



{ PERSIMMONS }

S P R I N G 2 0 1 3

P E R S I M M O N S

spring 2013

Editors-in-Chief

Kurestin Armada

Melissa Nigro

Editorial Staff

Louisa Ashford

Rosa Carnevali-Doan

Payton Cuddy

Ellie Dawson

Matthew Delbridge

Molly Donovan

Elizabeth Friedman

Claire Gaglione

Lucie Levine

Alexander Pang

Wyatt Riggs

Design

Kurestin Armada

Melissa Nigro

Cover Art

Tiresias — Melissa Nigro

KENYON COLLEGE

persimmons@kenyon.edu

POETRY

Mary Bank	15	<i>The Goldfish</i>
Gabriella Cooper	50	<i>When I was Orson at the Oscars</i>
Matthew Delbridge	32	<i>For Jack</i>
Andrew Ebner	4	<i>On the Other Side of Lonely</i>
	40	<i>Each Limb Lapping Its Neighbor</i>
Elise Economy	48	<i>Feeding Behavior</i>
John Foley	12	<i>A Centurion Like Myself</i>
	17	<i>My Angela</i>
Elizabeth Friedman	1	<i>Holi, the Commencement of Spring</i>
Rachel Gorsky	43	<i>Half a World</i>
	47	<i>Mirror, Mirror</i>
Emily Graf	6	<i>Flight 327, Chicago</i>
	35	<i>The Leaves Speak</i>
Annie Hulkower	9	<i>Jonah's Love Letter</i>
Tim Journey	31	<i>Better Metaphor</i>
	36	<i>Ritual</i>
Kathryn Kadleck	24	<i>Reverie</i>
Daniel Katz	19	<i>Coins</i>
Ville Lampi	44	<i>Agreed Measures of Conservation</i>
Emma Lo	39	<i>Glossary, Thailand</i>
	45	<i>Hold Me</i>
Nathaniel Lotze	5	<i>And I Would Follow You Forever</i>
	53	<i>Starboard (or beautiful things)</i>
Jack Mankiewicz	18	<i>Rosemary in Budapest</i>
Kevin Mckinney	33	<i>Monster to Monster</i>
David Miller	3	<i>Personally Speaking</i>
R. L. Neviska	20	<i>Cold Turkey (Pantoum #2)</i>
Elizabeth Norman	29	<i>Shall I Too?</i>
Willie Plaschke	14	<i>A Promised Napkin</i>
James Plunkett	27	<i>Where We Got Well</i>
	37	<i>For the Child Soldiers and Their Mothers</i>
Wyatt Riggs	38	<i>My Child</i>
Lucas Ropek	55	<i>day in reverse</i>
Phoebe Rotter	46	<i>Barnett Newman</i>
Molly Silverstein	2	<i>Speech Tree</i>
Daniel Solway	23	<i>There is no darkness, just the absence of light</i>
Natalie Wardlaw	49	<i>The Fall</i>
	54	<i>Window</i>
Julia Weaver	8	<i>Across the Great Divide</i>
	51	<i>Architecture</i>
Claire Weibel	13	<i>A Good Six Years</i>
Allyson Young	21	<i>October</i>



ART

Gabriella Alziari	38	<i>Untitled</i>
	43	<i>The Funeral</i>
Emily Bulik-Sullivan	33	<i>Untitled</i>
Andrew Ebner	52	<i>Catharist</i>
Tim Journey	1	<i>Tiger</i>
Melissa Nigro	~	<i>Tiresias (cover)</i>
Claudia Pepe	12	<i>Antes de la Procesión</i>
	47	<i>Here There Be Monsters</i>
Daniel Solway	14	<i>Mirror Lake</i>
	21	<i>Sheep Crossing</i>

{ TABLE OF CONTENTS }

Myles Buchanan	34	<i>What Our Forest is Like</i>
Alex Evans	41	<i>Leaving Chicago</i>
Taylor Geu	16	<i>Highway to Heaven</i>
D. Aaron Mcilhenny	25	<i>Pills</i>
Hannah Saiz	22	<i>Beautiful</i>
Peter Schulman	7	<i>Tunnel to the Docks</i>
Maria Zarka	11	<i>4:30 Easter Standard Time</i>



Holi, the Commencement of Spring

ELIZABETH FRIEDMAN

Little specks of kitchen backsplash
yellow with time and golden in sweet memory
frame lavender-lined eyebrows and lashes,
elbow creases gilded sunrise pink.
Hands up in the air,
plumes of powder
rise in jubilation,
float for a turquoise moment,
and descend in Aviators looking for sunshine,
light gray hair soon turned tangerine,
scalloped white arches splattered with ivy,
pressed flower buds nestled in smiling teeth.
This is the start of something fresh, new,
when winter's cold breath dissipates into raining powder
of pastel, brushstrokes that set soil on fire,
happiness that extends past the mire.



TIGER · Tim Journey

Speech Tree

MOLLY SILVERSTEIN

Silent and yellow thoughts,
and all you can do is declare them.
Bushes of ink
on the white page.

The use of words,
one after another,
beating back and forth
with meaning, with air.
How civilly words exchange together.
With what abandon.

Bells, upturned steadily,
chime on the hour. Hard-hearted,
cruel, the bells. Saccharine,
the bells.

Without words
there are sounds; without language,
there is the thrust and jest of language.
The potential energy.
The ghostly speech tree in an empty forest.

You are a tenant here and the land is showing you
how to trade, how to earn your keep when rain is rare,
vegetables slight and dry.

The text, though, is telling you how to be alone.
Domestic text. Foreign text. Veiled text.
The text froths like too much soap in a dishwasher,
swelling over the stove and the countertop,
coating the linoleum floor.

Personally Speaking

DAVID MILLER

Dear reader, when your vision blurs
you may not recognize me as what I am.
You may look upon me, but I will fade
until all you have is paper on the floor
and static on your hands.

Until all you have is a room
and the sound of it in your ears,
or is it sea foam—
the froth left behind
by the waves inside of you?

I am the *meerschaum*, perpetually
in dissolution, or is it disillusion?
If you tried to touch me, you might
crush me and snuff me out of existence
until I came back riding the next wave.

I was the room
when the room told you to wait—
it said that you were not meant to lie
on the ocean floor.
You will surface, and it will feel like lying.
The room said to tell the truth.

On the Other Side of Lonely

ANDREW EBNER

tonight there is a solid structure of lonely watching
outside the windowpane. cold and low
it is watching me. lonely cold needs to know
where the warmth went with some solid souls
from a few years ago.

and blue is this night too
with the windowpane etched new with
lonely cold and low across the slow
and terrible sorrow of the sodded sight
of tomorrow waking alone and wanting it be so.

and I close the blinds on sorrowful slow and low cold
and fallen below lonely who shows the moonlight
blue and empty folds of furrows of thoughts
etching wants long ago into ruts that
formed patterns of thought that pulled and tore at remaining
solemn and whole.
and for the time being steal some time away from lonely
bothering breathing gasping aching so steadily.

And I Would Follow You Forever

NATHANIEL LOTZE

You could write a book of our frustrations
Maybe, if you caught them in mid-stagger
Or corralled them in their brutal endless spinning
Or if you had the vision to
Recognize them haunting window frames
At night

I swear they are so exhausting
And the grass is dying
And the geese are passing overhead
Again
To somewhere underneath the sun
Where the equator stretches madly
Running in circles
With whatever stamina a racehorse must have

But circles get you nowhere
Or at least nowhere new and that is
Really the same thing after all
And if the racehorse breaks its leg
They have to kill it

Flight 327, Chicago

EMILY GRAF

This time
murmurous dinner parties
sift down on you
as you walk
across North Avenue.

This time
the girls roll their eyes
and put their black
dresses back
on the hangers.

They will not eat
the little olives and
wedges of cheese.
they will not eat the weighty
bread.

But yes,
they will drink the wine.

This time
the women lust for cabs,
boot heels declaring,
coats flapping.
You watch them go.
You watch the clock.
All this wears you out.

Where I am,
clouds look like
white animal skeletons
laid side by side.
The air chokes
with so much blossom.

Lights below
blink their yellow requirements
and I keep moving toward them.

Tunnel to the Docks

PETER SCHULMAN

There is a tunnel that leads to the docks. In December its opening is touched in pallid light and dripping vines hanging wet from the surf spray. From inside the shadow of the tunnel whose concrete smell is split by the tang of salt, you see the tossed water lathering around the tip of the jetty. Gull cries peal over the cedar boards worn smooth to the bones of their grain, and taupe clouds slide fast overhead.

A certain breed of people find a melancholy so consuming in that place over the waves that they cannot help but smile sweetly from the intensity of the emotion, returning each winter and wanting to die where they stand.

Across the Great Divide

JULIA WEAVER

as performed by Nanci Griffith

Trouble sleeping,
That's when momma came in
And sang me the blues because they
Told the truth better than any lullaby did.
Her faded voice followed me in the other rooms
Of my childhood, the years disappearing
Behind the mountains. But always her voice—it
Followed me down the road where John was calling
And I was crying and I couldn't sing the blues
Anymore.

Trouble living,
The red-orange hour settled itself like a stone
And choked the neck of my guitar. The dust
Of wedding vows from years gone away and
Cancer dying in my chest heat my bones like
Austin sunsets. Still I sit on the borderlines
And wonder how the owls find their homes
And how I always seem to sing others' blues
Better than my own.

Jonah's Love Letter

ANNIE HULKOWER

I.

These lips let the wind in and
Crack open like a clam or a yawn.
I'd like to lick their perimeter and feel the
Breeze each moment,
Maybe climb in, if permitted
To tap on teeth like white sugar
Mountains. If I am shaky,
May I clutch your tongue?
Hands must be dry but if one is
Skilled in scaling, these tastebuds
Are kid stuff. It's hard to hold
On when it moves as a bass
Like a heartbeat—
Those muscles have a mind of their own.
Now that I think of it,
I should've bathed in
Butter. Would that have pleased
You?
Little shells emerge with a
Crunch from your cryptic baleen
And they shatter with the
Clatter of a crystal chandelier.
So I boogie until it stops echoing.

II.

(Melancholia)

It's darker down here and
I ache for a kiss but my only
Suitors are long-dead mackerel
Whose permanently pursed
Mouths aren't challenge enough.

Plus, their breath is not sweet
Like yours.
I'm sick of hearing what I say
5 times over in this cavern,
Although it does make me choose
My words more carefully.
I can't last much longer,
But won't you, my dear
Take your slick fin
And tickle the uvula that hangs
In your throat, bigger than 3
Strong men, so your
Stomach might clench,
And push me back into the
Sunlight?

4:20 *Easter Standard Time*

MARIA ZARKA

What a magnificent bastard!

Truthfully, the obstetrician's enthusiastic assessment of my majesty was wholly unrelated to any divinely augmented length or girth of bodily baby appendages and much more closely allied to a comically faulty, undiscovered and undiagnosed anesthesia coupling joint; the extreme hour; and the regularly excessive amounts of nicotine and caffeine typically consumed by the medical community.

Though not the archetypal salutation of angels, magi, and talking livestock, this late night's proclamation was, at least, half correct; therefore, in general, to the clear, open eye of the unbiased viewer and in particular, into the flooded and blurry eye of the doctor, my lukewarm response: a streaming rainbow rejoinder, could have been construed as a figurative slap to the face, or a more literal poke to the eye! However, compared to the immanent and heavy handed riposte my tender virgin bottom was about to receive, in hindsight, mine was the more surgical strike.

My mother was an unhinged, cracked door. Dumped unceremoniously at the curb, in front of an Emergency Room entrance by persons unknown and left like a lumpy, disheveled pile of bulky rubbish, she never regained consciousness. We made our final transitions almost simultaneously, each moving towards the dawn-zerly's light: she exited quietly to the high pitched and squeaky, yet grave notes of the doctor calling out her time of death, while I beat loudly on the unrelenting cell bars and lock of my prison womb, in search of a last minute stay of execution, reprieve, or pardon.

The sound of one hand clapping is not an imponderable mystery to me, but simply the first rude introduction and subsequent birth cry of all newborns, delivered in front of a silent forest of stoned, skilled, and sterile medical technicians. Underdeveloped, below average weight and height, and displaying withdrawal symptoms that had nothing to do with the doctor's medical decision to employ a forceps delivery, my heralded magnificence evaporated as quickly as the delivery room's recirculation fans could dissipate the hallucinogenic nitrous gas. The air of irrational and exuberant lunacy slowly rose, like a thick crusted pizza, out through the ceiling's ductwork, pressed close against my mother's ghost, as she lifelessly finished her last dance with the angels on microscopic grains of dust smaller than the head of a pin and I began my abrupt transition from aristocratic luminary to person of questionable origin, gifted only with a nine digit string of nameless numbers that were soon to be tucked in and filed safely away with Social Services.

A Centurion Like Myself

JOHN FOLEY

I who wishes I had seen Alice Paul
In the Square and held hands with her as we both
Swaggered toward Woodrow Wilson's chalk white cottage
I who wishes I had eaten figs with Vladimir
And held Eli's hand in the brown and gray kitchen of this, our night

I who thinks and holds the candle even during your tempest

And thinks about it Ecstasy and Everest and Earnest

I wish I had held those Ronald RayGun signs,
And joked with Marla about the swarming of the armies in Kuwait
And the blood of Persians, while Michael did the moonwalk
And I was still nothing, not even a zygote

Could we have been friends in a different time?
Without the moon boots or our private laughter?

A centurion like me, and a century like ours, and a gentleman like you,
Makes me hope the answer is yes,

But never know



ANTES DE LA PROCESIÓN · Claudia Pepe

A Good Six Years

CLAIRE WEIBEL

Human nature is to compare and contrast,
so when you walk down the street with your dog
at your side, people will inevitably think of their own dog,
at home, the one that they're planning on getting, or buried somewhere
in the backyard. Usually it's dead. They'll say what a nice breed that is! I
used to have one. How old is she? And you will say she is six.

And they will say, I had one. Died
when he was four. And you will feel embarrassed because your dog is
living on borrowed time, and by your dog still being alive, you have
somehow deprived this friendly stranger. But they will think
nothing of it. I love the brindle, it's such a beautiful
color. Like stripes. Mine was fawn, with
an all-black face. Even after they've walked away,
thinking of their own dog or the one that died when it was
four or imagining a fresh new dog, you look at yours and she looks
up at you, big brown eyes asking if she's going to die soon.

And you say no, of course not,
but sooner or later you'll be stopping people on the street to pet their dog,
tell them that you had a dog like that once, and how old is this
dog? Oh, that's young. And you'll say that you and yours
had a good six years together
before the tumor.



MIRROR LAKE · Daniel Solway

A Pormised Napkin

WILLIE PLASCHKE

We said this was not a good name for a verse—
It fails to fly in the face of vice, nor is it clear: what
Do napkins have to do with beauty? And how
Does this serviette that is sworn to us precisely
Intensify culture? And ‘promised’ is blatantly
Spelled incorrectly. It looks like a porpoise,
Although we gaily tried to chute around
This stupid fact, the suspension lines failing
To hang sweetly from any old canopy. Now
We have time to fill lines, so divide and conjure
Up our mobile phones to figure out the import
Of a parachute: will fall, falling, and fell. Yes,
Words are pals pointing out our doppelganger—
It builds up culture not to know who ‘we’ are.

The Goldfish

MARY BANK

Fishy, fishy, swimming free,
In the waters of the sea
Yet in thy orb made of glass
How dost thou make the time to pass?

Thy scales glint and glitter like the sun
'Tis thy grace that compares to none
What eloquence was brought to thee?
A simpleton, by any degree.

Doth Poseidon's hand bring thee life?
Or doth thy enclosure shape thy strife?
What lonely days that thee endure,
There must be nothing more secure

What of the life above thy sphere?
There is naught but air for thee to fear
Doth thou tiny world make thou bored?
Keep thy faith, let it strike a chord!

But can there be but one for me?
Nay, 'tis plenty more of thee
For when thy belly doth go up
The carnival giveth thee in a cup

Fishy, fishy, swimming free,
In the waters of the sea
Yet in thy orb made of glass
How dost thou make the time to pass?

Highway to Heaven

TAYLOR GEU

It was a chill autumn twilight, the leaves had been stricken off the trees by the wind, and an orange moon shone in the sky. The breeze coiled and looped through and over plants. Like Jack Frost's breath it cooled puddles left from a recent rain. Then it went over a highway, a dark river cutting through the forest. Caressing, it twirled the fur of a lone raccoon. The raccoon was old. Around his muzzle the fur had gone milky white. He stared with determination at the road, a steely stare that was clearly making a decision.

Raccoons don't see death like humans do. The choice to die is completely in their hands. In the old days, raccoons contracted the foaming madness. Sometimes they'd sink in rivers. Rarely, they let themselves get shot (a gruesome and painful demise). But now they had an easy way to leave, the highway. A raccoon now only had to sit on the road and he'd enter the tunnel and zoom towards the light. Often in the distance, the trumpets of paradise sounded. At the end his soul was swept up into paradise. The body was left deflated from its departure.

The old raccoon had recently raided garbage cans. An old cohort had accompanied him. With their nimble baby soft hands they toppled and opened the cans. Touching is how raccoons see the world. They can feel the colors of moldy fruit. A napkin smeared with a lip print. A wilting rose with indentations from nervous fingers. A condom sent visions of a sperm graveyard. The raccoons could almost see the young, romantic couple who threw this away. Once in a while, they chattered to each other with a new development. Slowly the picture of the people was made.

After that, the raccoon's companion took the highway to heaven. Raccoon aren't close knit families. Yet, they can miss someone. The old coon was now having trouble getting at food. Young raccoons claimed food as was their right. The old had to give things up for those who would shape the future.

The raccoon had to choose now. It was scary to decide the quick end, but the alternative was to die starved. Long ago, the raccoon chose this to be the year he'd die. Now it was only the method of his release that had to be decided.

He made his decision. On stiff paws he walked on the rough tar. This wasn't the touch he wanted to leave the world on. So rough and coarse, still this was one of the best ways. The raccoon sat down. Already he was in the tunnel and he could see pin pricks of light at the end. Blaring, the horns of Paradise blew. The raccoon resignedly stared down the light.

And he was free and gone. Flying into the sky with a thousand other black masked siblings towards the moon. Towards the rest at the end of the road.

Dawn of the next day, a friend of the old raccoon saw his empty body on the road. She rubbed her arthritic hands. Quite a shame; she'd miss him in a small way. Her thoughts turned towards the coming winter. She was old and grey-muzzled and chances were she'd starve to death. A snowflake drifted down onto her nose. Soon she'd have to make a choice. Hopefully an old raccoon friend would be waiting on the other end.

My Angela

JOHN FOLEY

A thousand pretty Angelas dance in Portland and Montenegro
and Sioux City and Hell's Kitchen

They, all a-thousand of them, hail a taxi cab and brush their hair aside
in their stockings and hickey'ed necks and powdered noses

some of them take Ritalin and Vitamin E and snort cocaine at night
and tell their friends that 130 pounds is healthier than 115
and telling stories is healthier
than believing them

they live in Hollywood and on your magazine rack and they have white
teeth in every color photo taken of them

but we remember them in black and white and glittery silver blue dresses at
the awards we watch while eating pringles on the couch

Sometimes we think we see the Angelas when we don't: eating dinner with
us in a crowded oyster house or wearing white pearls at our work party, or
our wedding
we dream of the smile like a confirmation, a gentle pat

Sometimes we stumble up on real Angelas

My Angela has a creased smile, and brown glitter eyes and cracked
front teeth
big eyebrows and lashes, good forearms and the smell of a real human
he's never snorted cocaine, not even after midnight

He tries to be tricky with me when we drink wine in the dim noise
and his wink tells me a thousand different stories
about kissing and the manufacturing of the way love is supposed to work in
the factor-ied culture

My Angela reads on the big rocks in the Huron sound at night, and sees
stars as stars, not as diamonds or things you could ever name after someone

My Angela sleeps on his side, and when he drifts between wake and sleep I
think only that he is more than those a-thousand ever shall be

Rosemary in Budapest

JACK MANKIEWICZ

For a while, I'd been feeling as if I were missing a hat.
Not that I needed one, but that I had been wearing one for some time,
and it was gone. It was a lonely feeling. Like sending someone
fruit in the mail and finding out later that they never got it,
opening the door to see that it has come back,
and now it's all bruises.

I told my mother about it and she said I would be fine,
that she would buy me another hat. She put my father on
and he told me about a friend who had once taken LSD and felt
so much like a fried egg that he'd ended up in the woods, searching
for a missing piece of toast. Was this anything like that?
I said I didn't think so. He asked, "How's Rosemary?"
and I told him I had to go.

The absence at the top of my head grew familiar and snow began to fall.

*

I was writing poems about frozen deserts and reading
better poems about islands when your postcard came. Through the window,
I watched a raccoon paw at a scarf, forgotten in the snow.
Turning away, I opened the envelope and looked at
the picture on the front: hazy churches washed in yellow,
boats nearly out of frame, the moon blue and white in the water.
Snowflakes circled lazily through the frost-glazed window.

I wondered if Budapest was everything it seemed in pictures,
if you had met any Hungarian men who reminded you of me.

Coins

DANIEL KATZ

It's payday
and I'm searching for coins
you're up wide awake
I say go to sleep
shut your eyes already
you say you're not tired and I
see you're hung up on some sort of miscarriage
I say we've got to talk
you say not today

Today
any idea how I've spent my day today
any idea at all?
well I bought three flowers
a violet, a rose, a white one
and paid a visit to my mother in
the stone theater
where I opened up my scroll and read:
attention must be paid

Oh but I have paid mind
I thought or maybe said
I paid my vows and I paid you a lonely child
until I could afford a tired gentleman
I paid you with words
that I hoped would
pass through your skin
but not like money like seed
growing or meaning something eventually
money I paid you with money
for an operation
for a second husband
for no hard feelings

and it's true
no feelings that were hard you had
I paid with my attention
God knows I paid dearly with this

Back home you're asleep by now
I didn't think you'd stay awake
I had told you I'd found some sort of
heaven inside me
you told me nothing so I
resumed flipping through the dusty dollars
of my parents' prayers

Cold Turkey (Pantoum #2)

R. L. NEVISKA

Cold turkey.
second hand
smoke
holding temptation

second hand
sweaters, yellow
holding temptation
and five dollars

sweaters, yellow
smoke
and five dollars
Cold turkey.

October

ALLYSON YOUNG

I spend money I've not made mucking milk stalls in buzzfly heat
On carrot cake, tea with milk
I feign interest in moral philosophy and zip away to
Barcelona, Berlin, Rome
Après polka dancing with rough bearded
Gray haired men I fall
Hapless and happy into woolen bedframes
And nightly, my eyelids shut to deeply red pillowlips.
At dusk I count firebugs in my sycamoredreams,
Thousands of them gather in the soft blue pockets of my liling
suppositions
Nip at my earlobes and whisper into the magical cavernous mystery
between my thighs

They're not singing but sighing, saying
Oh.

Oh
HI
Oh.



SHEEP CROSSING · Daniel Solway

Beautiful

HANNAH SAIZ

We were on the pier when it happened, nestled together on a black bench, looking out at the Burlington harbor of Lake Champlain. Summer was in its death throes. The first breaths of autumn chill mixed with the final fluttering gasps of warmth floating off the lake. Thaniel and I sat mired in shadow. Out against the water, a party boat drifted by, alight with prom decor. Bass rippled over the water to quicken our pulses.

Thaniel had his arm around me. Then he shifted, doing that hip-lift guys do to get at their back-pocket wallets. Except it was Thaniel, and so instead of a wallet he pulled out a lighter and a half empty carton of green apple cigarillos.

He didn't offer me one, just lit up and snaked his arm back around my shoulders. We were into that understanding already: he did the drugs and acted responsible; I stayed clean and had no self control.

The tip of the cigarillo burned the same color as the party lights on the prom boat. Thaniel breathed smoke like some myth brought to life. My hand was on his knee. He laced our fingers together, his hand over mine and turned them palm up.

Brought the glow into contact with my skin. Said love, just as the prom goers set off fireworks. Watched the sky with me pressed against his side, my body curled around my hand.

"That was beautiful," he said when they were done. I still don't know if he meant them or me.

There is no darkness, just the absence of light

DANIEL SOLWAY

There is no darkness, just the absence of light
From it emerges the forgotten hours of night
The hours of live wire dances, the puzzle-piece grind
The fluorescent heartbeats in the vacancy sign
Empty dollars spill from emptying pockets
The speed is a nothing with no one to clock it

The liquid courageous with lucid tongue tricks
Blow greasy whistles at the thin and the thick
Sweat rolls like honey off the lips of the nameless
Sweeter only at night, when the shadows are blameless

Hazy intentions weave through rings of pot smoke
In a circle of misfits, the weary and broke
Faded to cross paths with the 4 a.m. breeze
Time is impulsive on nights just like these

The real stars are up but the sun is not
Drinking in moonlight, sweaty and hot
Gently, my pulse waxes and wanes
Walking home ready
To do it again

Reverie

KATHRYN KADLECK

This is my secret:
sometimes I clench my body
so tight, curl my muscles, fold

my bones in creased corners
until I am but a sliver
of myself, a comma
in human form. There is something so lovely

about punctuation marks.
I don't dream of being
Mahler's symphony
or a painted ballerina.

Let me be pure punctuation,

just a symbol that stains your page,
a streak of black, a perfect stroke
sandwiched between
words strung like incandescent Christmas lights.

Let me be

the space between two clauses,
the subtle inhalation, the wordless pause,
the silent syllable.

Strip me
until I am nothing

but a continuous sweep of sable ink,
so small and needed.

Pills

D. AARON MCILHENNY

After the twentieth hit, the rest start looking like little white clouds. Lined up there by the sink. They look so soft. So cuddly. But in my hands they feel like nails, like needles. There is a girl in the mirror opposite me. Floating through the disgusting pink tile of her bathroom, unclothed and open for all the world to see. She has two eyes, then four, then two again. They rotate around her face like a constellation full of Neptunes. I watch as she slides another cloud into her mouth and down her throat.

Her hair is not hair but a golden waterfall. Water. Fall.

She is on a floating ship floating floating through an ocean of culturally mandated beauty. That frothy, hideously pink sea of expectations. The girl in the mirror's skin is not pink; it is yellow or slight bronze, and she is fit and she is sexy and nine men and her mother have seen her in this skin and all nine men and *their* mothers couldn't make her fill the hole she has inside of her, the hole so big so empty so wide so she's just going to close it herself.

My head drops to the counter. There's a bigger cloud on the floor. It's a bottle but it looks like a cloud. 'Halcion,' it reads. Hal. Cion. Hal, see yon? Howl. Sí. Yawn. Yawn.

The girl's head slumps lower. So does mine. On her knees. On my knees. On my back on the floor.

The room's ceiling is pink, too. So bright and girly. Her entire school will be in shock. I picture their reactions to her death. *She had so many friends. She was so nice. She was so popular. Why oh why oh why?* Nine men and their mothers. A piece of meat to be eaten. To be consumed. No friends, only egos. They're only friends with me because I masturbate their self-love.

The ceiling is an ocean of clouds. Pink clouds. And I'm among them. Among them am I. I'm floating I'm floating in a sauna in a bubblebath on a cloud in the sea. On the sea in a cloud. On a boat made of howls and yawns. Sí.

My hand wafts up to the counter and brushes the marble and suddenly all the little clouds lined up there are falling falling down on me down on me on my body my body my beautiful blonde body. No brains just body. I put them in my mouth I put the clouds in my mouth and I float higher. And higher.

There are clam shells on the side of the bathtub. The pink bathtub. So pink and pungent and allegedly beautiful. I knock them and they fall too.

They hit the ground with sharp shrieks but I don't hear them. I mean I hear them but my brain don't. Or my brain hears them but I don't. There is sound but I don't care what it is so therefore there is no sound. I don't care. I don't have to. It's easy enough being pretty. I flutter my eyelashes at the right horny old men and they want me for more.

They love me for sex. They sex me for love? Howl? Sí.

Yawn.

The ceiling is pink. But it is also turning. Black. It's time. It's bed time. It's night-night time. Lullaby, lullaby. Sleep is. Sleep is nice.

It's like you're boarding a train and it's taking you to
Happy Land.

Happy
Land.

And once you're there. You'll be
accepted.

Not pretty. But accepted. Here they just want me. For pretty. They don't want
me. For me. Well. Fuck them.

Wait. Yeah. Fuck them.

They will remember me. For being pretty. But they won't remember me. For
being me. For being smart. For Changing The World. I'll show them. I don't need to
die, to make my point.

There is the counter. Miles above me. Miles above me there is the counter. I
watch my hand. Watch as it

Watch as it
floats

up there. Up to the counter. And grasps it. Takes hold. Takes *hold*.

It puts pressure on the counter. Exerts. But slips. Hand don't want to hold on.
But. It has to. It has to. I watch my hand drift upward again. Up to the counter. My
other hand. Flowing up there too. On a cloud of Halcion and glory. Pull. Engage.
Tighten triceps tighten biceps tighten core up we go. I'm sitting. I'm falling. I'm on
my back. I'm sitting again. Abs thighs calves feet work out of a dreamy. Dreamy.
Dreamy necessity. Necessity.

Feet. Knees. On my knees. The rug on my knees on the rug. No strength. I tread
water on the rug until my feet touch in the clamshells. They feel like
clam shells.

They are sharp and they try to wake me up. I place my foot in one. Push. Calves
thighs core arms arms core thighs calves. All working together in beautiful. Beautiful.
Beautiful symphony with the electricity my brain is pumping down pumping pump-
ing down to them willing them up making them rise. My feet are bleeding from the
clam shells on the floor but I don't feel them. Hal, see yon?

The girl in the mirror is back. Clothed in golden waterfalls waterfalling down her
back. She almost falls but she grabs the counter. Her hands flow from the counter and
stop by her side and she is standing by herself. Arms strength body mind. Steps steps
baby steps to the hall phone. Nein. Won. Won.

They come for me as I slip into life.

Where We Got Well

JAMES PLUNKETT

1. THE ILLUSORY HIJINX

If your teeth hurt stop drinking coffee
and swallow your spit immediately. Quit
the drugs you've been taking with your friends
and go to bed. Say goodnight and dream.

When you were little you dreamt so well
I bet you don't remember. You imagined real
scare-me-to-the-bones kind of shit; vampires
and werewolves and all that. Now it's just distorted
memories, left out too long to dry on the clotheslines—
sun faded versions of future, past, and present that
leave you in a cold sweat.

If your bones actually
start to ache you should see a doctor.
It could be a cyst or an ulcer or cancer or an STD,
UTI, BFA, or FBI coming to crack down
on all the small parts of your skull that don't work
as well as you thought they would. If you aren't actually
as smart as your parents always said you were that is ok.
You will probably grow up and be successful.
You will probably eat bread at some point.
Then will come a house and a husband and all that.
If you become fat due to war or famine
or depression or hunger do not fret.
Those things will end and so will you.
Don't let the police tame your vicious ways.

If your parents scream(ed) at one another until
the dull hours of the morning open your window
and leave. Jesus taught forgiveness but it is time
to realize you will never be Jesus. Sit in the woods,
kill deer with rocks and stones, remember how it feels
to bleed. The world will not collapse, we will continue
living forever and that is the real tragedy.

2. Zed is Dead

There is no Dali Llama in the streets,
there is no Cold War machismo,
there is no super human crew waiting
to change out of their pedestrian clothes.
To clean up the trouble we've caused.

This is no longer the era of heroes.
No one will light our final match, the last
inhale at the graceful yawn of atomic
smoke we will see on the morning of
the end of history.
The great apocalypse will arrive,
like the Good Book said it would and
we will have to illuminate ourselves or die trying.

If the smoke ever clears we will see
the one lonely cockroach skittering
amongst the debris, the singularity
that survives the fantastic atomic abyss.
On behalf of humanity
I address this poem to you.
Swallow your pride,
take our books and bombs and pray
for the sins of us kids that never meant it.
That once again humanity will rise
from the slush from whence we came and
one day
you will be our king.

3. Connecticut, December

When Sam didn't tell me her mom had
cancer
I wasn't entirely surprised.
I found out in the conventional way
you find out in small towns
by the sea. Through hearsay and karma
on the green. In New England there are
Newfoundlands
that walk their owners and bad kids who join the army.
They teach the younger generation about
their mistakes. Old men now who
wait for the mail in lawn chairs on the patio
where not even the smell of low tide
is moving.
Oh the collegiate days of madras and leather!
Oh the holy alarm clock sounding on deaf ears!
Oh the unthinkable beauty of old age settling
into the creases of our hands as they wrap around
one another!

Shall I Too?

ELIZABETH NORMAN

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Or maybe seek an original phrase
to tell you that hearing you laugh
is like
a roundhouse kick to the ribs and a blow to the knees
but never stop please,
especially when the stalest of jokes my flustered mouth could muster
the strength to stammer out

are ever the cause
please continue,
though the way you pause for breath
before you set down your books after walking briskly across campus

is enough to stop my breathing too, it doesn't feel like asphyxiation
if I can
be near you,
please go on

the other week when you waved at me and smiled
my smile refused to fade

even though the rain was pounding the pavement
around me like it was trying to
remove a stain I carried your smile behind mine like my own sunny
day.

But how do you work that into casual conversation?
I'm pretty sure that exceeds the word count of a text and anyway
is that really the right context
to unfold
the crumpled poems I've been throwing
at the trashcan in my brain like
ambitious Valentines with your name on them,
ones I couldn't bring myself to put in your shoebox.

And I'm not going to Facebook chat you to say, hey,
the day we met I cut my heart out of construction paper
and taped it to your back
as you left
and I was wondering if you'd done your laundry
and maybe found it yet.

Could I even express the realness of this
such blessed wretched ratchetness
in my own voice? No. The noises
are too timid to leave the nest
preferring to rest in my chest
rather than spread their wings and jump from my
mouth because what if you just stare
and these little word birds just fly smack into the flat glass of the
windows to your soul,
(you forgot to wear your bird of prey
silhouette eye contacts today),
and the ground they fall to is cold. Bold is my favorite flavor
but feelings are rarely favored in party mix, and for now maybe
that's enough.

I don't want to hear the ending too soon.
I know you know my name because you said it two days ago,
but
Hi, it's me, Elizabeth. Sup?

Better Metaphor

TIM JURNEY

an egret spears secrets
eyes beak underfeathers thick with
murmurs of the fish & frogs
the bogs are hefting metaphors
tossing cattail grammar skyward
seizing photosynthetic messages with
duckweed mosshands & jeweled eggs
spat out in stagnant rhymes by terse
water zipperslang & bubbles broken by
the broken speech of fish like 1 2 gill gill
still still the hum is nothing but the crack
of a typewriter filled with humid hummus.

i snatch a cattail top & chew its accent
spit out barbed tongues & after
hope cattails speak fuzzy past my lips
& after i return & dream in sheets & hope
egrets clack beaks across my pillow
lilting necks & breaths of reed language
sifting into your open mouth & that those
egrets say it better than my pale
english *i love you* can try.

For Jack

MATTHEW DELBRIDGE

These crazy saints thunder
Breaking my bedposts
Their hungry fingers frolicking on their brow
Picking at little worries and casting them aside

They pour their shaking nectar down my throat
And rattle my skull
A Holy Fuzz in my head takes hold
Crowning me one of the saints

Now my hands shake, too, and my eyes
My eyes shift endlessly, never ceasing
And strange tongues drift into my ears
Whispering angels and demons on both sides

Moons circle us like a collective Saturn
Swaddled in the borrowed light
A cracked road beckons us to dance
We gleam madness upon the asphalt

The lipless play the tenor saxophone
Blowing silent symphonies
And I, dripping out the endless Beat
Lead a march to the end of the world

No cars dare enter our plastic forest
We bare to them our teeth
The few headlights that appear quickly scurry
Until sunlight, we ordain this beastly fury

Monster to Monster

KEVIN MCKINNEY

Fire crackle crunch, We chew one another's corn cob teeth like cement mixers on gravel
My lizard feet vibrate across your coal bed legs glowing oven red and your steel mesh-
scratch ankles leaves tictactoe scars

Your expended shell fingertips click down my lead spine like typewriter keys to ransom
letters

My boiled skin man science birthmark pulses near you, my eyes glow brighter, my skin
turns greener, there is a bowl of dead butterflies in my stomach

Slugs slip along stormdrain thighs making trails that follow to our darkest parts

Your eyes are holes in the bunker of your bombproof soul's secret lair

My hand shovels at dead grass snapping hair search for cracks to pull up skull and know
your thoughts and your plans and your powers and even your secret weakness

Mine is love—love and a poke in the third eye behind my left knee.



UNTITLED · Emily Bulik-Sullivan

What Our Forest is Like

MYLES BUCHANAN

We have to clamber over the ridges of roots and some of the leaves are almost as big as we are. Deer the size of elephants, squirrels the size of dogs. You and I are the only people in this forest, and as you can see we've become very small. We find little trees to climb and jump off into soft beds of ferns. At that point, I've got all kinds of things to say to you about the mechanics of jumping into the ferns. Our youth is a long sunny day.

By adolescence we are small enough to run along the mossy roots without losing our balance. You are able to use the ferns as springs to get up into the air while I wait for you on the ground. We shrink at the same rate, so I'm always big enough to catch you easily. *Smaller than ever!* you say, after a fern takes you especially high. I can't think to say anything, as usual, so I just smile at you, kiss your forehead (you flinch a little) and set you down. To my relief, the evenings start stretching out. Soon the days stop really being days. There's no late morning, no early afternoon, just dawn and a quick slide into dusk. *I could get used to this*, I finally think to say.

Eventually our hair grows white and our skin loosens. Our muscles wither. Now, the sun rises directly into twilight and we're tiny enough to slide down the fronds of ferns. We make a fir cone our home and nestle behind one of its scales. We talk even less than we did and spend more of our time playing on the ferns, though we have be careful because of our new frailty.

I wake up late one night to sense an absence next to me. Even our little cone apartment has become spacious. A small slot of sky is visible. I find you perched on the edge of our fir cone scale, looking out over everything, waiting. I say, *remember when I used to catch you?* I put my withered hand on your white-haired head and we wait. Around us the night is not black but purple. Has been this whole time.

The Leaves Speak

EMILY GRAF

We open like hands
and the sun scuds off our tendons.

We watch people pass: nervous,
talking about love.

The city isn't sure yet if it will rain or not,
but we are sure.

Red dust, translucent halo,
wants to be clay. We hear
thirst—
our limbs murmur,
our scrolled edges gasp.

We jangle with frost
like charms on a wrist.

We know no speciation, we know no maps—
we die the way you could
only dream of dying.

In bright colors,
we escape upward
on funnels of endless wind.

Ritual

TIM JURNEY

specific time

which ticks between seconds which flit
in and out our lips between breaths which mark
clocks which kick with kisses

and place

y/o/u/r geologic crumble pocked with shock
pebble.blue pupil.blue

repeated

somersaulting lungs
down hill
and hill
& hill

sacred

i watched your eyes pull out a black chair for me
you watched my eyes pull out a black chair for you

secular

when you sit down in it and
i too sit down

hands quiet in our laps

set of objects

laying miniatures on the blankets between us
rearranging rooms of plastic
pressing blueprints back in among our bones

group

the bodies (left behind)
fingers laced in oxygen (and now also in us)

rite of passage

everytime we hold our bodies asif we arenot dead

For the Child Soldiers and Their Mothers

JAMES PLUNKETT

I have been wondering lately about limbs.

When I am quite alone in a dusty street,
red mud caking the toes of my shoes,
market women humming with large
woven baskets balanced on their heads.

When a part of your body falls away
do you hear it hit the damp earth?
Does it lie limp in the wet dust?
Does it bleed for hours?
Minutes?
Days?

Little girls in little yellow dresses
dream of what snow might feel
like at Easter mass but I tell them
to stop. I tell them to dream no longer.

When you stop believing in
things like God or denim or heroin
and swallow piss and venom and
make war on angels and children alike
you can become a hero.
You can lose yourself in the sound.
You can convince the world you are sane.
You can whisper to the universe that it
should be afraid.
That fear is natural as is death.

And there is a man shaking my hand
asking for forgiveness.

All I have seen is a woman in a dusty street,
flamingo posed,
one leg emerging from an ironed sun dress.
The space where she could once walk
now filled by visions of snow.



UNTITLED · Gabriella Alziari

My Child

WYATT RIGGS

My child cry,
My child moan,
My child soft in every bone.

My child cry,
My child kick,
My child full of yellow sick.

My child cry,
My child gone,
My child leave me all alone.

My child cry,
My child quick,
My child up in the attic.

Glossary, Thailand

EMMA LO

Why did you take so many pictures of dogs?

They pile like shedded sweaters or useless grandfathers in the street, steaming stubborn in plastic chairs or nodding raw eyes toward sludge-slick gates that cage rivers: rainbow of pisses and spits pronounced. Unavoidable world: it's tiring work to turn at every whistle and slap of a woven fan or a bamboo broom moving to prod you into a pile or worse, away.

All the snack stalls, fat smells, and cat calls did not wash away in last spring's flood. They're stuck here like dung to a paw of a dog. A plea: not to see and re-see the flood lines or remember how the water slapped the sides of stilt houses for weeks, the streets a sour soup that delivered Bangkok's innards into the sea, pronounced pen in Thai, says our tour guide who moved us toward

temples on a de-belted bus, moved me toward tears at his sincere servitude, moved himself away from a dignity that is so pronounced back home, it's as common as these palm trees. Even our dogs strut like powder-wigged princes down the street. For those with the tallest temples are hand-slapped,

back-clapped, congratulated by brothers, others, and the slapping of fat-stacked cash on the bank counter, so thick the banker leans back, suspicious. My grandma accounted for her sons even as the streets changed, even as son number one and two moved far, then father, away. Over the phone she warns us it's a sin to own two dogs because "two dogs" sounds like "graveyard" when pronounced...

unless I am confusing my Confucius tales with Aesop's fables pronounced nightly by my ABC father, who inundated me with alphabet so I'd fight slaps with words come fall of my fifth year. See now how I dog-ear pages at the pace of a rickshaw runner pulling a family toward one of the shopping malls. Backseat chatter: get us away from the dirty locals and local dirt that saturate these streets.

My curiosity clicks so out-loud down the plum-stone street you could guess my wish to know how your name is pronounced. I've tied all my old ties to a kite: sent it fluttering up and away until a plane labeled AA aimed to heave me home slaps my naivety out of the clouds down toward the sweating city. It will soon meet the jaws of a sodden dog.

Each Limb Lapping Its Neighbor

ANDREW EBNER

"The beauty of our dance, each limb lapping its neighbor, comes from our spanning, our holding together an empty space."

- from *Lining Up*, by Richard Howard

regain an old knowing of Neighbor gone for the day to work.
return home to arthritis, architect, enacting ending
the light grace of touching the banister
to linger along way to change to comfort
and other clothes.

Neighbor with olive oil and pauses
before smoke in the pan cuts the stove
to keep the heat low and starts onion
cut in halves and with the grain and against,
wipes eyes with back of hand and smiles to remind
it's all alright wordless, washes the knife,
wasn't dirty, the hot water and clean blade
invigorates like at least this makes sense,
curls toes to stretch, black shoes settled next
to boxes packed in the closet upstairs,
frayed near the toe, a year old,
there for the next day like next dinner like
quiet hours home like habit and music for mealtime,
unknowingly sending light through others' windows,
and warm noises to their halls.

Leaving Chicago

ALEX EVANS

It was a snowy day in Chicago as Edward's Camry slowly climbed the hill, spewing smoke from the exhaust. He should have never bought a car. She had told him that having a car would make them 'free;' that, were they only to have the necessary transport, they could go anywhere, and do anything they wanted. As it turns out, she'd rather go anywhere and doing anything with David Hungerford, the proud owner of a cherry red Ford Mustang, a job in an office building, and the intellect of a coffee mug. Now, as Edward sat in his piece-of-shit car, watching the weather through the windshield, he tried to count of the good things in his life. He had a job. It was an awful job and his manager hated him, but it was a job, nonetheless. He had an apartment, empty but for his books and those possessions she'd left behind, as if to further highlight her absence from the cramped room.

The car behind him honked, pulling Edward out of his meandering thoughts, and forcing him to egg the Camry on a few more blocks. He passed a Salvation Army Santa, standing out on the corner, ringing his bell and singing Christmas carols at the top of his lungs. Edward wondered idly whether the Santa was happy. He certainly appeared happy, a near-garish contrast to the drab, snow-covered street. Would he, Edward, be happy in a Santa suit, collecting money for the less fortunate? Are the less fortunate actually less fortunate? He scowled at himself for having such a thought—things were bad, certainly, but at least he wasn't sleeping in the park. There's the silver lining at last, he thought ruefully, as he pulled into the multistory parking garage.

He was a full 17 minutes late for work, but in spite of this, he extricated himself from the car slowly, and trudged to the stairs, ignoring an out of breath greeting from an equally late but infinitely more caring employee of Paggiano's, 'Chicago's Best 24-Hour Italian Restaurant.' As he hit the street and began the short walk to the restaurant, he reflected that he should have been nicer—it would be good to have a friend at work. It would be good to have a friend anywhere.

Work always passed slowly for Edward. Customers came in, orders went out, and dishes piled up beside his sink. As he submerged them in the lukewarm water, he tried to visualize her, to see life as it had been then, desperate and beautiful. He sighed, feeling the burn of buzzing fluorescent lights on his neck. All that remained was the desperation.

At 8:43, lost in the cold confusion of his mind, Edward let a wet plate slip out of his hand. Before the echoes of breaking porcelain had been silenced, his manager was in the kitchen, his face gleeful at the opportunity to criticize Edward.

"So, you thought you'd just smash some of my plates? Well, that's just great. Really. Thanks."

Edward began to stammer a response. He hadn't intentionally broken the plate. It had slipped out of his hand; surely the manager could understand a simple accident.

"I don't want to hear your excuses. You've been ungrateful of my generosity from the beginning, and I'm not having it. I'm cutting your pay from tonight on. Now clean this shit up and get back to work." The manager turned on his heels and

walked out of the kitchen, leaving behind a smell of grease and stale Parmesan.

As Edward dropped the shards of porcelain in the trash and returned to his sink, one thing stood out in his mind. He could not stay here. His paycheck from Paggiano's barely covered rent, let alone food and without her, he knew no one in this city. He spent his time fighting with his manager, fighting with his landlord, sleeping, and trying in vain to write a novel. He had to leave. Tonight.

The sky was an inky black when Edward finally buttoned up his coat and pushed his way out of the back door for the last time. All around him were the sounds of Chicago at night. Music streamed from the windows of apartments, blending into a cacophonous symphony with the roaring of the Red Line overhead. He stood on the street corner, feeling the cool night air on his cheeks, soaking in this city that had held him for the past eight months. This would be his last night in Chicago.

Edward climbed the stairs of the multistory slowly, taking in every detail of his surroundings, acutely aware that this life was about to end. As he unlocked his car and sat down in the worn driver's seat, he took stock of his provisions for the journey ahead. Lying on the passenger seat was a wilting bouquet of flowers, bought for her over a week ago, now crumpled sad on the seat. On the back seat were a few books and his typewriter, his one prized possession, a gift from her. This was enough, he thought.

His headlights reflected off of the street signs as he pulled out of the parking garage for the last time, passed the neon sign of Paggiano's, and drove on. As he sped along Lake Michigan, Edward thought back to his arrival in Chicago, a high school senior, destined for great things. He had left home without warning, pursuing a girl he hardly knew. He had imagined himself as a 21st century Jack Kerouac, setting out on a grand adventure, a few hundred dollars in his wallet and a head full of romance, beauty, and the thrill of city life. Now, as he pulled onto the highway, heading west, he was a stark comparison to his former self. His boyish face was hidden behind a scraggly beard; his ribcage was visible beneath his thrift store tshirt.

As the city lights faded in the rearview and dark farmland rose to greet him, Edward smiled inwardly. In spite of all that had happened, he was still here, and what is more, he was on his way. He didn't know where he was headed. He didn't know what he would find there, but he knew that it would be better than what he'd left behind.

Half a World

RACHEL GORSKY

You were an irishman
and We
over pots of tea
divined our futures.
You spoke to Me of dragon
bones tiled
in quiet, tidy rows
upon the floor.
My words were archaic
and Yours
modern prose, I
mistook Your meaning.



THE FUNERAL · Gabriella Alziari

Agreed Measures of Conservation

VILLE LAMPI

This is no climate-controlled board room
Even though the table seats twelve.
This is no Valentine's Day dinner
Despite the candles and the nice wine.
Behind you a picture,
Us, magnetically held together
With the metal window frame.

This photograph is the proof
Of my point of no return
To the way it used to be.
(And other clichés to which
Our conversation resorts.)

We keep silent.
(Let's put all photos under glass
Into hermetically sealed capsules.
Let's archive all early specimens,
Put guards around them to make
Sure they don't disappear.)

I ask for a copy.
(And yet you don't know that
You—like history—
Are being filed away into
A museum where wine won't spill.)

Hold Me

EMMA LO

I.

The flag is ashamed
of the pain needled in its seams,
the eager eyes of enemies who
strike matches at its sight,
of its obligation to mean everything,
and lure away sons so soon.

Hang, flag!

As punishment, the cruelty of the wind's
cold fists, punching straight and
square.

II.

The flag is divorced
from the human embrace that
all other cloths tender.

No one loves a quilt out of duty,
its patchy softness clings to skin
as if the hands of the one who wove it.

Oh that you could know, flag!

Your stars, stripes, moon, scythe, leaf
crumble and sigh in the fingers
of a seamstress,
or mash between an infant's wet gums,
or claim the just-soaped skin of a girl
who dreams on solid arms as she clutches you,
or wrap what is left of an old, old man
who says, *Nurse,*
How I shiver!

He delights in your warmth
more than anything else.

Barnett Newman

PHOEBE ROTTER

we are a difficult
conversation. the kind
in which one sits on a bed
bruised and smiling
the second stands tight-lipped
above. someone is
always sad to be there and
someone is always hurt
and glad

we are a rough night in
the space between an old married couple
one sleeps quietly on sorrow
the second burns awake with rage
leave me now leave me
to lick my wounds
who's afraid of
red, yellow, and blue



HERE THERE BE MONSTERS · Claudia Pepe

Mirror, Mirror

RACHEL GORSKY

Though alone, he shares with others
an overbearing presence.
As the body speaks, dominated by recollection,
his voice gains flesh.
This step saturates his thoughts,
and darkens the perception of him.
But such simplicity is deceptive,
for he cheers by the lines in a story.

Feeding Behavior

ELISE ECONOMY

There is a sadistic sense of advantage, manipulation
Which fishermen derive from sacrificing tiny, less desirable
Breeds to the waters, slicing and scattering them
Into an algae bloom of blood behind the boat
Pulling the salmon from the deep, crooning
“You are all disposable to me”

And the cold-blooded truth of the men
Whose hands are stained
With the warm-blooded water
Is that the fish cannot resist them.
It is what they were “trained to do.”

What I was “trained” to do, instinct—hunger, survival,
Fight or flight, triggered during life threatening situations,
Such as putting on my right shoe before my left
Or tapping the door frame twenty times, or only ten,
Before I make a mistake, and have to start again.

When you fear this way, you fear yourself.
You fear like a fool.
Driven by their natural urge to eat
The salmon spawn among the red haze awash in the wake
Only to be snared pursuing an insoluble hunger.

To live is to take risk, to live on the edge
My father says, studying me washing
My hands, raw, using routine procedure
To stem panic, while fear festers on.

“I won’t
be mugged.
“I won’t
be raped”
If I just keep washing, rubbing, rubbing, repeat.
The more you wash the more you need to feed.

The Fall

NATALIE WARDLAW

When I first picked up the snake
she was taller than me—head and body ensnared
in blueberry netting I was almost ashamed
of her vulnerability, thick black body
hanging limp in my cushioned child hand
and so I collected her eggs and lay them out in the field:
Go forth and multiply, I let sin slither through
my fingers and questioned how far do you have to go
to go too far. The answer came years later: it was
not far at all—just one bite, one quivering inhale of hesitation
that set the course for unavoidable downfall
into a spiral that I tried to trace back again and again
to the exact moment before his iron hand clamped itself
around my wrist, when salvation was still visible in front of
the horizon, before the permeating damp of that far gone cellar,
before my mind snapped into a broken loop of memory
played over the screen of my eyes
repeating in a terrible mockery of failed resolution
when Satan said I'll give it to you, but for a price
and I bit down and the smoke turned so cold in my lungs
that I wanted to laugh and say, I control death now!

When I was Orson at the Oscars

GABRIELLA COOPER

Those who spend millions on blank canvases painted white
And call them art
Those who use cameras to capture plastic women
Famous only for their flaws and faults
Those who measure worth by scandal and filth
Those who are blind to beauty in the obscene
Those who lust after the thrill of tumbling into pitfalls of humanity—
Lust after the thrill of falling—
Like Alice down the rabbit-hole
Past morphed realities and crude caricatures of their own whims and
fantasies
Like a pack of ravenous hounds,
They drool over embarrassment and doom
And desperation
Every drop of slime that oozes from their lips,
Candy-coated with deceit,
Lands on something pure and clean.
Like acid,
It burns right through
It mars the surface
Like a disease,
It spreads and corrupts
And absorbs
And takes over
And refuses to relinquish save for the promise of cold, hard cash
Like a snake,
It squeezes like a vice and looks you straight in the eye as it does it
As if to say:
I know it hurts to be consumed
And
Your existence meant nothing
And then,
Defeated, numb, rubbed raw
Eyes heavy with exhaustion,
You give in.

Architecture

JULIA WEAVER

There is erratic architecture in the back,
Its baroque curves strobe him and blind,
Untethering his nerves like rusted piping,
And studying him like a dance,
The curiosity of a building going—
Is this what people do?

It wonders why he lets the sunlight slant his words,
Slice through them like daggered lace,
Why some words stick and age and do wrong
And others fall through, swallowed in the pavement.

The building with the ribbed vaulting hisses,
Wonders how he can breathe with that hollow shell.
It wonders if he ever tries to do anything,
Ever tries to go beyond his life.

And how have you not crumbled? it wonders,
When bones are so much the weaker next to Gothic churches,
When eyes grow dimmer next to the clerestories,
When breathing is no longer enough to fill the structure.
But still, man moves like a dance.



CATHARIST · Andrew Ebner

Starboard (or beautiful things)

NATHANIEL LOTZE

Cast your doubts portside
Or starboard if you're so inclined
And let the water swallow them
Like babies with their mashed up food
Like songbirds with their songs when
Winter presses in and the naked woods
Are too quiet

Because it will all be fine
Okay
Wonderful even
Or whatever other platitudes your mother
Told you when you were young and scared
And crying

They are true if you believe them
If you see the evening light disappear
Over the gentle outline of the hills
Grey then pink then fading
And hear the rain descend from
Weighted clouds just waiting
The beautiful things

The beautiful things
Against all of everything else
The yen and dollars of our
Terrifying marketplace
The receding echoes in the chambers
Of the heart
And the scattered voices whispering harshly
Probabilities as if they were certainties

But what is daunting isn't always deadly
Though the end is where we are headed
We haven't reached it yet
There is a pulsing strength inside our bones
And hearts
And inside our eyes too
That allows them to see the sun
If they stare up into the sky for
Long enough

Window

NATALIE WARDLAW

A cold pane separating the room
from the world in a concreteness
that can only be understood as
much as transparency can be
grasped, layered thick enough
like the skin stretched taught across
my wrists that moves from the
invisible to the fully tangible only
because it has been repeated by
itself in an exponential embrace
wrapping tendons to veins that try
to touch outward, but are only
experienced as opaque shadows
behind films of unclean glass.

day in reverse

LUCAS ROPEK

and sunlight breaking in;

(whiplash)

a quick retreat from bombastic
orange to a soft vagrant yellow, to a
filthy bed sheet paleness (trippingly) while
inside, an ellipses patiently waiting finally kisses
that word and (the world turning) a fog eases
up from bruising, seeded clouds to whiteness

the day in reverse would've
started with a dying owl
talking candidly with
the broken tree limb:
saying skeletal, bare, beautiful
dark bones,
cradle of a beggar and a thief

and sunlight breaking in;

with this ugliness might
come the awakened mélange;
the wobbly-dobbly of here
and there (fantasy
of stasis brought once
again, rising
like a sea swell):

words and images assembling
from that hanging, wild and wicked jazz
to a recovering, ordered logic.

IN THIS ISSUE

art & literature

Gabriella Alziari

Mary Bank

Myles Buchanan

Emily Bulik-Sullivan

Gabriella Cooper

Matthew Delbridge

Elise Economy

Andrew Ebner

Alex Evans

John Foley

Elizabeth Friedman

Taylor Geu

Rachel Gorsky

Emily Graf

Annie Hulkower

Tim Jurney

Kathryn Kadleck

Daniel Katz

Ville Lampi

Emma Lo

Nathaniel Lotze

Jack Mankiewicz

Kevin Mckinney

D. Aaron Mcilbenny

David Miller

R. L. Neviska

Elizabeth Norman

Claudia Pepe

Willie Plaschke

James Plunkett

Wyatt Riggs

Lucas Ropek

Phoebe Rotter

Hannah Saiz

Peter Schulman

Molly Silverstein

Daniel Solway

Natalie Wardlaw

Julia Weaver

Claire Weibel

Allyson Young

Maria Zarka



I am going to be victorious
because a large persimmon has fallen into my hands.

(TOKUGAWA IYASU)