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School

Stephen Berg

I

gnawed full of holes like everything the chalk the god-like woman standing up front writing big words on a blackboard the ballfield pounding in my head I always felt being somewhere else would be I was always miserable in the steel deskchair waiting for the bell cheating I would never have graduated high school but the girl in the next seat showed me her answers to the math tests & history

her religious bent a book by some quack on marriage PhD remind me too when anyone needs to sing a corrupt memory interferes final the silent tongue final the day why expect why hope why believe her baby died in an automobile wreck ravaged black bodies in the dirt and clouds move as freely as gods across the eye the universe the wild-assed incomprehensible measureless blind universe of like the film on deep water Descartes’ second step feet nowhere that fiction seized him the way a beautiful woman can lead a man into hell introducing him to the screaming prisoners as if they were really angels must be the words those citizens of hell all trying to organize and break out by making sense been going on forever our poor heads reek with the pain creak with the effort like a heavy door

strange unresolved eyeball in its place nowhere what then? what befalls thee is spun for thee by fate each soul bereft of truth against its will why this unrecognizable godlike one bat in particular always felt right had a thin grip tapering out slightly not top-heavy light compared with the others gently tap the center of the plate with it don’t think wait for the white ball

huge indiscreet cunning trees clawed the windowpanes pressed close she wore almost nothing perched in my fat armchair hands folded on her petticoat exquisite feet quivered on the floor one wand of waxy light criss-crossed ecstatic lips a fly droned on a rosebud
nipple a circle of faint clear trills like a shocked
crystal chandelier broke from her mouth when I licked
her ankles and both my hands chased wild feet
through layers of white lace-No! she giggled clenching
her thighs Oh those bleak animal eyes I grazed each lid
with wet lips too much! Her head shot back I want to
tell you ... I completed her sentence with my tongue
which made her laugh again mercifully this time ready
huge indiscreet cunning trees clawed the windowpanes
(which makes a sonnet of Rimbaud’s arrogant quatrains)

yes but prayer they always they so the pieces they
lifted her dress like the first line of this no
these words are not the black hair fringing her panties
sweet legs crack quick wet lips they are always
even if you cannot see the Greek plays always seem so full
of meaning the chorus baffled stripped of control a group
unable to stop the bloodshed a mirror a pronoun I we they

it’s about play of poetry’s mandatory narcissistic
self-regarding beauteous to try time is the only
thing that is tragic to do something wrong is one cure
it always caused me pain to enter the classroom because of my
fear of being called on blank perhaps other children
didn’t mind but for me it was a persistent terror though I did
look forward to seeing the kids to diminish my great loneliness

I would how can I describe stealing night phone
calls about play of poetry fifty years later I realize
her tone her mother listening on the downstairs phone meet
me on the corner of at 4 sets of headlights flashed on when
I arrived on the phone she told me what she would do with
my cock like you know also discussed her pussy
my father came to the police station drove me home don’t

men think intellect as if writing a book whose real
plot I can’t know although my life is recognizable unless
this is about the future a foreboding not a knowing yes
choral warnings like the wild shriek of the chalk
accidentally pressed too hard in the wrong direction across the
grain of the slate it made my scrotum tremble memorize
and read chapter 10 and report on it tomorrow or else you’ll

I was always precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes
flung out the field was full of daisies when I kissed her
the grass like a green crown always choosing wrong
feared beauty one day the eloquent vulgar truth of my life
revealed itself like a star exploding if love is a mask
for murder it can cause irreparable flaws in a child gods
hold our lives in hands we may spend a lifetime to open

every time there is a conflict between what we are and what we
want to be we act so as to appear to be what we want to be
Freud derived the idea of repression from this simple notion
Weil’s lecture notes teaching in a girls’ school 1934 year I
was born didn’t I choose? inside the dream I was dead
outside I wrote essays on wars and insects schoolyard
where I first saw her fifty yards away blaze like a goddess

whose it call it innermost face yours
the teacher wore a long cotton dress printed with roses on
walked back and forth raving I thought of course every
syllable was right law truth what a background of black
important scrawls existence hinged my wee hand sweated
with a pencil in it took down everything on the wall behind her
associate death my lousy grades nowhere I could escape

associate the vague ominous air of consciousness with what face
motionless heart of truth then once now I it
not to care would be meanwhile you it’s about being
this way although I suppose no one would call it a story
about being at all woodshop was better you could design a
box choose wood measure and saw the pieces glue clamp then
screw hinges on the lid and one side fill it with stones

at night in the darkness of my room after it was all over I
often must have thought about it without knowing what I was
thinking without actually thinking more like wondering
without a structure of words though words flitted and fought
no doubt I was driven to sleep by such futile soliloquies
about an onerous unknown theme it still echoes still has a
I know you recognize this reference to the same thing in your

so it’s over interested in what there the worms did
inside it where you crept wept the first time
I shaved I think I believed I was out of school forever but no
that too was a school of skin of eye of mind or
am I being it’s when you cut yourself so blood appears by
a nostril that you do you like canned foam or a brush and
soap my father loved his badger brush but abandoned it for
a scene on the back porch who could have breeze was a
odor of a instinct told the seriousness exemplified and
instead she income beyond exegete high above us
the railing waists against its white chipped paint and the
one who heard us no more but had once listened missed by us now
seemed to wait somewhere beyond the slanted black roofs of the
neighborhood wispy almost invisible clouds temperatures

human voices fragments of sense conversations lost to us
reconstruct algebra was impossible got sick before tests
isn’t it strange to sit in a room for an hour with people your
age listening to some old fart trying to cram it while
someone else plays ball forget death my father’s eyes
an instance of corroboration and yet that phrase has no
meaning I understand looking for it not good for me now

nevertheless I turn the Platonic sea of words will do or
Aristotle’s endless notes stuck with nothing stupidity
nearly fifty books right now open on shelves desk floor
to the voices I’d like to squeeze each word like a chicken
neck and feel the body thrashing as it dies in the vise of my
fist breaths trying to find faith in speech disbelieving
Kafka’s Language clothes what is indestructible in us saves

can autobiography replace religion? which way what is
not it instead of who brilliant sociological
psycho-logical portraits of events greatly detailed told with
the suspense of a tale whose form consoles us with the slick
beauty of its execution won’t work unlike the icon of the
flesh and blood crucifixion or soandso chopping his arm off so
Buddha would listen the snow suddenly bright red at his

see you don’t even need the word you already know
but can’t say it forget yourself that’s autobiography in
the best sense so that the round Massachusetts rocks you
collected years ago sitting casually out back are the answer
or acting well with conscience whether you love or not
why is it flesh like a constant overstated question unheard
unknown even absolutely clear how one’s tongue tastes

home so by time’s law we have no real existence so by
the ardor of the foot touching cement each time you take a
step proof of solidity occurs proof of movement though often
walking somewhere thinking why words cause a porous con­
dition of the soul or the sense of well-being is so strong you
barely feel yourself pass Korman Suites Rite Aid the Parkway
and sleek gray buildings of the skyline beyond so very
hungry elaborating a metaphysic the sole example of pure ambivalence in our time such exquisitely deft hooves a rough draft of 3 obscene poems: ancient animals fucked running glans filmed with excremental blood our fathers showed their cocks unsheathing them pulling the scrotum out displayed you needed a huge prick to fuck women or pigs don’t envy a rhino’s dick we’re big enough but sadly

we’ve given up wielding our shlongs in public showing off like children frolicking in the woods often I watched men shitting behind hedges learned what the ass is for white screened by hair women have a tuft of it right there focused like a dark flame anything to be naked studying it I also dreamt of eating the deep pink lips that pout after fucking wet with my sperm dreamt my mouth was often open on it as if proof of a soul depended on that act

as if that were my soul kneeling sucking on it weeping (-rough drafts Rimbaud 3 sonnets Defilements published 1923)

momentary it seemed I was here I mean not worried because of the fake translations because of the subject because words were everything while nobody in particular listened angels in holy pictures like dimples when you smile

it’s true the most famous poet in America wanted to be a janitor so he could clean the same things over and over voice some people have weird dreams windows broken elaborating a metaphysic of the universe she bent down to unwind the garden hose turn it on at the wall adjust the spray nozzle concentrating it for awhile on each flower bed until it glistened used the hard stream to wash off the patio then

stood there letting the sun play through it pointed at nothing resolves the soul attentive mysteriously now a moving image of eternity because phrases can’t be erased I’d sit in front of a blank wall like a lump of shit steaming in the sun the neighbor’s cat leaves his at my back door periodically I picked one up once in a paper towel flung it at her back door hoping she’d hear it drunk as usual mumbling

maybe American poetry should be a doubt that doubts everything could produce versions of reality on the other side snow instead of mapping out territories of explanation the one thing missing: humility: assumes we’re blind and does not cling to belief or knowledge waits in bushes its broken wing splayed deep inside the network of tiny limbs deep low close to the ground until patience heals it no
act of will can substitute for this process of inner growth
no so-called cure can force it in the shadow of death
inside its cool intricate hiding place preliminary song
takes place invisible buds line the branches I can’t
extend the metaphor beyond this don’t know the way don’t know
what I’m saying half the time anyway stupidity and the rant
of death’s despotic absolute confidence in itself how
it does whatever it wants to like my drunk mumbling neighbor
who’d stand at our fence glass in hand while I weeded
mock me invulnerably say do any fucking thing whenever she
one thing I loved was picking up fallen small branches twigs
breaking them into short pieces stacked into two three piles
finally at nightfall I’d watch them in the yard neat peaceful
humps slowly dissolved by darkness until they looked symbolic
broken soul breaths waiting for not so un-
surreptitiously innocent about its fate the wild beast of
soul caged admired like the panther substituted for the man at
the end of Kafka’s Hunger Artist who could not eat little
enough to satisfy his ambition inside are we are
you here what a relief not to be called on invisible
watching her fat boobs bob up&down what a blessing when she
stopped turned faced the long blackboard wrote wrote
while the tips of her nipples smeared the white dusty letters

II

Sky walk brave not God why? fear
face always the truth is help I wanted
I refused nothing worked who in the vicinity
several times I separate views leaves and grass
the green is like an institution of pavement never
a man smoothing wet cement with a 2 X 4 like good sex
money in the bank nothing but my right arm eighteen birds

I wanted it badly who could yellow car the wild
touch swim reel kneel spawn wreck doom
the darkness inhabited by meaning I tried weeping over
does anyone? beyond the fence black chairs coughing
I wish after it happened I was torn please I know
at the back of my mind I always but perhaps who is
I remember the black-haired woman a voice breaking too

12 • VOLT
so never not again I could have done it but
inside the dripping mall we seethes writhes voraciously
you lifted knowing the depth of talk nevertheless
some do you twigs gnashing themselves I could never
have kissed it until then wild-eyed leaves filthy with
beyond where so many more too many more but you
still and the grinding noise of stripped gears at the light

reduced having tried this failure of a man this turd
stuck like a bleak black rock in blank soil where why
in they would never the water clear reeds trash
contemplate step back she had on air behind clouds
the big slate tiles like hands raking and stuffing and
each instantaneous lost Glimpse time is not like a you
but I in that glorious place a horse cantered bronze

what doesn’t is I was thinking when I red wool cap and
whose face lighted at evening under elms a wrought iron glider
in which canto was song breaches the intensity of that
stone don’t go that way chances in one mind not
God she opened it with index and middle fingers and and
stoop plead I was there saw it did not understand though I
inside the chairs placed half an inch from the wall always

there is none everyone’s desire no wanted too hairy
huge indiscreet cunning trees and she only it then
for a of course yes only these can simply wait in
reading it you always felt he was a miserable bastard with no
piled so thick it was a hill of heads arms faces legs genitals
even when you were alone peaceful at five came to take
dark smoke mostly silent barracks lips but not against

sick always forgive never unless see sick
I rose from the stone bed try to imitate it rose then
take yourself doubts slimy underneath gold leaves a
blindness not to touch would have inside you you could
feel darkness simmering scarring your soul without a free
possibility of escape you kept walking talking believing in
being able to being allowed to being breaths a

there was one valve fluttered like a scrap of poppies
and one whose large neck vein whose bladder we looked up anywhere at so much without worked-out meaning where
Japanese mist consciousness not but whose in the
I wanted it to be complete until I realized never the same
that day before noon through my reading glasses the bright
leaves yellowing green absolute blurs words in a confessional
human by which we live joys fears thanks to tears turn yourself but can’t burn yourself burn it but at ninety he that birthplace a hole that home his eyes holes but when I placed her hand there that first time she cried out and said she never would again terrifying me who didn’t know shit about sex already terrified by desire by hope gym where I bed where I today the homeless
epitomize our inability to transcend our basic selfishness our helpless greed not see see it as probe the black sockets the hidden work of uneventful days even then I would collect bugs wait until they dried then fix them with a spot of airplane glue to 8 1/2 X 11 sheets of typing paper study their shapes tack them to the wall over my desk until they filled the whole space or concentrate on her face
inside me doesn’t everyone have a face like that inside never to be possessed burning out the mind religiously night forms whispers against a wall a dare to floor otherwise who and the wish the of somewhere far below she did other things without me she never thought of me when I was alone I know never it always an it somewhere sky sea land wood room of mind
where the accumulated names of everything wait to be let out now I’m a teacher too of poetry now I stand up too and write big words on a board impressing the students with it feels like stupidity hold their poems in my hands talk revise theorize apologize improvise psychologize philosophize grow brilliant under the flourescent lights of the classroom assign famous poems analyze
now I’m up there in front of who I was in college still feeling as dumb as they do so what is poetry really I’ll ask just to get things started as if I didn’t know well I don’t know anymore but look at these hand-outs let’s try to discuss the unintentional metaphysical implications of the imagery in or count stresses or figure out what emotional effect those rhymes have in lines 4 to 12 of this Penn Warren poem in
3 sections where a bear in a cage at the zoo one night on a friend’s sailboat in hospital the night before an operation and the nurse comes in to switch on the light a western on TV or the difference in tone rhythm between the first and last lines of Birches don’t know my ass from my elbow still still looking for someone else to tell me what the truth is fact fact fact which fact next to which fact which
intelligence of stars incomplete like ours why is Dante was wrong we begin in Heaven are Purged and wind up in Hell strong enough because we are born to love Hell knowing less than we ever did shorn torn unrebom flooded with such awe the true disciple feels when he has been brought to his knees by a clear picture of his own littleness and lack of like the grades on my math papers 56 71 63 and so on

I'll never forget that day in class the student raised his hand well I've been reading The Duino Elegies and I really think it's a big load of horseshit Rilke's idea of angelic mind vs human the way we are I mean I know he's supposed to be a great poet but well you know I'd rather have my girlfriend blow me anytime this poetry shit can really get you down she can take the whole thing in all the way loves it when I come in her mouth swallows it that's poetry don't you agree laughed a little sat down hard to refute his conviction hard to argue that Rilke's high aspirations for us don't exclude the crude animals we are as we wend towards death we looked at each other wondering what poetry should do what the human voices we leave on a page for others to hear should do to help them live in the joy of equality versification is always a question the basis of music how to get one's voice inside each syllable so throat grain tongue touch wet with its dying lusts communicate the range the accepted utterly lost utterly present flesh and blood self as it seeks uses desire like fire using up a wick devouring the wax it is threaded through down to the candlestick of bone of where bone ends and soul begins until nothing else is left

I guess the word is passion but intellect's the same if it focuses on what one loves on who one loves has loved most still loves in anyone who is loved in the rain that is raining now on 20th & Mt. Vernon St. drops streaks on the window magnifying light through themselves bright beads above my desk in the invisible bus known only by tires brakes exhaust wet as it climbs 20th past my corner three houses east faint varied

notes in the text of atmosphere a plane drones overhead intensifies fades out like a thought about a involving you can denounce the literary value of fragments but so much we love is like us incomplete puzzling inspired by the hammering of ownerless questions it's the real world that matters right? it rained last night heavily almost all the yellow leaves blown down stuck to the pavement making a
slippery floor this far from understanding I want to use these
words to discover what nags behind every statement worries
description story no matter how rich with implication it is
until I accomplish a change in the state of my soul a clear
permanent unpredictably different way of seeing in which time
merges with things into a single vision of the physical and
the thing seen the face-to-face moment between I don’t know
in a recent book of poetry the author uses the word “paradise”
with such glib self-satisfaction it makes me gag as if his
mere pronunciation on gifted lips somehow gives the word
credence among our miseries our constant unresolvings typical
of certain minds typical of the man who wants to be seen as a
believer whether he knows or not where this paradise this other
side is that waits beyond death to give our dust eternal
joyousness to turn the shit we become into the infinite
universal smile of acceptance here now in the pleasure of
existence I believe by comparison in the ease with which
the rhino drops his load in front of strangers whenever it
pleases with an indifference to public opinion that rivals a
god’s the one I saw faced me for awhile before it abruptly
wheeled around lifted its tail asshole revealed and proceeded
to release a long string of turds that’s what I call
angelic a paradise of unselfconscious activity on this perfect
earth I suppose the secret for a human being is to
cultivate an attitude of compassionate ignorance amazed that
one minute leads into the next taste strawberries breathe
see friends walk on ground feel walls watch tropical fish
read spend money twilight quiet nights gossiping on the beach
with good wine before falling asleep I’ll never forget the
sheer charge of impersonal force sizzling between us the
bald man being tried for murder and me who had witnessed it and
testified and made the indictment possible he was screaming
you’ll pay for it you’ll pay with your life I’ll get you it was
as if wind strong enough to rip off roofs clawed my future to
shreds our shirts gashed tattered my psychic place in my own
body blown away by the dream two empty wooden chairs in the
courtroom the sonnet form’s a paradise a brief clear shape
in memory that lends itself to intonations proscribed by number
whereas non-metrical verse seems to exist in the future only
where number cannot be until the embodiment appears but the
sonnet’s abstract presence before a poet even writes one is
like a proof the soul lives outside the physical cracked
like an old coffee cup of my mother’s mine now deep blue grieving for the fierce habit of possession which reminds me of a story about stupidity about my inability to know the real estate agent called told me someone in my mother’s building wanted to buy the condo 95K a loss of 55 I said do it get rid of it I can’t afford it anyway even though it stands on the edge of the ocean the whole family loved it so

at settlement the buyer paid cash less the mortgage I cleared 56K felt zero like putting out garbage was I fooling myself after all it was my mother’s a kind of shrine in blue chip stocks now but the waves so beautiful still come in no matter what I’m sure no doubt someone is filling the board with what she deems important if education is to progress something must be taught us as a foundation

a thinker wrote in his last book ending with the noise of rain in a dream not all that different from today’s cold rain
My Interior

Jeff Clark

One bordello, one hookshop in the buttock.
One two-bit nightery with Wurlitzer in the back.
A theremin, a pump, the rubble-heap of a palace.
Siamese traps, and little pink cocktail umbrellas
for the little blowsy ones who tramp the boulevards
and sepia byways of my interior, tapping the asphalt

with their parasol-tips, unfurling their wings
to daunt paramours, tipping their fedoras to show their horns.
All day they pull cottons from the inhalers that come down my conveyor.
But in my night, they bolt home and lock it tight, and move inward,
and begin to preen by their armoires, and cower and whine:
We feel his first libation now, his hands on the hookah.

We hear Opal, we feel the bloodpump slow,
we hear him whimper, and know the miserable vespers begin now.
We prick him with our horns, we piss in his marrow.
We fill his belly with a pall of hoary feathers.
Before dawn, debauched,
they try to stroke me to sleep in the bath . . .

High noontide in my interior: the red deer
wends out of my ravine when I wave, the little goat.
The shadows of my Frenchmen annihilate my little night-womps.
In my back-of-the-eyelid cinema: arabesques.
My best records are all hiss and moan and tremolo.
Your shadow annihilates my little day-womps.

Languor keeps my body from the desk.
Languor keeps the stocking on the leg.
Glare keeps the little ones at the conveyor
and out of the head. But then, from way off, with cranking
comes my night, and when it arrives
I go to it like a callboy to a c-note.
Orchid

Joshua Clover

Seen in the south of that country’s south, near the wavefront of total war: indolent orchid, windowbox auto-da-fé, the year’s acedia. The flower was not about anything & nobody in the house to watch—not the simplest thing, 12 hours of sun, summer’s cool closure. I see you are curious so let me tell you it was not a museum but a house. Flower in the flowerbox, ear in the air’s cyan arc, mantic green wire. Almost fall & cool between the mountains & the master war,—walking, walking.... Because I am not history I can return “at will” to the house like a museum—the clothed idea of it, each of us passing, minds delinquent panic-bulbs, the flower about nothing (we were not attached to the beginning or to the end, divining nothing, the autumn out there beyond the museum-house still we could not come to the boundary of the funny war, secret heliotropes, orchid in the orchidbox, God in abeyance—
In one version you must convince every living thing one by one
to weep until he climbs back into the marriage-house,
that earth about which it is said that bread is the glue of the earth.
Certainly the earth is money, the phrase "the tears of things" is money,
the revelation of the Woman Clothed in the Sun is money.
The lake is a disc of bright money buying a few plain birds down,
they climb back nervously as you hurry through, plain birds like a plain song,
that moment when four or five are around your knees
like Zeno's arrow, rising by halves, like Euridyce's bread,
& still the possibility they might intersect,
you would be the one who was struck by a flying bird,
somewhere between a blessed fool & village idiot,
the only one to persist outside the local economy,
drooling at travelers, holding yourself, slinging incomprehensible advice,
you would learn the trick with museum wire
where you snap the heads off quiet animals in front of the store,
tempted equally by science & dirty work...

I am trying to invent a way for you to buy me back—
A Space Or All Space Every Part Of Which Is Full Of Matter

Martin Corless-Smith

a number of small lines
of a boat rove through a long block
small more or less brown singing
birds resembling the true wren
any of several small
dull singing birds
of numerous mostly of a plain colour often
which are excellent singers
a bird held to resemble
dark, gregarious
or in summer glossy greenish black
a small European
which are noted songsters
habitual manner
easily set to music
adapted for something resembling
in power an order in rank
a going or marching up
a fire in a fireplace
a mass of metal cast
a mountain lion as their luck
of large mass under the surface
performed by masked
to different axe
Mapping It Out: An Elegy

Jim Daniels

looking in the sky
for what you last said
to me that wasn’t good-bye and what,
what do I find?
  horn beating
ticking drumsticks
of a bad engine over-heating, lashing out
against every version
of sin remembered
distorted by bad gas
some dirt in it maybe
maybe all i have
  a cup
tattooed with your
last good heart
stirring up
the last vague sound
almost curdled
  almost
absolute pleasure
almost a bad dream
dry eyes and the flat
road of regret
or the hilly road
the dark woods
the fat pope of every
dead tree
  living tree
the numb color of grief
beneath me on the sidewalk
a pebble or two, sad nod
of a stranger or two
one side of the sky
warm with blessing
the other threatening
rain or curses
  I draw
a thin line above my head
a phone is ringing
maybe mine
maybe somebody else
making sure I’ve heard
etc. making sure
I’m okay really
it’s been years
my hands come together
in a kind of prayer
in a kind of gentle clap
heart beat.
The Duality of Consequence

Dana Dickerson

There is a black moon rising from the cold ground. The temperature of hell has dropped a few degrees. The climate of Croatia has calmed down. It is snowing in the high desert, it is the middle of April. This arctic wind has blown a rift in my psyche. I can feel a noticeable difference in the behavior of people around me. The arrowhead eyes of these so-called friends, like an outstretched hand curled into a fist. Voices at night telling me: stick to your own, stick to your own. My dreams have become an open bedroom door lit with opportunity. I am caught in the threshold of the-less-you-expect, the-less-you-are-disappointed. Does this sound like war? Good. This is war. I slide on my obsidian skin and say “take nothing for granted, leave nothing to be crushed under the coercion of surveillance.” It’s the war between light and dark, it’s the war between the pursued and the pursuer, it’s the war between the sleeping and the awake, it’s the war between anger and serenity, it’s the war between the drunk and the sober, it’s the war between the traditionalists and the progressives, it’s the war between the dreamers and the pragmatists. The softening routine of experience holds me in isolation. The inexpressable shock of lost contact. Why are human relations built so fragile, so easily broken? Stability goes the way of the moon. Pride, the petty tyrant struts up to whisper bitter nothings. In the labyrinth of green eyes I see a grave over my words. Like water from a melting glacier, the past clings to the present. Black, oily hairs spring like traps through my skin. Is the language of prayer as important as the act itself? My prayer for the prey is a lump in my throat. Does fate follow the arrow or is the arrow guided by fate? I am tied to the brittle threads of my black, oily hairs, which connect me to the madness of my tribe. The weight of this pending sanction feels like swimming in a sea of mercury. My face dries and peels like the paint from an ancient mask, unburying the cedar memory. This is the Spring of change. The beginning of the epoch of transference from chaos to order. This is the removal of hubris, like new skin.
The Deformity of Spiral Currents

Dana Dickerson

The thread of November shifts to the colors of a transparent ferris wheel, it is the steam from a kettle that creaks in its shadow, blackening the walls in a sun burnt haze, it is the heartworm in my electro-static psychic companion, sparking and sputting against the hallway outlets, it is the dust living in the thorny joints of gnarled, arthritic hands that straighten the crooked, splintered picture frame bought in 1943, it is the dark cloud of the stars that slide along the path of the cathode ray, straight into my black and white headache, it is the carnival mask of the murderer, who refers to women as “meat,” as he drives 1st avenue and rubs an ice pick along his inner thigh, it is the swift roll of time-lapse clouds as they grind over a lake in Mexico, expansive as the curve of my scoliotic spine, it is the electric river of the atom seed that glows a dirt mustard grey. November wakes repelled by the deformity of her spiral currents, she lingers in sun down, as footsteps walk away. She reaches for the soft, oily flesh on the copper face of a blood donor, she drinks the dry arroyo air to give her breath the similarity of lungs. She is the unwilling bride of a hollow season, she is covered in orange, yellow and red turkey feathers, with gaudy lights wrapped, blinking around her frame. She is unfamiliar with these gifts, they are new to her wilting body, she remembers the landscape of her breasts clothed in feasts of celebration.
The Recurrence

Gerald Fleming

Four in the morning- the glass of water passed between you seems so hard after those fields of skin, cotton sheets, almost unbelievably hard, and you two sit up in the total dark, unable to see each other, the glass passed from hand to hand,

_Sometimes I hate the taste of water in the middle of the night_, she says, and passes back the glass, and you think it must have been medicine, childhood, and you think of rain on your face in the jungle, the middle of the night & knowing there was a long way to go before any light showed over the ridge which by now was running with water- too fast! Too fast! This is so much better, you think, and drink & fold into the contour of her body.

But her body is not there. She has left grass in her place, whole fields of mud and buried teak, and she is sleeping, where? Your parents will not tell you. And you are your parents, and they lie, and you lie alone, the children’s breathing steady in the other room. Soon it will be dawn and as always you will anticipate it and you will watch it through the east window; and soon the alarm, when again you must meet your daughter’s eyes.
Compatibility

Carol Frost

Never after was life so filled with meeting, with reuniting and drawing apart as then, when bed-hot, filled with surges, the man and woman began to know each other. It was like the makeshift walking of geese toward water,—a settling into themselves and, with a fiercer and fiercer grip, a testing of the untried other. How safe they’d been before they touched and he asked her one thing which she meant to resist but was unable to. How beautiful to keep one’s fabled eyes closed:—Was another’s body not like some bright obstruction? But they, as if they knew nothing, opened entirely, bending to two wills, striking down vanities, feeling what lay deep inside—the darker compatibilities—until love seemed causal, not just related. Their sinuous tongues used the word, over and over, without speaking.
When the woman falls in the garden and hurts her hand, all the blows that have ever struck her, to which she had to yield, seem to return, so morose the look in her eyes. But haven’t they always been there, saved up and partly concealed, so that she could look them over one by one, eating and sleeping with them? The blows live in her honeycombed mind and newly with each passing day establish what she will give away and what she will share.
As she holds her wrist, she waits for the tumult in her body to dwindle—a blue welt is forming under a fingernail—and she breathes the summer air, soft as skin on warm tomatoes. It is hard to believe in what goes on without one.
And the heart learns a pity for itself, easy, coarse, common as the grave.
Blind Painting XI

Robert Melançon    translated by Geoffrey Gardner

January can give this woods
the look of a colonnade:
the falling leaves create
a happy labyrinth, an architecture
where only light can enter.
But you must not hang behind
at this metaphoric palace as ancient
as language. Here are trees
that all will have to be named:
none of them is like another.
They will not let themselves reduce
to the single idea of forest.
Blind Painting XII

Robert Melançon  translated by Geoffrey Gardner

Like day which revolves
through alternations of light
and of darkness, like
a river that multiplies the day,
like a street by turns swarming with people
and abandoned, like a stage set
when the performance is over,
so élan, rhythm, scansion
in which locations,
faces and occurrences
(what he grasps slips away,
what he approaches recedes
into incompletion) are fixed and lost,
so it is the poem that unrolls
and vanishes into what has not been done.
(The need to understand
how children listen. To do that
before going on... )

Two Rivers

The spirits are raining. This is true because of airplane breath.

A "day" slips back and forth in time.

I make numbers, my mother's darkness to the left, soon she'll be
the curve in a 5.

A secret can be used in public if not done in a row. Fix your face
so they know you are listening, then think your new word.
Today's new word is stewardess.

In the now of this she points from the airplane: the lines of Brazil
are simply there

where the dark & lighter rivers join (the joining is

a tiny slash (/)

For a time I dissolved upon my mother's tongue...

Rio Preto, she says. Amazon from the right (girl/boy, dark/light
which should I prefer)

Both rivers have fish that could eat a girl in minutes.

It's not that I can't choose between them but why bother—

If I'm made to decide...

(which is why I begin to love metaphor)
Two Mothers

We had two mothers who shifted their same borders like countries. One did our best;
the other put secret sugar in our milk; stirred it; laughed.

Bosses of sweetness built Brasilia out of little nerves.

How to live without the concept of “being better”? 

In the door to the left I start to feature her as the space;
I love her more than I am not here;
she loves us more though near is never reached.

Less fond of eating, I practice numbers;
the moment curve meets straight in the 5 is the “point” where time meets space.

At the moment it is missing I start to love her—; (or,
at the moment I start to fear it I start to love her)
Loose Sugar

I hardly remember any sounds from childhood. Leaving them out is second...

Little boys from the favelas came to the apartment for sugar.

In the smooth language I will later lose she gives it to them:

tin cupfuls, to their twin existences.

(How blind the sugar is, being passed along and tumbling into little bodies helplessly)

Everyone would have sacrificed something for them not to have to ask for it.

All our fathers stood in cane fields “in some respect.”

Later — the rest of my life — time resembles warm sugar, something almost imaginary having to do with asking.

In what part of _early_ to hide the particular?

Those boys are dead now; in the street perhaps their children’s children are roving bands of thieves...

When I was a child
in a blur toward being better

I disagreed with the concept of “need” —
the lyric you worked really hard to retrieve

Mother’s Language

Maybe you dwelt for a brief time in a language given up for you
or found reasons to combine brightnesses like a picture of a
Brazilian village made of butterfly wings—;
why are children still thought of as incomplete?
Your fingers were so smooth
because your fingerprints had been stolen!
To this very day,
before or after a photo, thinking “sentences” will heal you,
you stand so straight your speech is slow.
You speak to her so well now!
And if what she thinks she gave up is not what she
gave up, there is a desperate sweetness—
Early life was a looseness;

even if your preferred mode is fragment, you need syntax
to love.

Still, there is a "leaking" when we try to put things together.

As a bowl starts out being a bowl, the not-bowlness
drains out of it. Later,

form is not something we remember doing, like being born.

We are lived by what we didn’t have, which is not the same as
saying we distinguish it,

though sometimes the outline of my husband’s ear in the half dark
looks like Brazil—
Couplets for a Gift of Tulips and Roses  (for M.R.)

Colette Inez

Tulip-red, car lights stream
on the turnpike north.

A weekend escape from the city, you say.
Rose-white, your narrow boot print

on a hillside in Vermont.
Shagged, amber-blond, your hair falls forward.

Skates unlaced, blades catch the rays
of the red sun, white shooting stars.

Will you mull over that hour you were made
to come true by your mother and father

or remember the plummet from your mother’s womb?
I think not. I imagine my parents

scuffling through snow on the border of the Seine.
They speak of the cardinal’s red robes,

footnotes, addenda.
They long for songbirds in the linden.

The page of my mother’s Latin text, creamy white,
like the color of her thighs welcoming his manliness.

She learned my cry in a cool ward
my father never visited. In separate countries

at their graves, I am thankful for the sun
that warms their names on stone.

Now what passes for night in this city arrives;
a red-gray filmed-over heaven of flowering specks and jots.

You return from the north and unpack
behind a shuttered window. Tongues idle, skates
flop on their sides, gloves forget your hands.
The dark blindfolds you in a dream of cold roads.

My dream spins a ghostly couple who wave to me,
their only child. I blow them a kiss.

Undimmed by the moon, the Geminids have sped from Castor,
Pollux’s twin. Jupiter’s red spot transits the planet’s disk.

I loosen the stems of your flowers in a vase.
With all that it means for us winter begins.
scrapbook

Aletha Irby

door opens slightly and
an elongated megaphone of light
materializes on the hallway's
psychedelic lawn.

a bird's shadow
swift as an m escaped
from where sentenced
by some novelist
now makes its getaway
sliding iceskater-fashion
along the library corridor.

stand on sheet of construction paper with
stockingfeet flat and close together while
friend traces round them with pencil; cut
out shape, crayon spots on paper feet, paste
pипеcleaners tipped by red sequins for
antennae, and tack butterfly on bulletin board

she does backbends
toes fringe the edge
of a plastic mat
blond ponytail tassels to the floor;
in leotards the violet arc
from a frayed rainbow.

   camera's black and white film
then fries her into a curl snapped
from burnt bacon...

to squeeze sanity,
teddy bear lover,
even tighter
when its mouth
ripped into senility
drools rosebud-printed strips
cornucopia of rags
generous as an eclair
with its pus-color cream.
the full moon
a pencil eraser
that has just rubbed through
to this side of scribbled sky

below, bars of the penitentiary
encircled by stacks of coarse rhinestones
provide abacus entertainment.

escalator a crowded conveyor belt
each student comes with his own
corrugated pedestal
   this month's five-day bleeding
   commenced yesterday
   she wore its
gauze belt of pain
for two hours
that limbed vial
only a handy packaging scheme
while images
words
are hammocked
in a horizontal page
and a prism inside the skull
disperses sanity's white light
into the seven-lipped
inverted smile
of madness.

sky and textbook page
smeared with marksalot bands
afterwards one asterisked
the other starred in ballpoint-blue...
plus momentary pedestals
you make of each stair—
pausing on one foot
in a drooping arabesque
as you climb to rooms with
rusty fans,
blades brown as petals
between scrapbook pages

while gauzing the world
window screens
in front of them
graphpaper contortions
into minute squares...

that’s the way it goes.
Saturn mail-ordered a halo;
upon arrival it proved too large
so he had to settle
for a hula-hoop instead.
The Beginning of The Golden Age

Claudia Keelan

"In case of doubt, decide in favor of what is correct."
—Karl Kraus

Then she woke up calling an initial
and the dog in the trees,
a calling card in the buchenwald.
The word was elision,
the house creaking, the sun in her eye
then further above, that was good,
elision where the clue was absent,
the Alsatian sniffing the periphery
of vision at the profiteer's boundary.
D shouted, awake and loud,
D absent and the dog,
a localized bullet. D elided
but she'd missed the word,
absent so primary, ab
cess, the wound transformed and infecting you,
elision, like some kind of sought for island,
elsian, blonde opiate, or
ab
sinthe, a kinder narcotic,
no where but here, in here do you feel it,
to nod in, cars through the middle,
the dog gone and the sun
strung through an airplane's wing.
Elision, the will of the mercenary,
the dismembered bodies found by a dog
years later in the dead forest.
Or, the will of the practioner:
"We give you no God because him
you seek in solitary struggle..."
While walking with the children to the train:
"We give you no love, there is no love
without forgiveness, a laborious task..."
Leaving for Treblinka, carrying a gold clover:
I am angry with no one. it is impossible to be so.
Stuttering initials over the snow field
Planting them there
Calling the dog home
Phantom Self-Portrait In A Wall Collage

Stephen Kessler

The face in the mirror
in the photograph is “hers,” obscurely
backlit and beshadowed doubly
from behind the balcony’s glass
door, spookily beautiful and strange
beyond reach like a distant intimate
unrecoverable recollection stuck
in the midst of many other irreconcilable
images. I resemble the condemned
moviehouse on Main Street
nowhere in sight, the dead screen echoing
absentee stars and stories never to be
seen again, invisible ripples spreading
economically through every business on the
empty block, customers suddenly missing
minus the necessary narratives, and I
among them reading mail instead
including what never arrived:
one thank-you note, one IOU, one
argument over fidelity
in translation, one clipping
concerning the phantom’s fame, and one
request for money—all of a piece
with my current drugless discipline
of study and exercise, jealous sexual
fantasies fed by no phone calls, fear
that face may never appear again
except in reruns kept in a red box

in a drawer I dread opening
for its threatening obsession—

oldest song in the book, over-
recorded by every chanteuse

in Los Angeles. Whatever became
of that script which made us rich?
The muscle, exhausted, has a downward bent—sags. Gravity works on the sinew, pulls down—pull down thy vanity, says Pound. How did he see vanity, pulled down—at the corner of the mouth, sagging, or was it illustrated on the cover of a magazine—Vanity Fair, for instance, where models, lean in their bones, their bones sticking through, up, against gravity, which pulls down, sags the stomach, the bladder, the form, sags, in the pull, the pulling down of the muscle which feels pulled down, let down, relaxed. Relaxed now, the toes released, then extended outward so that you can feel the relaxed muscle tense again upward against gravity, it can be seen, the relaxed state, unhampered. Meanwhile, a hamper sits, unravels after a time, painted new becomes less painted, chipped, perhaps a reed springs loose, sticks out like moussed hair, sproing! unravels at the corner, shreds itself into fibers that scratch as you pass, catches the fabric of your skirt, blue chambray, that you are wearing, the three-cornered tear unravels, threads, unloosed in air, flap, disintegrate, the unraveling leaves short ends of fiber, blue, sticking out at the corners of the three-cornered tear in the skirt, blue. Mending it, thread binds itself in loops over and over recrossing itself. Still, little ends stick out, unable to capture or be captured by the looping string of thread of blue which does not quite match the blue of the skirt fabric. A red sash holds the waist, binds the skirt up so that it does not sag, still gravity pulls on the sash, string, waist, thread, the hem falls, cannot resist in its attraction (desire?) for the ground, the forces acting upon the hem, act on the muscle under the blue skirt, fabric woven, wanting to loosen itself from its binding, become free to flap in the air, catch on the ends of things, a chair, a mat woven of reeds, unravelling at the edges, a straw sticks out catching on the moving skirt, tatters, a three-cornered tear bound up again and again by thread resisting the pull of vanity, down vanity, gravity down, the pulling down, sag of thread, of being. mouth, corners, muscles, sash, untrammeled, reduced to, threads, to being un-ravelled again.
While I was there lying
While I was there lying
Down as though to sleep not sleeping
Pretending to agree to like
While I was lying there eyes shut
Pretending to likeness
As if sleeping
My bed in that small town
Blanketed in certainty
Green where I lay
As the freight passed
Pretending to sleep
Between the dreamed
Exactly repeated
Shapes of the houses
The young trees
Actually I was out on the lawn
For awhile I was lying
I caught myself lying
Dawn again and the colors returning
Stuttered between the shut blinds
It was already too early or late I was always
“Tired” there the light conversation
Fragile and false at dusk the crowded end
Of some lawn the suburbs of nothing
Another assembly
No one without a “professional degree.”
Strip the bed of sorrow and rage
I was trying to sleep
I was trying not to scream to breathe

Strip that bed of everything

I nailed down a corner of a lawn, with my feet, which were heavy, and I smiled: I was careful with my drink. Above me the words I wasn’t saying (I was being careful not to say) must have been printed somewhere, I think, like a caption: “I feel sad and angry”—no, that was the subtitle, the bad translation, at the bottom of the screen. Having driven here through the edited, the censored, the carefully emptied. Nothing but the mini-malls and gas stations, the pretty houses, the carefully tended squares of green. The caption above said “I Hate It Here,” while I smiled, while I gossiped, academically, while I balanced the plastic cup, the paper plate, I think that phrase must have been printed above me, as though I were an animal, given “thoughts,” and thoughts shaped into words. As though you could see into my dreams.

When I shut my eyes

I lay in the dark, turning some phrase—not mine—over and over, and what I could’ve or should’ve said in return was there too, turning in my head as though my head were a cement mixer: time the material kept tractable there, I lay there in the dark—tired, stupid, terrified construction worker—the grind of the churning stuff-of-the-day (real and imagined) turning over as I played it over, as though I could build the thing (set now, finished) over. From the beginning. In my dreams I say exactly what I mean.

No longer exemplary.

In my dreams.

The little lawns set down like napkins
Untouched at the edges of possibility
The houses all the same house nights
Hauled rattling away frame after frame after
Clattering through the projector cattle train
The boxes of dreams all one dream

No longer a “farming community.”

When I shut my eyes
I saw a darkened theatre,
Light leaking out through a puncture
In the empty screen.

Unable to remember who I was
Imagining believed me
But here, in this?
Suddenly unable to remember who I was talking to, as we’d passed the construction site: the vivid memory of nailed-together planks over a dark pit, shadows in the sulfurous light, the chain link fence that kept us out, safe, my delayed sense of misery and loss—how long had I been asleep—our relations defined by a context, the edge of one incompletely wall the boards held up, I was agreeing with something I didn’t agree with, just wanting to get past this—unfinished—moment and on to some easier (I would be alone again) next: I was saying something I didn’t mean to someone I didn’t trust, walking along together at night, why go over it again, try to sleep, following the fenced-off edge of the library construction site, in a strange—as of dawn or dusk—light, ragged lines of rebar a sketch of the future, black lines (an interpretation) twisting above the ruins like stilled flames, the foundation already in place, did I dream this? Did you see me dreaming this?

What were we talking about?
Poetry of course
Love Poem

Laura Mullen

A glimpse of you and then gone.

Boxes that tick.

Fling? Fling.

The word "just"
(Not as in fair, as in only;
As in I was only...).

The lonely.

Flung, as in violently—
Hearts that tick—
Ulterior motives—
You saying that to me:
"Ulterior motives."

The smoke from a candle
Blown out

Under a light spills
Upward billowing
In on itself in the air like blood
Pulled up from a vein
Through a needle
Into another
Solution

Spills, billowing
Like smoke.

Layers of translucencies,
Then gone.

Or, just invisible.

Tick, tick.
As though another
Sheer floating veil or shroud
Of explanation could solve it.

Anything.

How they get delivered,
Ticking like that.

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I had time to think about things,
Time for regrets, like.
The glowing vessel of frozen booze
Lists: Way a minit: wanna... 'scuss shumsing!
Memory overflowing its salt-rimmed dike?
But your version only, “the” truth...—

Sliced. Time folds in on itself: bed to couch.
The sheets (to the wind) come clean:
I gave the keys back.
Comes, in hot water, the stain of love, out.
Comes nobody back from the said, I mean....
To say what lies still under all that black

(Ashes cling)—nobody, that is, you’d trust.
I sifted myself, things over between us.
NOW PLAYING EVERYWHERE

Amy Trachtenberg, 1996.
Collage, oil, varnish, and charcoal on paper (23" x 29")
CONDUCT SAFETY

Amy Trachtenberg, 1996.
Oil, shellac, charcoal, and collage on paper (30.5' x 20.5')
SURRENDER SOME

Amy Trachtenberg, 1996.
Collage, oil, varnish, and charcoal on paper (23" x 29")
SEPTEMBER, BLISS/AGONY

Amy Trachtenberg, 1994. Oil on linen (22" x 31")
WE, ONLY DREAMS AND HEADS

Amy Trachtenberg, 1996.
Oil on linen. Collection Alta Tingle (25" x 31")
Of Later Things Yet To Happen

Denise Newman

10 a.m.
Human body being of upper half water is unsure of how to relate to others of the same meandering way

Whencesoever said for the delight of it like drawing in the lovers who were no one then

Inconsonant as a girl at the end of the 20th century saying whencesoever to a mirror and winking

Through one image to another.. joined like heaven to a painting of dahlias

*Here and there is born a Saint Teresa, foundress of nothing*

As if to evaporate rubies into chaos?

Life being a daisy doodle using the hole of loose-leaf paper for a center
11 a.m.

Keep the wound open until end...

A worn intimacy found among refuse/flies gather at the crotch where they smell her blood/black meaty winged ones smashed between hand and thighs

Wound is the nerve of the belief that destroys the illusion

perpetual sacrifice
in the name of knowing
12 p.m.

Ghetto maze of a story invented with the first word's
idea-Beneath
    as in foundation: *in the end all things will be justified*...
not out or bottom but has another, problem

You see lines are not horizontal but lead the eye down on a switch-back
descent of unraveling/ backward count after mastering all the numbers
forward so positively

    Couldn’t we go on climbing into infinity like lambs
quaintly passing time?

Unlambly one you were sinking from the start remember? Your zero
will be on the underside of meaning order if you continue rather than
stopping for tea and that pity me small talk
1 p.m.

Out there the calm surface of water...in her the murky below
If only I had days to stare at this lake, she thinks staring
at this lake for days

I mean if only I were this whole lake myself staring-then
what?

The child’s erupted skin who down there dwelling in a thought
source of putrefied bodies (leave a devil unchecked he’ll
roast and devour whole)

What human way is there of lake wound open and not sick?

Water can lull a rock/ No, water and rock lull me...What I want,
water-rock-me lulling all the rest

And in the background
lovers drift by in an open boat and are painted
A History of Tenderness

Bin Ramke

We must not believe that we know whether we are talking about subjects or objects, men or gods, animals, atoms, or texts. I have not yet said, for this is precisely what is at stake between forces: who speaks, and of what?
—Bruno Latour, IRREDUCTIONS

She’d just sit there rethinking her childhood
waiting for the chance to get it right, knowing
no one would make this first try
count, personne is so cruel, surely.

Even music might save us. Someone loved Jacqueline
du Pré, everyone loves Elgar.
The cello she played
was old, and she did so young die,
lamented by Dugan so lavishly,
“cello death” he wrote of, and of
joking away the horrors.
Everyone loves a good death among

the neighbors. To live in a body, words and destinies:
she never asked for any, and
such a danger it has become
to have one, a site for disease and desire.

Anyone could invent a past more worthy
some spare afternoon. A windy afternoon.
The molecules
quiver in the sunlight the trees

the whirling arrogance of the physical determined
to fill the moments. Nothing here is the subject:
the difference between
talking and not talking. Speech and silence.

Of my own ambition to be Audubon, I will not speak.
“The bird, far from its name, flies
from the name that I give it”
If later there was the woman from New Orleans
and we were too young but together and so
stayed forever when the world raged
beyond its own edges, little wars
washed at their beaches.

Climb trees with crayons, and
a notebook on a looped string.
Wedge among the limbs and watch
the ordinary birds while the dream birds
in the books make one cry. Such sweet failure.
"...but continues to fly in treatises on zoology
and the poems of St. John Perse.
The gull is in its sky, irreducible to ours. . ."

Who could dream it up, and who wouldn’t die
for such a world? All full of bitter beauties
and abilities to fly.
The bad ocean of childhood,
more mud than mystery, Faces south, small
sharks circle beneath the flat waves of the Gulf.
A little family stands there holding hands,
ankle deep in ocean, watching the gray sky
and the circling gulls laughing. Not
holding hands, hands folded
neatly each into a self, staring
off into the world below the gulls.

"...but the language of the taxonomist
is in the books, itself irreducible to any
gull ever dreamed of,
living or dead."—Bruno Latour.

Notes: Bruno Latour is French. Personne
is French. My mother is French,
Cajun, a diminished
heir to a pre-literate culture,
a dark people well disposed to shadows
and eerie childhoods, prone
to accidents, often wearing
hearts on sleeves.

No one knows. Everyone speaks.
One day I learned the earth’s surface
does move
and Brazil did fit into Africa

the sun was shining and small mammals
ingeniously opened various
types of nuts.
The children were feeding

bread to geese. On such a day one might learn
anything, but some days
I am simply delighted to
finish a sentence, and all

the words fit, and no offense taken.
Like a Spaniard she wrote poems
to save a nation, a minimal casualty:
thinking in Italian, she despaired.

Thinking she was Egyptian
she died, desiccated, dreamed:
“To live is to live forever;
to die is to never have been.”

She would like to return
to the egg to inscribe her mourning
sickness, her glorious
health of habit her secret street

self, graffito of further desperations.
Morning the flower—
a weed, really—over
her shoulder we see against

if you focus beyond, the morning glory
blue of ocean, gray, it
must be summer already,
good heavens. “The morning

glories grow in the egg,” Stevens said.
Spring was invented there
across that ocean
ten years ago. No one knew better
so the idea spread. You'd think some day
someone would stop it,
would return to the old
ways, the snow and wolves.

If you turn this weather into wisdom
you will hold the answers
dear and distant beyond
that line of cypress, tooth-edged

against the sky. If He has sent you to bind
up the brokenhearted, to proclaim
liberty to the captives,
He's made a mistake.

The weather is readied for spring
and we children wander untidy
picking at our small
poverty worn like Style, outlaws of mercy.

Listen to sad stories: Once upon a time
the man who could not speak
to his wife feared her rejection
so everyone sleeps alone in his house.

All these parables of capitalism, all
words and words. The laughter
cartoonish can rise like bubbles
fish breath forming domes in water.

Perpendicular sounds fly above us.
Still, the old virtues come home to roost.
If a herd of sinuous tumbleweed
weave onto the interstate at seventy

miles-per-hour still words come to mind:
dendrite, scarf-joint, fishplate. Fiche,
“to fasten” Morning glory
penetrates the topiary

like words the bristling brain. No words.
“I remember it well in my
mother's apartment.
It was in the living room

on a wall facing Fifth Avenue over
an unused fireplace” John Whitney
Payson, on Van Gogh's
Irises, recently auctioned.
Purple and green maybe bruised words auctioneer's
the air around them thick
    as paint the way things
continue temporarily.

The name on the bottom of the blind
is "Del Mar." He sees it
when he opens the window
at night to spill cool air
onto his bed. He doesn't sleep and doesn't
read. He sees the ceiling. The casual
fit of the quarter-round
to the tiles and walls; the corner
especially annoys after two A.M. when
he will turn off the lamp,
    the tiny light
clipped to the headboard, too soon,
then will lie in the dark imagining.
    He does still see darkly
her face of twenty-
five years ago; the slender woman
wore eye-liner and walked unafraid
the dark streets of New Orleans
at two AM. He will two
or three times a day invite
that picture of her waiting for him
    she a person in a street
    alone like a forest
    nobody there, personne,
that image of her waiting, she
    sitting on the ledge of a shop window
    like any street walker
her hair short angular like black and white
movies. Like France. The blind was
blue on the room side, white
for the neighbors. It was
    paper like something Japanese and folded.
There has been no sex since the birth
of the only child. No anger, no
discussion. Nothing left
to say, not “slept together.”

(He tells himself this is not his worst
behavior: it could be true. He waits
naked on the table
cold as medicine for her arrival

whose routine never varies except for the sex.
She tries to remember
the last time. He loves it
all, even the standing in the grim

steel corridor knowing they all are watching.
The oldest Korean woman
opens the inner door
with the greeting, “Forty dollar.”

One of the girls rises from the mat on which
they lie to watch TV, smiles and
takes his arm. It used to be
a different girl each time, but now

it is always Kay. Or Qué. Or K. Her touch.
She asks about his health, his
family. She no longer reminds
him of her tip. When he hands her the pack

of twenties she is efficient as any receptionist,
points to the little pegs for hanging
his shirt and pants above,
his sad little shoes side by side below.

There is no window, but the partition walls
do not reach the ceiling. He is
on his stomach.
He does not look at the ceiling.)

In earliest months of marriage he began his affair
with Ariadne, who was never
present when it happened,
who smiled at the weakness of men,
the folly of appetite. He and Ariadne
and her father had dinner
at a restaurant thought
to have once been a brothel.

Her father never paid income tax
thinking so long as one never appears
a name on the records
one remains safe. His daughter’s
date, this married man, after the veal, became
nervous under the portraits hanging
in the Smoking Room,
the red-lined room with brandy.

He refused the offered cigar, and the older
men smiled, everyone seated,
quiet, confident.
He spent the end of the evening

with Ariadne in a borrowed room of the Pontalba.
He was pleased to be in the building
which he’d admired
distantly on postcards. The apartment
disappointed, but not its balcony from which
one could hear St. Louis Basilica
chime, and pigeons
whir airborne, and the various
dangerous sounds of ships on the Mississippi
lying higher than the land itself
between levees. He
leaned with both hands on the iron rail

listening to all warnings thinking how
beautiful his wife was,
dark and full
of some past of her own

even if the good stories were taken,
all told, and all the good
people dead. There’s
nothing to do but the talking long
into someone’s night like an old joke.
Innocence is a dangerous
hobby, not for
the amateur, the happy husband who loves

The cello she played
was old, and she dead so young,

among the neighbors, there is music, too,
adagia played moderato, for
instance, no joke,
Elgar’s cello concerto, like,

like something, like nothing, no word
for it...it is about no word,
nothing. No one, or
personne, can hear her sawing away, still

in that damned machine, at that box
of air (she was six years younger
at her death than I
am now, imagine it) that furniture

more costly than anything I’ve slept in
eaten on, written on,
or loved beneath.
I love all women of fifty years.

It was such a pretty box of air she played
there was almost weather in it.
“I felt as if I
could not breathe”—Pablo Casals.

I, too, wish it were music. You can hardly
go wrong there, in their
world: everyone
loves you if you practice, years of practice

it takes and why not, the years will pass anyway.
Think of the terrible machinery
it takes to make
a poem. The books collecting for forty years
the shelves, the humming computer on the pretty desk,  
the power to organize, oh,  
the human genome, to  
organize weather. The ink. The lamp. The cat.

The awful rug and the spindly spider plant kept,  
mites and mitochondria, through  
the winter. But today  
is a nice day and the sun shines.

That the world is mathematical. No. That the world  
is describable mathematically. But  
*describable* is an ugly word.  
But no word is ugly. What is *ugly*, the word?

What beyond the politics of it, the philosophy? Last night I ate half a banana, picking  
small pieces off the shaft,  
inching the thick skin down yet still  
unable to induce appetite. This morning the tropical smell of it thickens the air around  
the table. The shape  
of anything, of nothing, that graph  
the self is of its progress through—Time? Air?  
Molecular disarray? Dawn, which is  
continuous, a slow  
disrobing of phallic presence, lunging  
(lounging) in the dark (into the dark) which means nothing, the world a map of  
itself mapping  
one-to-one ratios a clear symptom.

You know how lavender such air feels on  
such mornings after, the iris in bloom and  
it all makes a person  
want to climb something, mountains  
sometimes, ice covered. Sometimes they fall. Still, it's  
no safer to have ideas: the man  
in the park on his bench  
has ideas and could be happy under the sun.
In the park the old ambition makes it pretty:
clay pots, masses of annuals, wallflower,
forget-me-not
polyanthus, primula, convolvula, lots
of nasturtiums and a red brick path with moss
under an actual magnolia.
A boy and girl
in a city by the river getting married
and the light reflects off the basilica, entire
eccstacies rise. Glory. It mattered
who was young,
who still alive, and what lingered.

For that betrayal in the Pontalba he desired her
forgiveness. When the decades passing
made it safe
to ask, she could not remember the offense,

so could not forgive. Or I wish it were the movies,
the left hand of the editor white and
lintless, gloved like
no one’s dream. Hope is anyone’s in

the movies, the editor cuts and pastes all day, long
strips of art and history to run in his
machine backward and
forward like time at the atomic level of Indian uprisings

and submarine sinkings bombs float upward
into the bellies of airplanes like eggs
returning and polished
pots spin back into clay his hand is clean

and his art is absence. “It is absence that
receives us”—Edwin Muir. Editing as history.
A museum returns
its Indian art: figures and weapons, pots and sand.

Retrieved by tribes for returning to plein air shrines all
to dissolve in the great gift cycle.
Absence received them,

personne: Keats saw some urn stolen
(the absence of Greece) a documentary urn
  a hole in history, History of Art.
  Remember Home?
When you would read your bright books

and listen through your parents' wall and listening
and reading were patterns of incomprehension.
  There is a generation of boys
  whose first glimpses of nude women were

the momentary horrors of newsreels, the liberations,
  the flailing slender arms and flexible
  breasts, the bodies
  all shoveled into the open trench

military efficiency, medical need pouring them into
  the ground. Concentration, and no one
  to explain. No wonder
  we are afraid, and Anne Frank's true

diary, her delicate dangerous adolescence revealed
  in a book. History is full of shit.
  The men we become become
  the hideous enemy, the cold

erasure that shoved women into eternal naked
  humiliation, on film. And they are not
  humiliated, no one,
  we are not. We thrill at the sight

of everyone's guilt, especially the neighbors'.
  The world's a clear symptom, its music
  and its birds a sign
  of the silence that is possible, to anyone.
Societies Can Be Improved. Societies Cannot Be Good.

Donald Revell

an eye open
if and when
23 May 1810
I found the
word golden
an eye open including a self-portrait
thus early thus alone abstraction not
mythologies

and so in Europe now the young women
pay very well to wear bluejeans made
in American prisons by men convicted
of crime early and abstraction alone
cannot compass the mythology driving

an eye open
23 May 1810
I found the
word golden

Blake you should be alive at this hour
A Day Of Crisis No A Quiet Day

Donald Revell

cloud shapes of infants
sprawl where luckily
for all this summer
is one receding fabric
of exchanges abstract
and hot a solstice
and anniversary of life
for death though each
remains alive forever
for a few no matter
each remains alive
The Latter Marx

Standard Schaefer

Just as I find the other earring in the rug
a spectre of hands unfans
but no one arrived, not even the supplement or a mask
I say goggles are for August, you insist after the cat,
the tail like an afternoon dangling around the neck
it is only a tattoo, a sweater or a tropical storm
on the thigh of a six year old,
a run in the stocking we'd mistaken for police tape
it was at last the finish line

repose
a quiet that demands its cloak but gladly leaves its stitches
holding the breath for a count of five.

even hurricanes have pangs of property

"I'd rather be a professor in Basel, than a retired god"
he said over the pinball machine in another century
outside, his friend with no pockets explains to the undergraduate
"Do you like money?"

If so, I have no flaws.
Position Paper

Carol Snow

At a high tide, standing behind the breakwater, I found I could position my gaze very near to—by trying to make out the (submerged) surfaces of what had been rough beach—the “floor”

so that light sparkling, as off flint, off the incoming swells below and beyond seemed to hover, over me...

I would save someone by intervening.

Or many (vaguely), one by one. I would spare, if not rescue; since by ‘intervening’ I meant to appear (somehow) between — as ‘would spare’ placed me near to a perpetrator before (I imagined) “his” intended... (all of it imagined,

badly: stereotyped, poverty class setting, strangers, an angry, impending... the intended...)—there, between ‘intended’ and,

you know, ‘victim’, I would suddenly surface, absorbing the shout, blow or shot, even, (somehow) unhurt. That time is over.

Heroic, unscathed; that time, “that toy, that dream, that rest,”
it was already almost over when I saw I could as easily...—

there would be a woman cradling a child, a child known to her—hers, and cherished—and between them a closeness I’d (somehow) steal into, my looking up intercepting a gaze I wanted, badly... It was a joke, really.

That yelling again, that glaring was at me? Miss Absenting Herself, Miss Attention Elsewhere, The Dwindler — backing away without moving? Didn’t get it, sorry.

(Then sadly, had to miss affection?)

At a high tide — but where to place my having been thinking of position?—
I was scared, not sorry—not angry?—
At a high tide, as though just embarked (between waves and their...)—
but where to place my having been thinking of position?—
I was standing behind the breakwater.
Dedication

Carol Snow

Now we are rearranging the garden
both outside the windows and in the garden.
David and I.

Now we are David and Carol.

David in a window imagined the pond
we would place there.
Observing the garden without the pond
or lilies or the pear or the hill.

We have made a clearing, you and I.

So let us be you and I. Committed to address.
Carol in a window to the empty yard
composed a dedication. For David:

Loving you as I do —
without skill.
Quoting

Phyllis Stowell

On Fresh Air a woman said a woman
doesn’t know who she is
until she’s not nurturing.
Cooking pancakes for forty
the dreamer runs out of eggs
then steps down stone steps toward
the piazza. The steps
shrug off into sheer rock . . .

Half way down the chakras
the walls slam closed, bliss above
body below. Woman! you’ll come back
as an ant, like “the proud Indra.”
In the last verse
you’re supposed to loose yourself
into Light. On the sunlit doorframe
squats a spider with its bright tattoo.
I whack it — hard, with a shoe.

Midway between belief and act
balancing doubt
while sacking viscous caramelized grease at the sink
sick with yearning — Oh to gallop
over the pyramid roof, the half-dead eucalyptus,
on over the hilltop, the rim

and afterward hold up a captured beauty
Orchis Purpureal
electroformed copper, iridescent mauve patina
utterly female, fabricated.
The Asiatic Lily

Lee Upton

Why did it stop us both, arrest breath,
its nutmeg anthers,
itself like a scald on milk.

My daughter came around the corner of the garage
holding the lily,
the one pure thing she had been told to leave to itself.

She came to me, a five-year-old girl, as if she held the
head of a rival.
I forgot, she cried, the lily breathing forgetfulness

into her, making her forget the words between us.
She had brought it to my hands
as if she already held the life she would lead away from me.

Her future in her hands must be held out for me to see,
a life apart—
her body, her future, the sun shining through

the petals like a tent. We filled a bowl with tapwater for
the lily
and it spread its deep tobacco scent,

and all anger and confusion seeped out of me.
In two days
the lily sagged inward, loosening the curl of its talons,

the grain of its skin going sallow,
drawing downward
its slender pipe. And I think now why would I have cared

for such a small affection as the lily, why when
my life’s love brought it to me
as when Judith entered the tent, fierce with memory.
The Churchyard

Lee Upton

It’s the treatment. It makes hair fall out.
Turbans or not.
So turbans, chemotherapy treatments.
Along with saying the rosary.
The little fuzz kept coming back,
baby faint.
A beauty who walks in pride in the night,
and little pure white spinning tufts
at the base of the skull.
Her cheekbones jutting out.
Touch my head.
See. My hair is growing back in.
Now we can see how beautiful you are, we said, and meant it.

*

And she said, recalling,
I like to froze to death,
so cold in the room.
The water glass had a skin of ice on it.
The collie’s tail half-dithered me out of bed.
Snow day after snow day
I was putting shovelfuls of coal in the furnace.
Once I came home nearly frost bit.
My father ran lukewarm water
and put me in it,
half in and half out of it.

*

Here, bossies, my sister and I said,
bringing the cows up from the lane.
The cows were stepping lively,
milkbags nearly stirring at the ground.
They were going to the milking parlor—
a parlor as if they were done up:
trussed and gowned.
Dragging their udders behind them.
And we were barefoot, with our dolls.

*
It's awfully tough tonight, she said.
I apologize about the tough meat.
It's not exactly shoe leather.
But it is tough.
No, it's not. Really.
Tough, isn't it?
Oh I think it's just right.
I don't know what I could have done
to make it less tough. Not exactly
falling off the bone is it.

*

Where were we, what state or country
could we believe we were in?
Each place slid upon other places we had visited
even down to the first blinding thumping splinter of arrival
from the cave of the jet
pressed into a glacier crust of cold streams,
silvered ground.
The sense of the place was locked tight
opening only when I saw
the ulcerated neck of a swan in a park.
Oh swan, I've known you from a thousand
lousy books.

There were others who loved you—
why then were you here
in this country

a soft spot all the way down my throat?
Airport security pulled a rosary out of my purse
and why not—I had forgotten all about it.

It was from our best loved friend
who was coming along
now that she could be anywhere.
As if the peonies were savaged, all sutures taken out, torn by the handfuls, an old expression of grief, a pile of feathers, storm slashed, a soft synthetic splinter from the center, leaving behind a burned thatch, scar tissue, a crust, a knob dipping in the wind.

Three months afterward, I was on a dirt road. A church was off from the road. A charred door, a chain lock. Thorny bushes all about, milkweed. I had been hiking in the middle of the afternoon. Let myself sleep in the yard of the burned church, brushing away glass from the concrete. Awoke to a hawk circling, an infinity of blue, the virgin of the church unveiling herself. Her beautiful hair was made of thistles and briars.
Make A Function Work

Catherine Wagner

Jon meet Sarah.
Sarah enter Jon's hole.

A furious peeping that is crickets.

Sarah has a jail for Jon to exit Jon.

Sarah's number is that of a sister.

Once a hurt number.

Curls are full of holes.

I had a come back throat.
Sarah a goodbye bum. The noodles came back
and the ice cream came back, the flush pipe won't get fat

and is okay. Umbrella bellies.
Kiss me food.

Would shavings on my head make me pretty.
Prerservation Document

Suzanne Wise

Thy Sad On Arm Longr Than Th Othr.
Thy Sad Wr Wound. Thy Sad Strchd

By Wght Of Brfcase Ovr Thrty Yars Tm.
Thy Sad H Workd N Lac Wth Jws

N Th Garmnt Dstrct. Thy Sad Mayb H Was
A Jw. Thy Sad Onc Hs Lttl Grl Playd Naz

N Th Suprmarkt, Goos-Stppng, HI Htlrng
Untl Th Wf Slappd Hr Hard. Thy Sad Long

Aftr Th War, H’d March Th Nighbourhood
Lat At Nght, Warng Hs Old Ar Rad Wardn Hlmt,

And Wpng. Thy Sad Th Day H Dd, Documnts,
Wrttn N A Languag Hs Chldrn Dd Not Know,

Brok Opn and Flw As F Tormntd By A Grat Wnd.
Thy Sad Whn Hs Daughtr Pckd Thm Up, Nk Gushd

All Ovr Hr Hands. Thy Sad Th Words Burst
Nto A Thousand Tny Flams And Sh Dousd Thm

Wth A Fr Xtngusher. Thy Sad Sh Smard Th Words
On Purpos, Usng Hr Fathr’s Favort Watrng Can.
A Chattermouth in the Aspirin Trees

Brian Young

1.
It is not, of course, so strange to see someone asleep as it is to see them awake, and looking for an empty seat on this train, with bread, plums, and the shadow off the Basilica, the ripe tomato on your white belly, the full moon in your pussy, which shines on the lives we led, and it keeps flipping back to an edited entry on day-breaking paper, something we may still believe though it’s eaten into shade a little more each day, and evening is altogether blank, though splendid as rain on spring leaves, or the ambulance that is racing away, and there is a feeling that is so sinister and contrived attached to this idea of heaven, and it is too easy for me to feel my identity giving way, just as the soft cement rolls off the conveyor belt and into the river, where the ducks have done their breeding, and the whole family has gathered to gaze, though it seems that the water may have lost most of its meaning in direct proportion to our loss of memory, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen a sky that looked so much like a painting, the cathedral has rinsed itself in dark clouds and ancient domination to meet it, and to make you want it, and what it meant when that sky was inexhaustible, and done in oils.

2.
Tearing a hard nipple on the bark of a bonsai tree: “It’s much brighter than this,” or that is, or whatever gets done in our having you to do it, in the enchanting posters of the serial trees that gave a kind of meaning to life on this corner, the full television blaring in your dry mouth, and the kids glowing with “the day” that pours from its monthly payment eye, the body that wants to be borrowed by the mirror, and believe in the land surely enough to sleep tonight, and let the passion of the earth subside with a bowl of cold, cabbage soup which lowers us into the strange quality of the night as it is reflected in the faces of those who have lost track of what it was they once meant, how their days
at the beach had been full of the most unlikely
and beautiful behaviorisms, and I, too, had once been
very busy, and the helicopters had kept me ambitious,
but then, it seemed, the rules hadn’t changed so much
as become clear, and my ambitions only served to lift
the machines, the branches flew away as the days mangled
themselves upon returning, and the local administrators
put up a sign saying: “This way to an even nicer park,
to you alter-Oisin, and the tangerine tea.”

3.
Then we began to realize that we had been raising children
who were even more stupid than the television shows
they liked to watch, and we all lied back in our separate
daybooks, and tuned to the sycamores we’d sold for a song
about heaven, and this tape continues to play on
in the wide-open spaces, as each day comes fully apart
to wear its roses, feed the dogs, and burn from that t.v.
which is full of flags and freeways all transhormonally bright.

We took the remaining land
out of the safe
and burned it,
then, accidently, we looked
out the window
and nothing came back.

So, I went back to make sense of it, and that was a mistake,
this desire to have it make sense for you instead of for me,
that and allowing everything to merge into functionality,
and when our ashes were laid beside us in the cauldron,
this meal we were seemed like it had already been going on
forever, and was it meant to suggest that it was not so
strange that this should have happened? As the mere thought
of the supercilious doctor had suggested that it might?

The guide we were
told to study
claimed that some exotic birds
had never really even existed.

4.
Registering for something once, we watched a woman
pound a staple into her index finger, and we knew then
that another’s pain was unknowable, and appearances
became more irritating than ever, and we wanted her
to hurry with our paperwork, and the man beside her
winced with a face full of rubies, as though the moths
had completely exhausted themselves inside him, so we went
back to the meditation dome to be bolstered by the stiff

bravery of each new hymn, and the believable products
there in plain view would suck the land off its nerve-wracking
reverberations, and hold us over through the company songs,
which would calm us, those lovely tunes and the river

that made the wind leap over this quiet town, though it seemed
that each betrayal came off more casually than the last,
though they were all conceived of in an identical
parking structure, near the waiter who continually droned,

“You bring the beer this time... Forever...”

5.
...in the aspirin trees, with a vein to share.

For a thought coming back to be its shell only,
the ridiculous questions that caused us,
to call out for the well-being of the company,
and to collapse at a bar in space.

6.
In the shadow of The One-Star Hotel,
I splashed my face against the fifth wall.

7.
We came out of the surf,
and everything seemed to have changed,
though the distortion is all the same
to the listeners calling in,
calling for the destruction
of yet another bewildered nation,
to the distress of 12 billion cypresses,
“and thrush through the echoing timber,”
so I’ll leave a glass brain
to turn in the medieval shade,
and turn toward the vegetable stand
in the triangular shadows that hang heavily,

and stick to the terrific argument
called “human nature,” though it’s not
one I’m really trying to win here,
or even make as much sense with

as I think you might want, but no one is
made utterly voluntary by this fountain
with the yearning nude statues,
and only an idiot can laugh

without turning back the sky,
without ever having had to
fall asleep in the park,
out beneath the leather arch.

8.
So you’re found in a different sequence
in a separate, though similar park,
having been rewound without the slightest concern
for your feelings, and being forced
to listen to the bastard idiot
in the presidential cap, and the passion
with which he bites off his sister’s clitoris
before attending the convention
wearing his speech like a costume.
He claims to have been confused,
or deceived by the bankers near the lake,
or that not enough stars fell to him
as he stood out in the cornfields
with the children that were drowned.

And I think I must have been dead after all,
I can’t remember anything coming next.

I’m just standing out here,
surrounded by fireflies.

9.
I like my apartment to look a little bit like a campsite,
I thought I heard myself saying,
and I would like this interview so much more
if this interviewer wasn’t really here,
or anywhere, or maybe just the wrong line
in the long, dark book, wherein the Earth is continually
likened to a machine,
the way it will roll a field with wildflowers
off of its smooth conveyor belt,
and set them beneath
your broken, tired feet.
10.
We came out of the surf,
and everything seemed to have changed,
yet when morning comes again
and shines upon the metal leaves,
the distortion will be all the same
to the listeners calling in,
calling for an end to "sublunary vice;",
though the menu can offer nothing else,
to recreate you, "and thrush
through the echoing timber,"
and this can still make the hills waver
when you name them, though it is hard
to recall what it was, exactly,
that we expected one another to mean, or be,
as the song seemed to have tangled
several birds in the air, and let you be
lost for a few moments in a fading detail,
worn into the hillside with a bottle of wine,
while the sky fell upon its bloody knees,
and made you smile, the pharmacy that opened
from within its wide gash, and the powerlines
that always got lost there when you looked for them,
in that very same crushed and lazy sky,
wandering into the Museum of the Categorical Heart,
bemused and drunk, and though you'd known
that the powerlines were important,
you were still unprepared for the snobbery
that was apparent at The Festival Held
to Adore Them and to Adorn Them.
Stephen Berg’s most recent books are *Crow With No Mouth: IKKYO* and *New & Selected Poems* (both from Copper Canyon Press), and *Oblivion* (U of Illinois Press). *Shaving*, a book of prose poetry, will be published by Four Way Books in 1997, and *The Steel Bucket: Versions 1958-1997* by Copper Canyon Press. He is a founder and co-editor of APR and teaches in the Humanities Department at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.... **Jeff Clark** is an English Postgraduate Fellow in Poetry from the Iowa Writer’s Workshop. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *APR*, *Black Warrior*, and *Paris Review*. He lives in San Francisco.... **Joshua Clover**’s contributions are part of “The Orchid Project”, which can be found in his first book, *Madonna anno domini*, winner of the Walt Whitman Award, forthcoming in the spring of 1997 from LSU.... **Martin Corless-Smith** is from Worcestershire, England. His work has appeared in *Cimarron Review* and he has poems forthcoming in *Denver Quarterly* and *Colorado Review*.... **Jim Daniels**’ new books include *Hacking It*, and *Punching Out*.... **Dana Dickerson** is a member of the Colville Confederated Tribes of Washington state. She is currently attending the Institute of American Indian Arts. **Gerald Fleming**’s work appears frequently in little magazines, *New Letters, Indiana Review, Puerto Del Sol* and *Mudlark* among them. He edits the annual literary magazine, *Barnabe Mountain Review*.... **Carol Frost**’s book *Pure* was published in 1994. *Venus and Don Juan* will be published next year by Triquarterly Books (Northwestern University Press).... **Geoffrey Gardner**’s poetry, essays, and translations appear in *The American Poetry Review, Willow Springs, Virginia Quarterly Review, Partisan Review, Antioch Review, and Phoebe*. A selection of his translations from Jules Supervielle was printed by Tamarack Press as *The Horses of Time*. A grant from the NEA is allowing him to complete *Selected Poems of Jules Supervielle* in translation.... **Brenda Hillman**’s most recent collections include *Bright Existence* and *Death Tractates*. Her new manuscript will be published in January 1997 by Wesleyan.... **Aletha Irby** is very grateful to have been granted this time, on this planet, to spend with the English Language. She lives in Austin, Texas.... **Colette Inez**’s *New and Selected Poems* are available from Story Line Press.... **Claudia Keelan**’s second book, *The Secularist*, is forthcoming from the Contemporary Poets Series from the University of Georgia Press.... **Stephen Kessler**’s poems, translations, essays, and journalism have appeared variously—*Exquisite Corpse, Oxygen, Hambone, Poetry Flash, The New Yorker* and elsewhere. His translation of *Save Twilight, Selected Poems of Julio Cortazar*, is forthcoming.... **Patricia Machmiller**’s poems have appeared in *Northwest Review* and *Santa Clara Review*.... **Robert Melançon** was born in Montreal in 1947 and studied at the Université de Montréal and in Tours, France. He has taught at the Université de Montréal since 1972. His books of poetry include *Inscriptions* (1978), *Peinture aveugle* (1979), *Territoire* (1981), and *L'avant-printemps a Montréal* (1994). Selections which appear in VOLT are drawn from the title sequence of *Peinture aveugle*. The epigraph of that book is drawn from Leonardo Da Vinci: “Appelles-tu la peinture ‘poésie muette,’ le peinture peut qualifier de ‘peinture aveugle’ l'art du poète.” (If you call painting ‘mute poetry,’ the painter can grant the name ‘blind painting’ to the art of the poet.)...
Laura Mullen is the author of *The Surface*. Denise Newman is currently the live/work resident artist at the Djerassi Foundation in Woodside, CA. Her publications include *The Blood Flower* and *Why Pear?* (Em Press, Mill Valley, CA). *Of Later Things Yet to Happen* is forthcoming with Meow Press, Buffalo, NY. She is now collaborating with composer Kui Dong on an opera entitled, *Cess, After Turandot*. Bin Ramke's most recent book is *Massacre of the Innocents* (Iowa, 1995). He edits the *Denver Quarterly Review*, and the Contemporary Poetry Series for the University of Georgia Press. He teaches in the writing program at the University of Denver. Donald Revell's most recent books are *Beautiful Shirt* with Wesleyan, and his translation of Apollinaire's *Alcools*. Standard Schaefer is assistant editor of *Ribot*, a publication of *The College of Neglected Science*, and writes fiction and poetry—a short story is forthcoming from *Zyzzya*. Carol Snow's *Artist and Model* received the 1990 Poetry Center Book Award; a limited edition letterpress volume, *Breath As: Short Poems*, was published by Em Press in 1994. Phyllis Stowell's work-in-progress, *House of Intervals*, was a finalist for the Poetry Society of America's Alice Fay di Castagnola Award. She was named a MacDowell Colony Dewitt Wallace/Reader's Digest Fellow for 1993/4. Visual artist Amy Trachtenberg's painting and collage work has been shown on the west coast and in Europe. Recent collaborations with poets include costume and stage design for opera and theatre work written by Leslie Scalapino, Carla Harryman, and Susan Griffin. Other collaborative pieces have appeared in *avec, Zzzyva*, and *Chain*. Lee Upton's most recent collection is *Approximate Darling*, published in 1996 by University of Georgia Press. Catherine Wagner is a Ph.D. cadidate at the University of Utah. She has published poems in *Phoebe, Denver Quarterly, Colorado Review*, and *South Florida Review*. Suzanne Wise's work has appeared in *The Santa Monica Review* and *Phoebe*. Brian Young's new poems appear in *American Letters and Commentary, Iowa Review*, and *Grand Street*. 
Stephen Berg
Jeff Clark
Joshua Clover
Martin Corless-Smith
Jim Daniels
Dana Dickerson
Gerald Fleming
Carol Frost
Geoffrey Gardner
Brenda Hillman
Colette Inez
Aletha Irby
Claudia Keelan
Stephen Kessler
Patricia Machmiller
Laura Mullen
Denise Newman
Bin Ramke
Donald Revell
Standard Schaefer
Carol Snow
Phyllis Stowell
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Amy Trachtenberg
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