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Submissions of poetry and fiction are welcomed from Aug. 15 through Mar. 15 and must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Manuscripts are read and evaluated with the author's name masked so that beginning and well-established writers are read without prejudice.

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CONTENTS

Jerry Newman	
<i>After Han Shan</i>	5
<i>Intimations</i>	6
Mary Kratt	
<i>It's Not a Question a Man Pursues</i>	7
<i>A Thump Against the House</i>	8
<i>The Crazy Woman Upstairs</i>	9
Sherry Solomon	
<i>Soil Logic</i>	10
Peggy Heinrich	
<i>For Ellen</i>	11
Chuck Ozug	
<i>Unborn</i>	12
<i>The Harvest</i>	13
<i>Trapped</i>	14
Susie Fry	
<i>Freefall</i>	15
Hylah Jacques	
<i>Unidentified Creatures</i>	16
Laurie Taylor	
<i>Of the Order Neuroptera</i>	18
<i>Almost Home Again</i>	19
William Ferguson (fiction)	
<i>Pea Soup</i>	20
Roberta Gould	
<i>Morning</i>	23
Janet Krauss	
<i>In a Day Sky</i>	24
<i>Rites of Separation</i>	25
Joan Rohr Myers	
<i>October Fog</i>	26
<i>Listening to the Season</i>	27
Jean Nordhaus	
<i>Passover</i>	28
Louis McKee	
<i>Easton Waters</i>	29

Roberta Metz	
<i>Watchfires</i>	30
V.B. Price	
<i>Afterimage #7</i>	31
Melissa Cannon	
<i>The Four Chambers</i>	32
<i>May Leaf</i>	33
Don Hoyt	
<i>Four Unplanned Stanzas</i>	34
George E. Murphy Jr.	
<i>Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath Appear to the</i>	
<i>Fishermen in a Gloucester Diner</i>	35
<i>Scrimshaw</i>	36
<i>Consider the Absurd</i>	38
<i>Contributors' Notes</i>	39

JERRY NEWMAN

AFTER HAN SHAN

Try to compose all poems
and all loves
as if they were one: long
or short lines, language

of the heart or head.
You are always on someone else's
territory, a ghost
whose time has not yet come.

A woman moves around the room.
Behind her eyes
there is another room. A bird
caws, somewhere, outside.

JERRY NEWMAN

INTIMATIONS

A shiver of something quick
goes through us now and then, as if
the misaligned heart
were about to fracture under bone;

or a silent planet thinned itself
against the dark, unknown.

MARY KRATT

IT'S NOT A QUESTION A MAN PURSUES

while exploring crevices
of fragrance soft as dawn
pebble-smooth

but something asks itself
later at an intersection
or lighting a cigarette

will she gray a little at a time
wrinkle near the eyes from mirth
that surprise of her waist
widening below like a river delta

how will she be
where will I

MARY KRATT

A THUMP AGAINST THE HOUSE

Sudden
unfamiliar
like a great hand smacking
this brick box

I know all the usual noises
footsteps on a bare oak floor
pipes expanding
scales on an old piano
bump of a lazy dog
no
something else

Standing near the wall
where it sounded this rainy morning
a wide print scars one clean window
rippled brush from wet feathers
where a bird mistook glass for an opening
into some far garden.

MARY KRATT

THE CRAZY WOMAN UPSTAIRS

cries out as trains go by,
answering.
Something in their wail
brought close by coming rain
summons her.
She, who climbed the stairs
one day to bed, never
came down again.
Until one night
by a cloudy moon,
watching winter's tree, I saw
her long pale feet
sliding past my window.

SHERRY SOLOMON

SOIL LOGIC

I am at home with seeds and soil,
like my grandmother,
who taught me the
feel of fingers in pulverized dirt
and willed me two green thumbs.

We knelt, she and I,
to tend her garden of pinks and yellows
where hummingbirds fed,
to thin the petunias and
scatter marigold seeds beside the
porch,
and uproot weeds.

But it's confusing,
this garden I've planted,
with green things everywhere at night;
ferns that whisper to
spiny yucca plants by the lily pond;
philodendrons
with leaves like the tattered wings of a
giant bat,
and the startling bloom of the
moon cactus.

Did I also plant the
squeal of the frog in the snake's mouth,
or the bamboo wind chime's hollow tune?

PEGGY HEINRICH

FOR ELLEN

my daughter is learning to drive
we sit together in the front seat
watching the road
I turn my head and stare at the curve
of her cheek remembering

my daughter has returned from California
she tells me she is into screaming
she offers to teach me tantrums
I hear the screams of the mother
I hear the screams of the child

my daughter is trying to remember her birth
I tell her about the fear
ripping wrist straps from the table
clenching muscles to lock the dark tunnel
because I could not believe the miracle
of a melon slipping through a cat's eye
because I would miss a second heartbeat

CHUCK OZUG

UNBORN

for Manya

Child in your womb
Stirs at the senses:

Yellows which a prism prints
Wind against the lips
Purling of the melted snow
Full moon tugs and moans.

CHUCK OZUG

THE HARVEST

Row upon row
Of spiny, green corn
That grew at a pace
Even eyes could detect
Has tumbled to the blade.

stubbled earth.

And eyes once graced,
now sting,
and search the thin horizon.

CHUCK OZUG

TRAPPED

In the cupboard where we hide
the grape preserves and homemade jams,
wine vinegar and molasses,
we found a fieldmouse. Dead.

He floated in his thick, pure grave
of Crisco Oil. Bloated like a sea corpse.
His eyes, the size of sinkers, stared.
Saturated with surprise.

My eyes sprung wide.
My head locked tight.

Thoughts became the bait:

Perhaps another sank in marmalade
or gagged on Ruthie's chutney.
Perhaps, in other corkless bottles,
mice rocked like well-moored ships.

The chinks between corn syrup and Mazola hid
pairs and pairs of wincing, famished eyes.

SUSIE FRY

FREEFALL

You speak the breathing of rain,
sitar and violin
through the mist of a high frontier
where light travels on the tongues
of orioles and saints.

As I fall, into the earth,
to the rhythm of umbrella time,
your voice goes with me
to the grotto
where I spend my nights
falling, floating down
beneath a stretch of silk.

All the undercreatures know me,
the brush of ivory legs
chipping bits of earth
between the sconces and
the sofas scattered there.

The air is Christmas cold.
I move through thistles,
invincible and crisp
as the call of crows,
not understanding how
we settle into pain -
like the cushions of the sofas,
flattened by a stranger
they have never seen.

creased

visibly

—

HYLAH JACQUES

a swivel of his young body stretching up--he scents
my presence. We are poised
on either side of night's carpet. He
relaxes

 ears, head,
haunches, quietly considering
the many-footed and still mysterious
scurrying just outside
my light.

Gone.

The bait is
 gone.

LAURIE TAYLOR

OF THE ORDER *NEUROPTERA*

A lacewing has taken refuge
from the cold, up there,
at the corner of ceiling and wall
where the furnace-air lodges.
A lacewing, for all its bright eyes,
is useless (the garden book says)
but its larvae eat aphids,
and cleverly creep about
with old skins and excrement
piled on their backs, a means
of concealment. Think of poems
trying to survive long enough
to fly, and wonder what the words
are hiding.

LAURIE TAYLOR

ALMOST HOME AGAIN

Check back. Did the sky
always lean on these hills?
(almost cozily) and did the hills
cuddle the road like this?

The road's wider, striped,
but the same trees still escort
the curves, the old reflectors
fisted in bark.

Same patch of blackberries!
Picked clean--it's nearly fall.
A minute now, and the town
will rise to meet us.

My children stare, hunting
something of Minnesota.
The little one wants to know
if the sky is falling.

WILLIAM FERGUSON

PEA SOUP

I was always in a fog when I was young, if you believe my father--but I suppose I should call him "Daddy" like my brother and sister; a man is never too old to call his father Daddy; but I have to be careful, it's a sore point, because I was "born old" according to my mother, and although that may have been fine for her and her friends in the Altar Guild, for whom wise old children have some kind of religious or sexual significance, it meant that I would have to go through the most asinine gyrations just to log a few hours of Youth before I turned forty, which was yesterday, and I most certainly did, if the reports of my friends are anything to go by, except that whenever I was being Genuinely Young it seemed less like the cheerful nihilism of the child than the Stored-Up Blueprints for Vengeance of a very old man; and saying that "life begins at forty" is just incomparably saddening to me, since it sounds like "life begins when you're oldish," and that was the problem from the beginning, I mean that I was acting like a belligerent forty-year-old at age zero, if the recollections of my grandmother mean anything; and all of this may serve to explain why I was always in a fog back then, or maybe I was just "thick," as my dear cousin Harold used to say. I don't know. When I was five Daddy caught me sitting on the edge of the bed with my right ankle over my left knee ready to put on my tennis sneakers, and he reached into the fog and pulled me to my feet with a yell--why would he yell?--because as he said only old men put their shoes on like that, and I told him I'd put them on any way he liked but it didn't really matter to me since I didn't have to go around pretending I didn't have a pot, like he

WILLIAM FERGUSON

did. I didn't actually say anything, to tell the truth, but he got my meaning anyhow, maybe from my "expressive face" (as my teacher used to call it) which was totally unable to conceal anything, according to her, like an untrustworthy lieutenant. He didn't say anything else, just stomped off, but in my wisdom, through the mist as it were, I knew next time it would be worse, and sure enough, the very next day he caught me washing my hands and face in separate operations, which is incredibly stupid, he made me realize, since your hands get washed automatically when you wash your face. Now being particular about whether your hands are clean, though he didn't say it right out that time, is also characteristic of older people, if the number of children who get sent away from the table to "try again" is anything to judge by; and that would have been all right too if he hadn't made these two incidents into stories to tell his friends in my presence, tousling my hair and calling me "Foggy" as all those witnesses shook their heads and smiled inscrutably; once in a while somebody would venture that "kids will be kids," but fall back into silence at the odd stares and incongruous feelings he had elicited (there's a nice word, which was part of my vocabulary even then). It was hard to forgive my father for these sessions and others like them, since there is nothing an old person hates more than to be made fun of--even children must dislike it, I suppose--and I saw that he felt his tantrums were a sign of Irrepressible Youth, and as long as he could get away with them he would somehow be young. I don't know; maybe my cousin Harold was right; I just understand that somebody who is afraid of terrific

WILLIAM FERGUSON

anger may choose to inhabit a fog to make himself harder to find, and when my father did ever venture into those blind acres of mine I stood very still hoping a miracle would happen, namely that he would stumble on me and not be angry after all, but he always circled past and gave up early. I was stupid not to cry out Daddy, though it would have made him furious ("don't be so sensitive, for Christ's sake, you're not lost"), but I know I was idiotic to stay so quiet when it was at least perfectly possible he may have been out looking for me; and there must have been a solution but I never found it, the problem seemed to be the fog itself, not the searching; in a sense I was not only inside the fog, I was the fog; and I was thick, just like Harold said; I was so thick you could have cut me with a knife.

ROBERTA GOULD

MORNING

At last
the water is
recovering its blue
You wade in
and reach
for your hand
It rises
to greet you

JANET KRAUSS

IN A DAY SKY

the moon is translucent
an albino god
curled in a cool desert.
A young man watches
stars breathing at noon:
pinned against cerulean light.
Friends form a net around him,
hands knit over hands.
The stars lift off
and coast.

Faint glitter
collects on the linked fingers
as the afternoon thickens to mauve
and hills crowd the sky.
The young man and his friends
sprinkle a mist of words
lean into the lint of evening
as soft laughs
settle upward
take their places
and the sky inks in.

JANET KRAUSS

rites of separation

Rags of foam beat themselves below.
Monterey cyprus
bent on the rack of ancient winds
root to cliffs
last hold at continent's edge.
The white dead upright
red with algae grip to stone
silhouettes against
nests of green
offerings to the sea
in gesture:
each claws its territory.

Unnamed flowers: red tongues
and blue flames
burnings found at diving depths
wildfire on Point Lobos
low to the ground.
Nearby beneath the cliffs
grey whales
breed birth nurse
gentle eyes open
in tranced waters.

JOAN ROHR MYERS

OCTOBER FOG

Effervescent wine of a new moon
sprinkles the town like spine tingles
set free from the flesh.

A tuft of fog plucked from the river
bundles the grass and packs the trees
tight for winter. From a cove of bushes

leaf crackles hold the scent
of rabbit rest emptied
in the fall of my feet.

With snow at my back, urgent
doing is done, and I float
in the light, tasting the silence.

JOAN ROHR MYERS

LISTENING TO THE SEASON

When the elms, black and shiny
are bare as the pines are not,
I am caught in the gasping
one breath at a time, and the days
hang like shirts on a line--
pillowed by the wind
slackened by the void.

Over topstitched earth I crawl
tucking those buried beneath.
Held and hardened they push
the grass up, and draw the air down;
my ear flattens against sod
for what voices might say.

JEAN NORDHAUS

PASSOVER

I'll take these bones and drown them
in honor of my ancestors.
Not for the soup
of meager account
but in pity of waste.
Because of the muscle stretched
tight across the breast.
Because of the tiny
wings, tendon and pinkbone.

No tears. Salt sinks in
and disappears.
Everything else rises.

I watch through water
seasoned with a skim of grease, how it
bubbles and clouds, the forms tremble.
Pink turns pale as flesh stiffens.
Fat thimbles of oil swim up like prayer.
Even the marrow creeps out
and clings to the potside like cobweb.
Afterward bodyfume
wafted in steam.

What's left gets thrown away
without remorse. We keep only the clear,
thin broth of remembrance
here to read in trembling circles
through rising steam
how the waters kept closing
over their heads too soon,
how they waited
curled tight in their cases,

the sand in their cries,
their thin, white voices.

LOUIS MCKEE

EASTON WATERS

The scene embraces me,
an unusual hold
like unexpected romance.
This river, whose name
I don't even know,
is full of anger, drunk
on week-long bad weather.
A stranger here, I came
to what I thought was
a familiar voice, a friend.

In my town, I know
where the rivers begin,
and I know where they end.
I've gone to them before
with the language of trees,
and stood rooted in mud,
and have come away absolved,
cleansed by fresh breath,
the chill the waters give
to passing knots of air.

These Easton waters hurry
past, of one mind, with
someplace to go and no
time to breathe on my soul.

ROBERTA METZ

WATCHFIRES

I.

Eyes frost like winter glass
watching wind blow holes
into trees
and go on galloping
carrying quick lift
to spindly branches
making bundles of flying leaves
shaping air
and working the landscape over
like a tattoo-artist

II.

A sky knots with clouds
steeping the moon in it
and a cat bolts
tapping
waiting
for the window to open
so she can switch
to the inside sill
and crawl back
into her own image

III.

From the bedroom, he listens
to the echo of his wife's taffeta
slip

IV.

Lights go out
one
by
one

V.B. PRICE

AFTERIMAGE #7

*waiting for utopia
before the end of the world*

You could hear the waves a thousand miles away.
Earthworms glowed beneath the sod. The dirt itself
seemed, at times, to grow, and poison weeds,
that no one could outrun, caused hives to be
even on one's lungs. In my diary I wrote:

"It's as if my life depended upon
getting the rain to understand.
I waste whole weeks like butchers trimming fat.
In my prayers I see everything I need.
It's all within me; but I cannot reach it,
and it won't come out.

"Sadness makes me desperate.
I do not own a gun. I could use it if I did.
I am responsible, but I do not know what's wrong.

"My beloved and I walk in the night.
We inhale the dark.
I am proud of her arm around me.
The rising waters smell like shade.
And the cats pretend they're cats to please us
even more.

"What more do I want? Why can't I submit?
"We are the trash between great eras.
The world outside our garden considers me its host.
At 3 a.m. the air goes bad, breaks up, gets lumpy,
smells.

We breathe selectively when we can.
We are tired. So tired.
I eat long leisurely lunches.
The sky grows white, recedes, and leaves
a numb-pink scar growing from its edges.
And we
turn up the heat, put two blankets on the bed,
and slip ourselves into the warmth like splinters."

MELISSA CANNON

THE FOUR CHAMBERS

one takes me in
like a mouth

one spills me--
flushed acid

here I drink
at a dark pump

drift here on firm
pillows

red
light-headed

I swim
through narrows

veins
on and on

and again
it is the same

my long dreams
thin to nothing

I wake as always--
breathless--
in these bloody rooms

MELISSA CANNON

MAY LEAF

wide palm-lined heart
green future
spread like a summer fan

whispering
over and over
your long lush song

cool incessant tongue--
to praise to the end

do not remember
the first budding
with its tight shiny pain

or dream of the paper bone
thin and unlimber
fearing the winter rain

DON HOYT

FOUR UNPLANNED STANZAS

Creating its own weather as I write,
the moon looks nosily in.
Ignoring it and the sun,
people sleep across the world.

Grapes on the wall look luscious
and plastic all at once
while four ones on a digital clock
hail a new start.

Loudly as curses,
trains snake in the distance.
Revival songs wedge into the evil night
weathering a modern world like soap.

These are images from a TV on the blink
forgetting relevance and controversy
while a window glass holds back
my embarrassed laugh.

GEORGE E. MURPHY JR.

ANNE SEXTON AND SYLVIA PLATH APPEAR TO THE FISHERMEN
IN A GLOUCESTER DINER

In the lilt of yellow slickers,
while the harbor holds the haze from dissipation,
the morning's chowder steams around
the crackers growing soggy in the bowls.
St. Ann's bells jarred these men awake
while the filleted fish were wrapped for lunch
and bones dropped out the window to the alley.

Grease seeps into the grain
of the vinyl in the diner. Eggs sizzle
on the grill with all the bacon.
Beyond the banks, the morning sun
is scalloping the haze.
Fish ready for their leaps. Then,
Silvia appears within the mustard jar, majestic;
in a cruet, steeped in oils, emerges Ann.

A fisherman leans in to light his pipe
and is amazed. "Humph," he says
and settles back to blow his silvery breath
against the window, growing light.

When morning swims up to the door,
the fishermen are silent but
their rubbers thump the trampled bricks
downhill to Gloucester harbor.
Behind, the gas jets grin with flaming teeth;
rain hisses on the pavement.

GEORGE E. MURPHY JR.

SCRIMSHAW

In these fishing towns which hold
like teeth along this ragged coast,
the sun sometimes comes by
and brings a light to the clapboards
like a daughter's smile.
The whole town glows from six miles out.

On a day like this the fish might leap
into the nets all morning and bring the fleet
chugging back to harbor by noon.
Fishermen, singing, will take their wives
to the tavern and sleep the whole next day.

Early, the women will rise to work the gardens
and press fresh flowers for their sachets
or clasp blossoms in panes of glass
to frame and hang in the eaves of the upper rooms.
Fiddleheads, jack-in-the-pulpits, lion's teeth.

Once up, the dogs and children are away
in the morning steam.
They tumble down the cobbled hills
to the oily wharves where fish are scaled
and whales stripped of their useful parts.
Each boy's pocket jounces with its tooth and knife,
a whale's tooth, bigger than a fist,
polished through a thousand days of thumbing.

White boats rock against the pilings, nodding
on their lines. Jellyfish, pale and languorous,
lift and fall beneath the surface. Above,
the houses shimmer as the morning burns away.
In the outer harbor, a whale's ribs
are propped on the breakers,
curved like cathedral arches.

GEORGE E. MURPHY JR.

The boys are braced among the stays,
etching into ivory some stormy scene
or another they've not yet lived.
Below them the girls whisper of the clamor
beyond their walls that night and flirt
with their eyes. In their hair,
small flowers begin to wilt; the grey ambergris
floating in the harbor
has smothered their senses forever.

These are children who understand winter.
The taste of fish is in their mouths.
Their eyes have a certain shimmer, like scales.
They will learn to read and to sail,
to fish and press flowers
as if the future were less like a net
into which they'd leap for joy
to hear one another's laughter.

GEORGE E. MURPHY JR.

CONSIDER THE ABSURD

as, for example, after the storm,
when the sky's western lid lifts
and the white boats sit
so brightly in the harbor

and the terns whirl
in small circles at the water's edge,
their white bellies thrust out
at that other flock
throbbing back from the water

while, in the outer harbor, the red crane
which has been scraping the bottom
announces from its great claw
a glory of mud. Then the wind stops

and the only noise
is the thumping down the docks
of a boy on a rusty bicycle
his shirt clung to his ribs,
who throws his arms in the air
and, with a wahoo you understand,
sails clear off the end of the wharf
and starts a set of silky rings
out toward the saltmarsh
where, like an unanswered question,
the elegant curve of an egret
breaks into a flurry of wings.

CONTRIBUTORS

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