the metal corrective pin protruding

from the side of my hand goes clink clink on the desk as I write:

thickets

Untitled 1

When my mother calls, night has settled
like thick paint over building and tree,
spread across the sky as if space
were really the earth's great shadow,
her voice retains something, the pitch
of the ring, the taut clicks that rattle
from her coffee maker, and I know
it's about my leaving. I want to tell her these past
years, have been really just some last day
of school, that by morning, I'll have pushed
through our front door's same familiar smelling
rush of wind, that I will be in the kitchen,
because we had shaken the entireties of our lives
from a mat, years ago, or one morning found
them in the crackling plastic bottom of a cereal box.

Steering Wheel in the Field

is an imaginary flower
on the bent-down path
of foxtail and weeds
Joyous to find a rusted-out car there
I was 13

 The wind snakes through town
from here toward the Capitol—sounds different
depending on where

The boy walks sideways up the mountain in his drawing
I write diagonally across

 Storm night

Wind shakes the eaves
A lover is one who reads
nothing but words
& hands them
past the face

How to Travel Alone

The same painting is hanging on all four walls
of my hotel room: Ship at sea
Ship at sea

Ship at sea Ship at sea.

An empty bed won't say
"I love you" until its jaw falls off. The rain goose-stepping
up and down the interstate believes

the earth exists just to give it something
to fall against. What can I do

from my dingy little room but close
the blinds and turn up the TV?

Some days I come out wrinkled like a jacket
exhumed from a suitcase. Some days

I'm as constant as the last soggy cornflake
at the bottom of a bowl of starchy milk,
that piece that keeps giving

the spoon the slip. I'm that ship that can't
find shore, can't be sunk.

Just days without you and I've got
that midnight streetlight tan,
that Big Chug Jug caffeine carelessness, that one loose
toll booth tooth, these highway hiccups.

The wooden benches in the train station
remind me of the pews in the clapboard church

where my cousins are still swaying
with the holy spirit. Oh, ship at sea, they sing, you are
my ark, my raft.

But where is the cross, the portrait of Jesus knocking
on the inn door? All we have is the schedule board,

its clattering
numbers and letters, the clock that chimes and chimes.

As pigeons descend to devour
a dropped sandwich,

the station agent's voice echoes over
the PA speakers: Here is my ham on rye, with whom
I am well pleased.

I write postcards I don't
send. Each one
is a confession.
I eat microwaved cheeseburgers until my stomach

rocks and pitches like a ship at sea.
Your voice on this cell phone is like a bug
trapped in a jar. Your voice on this phone
is like a sliver under my fingernail.

How many nights will you be staying with us?
Here is your key card. Here is a brochure
to help you interpret the stains

on the ceiling tile, to augur the roaches
and broken glass. Do not be alarmed if you hear

a shout, a trumpet. The high school band
tournament is this weekend.

Your signal faded. Your call dropped.
I can't find my reservation number.

Your voice on this phone is like a ship at
Never mind, I found it.

Meanwhile, the greasy clouds go sliding around
on the sky
like grey eggs in a skillet. Meanwhile,

the laundromat beauty queens
in their wash-day sweatsuits thumb quarter

after quarter into the machines
and pray for miracles. Meanwhile, a shut-in dies buried
under a collection

of snow globes of Paris, where tiny couples walk
up and down the Champs-Élysées in endless winter.

A stranger in mirrored shades says Take off
your shoes, take off your jacket.

I do, I do. I unthread my belt in one long pull
that whispers it from its loops.

Will a skycap please bring a wheelchair to Gate 7B?
Jennifer H_____, please call your sister
in North Carolina. Roger M_____, Roger M_____.

please return to the security checkpoint
to retrieve a lost item.

Board by zone number. Sit in the wrong seat
just to meet a stranger, to apologize, to say

My mistake. You're breaking up. If the engines fail, don't worry:

on our cell phones, we'll watch
live footage of our plane fireballing
into the ocean, our own
bodies bobbing in the wreckage and surf.

Look, that's us waving.

I write postcards I don't send. They all start,
Dear ship at sea . . .

When I stop to throw
them into a dumpster, I glance down

into that darkness and see the continent where I was born, as if
from space, its cities lit
like clustered stars.

There are only two directions in the map
of my life: the way to you, and the way
from you.

The letters always end: You know I love you, but
all those cities that from space seem
to glitter are full of small dark rooms.

How to Paint Lightning

You must begin with something lost, a scrap
of paper, a cell phone burrowed

between the cushions, thrumming
like a mouse. You must start
with regret, its orbit

elliptical, reeling years deep
into forgetfulness but still
tethered to the hot, heavy center.

Begin with a Ganges of longing, holy
and so polluted one sip
might kill you.

Make the footpath connecting
the two lovers' houses

a temple. Make the bird circling
a field the dome.
The waves of kudzu its walls.

Begin with the moonlight
wobbly on the water. The word
the mind gropes for and never finds.

Here are the thoughts that crack
the temple apart: your grandfather's boots

standing empty in the basement,
the shopping cart clattering
 up and down the sidewalk at 3 AM,

the burglars bowing on the doorstep,

the firefly, who draws its mate
not with light but with the intervals
of darkness.

Whiskey Flowers

Bathroom color of her lips

Unscathed

Natural

Bloom

Into fresh paper cuts

Bud

Wiser

Wither

Shortly

Smoldering mother

Smolder mouth

Warn and worn

Unmarked water colors

Bloom

womb

was

green

and

raw

Mycorrhizal Hummingbird Sutra

Crescent of a crescent of hammer. Crescent of a crescent of nail. And the brightness, as if the moon had slipped from its armoire of drowsing butterflies, each pair of wings beating languidly in rhythm with a giant heart that spreads slowly beneath the surface of the earth like an invisible stain.

Somewhere in this valley the moon slops from side to side like an overripe pail of milk. From pens & pastures the goats narrow their almond eyes even further. Nothing else is breathing except for the stones in their precision telegraphy, transmitting the messages of the mad.

Crescent of a crescent of alum, crescent of a crescent of shrike. There comes a certain pressure within flight and the heart feels it as a thief explores the pocket of a dull festival mark. It is almost a sensual gesture though profit is its motive.

The moon surrounds itself within the lateral orbit of the automotive, a discarded theatrical costume on loan from some Dutch agency. Deep inside the vast waterworks of the night a great heart beats & trembles like the whiskers of a thousand lovestruck optometrists. A young boy, awake at this hour, writes a note in crayon to the ravenous tiger that lives in his bowel.

Crescent of a crescent of mitosis, crescent of a crescent of need. Here amid the dark garments charity leaves when she vanishes, that cover almost everything, that speak the sleek languages of electricity & rhododendrons. . . . The stevedores are sleeping, the brown river shimmies in its bodysuit; even the spectrum is at rest. Crescent of a crescent of mending. Crescent of a crescent of shine.

Now the moon stands in the moonlight like an Irish florin, freshly-minted, fungible, demonetized, erect. Insects of the night sip its tears, which taste of mint and gather in the hollows of the washerwomen's thick shoulders. The stones, messages completed, sink back exhausted into the static postures of their chemistries. From mycorrhizal hummingbirds the tongues of a new dawn flicker.

In the Narnia House

In the house with the Narnia walls we knelt. Not like the Winnie-the-Pooh house or the Earthsea cottage. All primary colors, bright hardwood floors. The murals on the walls whispered. We could hear them at night. We could hear them when we were kneeling. In the house with the Narnia walls we knelt while outside the furniture repairmen went on strike again. They chanted and they marched. We could hear them when we were eating. We could hear them when we stood in front of the walls and considered the murals. The figures in the murals were familiar, that is, inhuman. Presumably they had been painted. In daylight they stood motionless. At night they moved. When storms flashed through the town they clustered in the basement, where we peeled their skins from the slick stone walls in long strips. We grew thin on those skins. We grew thin on the surface of that listening.

Beneath the Trees At Ellingsworth

I wake in an orchard chaotic
with apple blossoms.
Kentucky, I know it from the smell.
Field where my dog spun circles
in blue light
collapsed
bleeding from the mouth.

We piled limestone in the yard to keep the coyotes out.
Covered the grave
and marked it with a wooden cross.

My brother knots his shirt on sheep wire
scores his stomach on the rusted barbs.

His name cuts my lung like split glass—
frost in the hollow of a throat
I can't remember.

The heart's heat-axis begins to slow.
I climb apple tree
after apple tree.

A Bridge Spanning the Sleep of Earth

Moon, you play your barren harp above the world,
a wastebasket out of which you eat Oreos.
I've written many a rock-lullaby in our time apart.
I am playing one such song presently.
Out on the veranda,
Moon, you fall into another drink.
I lean to tune to the ear, for all the good ideas
anyone had are still out there.
Would you consider yourself "an antler?"
At each incremental advance of technology
there is a brief juncture where the wicked
simply outpace us, the armed populace.
But each utters the same ritual to you, Moon.
Let's say you and I burn these old goat bones together.
Yesterday, I saw you. You lay in the park—grass
groveling in and over you. The children stole your head,
your iron and aluminum head,
then lost interest, left you to ants, sand.
From the car, I could clearly see your sigh
as you counted each step back across
the words of the poem in which you were.
When your sigh reached me I tuned my little e to it.
You say, Come try your act out by the customhouse.
And I come. I play that aged love song of yours.
Twist out old rags. Learn to punch
the snack machine just so. Though, you know,
some unlucky contingent dies each year
over eighty cents of snacks. People leave their lives for less.
You said, Come play your barren harp above the world.
And I wept. And now everyone in town calls me at odd hours;
dragging my good name through the dust.

“7 users found this review helpful”

re: the Caribbean cruise,
the first night was hardest
on my eyes. I read
a toy compass. Stuck
umbrellas on either side
of a jelly packet someone left
warming my pillow. I slept
like an island. I was surprised
they let me keep ice in my cabin.
It was jewelry for the glass
of gin & tonic.
The coconut milk kept
my mind from coiling
the garden hose's slither
through the lawn. By now,
my copy of *Leaves of Grass*
was sopping with dawn
light. I dreamt Walt Whitman
saluting wind-
ows I couldn't see beneath
the sea line. I imagined
an engine workers' strike
from feeding coal to the mouth
of a furnace. Their faces were flame-
licked & bronzed. The captain
said *stern* obsessively. At each port
the ship took a bow. One evening
the fire-eater chokes on bread
& gives himself the Heimlich
bent over a chair. I couldn't

take my eyes away
from the fork scraping my plate.
I wondered if peas ever tired
of sleeping beneath the princess.
Ever missed the womb of the pod.
I was smokestack on the deck,
my breath vapor. I dog-eared
the bible hiding in the bureau,
that ended with Gen-
esis. *In the beginning*
was the beginning again.
A five-year old stabbed fish
with his finger. A woman
with dementia bothered
to keep asking about you.
She would say *shouldn't*
she be here? & I would
think yeah, she should.

Three kinds of sudden equal three

Three kinds of sudden equal three
windows in a second-story room.
And birds oblivious out there, the way
we borrow something and forget

the kindness, the loss at the other end.
Birds do not suffer. I say that so lightly.
How can you think such a thing?
every mother cries out to me, mother

cloud, mother sideways and thunder,
mother cut with a knife not swiftly,
not clean. Day of almost rain, almost
whoever it was, which of us,

as children. Hidden. Pressed forward
and back. Remote, the urgent
start of it as a door locking distant,
the hinge shuddering up here.

I thought the tree

I thought the tree
beauty. A song, a story. Of
riverbank and good thieves
who took things back and back.

Inside, dampness is dream
of rot and wealth, a holding up,
out, a getting past, a go between
earth and heaven taken down

a notch, to dirt and sky. A bird—
herons favor it high. That's error too.
Eggs fall through, so much light
that weave. Tiny throats raised

in hunger, prickly murmur unto
murmur. Huge eyes in little fists
are blind. It's her
heat in the dark, flash of feathers.

Field Notes to Memory

Apply warm stitches one by one to the grandfather clock with the stuttering arms. Swerve through the storms without spitting out the saltwater. Gather in the comfort of warm library books and hammocks. How many wheelbarrows must we lose before we find our way to the bottom of the hill? Leave your life vests and driftwood at home. Look for the pond with the missing neck. Beside the dock she waits with the rowboats. These are memories' hands. Soft and gentle like a jewel thief. Let her grab you by the shoulders and show the moon's hidden doors or drag you, eyes open, down to the bottom of the lake. Which do you prefer on this calm and crooked night?

Why Is There a Rhinoceros in This Picture?

You have big hands, you said while holding my left wrist with your left, palm to palm against your right, marking our wingspan like birds marking territory. This is what pianists do, I remember, how they say hello, see music, take lovers. In my mind I responded: no, that is not the truth. I do not have large hands; you have small ones. We were just beginning so I tried not to hold this against you. Later, when we were naked, and seeing your hands on my breasts, I knew I was right. You worked like a baker, dough pressed between in hands and between fingers. You said, *they are deceptively large*, meaning my breasts and I thought, they are honest in their size, but I get you are trying to compliment me, make me feel sexy like those articulated skeletons in medical paintings from the 1800s, so pleased to be skeletons, jaunty against landscapes or flying cherubs. I saw a poster of one in the Mutter Museum, but barely

noticed the rhinoceros in the background, too
preoccupied with the glass
cases filled with fetuses
in jars, calm
selflessness gently suspended in glass
wombs, still and shaped like dying
earthworms. There,
my naked body would be
put to shame, burdened with such things as
oxygen and the memory of your fingers lightly
brushing sharps and flats the spaces
between my spine the white keys
of the piano.

The Sheer Fruit of Pennsylvania

In the thrown tire, in that
dismal gesture,
 in the mess
of glass that once was *door*, rust-colored
 berries hung in rough
chandeliers,

persisting beyond *chandelier*, beyond
 promise, beyond
dried blood and its mean
evocations.

 In a complex syntax, they spoke
so slowly of their poison, my
 timidity.

 In their hierarchy, I
lived lowest, abutting the least weakling
no bird would bother.

 I turned old
beneath their potency,
 hid
from the world's perversions, estranged
 and breathless
for no one.

The Oak

The oak sags
with yellow ribbon,
mice burrowed
in its hold
sleep
on siblings,
fold
as infant clothes do
in a bureau.

On *Yellow*

For certain, not *sunny*: that kaleidoscopic
rose ultra-rose or gold, deluxe
colors; nor dandelion whose hue turns finally
into parachutes, blown hopes
like ghosts falling in space. Maybe jewel-
weed or medicine of witch-hazel, shedding
use and last luster. Hallmark of illness upon
the mirror. Yes, even sweet weather
has counterweight: beaks open at beginning
and end. Hungry in their bed.
Mother's yellow feathers lost in translation.
As *flight* is first step and ledge into nothingness.
As *yellow* is cry that will not be quelled
nor met with a whisper or kiss.

sticking place

Most of the time, you're flatlining, you're pitted against the gods of Heat and Television, filling your bathtub with ice, dipping your pale-pink fingers in ash and then painting your eyes. Over and over you say, "When I was young, and asked no permission." You think about the deathless End of the West, you're waiting to be won over by music, and to be liberated from the impulse toward the Great Aphoristic Sound of Truth—but it's gravity, we always head for the biggest thing, we want its arm, its bland jeunesse—somebody did this beautiful thing and now we can't change it. You go to your mailbox, and gut it, and then you read the flyers from the grocery-store, which arrive to say, *Here is an accurate representation of today's bananas—don't be afraid, Nature is dead.*

Fang Face

The joy is too much, and the mouth is too
mouth, and one person's shit storm
is another's small business venture

in the wilds of whatever's left of the wilderness
capitalism. The satellites and hockey pucks

forever in our orbit. The meadow's not
pastoral, or at least not enough, so the prey
and the predators get colder by the second,

eyeing each other by the lamplight
provided, and the library books in their flood

of radiation. If only we could be less
human, from our bleeding liquid centers
to our janitor's ascension, maybe then

we wouldn't feel so tearful at the first glancing
blow of the rows and rows of serrated fences,

the dress of leaves so beautifully constructed.
And seemingly lovely, the princess
and the strawberry, the hunter and the bees,

swarming the house and the keeper in his dream
until nobody recognizes how deadly

we can be, and then I'm a fiction
or you're a technician. I hate the way stories
seem to love a conclusion. I love
the bird's singing just before it gets eaten.

Defender to Amplifier

Before I was able to write out this note
I forced every one of my fingers to forget

so what I typed I would type
with every ounce of my breath

& my pulse would be threatening
like flowers or death, both brighter

than bright. Both present & scary.
Because of the sunning, because of the cosmos,

because of the fractions that add up
to a concert. As in: our voices together

in most happy clarity, hitting the right notes
with a fist where it hurts. If I say

that I'm trying you should know
I'm trying hard & if my body is weeping

I'll fight it with every word
in my heart like a sword that is aimed

at the centermost dot on the map.
This is the place I'd defend with my life

& this is my life & it's all I have left.
Here is where we'll stand & declaim

all the feelings we have & the pasts
that we've passed, the regrets that we'll keep

despite all our bleeding & the tears
that we'll shout deep to every ear. To make sure

everyone knows that we're present.
To convince ourselves that we're still living

even in fear or in absence. It's important. We're not
losing focus. We're gladly giving up

like a catch in the throat so when we build up
a house there's room for us all & the horror

is that we can never be free of the hauntings.
Nor would we want to since the fright

keeps us honest. To feel more better
& to never forget. The motto I sing

as the moon begins to collapse. We're tinged
in the night by the choices we didn't make.

As well as the ones that we did.
This seems to me a flower in my inner most soul

& when I show it I want to show it in language,
want to keep trying again & again to speak it.

This is one moment that is too quickly sped
& our bodies are shaking because they know

they'll quiet. It's just what happens
though what matters is the intervening air.

Except more of this talking & typing & text.
I don't worry about all the sense I'm not making,

thrilled as I am to keep flying around it.
I'm happy to be light & heavy with darkness.

But stay with me or else I might sink into blank
remorse & never know how to write it.

The Knife He Plotted With

Zorba walked around our
sputum-green Plymouth a few
more times, and I thought he'd kick
the tires but he
was only prowling,
chest-length black beard blown
around. April wind

riffling the holes of his
t-shirt, a day you can smell
lake trout in your hair.
Zorba stalked in circles,
our Plymouth a clean
bug-eyed catch you don't know which
end to eat from first.

He sat down behind the wheel.
Wrapped his hands around the ridged
steering grips, where my father's
should be, cupped the shift
with his palm. Sat there.
Stared out the windshield at our
backyard basketball

pole, ten-foot regulation
height, worn grass, dirt—we never
laid a proper pavement court.
Past the sycamore
the red picket fence

that kept out the demented
collie coughing up

her guts every time I picked
tomatoes for my father.
Zorba ran his finger up
and around the bare
ignition slit like
he owned it, a primal claim
he must've picked up

in prison, his finger mim-
icking what the key should do.
Ripped the duct tape that held our
roof in place, it fell
on his head. And he
bought it without a test drive.
Drove to work each night

sometimes meeting his brother,
our high school science teacher
with a pointed Bruce Dern chin,
in the restaurant
parking lot, leaving
me alone to make pizzas
and antipasto

salads. I learned how to flirt
like mad with the waitresses

who looked out for me like I
was the teenage son
they'd worry over
someday. Once, I dropped
the ox-roast baggie,
translucent meat strips spilled on

the floor, and Zorba said put
them back, each one, in the bag.
His hands, soft like a painter's,
stacked the meat scraps on
someone's sub that night.
I remembered, too late to
stop him, that the guy

said no mayo—and Zorba's
shoulders stuck in their sockets
like fused pistons and he
tossed it in the trash,
started the sandwich
again, more meat flecked with dirt,
but this time no taste

of mayonnaise. He showed me
his nine-inch hunting knife, proud
the weapon one-third longer
than allowed by law,
the blade he'd use with
his brother tonight, the plot
against his brother's

wife. He made me touch the knife.
Everyone out of work now,
no customers except his
brother, they huddled
later in the mood
light of an empty table,
his brother peeling

bills, a back-pocket
wad. Business so slow I could
leave early, they said.

He Scalped Her

I thought Larry was dying. I hurried, dressed, too nervous to drive, my husband doubled over. Could I call an ambulance? I learned a long time ago, you ask in half-swoon flush for everything with Larry. There's no time, he said. I practically carried him, my broken man, to the garage. Zorba's car there, green Plymouth bought from his best friend's family in Millcreek. That word on the trunk, *Fury*— I was getting hit on the head, Larry pushing me, both hands on my waist. I started to fall down, he picked me right back up and hit me three or four more times. Larry's stomach pains, made-up kidney cancer, like one of his students faking her way out of a chemistry final. He made us all believe he had three months live.

Our garage at 4 a.m. The secrets I kept from Larry could fit inside my compact. I remember everything. The lightning crack behind my eyes, head split open by my brother-in-law, the stomach retch like freefall, the Dear God let me die it hurts. "You finish her off, Dennis," Larry said somewhere behind me. "I'll get dressed." The smell of spruce and sinking. Zorba pushed a sharp object in my neck, that knife he bragged about. I grabbed the blade, buck knife so big he couldn't hold me. I ducked. I'll never forget Zorba grunting and plump, trying to splatter me— my head under his arm—I didn't want to get cut. I fought with him. I ducked. An officer found the rest of my scalp in blood next to the mailbox at 26th and Raspberry. I remember running fast

as I could and Zorba couldn't keep up, a fat man
with stubby legs, and waking, alive, in an ambulance.

At their trial, the lawyers called him Dennis,
more polite that way, I guess, the courtroom prim
like an old woman squinting behind her bifocals.
Zorba confessed, sort of, as if he could pin the blame
on himself, protect his older brother: the affair
we never had, grass we never bought or smoked,
the blade that flashed straight from his filthy
John Brown beard, secrets I swear I never kept
from Larry. A fever broke his tongue on the stand.
Zorba said we smoked and fooled around—
as if I'd touch that portly ghoul—that I wanted
to make my husband jealous. Nobody knows
what's real and what's fake, everyone's talking
out loud. I don't know how else to say it.

Last summer, Larry says we're driving to Buffalo
to deliver artificial limbs to someone named Mr. Davis;
then in court, he testifies it was Dunkirk, instead,
to buy grass for Zorba and me. You'd think,
like Larry did, I'm nothing more than a spectator.
Crowds line up every day for trial, I go to the front
and right past the door, scarf wrapped round my head,
the burnt red prick of the last words I thought
I'd ever read, *Plymouth Fury*, a snuff-film loop
that plays every night before I fall asleep.
White stencils stamped on the trunk when Zorba
beats me with a blackjack in my garage.

Girl Band

The swim team was a ringing cross-section of girls that vibrated like a guitar string. I wore a black bathing suit, lemonade lip gloss and a mess of silver charms define me. Kristina had a lip ring and purple hair and she was on the swim team. Paige had a pixie cut and a Grateful Dead bear patch and she was on the swim team. Sharon was on the swim team, smoked pot behind the school in the crunching leaves. The violet crushed velvet skirt defines me.

I thought I heard you in the hallway but it was just the radio guy saying that Kurt Cobain had died. A floor covered in cassette tape cases with carpenter ants trapped inside them defines me. I pulled a safety pin out from the cobwebs in my closet, scratched his name into my arm.

The swim team ate pastas and grains and treaded water and sang in the shower and practice felt like torture. The pink-haired punk girl at the end of the driveway smoked Newports and said she didn't want to quit, said that she was "happy with her lifestyle." The swim team left you feeling all exhausted and hungry. The endorphins interact with the receptors in your brain that reduce your perception of pain. And I loved it. I loved the end of the driveway, loved the creek behind the school. Bethany says shaking your leg when you're sitting down burns hundreds of calories. So I try to do it all the time. I tap my toes and my fingers.

In health class they said picture a snowflake falling and count backwards from ten. Catch it on your tongue. All the movies we watch always say you're not alone, not alone, not alone. Many cutters are surprised to find that they can achieve the same rush of endorphins from running or from other rigorous exercise. Bethany says fanning yourself uses more energy than standing still, and actually makes you hotter. So I sweat all day. Never wearing short-shorts defines me. My bangs stick to my head. Or I walk down the hall with my hair in my eyes and my eyes on the ground. Or I sing like an alien into the fan's spinning blue blades.

Thumb War

Sometimes I wear a medium, but usually a small works better. I am generally small but I used to be even smaller. When I was smaller, I would take a shower. Go with you and your boyfriend to the mall or to the carnival. I would line my walls with pictures cut out from magazines—*Better Homes & Gardens*, the Pillsbury Doughboy, Macaulay Culkin from the movie *My Girl* where he gets stung to death by hundreds of bees. I'd take hour-long showers and get lost in the pipes underground, lost in the steam. Clothes from the Gap neatly folded on the toilet. Sunny orange socks. Went in the haunted house with your boyfriend's friend and tried to balance my laughter and screams.

I would steal your extra-large earrings in the morning and wear them to school. Poke the Pillsbury Doughboy in the stomach and he squeals with delight, and I squeal with delight, and I swoon. This was before Heather said he cheated on you, before you cried and cried and cried and cried in your room. Before you got back together, and he signed in your yearbook, "we've had our ups and downs, literally," and before Mom read it and threw a fit. Before he stopped by our house to pick up your bathing suit, and your goggles, and a tampon, and I handed them each to him one by one.

I wore plaids and stripes and florals and pushed my fingers into my closet wall. The Doughboy wearing an oven mitt. The Doughboy in a bed of flowers. The Doughboy for president, 1992. The year before I started junior high and you started high school. Before you shaved my legs with soap and a razor. Before you laid on the couch with your feet in his lap. Before you cut his hair on the back porch and sprinkled the trimmings in the bushes to scare away the deer.

Stomachs

i.

The first one
is always
asking for more
and there is never
enough bread
to fill this
leaking pouch.

ii.

Soft like sheepskin, inside
are the remains of books
and eyes and lettuces. They
break down; it is the Krebs
cycle on large scale. It warms.

iii.

This one is hungry when it is full
and it rarely grumbles around. It
hurts and tickles at the same time,
like the feeling just before coming,
but opposite. I imagine its mucus
moving aside, like some slow sea,
for the birthing of chyme.

iv.

Crowded with beads
and stones, it grinds
late at night like ideas.

v.

They threaten to bleed
and to rupture, to have
grand explosions and
gunshot pops, but they
never do. Not even when
I poke through the thick
parts like the dark spot
on top of a balloon. No,
not even the slow leaking,
the baking soda, can help.

brother

Say, Brother, that you had found your sea legs,
and not been bloody-stooled, scurvy-toothed

popped out like a pickled onion, unripened. Say
you had eaten my Fig Newtons, curled my toes,

melted all my ice cream. You warlock,
a feathered thing, you sumbitch changeling.

Had you not drank of the foxglove, chewed
hemlock, would your heart sound less

like a disappear, your eyes look less pallid;
would your long fingers trill? Brother, you were

swimming in an eggshell bath all along,
and still sit on my undercarriage at night.

Cry Baby

for Brenda

In the gut of West Albany, in a fading white Sears house
with pale blue trim, above the cellar where she shook
to Janice singing *Cry Baby* wearing a glittering belt of

lemon-colored plastic, in the rough and out
of the fold, across from the First Prize
meat packing plant and through the acid

scent of blood that came from it night and day,
out of the gutter, through the pipes, up against the ropes,
against the system and stickin' it to the man,

before the run to Florida and the baby doll pajamas
that were her uniform at the Bottoms Up bar, after the twenty-one
year-old boyfriend and the flesh marking her as a woman at twelve,

on top of the man, below the man, before the mirror
shifted in light to reveal her body as that of the freak
ZAMBORA THE GORILLA GIRL, before her son bloomed

like a fist inside her womb in the trailer of the headless
woman, between the years in the group home
and the months in county jail, before the coke the coke

the junk the coke the reds the blues the booze,
after her mother said she did not want her, made her
a ward of the state, in the cut the heavy camera made

into each of her palms, before the abortion at fourteen
and through the screams the pigs made in the night: there
in that fading white Sears house, she discovered

the old sharp-creased vellum with the generic
BABY GIRL KENNEALLY pressed into its fiber
like a blue tattoo, the paper that rested in her

the day she stood at the top of the stairs and threw
a whole dresser at her brother, threw it and then kicked the living
shit out of it, that dresser that she had sanded and

antiqued and stained rambling rose pink by hand and then
shattered in a wild-eyed rage, the dresser on which
she would lay all her most precious things to admire

as they shone: and here in a broken pink drawer lies the baby
twisting in the scrap of her West Albany life as Janice's throat
fills with splinters to sing *Honey, welcome back home.*

Sentence

The world never ends, shuffles this clutter: a tractor
of a man, naked except for socks, surfs
my channels, eyes to the ceiling, his swirling
red dots. The everyday we spoke of—hearts
adorned with habit's form. Touched
into a puddle of pantyhose, stretched
between forever and the stove, my grandmother's
knuckles, my father's jumper cables in the rain. Let's
blow them out, smirking statue, pluck petals
from my embered plate. This, our never was,
our begin again, ate coats from the hall closet,
mopped us, two pennies—head and tail up.

1988

We didn't know Paul
would die young, but he did.
And Susan. Susan's mother filled
the house with gas, believing her girl
was out. She woke to find her there
but gone. Suffer the children.
Suffer the teens and their sad beer.
Suffer the grown-ups
when there is no such thing.
And Paul, lucky Paul crushing
a last Schaeffer can in his hand
and letting the gun take him
to the garage. He would never
have to drink again.

June

When we died, she died
to me—the past tense began,
though she's living
in Pittsburgh, still naming
the breed of any dog passing.

That's one ridiculous
moon up there. What a joke,
she'd have said; it's too
big to be believable, the stamped
wax seal of it glowing,
though you wouldn't want
to break it.

One Way to Remain

One way to remain civilized
is to remove the shrapnel
we find embedded in the bars of soap
kept in their breast pockets.

One way is to walk
from heel to toe in the city streets
knowing when and when not to show
what we can do with our teeth.

Now the crops are burned.
Bridges are measured
with wire and chalk, mapping
how to bring them down.

A child with sunsets painted on her
eyelids offers you milk, cheese,
meats wrapped in leaves, says
the blood you steer by is gone.

Foot rot spreads through the farmlands.
Fingers draw new names
on soot-covered cars. One way
to remain is to leave a mark.

Remain calm, she says,
this is my first time too.
One way to remain civilized is to admit
the land here is not ours to seed.

Remain here while I check the hallway.
One way is out. One is outlasting
the dogs barking beyond the fields.
One bag of charges may not be enough.

from The Subjunctive Fantasia Series

*

If I were a man,
I would wear my hair long,
with mutton chops.
I would date a euphoric blonde
with a fetish
for roller skates.

At the rink, I would be
the envy
of all the millennial men,
trapped
in their khakis & fleece,
while I, with my mutton chops—

the Invincible Prince of Mutton Chops—

would glide backwards
in my blue-checked blazer,
scissoring my legs,
stroking my mutton chops
like Buddha's belly.

*

If I were a straight girl, & slight
of build—fair-haired & freckled,
with turquoise eyes & 20/20 vision—

I'd spend my summers at the Carnival—

learn to paint faces, play Keno, work
the deep-fat fryer. Sometimes I'd wear
pigtailed, but I'd never wear shoes,

& when the boys came, I'd pierce
my lip, play hard-to-get
till Ryan Phillippe (the prettiest

boy of them all) bought me a Kewpie doll.

*

If I were a number, I'd be an 8—not a lean figure-8 carved out of the ice,
but a curvy snowman of an 8, a well-stacked intertube of an 8, a plump Sesame
Street 8—*call me Señor(a) Ocho*—supple, orange, & scrumptious, with a soft fuzz
like someone stacked two peaches plum on top of each other, & when I lounged
on my side, they'd say, "Hey, look! An infinity sign!"

*

If I were a color, I'd be blue. Not a melancholic blue, like *baby* or *robin's egg*,
& not quite majestic *royal* blue or the standard issue *navy*.
I'd be the color they call *French blue*.

I'm not quite sure how the French have gotten involved
with this—a color common to crisp button-downs,
sharp throw rugs, the occasional, ornamental pillow.

But I do know, like the braid or the kiss,
where the French come into it, the process turns intricate,
the product always subtly more than you'd expect.

*

If I were a cheap motel, I'd be La Quinta Inn
at the Capitol in humid Austin, Texas.

I wouldn't have room service, but I would advise
all patrons that the Jimmy John's down the street delivers.

I would recommend the Club Tuna.

I would have two ice machines, one on each floor,
but the one on the second floor would be always on the fritz,

in part because I like saying "on the fritz" & in part because
the sodas are cold & the coffee is hot—

why do people need ice?

I would have a continental breakfast in the morning,
with fresh fruit & enormous Otis Spunkmeyer muffins.

You guessed it—I like saying “Spunkmeyer,” too.

And if I loved a girl, & she sent me roses all the way
from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to my cheap, musty room

in the La Quinta Inn at the Capitol in humid Austin, Texas,
I would stand transfixed in the toothpaste-stained mirror,

pronounce myself the happiest place on earth.

*

If I were a teenage boy, with one of those
crew cuts girls love to touch
& a small cleft in my chin
like my mother’s thumbprint cookies,
there is no telling the number of foolish,
liberating, death-defying, outrageously
invigorating things I would do—
including but not limited to—
inflating my airbag on purpose;
scaling a chain-link fence & letting myself
free-fall to the other side;
streaking the hallways of a hospital

on the night the carolers come through;
swallowing a live goldfish—on a dare;
eating a whole pack of radish seeds—on a dare;
drinking a whole bottle of Sriracha hot sauce—on a dare;
streaking the aisles of Whole Foods during a snowstorm
while juggling pints of Tofutti soy-cream;
eating two blocks of cheese in one evening
(I see you, George Costanza, & I raise you);
skateboarding through the mall until intercepted
by security & asked not to return—then returning;
dressing up as the math teacher for Halloween &
continuing to dress just like her until Thanksgiving;
smoking six cigarettes at the same time with
a parrot on my shoulder—on a dare;
eating a whole Vidalia onion while dancing
to “Me & Bobby McGee”—on a dare;
drinking a whole bottle of apple cider
vinegar while filming myself—on a dare;
streaking the aisles of Whole Foods during a heat wave
while wearing a wool cap and shouting “FIRE!”;
& just to say I had, throwing a John Wayne-style punch
at a man twice my size, then booking all the way home.

+ 1

On the day after D Day my
grandfather saw the European
sun,

he named its color *naranja*
embarazadas.

The beach was wet

and the mortar slung across his
back moaned

Que lastima chico and
caterwauls of *pobresito*

with each stutter step across
the earth.

Later that night, he opened a
can of pinto beans

and heard his infantry cry, "Take
cover boys! The Mexican is
cooking!"

He laughed *que la pitado*
hombre under his breath

while remembering Los
Angeles.

The Tenderloin

In San Francisco

there is a man

missing a shoe.

He will stop you on the street

his face covered in blood

and apologize for everything—

I'm so sorry but I was wondering if god bless you

You've just spent all your cash

on a pizza you are taking back to your hotel.

You feel nervous because

he sees it.

He won't believe you when you say you don't have any change.

A couple dollars I need the bus god bless you I'm so sorry

He will look you straight in the eye

while you blink at his

naked foot.

Your dinner gets colder

and his face keeps bleeding.

You will have to address the bleeding.

God bless you I am late for the bus if you could give me a couple dollars god bless you I am

sorry my face is like this I will be more careful I promise god bless you

You will have to give him the pizza.

There is no other way.

He will be disappointed but won't

stop god

blessing you

as you walk

away.

In Whose Hand the Light Expires

March, and still the heat anticipated
Our every move. The frozen creeks
Cracked like riflefire. Father carved
The same stupid mallard. *when loth
at landfall soft I leave.* I begged for
A clean break, but even toilet paper
Clung to my shoes. 'Between rocks
And hard times,' Grandmother said.
I yearned for the sea's bitter tongue,
To wave, a tiny man, upon a glacier.
Black flies gathered on our celestial
Maps. We carried forked twigs into
Naked woods, and no sign of water.
*No Petting. No Trespassing. Please
Silence Dead Leaves.* A tapped tree
Made me listen to Grandpa knitting
Rag dolls out of his used memories.

PARROT CHAMBER

Reality is a process
Where the action is

Who told Einstein

The CIA didn't used to read poetry,
but that's all changing now

Driving is a spiritual experience

Who created Tennessee

Time is a wavelength

Poets didn't used to calculate,
but that's all changing now too

Who abused the super-collider

There are many kinds of gyration

Echolocation is a state of mind

Radio reception is a destination

Black Holes didn't used to be a religion,
but that's all changing too

The Atlantic Cable is a rhythm

What time is it
No time to look back



The blessing is chanted [] []

redwood sprouts coming [] [] [] []

a straight pin embedded [] [] [] []

[] [] [] [] [] time lasts
[] as long as we remember []

[] memory burning []

a red crow flies [] [] [] dawn

The fever breaks [] [] [] []

[] scuttle [] into [] woodpile

the buzzards circle [] [] trashheap

You'll find nothing here

Universal Design

It is becoming easier to calculate
my mistakes but not to foresee them.

This is a kind of creature. I don't remember
my dreams. In my other

lives, I am wearing white suits, I am
a scientist. Things ablate. Things

formulate themselves in a moraine.
Something about accumulation. Something

regional & debased.

See a ghost & say
the secret word. My fingers are all

I have. My brain has its genuflections,
its specks of grandeur. I put it

in a mason jar & boil. I put my nails
up for the winter, wrapped

in plastic. The gesture is to coat
myself in leather, to affix warnings.

The pose is shot through. My
teeth, my useless hands.

Landscape with Alchemist

I put my potions in a little green
pot. I leave it open. I keep my hands
inside my sleeves. My legs are automatic.

I mean my fingers. I mean my predisposition
to mistakes the size of my face. My hair &
its tawdry knots. My teeth & their poison.

In the evenings, I catch bugs. I put them in
a coffee can. It is green. I keep the bugs cozy
with wonder. The sky gains its heroes.

Only monsters live in the waters. I have proof.
I have a strong dose of science. I keep
it in a satchel. The satchel is green.

I keep it hidden. I'm the best at freeze
tag & secrets. My bones break. My thumbs
have known, have been cut through

like an oxbow. Mud may prove
to be an asset, may prove to be the saddest
cloud. The clouds move when the can tips, when

the bugs think about the sky. The bugs have spent
the morning composing sonatas. I have spent the morning
plotting their escape.

In This Situation

You are who you imagine yourself to be in this situation. Until you get caught. After that, you're forever restringing the banjo, forever

staffing EZ bake ovens across the nation's college campuses. No, the edge has not been taken but the sentiment has been embraced. Cornfields

embrace the largest airforce base imaginable. You are the cornfields in this situation, forever thumping, forever shucking. Don't act alarmed

at the appropriation: the discovery of mendacity happens at drag shows across the nation's college campuses. The back room holds

secrets both immortal & nonplussed. It is better to leave the light off. You are the dollar bills in this situation. It has become

spectacle and the nation's college campuses fill accordingly. Tell your roommate you carry a blade in your boot heel & that he

has one week to change his name. Young men shave their privates across the nation's college campuses. You are the straight razor

in this situation. He will spend his nights chasing ladders, throwing smoke. Throwing knives comes naturally

when faced with objective fallacy. A felony is a production. A conviction is the lie agreed upon.

The Harmonica Lesson

for Sugar Blue

I was a virgin to the ways
of the diatonic moan
when you took me down
to the basement of Rosa's Lounge,
one blood to another,
to show me the secrets of the harp,
how the real blues claims every inch
of the hungry mouth, the tongue's tip,
its flattened sides, the lush, purpled
underbelly, how the most sincere
notes sneak out between tongue and cheek.

I was pinching the blues
between my lips like a schoolgirl
in a blind date kiss with a stranger
from the wrong side of the tracks.
I didn't know how to take the blues
deep into my mouth like a bit,
how to let it ride me
till I landed someplace
beyond the border of hurt,
but I was gonna learn somehow,
and if it wasn't you,
if it wasn't the royal line
of Muddy Waters harp men
in thin ties and tight shoes
from Sonny to Walter to Wells,
if it wasn't the Chicago Police
in my rearview

on a frostbitten night
with outstanding warrants
and a quota to fill,
I was gonna learn by standing
on the Chicago Metro Tracks
the first time a woman told me
she wouldn't be home till morning—
I'd be a needle in a railroad groove
about to play that song back a dozen times
to any other woman's ear.

And I don't know if your lesson was before
or during the times that would make you sing
about Krystalline Cocaine,
how she stopped your heart
just long enough to get your attention
and a bed in intensive care.
I don't know how long
it took you to crawl back
to wherever the blues had left you,
whether you were even able to kick
Ms. C to the curb for good—

But I know
that harp was keeping you alive,
that you were floating in its river,
extending a hand from its water,
teaching me how to breathe the old songs,
to bible up on the inhales and exhales

of all the Sonnys and Walters and Juniors
because they played it *right*,
and when I drew the breaths of their songs,
I was drawing some ancestor's life,
about as close as any blues man can get to heaven,
and as hard as he can ever hope to pray.

But what is prayer, anyway?
These days, for me,
it's a plea to write a poem
and play the harp once a day
until the pieces of me that I lost
in all my old lovers
find a way back.
And if I play the song long enough,
it'll cut the ache down like whiskey and weed
until I forget enough
to remember just enough
to build a bridge out of the thin air it takes
to blow a harp or read this poem aloud,
and tell you that some small
piece of that lesson stuck with me
all the way up to now, a moment
when I can finally say
I'm about as old as you were that night
beneath the feet of the drinkers at Rosa's
when you shared a secret with me about
how to breathe. Where I learned
how to french kiss the harp's metal mouth,

to slide between and into its ten holes
searching for the right notes,
biting down the tin and copper
of the silver plated Hohner Special 20
until the blues unlocks its rusty chastity
belt and whips me into the sweat
I've inherited from the sound of
one man, any man, breaking
beneath his own breath.

He sleeps every afternoon,

rimless glasses askew, chin on chest, for a few hours. Actually, he dozes most of the day. Book on his lap where a fig leaf might be. Marc likes to stretch out on his long green velveteen couch under the picture window. Perched near his sneakered feet, his ginger-colored cat naps or sits motionless, slowly opening and closing her eyes. A conscientious sentry, she'll desert her post only to leap lightly onto the window ledge when birds are thronging the feeder out back. She'll stare through the glass, making a guttural rasp, like someone saying "ack! ack!" Birds take no notice of the stock still yet agitated feline but disperse as soon as it begins to snow.

Marc's looking progressively younger than 30. Aging backwards fast, as some hibernators do. Later, I'll wake him, give him lunch and a shave. Between scrapes of the razor, which clears beardless paths through the shaving cream like a plow clearing snow, I'll try (and fail) to write down everything he says.

Once I was kindly disposed towards all deities. *Osiris, Helios, Odin, Buddha, Sita, Baal.* They seemed romantic figures to me. I wanted to know them all: their attributes, special powers and imaginative backstories. Now the whole inscrutable crew have lost my vote. Outside, fields of parched prairie grass rattle in wind. Mountain lions, seldom seen, keep local rodents in check. It's clear and cold here and you can see for miles, unlike where I come from, a temperate city so smoggy that nearby mountains are only visible after a three-day rain.

Marc's closest neighbors here complain deer have nibbled their kitchen garden to nubs. A buck and his harem are grazing there now. The husband of this neighbor couple pees every five feet around the perimeter of their large garden at night, as the scent of human urine is said to repel deer.

Marc's mind is a suitcase packed by someone else. Sometimes he rummages around and pulls out the striped sock or folding travel clock he was looking for. Other times, he'll pull out a surprise: a rubber snake, a string tie he doesn't remember owning, a potato

masher. He wakes, sets his book on the floor. "I'm lounging in these chairs watching a curtain to curtain preview," he tells me. *That must be fun* is the best I can come up with. "Everybody in this neighborhood is at least a five!" he says, enthusiastically. *At the very least!* I agree. I'm making him macaroni and cheese, stirring the white sauce with a whisk. The cat jumps onto his legs. He yanks her tail gently and she head butts his arm. "The other cat is being nostalgic, 'cause he's wheezing like he was admiring me as a child," he tells me, before nodding off. Not quite time for pain medication.

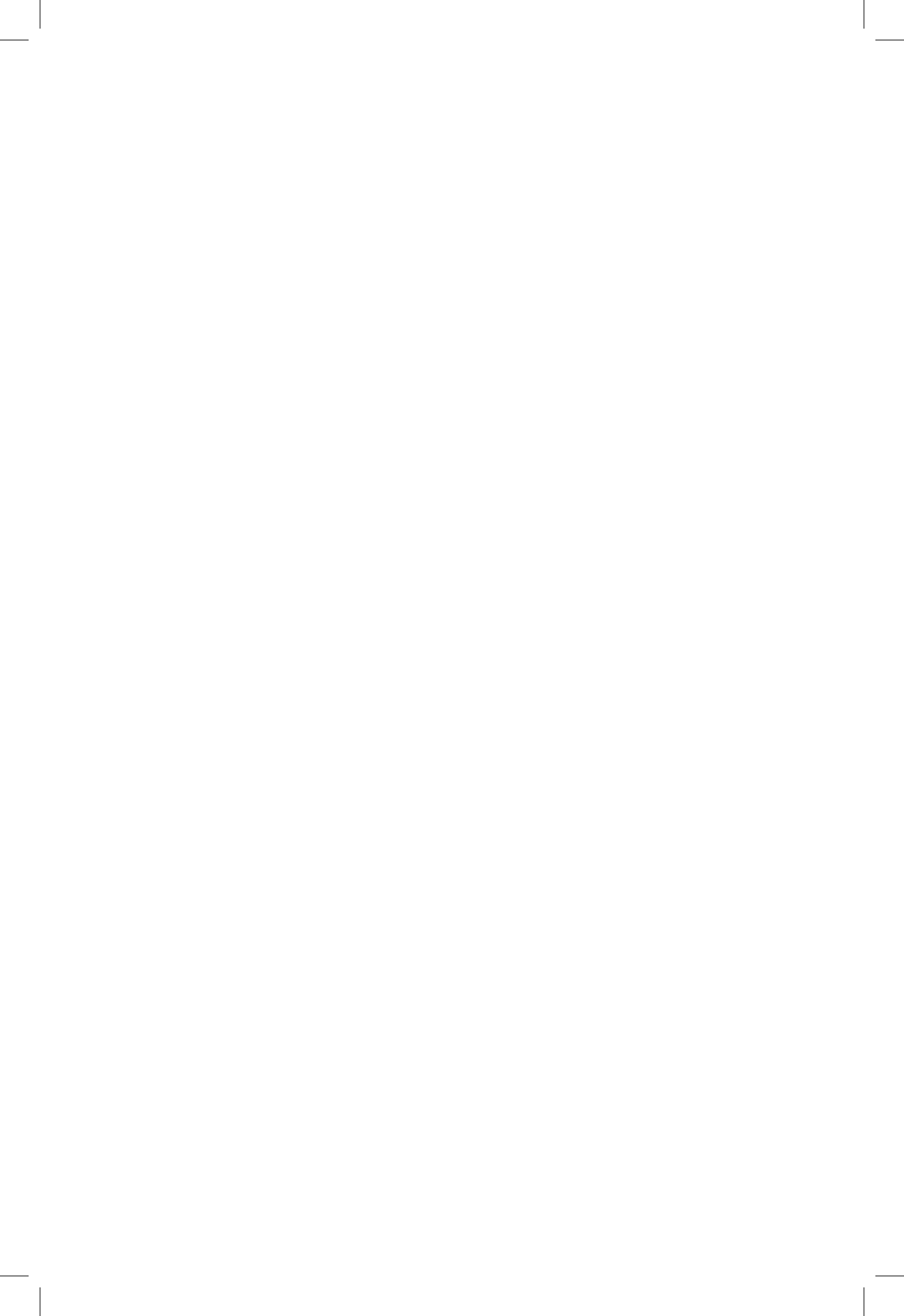
I kneel on the floor beside the couch and stare at his stubbly face as he sleeps. The cat turns up her purr volume, revving the pleasure engine, expecting me to pet her. Marc hates not being clean shaven, complaining it itches. His hands twitch energetically. That's new. *It's still him*, I tell myself every day. *Still my little brother. Still alive. Still in there.* His sense of humor is mostly intact. He recognizes me. He knows who he is. Except for the staples in his scalp he looks great.

Pale Queen

Her sovereignty. Your poverty. Her mocha-nipped majesty. All her faults, those small assaults. Her kisses, which taste of ancient faiths. Pray don't reproach her, imprisoned as she is in her latest incarnation, dazed by pent up scents that waft from her hair as she unwinds it at night. When she asks "do I look like a harlot in this dress?" insist that's ridiculous. When she inquires if pin curls make her a dead ringer for some medieval Spanish rabbi, better not laugh if you value This Unnatural, Utterly Lovely Woman, who drowned her child in a pond five lives ago, such was the distracted state of her mind: *I cannot pray, and can never repent . . .*



contributors



Raul Alvarez is a current MFA candidate at Columbia College Chicago. He has previously been published in *The Hibbleton Quarterly* and *Lexicon Polaroid*.

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Paula Bohince is the author of two poetry collections, both from Sarabande Books: *Incident at the Edge of Bayonet Woods* (2008) and *The Children* (forthcoming 2012). Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *The Nation*, and elsewhere. She lives in Pennsylvania and is the 2010-2011 Amy Lowell Poetry Travelling Scholar.

Jaswinder Bolina is the author of *Carrier Wave*, winner of the 2006 Colorado Prize for Poetry. His recent work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *The Missouri Review* online, *Cincinnati Review*, and *Third Coast*.

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Sophia Bostic is currently a fiction writing major and sophomore at Columbia College Chicago. She resides in the suburbs of Chicago. This is her first published work.

Jenny Bouilly is the author of the forthcoming *not merely because of the unknown that was stalking toward them* (Tarpaulin Sky Press), *The Book of Beginnings and Endings* (Sarabande), *The Body: An Essay* (Essay Press), and *[one love affair]** (Tarpaulin Sky). Recent work can be found in *TriQuarterly*, *Black Warrior Review*, and the *Huffington Post*. She lives in Chicago and teaches in the nonfiction and poetry programs at Columbia College Chicago.

Nathan Breitling was born and raised in Chicagoland, and is currently an MFA candidate at Columbia College Chicago. He has previously been unpublished.

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Elizabeth J. Colen lives in the Pacific Northwest. Her work has recently appeared in *The Normal School*, *Packingtown Review*, *RHINO*, and other venues. She is the author of the prose poetry collection *Money for Sunsets* (Steel Toe Books, 2010) and the forthcoming fiction chapbook *Dear Mother Monster, Dear Daughter Mistake* (Rose Metal Press, 2011).

Marisa Crawford is the author of *The Haunted House* (2010) from Switchback Books. Some of her poems have appeared in *Shampoo*, *Action, Yes*, *Invisible Ear*, and *GlitterPony*. She is an editor of Small Desk Press, holds an MFA from San Francisco State, and currently lives in Brooklyn.

Oliver de la Paz is the author of three collections of poetry, *Names Above Houses*, *Furious Lullaby*, and *Requiem for the Orchard*. He is the co-chair of the Kundiman.org advisory board and he teaches creative writing at Western Washington University.

Sally Delehant is a graduate of Saint Mary's College of California's MFA program in Creative Writing and was awarded The Academy of American Poets' Russell & Yvonne Lannan Poetry Prize during her first year. Her work was published in series one of *Calaveras*. Sally has recently moved to Chicago where she works in commercial real estate and, of course, writes poetry.

Shira Dentz is the author of a chapbook, *Leaf Weather* (Tilt Press). Her book of poetry, *black seeds on a white dish* (Shearsman Books), is forthcoming this fall, and a hybrid book of poetry and prose, *door of thin skins* (CavanKerry Press) is forthcoming in spring 2013. She is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and currently Poetry Co-Editor of *Quarterly West*.

Jaydn DeWald is an MFA candidate at Pacific University and currently lives with his wife in San Francisco, California, where he writes and plays in the DeWald/Taylor Jazz Quintet. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Barn Owl Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Lumina*, *Quick Fiction*, *West Branch*, and others.

Jessica Dyer was raised and educated in small Indiana towns. She writes and lives in Chicago. She teaches at Columbia College, where she is earning her MFA in poetry. Her work has appeared in *Exact Change Only*, *Ariel*, and on NPR.

Lisa Fishman's newest book, *Current*, has just been published by Parlor Press and a new chapbook, *at the same time as scattering*, is available from Albion Books (San Francisco). Her fifth book, *Flowercart*, is forthcoming this May on Ahsakta Press. Fishman is the Poetry Program Director at Columbia College Chicago and lives in Madison and Orfordville, Wisconsin.

Stephen Frech has published three volumes of poetry: *Toward Evening and the Day Far Spent* (1996), *If Not For These Wrinkles of Darkness* (2001), and *The Dark Villages of Childhood* (2009). He has a chapbook of mixed-genre work, *A Palace of Strangers Is No City*, to be published by Cervena Barva Press in 2011. He is founder and editor of Oneiros Press, publisher of award-winning letterpress poetry broadsides.

James Galvin has published two prose works and seven books of poems, most recently *As Is*, from Copper Canyon Press. He teaches at the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Amy Gerstler's most recent book of poetry is *Dearest Creature* (Penguin, 2010). She was guest editor of the anthology *Best American Poetry 2010*.

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Arielle Greenberg's poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Fence*, *Puerto del Sol*, and *Quarterly West*, among other journals. Her hybrid-genre book *Home/Birth: A Poemic*, co-written with Rachel Zucker, is just out from 1913 Press. She lives in Evanston, Illinois.

Nicholas Gulig is a recent graduate of the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop and recipient of both the Mark Leidner and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Awards. He has published poems in various journals across the country. He currently resides in Missoula, Montana.

Matt Hart is the author of *Who's Who Vivid* (Slope Editions, 2006) and *Wolf Face* (H_NGM_N BKS, 2010). A co-founder and the editor-in-chief of *Forklift, Ohio: A Journal of Poetry, Cooking & Light Industrial Safety*, he lives in Cincinnati where he teaches at the Art Academy of Cincinnati.

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Steve Henry is originally from Buffalo, New York, but he is currently living in Macomb, Illinois. His poems are also published in *Court Green* and *Phantom Limb*.

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Jeannie Hoag's as yet unnamed chapbook is forthcoming from Agnes Fox Press. Her work is forthcoming or published from *NOO Journal*, *Invisible Ear*, and *Seeing Other People*. She served as managing editor for *Slope Editions* and now works at the Poetry Collection at the University of Buffalo.

Meg Hurtado lives in San Francisco and recently received her MFA from St. Mary's College of California. She does not believe in parallel parking, or that John Lennon is dead. You can find her work in *Cannibal*, *West Wind Review*, and *POOL*.

John James was born in Los Angeles and grew up in Louisville, Kentucky. These days, he lives in Brooklyn, where he serves on the poetry editorial board for *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art*. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Copper Nickel*, *DIAGRAM*, and *The Los Angeles Review*, among others, and he recently received an Academy of American Poets Prize.

Sarah Jedd grew up in New Hampshire and makes the wicked long 945-mile drive to Chicago every August to continue working on her BA in Poetry at Columbia College. Her first publication, "Aphrodite the headless horse-girl," can be found in the 22nd issue of *Columbia Poetry Review*.

Tyehimba Jess lives in Brooklyn and plays harmonica regularly to his close compadres and on the occasional train platform. He wrote the book *Leadbelly*.

Marianne Kunkel is a second-year PhD student in poetry, with a specialization in women's and gender studies, at the University of Nebraska. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *32 Poems*, *New South*, *Passages North*, *Poet Lore*, *RATTLE*, *RHINO*, and elsewhere.

Nick Lantz is the author of two books of poetry, *We Don't Know We Don't Know* (Graywolf, 2010) and *The Lightning That Strikes the Neighbors' House* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2010). He has been a recipient of fellowships from the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference and the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing. He is the 2010-2011 Emerging Writer Lecturer at Gettysburg College.

Dorothea Lasky is the author of *Black Life* and *AWE*, both out from Wave Books. She is also the author of several chapbooks, including *Poetry Is Not a Project* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2010). She currently lives in New York City.

John Lemberger was born and raised in Wisconsin before moving to Chicago to pursue a college education. He is currently at Columbia College Chicago, studying to receive a degree in Film and Video with a minor in Poetry.

Shay Lessman is currently pursuing his MFA in Poetry from Columbia College Chicago. His work has most recently appeared in *Cantilevers: Journal of the Arts*, *The Legendary*, and *Definitely Magazine*.

Nathan McClain currently lives and works in Los Angeles. His poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Water~Stone Review*, *RHINO*, *California Quarterly*, *The Sow's Ear*, *Redactions*, and *Best New Poets 2010*.

Kyle McCord's book *Galley of the Beloved in Torment* was the winner of the 2008 Orphic Prize and was released by Dream Horse Press in the spring. He has work forthcoming or published from *Boston Review*, *Columbia: a Journal of Art and Literature*, *cream city review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, and elsewhere. He's worked for *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *jubilat*, and *The Nation*.

Nathan Masters is a first-year poetry graduate student at Columbia College. He lives in the city of Chicago.

Jacob Mays has nothing terribly impressive to report. He's a junior at Columbia College Chicago, but hails from the rusty hills of Western Pennsylvania. This is his first publishing credit.

Tom Nowak is a first-year Poetry MFA student at Columbia College Chicago. He graduated from Augustana College with a BA in English and German where he was named the Peggy Anderson Creative Writer for the 2010 class. *CPR* is his first publication.

Sara Peck is a first-year Poetry MFA candidate at Columbia College. From Charleston, South Carolina, she currently lives and writes in Chicago.

D.A. Powell's most recent collection, *Chronic* (Graywolf, 2009), received the California Book Award and the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. Powell has twice been nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and he was recently chosen to be Harvard University's Phi Beta Kappa poet. He lives in the Bay Area where he teaches.

Gretchen Primack's poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *FIELD*, *Best New Poets*, and elsewhere. She lives in the Hudson Valley, where she teaches and administrates with the Bard Prison Initiative.

Nate Pritts is the author of four full-length books of poems, most recently *Big Bright Sun* and *The Wonderful Yeaere*. His poems and criticism have recently appeared in *Black Warrior Review*, *Forklift*, *Ohio*, *Washington Square*, *Redivider*, and *Rain Taxi*. He lives in Syracuse, New York, and is the founder and principal editor of *H_NGM_N*.

Matthew Rohrer is the author of several books of poems, most recently *Destroyer and Preserver*, published by Wave Books. He lives in Brooklyn.

Jacob Saenz is a graduate of Columbia College Chicago. His work has appeared in *Apparatus*, *Inkstains*, *OCHO*, *Poetry*, and other journals. He is an associate editor for *RHINO*.

Kayla Sargeson's work has been anthologized in *Voices from the Attic*, *Dionne's Story*, and in the national anthology *Time You Let Me In: 25 Poets Under 25*, selected by Naomi Shihab Nye. Her poems also appear or are forthcoming in *5 AM*, *Chiron Review*, *Paper Street*, *Ophelia Street*, *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, and *Phantom Limb*. She is attending the MFA program at Columbia College Chicago.

Susan B.A. Somers-Willett is the author of two books of poetry, *Quiver* and *Roam*, and a book of criticism, *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry: Race, Identity, and the Performance of Popular Verse in America*. Her poems have appeared in publications such as *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Gulf Coast*, and *The Iowa Review*, as well as on Public Radio International and BBC Radio. She is an Assistant Professor of poetry and poetics at Montclair State University in New Jersey.

Abi Stokes is working toward a BA in Creative Writing with a concentration in Poetry and a minor in Environmental Studies at Columbia College Chicago. Her work has been published in *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Eleven Eleven*, *South Loop Review*, and can be found elsewhere on pages, walls, and the web.

Shelly Taylor is the author of *Black-Eyed Heifer* (Tarpaulin Sky Press, 2010), *Land Wide to Get a Hold Lost In* (Dancing Girl Press, 2009), and *Peaches the yes-girl* (Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs, 2008). Born in southern Georgia, she currently lives in Tucson, Arizona.

Yvette Thomas lives in Cleveland, Ohio, but her heart belongs to Chicago. Her work has appeared in *27 rue de fleures* and *elimae*, but was most recently spotted in the anthology *Starting Today: 100 Poems for Obama's First 100 Days*. When not reading and writing poems, she works at raising awareness of Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder she suffers from.

Tony Trigilio's newest book is the poetry collection *Historic Diary* (BlazeVOX Books, 2011). He is a member of the core poetry faculty at Columbia College Chicago and co-edits *Court Green*.

David Trinidad's most recent books are *The Late Show* (2007) and *By Myself* (with D.A. Powell, 2009), both published by Turtle Point Press. *Dear Prudence: New and Selected Poems* is forthcoming from Turtle Point in fall 2011. He is also the editor of *A Fast Life: The Collected Poems of Tim Dlugos* (Nightboat Books, 2011).

Julie Marie Wade is the author of two collections of poetry, *Without* (Finishing Line Press, New Women's Voices Chapbook Series, 2010) and *Postage Due* (White Pine Press, Marie Alexander Poetry Series, 2013) and two collections of lyric nonfiction, *Wishbone: A Memoir in Fractures* (Colgate University Press, 2010) and *Small Fires* (Sarabande Books, 2011). Currently, she is a doctoral student and graduate teaching fellow in the Humanities program at the University of Louisville.

Ryann S. Wahl is currently living and writing in her original hometown of Chicago, where she is a candidate for an MFA in Poetry at Columbia College. She received a BA in English with a concentration in creative writing (poetry) from Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania.

G.C. Waldrep's fourth collection, *Your Father on the Train of Ghosts*—in collaboration with John Gallaher—will be released by BOA Editions in April 2011. He lives in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where he teaches at Bucknell University. He also serves as Editor-at-Large for *The Kenyon Review*.

Marcus Wicker's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *jubilat*, *Sou'Wester*, and *cream city review*, among other journals. He is an Ann Arbor, Michigan, native who holds fellowships from Cave Canem and Indiana University, where he received his MFA. Marcus is also a 2010-2011 Fine Arts Work Center Fellow.

C. McAllister Williams is the author of the chapbooks *William Shatner* (Alice Blue Books, 2010) and *Neon Augury* (Fact-Simile Editions, forthcoming). Recent work can be found in *New Orleans Review*, *ELEVATOR*, *Dread Train*, and elsewhere. He lives in Chicago.

Nicole Wilson is the Assistant Programs Director of Poetry and Literature at Columbia College Chicago and her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *RealPoetik*, *Emprise Review*, *Rabbit Light Movies*, *Coconut*, *Fifth Wednesday Journal*, and *Tidal Basin Review*, among others.

Angela Veronica Wong is the author of two chapbooks, *All the Little Red Girls* on Flying Guillotine Press and *to know this* on Cy Gist Press. Forthcoming and previous publications include *Denver Quarterly*, *Vanitas*, and *Drunken Boat*. Based in Manhattan, she is currently living abroad in Taipei on a Fulbright research grant.

Dean Young has published ten books of poetry, including *Elegy on Toy Piano*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and a book on poetics, *The Art of Recklessness: Poetry As Assertive Force and Contradiction* (Graywolf Press, 2010). His eleventh book of poetry, *Fall Higher*, is forthcoming from Copper Canyon Press in 2011. He teaches at the University of Texas at Austin.





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