New Orleans Review

Volume 34 Number 2

COVER ART:
Tilted Mule, 2008
Jack Niven, oil on panel
Collection of Romi Gonzalez and Shelley Posey
Photo: Mike Davis

FRONTISPIECE:
Light Play on the Bayou
Owen Murphy

BOOK DESIGN:
Christopher Chambers

New Orleans Review, founded in 1968, is published by Loyola University New Orleans. Loyola University is a charter member of the Association of Jesuit University Presses. *New Orleans Review* reads unsolicited submissions of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and translations year round. Subscriptions $15 per year; $35 outside U.S. No portion of *New Orleans Review* may be reproduced without written permission. Send all correspondence to *New Orleans Review,* Box 195, Loyola University, New Orleans, LA 70118. For more information and back issues, visit us at www.neworleansreview.org. Contents listed in the PMLA Bibliography, the Index of American Periodical Verse, and the American Humanities Index. Printed in the United States. Distributed by Ingram Periodicals. ISSN: 0028-6400

Printed on recycled paper, 50% post-consumer waste, by McNaughton & Gunn, a certified Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) printer. Printing managed by Greencup Publishing, a not-for-profit community publisher.

LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY
NEW ORLEANS

CONTENTS

Thomas Cooper
The Lady in the Closet 12

Peter Joseph Gloviczki
Triolet for How We Spent Winter 16

Kevin Prufer
Late Empires 17
Icicles 20
It Is Not a Star, It Is an Airplane 22

Nicolas Hundley
Invocation 24

Monica Berlin
Measure By Hand 25

James Capozzi
The orange 26
The Zones 27

Evan Hanczor
A Request: 28

Brent Van Horne
Ascending the Mountain 29

Kaethe Schwehn
The Color of Carbon 37
Missive 39
To Thessaloniki, the Whore 40

Nansŏrhŏn Hŏ [translated by Ian Haight & Taeyoung Hŏ]
The Courtesan Houses 42
Touch-Me-Not Finger Polish 43
Resentment in Women's Quarters 44
Sensations of Spring 46

Garth Greenwell
Listening to the Cicadas 47
Club L'Esclave 49

R. E. Bowse
From the Night, Comes 51

POETRY FEATURE:
Nicky Beer
Mako 69
Pescados de Pesadillas 71
Folk Remedy 72
Poem 73
Annotations 74
The Exquisite Foreplay of the Tortoise 76
Hummingbird, 1:30 AM 77

Laura Longsong
Nerve 78

Mark Edward Pursell
Excelsior 83
Sonnet for All Hallow's Eve, Mombasa Province, 1997 84
New Cartography 85

Jennifer Whitaker
Father As Map of the World 87
Father As Barred Owl 88

Tom Christopher
Home Begins with a Village's Burning 89

Desmond Kon Zhicheng-Mingdé
res signata restituere retributio 90

Kate Sweeney
The Cattle Driver's Wife 91
Luminosity, 1900 92

PHOTOGRAPHY FEATURE:
Owen Murphy 93

Chris Waddington
Why Don't You Talk About Him? 104

POETRY FEATURE:
Marci Nelligan
from *Infinite Variations* 120

Polly Buckingham
Compliance 130

Robert Lipton
Swimming to Jerusalem 140

Lawrence Matsuda
Hiroshima 1995 142

James Brasfield
Coming Down 143

Erin Gendron
A Soldier Says We Are Stubborn 144
Dore Kiesselbach
Morgue 145

Derick Burleson
There is an order 147
November 148

Angie Macri
First the Bats, Then the Stars 150

Robyn L. Murphy
Hungry Ghost 151

Bryan Narendorf
Impression, Catullus, c. 5 159

Anna Maria Hong
The Bronze Age 160

Stefanie Wortman
The Transparent Fabulist 161

Thomas Cook
Office Park 162
Modern Lighting 163

Sara Guest
Enhancements 164

Lawrence Revard
The House I Promise in My Heart to the Dancer I Fall in Love With 165

Martha Zweig
Domestic 167
Tell Me Another 168

Elizabeth Rush
Song 170

Lynne Sharon Schwartz
Traveling with Uncle Bert 171

BOOK REVIEWS 181

CONTRIBUTORS 198

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 208

THOMAS HOOPER

The Lady in the Closet

Who knew how long she'd been there, the woman living in our bedroom closet. She was so small and quiet it seemed a crime to throw her out in the streets, especially in the middle of winter. My wife would have seen matters another way and called the police after telling me that I'd lost my mind, which is why I didn't tell her about the lady in the closet and planned on keeping it that way.

There she was one day while I was picking out a suit before work, her pale, delicately boned face peering out of the coats and jackets. I expected an apology, at the very least a "Well, I'll be going now," but she stayed quiet, as if it were her god-given right to be there. As if I, in fact, were the trespassing party.

"Where are you from?" I finally asked, meaning, "How did you get here, and how long have you been living in my house?"

But the young woman only said, "Des Moines."

"What's your name?" I asked.

But she only said, "Confidential." Her tone suggested I better not pursue the matter any further.

The decision to let the closet lady stay took less than a minute. Certainly far less time than it took me to agree to a first date with my wife when she asked so many years ago. I think it was my wife's recent sickness that helped me decide, how the house was sometimes so horribly silent and still.

Of course, in the beginning I panicked about what my wife would do if she ever found out about the lady in the closet. She'd want to know how long I'd been letting this woman, this incredibly sexy stranger, stay. How would I explain, *Since your hysterectomy*? In

case of emergency, I had my argument already prepared. The closet was spacious enough to house a small family, I would tell her, and hadn't we always talked about giving more to charity?

Not that I had any real reason to worry. The lady in the closet was nothing if not fastidious and polite, hardly like having another person in the house at all. She never left a trace of herself behind, never a hair, footstep, or handprint. Whenever she took food out of the refrigerator, it was a sliver of pot roast here, a nibble of Camembert there, never anything we'd notice missing.

On the mornings my wife left early for work, the closet lady and I had Turkish coffee and wheat toast at the sunny kitchen nook table. I started telling the closet lady everything, more than I ever told my wife or brother or psychiatrist.

The lady from the closet sat across from me, perfectly silent, every so often demurely patting her lips with a napkin.

I took her silence as a sign of unconditional acceptance, her unconditional acceptance as a sign of love, and her love as a sign that I should consider leaving my marriage. All of which, in turn, I took as a sign that I might have been losing my mind. Why, I'd never even touched the lady in the closet, had heard her say so few words that she might as well have been a chimera.

But she wasn't a chimera. There she was, so close in the sharp light of day that I could see the hundreds of copper and honey colors in her hair, could see the sun shining through her ears, turning the edges translucent red.

One morning, I told the closet lady, "Look, I don't know who you are, or what you are, but I want you to go away with me. Maybe out of the country." It was so ridiculously simple, loving this woman whose name I didn't even know, this woman who did nothing but listen and who was in the bloom of almost offensively perfect health.

She folded her fingers against her palm, stared at her French-manicured fingernails.

"I mean eventually," I said. "All right, forget I said that. Just don't leave, please."

I started to worry about the closet lady. Was I holding her captive somehow? Was what I was doing punishable by law? Could I lose my job at the accounting firm, or would they put me on the evening news?

That was around when my wife started getting fainting and coughing spells again, and when the closet lady started disappearing for days at a time, right when I needed her most. The curled indentation of her body would be on the carpet beneath the hanging coats and jackets, but no closet lady. I searched high and low for some trapdoor or secret compartment, sliding my hand along the walls and probing with my fingers. Nothing. For all I knew the lady in the closet had this whole other life, her own house and family, with her own lady or man in the closet. Or maybe she was spending time in someone else's closet, a bigger and better closet, in one of the houses down the street.

She always returned after a day or two, smelling briny, her pomegranate lipstick smeared around her mouth.

"And where have you been?" I would ask. Nonchalantly, snapping my newspaper.

She sighed and said, "Look, you need to relax." This was as much as she'd ever said to me, whoever this woman was who'd been living under my roof for over a year, maybe even since the last presidential administration.

"I'll relax," I told her. "Just don't leave. I really need you now."

Soon after that, around Christmas, my wife's cancer came back, metastasized to the brain. So began the long and horrible days of radiation therapy, the interminable nights of vigil as she retched fluorescent slime into a plastic bucket. One night I shaved her head as she sat on the bathroom toilet. We wept together, seeing all that fox-colored hair in curlicues on the tile floor. I held her hand, so

paper-dry, so brittle-fingered, and it seemed to me that everything about her was a fraction smaller than it had once been.

"You're distancing yourself lately, Edward," she told me. "Please stop." Even her voice sounded smaller.

There were times when I felt that I was betraying my wife, being with the lady in the closet. Now it felt like the other way around. I promised her I'd stop.

She died on a Sunday afternoon in February, between Clover Street and Main when we were driving home from the farmer's market. She gasped and I looked over, knuckles cracking around the wheel. I saw her drawn mouth and pale face, her stricken eyes, the inhaler cupped in her hand.

Between the funeral arrangements and the coming and going of relatives, I neglected the lady in the closet. For a long time I thought she'd left for good. But when spring came, I cleaned my wife's things out of the closet and looked through a hatbox where, apparently, she had been hiding all this time, curled like a possum, shivering and naked and bald. As if shaving her head like that wasn't sick and cruel enough, the lady in the closet didn't even look like herself anymore. She had thinned her eyebrows and shaded her lips and eyelids just like my wife's.

I ran away in a panic and hid behind the living room couch.

When the lady in the closet got sick and started coughing, I forgave her. At night she kept me awake with her coughing and retching, and every now and then I got up from bed and flicked on the closet light. The lady in the closet, who looked more like my wife every day, was always smaller than before, until by summer she was so small curled up in her hatbox that she seemed on the edge of disappearing. Just when I thought she couldn't get smaller, she would shrink more, and then more, until she was pin sized, until she was smaller than that, and then so small I couldn't tell if I was looking at someone real or imaginary, or just the size of memory.

PETER JOSEPH GLOVICZKI

Triolet for How We Spent Winter

We broke our breath on the window.
We left everything our lungs let out
released, now, steam watching snow.
We broke our breath on the window:
exhaled evidence of what lovers sow.
We wore skin for every blessed bout.
We broke our breath on the window.
We left everything our lungs let out.

KEVIN PRUFER

Late Empires

a dead woman by the road

Like a stadium,
emptying its hushed crowds—
Like a fallen empire, spilling refugees—
the stomach
displays its contents.

—

Sorry, the grass said
to the fingers' rigid purple,
to the half-smile where an arm bone
cracked
and split the skin. *Sorry*,
to the face on the roadside, to the gravel
pitted in the flesh—

—

It has sunk these last weeks
into the scrub.

It has cooled in the mists,
the clouds
of drunken flies.

—

He is far away
sleeping on a hotel bed,
singing to the radio,

driving to the city
with another girl
for drinks, more drinks.
We'll drink, he says,

showing her his money.

—

Rome fell;
the girl fell when he hit her hard.

The girl cried out
and, like Rome, fell on her broken arm
on the roadside.

The girl cried in the sun
on the gravel,
and a knife
to the baths, a knife to the libraries,
knife to the Palatine, knife to the slums,
knife to the throat
that wanted only
to keep its voice inside it.

—

The silence between one Rome
and another:
each empire's incipient failure,
a body's slow decay.
He has already forgotten,
he is far away, and, anyway, this is only
a dead girl,
having spilled a population
into the grass.

KEVIN PRUFER

Icicles

The light from my neighbor's computer
cast the half-melted snow

in a queer blue light.

—

Often, melting icicles remind me
of a hospital, the plastic bag

suspended from a pole
that dripped into your arm.

—

And my neighbors were hunched at their screens,
like nothing had happened,

emailing each other
about the weather.

—

Sometimes, my heart is a half-filled bag,
draining slowly

into the evening.

—

Listening closely, I heard the tap-tap
of my neighbors at their keyboards,

icicles dripping.

A thousand icicles
long as the night.

—

And from my heart, tubes descend.
Lower and lower, they branch and thin.

The last of my blood
empties into them.

KEVIN PRUFER

It Is Not a Star, It Is an Airplane

Clouds are a warning,
rain is worse, and next comes lightning

until the birds go quiet
and the dogs start barking.

We were on the phone,
and then a silence—

and I imagined you'd fallen,
the telephone turning above you on its cord.

Such quick bird breaths,
barely audible,

until you came back as if nothing had happened.
Darling, I've been away

too long and my hotel room
is always fresh and strange.

One day I'll be far from home,
and the bird that lives in your heart

might fall from its branch.
Don't say it isn't true.

When I am worried, I leave the hotel
and walk along the train tracks

where the storm's stopped
and the dogs are no longer barking.

The surgeon said you'd be fine,
patting your arm and looking out the window.

The stars are far away
and, anyway, not interested in us

until one of them moves.
I'm thinking of calling you.

NICOLAS HUNDLEY

Invocation

Who is the saint of unhinged mandibles?
Who is the saint of remorseless breeding?
Who presides over the removal of sores,
over their removers? Over the scholars
of sores? The sore-afflicted?
Who is the saint of swallowed insects?
Of their regurgitation? Of radiation sickness?
Who is the saint of wound-dressers?
Who is charged with tunnelers? Tunneling?
Who oversees the pail-maker?
Who is the saint of worms enlisted for healing?
Who is the saint of severed hands?
Offer your hands in prayer to him.
Swallow a prayer and think of two hands
in the dark, how hands are always in the dark.

MONICA BERLIN

Measure By Hand

Long before the horse pulls up lame, there is the matter of hands. *Not* palmed against flank or curve of back, but quantifiable units. A system of measurement not relative to the hand, not dependent on handler. It can't be wrong, this want of mine, for the body to be its own kind of metric, like the now-lost cubit sizing up the length from elbow to finger's tip. Or everything gauged against feet: a ruler, a dactyl, the forearm. Or a yard? Three feet, a landscaped plot of ground, storage for trains. And that hand? Four inches, even if to inch never signals distance. When my son was born every part of his body corresponded, fit right into some part of me. Before my son was, he wedged inside me. I swear to you, measurement was first hand made. It wanted to allow room for the possibility of my palm placed, tender, along his spine, or your fingers stretching from the horse's mane to its withers.

JAMES CAPOZZI

The orange

proves God's provision for us when we're wanting
go lonely through another country
worry about the quality of the democracy.
When we homestead furiously, go down in heat

are buried in mid-June somewhere
the insects' engine eats. Where the orange
moves us through heaven alive
the orchard that's a peace: Stream Tree

& other memories we lose first
in words, then lose the words themselves
which is the point entirely. They endure the same
dream in Siam Troy or anywhere they don't

have blood bones brains yet
you're expected to arrive, bent
& with the world in your voice
speaking deep deep into their skins.

JAMES CAPOZZI

The Zones

brown water / black water / the water of mercies
seawater / the sea itself / the sea's little cells
nourish days famish night
chanting hushed & deaf

a green year / blue years / the morsel of a year
passed in some core of a life
the black years / mustard years
muffling words
& open as a brute
o a year desists, before a mirror
secretes its guts through veils
hard mirror hard veil / zones blue or green
or brown zones, the black zones, zones of mercy

EVAN HANCZOR

A Request:

If you could carefully, ever so
carefully place those tomatoes

in the basket on the shelf

without fucking bruising them please,

they may be ripe by tomorrow.

BRENT VAN HORNE

Ascending the Mountain

1
Well, I can see you're surprised. I can't blame you. I've returned from the mountain carrying nothing, looking probably about the same as before. But my arrival can't be entirely unexpected. In fairness, you were standing there in the foyer, a hand on Daniel's shoulder, waiting, it seemed, when I opened the door. Did you hear the key in the lock? No? That's fine. So you were waiting. Thank you.

2
But perhaps my return isn't so strange. That I left to ascend the mountain at all was something that came up suddenly. We know that's not my field. I never appreciated the natural sciences. Even as a child I lacked a desire for discovery. In fact, isn't that my briefcase there? Just behind the hutch? I think it is.

3
But now I've returned, and I can see you're anxious to hear what's happened. So let's sit. There, in the living room. The sun is failing, but I can see some light on the floor.

4
The way to the mountain is this: Take the old highway out of town, past 70th, past the late night gas stations, past the farms and the farmers who will wave to you and who have kind eyes. You will eventually come to the mountain.

5

We were gathered at the base of the mountain, four of us, looking stupidly to the sky, attempting to discern the peak through some low-hanging clouds. You'll be happy to hear the others were much like me. We were, perhaps, the plumbers and businessmen from town, not especially skilled in the field of exploration, but gathered together to reach for the summit, fueled, each of us, by our individual desires. I carried with me a small box, fit snugly into my pack. On the box was a simple lock, a hole for a key. Others carried their own items, I'm sure, though I never saw them.

We continued to look to the sky, the peak hidden somewhere behind the clouds. We shook each others' hands, grasping fingers firmly, holding longer than usual. But, gathered there at the base of the mountain, our circumstances, as you can imagine, were not entirely familiar. And yet we smiled, attempting to appear hopeful, and we turned to ascend the mountain.

6

We ascended the east face of the mountain. The path was littered with what—rocks, snow, sparse brush, the remains of former climbers, the corpses of animals? No. The path was littered with nothing because there was no path. Which was, I admit, only slightly unnerving, as there were many ways to ascend the mountain.

7

The winds were awful and the cold, worse. Though we were prepared for the conditions—we had already donned our thick hats and heavy jackets—the fierceness with which they assailed us was surprising. An hour into the ascent, perhaps two, a boulder rolled past that was, if you'll bear with me, as large as a house and entirely unnatural in its bigness. It hummed lowly as it went, leaving deep hollows in the face of the mountain. We looked to the depressions for respite—our fingers already cold, our faces red—and in one we

made a fire, burning what sticks and brush we could find so thoroughly that, upon their demise, we questioned whether they had ever existed at all.

8
Our eagerness waned. And yet, we ascended the mountain.

9
Perhaps we should have known better. We found the east face impassable and turned reluctantly toward the north. There, the wind ran through our jackets and gloves, turning our hands a dull grey, not unlike the color of the low hanging sky, which, even at its brightest, refused to offer relief.

The snow threatened our progress. It came in torrents, sometimes burying us up to our shoulders, sometimes burying us entirely. But the snow did not claim us,

10
nor did the boulders,

11
and yet, we feared what may.

12
On our first night on the mountain, we were stirred from sleep by the sounds of restless animals. Their wails were unmistakable and horrible, and yet we could not put any names to the beasts that made them. We knew only that they were hungry and near, and that our bodies were warm and filled with blood. We walked from our tents, our feet already stiff and brittle—we were not seasoned climbers, and our bodies wore quickly—and we stared into the night.

What did we see?

We saw only black. Only the emptiness of night. And that was what we feared most. We would have rather seen some cruel beast waiting to ravage us than have seen nothing. Because when we followed those restless sounds that tore us away from our uneasy dreams, when we rose and stepped into the darkness and found nothing, we looked then toward the peak of the mountain.

13

When the morning came, some of us wished to turn back and descend toward easier climes and leveler terrain, our minds unnerved by the sounds of the animals, by the silence of night. We were surrounded by only whiteness and darkness. The mountain offered nothing in between. There were those who wished they had never come to the mountain. But what choice did we have? After ascending the mountain, what would become of the trip to the corner market for bread and coffee? to the commute into the city? to the slow dance in a darkened room?

Perhaps we were cowards. Perhaps we had always been cowards. It was, however, a moot point, as we continued our ascent, our small party of four still intact.

14

Do you see, Daniel? The way our boots plunged into the snow? Do you see the way our hands, grey and bloodless in our gloves, trembled as we climbed?

15

By the second night we no longer trusted our blankets to keep the cold away. We slept buried under our equipment, a cast iron pot snugly beneath our heads, our feet kept warm under ropes and axes. But any rest had on the mountain was uneasy rest. When we were able to dream of anything but the darkness of the mountain, of its

cold winds, we dreamt of our families, of you. And even so, we did not long for the embrace of our wives or of our children. Forgive me, but I hoped only that you slept peacefully, and that you understood why I was there.

16

I carried with me, if you remember, a small box, weighing, perhaps, a pound or less.

17

As we progressed, the air thinned, but became, somehow, warmer. The snow disappeared, giving way to sloped fields of long grasses. The sun returned, shining brightly and warmly in a sky the color of a shallow and sparsely populated ocean. The effect was unnerving, but it appeared we had achieved some kind of victory. We dotted the fields with tents, with orange and red fires, with the movement of bodies, our coats cast away, our hats, for once, resting lightly on the ground, or tucked tightly into our pockets. We created, perhaps half-way up the mountain, scenes of domesticity. We laughed, looking ahead to the peak, seeing snow, looking behind to the base, seeing snow, looking down to our feet, seeing grass.

And finally, with the rest granted to us by the break in the snow, by the long grasses, we were afforded the opportunity to consider our expedition. Where before we pushed on with our heads low, our minds lingering only on the troubles that plagued us, we were now allowed, while our bodies rested, to push further into what it meant to ascend the mountain, what it meant that we had gathered to reach toward the peak, suffering under the impediments the mountain seemed to so willingly proffer against us, moving forward, always, always ascending.

We were plumbers, of course. We were businessmen. But we had, on the mountain, taken on roles that demanded other qualities.

We had not abandoned all hope of bravery. Is it selfish to admit we were interested in what that meant?

18
This is what we decided: The mountain did not exist. Now, I see, already, you're looking to the ceiling, but I hope you consider, for a moment, our situation. We were tired, yes, but we were not mad. Is it so peculiar to conclude that perhaps the boulders were unnaturally large, the beasts horrible and unnamable, the winds ceaseless and cold because they were not bound by any particular reality? The mountain, we decided, was only a material representation of some past trouble, some former injury we had sustained, in the same way all present trouble is merely a manifestation of some previous trouble, existing only as a means of emphasizing and expanding upon what we already know.

19
Well, I can see you pointing Daniel to the stairs. It's late, I know, so goodnight, Daniel. Goodnight.

20
But, we continued to wonder,

21
if the mountain did not exist, why did our legs ache? Why did our cheeks, suffering the violence of the wind, redden? No, the mountain surely existed. We decided it must. And so we continued our ascent, the warm fields of grass replaced quickly by the familiarity of snow and of wind, of those large and unsettling boulders, our equipment once again piled atop us while we slept, the sound of restless animals stirring us occasionally. We ascended the mountain, thinking, again, only of the peak.

22
I carried with me a small box, from which came the sound of hushed singing. A hum, of sorts.

23
Eventually we came to the face of a cliff covered entirely in ice, two hundred feet or more. And if the height did not unsettle us, the color certainly did. The ice was black, the color of a chalkboard, and nearly as smooth. We ascended the face, but drove our boots and axes into the ice warily, unsure of what hid behind.

Our eyes, searching the face of the cliff, refused to focus. The effect was unnerving. We had expected cliffs, but I will not deny that our hope was shaken when we came upon the black ice.

24
On top of the cliff, the mountain revealed itself, stretching upwards a mile or more, and yet,

25
there! The peak!

26
Well, we were delighted. We shed our equipment, letting axes and tents fall to the ground, leaving all but our lightened packs behind, running toward the peak.

27
We ascended the mountain, attaining the peak, where we were greeted by a chorus of voices, singing sweetly and fully.

28
We ascended the mountain, attaining the peak, where we lingered

under the shadow of some low hanging cloud, standing atop an empty plateau of rock and snow, the view of the mountain below obscured by thick fog.

29

We ascended the mountain, attaining the peak, where we discovered a mound of miscellaneous items: shoes, telephones, an umbrella, a key. I reached into my pack and removed the small box, placed it on the ground, then turned and descended hurriedly down the mountain, not waiting to see what the others had discovered, clutching the key firmly in a balled fist.

30

When I arrived home, I fit the key into the lock of the front door and opened it to reveal, standing in the foyer, you and Daniel, your hand softly on his shoulder. You looked at me kindly, your demeanor anxious, but contented. And so I've ascended the mountain, and now returned, and I can see, as you've just come back from the kitchen, a pot of water boiling noisily on the stove. For tea, perhaps, or coffee.

31

This is what I know: The mountain is not an obstacle. The mountain exists. The winds on the mountain are cold. The way is steep. On the peak of the mountain sits a mound of miscellaneous items: shoes, telephones, an umbrella. When you return from the mountain you will expect the city to be different. It will not be. The streets are lined with lights. The cars below them shine. Somewhere, an exchange is made. Somewhere, a key is fit into a lock. A door swings open.

KAETHE SCHWEHN

The Color of Carbon

What is the scent of Ceylon? Celery: *a European herb (Apium graveolens) of the carrot family.* Below every celery stalk

is a seed of celery. She liked cayenne on her cauliflower. He was a cadet who had lost his caribou. Ceylon became

independent in 1948; its name was changed to Sri Lanka in 1972. Her eyes were a cadet blue and accentuated

the cayenne nicely. She could smell the carbon on his wrists. Celery is nature's toothbrush. When in Ceylon

they went out dancing, he lined the cashews up like soldiers on her napkin. "I want to run a celery farm,"

she said. Night came. A blueing purse of carbon. With his caribou lips he tore at her clothes. Bark from a birch

in winter. What color our despair? Under the cashewed bridge, hoof beats. "I don't know that a celery farm

is possible," he replied. Tensions erupted in the mid 1980's. She pressed on: "But wouldn't the little green

shoots be exciting?" The caribou left cayenne tracks
across the tundra. Tens of thousands have died in an

ethnic war that continues to fester. He left the room
to roam Ceylon. After the Chernobyl accident, the levels

of cesium in caribou increased steadily, and with cayenne
in the hoses, the cadets beat the people back. If enough

stories are juxtaposed, will they begin to sing together?
She died by celery. Was torn apart by caribou. Carbon:

a nonmetallic element found as a constituent of coal,
petroleum, and asphalt. He collected her hands and wrists.

Small pile of hair and teeth and cuffs. Since 1972, Ceylon
has not existed. Can you detect the traces of cesium

inside you? If a rickshaw scents Ceylon, how will the remains
of the caribou be measured? If blue adorns the carbon.

KAETHE SCHWEHN

Missive

Sir in need of reinforcements / perhaps more men or whatnot / the enemy approaches / & all but I are dead / thus the field of skeletons and I / prepare for battle somewhat / though I try to make us look alive / success of only partial rate / have propped the dead up by a variety of means / hooded cloaks as props or one dead man a stilt for another dead / men look alive I say ha ha / also have tried propping against shrubs but have found / only one shrub / also trees but trees only flourish / on outer parts of battlefields Sir / thus making us appear lazy / thus making us appear as though / we have rolled back our sardine cans / just to nibble because / which we have not let me make clear / as most of us are dead though I say / to myself / better a dead army than a lazy / army also have tried mirrors to make us appear / larger but I / have no mirrors canteens also / used as props but topple issues / that is to say / stack lean topple stack lean / topple also tried / my own self / lifting one man under each arm / thus appearing one giant man / have I made clear / no one left here but the wild boar came snorting through at sunset and I / stack lean topple I / thus find myself here Sir / at your side / to tell you what has become of us / decided this should be the last thing / though the rest of the company re-shudders / had to put the missive in your hand / myself Sir and may I say / that ring quite red against your gracious finger and hopeful / I stand always your servant until / death or something like it.

KAETHE SCHWEHN

To Thessaloniki, the Whore

My lover is in
you, Thessaloniki.
Steam rises from your
pavements and high heeled
boots strut along your streets.
I see the tugboat
sores in your mouth.

Thessaloniki! Your name stays longer in his mouth
than mine. He rolls over in you. He sits down in
you. He washes his pants in you and you have marked
his legal documents. You are bound to him
in INK, like the squid to the whale. You
Aegean him to sleep, your perverse waves
chucking against his chiseled chin.

Thessaloniki, miserable coquette, your
monasteries do not keep regular hours! You keep him
coming back for more: more monks, more coffee, more gelato,
more thin meats strapped to flaky pastries.

Oh! he sent me a picture, smiling before one of your palaces!
(How you wile Hellenistic sympathy from his pores!)
I have nothing to offer but a strip mall. Nothing to give
but TGI Friday's and Great Clips.

He proffers me an e-mail while
swailing his muscular forearm into your
cloudy sky to snap
a cloudy picture which I
will be forced to feed upon
for the month until his return.

Advent nears. And so,
Thessaloniki, I must rely upon your Christian
churches and your cracking icon lips to comfort him. I must rest
him in your oar-callused palms. I must trust you will
be kind to him. Meanwhile, I prepare myself for his return.

I polish my Penelope stare.
I bury three bishops in my soul.

NANSŎRHŎN HŎ

The Courtesan Houses

Over a hundred thousand brothels
line narrow lanes.

Carriages
of seven incense-breathing woods
tarry
at each house's gate.

A whipping eastern wind
snaps
limbs of longing willows—

on a haughty horse's back
a man treads
on fallen flowers.

—translated from the Korean by Ian Haight and Taeyoung Hŏ

NANSŎRHŎN HŎ

Touch-Me-Not Finger Polish

Evening dew condenses on the bridal chamber's glazed vase—
ten fingers of a beauty, so thin, so long.
Grind flower petals with a bamboo pestle,
roll my painted nails in cabbage leaves,
tie them carefully by candlelight—
my earrings lightly chime.

Wake in the cosmetics room in dawn's darkness,
tie window curtains—
a pleasure to see Mars on my mirror's surface.

Picking flowers, a blush swallowtail flits away—
plucking my harp's strings, surprise
at the sudden falling
of the peach blossoms.
Powder my cheeks, braid and set my long hair—
hard tears near the river reeds.
Slowly, take a brush, and pencil my brows—
the brows fleck with nail polish
as from a soft red rain.

—translated from the Korean by Ian Haight and Taeyoung Hŏ

NANSŎRHŎN HŎ

Resentment in Women's Quarters

I

Tie my silk skirt with a silk belt
covering tear trails.

Every year during blossoming spring
I resent Wang Son.

On the engraved lute
I finish playing *Longing for a Lover*.

Rain strikes pear blossoms—
close the door on the day.

II

Under the moon
autumn ends in the pavilion—
the painted paper screen

empty of feeling.
Ice coats fields of reeds—
evening geese alight.

Alone
I play the carved harp
where others cannot see—

a lotus corolla
falls
in the field pond.

—translated from the Korean by Ian Haight and Taeyoung Hŏ

NANSŎRHŎN HŎ

Sensations of Spring

Far from his palatial villa, I grow disconsolate—
only letters come on the Han River.
Thrushes trill at daybreak through numbing rains—
a willow sways flirtatiously in the middle season of roses.

Weeds sprout from cracks, crumbling cleanly cut steps—
my elegant cither, blanketed by bone-white dust.
Who believes my guest will return in his pine boat?
At the river's docks, snowy-white water chestnuts in full flower.

—translated from the Korean by Ian Haight and Taeyoung Hŏ

GARTH GREENWELL

Listening to the Cicadas

Leaning to him where he leaned
at the head of his bed back, benevolent, far,
I took at his mouth the smoke from his mouth.
In the black of the room his lips—
dragging at heat and air, heat
fed on air—in the slight stoked flame were
the sole thing lit. I leaned to him

and in the ordinary, need-bewildered dark,
playing at cruelty he traced
with the light of his cigarette the length
of my face. And I longed for it,
with the old abnormal eagerness for ruin,
the eros of damage, I willed
cruel play turn earnest cruelty. Beautiful

Phaedrus, in the aching primordial dark
the soul takes flame, is fledged in flame
at the sight of a god whose face
burns with unbearable brightness; and fails—
flinching it fails, and falls where
bodied, unflighted, damped, it seeks
with accompaniment of scourging the face

from which it fell. So, determined not to fail,
as though we might try twice, I turn
to each new face a face degenerate
with need; —as, before him in the dark, baring
to the rank eye of a cigarette my eye,
I turned to his hand, which drew away,
grinding on the wall transfiguration to ash.

GARTH GREENWELL

Club L'Esclave

Avignon 2008

From the high ceiling whipped pivoting about, lights
lash the room. The walls
are animate with sound; men lay their faces along mine
and shout intimate as whispers

a language I just passably understand, in which
free from reference I can be
as yet anything at all I choose. On the crowded floor
two men are dancing. A space opens

around them, something in their dance
demanding it: the way one,
lifting his arms, circles almost threateningly
the other, who in just perceptible rhythm

hovers, hunched down and enthralled
like a bird before a snake. Now the first,
closer, lifts one leg before him hooked
and hops barely forward, weird

and compelling, discarding as if indifferent eloquent
motion. Everyone watches them: we feel
almost together the same longing
for a narrative whose folds would bind us

hunted as that boy was bound.
Above us, in the dark room at the top of the stairs,
unclaimed bodies circle namelessly
a man on his knees. Why did I think

I could come here and be
changed? Habitual as riot
on the stained floor the heart
lays itself underfoot.

R. E. BOWSE

From the Night, Comes

Roger had taken out the trash and become fixated on the house. It was a pretty postcard, a cottage from a fairy tale. Annie had edged their cape with strings of green and gold lights, its windows, two on each side of the front door, with plastic candles, the sheers suffused with a gauzy glow. She had a knack for decor, but recently he had noticed more precision in her execution. Beneath each window a redwood flowerbox overflowed with juniper and holly, and above, dead center on the roof, a garlanded chimney shot into the pitch of Christmas night. It was quarter to eleven. His wife and son were asleep.

He stood by the trash cans wondering what image the neighbors had of the life inside these walls. He and Annie were in their early thirties, and they had a young son, Ben, who was almost four. Roger thought of their leisurely walks through the neighborhood pulling Ben behind in his wagon. He knew by the friendly gazes and spirited inquiries about Ben, by the ebullience with which each of his developmental milestones was received, that theirs was an envied life. Was it too much to imagine the joy their presence gave others?

Then he noticed the wreath on the front door, and how its bow, pinned to one side, destroyed the harmony of the image. It had bothered him from the moment Annie had first hung it up. Now as he fixed on it, he felt a familiar sense of vertigo creeping into his head. The house, the entire night, began to swim; Roger leaned on the trash cans and—that was when he first saw the man.

He began as a flicker at the periphery of Roger's vision, a formless shifting of black on black beyond the side door to the house. Roger trained his gaze on a small, half-veiled mass atop a slope of snow—the hindquarters of the neighbor's cat? But when the mass entered the light, Roger saw it wasn't a cat but rather the boot of a man who stepped from the darkness and onto the drive. Roger's first thought was that it was his optic neuritis flaring up. He had been given the diagnosis two years ago, and along with it a thinly-qualified promise that he was in an early stage of multiple sclerosis. Since then, his only symptoms had been visual phenomena—vertigo, an occasional scotoma, a dark spot at the edge of his visual field—that could be managed by a shot of Medrol. The doctor had instructed him to be watchful for other complications: fine coordination deficits, gait disturbance, muscle spasticity, all of which would presage the more troubling disease. MS was not terminal, he was told, and he could expect to live to a proud old age. But he should be prepared for a slow erosion of motor skills, a steady loss of autonomy, and an increased dependence on his wife.

How *was* his marriage? the doctor had asked.

A shiver flit through Roger's body. The man was huge, a head over six feet, and he evinced an unnatural degree of fixity and hardness as though he were chipped from a flow of obsidian. Roger could see the man was too big to be his neighbor, too sharply drawn to be an issue of his disease. He wanted to call out but was curious: the man might be a thief or vandal—there had been talk of one of the cars in the neighborhood getting keyed earlier in the fall—and so Roger waited silently behind a trash can. It would be best to catch the man in the act, he thought, and have the weight of the law behind him. It might be useful, too, if he had to confront the man, a man for whom he would be no match physically.

Suddenly, the man turned and bounded up the steps and into the house.

Roger tripped through the trash cans and tumbled face-down into

the icy grit of the sidewalk. In a moment, he was up and scrambling over the icy drive, his blood thrumming in his ears. He mounted the stairs and swung the storm door open, nearly shattering it as it banged off the railing behind. Inside, the kitchen was dark but for the fluorescent tube that cast the sink in a yellow light. The man, he could see, was not in the kitchen; nor was he in the short hallway that led to the bathroom, Ben's toy room and the guest bedroom. In the middle of the hardwood floor, Roger saw a small, slushy pool of water and beyond it two buds of snow.

"Excuse me," he called in a voice meant to sound scathing. Then, feeling self-conscious, he appended a loud and forceful "*Hey!*" and flipped the switch for the overhead light. "Hey, *fucko*," he bellowed.

Where was the man?

Roger pulled a paper towel from the roll mounted beneath a cabinet and pressed it to his jaw, stanching a seam of blood. He paced down the hall and confirmed that the bathroom was empty, as were the two other rooms. He retraced his steps and went into the living room where the Christmas tree hulked in the corner, its string of bulbs winking a soft light. He pulled the lamp chain. Here, too, there was no evidence of the intruder, not a track, not even a faint indentation in the carpet. He went to the basement door and swung it open. "Hey!" he called again, summoning his deepest baritone. "What the fuck are you doing down there?" but his voice only echoed through the darkness. He closed the door and went back into the living room where he found Annie tying up her bathrobe.

"What on earth is going on?" she said.

Roger's body raced with an energy he couldn't localize, and he wanted to laugh it out of his system—the anger, the outrage—but he knew she wouldn't understand, would in fact be put off by it. He explained everything to her. He chose to omit the detail about the man's prodigious size.

"What are you saying, Roger? Someone is in our house?"

He nodded, tapping the paper towel to his jaw.

"Jesus, Roger. Where is he?"

He felt a pang of indignation. Was this somehow his fault?

"I don't know. Christ, Annie, settle down, eh?"

"What do you mean you don't know?"

A moment yawned between them. Then he noticed the tremor in her forehead; he saw how her flint-blue eyes were not angry but rather frightened.

"Roger," she said, "a man *in our house*?"

"No, baby," he heard himself saying, "tried to get in. What I meant was—"

"Tried, Roger?"

"A big man, Annie," and he took her in his arms. "A real heavy duty."

"Tried, Roger, but then you—" and she noticed his nicked face. He could tell she was moved, almost moved, to touch it. "Oh, goodness, let me get you something. Let me get you a clean cloth." She hurried to the sink and turned on the faucet. "Shouldn't we call someone?" But he wasn't listening; he was overwhelmed by her sense of duty to him, by the way her silk robe switched across the furrow of her ass. "Damn," she cried, and she turned and showed him a line of blood threading down the back of her hand. "Oh, Roger, I'm so careless." She stood helpless before him, her head sunk to her breast and her sobs rising. "Where, Roger?" she cried. "Where is he?"

They waited in his pickup with the doors locked while the policemen searched inside. Roger sat in the driver's seat; Annie was next to him, buried inside the bloated annulets of her down parka. In the backseat, Ben slept. The roar of warm air through the vents gave Roger a sense of insularity. He monitored the gravid black of the woods behind their house; with the police inside, the man might be flushed out. So far, though, he had seen nothing, felt nothing except an absence like the empty weight of space collapsing upon the cab. Through the side window, he saw the night sky pulsing with the

xenon flash of the squad car's strobe light. He sank into his seat, imagining himself to be the shrinking subject of a paparazzi lens.

When the door to the house opened, he expected a dark figure to emerge with hands cuffed, head bent in shame. Instead he saw only the police officers, who were moving as carefree as a couple of greased patrons being exhaled from a bar after last call. Roger met them at the bottom of the stairs.

"What's the verdict?"

The ranking officer told him there had been no evidence of an intruder, nothing of an unlawful entry. As he spoke, the man worked a piece of gum back and forth across his mouth, then forward to his incisors as he ticked off the areas that had been cleared: upstairs and down, bedrooms, baths, closets, kneewall space, attic, basement. Roger nodded as though listening to a doctor recite a predictably clean bill of health. When the man instructed him on what to do if he remembered anything else he'd like to have added to the report, Roger asked whether something more might be done now, to satisfy his wife, and he gave the officers a look that said *You know how women can be…*

"You might," said the ranking officer, "try locking your door."

After they had left, Roger opened the passenger-side door and watched Annie's face as she emerged from a deep sleep. It was the same look she had had when he first decided he might love her: a bit credulous, a bit innocent, true—a look that said she would agree to slip from her father's province to his, conferring upon him the same honor, the same sexless affection, and demanding of him the same care in guardianship, the same economy in love. Before their engagement, to firm up the transaction, Annie's father had summoned him to a downtown lunch. The old man had leaned forward until his head hung over the table like a guillotine. Roger had thought he wanted an assurance as to the treatment of his daughter, or wished to offer a windy exegesis on marriage. Instead, her father had confided to Roger a series of infidelities with secretaries and clients that spanned several decades. His mouth curled salaciously as he retold

details of lechery and subterfuge. Until then, Roger had thought her father a titan of virtue; it was an opinion Annie and the rest of her family seemed to hold as well. "Treat my daughter the same as you would any damn woman," he had concluded with brilliant satisfaction, dicing his words with chops made by the blade of his hand.

Annie sat up and rubbed her eyes. "They didn't find anything did they?"

"No," he said.

"Well, Roger, that's—that's just great."

She stepped out and slammed the door, leaving Roger to deal with Ben. He went to the rear door and lifted the boy in his arms and brought him to his bed. "I don't want you to go," the boy said as Roger laid him down, and he took hold of his father's shirt pocket. Roger was pained to see that the gentle slopes of Ben's face were growing sharp with age.

"You want me to sleep here with you?"

"There," the boy said, "on the floor—"

Roger speared the crown of his head into his son's chest, and then covered the boy in a cataract of kisses. This type of gentle manipulation and roughhousing was their routine; Roger believed that physical affection would release a chemical in the boy's brain, a dopamine to fuel his sense of self-worth. Ben squirmed onto his stomach, fighting to contain breathless shrieks, and finally the two unwound into each other: Roger knelt on the floor, his head strapped by Ben's arms, his eyes slowly blinking into the boy's fluttering breast.

"Benny, do you like your room?" he heard himself ask.

"Mm-hmmm."

"And you're happy, you know, in *aggregate*?"

"Yes."

After a minute, he said, "Well, good night, baby boy," and he headed for the cord of light that shone under the door. But with each step he fought an urge to probe this happiness, to have Ben fashion it for him to see and inspect and test its durability, to use as a

model for his fledgling own. At the door, he spun for one last look, a look that would carry him through to morning, but Ben was hidden by the long shadow his figure cast over his son. "I love you," Roger whispered.

What he had really wanted to say was: "Do you love me?"

Downstairs, Roger conducted his own search for the man. The rooms, the closet by the side door, the one down the hallway, the guest bedroom. He carried a chair into the bathroom and stabbed its legs into the shower curtain straight through to the back wall. For a full minute, he stared at the Christmas tree, thinking its boughs concealed the man's stooped shape. "Y-you," he whispered to the tree, but the tree said nothing. Finally, he took a branch in his hand and pulled it over, letting out a quick gasp as it fell. But behind it were only a few strands of tinsel clinging to the bare wall.

He washed up and checked on Ben again, waiting patiently to confirm the rise and fall of the boy's breast. Since Ben's birth, Roger had thought of his son variously as an attendant or conspirator, at times a prop in Annie's and his crude display of marital burlesque. It was apparent, as Roger watched his son's eyelids flutter in dream, that none of these was accurate. Even at his age, Ben was the hero in his own journey, one that would supersede in being and time Roger's poor travails. It wasn't that this realization made him feel insignificant—from the instant of Ben's birth, Roger had welcomed the relief that came with putting himself second (or third, behind his obligations to Annie and their marriage); rather, it was that he was acutely afraid for his son's having to suffer the many crucibles of masculinity—sports, war and, above all, domesticity. Roger knew how powerless he was to help the boy, and how utterly useless he would be after being undone by his disease. He went to his room with this knowledge weighing on his shoulders. He found Annie sprawled across the mattress, and he slipped his hands under her and folded her onto her side.

"Oh, Roger, don't," she said, her voice sharp and dry.

No, he mouthed, he wouldn't, or wasn't. Then for a long time he lay awake watching his wife in the alarm-clock glow: the smooth plane of her forehead, the twin hillocks of her cheeks, her loose jowls gathering at the shallow, rumpled bowl of her chin. He peeled back the blankets to reveal a breast, its skin fish-belly white, her flank gripped by the fingers of her ribs, next the dark wickerwork of her pubic hair. She slept in the nude—had even continued to do so after marriage and childbirth, even after he had ended the practice for himself years ago. Seeing her like this now filled him with hope, and he planted his palm in the mattress to improve his view. After a moment, she let out a soft moan, and he turned and saw her eyes open and trained vacantly on the tiny bulb of lime-light on the smoke detector above their bed. He drew the blankets back over her body.

That night he dreamed of an ophidian darkness beneath their bed from which came woody shoots that twined about the coils and wire of its innersprings, wended through foam and upholstery, through the twill and quilting of bedding, through brushed wool and pockets of warm down. He watched the shoots emerge and fuse about him like a cage. At a point overhead, they took the shape of an enormous hand that densified and hardened to a creosote polish. The hand rotated in the air, fingers flexing, each movement mirrored in shadow on the wall. Then the fingers gathered to a fist and the two, the hand and its shadow, rose like twin cobras trailing loose threadings of shoots that slow-twisted into wrists and forearms and hinges of elbows. When the crown of the man's head began to push through his chest, Roger bolted upright, his heart speeding like a newborn's, and the man and the shoots vanished. For several minutes, he sat silently nodding at the idea the intruder was nothing more than a rogue snap of electricity, a bit of his rotten biology insinuating itself into his present, just as had been predicted by the doctor.

The next morning he awoke alone in bed in a film of sweat and his right eye aching.

He went downstairs, where he found Ben at the foot of the television and an old Mel Blanc cartoon playing on the screen. On the floor next to the boy was the Christmas tree. He watched Ben rock on his haunches, mimicking the gait of a bulldog, its chest full as a sail, parading beneath a birdcage. "Doot-doot, doot-doot," the boy sang to the brassy bleats of an orchestral score. Each note intensified Roger's pain.

"Where's mom?" Roger said.

Onscreen a black cat slunk about to the notes of a clarinet.

"Huh?" The boy's eyes flickered with color. "What did you say, dad?"

Roger stood the tree up in the corner, his eye pulsing from the effort. In a bauble's reflection, he saw his son sitting cross-legged in a distortion of curved walls and crimson air, the image framed by a horseshoe of evergreen. Ben was crying.

"Jesus, what's the matter?" he said.

The boy pointed to the screen, where an old woman in a pioneer dress and apron was hammering the backside of the bulldog until it expelled the black cat onto the floor. "Come on, Benny, that's a joke." The boy's eyes were round with terror; Roger stood for a moment with his head cocked at the witlessness of a three-year-old. He looked again to see what had disturbed the boy: to him, the cat's damp fur sat humorously dentate along the ridge of its back; the dog was cowed but none the worse for wear; and the bird—that little fucking bird still sang its nauseating tune.

"Shit, if you're going to be a baby," he said, and he went over and turned the set off. "Now how do you goddamn feel about that?"

A dull thud downstairs brought him to the cellar door, dismissing as he went Ben's muffled objections. The basement light was on; Annie stood in the make-shift workspace that he had made after his old office had been redeployed as a bedroom for Ben. At her

feet were his binders, spilled and in loose geometry on the concrete floor.

"What the hell are these?" she said.

Ignoring her, he walked to the back of the basement where a slat-door led to a steep flight of stairs and a rusted iron bulkhead. He opened the door and checked the latch on the bulkhead, egress to their backyard.

"The way I had it figured," he said, shuffling down the stairs, "is that the man I saw—"

"The *man*, Roger?"

"The man I saw," he repeated with a sober maturity that conveyed he was willing to overlook her invasion of his private space, "went out through that door when the police showed up," and here he paused and stroked his chin. "But then—"

"But then it's locked, right?"

"Well, yes."

"From the inside." Her face was clenched into a tight, sardonic expression. "Locked, Roger, don't you see, locked from the inside."

"Yes, locked, *locked*," he snapped back, and he was pleased at how something, perhaps the fierce set of his eyes, caused the anger to slip from her face like a ledge of ice calving away to reveal a beautifully intricate and yet fathomless interior.

"Don't you see, there wasn't a man. And now this," and she picked up a binder whose label, done in his careful script, read "Hospice Care for Roger Dufresne, Volume Four: Medicinal Therapies." She opened the binder and began to recite its table of contents: "One, Interferon Beta-1a and the Treatment of Pattern I Multiple Sclerosis (MS)." He watched her lips birth the words, each a harbinger of a sadness he would be visiting on her. "Two, Drug Profiles: Avonex (23-gauge, 1.25 inch needle, intramuscular, once weekly) and Rebif (29-gauge autoinjector, subcutaneous, three times weekly); Three—"

"Annie," he said.

"Possible Injection Sites." Her voice rose to defeat the intensity of his. "Four, Complimentary and Alternative Medicine; Five—"

"Annie, please."

"Fi-*ve*—" she stammered.

He pulled the binder from her hands, then gathered the rest and neatly reordered them on the shelf above his desk. While he did, she sat in his chair, her face a small bundle in her hands. When he finished, he crouched beneath her and laid his head on her thigh. The silk of her robe was flush with the sweet and mineral scent of her bath powder.

"Why won't you fight?" She worked her fingers stiffly through his hair. Suddenly, she stood. "That's what I can't understand. Why won't you *fight*?"

"I am fighting."

"This," she said, indicating the two canes at the side of his desk, one a standard model made of hardwood and the other a chrome quad-cane. "This is fighting?" Her palms flew out, aping a moment of high incredulity. "This?" And she indicated the binders, next a four-foot tower of plastic bins filled with first aid supplies. With each gesture, the sash to her robe loosened, revealing the swale between her breasts. "You think I don't see the literature pouring in? Wheelchairs and stair lifts and shower gurneys? A shower gurney is not fighting, Roger, it's surrender."

"It's educating myself. It's being prepared."

"It's *not* a healthy frame of mind, Roger."

"I'm doing it for you," he said. "So you—"

"Oh, no, no, don't you—"

"—so you won't have to."

"So I won't have to *what*?"

They watched each other from competing sides of a meditative pause.

"Well," she said finally, "I don't want it, Roger, and I want it to stop." She reached her hands behind her and worked the muscle in

the shoal of her neck. "I want you to start trying, if not for yourself then for Ben, for me. What about your family? Please think about someone other than yourself."

Her robe was hanging open, and he could see the delta of her red panties, its strings veeing up over her hips. "My goodness," she said, seeing the hunger in his eyes. "You're like an animal." Her face flushed and she pressed her fists into her sides and stared at him with an expression of horror and demureness and, indisputably to him, intrigue.

"Really, Roger, my *god*…"

Roger wrestled the snow blower through the dense, gravelly slough at the entrance to his drive, courtesy of the overnight plows. He felt invigorated by the sharp air and the lucent-blue sky. As he worked, a rhapsody of tinny whines and four-stroke warbles reminded him of the noble ceremony in which he was participating, and he imagined each to be the trifid cry of brotherhood: a call to arms, a spirited assent, and a hearty rejoinder. It was almost enough to put out of his mind Annie's final admonishment as she had mounted the stairs, her robe gathered by a fist at her abdomen: there was no intruder in the house, she had said, and he had better stop claiming as much because hadn't the police already ruled it out? Didn't he say the officer had given him a funny look, as though he were some kind of fruitcake? Couldn't he see what such nonsense was doing to their son?

Roger dismissed the idea that Ben's *episode* in front of the television this morning had been caused by talk of an intruder in the house. For one, the boy had been suffering these acute emotional breakdowns for more than a year; for another, well, his doctor hadn't even offered an opinion on the matter, which seemed to indicate that the behavior may be normal. Blaming him was typical, predictable; it was another of Annie's maddening leaps of logic, but Roger knew better than to challenge her on the subject. That was the thing about marriage: it was better to be right in the sanctum of one's own counsel than in a sea of discord.

The snow blower coughed and sputtered—it was low on gas—so he shut it down for the day. He was nearly finished and, anyhow, his arms were terrifically sapped. As he pushed the blower back to the garage, he saw his neighbor, a man in his fifties, wheeling a shovel through a large drift. "Snow enough for you?" Roger called, buoyed by a buzzing warmth in his body. "I'd help you out, see, but I'm all out of the petrol."

The man stopped and leaned on his shovel. "Not a problem, buddy."

Roger said, "I've been here over two years, and I still don't know your name."

"Walt."

"Pleased, Walt. The name's Roger," and he went along the sidewalk and made a great show of taking off his glove and extending his hand. "I bet our wives have hit it off a hundred times and here it is we've never even met." He felt his fingers bend beneath the man's grip and a ripple ride the length of his arm as they shook. "So Walt," he said, trying to stay on top of the situation, "what sort of work do you do?"

The neighbor gave a smile that seemed to measure Roger against a hidden standard of fitness or vitality. "Site maintenance up at Greely Fairfield." Roger recognized the name of a boarding school a few towns north.

"Well, it beats the hell out of an office job. Me? I'm do retail marketing for an outfit downtown. Stately and Moore, if you've heard of it." Roger laughed through his nose. "It sure is a funny little outfit."

"Yeah?" said the man. "How so?"

"Oh, well," Roger stammered, suddenly aware of a whorl of blood vessels on the tip of the man's nose. "Some places are just funny, you know, office politics and so on." He felt his anxiety gather like a marble in his throat, and he knew his only hope was to talk it out. "But see, I'm able to work from home. I got an office down in the basement that we're going to finish, recessed lighting,

a laminate floor, the works. I'll be full-time from home once it's finished. Sure, I might even put it to the boss tomorrow, have him run it up the flagpole and see how she flies."

"Mm-hmm," the man said.

Roger said, "You ever see a big guy dressed in black wandering around here at night?"

"Can't say that I have."

"I had a run-in last night." Roger absently ran a finger along the abrasions on his face. "Cops and everything. I figure the guy was probably some kind of car vandal or miscreant. We might want to look into a whaddyacallit—a neighborhood watch."

"Knock yourself out," said his neighbor.

Then the man slapped him on the arm and headed back to his shoveling, and Roger announced that since they were predicting snow again at the end of the week, he guessed he'd be seeing him around, and this time he'd give him a hand, seeing as Walt only had a shovel. "Have a good one," Roger called, and then he went to the garage and kicked a bunch of Annie's gardening shit out of the way—hand tools and ceramic pots and loose bags of top soil—to make room for his snow blower.

He fell into the couch, his arms and legs fluttering with exhaustion. Ben was playing on the floor with a puzzle. He watched the boy work the edge of the image, a barnyard scene. Ben, he noticed, didn't seem to understand the idea of lining up the flat sides of the pieces to make a border, didn't even seem to realize certain pieces had flat sides. "Line 'em up, Benny, come on now," he called reassuringly, and he leaned over and pointed at a couple of brown edge-pieces, part of a pig wallow. "Didn't mom teach you how to do that? There and there. Put them together. Yes, that's it, like that."

The boy still struggled; it was almost as if he was purposefully trying to do it wrong. "Christ, it's just a kid's puzzle. Three and up, and you're almost four." Roger's arm began to strain under the

weight of his body and he fell back into the couch. "That a boy," he said, wanting to end on a positive note. He licked his lips and closed his eyes and yawned. "That's how to bang her out." He felt the warm cushions beneath his body and slumber descending upon him.

"Roger—"

Annie stood over him with the wicker basket. In it were the syringes, cotton balls and alcohol, and a notepad he used to record injection sites. He groaned, sat up and loosened his belt. "You really ought to do this yourself," she said as he slipped his pants to his ankles. He watched her mouth flatten in concentration as she loaded the needle. He loved the twin peaks of her lips, the lower crescent split by a delicate vertical line. "Feet flat on the floor," she said. "Ready?"

He wished she would take off her pants, and he said so.

"Don't be silly," she said. "Now just sit back and—"

Her shirt then. Please, the shirt. "Go on, Benny. Get out of here."

Her eyes settled on his: first stern, then somber, then heavy. Her lips parted.

"Ben, go to your playroom," she said. "Just for a minute."

"Mom—"

"Get out, Benny," Roger cried. "*Go*."

She unbuttoned her shirt and slipped out of it.

"The bra," he said. "If not the pants, then the bra, too."

"Roger—" But she did this, too, without a fuss. "Sit back," she said, and she leaned over him closer, he thought, than was necessary. He closed his eyes, feeling the warmth of her breast pressing against his eyelids. "Deep breath," and then when the needle pierced his skin he gripped the cushion and splayed his thighs and pulled in the flowery scent of her shampoo. She pressed the stopper; he felt a cool liquid running through the deep fiber of his quadriceps, and the needle slipping out and his skin slowly yielding to its extraction, reaching up, leaving off in a final, viscous kiss. He opened his eyes

and watched her breasts sway as she pressed a cotton ball and Band-Aid to the injection site. "Oh, Roger, you look awful," she said. "Why don't you go to bed?"

When she spoke, he could just make out the shadow of lips across her teeth.

Formally, it would start with his thumb. Thirty-three, thirty-three-and-a-half, thirty-four. The exact month would be lost among the enormous effort to steel himself against an inescapable fate, but he would always remember the thumb: tingling while reading, jitterbugging. He'd roll over, give his back to his wife. In two weeks, it would return, this time in both thumbs, and he'd fold the book together and kill the light by yanking the cord, casting the plug into the carpet across the room—all because he couldn't manage the simplicity of a twist switch. Next came his legs: one, then the other. Imagine a thick stocking, a tight casing about the calf and the cushion that attends each step. Imagine reaching to remove it and finding it's not there. That's what it was like, or this: fingers buzzing; an arm deadened at the shoulder; bits of flesh leaping on his body like young steelheads hitting flies. There would be good days, days as quiet as a climbing moon. Symptoms would come and go, but it would officially, formally, start with his thumb.

When Roger woke, the room was sealed in darkness but for the faint glow of the clock on the nightstand that read six-thirty. He listened to the quiet chimes of the dishwasher being loaded downstairs. Why in bloody hell did she let him sleep so long? He sat up and swung his feet off the bed. When he tried to stand, it was as if he had stepped into a wall. He sat back for a moment, thinking that she had moved the bed on him, or that he had gotten off on the wrong side, or that somehow he had fallen asleep in a different room altogether. He checked his bearings—the door at ten o'clock

and the window to his right, the faint wires of streetlight etched in its blinds. Yes, he was in their bedroom—

And then he heard the man clear his throat.

Roger spun back across the mattress and fell onto the floor. He got up and raced around the bed, through the door to the hall. He sledded down the stairs on his backside, then burst into the kitchen, where Annie and Ben were having dinner. He fell into her arms; the two fell to the floor.

"What is it?" she cried. "Roger, what's wrong?"

"The man. The man—"

In her own way, she, too, had been preparing for this moment, and when she spoke it was as though her words had been scripted over months or years of preparation, each syllable beat out in many grievous rehearsals. She knew that if Roger didn't imagine him, if the man really *was* in the house, then maybe everything was fine. Maybe Roger *was* healthy and then she wouldn't have to worry for him, for his future or theirs, or for Ben. She wouldn't have to do all the worrying, all the everything.

"Yes, of course, Roger, you were right." She stroked his hair. "You were right, dear. You were right all along."

To Roger the words held the unmistakable suggestion that he was, beginning now, a burden to her, like a second unwanted child. But he would forgive her, and he would learn to make use of her careless attention and respect her cool sense of duty. Her arms were loose about him; his head was in her lap. He looked at his wife: her eyes seemed to be following the sweep of the second hand on the clock above the highboy. Yes, he thought, together they would fly into the future and drink in all pain and suffering; they would gambol on despair. Poor Ben was wailing from his seat at the table. He could hear the man pounding down the stairs.

POETRY FEATURE

Nicky Beer

NICKY BEER

Mako

Motion took on a form
and stayed. No more infatuations
with dried contrails of seagrass
or foam-clotted yards of brine.

I have blundered through liquid
reliquiae in cold niches
of salt and wet. You litter the sea
with unblinking phantoms;

the warmest sea
still cradles these shudders.
Your sleep is little more
than an opiate lingering

in a green-feathered cellar.
The deep lamentations
of coral knuckles and drowned
rosemary remain charmless,

and you have no terror
of the infinite because
you are the infinite.
You were there

at the beginning of water.
Every inch of you is a thresher.
There were nights I dreamed
that you came for me

and blue whispers
drifted out of your breathless mouth.
Once I tied a rock to my ankle
to sing it all back to you.

Note: The mako is one of the fastest species of all sharks. Reliquae are "remains, as those of fossil organisms" (*Random House Dictionary*).

NICKY BEER

Pescados de Pesadillas
Nightmare fish

When Dali submerged the young octopus
he'd found on the Catalan seashore
in acid, it was not
to watch the violent
irradiation of its skin from pearlescence
to wounded rose nor the convulsive
arabesques of its arms in the corrosive bath,
nor even for the etching he made
from its corpse so that Medusa
might be mantled with spectral,
tentacular snakes,
but that
he might earn from his transgression a lifetime
of dreams in which many-armed remorse
would roost upon his shoulder, lay
a chilled, reproachful catenary against his cheek
and in the instant before his ears turned
to granite he could at last hear
the soft, slightly acrid voice
pressing him for an answer
to its dark, indelible question.

NICKY BEER

Folk Remedy

When you have done the unthinkable, the monstrous, and the shame leaches its bitter and hungry acid into your stomach, tell your secret to an octopus. He will be shocked at your traitorous indiscretions, and will clack his beak at you furiously like an almost-broken typewriter. And because the guilty crave condemnation above all other things, you will feel a sweet balm rushing over the poison in your body. And with a newly-lightened heart, you'll find it quite natural to turn and go, even while the octopus is still purpling gorgeously with indignation, buttonholing passing kelp and flotsam for commiseration. When he eventually dies years later your secret will emerge once more as a malignant scribble from beneath his expiring robe, but the current will quickly scramble it to brackish gibberish and none will be the wiser, and you will likely have been publicly exposed for any one of a thousand other abominations that you committed with greater and greater ease, and for which the sea is now turning the color of an open grave.

NICKY BEER

Poem

Because they are born
without fear or understanding
of fire octopuses have been known to emerge
from tidepools where the surf had absent-mindedly tossed
and stranded them and crawl directly into the glassmakers' burning
piles of soda ash that lay between them and the clamoring waves
and so at least it is innocence and not self-annihilation that moves me
back to you now even when the red creature rears before me and all my edges smolder
and what remains of me will be a charred nebula outstretched in the flux-seeded coals

NICKY BEER

Annotations

your eyes are limpid pools

> By which I mean that they are full of bitter, stinging chemicals which burn the tenderest parts of the body, that they are necropolises for suicidal cicadas and last season's leaves. That they are used indolently by the very rich and maintained by the very poor. That a fence must be erected around them, or someone careless will die young.

all night long

> Twenty to forty-five minutes.

from heaven above; cf, *sent from above, like a turtle-dove*

> It is a sad fact that many other languages have far superior rhyming capabilities, particularly for the purposes of wooing, to our own. The French *amour* has the marvelous *toujours* (always) and *au secours (help)*, while the Japanese *ai* braids with *gai* (harm) and *mai* (dance). Yet we are consigned to constructions which either betray the agnostic, or else place undue emphasis on a species of bird so hopelessly inbred that it has almost completely lost its instinctive fear of large predators, and thus is dangerously close to extinction.

you've broken my heart; cf. *you've ripped the still-beating heart from my chest*

> Interestingly enough, just the opposite is true: in fact, by means of pneumatic bolts and soldered iron and diverted funds intended for public benefit, you've installed a dubious, but indestructible monument where before there was only a comfortably deserted pedestal on which every infatuated wind might be enshrined.

can't live without you

> You," in this sense, indicating the near-three-quarters of your body that is water.

NICKY BEER

The Exquisite Foreplay of the Tortoise

for Brian

Every movement of my body
is a genuflection to stone,
my flesh a chalice for dust,
which is itself the dry ghosts of flesh.

It is true that I have had
my dalliances with the odd
toadstool, the bulbous contours
of their weeping bride-heads,

but oh my love, consider
the rare patience of my desire,
the readiness with which my body
greets you, the anticipation

born in my clay heart
twenty-five years before
I could gaze over the horizon
of your skull, my two legs

trembling on your back
like a ship-born boy's
on his first beach, terrified
he will drown in this strange earth.

NICKY BEER

Hummingbird, 1:30 AM

Consider what a thought would do
if it could abandon the body entirely,
move through a green-yellowed reticule
of evening primrose.
The flashlight's watery scythe
yields a gecko's pale rind
splayed on a stray leaf (ardor
of blind green for green)
and then something more
dragonfly than bird
with a burning coal—
live—
hung around its neck
which chooses,
rechooses
hundreds of pink yaws
gasping into darkness.
I should open my mouth.

LAURA LONGSONG

Nerve

His only flaw was that he paused to watch his victim spin or crumple. Sometimes the sight sent him out of his body. That last time—hovering twelve feet above the sparsely lit street, he saw the slain curved in a distorted S under the streetlight. And he saw his own head and feet and fists moving fast and blurred beneath the falling snow, dodging and zigzagging the warm, liquid bursts of porch lights till he slid into the alley. Then he was inside his body, arms shaking, heart tumbling, his car tunneling so smoothly up the street and into the cavern of the night. His brain tingled, exultant, and needles of heat and cold pricked his face and scalp: I'm a shooting star.

He lived in sad tilted rooms or primly plush hotel suites, depending on the assignment. He traveled with three suits and a clock radio, and he owned the contents of an apartment in the Bronx. Most of his money was in the bank, and he rested his mind on it often and unconsciously, as he rested his chin on his hand.

This next assignment was routine except that he had once met, in passing, the woman whose suitcase he would plant. She worked for the same people he did, but she didn't know her time was up.

He couldn't refuse the assignment. It would mean he was not committed. He knew too much not to be committed.

They would spend one night in neighboring hotels. She would catch a taxi to the airport the next morning. When the bomb exploded an hour later, she would experience a split second of surprise. It would be over much too soon for her brain to complete a thought, to make a connection, to think of him.

Over their second drink in her hotel's restaurant, they were deep into a discussion of what she believed to be her next assignment. Happy to be leaving the country, after her first drink she had begun to laugh in waves, like a schoolgirl. He'd forgotten how blonde she was, and how the left corner of her mouth twitched when she finished sentences—as if there were an insect under the skin, trapped, trying to get out. He waited for the twitch. It came again. And again. He felt on the edge of being hypnotized.

"What's wrong, hey? Is my lipstick smeared?"

He remembered. "My wallet—I must have left it upstairs in your room."

She gave him her key and waved him off with a deprecating, slightly drunken shrug.

In her carry-on bag nestled the telephoto lens he'd given her earlier. Everything was going to go smoothly. He tried to have a sure feeling about it, but a jittery sensation irritated him, as if some difficult task remained, or as if he was forgetting something.

She exclaimed that he must meet her for breakfast. She was so nervous before flights, had never gotten used to stepping inside the belly of a plane—or an elevator either for that matter, she always hesitated a second—but it wasn't too serious, no tranquilizers. Once she was strapped in a seat with a drink in her hand, she didn't worry; once there was no turning back, why look back? She laughed as if she had told a joke.

Over breakfast, her lip didn't twitch very often because she smiled less. She seemed subdued, perhaps hungover. She said, "I had a strange dream last night. Some old woman in bedroom slippers was showing me how to iron shirts. We were in an attic. And she kept telling me I wasn't doing it right. I know it doesn't sound like much, but it was almost a nightmare." She pushed her plate away, annoyed, and looked around at the empty tables. "Imagine ironing all these tablecloths. I'd go crazy."

When he was younger and wondering how to get on in the

world, he had noticed that most people got upset over ideas in their heads, not things in the real world. He had practiced making his own mind a blank slate when he so willed.

While riding the subway the following morning, he read her name in the list of the dozen who had died in the bomb incident. But since it was her fake name from her fake passport, no one would claim her remains—assuming they (the police? the coroner? the clean-up crew?) were able to tell which were hers. The thought was unpleasant and much too close to the ground. He closed his eyes and tried to project himself above the vision of the shattered airport lobby. Instead he saw her lip twitching, the minute insect struggling to get out.

He was a child. He saw the kitten's eyes transfix into the light of death, and then he watched its ears quiver, and stop. It would run away from him no more.

Long ago he had accepted that he was an angel of death. He was not attached to this world; he liked blank walls, black shoes, empty glasses, clean fingernails, and veal cooked without spice or sauce. He habitually calmed himself by staring at the ceiling or the floor until he momentarily lost track of time and of everything around him. He often imagined himself lying naked on a cool marble floor looking at a radiant blue sky where a fleet of enormous muscular clouds floated. In this way he regained an almost tactile sense of smoothness, which he carefully stored and carried inside his head and chest.

But sometimes, small sounds inexplicably distracted and terrified him. In his worst dreams, mice scrabble behind the wall, a bat flutters beside his ear, invisible clocks tick-tock, a woman's heels clomp an echoing staccato down an endless hallway.

Without warning, the quiver in that woman's cheek now became an intermittent *chirr* in his ear. Then the sound burrowed under his skin and became an itch. He felt the skin on his cheeks involuntarily

curdle. When he scratched, his cheeks felt cool and fleshy but lifeless, like raw skinless meat.

As the subway careened through the black underworld, the man crumpled the newspaper under his arm, gritted his teeth, stared at the orange plastic seat in front of him, then closed his eyes. If everything would just hold still, he could feel the cool marble, see the radiant sky, and steady inside himself a smooth glow. Then his life would again be as easy as walking up stairs.

Gray, smoky light drifted through the dusty triangular window. The moth wings layering the sill and strewn on the floor had faded into mottled crisps like some page of an ancient newspaper that crumples to the touch. *Be careful*. He glimpsed the wavering treetops outside and inside on the floor set a wicker basket heaped with white, wrinkled shirts. Hunched over the ironing board, the old woman owlishly swiveled her head around. Among the intricate folds of her face, her wrinkles snaked as if the skin was about to roil off her face and fly toward him.

The subway shrieked to a halt, and he got off one stop early. He needed air and light. Now he was walking up the stairs. It was easy. At the top, below a pale sky, among streams of traffic and buildings, clots of brightly-dressed people flowed in all directions. Everything was scrambled, even the buildings and their windows were awry. Haphazard as a cloud, he floated toward an intersection among a group of dark-clad bodies. Light reflected off their black hats and coats.

Then he saw the woman step off the curb—she had not died, she had not been there when the bomb exploded! He stood paralyzed beside a street sign while all around the streams roared by. Her legs scissored quickly toward him, her blonde hair riffled in the wind, the corner of her red lip jutted into her cheek. As she came closer, he saw in an instant—this woman, with her snub nose and pointed chin, was someone else, not her. His heart beat hollow and loud.

This is what it means to lose your nerve.

Deep inside, his fear stirred, but it belonged underground, in the dark, far away from where he could rise to. He must live on a plane separate from other people, separate from fear.

The man dodged into a side street where he leaned his head against the window of a travel agency. Here was a Caribbean shore. A pulsing jewel sun dazzled through his thoughts and cleansed him with a bright blindness. Turquoise waters cooled his heat-soaked body and eased him out of jagged dreams. The plush sky was erased of all clouds, all memories. *I'll go somewhere else. Everything will be clean and smooth*. He would become part of a blank wall, a stack of empty glasses, unnoticed in some anonymous, well-lit territory. While struggling to believe this, he could see that insect, under her skin, quivering in spasms, helplessly.

MARK EDWARD PURSELL

Excelsior

Watch the banners; their blues are deeper
than the sewers of Edinburgh, where I taught
thirty rats to chorus, where I taught twilight to
come when called, where I learned that red things
taste red because I let a Japanese man blindfold
me and feed me cherries, peppers, his blood,
until we beat against each other as cloths do
in a dryer, tumbling in heat, making new languages
from the burst of tomato in a sightless mouth.
I will be sore in the morning, I will divide
leaves by color, craft squadrons of paper boats
to float on the moon's reflection in the loch.

MARK EDWARD PURSELL

Sonnet for All Hallow's Eve, Mombasa Province, 1997

john—husband, gorilla—draws the glow
of ghosts. the night, bladed with palms, is frail
and damp as our stillborn daughter's elbow.
we wrapped her silence in a battered sail
for halloween.
                my love for john is great,

beyond the love of other apes. i'd pry
the shine from his teddy-bear head and shape
a bulb to light my room. but now the sky
droops red and wet around the trees. i learned
the names of yellow bones. i cast out lines

of healing, sang spells. still, the baby turned
like the weather. we seized it for a sign,
animal gleam behind john's eye, hatred
striking flint to tinder in our bed.

MARK EDWARD PURSELL

New Cartography

Try instead the still life of a gun. The shadows
of forsythia tangle over it; the grass turns cold

with panic. The tail of summer flicks up whitely
at autumn's stealthy approach. It's a disaster, this

endless parade of metal through the private spheres,
how a revolver inviegles its way into our dining room.

Direction is malleable; there are hundreds of ways
to arrive in Eastcastle, but the city itself is what we

call a singularity, a fixed point on the lake's widening
circumference. The same cannot be said of this gun

or the impulse to paint it, which slips away with the
gloaming, the light cloudy as skeins of milk threading

through tea. Yes, we can navigate by the stars, we
can plant a spear on the roof of our building and travel

in the direction of its shadow at three p.m., but what
are we likely to arrive at? What is likely to get in our

way? The old journeys are ended, the great crossings,
the migrations of wood and water. You sat down

to paint a Saxon woman sneaking into the Roman
baths of Lingard at night—you heard this legend

from a historian friend who has been there, who
claims to have seen her ghost falling away from him

as he turned a deserted stone corner, but maybe the
light was just cloudy that day, too. Today, everything

looks like a ghost. Has there been a fire? Is this smoke
hanging in the air or something else, aether leaking into

our world from a nearby rip? I hope for your sake it's the
latter, that there's a place just outside our grasp that will

require a new cartography, where in the beams of a native
glade there can be seen the nest of something monstrous.

JENNIFER WHITAKER

Father as Map of the World

You, brittle rawhide sheet, coaxed smooth.

You, stained with careful navy rivers,
margins of principalities and kingdoms.

At first you embraced the local animal, copse of birch,
lemon tree, swamp tangled with snakes.

Then you were rewritten, your sheep-filled fields scratched out—
the wolves now lean and roaming.

Gone the fishes and toads, gone the trees with gasping blooms.

What choice had we but to fill the unknown spaces,
wondering if we would stand next to starving beasts
in those dim expanses, or if we would drown.

JENNIFER WHITAKER

Father as Barred Owl

How could we not recognize you that spring—
the distinctive, quavering call, face sallow as ash.
Hunting alone after sunset, you must have eaten
all night. At first, the forest-wealth of bobwhites
and chipmunks thinned, and in daylight,
dense hair and bone littered the ground
under the Virginia pine you loved.
But by the end of the season,
you caught more than your need
in that thin-river kingdom: in the morning, pale snakes sizzled
belly-up on the banks, small opossums lay frozen, mid-snarl.
We too paced in our houses that spring, and the feral kittens
shook under our shed, alive with flies.

TOM CHRISTOPHER

Home Begins with a Village's Burning

If fire is the act, then darkness is both the father and the son of the action. My theory: progress has been measured not by the amount of light, but by the piles of ash. The more I envision a city for the luminous dreamers, the more the streets bark with heat. The awe-struck mouths of the houses. Our orders: past the vile clouds of the swan factory, past the dead shapes bobbing in the lake. The moon leering like a hound nailed to a tree. Our role: waving torches, singing. A school bell drunk and splashing through the smoke. The driest eyes carving the night. My promise: tomorrow I will build a pretty bed for the children to die in.

DESMOND KON ZHICHENG-MINGDÉ

*res signata restituere retributio**

when will you paint me pictures of home again? those pictures spoke a sensible content
a rare happiness I haven't seen in you recently, your half-smiles a disinclination to things
as if life forced you into its elisions, a hammering, a mezzanine of one-man antechambers;
you are lassaw's composition in steel, its principal arch a glassless window you look at
through and under, at once opaque and a cellophane, these lighting fixtures wrapped too
to bloom like lucent tulips tipping over in a wide bowl; then there's blackburn, his irish
blacksmith and his iron-clad song—how you determined its significations—a wry system
textual, mutual gravitation, of orderliness thrust into vast regions of space; I think prisms
and you say the bizarre must buck the obvious, an emphatic stress; you love prevarication
I think the bottom rung is a cautionary tale, you say, the whalebone above it a pitchfork;
road as conditional as the bridge, deck-beam simple as clarity, as contingent a fathering
the forehead kisses you require before you leave; you say the territories of each satellite
once mapped, cannot gather space like sandcastles with widening moats; the camel hues
need to be painted luminous like reflective signs, the no exits, locked doorways to safety;
always alarming, one more dangerous leap to help us pass the rundown sections of god
and his breakable city; you appraise art, intense-sacramental as if bemused but aggrieved
when will you pick up your brushes again? or charcoal, just contours and the insides left
a benevolent white, the saved time sanctified for old-fashioned observances no longer
religious, no longer a bluish-red bloodedness or the depth of eleven miles with no end
in sight; in sight, we are restored wise restraints, don't you think? no hurt going derelict
its vessel poised like that autumn leaf, clutched like a kalij pheasant trussed, tired struggle
now a hung-up defeat, a diffidence about what birthrights may be built into a fairground;
its exhibits travelling—goods transfer, passengers transfer—our devotions a raised area

*Res signata translates into "the thing signified," often understood as res sacramenti or "the thing of the sacrament," defined as the thing toward which the visible sign of a sacrament points. The Latin retributio means "repayment" while restituere means "to restore," the latter leading to the ethical principle of "commutative justice" whereby reparation is made for an action injurious to someone else.

KATE SWEENEY

The Cattle Driver's Wife

After George Bellows' Jim Twadell's Place

Alone, she has delivered the breech colt
of his favorite mare in a rare autumn birth
he would have called a "sticky windfall."
In the stable, she filled buckets
with water and the blood-soaked rags
torn from an old housedress
she washes now in the blue basin
over a tiny life of flame. Red fists
of apples thump in the orchard.

There is much to do before he returns,
scattering a fluster of hens with his steel-toe:
She must tend to the anemic fence
and the section near the woodshed
where the satin oil did not reach the edge
of the canvas before Bellows finished
this rural meditation, placed the damp
painting over his mantelpiece and imagined
himself the man in spurs, pressing a blossom
of aster into his wife's chapped palm.

KATE SWEENEY

Luminosity, 1900

Below the lighthouse, sandpipers print a paragraph of beach.
Since Frensel, kerosene only slicks the wick of hand lanterns.
Tossed over the cliff in barrels, it now lies in reach

of the shoals and sandbars the burning eye once skimmed
but could never see. After the last lighting, he returns
to the Principal Keeper's dwellings, a bed the size of a thole pin,

a medicine cabinet of names for seafarers' daughters—Laudanum
and Arnica—and whiskey for the keeper who, restless
as a flash pattern, wakes the wife with his thunder mug drum.

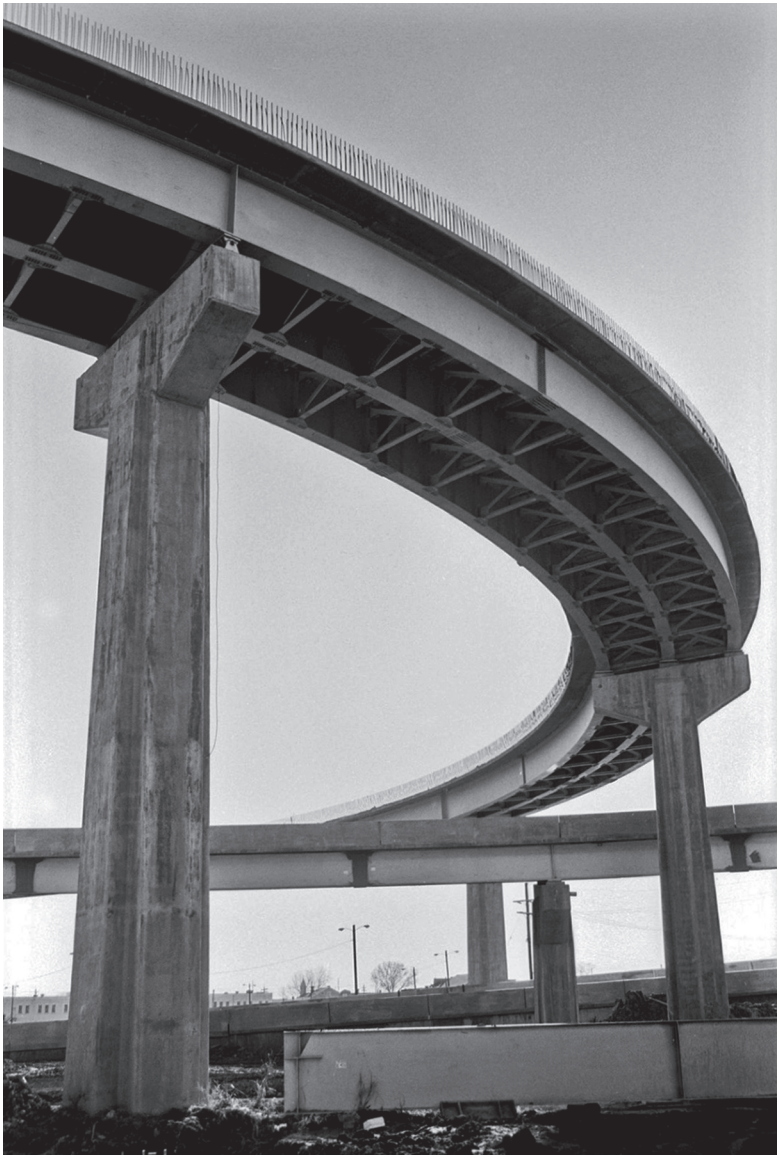
PHOTOGRAPHY FEATURE

Owen Murphy

Twice Revealed

A Long Time Ago

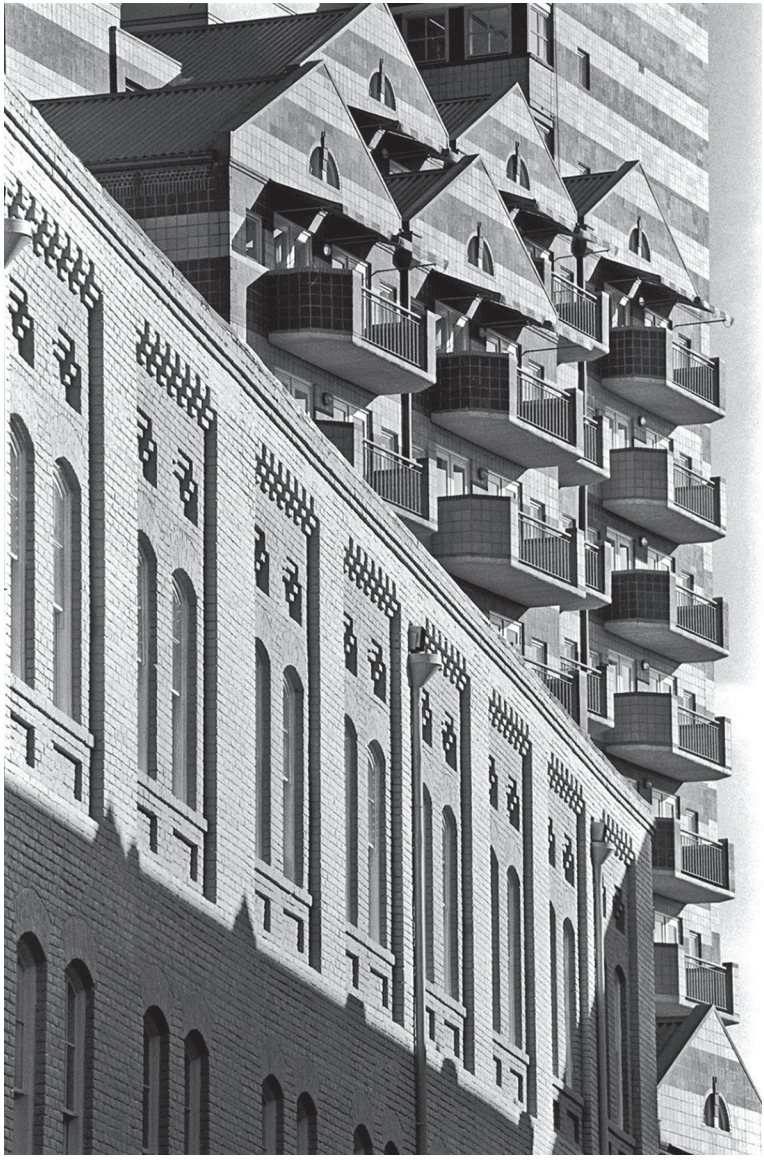
Lee Circle



Crescent City Connection 1

Crescent City Connection 2

Crescent City Connection 3



Warehouse District

Hibernia

Bayou St. John Meets Lake Ponchartrain

Bayou under Lakeshore Drive

CHRIS WADDINGTON

Why Don't You Talk About Him?

At midnight, I counted seven empty wine bottles on Bebe Nesbitt's dining room table—one for each guest, one for each word that rose from the past, involuntary as hiccups, when Bebe turned the conversation to childhood: "Kingdom. Phylum. Class. Order. Family. Genus. Species."

Now, it's true that we had been chuckling over my prized collection of non sequiturs, but this was different; this was Dad addressing me from the grave in a baritone that brought to mind the cool exhalations of hidden mine shafts—a familiar hazard to those, like Bebe, who bird or botanize on the overgrown slopes and spoil banks of our mineral-rich cordillera. Up there, a few stray lambs disappear every year. Men in blaze-orange garb are always plunging into darkness, breaking their legs, sleeping on ledges, and worrying their families half to death—this despite the government signs dotting the countryside, which offer the following caution to wanderers: "The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there."

A few examples: My father believed that men could be improved, and to show it, he once spent an autumn day chained to a bulldozer in a highway right-of-way. He wore Santa suits in July and sprayed dignitaries with pig's blood during centennial celebrations for a popular tinned meat product.

My mother anticipated his needs.

"He keeps me on my toes," she would say, making light of her predicament as she poured coffee or stuffed envelopes with the other wives. Even then, she evinced a brightness that seemed anach-

ronistic. Her style had passed from fashion as surely as those snub-nosed blondes she so resembled, pert child-bearers all, who were the glory of the Technicolor era.

At her best, however, Mom persuaded traffic cops to let us off with a warning. She knew the home phone numbers of bail bondsmen and sympathetic attorneys across

the West. She made my lunches, raised money, threw herself before judges, and spoke to journalists.

She also spied on Dad for the FBI.

"Your mother has been doing it for years," Dad said. He shook his head slowly, as though he knew that his grizzled beard and deep-set eyes would soon grace post office walls across the nation. He had parked in the fire lane alongside my school and spoke of his disappointment in a voice that barely rose above the low idle of the jeep. "So I have to go," he said. "Given the circumstances, I don't have many alternatives. And I want you with me. We'll see the Rockies together."

In the pause that followed, a fly tapped and buzzed at the windshield, magnifying the silence between us. Kids crossed the street, humping book bags. A crowd jostled on the school's front steps, ignored by the granite lions that framed the door.

"Whaddya say, Nick?"

I fiddled with the clasp of my seat belt. I couldn't answer, but for once it wasn't required.

Bebe knows my silences.

Even so, she pushed for full disclosure, employing the tone of martyred reasonability that always worked well when I was sloshed.

"Is this for the record?" I asked.

Since my heart attack, she has urged me to "open up to my feelings," as if the past, left to ferment, might cause my chest to explode.

"There are no wrong answers," Bebe said. "If you let yourself get hung up about perfection, you'll never get anywhere. You have to be willing to fail, Nick. You have to take risks."

So how does one answer a love like that?

"Kingdom. Phylum. Class. Order. Family. Genus. Species."

Dad knew all the answers and insisted that I have them, too, raising his eyebrows like question marks when I flubbed an easy response.

Can you name the highest volcano in Oregon?

What did General Cambronne say at Waterloo?

When Dad got going, he jerked his arms like a driver stalled in rush hour traffic.

"Tell me why, why, why," he would say, getting louder with each repetition. I learned to step back when the spittle flew, to stoop for creased bills and scribbled notes and carefully underlined newspaper clippings—all the stuff that spilled from his pockets as I followed him between coffee shops and copy shops and the reference desk of whatever public library was near. That's where he taught me his favorite mnemonic phrases—King Philip Come Out For God's Sake … Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species—as if I could forget the fundamentals of taxonomy, the principal rivers of Siberia, the assassin of Archduke Ferdinand, the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, or any of the other things he hammered into my twelve-year-old head the summer he kidnapped me.

"You're not listening, Nick."

Bebe pinched me under the table. Her face was close, carefully composed, like the mask a geisha might don when rifling the pockets of an unconscious patron.

The other guest kept talking. They must have assumed that their hostess was smiling—a reasonable supposition, unless, like me, they had played poker with the woman, or watched her wheel a beloved aunt down the echoing halls of a West Memphis rest home.

That's how I found myself chugging Bebe's untouched glass of mineral water, watching her sway to the sideboard in a 36-year-old swimmer's body and size four Armani dress. Bebe believed in the necessity of action: a take-charge hostess who grasped the inherent drama of midnight lulls, like this one, when guests start to yawn and scrape chairs away from the table.

"Okay, everybody, let's keep on point," she said.

A bummed cigarette hung from Bebe's lower lip, not drunkenly, but in the manner of those who believe they can execute seven tasks simultaneously: hosting, bartending, barely inhaling, squinting at me through a tendril of smoke, tipping her head, smiling prettily and repeating her inquiry: "How sheltered was your childhood?"

Bebe poses such questions at all her dinner parties, dropping them amid conversational breaks in a hushed, Delta drawl that is said to have grown even more pronounced during her years in the North. It doesn't matter that friends grumble about "parlor games." Bebe calls it "keeping things lively," and claims that "Yankees will talk only about work if you let them."

I suppose she's right. In any case, there's no percentage in arguing with Bebe. Not when she's batting her lashes for a table of old friends and celebrated guests.

The best-known name spoke first; baring teeth that made him look like a cheerful rodent.

"I can't play this game," he announced. His eyes roved from diner to diner, fixing each of us in the inclusive style recommended by group dynamics consultants.

Kurt Curtis claimed that he "had no childhood," since everything from his tantrums to his toilet training went into a popular child rearing guide composed by his émigré parents.

"You see, I'm an open book," he said, spreading his palms in apology when he realized that all of us had heard his much-rehearsed witticism before.

Bebe set him straight: "That's the ultimate sheltered childhood,

Kurt. Everything that you did had meaning—and not just for Mom and Dad. For the rest of us, too. That's as good as believing in Santa Claus.''

A croaking laugh caught everyone off guard. Bebe's editor had leaned forward like a wading bird ready to strike. "You want to know about sheltered childhoods?" he asked. "When I was a kid, I milked Mom's goats before breakfast. I thought everyone ate seaweed and lived in teepees.''

"Oh, come on!" The CPA couldn't take it. She'd been chewing her lips—a painful business if your mouth already resembles the bottom line in a ledger. "I think we need a definition," she said. "What constitutes a 'sheltered childhood'? And I'd like to see something more than this anecdotal stuff. Hasn't somebody tried to quantify the experience?"

Privately, I ran a few totals. I calculated the number of cream pies that my father had tossed in the kissers of startled bureaucrats, the occasions he had failed to stand for the national anthem, the death threats received at our home, the collection calls, the vandalized cars, the ten million times I had walked away when other kids asked what my Daddy did for a living.

I also counted Dad's heart attacks on the road to Idaho.

In Cody, Wyoming, he clutched his chest in a grocery checkout line. He fainted at a meat counter in Bozeman, Montana. He couldn't breathe in Lewistown. He fell—quite convincingly—and on each occasion I waltzed out the door without paying, invisible with my sack of groceries and sagging pockets, a good kid who never got underfoot, who was not heard, was not seen, but crossed the parking lot quickly, obedient as a shadow, remembering Dad's order not to look back unless I heard sirens.

When I collapsed, the chest pains weren't an act.

Bebe brought me back from the dead, and, for months, I had bruises to prove it: a knot where my head banged the floor;

cracked ribs that stabbed when I sighed or shouted or breathed too deeply in an effort to calm myself. The doctors called me "a Medical miracle"—a phrase that drew a snort of derision from Bebe.

"A miracle, huh? Was it some kind of miracle that I keep a pair of shock paddles in the house?"

"Hey, Bebe, do second childhoods count? Am I breaking the rules?"

Felix Neiman brayed louder than the other guests—an attribute that had helped him on playing fields and trading floors for half a century. By candlelight, he resembled an unwrapped mummy—hide stretched over bone, lips jerked in a leer—as if grave robbers had dropped their torches and propped his remains at the table, dressing him in a raw silk sport coat and open-necked shirt.

"Shut up, Felix." Bebe cut him off with a backhand honed on a thousand tennis courts.

Felix smiled at Bebe in return. His teeth were a tribute to the powers of cosmetic dentistry, but their radiance only emphasized his age— or maybe he just looked older because he was squeezing the youngest guest at the table.

The girl wiggled under Felix's withered arm. Her chair squeaked, filling gaps in the conversation. Her clenched fists gripped the too-short hem of a vintage dress that had crept up her thighs all evening. She didn't speak, but that hardly seemed necessary. She broadcast sexual pheromones like a riffled copy of *Vogue*.

There were other smells, too: candles dripping under the ceiling fan, the garlic spoor of my nervousness, stale cigarette smoke, lilacs in the garden, and a whiff of skunk on the damp air that poured through the French doors along with the moonlight.

"He's back," I said.

"Who's back? Your Daddy?"

I smiled at Bebe's worried expression, then lifted my head and sniffed. "The skunk is back."

The other guests were sniffing, too, now that the scent was acknowledged.

"Don't you love the country life?" Felix said.

The woman across from Felix looked up. She'd been fumbling through her purse for five minutes, a gesture of loss that signaled something more serious than misplaced lipstick or keys.

"When I was a kid I used to live in the country," she said. "Lots of skunks. Lots of smells." She looked from one face to another and let her words sink in, as though she were reading a Bible verse to parishioners. Her expression was grave. Her clothes were black. Her skin, pale as vellum, gained all its color from the flickering candles—a light caught in rimless eyeglasses that magnified her pupils.

Then she mentioned Nabokov. "The authority on nostalgia," she called him. "He wrote that memory can restore everything—a lover's touch, autumn light—everything except the smell of the past. So to him it was odd that nothing brings the past back so vividly as a smell that was once associated with it."

Her eyes were moist—something to be feared in a literary lady.

So I interrupted: "Bebe's dog will take care of the skunk."

"He better not try," Felix said. "This is nothing—a whiff, not even a warning. If he gets in a tussle, you'll need tomato juice to give doggy a bath."

Bebe blocked my view.

"What are you talking about?" she asked.

I explained my delight in canine companionship, how her dog had opened my eyes to life's simple pleasures.

A pause ensued. She closed her eyes and shook her head mournfully.

"I don't have a dog, Nick. You know that."

I wasn't about to argue. Besides, I know what Bebe is going through. To hold onto things is a struggle for all of us. Jobs, lovers, youth, beauty—all vanish eventually, like cheap sunglasses that slip

beneath car seats, never to reappear. Dogs run away, too. Children grow up and leave. Memories are especially tricky.

As a boy, for example, I lived with a dog very briefly—a golden retriever that my father brought to our motel room on the backside of Cheyenne, Wyoming. We were waiting out the apocalypse, but the dog didn't know that. It jumped on the bed and wagged its tail and barked until my father unwrapped a pound of sirloin and put it in the bathtub along with the dog.

"You wanted one. Now you have one," he said. "You'll need to take care of it."

The dog tore at the meat, swallowing chunks with a greedy wet mouth until the sirloin was gone. We watched it, not saying a word

"Go ahead. Pet it," he said. I knelt on the bathroom's cool tile floor and touched the dog gingerly. It smelled of sage and rare summer rain, and its back trembled like a static charge under my hand.

Or was *I* trembling?

I looked at Dad. He crossed his arms and shifted to block the doorway. Perhaps he expected the dog to bolt after eating.

"What's his name?" I asked.

"It's a her, Nick."

"What's *her* name?"

"It doesn't have a name yet—and doesn't need one," he said. His voice had jumped half an octave—as if I had praised food additives or advocated the harvest of old-growth redwoods. He used that tone when I squirmed in my chair at the library, when I interrupted his research, when I missed an easy answer or asked about Mom.

Bebe explained how I had spoiled her previous dinner party.

"We were talking about his childhood," she said. "I suppose we'd had a few drinks. Nothing major. He looked fine, and the next minute his head hit the floor."

Bebe had burned two rings of hair off my chest with the paddles.

She had thumped my ribs, and I had bucked like a trophy fish underfoot— or so I'm told. What I recall was the circle of faces above me, friends dropping questions like stones down an echoing well.

"How many fingers, Nick?"

"Can you feel this?"

"Is he breathing?"

At such moments, one's life is supposed to pass in review, but what came to me were the names of Jupiter's moons; the capitals of the fifty states; the bones of the foot, learned in painful detail, when an unmarked police car edged through a crowd at a protest rally and Dad didn't step away fast enough.

These were not the answers that Bebe was seeking.

I must have named the dog. Dad would have insisted on that. But I don't remember the name I chose. I just remember the way she turned when I called her, and how she trotted across the dew-soaked parking lot of the Red Cloud Motel, her tail wagging, her head held high like a textbook retriever. One morning, she came back with a mouthful. It was something that fluttered. A few green feathers fell to the pavement, and the dog looked as startled as I did when she opened her jaw and plopped a stunned parakeet into my hand.

It's a story I tell whenever someone brags about the "soft mouth" of his retriever, although I leave out a lot of unneeded details. Does it matter that the bird lived in a cage in the motel office? That the night clerk released it whenever she had been drinking, letting it flit from the dented lampshade and magazine rack to a curtain rod that ran the length of a boarded window?

The clerk laughed when I brought back the bird—a laugh that merged with her morning cough.

"You should have let it go, kid."

I told her what the dog had done.

"Okay, amazing," she said. "But that poor bird would have been

better off if the dog had just eaten him."

She must have seen my defeated expression. She shook her head and looked past me to the boarded window. "You know I hate to see anything in a cage."

"Me, too," I said, although I wasn't thinking about the bird.

Bebe said, "Are you going to embarrass me in front of our guests?"

She wasn't leaving me with a whole lot of options. I tried to stand and she squeezed my shoulder.

"I hadn't planned to embarrass you. Not in front of the guests, anyway."

"Well, I feel that you're mocking me."

"I'm not mocking you, Bebe."

"Just now you were. You're repeating me."

"Not now."

"*Just* now!"

"I guess I don't follow you, Bebe."

One day, walking the dog, I left the strip of cinderblock motels and cut through a gap in a chain link fence to some scrub that bordered a holding pond. I walked farther than I had planned, crossing a rail line and a ravine and entering a quiet neighborhood. The houses were large, with broad lawns and old trees that dated to World War II. I suppose I was lost, but the dog kept pulling. She was walking me, panting happily and letting her tongue hang, as if she scented something familiar, a meal or a warm bed beside a hearth. Then, on a phone pole, I saw a neatly printed sign: LOST DOG. I didn't need to look twice. I was walking the dog in the picture, my unnamed dog, my dog who wagged her tail as I leashed her to the pole.

It took me an hour to get back to the hotel—not the walking part, but the part where I tried to figure out what to say to my Dad.

I needn't have bothered.

Dad was sitting on the edge of the bed, holding the phone away from his ear. I could hear my mother shouting on the other end of the line.

"Why do you keep calling if you don't want to get caught?" she asked.

Dad hung up the phone. He never answered trick questions.

With Bebe's prompting, an actress from Mississippi confessed that she had never seen a black man reading until she went to college in Boston. In the silence that followed, Bebe's editor reached across the dinner table to pat her hand: "That's not a sheltered childhood, either. That's just embarrassing. Let's not change the rules of the game."

But embarrassment became the theme of the night.

We heard from the chronic masturbator. We heard from the girl who peed in her mother's perennial beds. We heard from the boy who once used his new penknife to cut all the screens from his bedroom window and needed a psychoanalyst to explain what he was pursuing.

Felix, laughing loudest of all, admitted that he was a virgin until his twenty-fourth birthday.

"My God, Felix, I feel like I haven't had it since then," said the literary lady. Then she tried to pour more wine from an empty bottle.

Bebe salvaged the moment by popping another cork, but no one really wanted champagne at that hour.

"It's late," said the accountant. "Way past my bedtime." Others yawned and nodded. Children were waiting. Morning would be hell. When the mantel clock struck the hour, the guests rose as one, possessed by a need to say a few words about dinner.

"That chicken was something, Bebe."

The best-known guest kissed her cheek. "You've got a talent for poultry," he said, projecting the same air of wisdom that made him

such a comfort to TV viewers.

The literary lady had already reached the doorway. "I want the recipe for the chicken," she said. Then she hiccupped. I saw a tag at the nape of her neck. Her jacket was inside out.

The actress brushed past her, waving at Bebe: "You are *so* clever, darling! No one does *chicken* anymore. Chicken is so, so over, but you pulled it off! You might just be starting a trend!"

"Chicken?" asked Felix's date. "That was chicken?" She shivered and looked a bit like chicken herself, goose bumps prickling her bare thighs and delicate shoulders. If I wasn't mistaken, she had grown a shade paler, although that might have been an effect of the moonlight, which was bright enough to cast long shadows across the lawn as the girl fled toward an overgrown lilac bush.

Finally, on the steps, Bebe handed a foil-wrapped package to Felix. "It's the chicken," she said, pushing the broker down the steps, toward the lilacs, where the bare legs of his date protruded like the opening scene of a mystery novel.

"The chicken was overcooked," Bebe said. She pouted at the bedroom mirror after the guests had departed.

I stood in the door with a towel around my waist.

"Everyone loved it," I said. "They took second helpings."

"What do they know?"

I came up behind Bebe and hugged her, inhaling the perfume and cigarette smoke in her hair.

"You're dripping, Nick."

"I know I'm dripping."

She wiggled out of my arms, and both of us stood there, listening to the dishwasher grinding downstairs. A wet handprint covered each of her breasts—marks that she failed to mention as her gaze returned to the mirror.

"Does this dress make me look fat?"

"If you look fat, it must be the dress. It's certainly not your body," I said. "Stop fishing for compliments."

Bebe turned full circle, letting me admire her barelegged glory, her unpinned hair, her ivory arms polished by ten thousand laps at the YMCA.

"How come you never talk about your Dad?"

"Well, it was a dinner party, not group therapy."

"But I mean never," she said. "You tell your jokes and track your stocks and pour drinks and plunge ahead without looking into all that. What did it mean for you?"

At first, I laughed her off. "You remember what happened to Bluebeard's wife?"

"I'm not your wife," she said. "Don't you remember?"

"I remember the major rivers of Siberia."

Bebe tipped her head, pretending she hadn't heard me properly.

"The Ob, the Lena, the Amur and the Yenisey. "

"You're not being funny, Nick. That's not the important stuff."

"But those are the major rivers of Siberia. Thousands of people live on their banks."

"You don't love me," Bebe said—a statement that deserved an answer as surely as any question. But all my answers were useless in this situation.

For example, I didn't mention that the combined drainages of the Ob, the Lena, the Amur and Yenisey are four times the size of the territory drained by the Mississippi. They turn vast turbines. They power Kiev's streetlights and Moscow's subway. They stand for progress, although fish still battle upstream against those currents, spawning and dying in cycles that remind the thoughtful traveler of his own mortality.

Not that I'm an authority. Not that I've ever been there. Not that I speak one word of Russian or deserve to be trusted about the facts. Occasionally, in winter, I'll drink vodka by a bonfire, but drinking

hasn't added to my wisdom. Reading Russian novels? That's a start, I suppose, but only because they hint at what it might mean to open my heart for a minute, to step out of this fiction and embrace Bebe and tell her about the last, long day with my father, hiking above the slide alder and thinning trees to a ridgeline in Idaho.

Even in June, there was snow up there. We scrambled over house-sized boulders that teetered beneath us, and then found solid footing where the slopes grew steeper and a vista began to open. Below was the old life: the highway, the trees, the river glinting where it passed from deep shade into meadows. There were clear cuts on the opposite slope, peaks receding like stage flats—and somewhere, in a gooseberry thicket, the car we had abandoned so suddenly.

Dad wouldn't allow any rests stops. We sipped water on the move, cutting long switchbacks when we reached the permanent snow. We paced ourselves, climbing step by step, breath by breath in this high blue place where the wind seemed to come from Siberia —cold and dry and howling through crenellations, pushing clouds with the speed of a time-lapse camera.

At midday, we reached the saddle and picked our way up the ridge, staying clear of snow chutes that dropped a thousand feet in both directions. We were there, Dad said, "Because it's there"—which seemed as good a reason as any that summer.

"Shouldn't we be roped together?" I asked. My feet were wet in high-top tennis shoes. The wind cut through my thin nylon jacket, the same one I'd tossed on so casually when I'd left for school a few weeks before. Dad turned slowly, but he didn't answer. His eyes were concealed by smoke-dark mountaineer's glasses. I thought, What should I do? As if one could do anything. As if that was something more than a trick question—another obstacle on the way to the summit.

So here are the facts. Wind-packed snow forms sturdy cornices on high ridges in the Rockies. Spring sun weakens the snow, not just

on the lip, where only a fool would walk, but in unexpected places, too—near the living rock, which channels the sun's heat into the snow, creating trap doors, hidden drops, chutes covered by the thinnest crust. Do I need to say more?

My father dropped soundlessly, almost vertically, as unflustered as the hero of a slapstick comedy.

One moment I was behind him, knee-deep in his plunging footprints. Then he was gone, too fast for shock, just a tumbling thing that dislodged ice blocks and boulders in the couloir, a mannequin dressed in my father's camouflage jacket, already broken when it bounced and sent up a plume of snow and disappeared into thin air.

Which brings me straight to the present, to this dizziness that seizes me as Bebe stamps to the bathroom and slams the door. Perhaps you have felt it, too —on top of a swaying ladder, in a deer stand on a windy day when the thermos slips out of your hand. Your stomach plunges and you wonder how anyone dares to jump, the ones you hear about, the names withheld in the paper, the ill and the lonely, teetering on the bridge rail and parapet.

But isn't grief like gravity?

It's a force, not a burden. It pulls me. It keeps my stars and planets in their proper courses, so that those more wise than I might predict my improbable future—that we would meet on the snowy expanse of Bebe Nesbitt's bedroom carpet; that my teeth would be chattering; that I would be gasping for breath; that I would cling to the leg of the bedside table, spilling the lamp and the water glass; that I would feel this pain in my chest, as if my heart were breaking.

POETRY FEATURE

Marci Nelligan

MARCI NELLIGAN

from *Infinite Variations*

*

The skin is diffused by proportional
numbers. Inside, a wilderness
of false remarks.

Perhaps you anticipated posterity—
a future raised in manuscript form—

or grasp at expectation
in reference to your offspring.

The faithful sense
the same comparisons,
make the eye a well
of incipient water,
the hand a kind of covenant.

Allusions illustrate our struggle—
life the same
or nearly similar.

*

One ovule holds
the flowers of curious
structure, their dimorphic
and trimorphic arrangement
necessary now we know
the mind as an inutility
of instances.

Trifling remarks excite
no special use, the ears
meet as mere morphology
just one time to illustrate
night as orchids present,
or the assumed
difference of ruin.

Even to speak, to turn aside
when one imagines it
upsets the significance—

people stand for something
human, a tactile prayer
seeking its direction.

*

Under an evident atmosphere
birds incline north
—life at greater depths
changing color
(true or not
a lovely action, as a stone
through clear water
tumbles in the light).
But what is the greater hope?
Not the fluctuating sea,
the domestic opposite
we lay ourselves upon.

Two series organized as animal,
light shaped in the time it takes
to voice a thought or fly.

Who is the same again,
except to say, birds possessed
by climate act or wait
depending on the evidence
as hands, like reason,
lose their hold.

*

Now we are floating
—twisted cords
intercrossing.
A man and a woman
on profoundly deep seas.

This mammalian enterprise
occupies the size of things,
a forfeit, a full yield
—of yourself you make the vineyard
of yourself the plow.

Direction is a sign of life—
a man takes a woman and comes in to her
like a garment, or a shell
and perhaps whole countries are
made new, perhaps transported.

How to settle or turn,
bring out of two
what is easily more?

Together, perhaps attached
we home ourselves with struggle
stocked in consequence.

And she thinks of distant islands.
And he spreads his garment out
before the elders of the town.

*

To be purified one must acquire
habits—a state of body
between instinct and action.

Wonderful animals, what purpose we have
held above the living water declaring
life itself a metaphysical possibility
—the cedar wood, the scarlet worm, the hyssop

Our sin is to embrace the flesh,
a gift of whole and utter faculty,
as without knowing why a bird migrates
and lays her eggs, and time impels her premise.
In the open field the bird
is a live bird, the blood its blood
and we wash in the water—
all our wholeness measured
like a grain of wheat, a dose of days
that we offer over and over
as the lamb its innocence
the now slain bird
its well-worn song.

⋆

Furnished with eyes,
one has a view

—a weaver engraving holiness
in the explanation, a thread of
silence, of pure gold.

To see is to fix,
yet the blind tell
of a seam edge surrounding
the world, opening all around,
twisted but not split—not sight
but the feeling of sight,

as from a cave this protean habit
to write and rewrite
what we are, or what we see.

This ordinary, this secluded flowering
of rain, of seed, of sleep-endured
descent and darkness—
this human amblyopia
preserves our eyes lest they
breech their own severity.

*

Something distinct
rises or falls in
its origin
like a dialect of structure.

We established the language,
grew to love a red mouth.
The first fault was to dwell
weary on the name.

Sometimes I change
the immediate animals
sometimes the best
takes more than usual.

Once I was on notice for
what I wanted,
insensible as fashion—

something just growing
there, seventeen deviations
from perfect, a little distinct
and halfway to dying.

⋆

The most ingenious stem

could not support them
— light and incoherent, a sort of chamber,

and itself hollowed out into

curious fleshy ridges

a "continual procession" of

lateral wings which went to (another)

and settled in the country of gigantic flower,

this orchid into which drops of almost pure

water continually fell

and acquired and were carried away.

And viscid, and variously shaped

—a flower conceived in spirit of witness

and its nectar, like a secret

when you stand above

that parts, and waits, and serves.

*

Which capsule of power to believe
one great with seed
or hunted with pincer and with bow?
The links of the chain
arise in deciding whether
you are blessed or damned

and sometimes
the same island
is its own archipelago.

I bow down to reason
with what common
people call exaggeration.

Whether butterflies arise
or not there is grain and wine
and out of it all we come trembling
to be, to cry, to make a delicacy
of those who damn us.

So it is with human gradation
and the fat earth it furnishes.
One is always the same—
some product of another.

*

Lament if you will
sterility across a land
whose excess pays our ills—
death is the first difference
and all are gone who had become.
From before to always
what differs
is the man who rules,
so fertile death holds
our names in his mouth
a bramble of arrangement.

Why act
when there's the limited
good of a little pleasure?
A system caved in, buried
by resemblance.

Our hands are heavy
and explain in causing
the things we once believed.

POLLY BUCKINGHAM

Compliance

I work in Compliance now. This week anyway. Last week I worked in Acquisitions. I worked the phones, but they sent me to Compliance when I said, "Hello, Acquee, Acquiescence." I knew it was not acquiescence, but I was flustered. The guy on the other end of the line said, "Excuse me?" like he was insulted. I'm much happier in Compliance anyway. No phones. I'm a collator.

I'm sitting in a soft gray chair with wheels. On the table in front of me is a stack of white papers, each with a file tab at the top. The papers come in groups of five, the tabs in five different places from left to right. I also have a stack of stickers. The stickers fit neatly onto the tabs, A through J, which means two sets of tab sheets per folder. I'm collating folders for a merger. Mergers are dangerous things, messy and violent, and I'm not supposed to think about them. I'm not supposed to think about the red paint. The papers are white and crisp, and the rugs are gray, and the chair is gray, and the air is still and quiet.

Section A: Conversion Checklist

My cousin wants me to go to a party with her. I don't have anything to wear. It was hard enough finding these work clothes, business casual.

"What does that mean?" I ask my cousin.

"No jeans, no tennis shoes, no t-shirts. Nothing untucked."

I wanted to cry. I used to run naked through the woods.

My cousin took me to Penny's. She picked out two outfits and

a wide black belt. Jimmy tried to hang himself with a belt. He was drunk and doped up. I remember thinking, better him than me. That was before the paint. But I'm trying not to think about mergers, about naked bodies, mine and Jimmy's, rubbing up against one another. My cousin always says, "Just stop thinking about it."

"I don't wear belts," I tell my cousin. The lights from the dressing room bring out red splotches in my skin.

"It looks cute," she said.

My stomach hurt. I bought the belt.

I stick a tab and put the sheet face down then pick up the stack and straighten it out, the edges of the papers knocking on the counter top. My cousin's irritated with me, I know. It's important to her that I wear the right clothes. So I'm wearing the right clothes. Isn't that enough? But it's important to her that I meet people too. "Anybody interesting at work?" she asked the other night. "No," I said. "Nobody."

Yesterday I worked with a girl who couldn't stop talking. The talking rattled around inside my head.

"When I did this for Group Health we did it different. It wasn't this boring. They let you do different tasks, not the same thing for hours. I can't believe they expect us to do this."

What was I supposed to say? I was quiet and happy, concentrating hard on making sure the stickers weren't crooked. I'd devised a system for pulling the stickers off the thin waxy paper. I'd fold back the edge of the row until the stickers were partially unstuck and easier to remove.

"I can't get these stickers off," she said. "The plastic is giving me a headache," she said. "The letters are too small. My eyes are going buggy. When I worked at Group Health they used bigger print." I didn't believe her. "I can't do this much longer. I'm a writer. This is not creative enough for me."

I could do this for days, months. I could watch my neat stacks

of ten tab sheets pile up, one crossing the other, one canceling the other, this canceling that. Over and over and over.

Section B: Conversion Instructions and Highlights

When the manager of the merger folder project came in, the woman I was working with whispered, "Oh thank god. Something different."

"These need to be cut and inserted into the folders," the manager said. She put a green cutter and a stack of new copies on the table and left.

"Do you want to cut?" I said.

"No," my coworker said.

I was sorry to leave my tabs. Two days of tabs was not enough for me.

At first the cutter made me nervous. The papers were still warm and the ink smelled strong and sweet. I lined one sheet against the squares engraved on the cutter. The squares made me think of cubicles. Except for this room, Compliance is all cubicles. The cutting was exacting work, and I was happy again. I kept my fingers away from the blade. I swung the arm down. Whoosh. I used to run shirtless through the woods with a machete hacking at the blackberries along the paths.

"We should only have to lift these things once," the woman said as she unpacked a box of plastic binder folders and emptied them onto the table. There were twelve binders per box. There were fifty boxes. Whoosh across the top, whoosh, along the left side, the right, the bottom. The trail's a mess. My arms are scratched and covered with thin lines of red balls like spatter paint. "Emmy! Emmy!" I yell. "Emmy!" I hear rustling and I stop. The branches around me have blunt and broken ends from my summer trail blazing. "Emmy?" I see the wing of a bird in a bush. I am having a hard time breathing.

"When I worked—"

Swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh.

I've been instructed not to think about these things, not Jimmy, not the dog, not the woods.

Section C: Equipment

My coworker didn't come in today. The manager said she called in sick. "Are you okay alone?" she said.

"Of course," I said, and I smiled and she backed out of the room.

So it's just me again. And I'm back to tabs, which makes me happy. I think about arriving at my cousin's party in my rain boots, the ones always caked with mud. This makes me laugh. I'm naked except for the boots, and there are a row of people who all look like my coworker and my manager and my cousin, and they all extend their hands, and I say, "Pleased to meet you, Pleased to meet you." I laugh out loud, "Ha." It's okay, there's no one here.

The boots are in my closet in the apartment my cousin helped me find, and I do wear them here in the city. I slip them over my bare feet in the mornings when I walk Emmy. Black rubber boots with dark red soles. Jimmy's sole was red. I saw the red bottom of his boot, and I saw the back of his flannel shirt, and I saw the door bounce twice against the frame after he slammed it. On the wood floor is a circle of red paint, a circle that leaks out little drips in many directions. Dust and dog hair are stuck to the paint. A red boot print, then half a red boot print, then the outline of the right side of a boot lead to the door. Outside the door, new green blackberry shoots lay across the crooked boards of the porch. In a small bit of sky, a cloud is rapidly moving.

The door of the room I work in is open, but still, there is little air here. Nothing moves but my hands, yellow in the steady light. I'm in the back room at what is usually a conference table. There are large windows that look out at other windows of other eighth floor rooms.

Section D: Cash and Negotiables

"I'm selling my TV over the web," a woman says. Though the door is open, I can't see her cubicle.

"Any luck?" another woman says.

"Three messages, I'm just checking them now."

"What are you asking?"

"$50. The remote doesn't work. But I need enough to buy this one that's on sale at Freddy's."

Where is this web anyway? A word assigned to nothing. The woods. A word assigned to a cluster of trees, alder and hemlock and fir, and dirt and beetles and worms and robins and squirrels and slugs. The superhighway. Words in an unknown space. My driveway. The end of an old logging road. Baby alders crowd the edges. Small bugs balance on the surface of muddy puddles out of which truck tire tracks emerge. I'm in the kitchen cooking cabbage and rice. Jimmy's truck pulls up as I throw another log in the barrel shaped woodstove. Emmy is curled up between the kindling box and the stove, the brown tip of her tail tucked under her wiry, white chin.

"What have you got to lose? You should get what you can for it." A file cabinet opens.

"That's how I see it."

Section E: Wire Transfer Instructions

The manager comes in. "There's a call for you," she says. I pick up the phone in the conference room.

"You're coming tonight, right?" my cousin says.

"Yeah," I say.

"Do you want me to pick you up at work?"

"I have to walk Emmy," I say.

"Jesus, Lucille, not that again."

I stare out at floor number eight of the building across a span of air. Cubicles? Probably. "I have to get dressed," I add.

"Okay, fine," she says. "Any great guys where you work?"

"No," I say. "None. I have to get back to work."

"Seven?"

"Good."

In the conference room, boxes are stacked neatly against the walls and under the table. Tab sheets are stacked neatly on the table. The room smells of new plastic. The cutter with its violent green arm is on the window sill beside the stapler and hole puncher. The drawers are filled with hundreds of ordered files. In my apartment clothes are tumbling out of my drawers, dirty clothes are heaped on the floor, and shirts are hanging on the chairs.

When we lived in the cabin Jimmy used to leave his plaid and chamois shirts on the chair by the blue table in the area that was our kitchen. I'd play with the buttons, slide the round plastic between the cloth slit, in and out, as if there were somebody inside.

I touch my thumb to the sticky upturned edge of a label then place the label as straight as possible on a tab.

Section F: Frequently Used Procedures

I hold one page of eight tab sticker sets in my right hand. With my left, because I am left handed, I pull the tabs off of their waxy backing. The pile of tab sets waiting to be stuck is on my right. I drop the empty wax paper, with just the edges of sticker remaining, into a waste basket to the right of my seat.

Directly in front of me is the pile of blank file divider sheets, the tabs parallel to the edge of the table. After I stick each sticker, I slide the sheet above the pile, and after ten sheets, one completed set, I straighten the stack and add it to the criss-crossed stack to my left. I put that pile beyond the reach of my elbow because when I first started, I knocked the pile onto the floor.

I devised this system within my first hour in Compliance, and I find it is the most efficient method. I found I worked twice as fast as

my coworker who had papers in disarray around her and misplaced tab stickers all over her fingers. I worried that she would destroy the order I had created.

Jimmy's standing beside the woodstove yelling. I have lost track of the words. The paint on the kitchen table is chipped and peeling. There are dust balls in the corners. A leg of the propane burner is uneven and I worry about fires. Blackberries grow through the railroad ties which are the cabin walls, and I can see small pinpoints of light shining through. Jimmy kicks the dog with the inside of his boot. The dog leaves the ground, all four of her paws leave the ground, and her head when she comes down hits the dusty wood floor.

There is nothing dusty here. The machines run smoothly, and they hum. I hear the copier sometimes, far away, behind a door and a partition. The muffled sound of fingers on keyboards is so regular it sounds like a slow motor.

Section G: Resources

I work until 4:30, but I wouldn't mind working until 9. At 9 I could take the bus and be back at my apartment before 10. At 10 I could at least lie down. I could pretend to sleep. At 5:30, you can't pretend to sleep. If I were here until 9, I wouldn't have to maneuver through the people on the streets. I wouldn't have to apologize and step out of the way. At 9 there are not many cars, and in the dark it is harder to tell how everything is broken up into tiny squares, the sidewalks, the buildings, even people's faces become part of a complex system.

But tonight I am going to a party. I wonder if I will meet people like my coworker and my manager and the woman selling her TV on the superhighway. I stood on the porch, my hand shading my eyes, "Emmy!" I called. I stare at the screen of a TV buried in blackberry vines. In it Emmy is suspended in air; her yelp is suspended; her eyes frantic and rolling in their sockets.

The phone rings. I press a tab onto paper. The windows of the building across the street are mirrored. The phone rings again. A mouse scampers past the woodstove. Rain drums the cabin, and wind blows through the cracks in the walls. My hands are covered with red paint. I am wrapped in a blue comforter that is also splattered with tear shaped spots of red. The woodstove is cold. The cabin smells of rot. I think I have been sitting like this for days but I'm not sure. The phone rings again.

Afterall, my cousin did find me the apartment. She did pay the rent Jimmy and I were behind on at the cabin, though it wasn't half the amount I pay here. Jimmy sure wouldn't have paid it. He took off. Never even called. He doesn't know where I am now, and that's okay—the counselor says, that's okay. My cousin really has been helpful, which is more than I can say for some people—she did put down my first and last, and she did provide herself as my reference. The phone continues to ring, and I continue to stick tabs. I suppose I could pretend to enjoy myself this evening.

Section H: Customer Communications

My manager stands in the doorway. "What's the problem?" she says.

I look up. "What?"

"I just called here."

"I didn't know I was supposed to answer the phone," I say.

She's wearing a red suit jacket. I did not buy a red suit jacket. I bought a blue sweater with a v-neck and a white button up shirt with a collar that I have to tuck in.

"I have something else for you to do," she says.

I panic, but she doesn't notice.

"Is this part of the merger?" I ask.

"It's not a merger," she says. "It's a conversion. We don't call them mergers. How many times do I have to tell you?"

I don't say anything. I'm thinking how when Jimmy's body merged with mine, perhaps that too was a conversion? I'm thinking, what happened to the word merger? I see it out there on the superhighway, maneuvering around all the other lost words.

"These coversheets need to be slipped under the binder covers. The binders are in those boxes."

"I know," I say. "The other woman counted them."

"Right." She puts a stack of bright orange cardstock on the table. The cardstock announces the conversion in bold letters.

Section I: Reference Materials

I decide not to do the binders today. Perhaps I can do them tomorrow. She did not say they needed to be done today. I still have many tabs to stick, at least three hours worth, and there are only two hours left today. The bright orange in the middle of the table is disturbing, so I put the stack of cardstock in one of the boxes with the binders.

From the top of the steps going up to the loft I could see the splot of red paint below. It is drying a dark brown. Unfolded clothes are piled on metal shelving. The plastic protecting the broken window flaps and rattles. "Emmy?" I say as I approach the bed. She is lying on her side, one white and brown paw jutting out over the edge of the bed. I crouch beside her and pet her course fur. "Emmy?" I pick up one of Jimmy's shirts from the floor and gather her in my arms. I wrap the shirt around her body. I button it. The sheets and the comforter are covered with red paint. There are spots on the pillow. In my arms Emmy is heavy and still.

I cannot stick tabs anymore. I cannot stand the tackiness on my fingers. I cannot stand that there is no air. I breath deep but the breath stops halfway to my lungs. I put my palms flat on the table. My yellow hands twitch and jump.

Section J: Products and Services

I am able to negotiate with myself. I am able to swallow the breath. I stare at the tab stickers. The black letters leap off the pages and switch places with each other so that I cannot read them. How easily they could get up and walk out.

"What does that mean?" I asked my cousin. "Talent Tree. Is this is a real thing?"

"Hang up, Lucille. Enough already. You'll like it just fine. They're a good agency."

I imagine people hanging on trees, and people in red jackets pick them and package them in business casual shirts and sell them. There is a place in the city where I hang on a tree. I am out on the thinnest branch in the coldest part of winter, but I do not feel the cold.

Emmy used to come with me through the woods when I did trail maintenance. Light filtered in through the trees, and leaf patterns moved across the ground. I'd often peel off my shirt because there was no one around for miles, and the damp air felt good against my skin. The leaves brushed by my bare shoulders. Emmy chased birds in the brush; she growled and shook at roots believing them to be sticks she could dislodge from the earth. She'd run ahead on the trail then stop and look back, waiting for me. Maybe she's the only one who ever really waited for me. I look out the window and imagine her square little terrier face peering at me through tall grass. For the first time I notice clouds above the skyscrapers. They are gathering and parting, gathering and parting.

ROBERT LIPTON

Swimming to Jerusalem

the caterpillar D-9 tore the olive trees from the ground
boy soldiers with little jokes, kept their fingers on the trigger
A girl with braids and a limp (she called it her pet monkey) brought us juice
Zadi whispered he was going swimming near Damascus gate

soldiers with little jokes, kept their fingers on the trigger
a father was crying and pulling his hair
Zadi whispered he was going swimming near Damascus gate
men wearing yarmulkes cheered and waved their knishes

a father was crying and pulling his hair
two boys were juggling melons and hand grenades
men wearing yarmulkes cheered and waved their knishes
a helicopter flew in low trailing an advertisement for suntan lotion

two boys were juggling melons and hand grenades
sheep wandered into the olive grove bah-ing and shitting
a helicopter flew in low trailing an advertisement for suntan lotion
Zadi practiced his backstroke on the farmer's kitchen floor

sheep wandered into the olive grove bah-ing and shitting
the pilot waved and fired two missiles at a taxi
Zadi practiced his backstroke on the farmer's kitchen floor
like a piñata it exploded and spilled candy across the trees

the pilot waved and fired two missiles at a taxi
children ran out with their mouths open and hands in the air
like a piñata it exploded and spilled candy across the trees
mothers chased the children warning them about their teeth

children ran out with their mouths open and hands in the air
a truck pulling a swimming pool rounded the bend, water splashing
mothers chased the children warning them about their teeth
Zadi climbed into the pool as it rumbled past

a truck pulling a swimming pool rounded the bend, water splashing
it kept on past the check points and field guns toward Jerusalem
Zadi climbed into the pool as it rumbled past
an ice cream truck was following blaring a jingle

the caterpillar D-9 tore the olive trees from the ground

LAWRENCE MATSUDA

Hiroshima 1995

Gray granite monument
with black Japanese script,
our family grave holds
a small drawer of ashes.
Nearby hundreds of upright markers
squeeze like a stone garden into a cemetery
bound by apartment buildings
inside the middle of the city.

Cousin Akira slides the drawer open,
maybe 1,000 years of ancestors
layered like sediment on the ocean floor.
In my mind I drill a core sample down
to the first Yamadas,
of my mother's family tree.
My hands want to reach into
samurai, merchants, housewives,
bomb victims and civil servants.

Maybe only 50 years of ancestors there
if the bomb converted ashes to ashes,
spread remains to the wind,
dust on the *tansu*, grime and pollution
precipitated from the air.

Note: A *tansu* is a Japanese chest of drawers.

JAMES BRASFIELD

Coming Down

High up a crow flying fast
over the Village, over
a starling resting on a TV aerial,
then with enough thrust
to set the aerial shaking
the starling shoves off,
flying fast over the Village.

I'm following
a lean, gray-haired man
walking north, who stops
as at a riverbank.
He looks across Seventh Ave.,
at St. Vincent's
and makes the sign of the cross.

Late afternoon—in apparent stillness
dark clouds coming in,
the wind picking up—a cold drizzle
comes. Sparrows disperse
like a handful of postcards
tossed up at the so what,
coming down wherever.

ERIN GENDRON

A Soldier Says We Are Stubborn

He says, "They're like horses that only see
one way to go." But that's not true. Horses
see two worlds, one with each eye. That's why
what you teach to the right side, you must also
teach to the left. In the evening

I climb on the donkey's back
while he grazes in the field. Combing my fingers
through the mane, I imagine the bow
of my violin and remember how the instrument
crunched like a beetle under our feet as we ran.

I rest my head on the donkey's long neck and drop
the spiny sandburs into a rusty American coffee can.
I want to ask the soldier, "How long has it been
since you drank from a familiar ceramic cup, or slept
on bed in a room of your own, or held anything

as useful as a violin." But maybe he understands
that when you are refugee, you live in an empty house
with no possessions to rest your words or your body on.

DORE KIESSELBACH

Morgue

We passed pickled
tissue, things gone
wrong in glass
jars as he walked
us to the cooler
through the lab.
It was cold
behind those silver-
handled doors:
shapes on gurneys,
a foot, big-toe-
tags, yes. She
thought he'd used
his children
to send home
a threat but
I say he wanted
us to see how
plain it would
be in a few
months when
he'd decide
he was so tired
he had to lie

down there,
how he'd be
counted then and
in the spotless
balance weighed.

DERICK BURLESON

There is an order

in the apparent chaos of the spruce swamp,
but not the order of human tragedy or love.

Beneath the snow there is horsetail, tundra tea
the lignonberries, last year's spruce needles,

four kinds of moss, spruce roots and loess,
mountain ground powder fine by glaciers

and years and carried here on north wind
like the rumor someone who loved you once

has died. Beneath that, a lens of permafrost ice
which hasn't thawed in a million years, not since

the arctic was tropical, the mosquitoes sharp
enough to suck blood from a wooly mammoth.

It's thawing now in a fractal release of carbon,
and more and more and soon the spruce will slump

and tumble into a new form of carbon for the air,
which, on second thought, isn't really all that far

from the end of human love or tragedy, when there is
only one among all the dead left to tell us this.

DERICK BURLESON

November

Takes you at a gallop
through frosted stalks
of fireweed and grass
bent under new snow,
each seed singing *cling*

cling as if runaway belief
could seam a torn season.
As if, once past the last
cabin's smoke, the trail
spurs you on north until

winter shreds her mane
and winter's burn fingers
holes in a coat you hoped
would hold some reason
to doubt her bearing. Until

the incremental shrinking
of birch and black spruce
leaves you dazed, weaving
fetlock deep through boreal
forest with a horizon too

far away for the sun to see.
You could shiver a long
night here. A long night.
More snow will come.
And wind. Don't worry.

ANGIE MACRI

First the Bats, Then the Stars

Fingers and thumb wring into wings. The bats
echolocate as whales and dolphins hunting
through new stellar loops. Corona, corolla,
core, we sink into more, across cotton from the delta,
along the wine space of mouths. Grapes mass
into oak-wrapped drink. Fibers unlock and spin.
We, love, we begin again. Will we come
up through hands that quiver with the pulses
of star fields? Will we come along the river,
her oxbows flooded with spring? Light, bright
as looking glass, limbs stroke tonight. I would do
most anything, as fur and star in agitation.

ROBYN MURPHY

Hungry Ghost

Brian's ghost is standing next to the crib when I go in to get Lucy for her 3am feeding. She's screaming, and in the glow of the hallway light I can see the arch of her back, the way her tiny fists beat the air as she bellows out her rage. Brian's ghost is motionless except for his eyes, which track Lucy's every movement. I pick Lucy up, one hand supporting her head, downy and fitting perfectly into my palm, ridiculous on her flimsy chicken neck, and one hand and arm sliding under her body to feel the amazing solidity of this creature that I somehow helped create. Brian's ghost watches as I jiggle her into position next to my body, a motion that has become so habitual that it is easy to forget how foreign it felt the first time I held her. I know that Brian's ghost will not follow me into the hallway, or into the bedroom where Pepper and her massively milk-engorged breasts wait to receive our spawn. Brian's ghost will wait, motionless, until Lucy is returned to his gaze.

The stillness of Brian's ghost used to bother me, because when he was alive Brian could never stay in one spot. I have become too used to his ghost, however, and sometimes I have to forcibly remind myself of what he used to be like. When we were kids I used to get up a half hour early so that I could eat breakfast before him, because he used to tap his fingers on the table, stomp his feet, and swivel his shoulders to a tribal beat that only he could hear in some attempt to serenade his oatmeal. It would've been understandable if Brian had been a musician, but he lacked any type of rhythm, as was finally proved in high school when he attempted to learn the drums.

It was a harsh lesson, coinciding as it did with the beginning of my mother's menopause.

I first saw Brian's ghost in the winter, when my bus was waiting at the Murray and Forbes stop in Squirrel Hill. They say that it's the most popular stop in Pittsburgh, and I believe it, because it always takes forever, with hordes of people getting on while a whole mob tries just as hard to get off. I was looking out the window, not really paying attention, when I saw Brian standing at the stop dressed in a black suit and tie. The snow was falling pretty heavily, and it was almost dark out, but even through the flakes and in the twilight I recognized him instantly. The first thing I wondered was why he'd been stupid enough to forget his jacket. Thinking back, it's still difficult to believe that this was my first thought—not that my brother wasn't even in the country, and on top of that didn't own a suit. Those were my second and third thoughts, respectively. Once I'd had them, I knew that it must've been some dumb college kid—something that Pittsburgh had in abundance, and sometimes you'll see a particularly fine specimen walking along in shorts and thong sandals in January, or wool coats in August.

I mentioned it to my parents over dinner, and they agreed that the college students get crazier each year. On my bus ride back to my apartment in Oakland I watched for the student out the window, and even mentioned it when I wrote Brian my weekly letter that night.

The army sent the letter back to me. It arrived months later, after the tulips were up and I was trying to accept that this was my first of many springs without Brian. I thought about how weird it was that I'd written him a letter when he was already dead—he'd died hours before I'd put pen to paper, in the mountains of the Anbar province. The Army guys weren't very specific, and I hadn't been looking at my watch, but it had probably happened around the time that I saw his ghost at the bus stop. It seems to make sense.

In our bedroom, Pepper has propped herself up in bed, but hasn't bothered to open her eyes. In the four months since Lucy arrived we have both become adept at performing most low-level tasks while technically asleep. The front of her pajama top is already unbuttoned, but I can't remember if she ever bothered to re-button after Lucy's 11pm feeding. Her arms curl automatically around the baby when I pass her over, but it is only when she takes Lucy's full weight that her eyes open halfway to regard me, and she smiles sleepily.

Lucy's howls stop the moment that she latches onto the nipple, and the sudden silence feels loud with their absence. The first few nights at home, I always woke up wondering why the hell I heard a screaming baby, and when someone would take care of it. Now if I wake up and I don't hear her, I panic and wonder who stole my child.

Lucy is not an easy baby. Our pediatrician told us that, so I know that it isn't just my imagination. The Jesuit priest that I once consulted about a possible exorcism also complimented her lung-power, and suggested that opera might be a good field for her. He further told me what I already believed, that she was an unusually lovely baby, but then he had to ruin it by saying that the most beautiful children were always produced when East met West. I spent a lot of time pondering that one to figure out if there had been any latent racism in it—a new hobby of mine since becoming the parent of a half Irish half Chinese child. I eventually tried to refer it to Pepper for final arbitration, but she told me to stop being so sensitive.

I stretch out beside Pepper, trying to find a position uncomfortable enough to keep me awake until Lucy is done and I can carry her back to her room. I settle for lying on my side with my head propped up on Pepper's remarkably bony knees. I listen to Lucy's little grunting noises, and watch Pepper's hand rub the baby's back in slow circles. I smell baby powder, and the sweetness of the breast milk that dribbles down Lucy's chin, and Pepper herself. Even

through the dull haze of sleep deprivation I recognize that this is a moment of perfection.

"Was he there tonight?" Pepper whispers. Her stroking hand moves from Lucy's back to her downy black hair. I don't respond, and Pepper doesn't ask again, because she knows my answer in the silence. She has asked this question every night since Lucy came home from the hospital.

Pepper's real name is Peigh Ang, which Brian never knew, because I did not learn it until after he died. Pepper and I were together for three years, and already engaged, before I found out. She was the first Asian girl I'd ever dated and I had assumed that her name was cultural, like my Uncle Patrick, and that lots of Chinese people were named after household spices. I also had a deep terror that if I asked about the origins of her name I would be following in steps laid down by every boyfriend before me, and so made a conscious effort to never let on that she carried a moniker that I had hitherto only encountered attached to a miniature Schnauzer. Most of my anxieties stemmed from our third date, when we went out for pizza and ran into her most recent ex-boyfriend, a man who was taller, handsomer, and from what I gathered during our brief and awkward introduction, significantly funnier than I was. Knowing that she had dumped this figure of American masculinity (in all honestly, I once saw this same man in a razor commercial) had driven me to competitive extremes that eased after I goaded her one day into admitting that I was a better driver than my rival, as well as having fewer drug and alcohol problems.

I learned Pepper's real name when her mother insisted on its presence on our wedding invitations. It was an awkward discovery, even though Pepper had not responded to her birth name since her first day of school, when a classroom of children discovered that on the tongue of a Chicago native, such as a certain hapless kindergarten teacher, 'Peigh Ang' sounds indistinguishable from 'peeing.' It

had led to a morning so profoundly traumatizing for Pepper that the principal chose to move her to another classroom and introduce her under a hastily chosen nickname.

When Brian was seven I began calling him 'spud.' I don't know why I started doing it, but his face got so red and he screamed so loudly that I couldn't stop myself, even after my dad told me very seriously one day that if he heard me say it again he was going to knock the shit right out of me. After that I only said it when we were away from adults, but once when I was fifteen and Brian was in eighth grade I called him spud when we were standing on the front stoop of our house, and he punched me so hard in the gut that I lost my balance, fell, and cracked my head against the concrete steps. My mom took me down to Presby hospital for stitches, and I still have a scar over my left eyebrow. Brian cried harder than I did even when they were stitching me up, and after that he never reacted to being called spud, so eventually I stopped.

Lucy is waving her feet, and I reach out and grab one in my right hand. Pepper detaches her to switch sides, and for a minute, while she adjusts herself, Lucy glares down at me, the person holding onto her toes. She looks like a tiny prize-fighter, with her little fisted hands held up in front of her chin, and I run my thumb along the arch of her foot just to make it twitch. Lucy makes the squawking sound that I love, then Pepper rearranges her and she latches onto the other breast greedily. I lose her foot in the switch, but when I reach for her other foot she moves and I only catch her heel and ankle. The fabric of her baby jumper has ridden up, and I feel the string around her ankle.

Lucy has worn that string of red yarn since the day we brought her home. Pepper's mother tied it on when neither of us were looking. Our pediatrician asked about it, and Pepper lied and said that it was for good luck.

My mom and Pepper's mother argue about it a lot. Sometimes

they're almost indecipherable, between my mother's thick Yinzer accent and Pepper's mom's broken English and occasional lapses into Mandarin, but they manage to understand enough to disagree. My mom says that Brian is Lucy's guardian angel, but Pepper's mom calls him a 'hungry ghost.' When I asked Pepper what her mother meant, she just vaguely referred to it as bad luck, but she and her mother had a long conversation in Mandarin that seemed to imply that there was a bit more to it.

It was hard not to believe Pepper's mom over mine. She seemed so certain, so none of us tried to take the red yarn off of Lucy, even during bath times. Even my mother must've really believed her, because a week after the string went on I found saint's medals hidden under the mattress of Lucy's crib. "Just in case," my mom said when I asked her about them. "And only her patron saint."

Lucy's heel is warm in my palm, and I can even feel the faint flutter of her heartbeat through it. Brian didn't write me too often from Iraq—he was either busy or tired, but when he did it was usually with some anecdote that was mostly intended to downplay where he was. Once he wrote me a long letter detailing how nice it could be to take a shit in the desert (someone from his unit had brought a little fisherman's foldable stool along, and after they cut a big hole in the canvas it was apparently an ideal portable toilet substitute), and another time about how his unit had thrown water balloons at the Syrian border. Usually he would just ask me for more letters (when shitting in the desert, I learned, reading material is important), but once after his first mission to Anbar province he asked me for some heavy wool socks. Brian wrote that it was so cold over there that it took him two days back at base to thaw his feet out afterwards. I drove out to a ski shop and got a box of thermal socks, enough for the whole unit.

After they sent his body home, I brought a pair of heavy socks to the funeral director and asked for him to put them on Brian. I hated

the thought of him down there in the ground with cold feet. At the wake I saw that the suit my dad bought for him was the same one that his ghost had worn at the bus stop.

Brian is waiting when I carry Lucy back and put her in the crib. I used to tease Brian about knocking up any Iraqi girls while he was over there, saying that Mom wouldn't be able to handle the shock of a Muslim daughter-in-law on top of my Buddhist girlfriend. In one letter he told me that it wasn't a problem. "This ain't Vietnam," he wrote.

I wish he had. Or that he'd had a kid with some good 'Burgher girl back here. When Mom and Dad and I are gone, he'll be gone—no one's father or granddad. Lucy can say that her uncle died over there, but he will never be real to her. I wonder sometimes if his photos will mean anything at all to her, or if someday they'll just be packed away in a box. When Pepper made a genealogy chart for Lucy's room, she put Brian in, but he just hangs there alone, held up only by me and my parents.

Does Brian's ghost think these things? Is he jealous of my baby? I didn't know that babies were something to be jealous of until Lucy was born. It was a shock to me how much I loved her, how precious she was to me. Every day she breaks new ground and proves that how I felt for her yesterday was just a shadow of how I love her today. The first time she lifted her head was amazing, triumphant. Sometimes I wonder how any future baby could compete. They would just be pale imitations to my first, like everyone who climbed Mt. Everest after Edmund Hillary.

Hungry ghost, Pepper's mother calls Brian, as if he wants to eat Lucy. I hated the thought of Brian being cold, and I hate the thought that he might be hungry. Watching his ghost stare at my baby with tireless fervor, sometimes on these nights I wonder if I owe it to him. On long nights, with little sleep, I stare at him as he stares at Lucy, all three of us more shadow than flesh in the faint light cast by

Lucy's Eeyore nightlight, and sometimes I can even pretend that he is not a ghost, or that we all are.

Brian is dead—already he is being forgotten. Someday he will be a name on a memorial, great-great-uncle to someone who doesn't care. A man who died for college tuition, and only after he was gone did I realize how little he'd actually gotten to do.

I untie the string from around Lucy's ankle, then move my hand up to let her grasp my finger. With her belly full of milk, she is quiet for once, looking up at me with her beautiful dark eyes. Brian's ghost moves closer to her. One hand reaches in, forefinger extended. It moves to her cheek, almost touching, and pauses. For the first time since I hugged him goodbye at the airport, where a plane took him out of my life, my brother looks at me. I wait, watching, not interfering,

BRYAN NARENDORF

Impression, Catullus, c. 5

Of course, Frieda, they talk the whys
and wheretofors sock-caught like burrs
on our evening walks, details too promising
not to chitchat up when we see them
but keep to our own table in the corner.
This will settle, noted but not crucial.
Kiss me. And again while we wait for the light
on the corner. Memory will do its work
behind some future sun. If anyone cares
they'll say yes we saw it start there
and then. Is it important? Was it ever?

ANNA MARIA HONG

The Bronze Age

A giant man and woman strode the land
anticipating the arrival of
the gods but not believing truly in the end.
They were enormous beings hewn out of

frost and fire. By day, they strode across
the elemental greens and grays that formed
the captious clouds of their existence.
By night, they dreamt crepuscular dreams formed

at the hour mixing twilight. They were
incapable of simple recollection.
Each day to night was mute perfection,

and neither could they purely feel the future.
Horizoning and blaring sure erasure,
the gods were felt as distant pressure.

STEFANIE WORTMAN

The Transparent Fabulist

Part air the hollow
Boned bird. Eats
And eats until she
Says she can't breathe.
That the spoon is
Not itself but emptiness.
Walks out and comes
Back lighter. Through
A skin the glass
Frog's working organs.

THOMAS COOK

Office Park

The state shrunken: if we remove the encasements: which fountain are we at? Another tree imitates fire & I am called to its side in a kind of brush-by of acknowledgement. The wind resolves to be divided on this point. We understand an entire museum has been promised to be shipped overseas & we hope to not be caught in it, receiving some lightening or other stark shift in climate. Take the field: who can determine if open is safe? If there is something specifically rhinal about goatheards, or if it is just tending feeling. (Why lavender is lucky.) Look: I am not here. The street is deeply biased. I am speaking again in touchdown celebrations, not blood but glittering. I pray for each of seven heads, very small & confused indices & I am growing old. Something aesthetically pleasing about concrete triangles keeps me coming back to the library in silence, in multiples. Loneliness like this everywhere. The big stratagem we imagined bore us is no longer expanding. Its frontispiece has unfolded revealing the totality of its scale; it can harbor a lifetime of dreams where unspecific traffic rolls & gives them over to us only one night at a time.

THOMAS COOK

Modern Lighting

Standing now in the great new apartment, we do not know why it is called a condominium. Three impossible windows touch wildly & cannot open. Here, so far, we have consumed nothing. Like an unspoken pact to fast, that alone seems reason to celebrate. A landscape an excuse for painting. We can see that spot way out in the park, hear all the fictional parties obeying around the corner & down the hall. Some sectioning will be necessary if we expect to coexist here. We have brought a gourd that only vegetates when suspended in air. Now for lemonade & I am in a jag hearing this churchbell, as though I have not been truly alone with myself. I was hoping to put up this holiday barrier between lies & in the evening, adjust the radio to real useful—but I am bodiless & massive in my desires. I arrange the day & cry out. Here, nothing is clear. We could die & we have various ways to select what visions will compose our final montage. The one recording is played once more. You stand in the sum.

SARA GUEST

Enchancements

Barns burning.

Cattle standing next to them—shy in the flames. A silkiness about the air, when a match could take everything up from the old boards, without wet, without coated grasses. Barns burning every year down the way. Nobody replacing them or little gardens trampled by firemen. Nobody picking through stampeded bulbs, huffing them back to life.

Did we wonder if we saw what we saw? We have to keep secrets about the breakdown of things, the way loss coats us in ash same as a fire would, humbled in ferocity.

What the naked barn looks like afterward, stalks coming through the singeing. On the empty land, things to be destroyed. Just when you think you can grasp and survey the emptiness, fire finds something else to burn, something you didn't see.

LAWRENCE REVARD

The House I Promise in My Heart to the Dancer I Fall in Love With

> *…and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will grant it." And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." And she went out, and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?"*
>
> *—Mark 6: 22-24*

The promise of the house, like the rocking of trees,
like concertos, is all it builds
on the air that we may pass

dreaming at night and know. Houses know need
as the decrepit barn I found as a child
knew dusty light. The red barn,

a palace wind beat
young pines against. I got inside its broken safe. In an unlit
room, I could hide

goldfinch feathers and pocket knives,
things worth nothing but what they tell of their finder's hand
and eye. The pinholes in the tin roof made day and wind

stars and whistles. Like you,
they formed a new Lyra and a new Pegasus together
in my sky. They turned and breathed. I could take off my clothes

and rest beneath that turning and feel every hair on my thighs
lift freely and slowly in the side-to-side
rhythm and pulse

of the air currents of deep Georgia woods. If you ask me,
this is what your body tells me.
If you ask me, I will

buy an old church to be the house I let the birds break in
as memory is broken in, their voices inside fragile
and steadfast as the desert

prophets suddenly but clearly understood to have said
we were always loved
and made of treasured things.

MARTHA ZWEIG

Domestic

Where innocence is concerned,
I keep a culprit: boon companion, house pet.
Also I have my doubts.

Or others took first pick, stuck me
with the lively conscience. Yap yap, or I hear it chewing
velvety slippers under my mind.

Knock: I adopt an adult bearing to answer the door.
A tract? A summons? Oil pipeline hookup day
pumping away my share? But a mere

evening stumbles indoors out of the blue.
Or overwrought from overwork the Daily Grind
flops to my stoop, whose cutting-edge

undoings cancel each other out: void leads,
void ads & items: local oblivion's scrapbook-of-
record sentenced in cumulative absentia;

or the voluminously obsolete
encyclopedia salesgirl, here arrived to settle in per her walking
papers' overfamiliar address?

She will tell me, make myself at home.
She says, *Give it a rest. Give it a moment's*
thanks. Let's eat what you've put behind you.

MARTHA ZWEIG

Tell Me Another

What it is, if it's not
one thing, is another. Or, *exeunt*
omnes, severally, my loves (I
was old-fashioned, just one
another at a time).

Another's what one good
turn deserves: re-
turn, twist o' my plot!
Strenuous manipulative, next knot
tightening upon knot, don't stop.

Another's what one
hand washes, if it can find it,
malformity inflicted at the end
of an opposite arm. Whose's that
cold persistent blood, white suds?

One damned thing right after another
assigns the wrong to the damned
thing previous. Or might the accursed
precedent, today, leapfrog the redeemed
act subsequent, wronging it righting itself?

Even as day, then dollar,
follows another, so offstage proceeds
an accounting: player's wage,
creditor's ultimatum. Another's
the think they've both got coming.

We must love one another
or die, the poet said. Trick is, we love
plurally, & die. O infantile affection!—who
was the first next another I deadly
couldn't tell the one from?

ELIZABETH RUSH

Song

A sudden lack of desire
strips the night from the waist up—

bare-breasted night,
lime-leaf night,

night of a thousand catfish
feeding on the surface

of a pond in spate—
the sky's discarnate twin

disturbed by their blind hunger.
This is the night

father would sing of
from the bottom of the well,

the one that remains
even though we cup our hands

and drink and drink.
Oh never-ending night

of awe
whose hunger is all of our hunger.

LYNNE SHARON SCHWARTZ

Traveling with Uncle Bert

As a child, I longed to see the world. I grew up in a family where no one—well, almost no one—went anywhere except to New York State's Catskill Mountains in the summer and once in a great while, in the winter, to Florida. Miami Beach. What I wanted was the exotic, and I said so. Why can't we go somewhere exotic? I asked my parents as they loaded the car for our annual trek to the mountains, and they would laugh. Exotic! It became a word they used to tease me with, and sometimes taunt. But that never stopped my craving for the exotic or my belief that it did exist, somewhere. Ironic, for nowadays the idea of the exotic is politically incorrect. To consider any place exotic is to advertise not only one's egocentricity but provinciality. We've all learned that the Other is not really Other. And while that may be a social advance, I do regret the loss of the exotic, or rather the freedom to yearn for it and to feel awestruck on finding it.

Although my parents didn't frequent Miami Beach, I had an unexpected chance to see it. My Uncle Bert and Aunt Lily invited me to accompany them there during a school Easter break. I accepted right away. I wanted to explore, and this was the best in the way of exploration that I could hope for just then. I was fifteen. Bert and Lily's older son, my cousin, was a student at the University of Miami, and they were going to visit him.

My parents, who considered Miami Beach well within the range of the acceptable, practically a sister city, and knowing my bent for the exotic—in short supply in Brooklyn—gave their permission.

They trusted that my aunt and uncle knew something about travel because Bert and Lily were the only family members who ventured beyond the borders of the known world. They took cruises and went on tours to faraway places. To my mother, who was fearful of traveling—even fearful of escalators, a very minor form of travel—this was a form of eccentricity or self-punishment. Long after our trip to Florida, well into old age, my aunt and uncle continued traveling; at the announcement of each new trip, my mother would shake her head ruefully and sigh with pity for my aunt, who she believed was dragged along against her wishes. Maybe she was right. Or maybe travel was part of an informal pre-nuptial agreement. My aunt was a docile woman who rarely disagreed with her husband, in public, at any rate. She appreciated the comfortable life he made possible for her, even if in return she had to put up with his wanderlust, his vile temper and uncensored tongue.

The plan was that Bert and Lily would drive down to Miami and I would be sent by plane along with their other son, Phil, a year and a half younger than I. In those days people used to dress for a flight as if for a job interview—dignified, businesslike clothing. I wore a two-piece gray suit with stockings and Cuban heels, squat two-inch heels that have lately become stylish but at the time were considered appropriate for teen-agers, not sexy like the four-inch spike heels I couldn't wait to wear, but still denoting a level slightly above childhood. I can't remember what my cousin Phil wore, which is just as well because during the flight I threw up on my suit and on whatever he had on. There was always a coolness between us after that.

I saw Miami Beach with its famed luxury hotels. Typically, I remember little of the trip. Among my few misty memories are several outings to places with performing animals—dolphins, alligators—many meals in Junior's, my uncle's violent temper and my aunt's meekness. For this I did not need to travel; I witnessed it often enough in Brooklyn. You never knew what might set him off,

a waitress's delay in bringing his lunch, say, and for this reason it was embarrassing to eat in restaurants with him.

Later on, when I was grown, my mother revealed that she had been courted by Bert, who made the tactical error of introducing her to his younger brother, who became my father. My mother never said exactly how far her romance with Bert had progressed, but in any event I was enormously relieved that she had chosen my father over him. As a pair, she and Bert would have been painfully mismatched. "Whoever is stiff and inflexible," says the Tao te Ching, "is a disciple of death. Whoever is soft and yielding is a disciple of life." My mother, soft and yielding, would have contended with Bert all her life—divorce, in that time and place, being virtually unthinkable except under the most egregious of pressures: crime, blatant or incessant adultery, and alcoholism, none of which were Bert's vices. Travel would hardly have qualified. Nor would a violent temper. My father's temper was also irascible and hard to take, but not quite so vitriolic as Bert's, and my father was better-natured. On the other hand, Bert made a lot of money, though had I been his daughter I would probably have had to spend my legacy on psychiatrists.

In our small rooming house in Miami Beach, we occupied two rooms, for propriety. I slept in one room with my aunt while my uncle and cousin shared the other. It would have been awkward for my thirteen-year-old cousin and me to room together, especially after I had thrown up on him. At fifteen I didn't know much, but I did know that married people liked to sleep together, and I wondered if Bert and Lily felt deprived. I felt mildly guilty at being the cause of their temporary celibacy. At night, going to bed, my aunt and I sometimes discussed my uncle's fits of temper and what scene or scenes they had generated that day. These conversations must have been at my instigation. I can't imagine her ever bringing the subject up. I asked why she didn't answer him back. I was speaking from the example of my own parents; my father yelled and screamed, but my

mother answered back. My aunt said fearfully that she didn't know what he might do: he might hit her. I could have told her that those types didn't hit, at least judging by my father, but I didn't go that far. I just regarded her with mute pity.

I also felt sorry for her because I could see, through her transparent white nightgown, that her hips bumped out and then her thighs bumped out, with a kind of vertical valley in between. From my waist to my upper thighs was one gentle curve and I did not wish this to alter with age. Of course I had seen my mother's body many times, but she was fat so there were no valleys or indentations anywhere. My aunt was slim. This, too, I did not bring up for discussion.

We visited my older cousin and walked around the campus of his university. He invited me—I don't know if this was his idea or if his parents had urged him—to a pool party one night with his college friends. In the sultry Miami Beach night, everyone cavorted around the lit-up pool in bathing suits. I wore a royal blue velveteen bathing suit I had inherited from my older sister. I had coveted this bathing suit for quite some time, and when I put it on, I couldn't stop admiring myself in the mirror. But almost none of the college kids, certainly none of the boys, spoke to me, and I ambled about on the edge of the party in my beautiful bathing suit, drinking soda and retreating underwater until it was mercifully over. I was drenched with awkwardness but also relieved, for I didn't know what I would have said had any boys approached me. I didn't know how to flirt even with boys my own age, and these were college boys. I was glad to be back with Phil, with whom I could behave like an older woman.

This was hardly the first time I endured that vertiginous sense of boundless alienation. I'd known it ever since I could remember, although in childhood I wouldn't have known the word. Not belonging, I would have called it, or not fitting in. In my innocence,

or child wisdom, I must have thought it was a commonplace feeling everyone shared—something that came along with the package of life, like hunger or boredom. The only time I was completely free of it was when I was alone. I belonged with myself; that much I knew for sure.

But the evening at the pool in Miami Beach was the first time I experienced not belonging culturally, in the context of travel to a new place. There it felt more justified. I was not different because of an obscure, maybe shameful, weakness or flaw. I was objectively different: this place, these people, this weather, these customs had no connection to who or what I was. Pool parties! In March!

Anxiety informs the only other vivid memory from my Florida trip, but anxiety of a more domestic, reasonable nature. My uncle periodically let Phil steer the car—a prelude to teaching him how to drive—but not sit in the driver's seat. He would have Phil lean over from the passenger seat to steer. I was not a nervous passenger, having grown up with my father's bold and excellent driving, but this antic, which went on for long stretches on endless roads leading to the various animal performances, struck me as extremely unwise. My aunt and I sat in the back seat. Like her, I was tense and silent. I would go home soon, I thought, if Phil's steering didn't kill us. My ordeal would be over, but she had to spend her whole life this way.

Many years later, after my father had died, I took to dropping in on my Aunt Lily and Uncle Bert. They had moved from Brooklyn to midtown Manhattan, a high-rise apartment building from which Bert, in his retirement, roamed the city. Once I met him on the subway, on his way to a Russian class downtown. I didn't know how much Russian he remembered from his childhood, if any, or how much he had had to begin with. The family originally came from a town near Kiev, though I never heard a word of Russian spoken by my father, my grandparents, or my seven aunts and uncles. They

probably spoke Yiddish, growing up, but they must have known some Russian. Unlike Bert, my father wished to delete that segment of his life altogether. After his death, going through his papers, I found an old report card in Russian, listing his subjects and grades. I could read the Cyrillic alphabet and had taught myself a bit of the language: from that bit I made out what the subjects were—geometry, grammar, geography—and it appeared that his grades were excellent.

I would go over to Bert and Lily's in the late afternoon and be given tea or a drink. Then I would look at Bert and listen to him talk—about his travels, his past, his law practice, politics. It didn't matter what—I just liked to look and listen. I felt slightly hypocritical about the visits, since their main reason was that I missed my father, and Bert looked and sounded so much like him. Were I from California, I might say his "aura" was similar. Bert was short and slight—my father was stockier—and his manner was more curt, and he had less white hair (family rumor claimed that Bert, in his vanity, had had hair implants, but if so they hadn't helped much). Still, the resemblance was strong, especially the voice and the inflections and the elegant fluency. I would have liked to close my eyes and simply hear his voice, but of course that would never do. Sometimes I brought my children along.

My father was not the only person Bert resembled. Back in the 1960's when the name of Ariel Sharon, then a general in the Israeli Army, began to appear in news reports, it occurred to me that perhaps he was a relative. Sharon was my family name as well, shortened and Anglicized when the family emigrated before World War I. I'd heard that the general's family was from Russia, too. If we were related, I fantasized, I could go to Israel and look him up. What a lark, to be entertained by a general, surely the only time such an opportunity would come my way, given my distinctly unmilitary connections.

I began asking my old aunts and uncles about Ariel Sharon, those remaining of the eight who had emigrated here. A ninth, the oldest brother, had remained in or near Kiev because he was already married and embarked on an adult life. Unless he got out before the war, in all likelihood he was a victim of the Nazi massacre at Babi Yar and thrown into the ditch with so many others. Once I asked my father what had become of him. It was touchy to approach my father on this subject because he pretended those first twelve years of his life did not exist, so I asked very tentatively. He didn't know, he said, only at some point the family stopped receiving letters.

There were two schools of thought on the subject of Ariel Sharon. My Aunt Frieda, a preternaturally shrewd, skinny, angular woman with a stiletto-like tongue—the female version of the family's vehemence—definitely believed him to be one of us. From earliest childhood I'd trusted her intelligence and instincts. Others were not so sure. Bert, who had fixed opinions about everything, was for once uncertain. I didn't know how to pursue the matter—by way of research, that is. At that time there were no biographies of Sharon that I knew of and no Google. Anyhow, I am a poor researcher and have always preferred fantasy, where everything is possible, over fact, where a single explanation shackles the imagination.

I did go so far as to look him up in an encyclopedia. What I found was not promising. His family did come from Russia, but they had emigrated to Israel long before my branch left. The other facts I've forgotten, except that they didn't fit either.

Standing in opposition to the facts was the matter of temperament. Over the years that I dithered on and off with the notion of kinship, every exploit of Ariel Sharon's seemed to be generated from the same DNA that had produced my father, my uncles and aunts, my cousins. Me. He was willful, quick to anger, heedless of caution, a juggernaut when it came to pursuing his goals. He shocked people, first by his rashness and bravery and later by his

single-minded ruthlessness. This was all very familiar, even if on a grander scale than I was accustomed to. At the time of his 1982 foray into the refugee camp in Lebanon, I was at the point of hoping he was not a blood relation. "Weapons are the tools of fear," says the *Tao te Ching*:

a decent man will avoid them
except in the direst necessity
and, if compelled, will use them
only with the utmost restraint….
His enemies are not demons,
but human beings like himself.

Watching Sharon's career, I was thankful that my father and his brothers and sisters had never been in a position of political or military power. Whatever damage they had done had at least been in the domestic sphere.

But the resemblance to Bert: after I'd stopped thinking about the matter, indeed avoided it, my mother showed me a photograph of Ariel Sharon in *Time* magazine. "You were wondering if he was a relative," she said. "Just look at this. He's a fat Bert." She was right. A fat Bert. A Bert blown up with air and stuffed into a uniform. The resemblance was uncanny. I hoped it was coincidental. Sometimes old people, particularly those from the same ethnic background, start to look alike.

Bert—the thin Bert, who definitely was in the family—appreciated my visits and sometimes gave me small gifts, once a silver dollar he said was very valuable ("You, of course, don't know anything about coins, but believe me, take it to a professional and you'll see, it's worth a lot") or trinkets from his various travels, the kinds of things one might give to children. Because he appreciated my visits, he promised that he would take my husband and me along on

his next trip, which was to be a cruise down the Amazon, at some vague future date. I told my husband to be prepared for this invitation, and we developed a running joke about our hypothetical cruise down the Amazon, envisioning ourselves lounging on deck chairs with a lot of rich old people, hearing the lapping of the murky water and watching the jungle drift past. My visions were conjured from Conrad's Heart of Darkness, even though that was another continent and another century. Still, we looked forward to it, out of curiosity. So we were dismayed, a few years later—by then my visits to Bert and Lily had grown less frequent—to learn that they had already cruised down the Amazon without us.

After a while my visits to Bert and Lily dropped off, partly because I'd gotten used to the vacancy my father's death had left in the world and was not quite so much in need of hearing his voice or seeing the planes and angles of his long, sallow face. But there was another reason. During the height of my visiting, Bert said he would like to take my family out to dinner. We should choose the place, the most expensive restaurant we could find. I didn't know any very expensive restaurants at the time, so on a friend's recommendation I suggested a new French restaurant on the East Side. It was an unfortunate choice, or night, because the place was nearly empty, which seemed a reflection on my savoir faire, and to make matters worse they didn't have the dish Bert ordered. Salmon. Poached. He berated the waiter loudly, making an awful scene with his demands for the salmon, and I was mortified. My daughters, in early adolescence, looked on in astonishment. When we left, I swore that I would never again appear in a public place with Bert. I was newly grateful that my mother had not married him. My father had been capable of public rudeness, too, but only with significant provocation. The absence of his chosen dish on the menu would not have been sufficient to trip the wires, so to speak. It would have taken something

more significant, a friend's betrayal, perhaps, or a remark showing political ingenuousness. Then he would stomp around shouting that religion was the opiate of the people, that altruism was the mask of self-interest, and that the Marshall Plan was less generosity than a way of insuring eventual markets for American goods. "Markets, markets, it's all markets," he would sputter, waving his arms in the air and making small objects in the vicinity tremble.

But in any case my father would never have found himself in such an expensive restaurant: he hated that kind of pretension. He wasn't willing to pay for "atmosphere," he always said, just for food.

So my visits to Bert tapered off in the wake of that disastrous evening, which is, no doubt, why I never cruised down the Amazon with him and Aunt Lily.

In December of 2006 three new biographies of Ariel Sharon appeared. I read the reviews. Sharon's family came from Soviet Georgia; mine came from a town near Kiev. His original family name was Scheinerman, which was not my family's original name. "The Hebraicized name," one reviewer writes, "was given to him by David Ben-Gurion, like a Shakespearean king anointing one of his knights." Thus ended my hypothetical kinship with a military man, though not with my uncle.

"The hard and stiff will be broken. The soft and supple will prevail," the *Tao de Ching* verse continues, but this is not always true. Bert lived way into his nineties, imposing his will, hard and stiff, until the very end.

BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEWED BY MARY A. MCCAY

A Pleiades of Poets Plus One, but Mostly Men

Conflicted Light, J. P. Dancing Bear, Salmon Poetry: County Clare, Ireland, 2008.

Estuary, Barbary Chaapel, Lost Hills Books, Duluth Minnesota, 2008.

Adam's Ribs, Terry Adams, Off the Grid Press, Weld, Maine, 2008.

Wrong, Laurie Blauner, Cherry Grove Collections, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2008.

Inverse Sky, John Isles , University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, Iowa, 2008

Please, Jericho Brown, New Issues Poetry and Prose, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 2008.

Poems for New Orleans, Edward Sanders, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, California, 2008.

Green Zone New Orleans, Mark Yakich, Press Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2008

While it may be that, as W.H. Auden wrote in his elegy for William Butler Yeats, "poetry makes nothing happen," it is true in both meanings of the phrase. It is equally "a way of happening, a mouth." Each of the eight poets in this review has a distinctive voice and a definite capacity for giving new life to even the seemingly

mundane activities of our lives as well as articulating the catastrophes that plague us but do not always make us strong in the broken places.

J. P. Dancing Bear's *Conflicted Light* divides into "Conflicts," "Exit Strategies," "Armistice Days," and "Aftermath." The first section bristles with bold, aggressive imagery barely hiding the anger at the Iraq War, as "a low chant of revenge hung in the air." While the poems in this section have a polemic tone, there is also an elegy for a lost America. "Innocence has gone missing from the fields."

The elegiac note continues in the second section, as most of the exit strategies lean toward death because "There is a music that only the dead can hear." Death and the hope of resurrection, but only a faint hope as the dead mother calls, "Oh Child follow me, / into this first last snow." Reading section two, one wonders if there will be anyone alive on Armistice Day. There is, however, at least one witness who asks:

And what would I tell
a seeker should any come?
It was a bitter drought.
I am the witness, this is
my fact: I am here,
still afraid of fire and flood.

The last section, "Aftermath," leaves many dead, many grieving, and one who asserts, "I emerge from the layers, / as someone I nearly knew. A new version of my old self." Dancing Bear, through the process of war, death, resolution, and a small rebirth, brings the poetic voice a new timbre, chastened and refined by loss and determination.

Barbary Chaapel's Estuary chronicles the poet's life in Appalachia in an attempt to come to terms with her own and her family's pasts. It is, however, the tension between mother and daughter that

strikes a potent chord throughout the book. Quoting from W.H. Auden, Chaapel opens one poem with "Recipe for the Upbringing of a Poet: 'As much neurosis as the child can bear.'" This poem in the voice of an aunt—serving as a surrogate mother—decries the eleven-year-old child's attendance at a holy-roller service, saying, "if you don't straighten up / show me some respect I'll send you / back to your whoring mother." The mother herself appears in at least two other poems, "The last Vigilance" and "Hello-Goodbye." In both poems, it is the mother's seeming lack of love that drives the narrator to scream: "Did your love me?" Chaapel's poems about people are sharp and vivid in their portrayals; they can also be quite funny. "Santa Visits the United Mine Workers Union Hall" ends with Santa dandling his wife on his knee, asking her if she has been a good girl and what does she want for Christmas. When Robin, his wife, replies, "A big Diamond," Santa pretends to hesitate, saying, "Well, Little girl, we'll see about that on Christmas eve," and Robin punches him in the belly.

The way women interact with each other and with men is central to much of Chaapel's poetry, and she captures moments that uncover friendships and memories. Two friends going to Art's Seafood on a Sunday are talking, and Annette says, "Well, hell, / I'm not going to let some angry men / That I could adore come / Between me and Art's fish fry." And the speaker remembering that day, remembers "every succulent bite of the perch we ate that day."

In fact, it is the past and how it has formed the poet that determines the way the poems are structured. They create a family and a personal history that invites readers to join for a moment a different family, one that Chaapel ultimately constructs with love.

Terry Adams opens *Adam's Rib* with a poem that looks backwards and forwards from his mother's death and his daughter's fear of death. Entitled "Pieta," the poem and the speaker hang between two worlds, two women, and the fear that one is not loved.

Mothers, fathers, daughters, cousins, and brothers people the pages of *Adam's Rib.* All seem somehow a part of the matted fabric of the poet's life: fractured families, a stepdaughter wanting something she cannot have, a stepmother the poet must give to a "slime ball" new husband, and three Irish workers who have already been paid. These characters come alive through the searing imagery of moments in which people find themselves trapped in the truths of their lives. The ex-lover, the new lover, and the woman they both love tangle together in moments of touching and sliding away. The brother with a bullet in his neck, shot by his ex wife, watches its journey from his fifth rib: "it felt just like a solid punch… He kept going for years with the bullet traveling all over inside him."

When Terry Adams writes about Vietnam, there is an immediacy about the horror of what a young soldier writing a letter home sees—a "small pith-helmeted woman and the folded-up child…. The ratcheting spray of splinters, smoke and shattered water…. and the satiny bubbles of soaked cloth, / suggesting arms, legs." While the letter home floats gently away on the river, the image of the family, once so alive, now dead cauterizes the young soldier's innocence.

Laurie Blauner's Wrong is right in so many ways that the title insists on its own irony as the poems parade through each moment, capturing each specific second of grief, love, and loss. "Misunderstood" seems at first a series of couplets that chronicle a young girl's complaint about not being free. However, at the end, the image, "crawling on my hands and knees into my heart / but it was too early to tell what was there" flouts all the previous couplets with its devastating honesty; the solipsism of the previous attempts at freedom is demolished. Maybe there is nothing to wait for. Another poem that speaks to the condition of how "self " is appropriated is "Her History As Told by Her Teacher." It actually questions what we know of others. It might be only what we think we know about ourselves. He was "all persuasion and good looks, no knowledge of

/ the past, or the forbidden." Her history is lost in his explanations of the world as he sees it. But loss is the warp of many of the poems, woven through with explanations or assertions—promises and dares. "Of All the Little Intrigues " insists, "If you're leaving, / leave. We have what's left of you and it's weightless. / A person could die of loneliness, talking to themselves." Aside from the grammatical problem, the line shimmers with loss. Ultimately Blauner's poetry depends upon a reader's trust in the juxtaposition of images and strange pronouncements, such as in "The Enormity of It Took Him by Surprise": "Threshold, transgression, and time. It's decided. / Behind him a fence of bones, knees that fall. Because what hurts me, hurts him." Blauner trusts her reader to accept the thresholds of identity, see into the need for transgression, and accept that time will ultimately kill "what we live with."

John Isles's collection, Inverse Sky, partakes of both the public and the personal. Looking back at nineteenth-century California—a very different experience from the Appalachia of Chaapel's family past—but full of violence and a church's tyranny, Isles sees in the violent beginning of the state a foreshadowing of the broken promises and the devastated landscape of the present. The speaker of the collection is at once an innocent observer who cannot believe the modern world and an acute recorder of human waste. In "Arcade," the observer stands "outside the hospital, overlooking / the humantide ebbing into the sunset" while Junipero Serra, congealed into stone, / looks down." The clashing of past and present, stasis and flux, reverberates with the meaning of the title—"Arcade"—of machines noisy and silent, blinking and still in a dark hall. Yesterday and today stand side by side.

There is both a pastoral pavane to the landscape and an elegiac response to the loss of that same landscape. In "Send My Roots Rain," Isles juxtaposes MacDonald's, Wendy's, and "the boarded hulk of the roller rink" with "the sun consumed / surf hissing behind the scenes." Living among "Jordache and Calvin Klein—room

robbed of oxygen," one suffers "the bends." Deer "take the lie of lime and die / on fastidious lawns of the fashionable. The early twenty-first century has not been kind to the once pastoral California landscape, and the poet's rage at such desecration is evident in "the animal lurking the animal wants out."

Part III of the collection is a long poem entitled "The Arcadia Negotiations," a series of stanzas that bring the innocent observer to a point of trying to find a way to live in the world without destroying it or being destroyed by what his ancestors have done or failed to do: "Something there is / That will not let us be— / … festive flags / of the used car lot, shine like blood in the traffic surge." Complex negotiations between history and myth occur: "After the Mexican War, Vallejo surrenders to the Bear Flag Republic. The mission burning and he is serving / wine and eggs and Chorizo to the Americans /who have come to arrest him. It is time /to move on." All this takes place while "the immensity of… /the Pacific continuing in the expansive mode—" while the observer becomes a "Desert of one—down sidewalks buried in the drift." This long poem, perhaps the best and most complex in the collection, instills the whole book with a core of Isles' argument. Nature is no longer other; it is part, not just of the landscape like the paintings of the Hudson River School, but of the self: "I am intermingled and cannot distinguish / the skin's sensation's from the world. If the world dies, so does the poet. That realization is both personal and political. What we do and what we make are who and what we are.

The last three collections, Please, Poems for New Orleans and Green Zone New Orleans are all the products of the city and its devastation both physical and psychological. Please, by Jericho Brown, is the product of Brown's New Orleans education at Dillard University and the University of New Orleans and a political initiation as a speechwriter for Marc Morial, a former Mayor of New Orleans. The poems are rife with musicians—their pasts and their pain. His poems sing out of suffering. As the epitaph of the

book, a line from Prince Rogers Nelson ("The beautiful ones always smash the picture") announces, violence, both terrifying and seductive, lurks throughout the poems. "Track 1: Lush Life," opens with "The woman with the microphone sings to hurt you…. The mic may as well be a leather belt. You drive to the center of town / to be whipped by a woman's voice." Parental violence is met with love in "Prayer of the Backhanded." Father, I bear the bridge / Of what might have been / A broken nose. I lift to you what was a busted lip. Bless / The boy who believes / his best beatings lack Intention, the mark of the beast." That parental violence begets a social violence in "Track 3: (Back down) Memory Lane" as "dangerous men park carefully, / Slanting over-sized automobiles / into the ditches… " In that world, "the entire decade shoots / For words to put in the dictionary: / Crackhead, drive-by. Loss."

Parental, societal, and historical—the pain of being Black, of being human, in a world that doesn't understand what it means to sing rages through "Pause. The voice in that poem is both angry and beautiful, frustrated and philosophical: "I who hate for people to comment / That I must be happy / Just because they hear me hum. / I want to ask / If they ever heard of slavery / The work song—the best music / Is made of subtraction, The singer seeks an exit from the scarred body / And opens his mouth / Trying to get out."

One poem in the collection is only one line, but it shimmers with the knowledge of what is lost: "I often lie open as a field. Sharecroppers have no fixed names." Loss is also integral to "The Gulf," a poem that marries the present to the past, national violence to personal violence: The water is " The Blood of those / Flung overboard / the word ancestors," but it is also "the dark / Sand, the skin of my father / Will my lover look in his face / And call me his baby… / Or cut me open with a switchblade."

Not only the poems but the lives of the singers who people many of them are fraught with tragedy. Janis Joplin died of a drug

overdose; Marvin Gaye, who suffered from bouts of depression and drug addiction throughout his life, was shot and killed by his own father; Phyllis Hyman committed suicide just before a concert in 1995; Mary Griffin lived and performed in New Orleans until Katrina destroyed the city and her livelihood, and drove her to Houston. In the late sixties, Diana Ross and the Supremes were accused by some African-Americans of not being "black enough," and Motown Records worked to help them regain and retain their Black audience. Brown puts all this information in a section he calls "Liner Notes" in order to create a bridge between the lives in his poems and the musical lives of the many musicians he honors and memorializes . Music grows out of violence and loss, but it also transforms it through love.

Ed Sanders was invited by Michael Minzer to go anywhere in the world and write poetry about it. Minzer would produce a CD of the poems. Sanders decided to travel to New Orleans for Mardi Gras 2007, and *Poems for New Orleans* is a result of that trip. It is also a journey into the history of the city from its founding in 1718 through the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the political fiasco that was its aftermath. Sanders is particularly well placed to focus on the political implications of history, given his counterculture past and his commitment to social justice and political action. In his introduction to the poems, Sanders says that "the more research I did, and the more poems I wrote, it became ever more certain that what happened to New Orleans after Katrina was not only a heartless act of wild nature, it was also a calamity of vote fraud and deliberate neglect. It was a brazen attempt to turn New Orleans into a suffering laboratory of neocon, laissez-faire, dog-eat-dog economics. It was as if the New Deal, the Great Society, and I Have a Dream had never occurred." Indeed, this behavior is "violative of the Fair Play Spirit of America." Sanders' experience of the history of New Orleans, its founding, its battles, its tourists, natives, and politicians

is a compendium that was carefully, and extensively researched; and, more and more, as he looked at the present in terms of that past, the angrier he became with what Katrina and the politicians wrought.

The opening poem, "The First 85 Years," is a history lesson in verse. "The year was 1718 / the man named jean Baptiste Le Moyne / chose a big swampy 3-sided bend in the river," and that is where and how it all began. Through twelve parts, Sanders journeys through the past, through "the schemes of tyrants / and empire-builders / lead to luck licking the boots of chance / & so it was that New Orleans / passed from power to power / France to Spain to France to the U.S.A." From one empire to the next, the city became a colony of its own myth when Jefferson, "the genius of Virginia / so adroit at schematics and design / gave us a huge new piece of land / and the stacked docks of New Orleans." The history continues through "The Battle of New Orleans" and "Teeming Docks—New Orleans 1820-1860," before New Orleans succumbs "Oh Lord [to] the War the War!" The Civil War, the watershed and flood that defeated New Orleans, took away its supremacy, and left it bereft and stranded by its own sins.

The historic past moves into the imaginative past with poems about the possibilities of Blake in New Orleans and with "a rumor once / that Twain crossed paths with Marie Laveau / during Mardi Gras of '61." Whitman was here and "hated /the /Slave Auction / during his / actual /visit / in 1848." Reality and imagination merge during Mardi Gras, and everything that happens in New Orleans is "the fault of Bead Greed!" Greed and Hatred—"Don't give those black folk, not a dime / That will come another time." But Huey did. Long gave black teachers the same pay as whites. And Marie Lebage, school teacher, great granddaughter of Lemoine Lebage, "who fought alongside Andy Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans," was on the steps of the Capitol singing "Every Man a King," when

"the Kingfish was gunned to the stone." That is our history—"A dead savior is a dead savior."

Sanders' cynicism and polemic style ratchets up in "Secret Poverty," a definition poem that defines poverty in all the ways that make it seem beautiful, acceptable; but in the end the truth comes out: "Ahh, what can we call it [poverty] / let's call it the American system / part Dream / part Dearth / part Bomb / part Child / and one-eyed Jacks are wild."

The poet's anger at the incompetence and greed of politicians and insurance companies after Katrina is incandescent. "Unearned suffering" may be redemptive in some people's vision, but for others, it is "Four days… in the attic / with 27 cans of beans / and some Coca Cola." But as the speaker's mother said: "The river always pours towards poverty / You can't lose the same house twice." Perhaps it isn't poetry, but the names certainly scan in the poem "Lethal Ineptitude." Sanders writes, "Doug Brinkley called it / Lethal Ineptitude / the way Bush, Chertoff, Brown, Blanco, Nagin et al. / dripped malice / & do not / on New Orleans / and the Gulf." But it was more than ineptitude; in the poem "Gimme That Land!" the voices form a greedy chorus: "Gimme that land! / shouts the developer / Gimme that lot! / screams the architect / Gimme that swamp! / yowls the banker." That is not ineptitude that is planned greed—"greed is the seed."

Sanders sometimes trades poetry for politics, but what he has to say should be listened to. As Willy Lohman's wife said: "Attention must be paid. " Someone has to call those responsible for the devastation to account, and Sanders is willing to do it. He has the talent, the rage, and the political awareness of how the system works, doesn't work, but should work; and he pulls no punches in *Poems for New Orleans*.

Mark Yakich was not here for Katrina, but he certainly has captured New Orleans in his chapbook "Green Zone New Orleans."

The chapbook, sponsored by the Press Street Literary and Arts Collaborative, is both a poem and a graphic story. The poem was first published as a section of *The Importance of Peeling Potatoes in the Ukraine* (Penguin Books, 2008) that does not include the drawings done by Yakich, so the chapbook creates an entirely different impression than the section in the book.

"Green Zone New Orleans" is subtitled "A Poem for Nine Voices in Unison." Those voices can be heard on his website: markyakich.com. The poem should be listened to as well as read. It has the tone of a Greek chorus decrying the tragedy of the city, the people, and the single individuals who died waiting for help that never came. The title is also a reminder of what "Green Zone" means in military parlance. It is the fortress that keeps out the enemy. In Iraq, the Green Zone protects American and British administrators from the enemy. In New Orleans the Green Zone was the city itself, supposedly protected from wild nature by levees, canals, and pumps. Beleaguered by Katrina and by the failure of the Army Corps of Engineers, the levees and pumps failed, and the city was flooded. What would the government do if Iraq's Green Zone were overrun? The response would not be indifference, neglect, or ineptitude. Like Sanders, Yakich condemns the government but in a much more subtle manner, so the reader is suddenly surprised when the real meaning of what is being said becomes clear.

The first voice in the poem cries, "Forgive me, Home— / I have to go and can't take you with!" Poem I, a sort of prelude to the storm, is accompanied by a cartoon (in the Renaissance sense of the word) of a being putting on lipstick, as if the forty days and nights of flood were not about to happen. Poem II, with a drawing of a man pushing the sun, like Sisyphus, into the void, knowing it will only fall again, captures perfectly what was lost in New Orleans, even though the city itself is not named. "For I shall leave no inheritance"— all the colors of the city, all the colors of the world, all the

harmonies killed by "Enemies of the State." All that is left is "Blood and blue sky."

One poem in the collection is exceptionally poignant—Poem VII. Beautifully elegiac, the poem reminds readers, "You'll never /See your own? Corpse." The only hope is that "God exists to give / Your daughter / Someone to believe in / When you're gone." The drawing that accompanies the poem is a sort of pieta for the city and the child, but the parent is smiling, hopeful that the child will live. Hope is all that was left after Katrina, only a belief that life could go on, even though that hope and that belief were constantly being undermined by the agencies who should have helped. Now one must ask again, can one believe? The last poem in the book is paired with a beautiful cartoon of the water, three suns, and a tree with leaves of small faces, hundreds of faces looking out through the branches. Maybe, as the poem says, "There is no God." But maybe a city like New Orleans needs no god but a sense of community: "Together / We'll jump from the back of one / Dark horse to the next." Because the city won't die, no matter how much the government, wild nature, or god wants it to. Unlike "Hap," The Thomas Hardy poem that looks for a God to blame, "Green Zone New Orleans" asserts, "In case of emergency we can be held / Together. We shall open and float / Away like thousands of diapers from the levees."

All the poets in this review have distinctive voices. They range from angry to elegiac, from lyric to polemic, historical to mythical, but each makes the nothing that is the void before the imagination comes into play happen. Each poem is a way of happening, a mouth.

REVIEWED BY MARY A. MCCAY

Two from New Orleans

Prey for Me and *Crescent City Countdow,* Ronald M. Gauthier, JoJo Press, 2008

JoJo Press is a small cooperative press located in New Orleans. Ronald M. Gauthier, a native New Orleanian driven to Atlanta by Hurricane Katrina, has a planned trilogy of New Orleans mysteries for the press, featuring Jeanette Plaisance, a social worker and private eye who helps the New Orleans Police Department solve crimes. Studying criminal justice at the University of New Orleans, she suspects that some of the many murders of black men in New Orleans are being committed by a serial killer who eventually is dubbed "The Garbage Man" because he dumps his young black male victims next to dumpsters around the city. It is Jeannette who first broaches the possibility with Dr. Joseph Collier, her professor in the criminal justice program. Jeannette, already with an internship from Quantico in profiling serial killers under her belt, is seconded to the NOPD to help profile the killer.

The novel is peopled by black men and women struggling to survive in a city that murders over 250 people a year, most of them black, such as Kali, a social worker in the Ninth Ward, "isolated and separated from the rest of the city by a gaping industrial canal," which we all now know flooded the ward, leaving it almost abandoned. In this environment, Jeannette must profile and help the NOPD find a killer. It is, however, the women who "endured their

share of heartache and suffering stretching from adolescence to womanhood, bouts of sexism and misogyny, teen pregnancy and deadbeat dads," who really hold everything together and have the information needed to help Jeannette.

While the mystery moves quickly, and the plot is clear and well defined, Gautier, a writer who worked in prison literacy programs and is now a librarian, also highlights the social work aspects of the case. He interjects a picture of Angola prison, the only maximum security prison in the state, pointing out that "It was fed a large number of prisoners from New Orleans," and "many of the inmates were lifers and they would likely be buried in Camp Look-out, the prison cemetery, cementing their life sentences to eternity." Since eventually it will be clear that at least one person at Angola was innocent, the description adds to the desperation many feel about the prison system in Louisiana.

His detective, Jeannette, is earnest, beautiful, and proud of her fatherless teenage son, whom she has reared and has great expectations for. Unfortunately, she sometimes thinks and speaks from a text book, as if her education could protect her from the vicissitudes of her world. Other than that, she is lively and concerned, savvy and sexy, but unwilling to get involved with men who will simply leave or end up in prison, as her son's father did. She is also very committed to solving the case and is willing to find out uncomfortable truths about her own family if those secrets will lead her to the killer.

The second book in the trilogy, *Crescent City Countdown*, brings back Jeannette Plaisance, now a private detective with her degree in criminal justice, her own agency, and a husband, Derrick, who works for the NOPD. However, it is post Katrina New Orleans, and in the once thriving area between North Broad and Canal Street where Plaisance has her office, black businesses have lost everything

to the storm, and many have left New Orleans. It is in the city that is trying to resuscitate itself that Jeannette finds a strange and very compelling case.

Gauthier has a map of New Orleans in his head; he seems to know every street and store in the black neighborhoods of the city. In *Prey for Me,* he was able to recreate the Ninth Ward, and in this book, he travels all around New Orleans with an architect's sense of the beauty of the place. No matter where he lives, Gauthier's heart is in New Orleans.

Once again, Gauthier combines family history with the murder mystery, and Jeannette's brother, Marcel, has uncovered an interesting fact about the family—they had an ancestor who was a slave who fought for reparations. The family story and the mystery go hand in hand in the second novel, just as family history and mystery were integrated in the first. The Plaisance family has a rich and convoluted history, and Marcel Plaisance figures prominently in both novels as the sleuth of the family past. It is this skein of the novel that is so appropriate to post Katrina New Orleans—it is a class-action suit against those who profited from slavery and prevented reparations during the Reconstruction Era. It is their ancestor Jonah Toulouse, and his attempts at reparations, that will ground the suit.

The murder mystery of the second novel revolves around the killing of a hotel manager. No one has been apprehended, so the manager's mother goes to Jeannette to help her find the young men who shot him. They were young black men, and "a Black boy who could not avoid the wrong crowds was committing suicide." Joshua, Jeannette's son, is clever enough to avoid that path, but his father, sucked in two decades ago, only now has been exonerated by Tulane's Innocence Project. Father and son meet after years and finally forge a bond.

Maybe the idea of an innocent father, wrongly incarcerated, and a bright son, on his way to carving out a career in journalism so he

can speak for his people, is one that Gauthier, a prison educator, wants to underscore in this book. Justice for all, even the dead, does echo throughout both mysteries.

All three skeins of the story have relevance to New Orleans today. Kareem, Joshua Plaisance's innocent father, incarcerated unjustly, seeking a way not to be locked up again; Jeannette and Marcel Plaisance, researching the family past to get reparations and to find a long lost relative, isolated from both black and white by mixed blood; and Mrs. Pierre, seeking the murderer of her son, so justice can be done for him—all three plots are intricately woven together, and Gauthier makes his point that there must be justice for all.

CONTRIBUTORS

NICKY BEER has won a Literature Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Ruth Lilly Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation, a Tuition Scholarship from the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and a Discovery/*The Nation* Award. Her first book of poems, *The Diminishing House*, has been accepted for publication by Carnegie Mellon UP and will be coming out in early 2010. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in *AGNI*, *Best American Poetry 2007*, *Kenyon Review*, *The Nation*, *Poetry*, and elsewhere. She is a Visiting Writer at Murray State University.

MONICA BERLIN'S poems have appeared in *Third Coast*, *Dislocate*, *The Artful Dodge*, *The Missouri Review*, *After Hours, Diagram*, and other journals, and are forthcoming in *Rhino* and *Tammy*. Her prose has been published in MLA's *Profession*, with Dalkey Archive Press, and in the *Black Warrior Review*. In addition to four nominations for Pushcarts, Berlin was awarded an Illinois Arts Council grant in 2005. She is a contributing editor at *Hunger Mountain* and an assistant poetry editor at *Fifth Wednesday*. Currently, Berlin is an Assistant Professor at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, where she teaches poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction, and serves as the Associate Director for the Program in Creative Writing.

R. E. BOWSE is a 2008 graduate of the MFA program at the University of Massachusetts. His fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Florida Review*, *Night Train*, *N.Y. Tyrant, Dislocate* and elsewhere, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

JAMES BRASFIELD'S collection of poems, *Ledger of Crossroads*, is forthcoming from LSU Press, in autumn, 2009.

POLLY BUCKINGHAM's work appears in *The North American Review, The Tampa Review* (Pushcart nomination), *Exquisite Corpse, Kalliope, Hubbub* and elsewhere. She is founding editor of StringTown Press and teaches writing and literature at Eastern Washington University.

DERICK BURLESON is the author of Never Night (Marick Press, 2008) and Ejo: Poems, Rwanda 1991–94 (University of Wisconsin Press, 2000). His poems have appeared in The Georgia Review, The Kenyon Review, The Paris Review, The Southern Review and Poetry, among other journals. A recipient of a 1999 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Poetry, Burleson teaches in the MFA program in Creative Writing at the University of Alaska—Fairbanks and lives in Two Rivers.

JAMES CAPOZZI lives in Binghamton, NY. His poems have appeared in *Chicago Review, Poetry*, and elsewhere.

TOM CHRISTOPHER teaches at UNC Greensboro and has recently completed a residency as the Emerging Writer at Randolph College. His poetry has appeared in numerous journals, most recently or forthcoming in *Alaska Quarterly, BATEAU, Caketrain, Court Green, Harpur Palate,* the *Mid-American Review, Midway Journal,* and *Spinning Jenny,* as well as the anthologies *Best American Poetry 2006* and *Cadence of Hooves.*

THOMAS COOK's poetry has recently appeared in *Arch Journal* and *Critiphoria*. He is the author of three chapbooks, the most recent of which is *Anemic Cinema* from Horse Less Press.

THOMAS COOPER, a 2008 Pushcart Prize nominee, is at work on a story collection and novel. His work currently appears in *Beloit Fiction Journal, Lake Effect, Night Train, Quick Fiction,* and *Opium,*

among other places. He can be reached via www.myspace.com/thepapercastle.

ERIN GENDRON is originally from Michigan and is pursuing an MFA from The University of New Orleans.

PETER JOSEPH GLOVICZKI lives in Minnesota. His poems appear in *The Christian Science Monitor, Margie, 32 Poems* and elsewhere. Peter's chapbook, *Drinking River Water,* was published in 2008 by Poetry Midwest.

GARTH GREENWELL has new poems in *Salmagundi*, *Poetry International*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *Beloit Poetry Journal*. This summer he was the John Atherton Scholar in Poetry at Bread Loaf. He teaches at Greenhills School in Ann Arbor.

SARA GUEST is a writer and editor from Portland, Oregon.

IAN HAIGHT was the co-organizer and translator for the UN's global poetry readings held annually in Pusan, Korea from 2002–04. He has been awarded translation grants from the Daesan Foundation, Korea Literary Translation Institute, and Baroboin Buddhist Foundation. With Taeyoung Hŏ, he is the co-translator of *At the Shores of the Sky: Selected Poems of Kyun Hŏ* (White Pine, 2009). His poems, essays, and translations appear or are forthcoming in *Barrow Street*, *Writer's Chronicle*, and *Atlanta Review.*

EVAN HANCZOR writes and works as a chef in Connecticut. He covers books for *The Adirondack Review*.

Nansŏrhŏn Hŏ (Nahn-suhl-hun Huh) is the more commonly known penname of Cho-hee Hŏ (1563-89), a Korean noblewoman.

Married at the age of 14, Nansŏrhŏn then lived a sequestered life largely removed from the outside world. Troubled by the losses of her children, father, a close brother, and absence of her husband, she began to write poems of longing for another world—a Taoist world—in her final years. Nansŏrhŏn is widely considered to be the greatest female poet in Korean literature.

TAEYOUNG HŎ has been awarded several translation grants from the Daesan Foundation and Korea Literary Translation Institute. With Ian Haight, he is the co-translator of *At the Shores of the Sky: Selected Poems of Kyun Hŏ* (White Pine, 2009). The translations appearing in this issue are from a grant-supported manuscript of Nansŏrhŏn's poems Taeyoung is working on with Ian Haight. His translations have appeared in *Runes*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, and *Puerto del Sol*.

ANNA MARIA HONG has recently published poems in journals including *Fence, Black Clock, Puerto del Sol, Fairy Tale Review, Cue: A Journal of Prose Poetry, Painted Bride Quarterly, Exquisite Corpse, Tarpaulin Sky, No Tell Motel,* and *Quarterly West*. Her nonfiction writings about visual art and literature have been published in *American Book Review, Poets & Writers, poetryfoundation.org, The Stranger, The International Examiner,* and other publications. She teaches creative writing at the UCLA Extension Writers' Program and at the University of Washington.

NICOLAS HUNDLEY'S work has recently appeared in *Verse*, *LIT*, *Gulf Coast*, and *POOL*. He lives in Austin, deep in the heart of Texas.

DORE KIESSELBACH publishes in magazines such as *Field*, *Mid-American Review*, *New Letters* and *Spinning Jenny,* and has recently completed a first collection. A Jacob Javits Fellow as a student at Iowa, he now lives in Minneapolis.

DESMOND KON ZHICHENG-MINGDÉ, a former journalist in Singapore, has edited ten books and co-produced three audio books. Holding a theology masters from Harvard and trained in book publishing at Stanford, Desmond has had work published in *Agni*, *Confrontation*, *Faultline, Gulf Coast*, *Harvard Review*, *Seneca Review* and *Sonora Review*.

ROBERT LIPTON works as an epidemiologist researching violence and recently had a book of poetry published by Marick press, *A Complex Bravery*.

LAURA LONGSONG is finishing a novel; meanwhile, her first book, *Imagine a Door: Poems,* is forthcoming from Turning Point Books (2009). Fiction is forthcoming from *Arts & Letters,* has appeared in numerous journals, and was awarded a James Michener Fellowship, Texas Artist Grant, and PEN-Texas Award. She lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

ANGIE MACRI received an MFA from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in journals including *Crab Orchard Review*, *Fugue*, *New Delta Review*, and *Southern Indiana Review* and was featured in *The Spoon River Poetry Review*. She was recently awarded an individual artist fellowship from the Arkansas Arts Council.

LAWRENCE MATSUDA was born in the Minidoka, Idaho War Relocation Center during World War II. He and his family, along with 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans, were held in ten concentration camps without a crime and without due process for approximately three years. Matsuda has a Ph.D. in education and was recently a visiting professor at Seattle University. He was a junior high language arts teacher and Seattle School District administrator and principal for twenty-seven years. His first book of poetry entitled *A Cold Wind from Idaho* will be published by Black Lawrence Press in 2010. He lives with his wife, Karen, and son, Matthew in Seattle.

OWEN MURPHY, a native of Louisiana, was born in New Orleans. After attending the University of New Orleans, he moved to New York City in the late 60's, briefly returning to New Orleans in the early 70's. It was during this time that he learned the basics of photography and helped create the New Orleans Visual Collective, a communal learning experience under the guidance of the late Dennis Cipnic. He then moved to San Francisco to continue his travels and further develop his interest in photography. By 1975, he returned to New Orleans and helped create the Photo Exchange, a photographers-run exhibition and work space. In 1998 he received a Louisiana Division of the Arts Fellowship for his photographic work and book, Creoles of New Orleans, co-authored with Lyla Hay Owen. Currently he is an instructor in photography at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts and is a founding board member of the New Orleans Photo Alliance. His work is in the permanent collections of the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Historic New Orleans Collection, the Odgen Museum of Southern Art, and many private collections.

ROBYN L. MURPHY received her MFA from the University of Pittsburgh and is presently working on her first novel. She has been previously published in *The Missouri Review, The Beloit Fiction Journal, The Berkeley Fiction Review*, *The Cream City Review*, *Parting Gifts*, *Barbaric Yawp*, *Gertrude*, and *The Armchair Aesthete*.

BRYAN NARENDORF lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His poems have most recently appeared or are forthcoming in the *Georgetown Review, Greensboro Review*, and *Poet Lore*.

MARCI NELLIGAN'S work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Jacket, How2, Dusie, Word For/Word, The Tiny, Chain*, and other journals. She is the co-editor of an interdisciplinary book about sidewalks entitled *Intersection*. She holds an MFA from Mills College. These poems are composed using words and phrases from randomly selected passages of the Old Testament and the *Origin of the Species*. The final poem in

this series (Lament if you will...) appeared in the Dusie Kollectiv chapbook project, in Spring, 2008 (Issue 7, vol. 2, num. 3).

JACK NIVEN is a Canadian artist living and working in New Orleans since 2005. His most recent exhibition and curatorial project is called American Beauty, South: a collection of artist produced billboards mounted on Motels located along a stretch of Highway 61 in New Orleans. His work can be found in private and public collections in Europe, Canada and the United States.

KEVIN PRUFER's newest books are *National Anthem* (Four Way, 2008) and *Fallen From a Chariot* (Carnegie Mellon, 2005). With Wayne Miller, he's editor of both *Plieades: A Journal of New Writing* and *New European Poets* (Graywolf, 2008). His next book, *Little Paper Sacrifice*, is forthcoming. He lives in rural Missouri.

MARK EDWARD PURSELL is a graduate of the MFA creative writing program at the University of Central Florida, where he also served as poetry editor for *The Florida Review*. He currently teaches at Full Sail University in Winter Park, Florida. His poetry has previously appeared in *Nimrod*.

LAWRENCE REVARD's translations of John Milton's Neo-Latin and Italian verse are forthcoming in a Blackwell's edition of the 1645 *Poems*. He has poems forthcoming in *Tampa Review, Agni, & Hayden's Ferry Review*. "The House I Promise…" owes to the influence of R., whom he thanks for many hours of conversation.

ELIZABETH RUSH's poetry has previously been published in the *Seneca Review*. She is currently living in Hanoi, Vietnam where she continues to work on her poetry manuscript, *[O!],* while co-authoring an American woman's memoirs about the development of the contemporary arts in Vietnam.

LYNNE SHARON SCHWARTZ's essay, "Traveling with Uncle Bert," is taken from her memoir, *Not Now, Voyager,* which will be published by Counterpoint in April. She is the author of twenty other books, including the novels *The Writing on the Wall* and *Disturbances in the Field,* and the memoir, *Ruined by Reading.* She has also published translations from Italian and a poetry collection, *In Solitary.* Ms. Schwartz is on the faculty of the Bennington Writing Seminars.

KAETHE SCHWEHN's poems have been published in or are forthcoming from journals such as *jubilat*, *Crazyhorse*, *Barrelhouse* and *The Literary Review*. "Hands," a short story, will be published by Milkweed Press in a forthcoming anthology entitled *Fiction on a Stick: New Stories by Minnesota Writers*. She lives in Northfield, Minnesota and teaches at St. Olaf College.

KATE SWEENEY is a recent graduate of the University of Florida's MFA program. Her work has appeared in *Meridian, Poetry Midwest, Verseweavers*, and is forthcoming in *The Tampa Review*. She lives in Florida and teaches English.

BRENT VAN HORNE's stories have appeared in *Fugue* and *Sou'wester.*

CHRIS WADDINGTON's stories have been published by notable magazine editors for more than a decade. In the 1990's, Gordon Lish chose two pieces for *The Quarterly,* and Andrei Condrescu ran short-shorts in *Exquisite Corpse.* More recently, Dawn Raffel picked his work for the New York-based online journal *Guernica*. Waddington's stories also ran in *The Rake,* a Minneapolis city magazine, where they appeared alongside fiction by Ron Carlson, Stuart Dybeck and other established talents. Waddington lives in New Orleans where he writes about music and dance for *The Times-Picayune* newspaper.

JENNIFER WHITAKER is a lecturer in English and assistant director of the University Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Mid-American Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *Pebble Lake Review,* and *New England Review.*

STEFANIE WORTMAN is pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Missouri–Columbia. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in the *Yale Review, Cimarron Review* and *Smartish Pace*.

MARTHA ZWEIG's *Monkey Lightning*, her third full-length collection, will appear from Tupelo Press in 2010. *Vinegar Bone* (1999) and *What Kind* (2003), are published by Wesleyan University Press. *Powers*, from the Vermont Council on the Arts, is her chapbook. Zweig's poetry has received a Whiting Award and has appeared recently or is forthcoming in *The Progressive, Ploughshares, Pequod, Boston Review, The Paris Review, The Chattahoochee Review* and *The National Poetry Review,* and in *Poetry Daily* and *Verse Daily* online.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The *New Orleans Review* is made possible thanks to the support of the Department of English, and the College of Humanities & Natural Sciences, at Loyola University New Orleans, our subscribers, and our patrons who include:

Shannon Cain
Grace Clerihew
Douglas Ebbitt
Brian Fitzgerald
Frank Groves, Jr.
Juli Henshaw
Carey Herman
Peter Hodgson
Mary Ramke
Ashley Schaffer
Sophia Stone
Theresa Sherrod