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Red Queen Hypothesis

Karen Anderson

Which holds that
the environment, wheat,
locust, deteriorates because
of wheat rust, the continual
bursts, evolutions of other
species, from its own body.

Survive: the wind's scissor
can't slow it, my patterned
green, competitors, predators, parasites,

like a queen running

to stay in place, right up
to the field's edge—
Ground, moving against

her, perfect perseverance
infects and my body is one
day latch-hooked red.

Example: can't breathe
here anymore, for the short
wheat's stink can't eat the

rust's gnawing sex,
a race, its twisted rot
splicing me unwinged.

What looks like running is

blood mushrooming up
to crown the field's shining skin,
genome unstrung, seeds chewed

clean of sowing. Catch up.
Self-mutation is impossible:
grow fungus-hungry, search
for the field’s edges, trees. *Escape can be win.* Won’t need seams
of stubble, will eat earth, leaning snow

against me to learn what can’t *(be her, beat her)* or can be stripped
and eaten from the ground I’m grown

small and weak jawed but is it *nothing that can be made against
this hand-length life span?* leg-singing

for my parsed queen, to *move through the wheat,* come to me,*
*bring my green wings,* *what*

is lost, mating’s machine-stitch,
hold my own needled shivering.
Some Ancient Mutations

Jeanne Marie Beaumont

In the firm hairs growing two ways was seen proximity to the feral. Beneath lurked the unbarbered facts, recurring pattern that marked the million years of forests, grasslands, a life in trees. 

*If a body meet a body* there begat a mottling, a blurring. Occasionally, soft furrows, permanent waves. Eyes, searching winter, hazeled. Buried nuts, ferreted up, dazzled in a room furnace by beeswax. Thickened honey purred into the greasy pelt—well glossed by the fervent tongue. Further doings and the first solid color emerged, then another, and yet a third was preferred. Stripes lost, furtive in the underpinnings. Telltales littering the furniture. Mercy—to the fertile. Ears upright, stirred by the weakest of currents. Something was winding its way from the sea. Tongues wagged furiously dislodging tails. (At first it didn’t seem possible . . . murmuring murmurings) Thumbs swerving away from their packs, yearning to be referred onward and elsewhere.
They Liked It Because the Wind Blew, and Blew the Birds About

Cal Bedient

1

Ferdinand-boatplank to me, whistling with the breath of all the sea birds. Who extends me

2

is pearl loosened company, like a beetle

3

chewing its way out into a brilliant day in the prairies; for I swear— I was pushed into this country

4

by a few staggering sentences.

5

These Burger Kings will never gather the hems of the mountains about them,

6

nor will an idle Helen, sick because the phantom one alone sings! and moans! in Troy, take ship

7

on Lake Powell's pink and motionless undercloud of matter's every-evening desire.
A fly-sized plane is all the Om in Omaha.

These lion-colored clouds over Salt Lake will never taste a Mormon.

And tom eliot had it all to give away—mountains rearing like salmon in his fishing basket.

To walk down the center line of a Nevada highway, shaking one’s head from side to side to side!

Jupiter

glows over the ice-altar. A hobo spits on his palm.

Love, Anger, Fear— the gods cruise in the Silver Dollar, the Circle Bar, and Jolly Jacks.

Come down the road with me, like a convoy

of the crushed conversations of beer cans.

The prairie night is no Helen that we know.
Tricky in your cloak and pumps,
half the year you aren’t out.
You’re skulking and slow to report
from the other side, although
your souvenir shop looks fun—

I love the tin butterflies and
mermaid icons. Needley rain greeted
me this visit. The place was like a weekend
lodge with the smell of old bacon grease
and an influx of gypsy moths.

At the carnival, I floundered around,
not even beginning to fit in—your country
just isn’t mine, all its peppery sounds.
My eyes aren’t brown. A woman mapped
the iris of one—unmatched beams,
uninhabited islands. You two
have been trading tragic stories.
“Buenas noches my pale pony,”
your afterlife body whispers.
Your hair is sleeker than ever.

I know how it feels—all done up
and your agenda still howling for more.
Look, the hibiscus becomes us;
you’ve found your pill’s worth
of space, one season less.
Antonia, new at the club, says,
"Hold my fan while
I check the towering gray.
No monarchs or buckeyes
this season—only a shrine
for a dead man shot

in the line of his duty—
Our Lady and many carnations.
I’m finally going in where the couches
are plastic in the rudest way,
a scene for my scene.
The spores in the outdoor air

are nearly torturing me. Haven’t I
held my breasts up? Surely and brashly
I can accessorize at a minute’s notice
working it with luminous ardor.
But here the music doesn’t suit
my hat or shoes, my gothic mascara.

Float me above this smoky club
and city soot, I’ll be wearing
my faux scaly wings.
Even the yearning is scabby,
clouds hardly dab the oozing.
Oh burning rain—stranger than all paradise."
Entrance of Flowers

Elena Karina Byrne

No road to get there, not even the rhododendron
which sounds like road at dusk. No road angst. She will walk
up the mountain, her body gathering green as she goes by, this
new green of stopped breath
drawing her in when she reaches the top
to the skunk-weed field where lemon lilies are resilient
to darkness. The cold there will tighten
like a man’s grip under her skirt, a certain
vertigo-pull toward her belly’s center where fear
falls confused with pleasure.
As if reversed in becoming, she stares and forgets
how to speak. She will shrink
as the flowers seem to grow and brighten: flesh, phalanx, flower.
Her lips will open as if mouth meant net
to catch tiny silver-thin fish of last light.
Now, history’s flower-curved abstract
has her. Now, the milkman’s clock
will break in the bottle of sky, its milk-beads
of bird song rise to a vast dissolve,—all air
will turn taut as a clothesline swinging its clean blue
sheets above her, in that same final blue
color from the eyes of her dying father
and the first color she will remember
when at last rewarded back
to living, she walks out
into the open, the entrance of flowers.
Cerial Type

Jennifer Connolly

Where there's a crapful of ladies stashing their unhappy mouths. You see them nightly, nudes and crying inside that window. When they take turns shifting object after object on sides. I'm talking in a humanistic way. How much time it takes to hang rope from tongue to navel.

Hair is a great experience of occupation. He calls Victoria up on add channels. There's so much need to please him. To please himself nightly. Or if the neighbors will sing through the walls along him. It's just that Sari won't touch a crumb.

But she will do anything like a good girl.
Meaning the Rose Bug

Jennifer Connolly

Seeing you—or if that’s the meaning of where you must be walking around the park at all hours haunting squirrels and their split acorns already.

Or if for some purpose you’re scaling the outer walls of this place, because I’m sure that you’re out there. Just watch while I snap fingers and all these wounds heal. I’m thinking of everything at once without you, couldn’t be happier I should say happiest even. Once I had my

vision of things, there was a brown bug stranded on it’s back and I understood clearly. It was your hands

leaving the suffering by a cracked window, which I also am, and left up to its ingenuity to get out, which I had enough to fly away with, you see,

snagging my perspective this bug’s the guide I must follow. The dialogue of children tell more. I will

plant biannual fests for our cracked affair. New women bring flowers as I wish, every love of mine’s fulfilled. When I say tulips,

you watch: they’ll prance down calatunia colors, my love’s a cockatoo in previous episodes, yeh. Which is not to say that all places that have people I find you.

So, I do. “I have seen you absolutely everywhere.” But that is written just in chalk somewhere in the Jacarbi. There’s a whole

stash of grace embedded by my own hands deep to that sweet earth since I started catching on to your plot. And there’s no headsets

finding it. What I’ve saved is full of rainseed, the frustrated fruits of every goddamn season.

But to tell you the truth what that brown bug was meaning, it said to go home nowhere in your hands, just in your hands. But they
turned the best door shut. And the fact that the glass was so jagged, and
the fact that the being was never identified, never given a rightful human or
polygenic name means I can
touch you no longer under spells, which, it said, could lead into some grave
or final space.

Which is not to say that nothing’s come of this. Rather, I am
torn to shit listening to the hands of your indifference pad down all over my
table top. So
to see you, I do want you to know that all the children are not weeping.
It’s just my best regards speared up on pine stakes

and waiting for you, or if the sun would rain so that anything could live
around here. Don’t worry anyhow.
Grass to reeds. I pull blades, sink points where too shallow for vessels anchoring. Swatch blades when gulls wheeling over. Your mighty eyes display above me. If the pitch pine burned down ridges they wouldn’t see you. I raise promises to keep feeding you, though there is no heat.

If my head points to the wrack line, I imagine you can touch it. When I crow out—the stream catches the light that catches the salt air. Tell me: the tiger beetles, while I dream, crawl over. Great hooves much bigger than my body. I crouch to the lowest valley of dunes beneath your weight. Tossed up weeds I thrust forward a waking giant. And indicate the ghost that’s rolling over.

The sea mink and the great auk are gone. And bogs crested in the higher valley. I am, waking through gullied bodies. I try looking straight the days I hit the concrete under me. People don’t know what smelling is. Those houses and wheels on cogs, well I dodge from radar domes down the outer cape. I’m growing less and less in your love.

Still many musts and visions to this keep. I put the spoils into smallest cages I can make. Skate eggs and sponges and earth stars hold spores but sometimes let them free. The clubmoss and algae I strap around my limbs. And carvings I make to know my flesh pulls warm. Still waiting to hear you in all fractured spills of light. I preen the sundews shattered across another water table.
Fake House

Linh Dinh

As I sit at my desk eating a ham sandwich (with mayo, no mustard), head bent over the sports section of the Chronicles (Dodgers 3, Giants 0), the phone rings. It's my wife: “Guess who just showed up?”

We haven’t seen my brother Josh in over a year. “I’m really sorry,” I say.

“Are you coming home early?”

“I... I will.”

The last time he came, Josh stayed with us for over two weeks and didn’t leave until I had given him a thousand dollars. “Good luck, Josh,” I said as I left him at the Grey Hound station.

“Thanks, Boffo.”

Josh has called me “Boffo,” short for “Boffo Mofo,” since we were teenagers. He has always fancied himself to be some kind of a wordsmith. He also likes to draw pictures, blow into a saxophone.

Josh lives on the beach in Santa Monica. About six months ago I received a letter from him: “Dear Boffo, How are you? I was squatting in this warehouse with a bunch of people, very nice folks, mostly artists and musicians. We called it the “Fake House” (because it looked fake on the outside). It had running water but no shower and no electricity. To take a shower, you stood in a large trash can and scooped water from the sink and poured it on yourself. Everything was fine until three days ago. Mustapha—he’s a painter—always left turpentine-soaked rags on the floor and somebody must have dropped a cigarette on one of these rags because the place went up in flame! Poof! Just like that! No more “Fake House”! Now I sleep on the beach. I am ashamed to ask you this, but, Boffo, could you please send me $200 by Western Union? I’ll pay you back when I can. Your brother, Josh. P.S. Please send my regards to Sheila.” (My wife’s name is “Sheilah, but Josh has always deleted the “h” from her name, yet another symptom of his overall slovenliness.) I thought, “There’s no Fake House, no Mustapha, no fire,” but I sent him $200 anyway.

Asides from these begging letters, he also sends me postcards from places you and I would never visit. One postmarked Salt Lake City said simply: “Ate flapjacks, saw pronghorns.” One postmarked Belize City said: “Soggy Chinese food.”

Why should I care that he ate flapjacks and saw pronghorns in Utah? That he had soggy Chinese food in Belize? But I suspect that for a man like Josh, who has accomplished nothing in this life, these trivial correspondents serve as confirmations that he exists, that he is doing something.

One year, a flyer arrived around Christmas with a meticulously drawn image of Joseph Stalin in an awkward dancing pose, with these captions: “NO PARTY LIKE A PARTY CONGRESS! EVERYBODY DANCES THE STUDDER STEPS!”
I am unable to finish my sentence. My secretary smiles:

“You’re stepping out, Sir?”

I nod.

“You’ll be back, Sir?”

I shake my head.

“You’re going home, Sir?”

I nod again, smile, and walk out of the office. There was an extra sparkle in Tracy’s eyes. Perhaps she finds my stuttering, an absurd yet harmless defect, endearing. I’ve noticed that she has done something strange to her hair lately and that, since the weather has gotten warmer, she shows up most days for work in a curta, clingy dress and a clingy blouse made from a sheer fabric.

Aside from this small, perhaps endearing defect, I am a man in control of my own faculties and life. I manage two dozen residential units and four commercial buildings. Last year I cleared $135,000 after tax. My wife does not have to do anything. She sits home and watches Oprah, takes Tai Chi lessons. A month ago she went to Hawaii alone.

I grip the steering wheel with my left hand and massage my left forearm with my right hand. Muscle tone is important. Time also. I do not like to waste time, even when driving. Then I switch hands, gripping the steering wheel with my right hand and massaging my right forearm with my left hand. Then I massage my right bicep while rotating my neck. “A clear road ahead!” I shout. As I drive, I like to reinforce my constitution with uplifting slogans. I never stutter when alone. “Firm but fair!” “Money is time!” Positive thoughts are an important component of my success. It is what separates me from those of my brother’s ilk.

I am in excellent shape for a man of 42. I have very little fat and no beer gut. With dinner I allow myself a single glass of chardonnay. Each morning, before work, I go to the spa and swim a dozen precise laps. Never thirteen. Never eleven. Then I would stand still for about two minutes at the shallow end of the pool, with my eyes closed and my hands bobbing in the water, thinking about nothing. Mr. Chow, who is also at the pool early in the morning, has taught me this exercise. After watching me swim, he said: “You have too much yang. You must learn how to cultivate your yin” Or maybe it was the other way around: “You have too much yin. You must learn how to cultivate your yang.” In any case, he suggested that I stand still at the shallow end of the pool for a couple of minutes each day, breathe in deeply, exhale slowly, and think about nothing.

It is very relaxing, this exercise, but of course, no one can ever think about nothing. As I stand still at the shallow end of the pool, what I must do for the rest of the day comes sharply into focus: “Send eviction notice to 2B, 245 Montgomery. Jack up rent from 600 to 625 on new lease for 2450 Anna Drive. The idiot on the third floor at 844 Taylor has dumped paper towel into the toilet again, flooding the basement. Call plumber. Send bill to idiot…”

Josh is my only sibling. He is a year older than me. He is my older brother. When we were kids, Josh was considered by our parents to be by far the smarter one, someone who will surely leave his mark in the world, a prediction he took quite seriously. But the facts have proven otherwise. I have often thought the reason I tolerate these visits by my loser brother, during which he never behaves graciously, but often vulgarly, atrociously, and at the end of which I will have to part with a
A thousand dollars, or at least 500 bucks, is because he is tangible proof that I have not failed in this life. I’m not a loser. I am not Josh. We have the same background, grew up in the same idiotic city, San Mateo, raised by the same quarrelsome parents, a garrulous, megalomaniacal father and a childish, know nothing mother. Josh was considered by all to be the smarter one, even the better looking one. Although we started out with roughly the same handicaps, I was never afflicted by his hubris, never thought I had to leave a so-called mark on this world. I never wanted to be better than people, although, such is life, I am now doing better than just about anyone I know (and certainly better than everyone I grew up with), whereas Josh, who was so convinced of his superiority, has degenerated into a pathetic loser, taking showers in trash cans and living under the same roof with people with names like Mustapha.

It is true that my brother is better looking than me. Girls were enthralled by him. He lost his virginity at 15. I at 23. But as he grew older, this superficial asset became increasingly worthless. Mature women do not care for good looks and a glib conversation. What they want is a roof over their head, a breadwinner and a father for their children. They like to be warm and clean. What woman will put up with standing in a trash can and having water poured over herself? Although Sheilah and I do not have children, we will when the time is right. There is no hurry.

It is a shame you cannot see my wife because any man who has will concede that she is a strikingly, almost disturbingly, beautiful woman. She has eyes which beg a little but lips which are determined, fierce, without being vulgar or cruel. They are well drawn and not too fleshy. Her smiles are discreet. She is not one of those women who, out of fear and dishonesty, are constantly showing their teeth. She is tall, two, maybe three inches taller than me.

Sheilah is Tracy’s predecessor. She worked for me for two years before we started dating. It was she who asked me out the first time. The pretext was her 24th birthday. She said: “Me and a bunch of friends are going to this French bistro on Ghiradelli Square for my birthday. Would you like to come as my date?”

I must admit that although I was attracted to Sheilah from the moment she walked into my office for the job interview, I did not dare to betray my interest. She was out of my league. Even now, five years into our marriage, I still catch myself in moments of self-congratulation. Once I even laughed out loud, shaking my head and exclaiming: “You didn’t do too bad, you ugly son of a bitch!”

Josh, on the other hand, has never been married, has never even had a relationship with a woman lasting more than a few months. Three times he had to borrow money from me to pay for his girlfriends’ abortions. It is a good thing, these abortions, considering the kind of father he would have made.

I haven’t told you about the incident which prompted me to get rid of him the last time he came to stay with us.

He had been brooding in front of the TV all week, drunk on my wine. When he wanted to borrow my car one night to go into town, I was more than happy to oblige. I even gave him 20 dollars for beer. He left at 8 o’clock and came back at around 1 in the morning. I could tell immediately that he had a girl with him. My wife was asleep but, as usual, I was up reading. Each night, before bed, I try to take in at least 12 pages of a good novel. Although a businessman, I do not neglect to develop the left side of my brain. On that night, if I remember correctly, I was
reading The Joy Luck Club by Maxine Hong Kingston.

Since the guest room is adjacent to the master bedroom, I could hear their voices fairly distinctly. Josh was talking in a near whisper but the girl was loud. She was black. I could never recall him dating an African-American girl or showing any interest in black women and was a little surprised by this fact. Of course, playing the saxophone, he was always listening to the great black musicians. They were haggling.

"Please."
"You don't got 40 bucks?"
"I only have 10."
"Uh uh."
"I'll give you my jacket." It was actually a ski jacket I had lent him.
"I won't even suck your motherfuckin' white trash dick for that motherfuckin' boo sheeiit jacket!"
"Please."
"Get me the fuck out of here!"
She left.

It was over in less than a minute. I was so startled by such an unusual incident occurring in my own home that I had no time to react. Maybe I was a little disappointed that something even more bizarre did not happen. My wife had slept through the entire episode. She could sleep through anything: car alarms, sirens, earthquakes. I looked down at her serene, distant face and felt an overwhelming urge to penetrate.

A week, maximum, I decide, massaging my right thigh as I turn into the driveway. We live in a split-level three bedroom house with a two-car garage, in an upscale, multi-ethnic neighborhood. My brother is standing inside the plate glass window of the living room, waiting for me. He has on a dirty-looking baseball cap and a black T-shirt. When he comes out of the house, I notice that he has put on weight just in the past year. He has never taken care of his body, never eaten right, never exercised. He trots down the sloping brick path leading to my car, smiling shamelessly. My brother is always most obsequious during the first few days. Sheilah is nowhere to be seen. I step out of the car. "Good to see you, Boffo!" He practically screams. We hug.

"How.. how.. how are you?"
"Can't complain!"
"Howsa, howsa.. Mustapha?"
Josh looks confused. Then he says: "Mustapha died in the fire."
A professional con man, my brother. I place a hand on the back of his neck and start to massage it without thinking. I lead him into my house.
IN WIND: (A) PAPER
[prelude]

Molly Lou Freeman

Hovering word by word
a paper unfolds in wind
    depending on
    a series of et ceteras.
The paper swoops to and to the sidewalk
    (as if it were a bird)
and there the curb elides the fragment—
    the and only and
nevertheless without an argument,
    a statement meaning that
    a word drowses in ordinary daylight.
If someone shoos a paper with an umbrella,
    it often takes repose against a wall . . .
there the paper shrugs,
    released. The paper is aloof again:
    rolling over and over, it describes the roller
    -skater.
If fluttering
to the river
    the paper nods
    to ripples with a yes and yes,
then subsiding sideways as if to suggest, no
    not that.
In a gassy updraft a city map twists into
    a transparent sandwich tissue. The tabloid page
distorts in gusts
    tossing other papers into a joy
    of dots—of snow
now dissolving
so that I cannot tell how
    this begins
IN WIND: (A) PAPER

Molly Lou Freeman

In profile, the paper describes a single line, floating in air above the sidewalk where the pigeon, too, moves sideways, most often of a motion not the wind's.

A gust revises the paper's gesture, so that the paper flutters to the river rippling with a yes and yes then subsiding sideways to suggest no, not that. Whereas the bird alights specifically considering this twig, that square, where here is a beginning and there an arrival, the paper always only beginning a motion, then revising it, crossing the street halfway, rustling, settling as a shadow, swimming in air again, swerving to precede the pedestrian, having returned to trace the motion of the bird, then skating through air, then rolling over and over to describe the roller skater, rolling off... Someone shoos the paper with an umbrella. Often it takes repose against a wall.

*

Above the paper, gulls are turning motionless. Encircling the paper a gust of wind unfolds so that it hovers, rippling toward the gulls and far above the walking pigeons.

The paper measures the city as a room without a ceiling—Walls and doorways rippling around the curve of buildings (the wind decays.)

One window becomes another, tilting
avenues, slanted alleyways, winged statues . . .
Whereas the umbrella, with feet beneath it, rests
beside a fountain,
the paper having passed from here to there.
And now the paper glides around an edge,
forming a parapet, a corner
whose angle rearranges
into motion.

*

The paper proposes each
by each
maneuver in a gassy updraft.
The pigeon is hurried up into a dot
then always down and down into a bird again.
One sees the gull as never a dot and sometimes
a line and always a bird,
each day a sequence of giving over to, returning to
the same slightly different place—
the bird always belonging somewhere—
folded beside a tree or fountain. The paper’s flight appears
its own
pretense, of progressing to the same indifference
so change becomes abstract,
circles dissolving into an eddy, the paper curving into shape—
a hedge. For days the constant
departure of the scene, leaving
as much distance behind as before each nuance, each movement.
The past increases as far as this

*

and never an arrival to . . .
Each corner
a vanishing point.
Each horizon dissolves into another.
Et cetera . . .
The paper blown,
pitching along beside the little dog . . .
The city becomes a staircase through the city, glinting.

Now the bay is disappearing behind the barge,
the river dissolving
the paper surface of a sandbar.
    And there are other surfaces:
that streamer following
the tiny plane suggests a certain kind
of paper— what does it say?
The paper arcs toward an edifice
where the pigeon departs.
Above the boulevard
    The wind explains it is a paper—
left in a branch where wind still floats,
extends into a gust, then leaves, returning soon enough
to influence the paper to the surface of the sidewalk
(as if it were a bird).

*

Where the curb elides, the paper displaces
a word drowsing in ordinary daylight:
the dot and line suspend,
the paper rests in air
    never wholly taken in
(before)
    between
blank wall,
    blank sky
light saturates this very surface.
The Wild Palms

Karen Garthe

Actual Clairvoyance

It’s like dice

To bring her here to sealevel Now

There would be glitter on the tide-chopped water

A vicious fabulous quality

Vanished upward which rich massy air

Mazy

Burlesque looked demure

Looked as if you could walk on it?

The skiff moved in a nimbus

The skiff passed Vicksburg

The woman had ceased

That is night had completely come

Follow the poles

Follow

The bayou

Actual clairvoyance

Like little dice against the stones
the arms of the Kirov

Karen Garthe

gathering in
pooling
furrowing
aisle swans
tulle
a blue fed lake
uphold
flanged palms
stave evil
is
enchantment
just so
this corps
is Entity
their
eyes
sly to Odette’s ideal
dervishing
spot
more downy
more
plus
extremely
arms the moon
she keels and beats
with
the tops of
her hands
oscillate a mortal
cove
of damsels
trained to birds
that flock
without parole
Rainbows, grasshoppers, red seas combined,
if there were a prophet I would listen.
Carefully I attend
to the rattle of sticks,
the breaking of leaves.
I look up at the sky;
Ask the body says, Ask!
What action today?
What inference?
In this city 30 churches torn down,
for lack of heat—nickles, dimes—
falling down.
Such a noise disturbs, regardless.
Ridiculous to think the theme changed.
The attractive (attract
because they) do not cringe?
I ask this of God in a fit
of bad behaviour.
One cannot begrudge the snow the spring,
its misty purifier.

Speechless
I would like to write all day long.
Four to a table. Round tables, so that some
must turn away to see the president speaking
and are at a disadvantage when it comes
to finding what they want in the pages on their laps and knees.
Most noticeable here is the hair, the thick and just-cut
hair the women speak out from and beneath,
and the various valid ways to have it fixed this year.
Pens are rummaged from purses and coffee percolates
in back, near the cut-up cake. And it’s from back there,
after a report and closing joke from the treasurer,
that the newcomer makes a suggestion the president
doesn’t hear until she says it again a measure
louder. No less than six looks exchange, quick
and taut, between new and past committee chairs—
Out of order, Out of order! Overslept!
—but they let her talk on, uncorrected.
Turning back to the matter, then, that they once were
speaking of, is done in the upper torso and head
of each woman. Like a key. As her father would.
Family Reunion

Valerie Hanson

Down the down the
try to touch
hem of her dress
at her wedding—each of us
in eyelet around
and clink of glasses for the toast

and in the uncle’s opera glass
wince—us
overwhelmed as one of each:
one dress per lens’s focal
point we, little,
captured into identical.
Joshua Harmon

Torn page, promising route, a proposition considered. It is a winter’s tale. Snow, fields, woc sounds loosed from any lost moment, gone, successful in generalization. Only say image’s hesitant turning answers speech currency would. Lanterns lifted, affect an indifference, rest Lack of definition. Original plans now lost. The poet’s apostasy in a darkened wood. To bui fire.

imagined oceans, he has augmented the future of the

One scene occasional, the first of a series, or at the beginning

signatures indelible accomplice’s word taken as

A white sentence conceals here disparities in punctuation

not to bear repetition proffered in exchange a prayer

Of course it is no longer precise, the tedium of narration, the snow
“It’s in the weeds, yank the mother.” Mud, we were sitting in dry mud looking out for snakes just in case we forgot where we were. Back down the side of Forty Foot. They say folks used to jump off that bridge. We spent every summer moment there. It was our own backyard. For a brief moment he was here, ‘round our age, a little older or a little younger, made us laugh with his slang, coated with a sharp smile radiating things that we didn’t know. Me and my brother came from a long line of upstate weekend pristine Catskill on the Eusopus kind of fishing. “Cornmeal, whooooo, a little bacon fat. Them gooood. Shit, your ass will be shaking when your pole slams into next week your momma calling.” He was a Nubian shaman calling the water to shift. Fish always snatched his bait first even though ours were less then 6 feet away. We were enamored, mutual, yet distanced, mutual. He lived up Townline Road in a big old broken down house that sat far off. Seemed lonely, peaceful, isolated. A small island in a ocean. A refuge and a lifeboat.

He taught us the Y. The tree branch with a Y in it stuck into the ground, pole between, propped in air. “Snatch it back and hold it when the tip flips.” Carp, he’d take them home, we wouldn’t, bottom feeders. Catfish, we’d both take ‘em home, keepers, bottom feeders. He’d have turtle soup if he was lucky enough to snag that prize. “The line will bend over and then just sit there, there you go, just like that. Wait 3, 4 times. Pull hard, away from the weeds! Shit, this ain’t pussyfooten. Would of been damn fine eatin’.”

We’d ride our bikes home navigating like boats coming into the harbor up Sickletown Rd ‘til a large smile and nod would say goodbye. 4th day, “Got some water?” He followed up the driveway, never thought twice about it. Let the water run from the hose ‘til cold. We passed it around like a bottle of bourbon even though we were glad it wasn’t, we were only ten. There he was, he had been to our house. Down the driveway he went, disappeared passed the eight maple trees. Door slammed. “Don’t you ever let him drink out of the hose again with you, you’ll get some kind of germs. Who was that, where did you meet him?” She was livid. Mother of the surprise. Mother of the irrational. Mother of the racial. My face flushed with shame. This is not happening. He was the fishershaman of the Nubian desert.
Andrew Long

4 minutes, can you give me just 4 minutes? No more, no less...then you can go on with whatever you were doing. Where to start is confusing... I went thru my first mid-life crisis when I was 11 years old. There was nothing neurotic about it—more Albert Brooks then Woody Allen. Spent the time in our basement playing with a train set placed up on a sheet of plywood near the furnace. The furnace growling loudly, the black Lionel engine whisking round and round. I would set objects on the track—a cow propped atop faded blue building blocks. Watch the train zoom round, choo choo, steam bustling up, grinding wheels down the track and then smack. I got a car, I was 13. Kept it hidden in the deserted apple orchard back 'round the Miller's old house. A 1967 creme Chevy Nova, 4 barrel Holly caruretor, chrome mag wheels, 60's on the front and 80's on the back. At night, I'd place my hand on the handle of the basement door and like clockwork my mother would ask, just above a whisper, “where are you going dear?” “Out.” It was the only thing I said. Everytime. Down the hill, past the tall picket fence where westeria would bloom come spring, I'd rev up my dream and drive. Fast, faster, windows rolled down with wind splashing my face under the open sky I'd ride, radio diving the sounds only heard out late night. Like clockwork, her voice rolling down the green shag carpet over the stairs. “Where are you going dear?” Out. Out of the house. Out of my mind. Out of this world. No one ever knew where I was going, and neither did I. It was like I had more yesterdays behind me then tomorrow's in front.

I once flirted with the idea of becoming an astronomer. But how could I? Always feeling like a small ant on a ten mile high pile of mid-life crises piling up as I stood before my imaginary colleagues to announce a startling new discovery that the universe started three trillion years earlier. Hell, I couldn't even stand in a ticket line at a movie theater during an experimental film festival a few weeks ago. I overheard a conversation behind me about a film in which one character turned to the other and said, “I only have 30 summers left”. 30? So I left. I immediately went home and covered myself with every blanket I could find and went to sleep. I had this dream filled with fantastic colors, more vivid then I ever had before. All my dreams are usually in black and white, playing backwards where the film credits at the end of the film play first. Sometimes it's just the ending of the film, played backwards of course. But this time it was different. There were previews first, just like in the movies. There I was on the big screen. There was this car barreling across a deserted field and I was steering wheel.
I could feel hands gripped tight around me, the radio blasting Del Shannon, “you little runaway.” Thunder cracked, lighting struck the car. Like a 4th of July Christmas tree I was having a full fledged mystical experience of the Castaneda kind. I then suddenly awoke to the flutter flutter flutter sound of a migrating velvet red cardinal standing outside my window and I realized then that I was not alone.
Metaphysic, With Bird

Tod Marshall

A window allows that language struggles to translate, that the verb, that verb falters.

O that it falters. And rises again. That this window allows a cardinal in the backyard to flash across a stretch of glass and then vanish into a now-it's-gone absence, a silence of eye and ear and mind that follows the trail of feather and light to dreams of perfect birdness, perfect cardinal in the back-yard, with a verb, to flash to fly to. That verb falters, that the verb, that the window allows.
Susan McCabe

A clouded leopard stares through crosshatched light-floods at houses floating backwards, ductile receptacles of dust.

Let's go back to the green bicycle, birds quickened, from all this tatterdemalion nesting in a half-remembered brackish hat.

Angel swinging her arms in a lowcut blouse.

I want to put my finger into the leopard's mouth let it bite..., the absent thing vibrantly absent. In the darkness sweetness eats.

Birds billowing everywhere. (Is this a way of becoming another?) Lies are truths floating backwards, ductile receptacles of dust.

Let's go back to the green bicycle, birds flying out of sleeves, bicycle wheels turning: I'm being pulled into leafy mist.

Bitten by sky, a sleeve shudders. My arm waves to me from afar. Temporary whitenesses cresting—

Papillae of a pink wet tongue. I am already somewhere else.

Angel swings her arms, just the wild flotilla of her skirts ... vanished

I never saw a ------, yet I know it exists. Further and further darks. The sky- smeared ink.
Over A River Do You Hear The Water

Susan McCabe

Do you learn do you learn do you learn don't we all remembering is learning you do remember do you learn do you

if remembering is learning do you then it happens in hills of smoke if you cannot recollect can you can you learn what do you know

what do you know do you learn a slender garland pencilled around the rim of the page do you know do you remember the slender one

learning to look away is not knowing not remembering to look is not to not to learn not to sing not to draw but then what then is learning not to

the cat howling not remembering through the screen door is heaven

not to remember can you smell them can you smell them when they move farther away can you recollect them when they drift under your house

when your house has been built over a river do you hear the water do you feel it do you smell it flow can you learn from the slender one

the garland that you draw looking for the grasses that you gathered you kept them under the house you remembered you might choose
do you drift is this water and dirt
is this learning this dull pace
of numbers knocked out
because they added up is this them

that you gathered now turned yellow
can you remember can you remember
how he looked how he knew he
was on his way to never returning

at night when you sleep do you rock
do you learn as the water rushes
under you under your grasses under
not adding up under garland one
There is a Dislocation

Susan McCabe

First, there is a mouth. Something sinks to the surface. Swim the skin.

Ounces in dust on the ribbons. Her hair fell on the floor. The trees were full of Rebecca. Art was outside the book. Analogy is a sister.

How a body does not vanish how it can’t stop itself from within from next to how it moves

There is a dislocation. Mantle slips and there,
the starry night of slats—
through rectangular portholes,
there has never been a starrier.

There is no destruction.

Like the mantle and the light and the crackling underwear.
Like them all, dazzles.
There is a barrier to the coziness of lightning.
The dahlias clamour for more skyliness.

There is no analogy. Torch to underwear.
Flatness to radiance.
Star inside every broken twig
of cottonwood, won’t you talk?

God can never have enough scars.
Seeing is enough to cover
any face in ash.

Mixtures are bright.
I want a thin lid for my face. Make all the necessary perforations.
Are you wearing your feet.

Shutting our eyes can be enough.

Have you seen my elm coat or my thistle scarf. Ash coats wear well, they flutter eaten from the inside. My kisses shall be—
tilt the horizon.
The way an exit resembles an entrance to a fluffling sea,
the glass just tipping the table over.
The Rapture

Wendy McClure

The vistas like sieves from here.
Nights like synaesthesia as in.
Light or sound baiting the wires.
For if some of us wished to be led.

Nights like synaesthesia as in.
The desolate town in the ode.
For if some of us wished to be led.
Through another surface like water.

The desolate town in the ode.
Its country secret but visible.
Through another surface like water.
But something foreign that wavered.

Its country secret but visible.
Still while the firmaments emptied.
But something foreign that wavered.
All along the gauges read dead.

Still while the firmaments emptied.
First the relics then our eyes.
All along the gauges read dead.
To the end on a talisman bearing.

First the relics then our eyes.
The infidel captives would covet.
To the end on a talisman bearing.
Some beasts dismantled by stars.

The infidel captives would covet.
The vistas like sieves from here.
Some beasts dismantled by stars.
Light or sound baiting the wires.
For Emily

Beth Murray

the grandmother willow tree she is very old
you can tell by her sweeping branches
pure silver forks mixed with the metal ones

she let it all down the falls
morning after her stroke
watched her silver in the water and sun
hair turned white in one night

kept calling it the nursing home
though that was done
letting go of her knee
que buena suerte
a whole night of translations
three sips and falling back to sleep again

did her nails and steamed her glasses
when I kissed her the second cousins cried
her dignity: a hawk's nose
against the makeup put on her

if and given a bird just come
she will have a small rectangular one
dates flush with the grass
a precise depth, making space for the others
*M*

Beth Murray

I put his heart
beat upon my breast
wished him freedom from the respirators

now step out on the green
your cart is waiting
The definition of dreams one hundred years ago would not do for the present age.
One example, to hear pinecones falling from trees or ride a powerful city in search of the definition of dreams.
This evening might do for the present age.
In time, those cities will teach something that it’s not yet time to hear, something we can’t bear yet.
And those voices will be marks on a different kind of ruler, that hasn’t been laid down yet.
But it will be, and yet begin to measure.
We’ll struggle in the package of ourselves to equal it.
We can trace ourselves back to the hulk of sun, bypass most of where we came from.
It hasn’t finished shining yet.
Even when it helped itself arrange the other half of me, it hadn’t yet.
GIVER OF OBLIVION
Barbieo Barros-Gizzi
12" x 23.5" collage 1996
MANIFEST DESTINY
Barbieo Barros-Gizzi
24" x 48" collage 1997
Life in this time, you
walking, bound by fabric
leather, elastic
cuffs of your sweatpants and lines
of your bra, breasts that fall loose
when you bend to retrieve
books, dirty in stacks. Life
in constrictions, hairs
duly-bound to curling
ironed to flatness, nesting
in patches. Angled with razors.
Underneath these, the head
does its thinking. You are
taut in your kind of
irreconcilable beauty. Those thoughts of
looseness. Not naked but
covered by things that aren’t
tight. He lifts his weights in
the kitchen. Muscle.
You pour out of your body, loose
waves of skin.

After sleeping, the mornng. Drinking
coffee, binding your thoughts up.
Such tightness of mind. Feathers on the end of
the arrow. Constructed
for flight. Maximum
distance. Let fly they
land, poking the target. And buzz with that
taut hum of puncture.

On your feet, after rising, you make
the same sound.
Lovers

Kaya Oakes

One's own face begets another.

Wrong, I think, to be aroused by the crinkle-eyed visage of my neighbor, the one who smokes behind the cypress tree, counts off his little daughters, and goes inside.

Also the possibility that sex is loveless. Drunk, he likes to think. Otherwise, he hates it; the images, smells inside his head like irritating, wingless bugs.

Black coffee on the porch at two. Then children are let into their houses. Caretakers line this street, and every other morning gardeners come out with gas powered blowers to clean it up. I manage celibacy from time to time. Unthreatened by fidelity.

The hard part, though, is picturing lovemaking when it snows outside. This seaside basin with its ugly air will not allow it. Once, I drove with boyfriend #6 to Arizona in December made love in the front seat of a truck, no heater. But here in Berkeley spring, there is no way to hang that image up; cold steering wheel against the ass, cold fights across the desert into Colorado.

Between two sides the street breaks up my vision. There is a narrow place where I watch him at night, receding back into his parenthood as if he were a motel clerk. And me, long distance truck driver, left thigh that hard from shifting
Three weeks earlier they'd met and married — then she fled — sailed off in a Huff — and winds whinnied through the ship — and star— Entangled whys pocked the fictive fields of sea. —

Did she lament as she Lay on her berth at the bottom of the boat?

Would she explain Afterwards?: — She As She Was, “I as I am,” racing to become Native to herself. —

Because he had jibed, “Your face folds up, Dissolves, purses, puckers, crimps like a dry Sponge.” —

Why? Why had they married? A frenzied Swarm of bees cruised the canopy above their Heads. Three fiddles whined under an unmagical moon, An immense sea, harbors at its feet, Roared like a cannon down the corridors of their hearts.

Passage to America— was it for that? Or not to be alone For even a minute more? Or to live in a six-storey walk-up, to Earn a hand-to-mouth wage, to bury the corpse of their dreams, Always to feel alien, one foot here, the other in the old country? Tasting the difference, every day starved for the leftover plate, but Unable to eat — trapped in a cage of whose making? — two children Reaching for bread —

So how does she unravel herself? How Enter her life? What wings will jab Sharp shoals of light? Whose feathers flare the sun?
Alone, at night,
She will not, cannot sing.

Every day he waits for a letter.

Every day she tries to write.

"My dearest," he scrawls, "remember our walks in the woods,
Evenings we bathed in the cold stream...how we shivered...."

"Dear husband," she replies, "I am not beautiful, my eyes
Tuck into my face. I will not bleed when you speak, I am neither
Opus nor brief text, I am not scarf around your neck, nor
Beard at your chin. I am me,

I am me — the one I’m
Expected (entrusted) (enabled) to be...

(AND WHO IS THAT, WHO IS THAT?)

They must not ask me,
Woman, why were you not you?"
Renegade Clues

Anna Rabinowitz

Tentative gropings for kernels of was....
Memory-shucked husks of history:

Hence: his bed in Warsaw: a pine plank between two wooden chairs...
his workday: eighteen hours to learn a trade:
Eggs beaten pale, lumps of dough rising into buns and rolls...

Weekly Bund meetings where he sits riveted:
*Help lies in us alone...Unity increases power...*

*Under a single flag...*

In a single hope...

*We must go out face to face “with a mighty arm”...*

Number me among the Retriever[s]; name me Gatherer of Seed.

Daylight, twilight, nightlight, history shoulders everything...
and nothing,
Heir to its own disillusion (dissolution)...Offering up winters
as they may not have been...
Insatiable accruals of query and claim:
antonyms, as in that which jars (bars) memory,
Synonyms, as in renegade clues.

Believe me, I have seen them
Devoured, heard them silenced by their own
Entropies...
Minuends from which everything is subtracted...

Believe me, history can be neither bought,
nor stolen, nor faked,
neither borrowed nor slaked...
Believe me,
Adream on his chairs, he is lonely and prays for her letter.

Believe me,
Thousands of instances, images search for that alterworld
  where random rhymes of time release flocks of vowel
Having no truck with air, making no sound of fact,

Lost coveys of consonants with clipped wings...

And he dreams, and he waits, and he breaks bread
  in a two-room flat where eight of them sleep.

Believe me, this
Must be told because it is foreign to me.

Everywhere, feathers lunge from the dust and, powerless
  before them, I must take
Note of their pleas to be gathered: first
Thoughts seeking a second life, long-distance
  flyers ready to live a double death...
Because it is permanent and blushing
As if X led off to tangent Y

Because as he followed she led

Because papers

Because darkening trees
as they darken
Become light

Red is red
Brown is

Because on a holiday snow
Weekend frost

First encounter in someone else's shirt

And in the middle

As she began to see
Lights looked angry
Machines stupid

Someone else stairs
from behind the glass stars

As in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*
When the screen has become
Life

Because never
The right clothes

Money is real
And in her story how the stars
Look off, chatter

How the flowers also look

A gardener stands in view
perennially watering

And is motion
Is stasis

Because two of them make one
And one is infinite

Multiplication of what?

Because in show business
And in "real time"

Close captioned
for an audience of millions

Because as they look at each other
across celluloid
A piercing
And ringing
occurs to everyone
Who watches

Flowers again
that fall, turn to dirt

Her shirt is red
and memory of red
People found ways
of living that were bearable
and passed instructions
through the ages
in secret code?
I think not.
How could they delouse
their children?
Perhaps that was part of the code?
And the special bells
for the necks of goats
and the stuff they put
in the urns?
You say there might have
been songs and we can
learn them.
But a whiff of soup
disappears down the nose
missing the mouth entirely.
Some people lived in caves
and ate nettles.
From them we know the formula
for unguents.
Art was not artfully arranged
and one was expected to eat it.
Since the advent of knives
there have been roses
of beetroot. Even
a scavenger can dine
on the petals.
Maybe he lives, maybe he dies,
maybe fine strands of DNA
can be found in the comb of your question.
Spoor travels.
A veil of snow falls from the pine.
Christmas cards are also real,
their branches covered with glitter.
When we shake them the spontaneous
effusion of humanity can be heard
and we trample it into the floor.
Is that an instruction,
to listen?
Mad sesame of mine!
In front of everything I ever
opened I shook my head
not knowing.
You could have bit my tongue
in two and like a worm
it went on living.
Nothing's happened, there are no examples. 
At most I feel an exceptionally light bug 
has been bothering me. 
It's dead on the maternity ward 
and I've never even *seen* bougainvillea 
so this gardening rag is a bust. 
There's a rustle of forms. 
Aline comes in at midnight 
and gives me a penny for my thoughts. 
She's like a mid-Atlantic Coke machine 
that's out of order. Bob comes in at six 
and tells me about the weekend. 
He screwed behind sandbags, lurched 
down the beach, blacked out 
but didn't drown. 
I crawl straight back to the depths of 
my mother's drawer, sunk among the lingerie.
Door Frame

Valerie Savior

no yellow slicker comes
lightly through bevel/frame
hinge/frame yawn wood wood
yawn
cluster hinge knot no she said
no still life door hinge frame no
do or case knot then slicker sour hat
Paris defines door frame frame staircase.

whicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhicwhic
hinge mouth. Ahhhhhhhhh!! I know you. I know you
this pillow. door in door in door in door...
moments. knife butter leaf. no, insistance.
actually Romaine frame door. blond wood.
(carriage).
of sorts. Parens—this dash slicker yellow.
stairwell. I'm telling you through she goes and
the little gristle increases.
The Trend

Spencer Selby

The trend nowadays
is more and more towards
value objects in defense of the good
These objects lose their interest
before their value is revealed
as something else

Free estate leading into
flat-roofed modern houses
Building clocks covering
residential switchover
Perfect motion
in a flowerless garden

Sporadic snapping and crackling
of windows that never seem to open
A series of transient views
greys and glooming shades residuum

Far away down the center
of a dark street between
rising and falling skyscrapers
Nameless strangers dwarfed by
judgments all the more deadly
for being unspoken

Man dressed in a dark business suit
opening a book framed in light
spilling attitude protests against
hard reality

Suitcase swollen with rain
Vent pipes seeping into sodden ground
Absolute stillness
drowned out by the noise of traffic

Broken walls non-dimensional
weight of centuries unintentional
blue current with moonlight
making me throw back my head
Just after the accident, I saw him with his steel halo bolted, holding him upright in the wheelchair while he convalesced. We were in a movie theater, watching The Andalusian Dog, where the woman sucks the toes of the statue, and the eyeball gets cut open. He had no hair then but his body was lingering, fleshed out—The metal went into his head bloodlessly. Later the halo was removed, his joints became remnants, and his hair grew.

During World War I, neurologists mapped out an Atlas of the nervous system by studying the gunshot wounds in the spine. They charted the losses of sensation, tracing them to the nerve roots.

I never asked him how it happened,
*pain is felt by proxy,*
*by an image of the hurting part.* I hear it was from diving into the ocean.

The phantom limb could be said to live, grip things, curl and uncurl. Surgeons often tried, unsuccessfully, to cut off the sensation by cauterizing the wounded nerves.
Now I feel
my hands go
into his hair, the fibers always
growing full-tilt, flare
red, hanging to the wheels
of the chair. I put my hands
into all the luster and weight,
almost catching a pulse. He will have it
cut and sold, just like the previous
horse-tail bundle, last year's flourish.
Balding ladies walk the streets,
the sun glinting of their new red hair.
XLI.

On my log perch in the park—finally sun prevailed
after weeks of rain—commits
one’s eyes to color, a certain sheen, bare
before light or clothed in light, heart-
shaped clover fluffs up, dew drops play globe, stinky acacia’s blooming youth-
like glandular smell befits
a day seems young, randy even which turns it toward luscious age—so there
in vivid distance one sees Mt. Diablo as attainable, San Francisco itself a perch or
point of view, high art’s
mental cartography, plum blossoms pinking the air. Truth
won
for clear light a city diversity grandeur cliff’s edge the
giddy flight over moaty Bay or endless imagination Pacific assailed
by wave froth and fog dramatic but not veiled so pure Northern light prevails, “true”
visual light on me
now right side cleared and raised in heat besotted devoted son.
remounted the bright stair by being remounted in her attention, plum blossoms white as well as pink I discovered, whiter than grief’s mere sustenance. Saxophone mellows a bass in Benny Carter’s mouth, gain for my ears clearly synchronous, one year ago surprised in bold February sun the heave of air sucking up loss from AIDS encoded as storm-ravaged trees, now second February here sun again is chief instigator leveling by heat two in a row undoes projection, I’d forgotten plums exploded early then, too. Nearly ready now to beach early spring across the gray sand leading pools of footprints you punch a momentary path then vanish in late light one needn’t depend on skin or bones, easy incarnation, beside her passing father simultaneous a child alone
XLIII.

The difficulties are so alluring where cigarette butt, peony, the glass sphere, and prostate don’t actually meet. See the man who’s wrapped himself in shirred gold — he made that outfit! A pasta dish including vegetables gets respected while a flying line of brown pelicans haul tide. The day is longer than 24 hours given what we remember, a feature and its features. The shade we wanted fell across sun’s face a map of Northwest states or somebody’s dream of north directed up. Let’s stay focused on the bright shadow of noon with its google eyes, the “golden weight of attention.” A person is hungry under the plane tree, says “Show me your pure function among objects give me a light.”
XLIV.

"Be not afraid of my body," thought Whitman as if beating down his own thought swollen with hesitation in the way of pleasure. The heaven of body was gone to thought's heaven. "I brought my own self to the headlands" he wrote post climax solo wrought of projections in language where hands didn't have to stay put the book he squeezed let out a moan close to his chest where a gray hair got stuck in its uncut pages. I take a stand on my knees to favor his slow leak into the future where books squeeze back this time in your arms the writing's on me "the body of this thought must be a star" if it tingles, zoom heavenly body searing woe-filled with chaos burning toward — woo! — trembling anticipation of the wet land.
Bug Doctor

Charles Simic

Night visitor, do you know about fear?
Do you shit on the run
When you see my long fingernail
Coming after you on the pillow?
Are you astounded to be in pain
When they crucify you with pins,
Or when I pinch you tight
Between a thumb and a forefinger?

Writhing in torment, beating your wings,
Your health is delicate,
And now you can’t stop shivering.
I suppose your face is pale,
And lined with sudden worry.
The pointiest pencil-point won’t do justice
To the terror in your eyes.

Something in me, too, come to think,
Has a way of cringing that low.
The perplexity and serious trouble
You’ve fallen into, are familiar to me.
So, get lost, buzz off—
Or whatever it is that you actually do...
Is that a new limp you’ve got,
Or are you just a little giddy?
Carnival Booth

Charles Simic

A hunter with a shotgun and a black dog
With a bird in its mouth
Is what I remember of the decoration.
Plus a dozen ducklings marching in a line
And you hunched over, popping shots.
The fellow in charge had a glass eye
About to detonate.
Only the ducks you kept missing
Preserved their air of serenity.

Later you went to sulk by yourself
At the edge of the surf while I
Stayed on the towel. That’s how
Some punks saw us and took offense.
They sent a couple of beer bottles
From the boardwalk our way,
Which made you turn and run into my arms,
And me, dumb dodo, breaking your embrace
To peek warily over my shoulder.
Simic’s Mystery Theater

Charles Simic

Numb, ink-stained wretch,
Bowed at the blackboard
In the cold, blue twilight
Of a small schoolhouse
Shut down for the winter break.

There is a sentence left behind,
Its words almost faded,
You are supposed to append to,
And so lift a chalk
For that very purpose.

I’ve no idea what happens next?
Only that you’ve shut your eyes tight
To think real hard,
To think this through.
Bowl

Carol Snow

Something there. Something white there under the water.

Tugged on its moorings.

I know, only seen as tugged, my having seen — off the end of the dock

at low tide — half-clamshells nestled among eelgrass, bowls of one or two not yet half-filled with sand but almost overlooked; moving by them were tiny (baby?) crabs,
sidling the tide in. Pincering and nibbling.

I couldn’t help meddling.
From a scalp on the dock’s underside, I pried a small (young?) mussel,
tough as a thumbnail — denting the soft wood of the dock where I crushed it — but light so that, even in that shallow, it drifted, settling.
Eluding my favorite. I’d chosen a favorite to feed, like a child

at the Petting Zoo, fistful of grass thrust toward the handsomest or shyest or driest deer nose (that offering, something between offering and forcing:

‘tempting’ — ) and tracking its deflections...

A beetle — the ovoid wash of back with wisps of antennae and finely-haired legs —

looking quite real beside the blue-rimed dish pitched toward us on its single-stroke base, an oval resting in a wider oval: two almost-ellipses with the character of the brushstrokes of the Chinese characters in a column on the left — good-humored, somehow... intended, each oval a curve which began to be drawn and was

drawn.

Only seen as tugged: per the Law

of Refraction — with diagrams and “thought experiments”
I struggled to understand this — and the roiling of the water (the projecting)
surface per the Laws of Wave Motion, Gravity and Surface Tension, that "the universe is composed of atoms," that "a liquid seeks its own level," per the Laws of About Everything and then the relative clam... I mean, calm a viewer on the dock presupposes, the image of a shell wavered, displaced, but "on its moorings" — flown like a kite, thrown like a lariat — only so far.

"Roll the TV a little closer."

"It’ll come unplugged."

"Master of Illusion, Prestidigitation, Legerdemain, Sleight of Hand...": his hands in prayer or namaste; thumbs parting to show us the begging bowl (empty); pinkies hinged, his hands were a bivalve opening and closing then faster and faster like wings for flight until — he seemed as surprised as we were — a dove flew out of them!

White as our dove of the Sleight of Water.

We were “glued to the screen” of the box showing us this, a variety show broadcast — as television was, then — in black and white, exciting, therefore, rhodopsin on the tips of the rods (my short-lived interest in the workings of the eye — remember “the rods and cones”? — because of the word ‘rod’).

(Was it the green of trees on the water, the black-green of the water — licorice-black, licorice-green?)

Fingers following the curve of the inside of the bowl you were rinsing, so water would go everywhere.

— He’d already “sawn a woman in half.” (One saws a woman in half.)

There were two columns of line drawings on each page of the workbook:

apple    truck
robin    spurs

72 • VOLT
So, hen... coop: with an oversized pencil and all of your body-mind — even the tongue — attending, drawing around each an awkward loop like a bad lasso (the hand was young), then making the tether.

In a postcard I keep of “Mud Beetle and Blue and White Dish:

Leaf from *Album of Insects and Plants*” — where Ch‘i Pai-shih’s dish is two ovals, nested — the white of the dish is the white of the “leaf” (the page). (The begging bowl.)

The dashing magician in white tie —

here memory, as it can, conflates two or more men in tuxedoes — ran the length of the long table to retrieve another dish —

revving, in passing, the supports of a few of the fifteen already twirling ones (by then the first, the one at the head of the table, wobbling terribly... he barely saved it) — and raced to the foot again, to eddy up this last. With a fanfare, before briskly lifting each of them down, palms flourished he looked out at us, proud — astonishing, really — he kept so many spinning on their rods...

Something there. Something white there under the water.

Tugged on its moorings.

I know, only seen as — seeing (white), tugged: I am That.
At An Intersection

Arthur Vogelsang

Walking babies in and out of an expensive double stroller,
A strong family walks ten miles to the beach,
Toward entanglements on the westside.

Through the traffic we see a thicket across the street,
With faces to be found.
They will cross in front of it.

Reflections in a harbor are understood,
But I said the ocean was ahead,
Far ahead, its rumpled, jagged surface.

Did they or did they not see tops of buildings pierce
The surface of the sea for a few hours then submerge for a few hours
Then appear?
Otherwise as is certain
Noses and cheeks of a dozen faces bouncing in the waves.
What had clarity and was simple
Was that tops of buildings pierced the surface of the sea
For a few days then submerged for a few days then appeared.

The healthy family is not gone so much as out of sight.
They will never tell us.
We will live in a seaside town
Where the tension of an infatuation
Is so absorbing to the town
That the supernatural buildings and their distance
Beyond a swim is, we will say,
Just a nice scene to look at.
I wonder how the sea will look today,
Will be how we put it.
Remember that the infatuation will be like peanuts
Or a comfortable, long show—you never want to stop eating,
You never want to leave your seat.
The odor of urgency (sweet if it’s another’s)
May it never end. May the whole show never end!
May we know her opinion of him? and vice versa!
How could we get details of the lovers’ cries and positions?
Everyone felt this way. Promises sprayed disappointment
As a hose sprays water, very easily.
I promise to meet you at 3, I said to the fireman,
To work with him on his letter.
He never came. I promise to give you money, said the banker
To my child, and the bank didn’t.
I couldn’t do anything about it. What good
Was I to my child? Is it any wonder everyone
Desired the true, complete story of the infatuation
Including whiffs of urgency ...
The family that was strong and really saw the ocean
Well we were glad they had gone down the street, west,
And were “lost” to us,
That there might be something for us to tell over and over,
Apart from the graceful cascading rise
Of the buildings ever so often, the white water
Falling off them, or their sleek slow submergence.
Graves In Johnson County

Arthur Vogelsang

Want to try to get home
Without a funny thing
Happening on the way?
Me I just ran into
An anthropological stunner:
More people alive
Than all the dead put together.
Ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-ha.

Who would put the dead together?
Hee-hee-hee.
A person back home, back east,
Like an animal
Sees others
As part of the food chain,
Walking meat
To become him,
His chest,
His soul, which he has,
Which is like a city's humidity.
The phrase vaporized meat
In one of my poems.
Dig?

Thank you for your applause.
Most of our fun here,
Three others and me,
Is reading what's chiseled.
Death year, badly put message.
Birth year, wow!
The field of cut white stones
Is a trap without a lock,
Like memory,
The only supernatural thing.
Wait till you get a load of my machine
To compare memory,
Five- or nine-sided recollections,
Device of steadily melting iron
And purloined cartilage,
Of no use,  
No practical use,  
Brain fruit clustered  
Like rounded monuments  
To you to you to you.

Thank you.  
One of those three  
Has a personal taboo on me.  
Wait a minute, thank you.  
Ladies and germs. Huh huh huh. All right,  
I know it rhymes.  
All right. Just a minute now. As I was saying,  
She has a taboo on me,  
So probably I was not included,  
Tell me if you think I was,  
In an embrace  
Among the small markers  
Over and down a hill  
That’s a ripple  
Because the glaciers  
Pushed and stopped.  
Just so the embrace  
Could be hidden  
From the other two people,  
Just so the embrace  
Could occur at all—  
The glacier did its work  
And withdrew.  
What counts is what I say,  
Where I say it.  
Meanwhile, the way she says it.

A portrait. However,  
In the car  
Plans for dinner disintegrated.  
There were two women  
And another guy,  
Three yous
As Merle Brown said there should be, 
And me. 
The question marks that abounded 
Were benign, still are, 
As in a social history 
Safe from kissing. 
Among the discussions 
Of vapor, 
Mores in wagons, 
And infancy, 
The car went on. 

It had done so. 
Dinner had disintegrated 
In the graveyard. 
Will you believe me, a happy place, 
Many question marks, 
Benign and many, there. 
Because the car had gone on, 
Because the glacier’s 
Entire purpose 
Was to hide 
The briefest affair 
Under a hill, 
An encounter so brief 
There probably was no kiss, 
But the glacier’s entire purpose 
Was to hide the embrace 
From the other two people, 
For only those specific reasons 
I need each of your kinds of memory, 
You your honesty 
That might admit 
Some or no feeling for me, 
You your tendency 
To fabricate first 
And outright lie second, 
You your flexibility 
And elegance 
With stories about eating, 
Molestation, 
And unrelieved pain. 
May I have these 
In three letters please? 

In a play, 
Which is a trap with a lock,
This would be called
Begging a something or other.
Asking for the machine
Would be too,
And if God allowed
Or the desperate playwright opted
The machine to appear and work,
This would be seen
By even the weakest of audiences
As a deus ex machina.
Ooo-hee-hee and excuse me.

All graves are a deus ex machina.
All graves are failures as such.
They are like radios
Made before electricity.
Thank you for your applause.
I was the driver.
That was the second of my portraits.

Marriage is a business.
You will have enemies
Who leave you alone now.
You will be like a two-personed statue
Versus a rock.
The insane hate the rocks.
The well hate the statue, or, sorry,
The well may and might hate the statue.
But in the contract, the bond,
There is a power
Like an alligator's peculiar muscles,
Easy to hand-open the jaws
But irresistible force squeezing closed.
If we did that,
We'd have to move
To Shingle Point
In the Northern Yukon,
We'd have to flush
Baby alligators
Down the toilet
And dig in the ice
Or freeze the human bodies
Until the summer
And its persistent day.
Arthur grasped the story
Of the county's lost campaign
Against the Rodin piece
On the rich lovers' mausoleum
Depicting a dedicated act of intercourse,
Since stolen of course.
Of course of course.

I brought you here
To listen to my routine,
To try myself to fall in love
Or secondarily to get laid,
And to introduce you to each other.
There are no various versions to compare
And your presence,
Though only a rhetorical one,
Not like really being together
In a car or in a graveyard,
Has been terrific
For two days of writing
And I admit
We are all whirling balls
Of self-interest as are our sun or our earth which by gravity
Pull in hard and mush up what's without heat shield or parachute
So it becomes them
And so I have made you into me
But while it's now
Would you look around
At the field of stones
And answer my question?

Encore

This is not a tradition in stand-up.
What am I supposed to do,
Come back out and say OK get this, listen up, here's one more joke?
Shakespeare didn't say to himself
Now I'll sit down and write Hamlet,
He was, you know, in a process when he did it
And my stuff's like that rather than one-liners.
I can't dance and I can't sing
So I became a poet;
I suppose I could ask the orchestra
If they knew any poem and then try to sing along with them, whatever it was.
Let me ask you instead am I slipping away
Like ice mistakenly let go on downhill ice?
Are you?

80 • VOLT
They Know

Steve Willard

I found the needle in your leg,
but it had made a home. On the turn
to the summer place—everything in the
northeast different shades of green, so boring—
we saw the figures in the darkstained wood
rock outcropping, held by the rocks, held
by the outcroppings. They held themselves
out to us and retreated as usual. Across from the weird church.

I had wanted to sleep with “Cindy” in her black sweater
and go into town. I went into town. , under the hanging
spiders and fungi colonizing the trees. The fish markets
and slaughterhouses all were closed, no going inside them,
only the uneven rocks hauled out of the earth to mark,
to mar, to wall certain roads and fields off (and the sea)
and separate junctures. Everyone here is becoming rich,
but I haven’t eaten for three hours. Large houses. Let it work.
1. A drunk wants the spicy fish soup, and to insist that there is only one God, not to become dispersed, O Lord, into chronological conditions of strain and distress.

A lifetime largely reconstituted, the recorded seashore, the burning stables, the absolute brink of excess, large government grants and fat priests upon the celebrated towers, with smoke and salami.

The elimination of compelling narratives, and a self-tanning mentality to disfigure the moon with, to take a jackhammer to the vegetable garden without any pressure to get the job done before dawn.

Only to recall what once was or may have been, to project it in the tones that were given, and given over as Miriam grabs the tambourine and the sweet potatoes, her head looking new against the buttered gate.

Will the cause of monotheism be advanced? The sub-contractors all feel a little threatened?

To be lewd, to be habitual. Retranslated, what a deranged smirk it has.

2. Then you realized that it was you that this was happening to, and not always as someone else.

All your life then, tapped on the shoulder by a grass hand, or someone with fake binoculars staring out the window.
An ornithologist’s “then.”
The whole alignment so totally fucked-up,
and the bohemian waxwing veering off to the right.

Just the exultation of it.
“Out of the manyness” “A molting of the singular”.

Out of the cane reliquary, it will return
the wall upon us like a sacrificial quote,
and the bushes will spring again with Chevrolets.

3.
And this, it is hoped, will sustain us,
if it can deliver them wholly and without sanctimony

into the enameling realm of the extraordinary,
and divide us up, and it doesn’t matter

what it leads you to think
or talk about, as you already know,

as though you were capable of making some effort
to be serious, even if you may in fact
have some kind of a life in place somewhere,

and if not really “in place,” then in Arizona,
where you’ve been sitting with a wet fist
since the fall of Saigon, rolling some

tobacco and using the cherry-scented porta-jons
lined up on the sidewalk on festival days,

which can be numerous if you think about them,
though it’s true that many people fail to,

but still, it is hoped that a few
harmless delusions will fall to you each day,

like wine on your corn flakes
through the sleeves of the mindless sun.
Sets out, on the plains of vagary
and calling down a remote shell for velocity,
how resolute the abandoned self,
and the jinx of it all, the whimsical cranes
raise the bells on my sleeve, and the short
duration of my accomplice's futurity

The night split, spilt and spelt down
the postures of futurity, its feudal posters
The futility it awoke to recede
into mass vagary, the virgins in the lemon verbena
unbinding
The moment it took to blaze into
risk was not the significant moment, too unearthly,
too short and scrumptious
I didn’t have a chance, a pick, to hack up
the question of its velocity, not that it mattered,
the entire community being so vile, so ready to
cooperate, so disgusting, so sickening, so what
So much construction in sight, and so
on the lyric horizon, so many strange dogs
sniffing around the cranes, the young Cardinal
Liberace's mini-focaccia, tender fiend your tendrils
tendrils
Are no real source of pleasure for anyone, least of all
yourself, draped over the Bane of the Madonna Lily
at dawn, reflecting upon a necro-stammering
glittering shower of glass bugs one sultry
and preposterous island in June and July

In our stammering we knew it meant July,
with books about gift triangles and large quantities
of the Brain Protector nearby, ours on display, we knew
it meant something or nothing to the soft
boiling sunfish in the pot, and their good pink livers,
all for the beautiful sound of my pill-bottles jangling
in my pocket
As we climbed into Faultline Park to get
a better view of the mammoth posters of the dewy
green meadows, and the honeybees ablaze, the only
recklessness in those imitations of others we had
inadvertently become, plowed down like sentences
beneath the hedges, the tipsyness, I said, those were
pill-bottles that were his eyes, those are yours,
pill-bottles multiplying so rapidly, not you
The unbinding of the batteries from their monochromatic
boxes, the scrumptious tendrils of the tornado we thought
to win to our side, each Sunday checked off
from the calender, if it all could only mean as much
as it does, or will, the disposable lighter now low
on fuel, do I still mean to mean something to
someone when they’re sleeping
The unbinding of the egrets
from the chemical spillage, they love it there so,
as though it were a pond composed of lustrous
egret-wine, and the blue finches beside the transport
glow, to all who have the time to forget the moments
as they are unmade in them, here, take this lovely
pill, my lonely chanteuse, what is

There beyond the predictable wafer?
What is it that you’ve spent the last five minutes debriefing? A crane?
I’ve only heard it called “the originary” between hamburgers
but in that the trees were changed into chains decibles
rotator cuff surgery I don’t doubt it

Scrumptious as the same twenty year old lines Mr. X laid
down on the page like cocaine, for lunch, de la Con,
de la Boogie, de la instant replay karma, its willingness
alone, its break from break to time so dear so perverse,
its weeds, its this problem you have, it needs
a stupid surly alcoholic to survive it, to retrieve it
and install it, its that grotesque furniture again, etc.
If We Lie We Are Alive

Rachel Zucker

Say weather is not what it is and do not go out.
If you have a window to watch with, watch. If not wait.

Wait. It is likely you will not go out today.
Today, as always, you are always inside the city.

Even when you are outside, you are inside the city.

A personal map has narrative, you tell me
and show me: me, you and the big wall that is the city.

Sometimes we open the window and stick our heads out.
The air between the buildings is empty. The light
unconnected to the sun or any single source.
You want to know about the city? It's nowhere.

The sun glancing off the buildings when you walk East; the express
shooting by, blue sparks making blue stars along the track.

Under or above ground you are still inside the city.

You have enough old newspapers for kindling but no
fireplace or even an empty bin or empty anything except the light.

You are at a precise point on the map: here and here and here
and everywhere there is the mountain that is the big wall that is the city.

The landmarks are mutable, we are removable; something
is blocking out the last traces of available light. Once I
believed in weather and tried to plan accordingly.
Now there is: the window, the forecast, a last platform.
As It Grows Cold

Rachel Zucker

I walk the streets, pick up speech,
lose my way— one world, another.
Words like “whore” or “bench” or
“cap” are what I find, are
all that’s left by others—

Consigned to life-time night-sweeps,
I curse the conservation of the paltry,
but sweep it up, this rot
that will not stop,
and knowing not with what
to hold it, build a pantry.

A fleet of jars of indigent okra,
seedless jam, three-corn relish,
branided peaches. Sterilized,
preserved in brine, from seed,
from soil, my despair. The thready,
fetal pods. The crisp and bitter teeth. My sweet,
deep blood. I walk the streets.

The words I gather will not keep.
Yes, I did cut down the tree to make a pie.
Try to demonstrate just how tenacious is
the non-bleach detergent even on the purpose­fully cherry-smeared shirt sleeve. How it breaks
down the cotton’s brush with life. Will it all wash
away?

No, I could not have picked
the jewels and left the arbor undefiled
and lied and lied and lied.
Karen Anderson is a recent graduate of the Iowa Writer’s Workshop. ... Jeanne Marie Beaumont’s collection of poems, Placebo Effects (W.W. Norton, 1997), was selected for the National Poetry Series by William Matthews and was issued this past fall. She co-edits the literary annual American Letters & Commentary. ... Cal Bedient’s collection of poetry is Candy Necklace, from Wesleyan. He teaches at UCLA. ... Molly Bendall’s collection of poems After Estrangement won the Peregrine Smith Poetry Prize in 1992. She teaches at the University of Southern California. ... Elena Karina Byrne is the Director of the Poetry Society of America in Los Angeles. She is completing her first book of poems, Endeavor’s Provender, and a book of essays on poetry, philosophy, and the arts entitled Inseparable to Insignificance. ... Jennifer Connolly received the University of Pennsylvania College Alumni Society’s Award for Poetry in 1997. ... Linh Dinh’s work has appeared in Sulfur, New American Writing, and Chicago Review. His collection of short stories, Fake House, will be released in the spring of 1999 by Seven Stories Press. ... Molly Lou Freeman is a recent graduate of the University of Iowa Writer’s Workshop where she received an Academy of American Poet’s Award. ... Karen Garthe’s poetry has appeared in New American Writing, American Letters & Commentary, Exquisite Corpse, and other journals. ... Doreen Gildroy’s poems have appeared in The Antioch Review, The Colorado Review, and are forthcoming in The American Poetry Review. ... Barbieo Barros-Gizzi is a painter and collage artist whose work has been exhibited widely in both solo and group exhibitions, predominately in the northeastern United States, in France, in Cuba, and in Poland. Her most recent group shows include Translacje ’97, in Poland; Karantonha, at the Boston Center for the Arts; Genius Loci, Geoffery Young Gallery, Barrington Massachusetts; and Race Rage and American Justice at International State College in Springfield, Massachusetts. ... Julie Jordan Hanson’s poetry appears in the 1997 Anthology of Magazine Verse and Yearbook of American Poetry (Monitor Books). ... Valerie Hanson lives in Philadelphia and is a senior editor of Boulevard. ... Joshua Harmon’s poems are published or forthcoming in Verse, Arshile, Situation, Tinfish, and Washington Review. ... Andrew Long is a multidisciplinary (word, painting, dance, theatre, photography) artist and he is the artistic director of the Johnson/Long Dance Company. ... Tod Marshall lives in Memphis, TN, where he teaches at Rhodes College. ... Susan McCabe is an assistant professor at Arizona State University. Her book, Elizabeth Bishop: Her Poetics of Loss, is published by Penn State Press. Her poems appear in Jacaranda Review and Hayden’s Ferry Review. ... Wendy McClure’s poems have appeared in Sulfur, No Roses Review, and New American Writing. She lives in Chicago and works as a children’s book editor. ... Beth Murray teaches art and poetry in elementary schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has an MFA from the Univ. of Illinois-Chicago in photography and performance. She publishes poetry through her press, Lucinda. ... Geoffrey Nutter lives in New York City. The poem “4:37” is an excerpt from his poem A Summer Evening. His work has appeared in Colorado Review, Fine Madness, Denver Quarterly, and other journals. ... Kaya Oakes holds and MFA in poetry from St. Mary’s College. Her work has appeared in 6ix,
Poetry Model, and other journals. ... Anna Rabinowitz's collection of poems, *At the Site of Inside Out* (Univ. of Massachusetts Press), won the Juniper Prize in 1996. She co-edits the annual literary journal *American Letters & Commentary*. ... Ethel Rackin's poems have appeared in *Poetry East*, *Lingo*, *xconnect*, and other journals. She is in the MFA program at Bard College. Mary Ruefle is the author of four books of poetry, the most recent of which is *Cold Pluto* (Carnegie-Mellon, 1996). She lives in Bennington, Vermont. ... Valerie Savior's poem is from *Its Sliding Shape*, a section of a larger manuscript entitled *A Mistrust of Parks*. ... Spencer Selby's most recent books are *No Island* (Drogue Press, 1995) and *Malleable Cast* (Generator, 1995). "The Trend" is from a collection entitled *The Big R*. ... Allyson Shaw's poetry appears in the *Absolute Disaster* anthology. She is working on a novel loosely based on the life of Saint Catherine of Sienna. ... Aaron Shurin's most recent collection of poetry is *Into Distances* with Sun and Moon, who will also be publishing *A Door*. A collection of essays, *Unbound: A Book of Aids*, is also with Sun and Moon... ... Charles Simic's last book of poems is *Walking the Black Cat* (Harcourt Brace). He has a new book of essays and memoirs from Michigan called *Orphan Factory*. ... Carol Snow is the author of *Artist and Model* (Atlantic Monthly Press) and *Breath As: Short Poems* (Em Press). Her new collection, *For*, is forthcoming from Univ. of California Press. ... Arthur Vogelsang's books are *Cities and Towns* (Univ. of Massachusetts Press), *Twentieth Century Women* (Univ. of Georgia Press), and *A Planet* (Holt, Rinehart, & Winston). ... Steve Willard is a graduate of the University of Miami and the University of Iowa. ... Brian Young recently published *Faultline Park* (24 Hour Press). ... Rachel Zucker's poems have appeared in *Amelia*, *Explosive*, and *New Letters*. She is co-founder of Bommerang! *A Contributor's Journal*. ...
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