

Calliope

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Manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped
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Manuscripts are discussed with the writer's name masked so that
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Francine Witte

PASSAGE

There's a thunder to everyday events
that rolls so steady we block it out,
like the importance a zipper
has 30 years after the snowsuit
it closed has been thrown out.
Those moments are the string
on your finger you tie and forget

till years later when you feel it scratching
your hands like the mittens
you peeled off with childhood.
Changing to gloves ought to be more
of a passage rite, growing up ought to have drums .

Francine Witte

MOTHER / DAUGHTER

I am standing in the kitchen
of my memory with Mother
hunched over the sink,
bowl clinking glass.
She squeezes her thumb into a sponge.
It bubbles with the suds
of my teen-age questions.
Crossing that field of years
between us, too young to know
her private mysteries are the same
as mine. It will be years before
I know
this
maybe some morning when I watch the stream
of floor wax pouring out.
Or maybe in the sudden swell of quiet
when I hear the clock
on the wall naming
seconds.

Gary J. Whitehead

AFTER SPRING RAINS

When little rivers
 cling to sidewalks
 as they run down the blocks,
 giggling, and luring

the first earthworms
 into their spill
 toward the storm grate,
 we sail our small boats

of paper and wax.
 All the time the dark silt
 seeps between our toes
 and the street lifts

in fingers of mist
 back into the arms
 of the afternoon,
 we talk of the boy

we'll do this with,
 and how soon the reaching
 will be of our own
 making—the darling gift

of a vessel moving
 in water,
 inevitably drifting
 on the pull of the world,

a circling, frantic thing
 in the light glaring
 on the lip, a thing
 imploring to be lifted.

Gary J. Whitehead

MORNING

All at once after the rain had ceased
and I had made my way through the rocks
of sleep and emerged in the silver
light of our bed, I could see flashing
upon your still face the death I had run
from, only vast in its peace and not grim.
Though it rose and fell and where shadowed
seemed to recede from all I sought in it,
your face wore the perfect sleep perfectly,
as perhaps we go there without knowing
when the rain comes to us in the night
and veering from the storm's swift path
push ahead of ourselves and time only
to burrow in the earth because it is all
we know, and to emerge at last in faint light
as though to small fingers on the window
we only just remember having heard
all at once after the rain has ceased.

Mimi White

BIRDWATCHER

for Gerald Stern

I wake to find the light
approaching, and wake up sad.
Not that the day is drudgery,
but that life with its screaming branches
and blue, blue sky
is just outside my window.
I want a cold hibernation,
a cave with the opening
blocked by the wolf.

But it's your singing
I hear as the sun assaults
and causes me to grit my teeth
against any happiness.
It's your tune of weeds and leafmold,
keepsakes; birds you stare at closely,
the script of their feathers
indelible.

You remind me to invite the loss
of those who feed
from my hand.
Each day this month
I woke with the hinged tree
scraping against my heart
and did not know
it was the sparrow
come home for the seed.

Mimi White

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

Let's retell the story
of our house,
the one the wolf blew down
over and over

until we no longer
think it is a house
with windows
and a real, red door.

Let's retell it slowly,
stick by stick,
the chinks of light

darkening with his body
and tell it knowing
this is a story of ruin.

Let's never tire
of the pain
it holds
and feel the roof

collapse on our heads,
in our hairs,
his hands on us,
our hearts in our mouths.

Mimi White / **The Three Little Pigs**

Let's savor his sour breath,
of salt and purple marrow.
Let's let him in.
Let's help him

devour us,
and watch our bodies burn
toward distraction.

David Starky

SNAPSHOT OF MY SISTER AND BROTHER-IN-LAW

The Fairbanks Pizza Hut—Jenny
And Bill are captured in the flash
Of his mom's camera. Bill smiles
Broadly and strokes his new mustache.

Jenny is staring off-right, glum
Over the baby's health; he's sick
So often, yet Bill says her talk
Of moving home is lunatic.

He's making more in one month's work
Than he could in six back in Austin.
She bites her lip and does her hair,
Eats out a lot. Her face grows wan.

The table's strewn with pizza crust,
Wadded napkins, pitchers of Coke.
The backdrop is a huge window:
the sun setting at three o'clock.

Michael S. Smith

WATERING THE NEW LAWN

It took us both to water the new lawn,
our nozzles splashing life on the warm seeds
in peat mossed dust, desperate for water and sun.

Milky diamonds dangled in strips of beads
from our hoses as we danced from the edges
toward each other in the crotch of the yard.

We took positions near each other, nudged
our streams slowly back and forth, saturating
each waiting seed, with practiced rhythms

repeated a thousand times, lovers making
life grow. This could be our last lawn, we knew,
and aged expertise had taught us to take our sweet time.

Vivian Shipley

FAIR HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

No longer paved with shells, Pearl Street has oysters piled
around doors not crushed to feed the ducks
but bleached by one hundred and fifty years

of work in the shallows. Built into hills on sides of the Quinnipiac,
houses front the river, stilled faces lifting lace
to peer out as they did when Fair Haven led

the world in exporting oysters. Trees hang on the banks, roots
exposed like the tentacles on squid or the scrub
pine at the rim of pits left by miners like my father

in Harlan County. Shovel then empty the bucket and back again
was not so different than stripping away land
that surfaced to air not green water. Fill with bits

of coal almost blue in the sun was bulldozed back leaving earth
not good for anything but holding the surface
of my family's world together. There's no smell

of sulphur but when I wade into the Quinnipiac waist deep, it's old
hair I smell. There are no oyster crops for light
to bounce from but darkness, almost a breathing

from the remaining beds as if the muck from United Illuminating
is trying to take over, pooling like shadows
in the corner of a dirt floor. I come here to hang

over Grand Avenue Bridge so often, my fingers number green chips
on the rails; I know which arch the gulls prefer. Salt
marshes move with the tide, ring the river's mouth

Vivian Shipley / **Fair Haven, Connecticut**

and on sunny days, landfill shines as it washes to Long Island Sound
past oil barges, past Lighthouse Point, past
the breakwater. I still think I can make rocks

walk, time them to fall between every third ripple, dropping one
by one. I never tire of this one-sided catch,
spruce pilings slicked creosote soaked sides

or the air like my mother's arms. At night, I can hang my head over
the pier and as the moon mirrors up, stars
are dropped like sweat on blackened faces

of fishermen who pushed wheelbarrows overflowing with oysters
up the Quinnipiac's banks to wives waiting
in above ground basements to shuck off sharp

spines. Women spent all day every day, forcing briny meat to yield,
shelling, packing oysters in salt that were
shipped and sold in Chicago, London, New York

and Paris. Pearls they found were strung, twisted around their necks.
Each wore the life her man dug out, proudly beaded in
black like my father's lungs or albino drops of blood.

Cynthia Riede

Summer In Springdale

Others cut grass, or raked the lawn.
My father worked on his car, leaned
like a dentist into a patient mouth.
The lazy clink of wrench against metal sounded
unti he emerged, frowning, grease up to elbows.

Meanwhile, I constructed freeway systems
in the gravel drive, plowed my palm flat
through the cool dirt beneath the stones.
I drove matchbox cars up and down those roads—
from the police station to home,
from the park to a hospital.

My father stood over me, his shirt plastered
to his body, hands on hips. He seemed to be thinking,
"I wish it was that easy. Yes, I wish it was so simple."
Then he'd fold into the mouth of his Ford once again.

He sat behind the steering wheel and turned the key
while I packed my cars into their brown plastic box.
His car would do nothing, not even sigh,
and he'd be out in the drive hours later,
the beam of his flashlight playing through the trees
while he twisted further into that machinery.

I sat on the porch steps, caught lightning bugs
close to the ground. I held them cupped in my hand,
peeked in at that yellow spark
through cracks between my fingers.
Sometimes, I'd pull the yellow bulb off,
and wear it like a ring. Sometimes,
I just let the bug go free, watched it fly
into the July night, blinking
like a crazy drunken star.

Allan Peterson

TALK BACK THEN

There are drawbacks. Embarrassments.
Even the eagles look away
on coins flags government buildings.
Wing bars of the suet finch
out the back window spread among the punkberry
shadows till I cannot tell them
for certain from the streaks like fish on my glasses
or cheetah's paw-printed fur on the blotchy veld.
Hard to see. Hard to prove anything.

There was talk of gypsies roving wild in their caravans
but when I saw them in a valley
of the unflooded Des Moines they had Chevrolets
and Nashes at their campfires.
I thought Europe and America were connected again.
Another land bridge opened
from the war-torn to here without knowing
we despised any difference in our voices
or even someone we didn't know
trying to pull a silver muscle from water near the dam.
Taking our fish. Our dam to hear them tell it.
Someone calling just like us—last one to the river
is a pig or somesuch. You can just hear them.

Chris Ransick

DRIVING NAILS BY HAND

I've seen every muscle she has
in flexion and repose
these fifteen years gone past,

those I first admired from afar,
the lean, taut fibers of her legs,
twin dreams of a starved boy,

and later, the smoothness of her belly,
the bending slope of a wave
past cresting.

Now, in a dusty garage we bend together
to the task of building shelves,
early June heat squeezing water

to the surface of our skin.
The power tools we borrowed
now lie still, their cruel bits

protrude silently, their wicked
scimitars the poised teeth
of a wolf turned steel

at the moment of attack.
She's driving nails by hand, hammer
to head, to head, to head

until the thin shaft sinks and disappears
in the soft slat,
faint scent of split pine emanating.

I see her perfect bicep, mounded
but not bulky, and in extension
fluid, lithe between her dimpled shoulder
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Chris Ransick/Driving Nails by Hand

and the hard bones of elbow.
The pounding of the hammer
shows everything in unison,

this woman, such a fine machine
and powerful, and graceful,
my own hand resisting the pull

of muscle and sinew that answers
some urge to reach, take gentle hold
of her arm, to feel what flows beneath.

She's driving nails by hand,
and I'm in love again today, as yesterday.
Who was I to inherit

another man's daughter
bringing children to her
through secret muscles and rivers

of my own, left now to build
and rebuild shelters for the making
of new lives?

I will take her fine bones in my own
again tonight, encircling again
the half of self that is not self

but that a man, if he is wise and
marked with luck, may find,
knowing she will answer

with her own strong embrace,
and in that temporary union
we will build a lasting house.

Chris Ransick

HARBINGER, PAST MIDNIGHT

While she sleeps, sleet taps at the glass,
half hail half rain, either melting or freezing.
She breathes in slow circles, far from the surface.
Night flows through her empty rooms,

half hail half rain, either melting or freezing,
a late winter waterfall spills down the dark.
Night flows through her empty rooms,
awash in cool moisture, quiet and weightless.

A late winter waterfall spills down the dark,
the spark and bloom of bulbs in the dirt,
awash in cool moisture, quiet and weightless
awaiting the warm palms of sun upon earth.

The spark and bloom of bulbs in the dirt,
imagination in the still frigid sod,
awaiting the warm palms of sun upon earth.
Sleet falls & gathers, small stones of ice.

Imagination in the still frigid sod.
Bright bliss of her dream, splashed with color.
Sleet falls & gathers, small stones of ice,
beats, then recedes, from the window above.

Bright bliss of her dream, splashed in color
as the night sky inhales, curving away,
brushes, recedes, from the window above,
then silence returns, an unusual calm.

The night sky inhales, curving away,
pounds the earth just once with its fist.
Then silence returns, an unusual calm
in thunderclap's vacated concentric circles.

Chris Ransick/**Harbinger, Past Midnight**

The night sky exhales, curving away,
having loosened the frozen soil with its fist,
and while she sleeps, sleet taps at the glass,
she breathes in slow circles, close to the surface.

Marcia Pelletiere

STRAY

for Richard (1942-1966)

1. Tracking Mud

Every day the dark comes earlier,
rust and yellow blending into umber.
No one would choose this place,
where puddles spread like bruises
in the rain and clouds throw odd shadows
so the hills look badly drawn.
Snuffing out insects under wet boots,
I track mud inside. On my table
vases of cut freesias bleed a sweet scent
into the room, with not enough time left
to form their seeds, the smallest buds
not opening at all.

2. Little Sister

She loves to mimic him.
Whatever he hums,
she'll hum it back at him.
On Sunday, after practicing
scales in four octaves,
he makes up a jumpy tune
and calls her over from behind the sofa
where she listens. He makes room
on the bench and shows her a song
easy enough for a little sister.
They close hands into fists
and rock their knuckles
across the black keys.

Marcia Pelletiere / **Stray**

He uncurls her fingers and looks.
The scars have disappeared.
Does she remember?
That one time he forced her pudgy hand
onto the spiral burner of a stove,
the black ring still holding a trace of red.
Someone buttered her palm while he hid.

3. He Sings To Me

It was my brother on the stairs
I followed till he threw himself
From his high place.

Who took himself early from me
Who made a hole to close over him
Who crumpled our dried leaf of a family.

Now he sings
a different kind of lullaby.

He waits for dark, then begins:

 This is how you'll lie,
 On your back, perfectly still,
 Not a tongue or a lip, not an eye.

Marcia Pelletiere / **Stray**

4. Stray

Under a streetlamp,
in the body pried from his car,
shards of glass and metal
glitter through fog.

*

The grave is too far.
It's not right, a brother
driven so many miles away
he loses the scent of home.

*

The cemetery is fenced, and full
of shade trees, a haven for dogs
left to race between the stones.
A collie limps toward me, small wet stains
where blood has matted his fur.
He sniffs at my foot.
I check his paw to make sure
it will heal on its own.

So what if I pretend this dog is him?

5. Offering

Mother stays outside, digging,
chin to her knees like a child,
with a spade and flowered gloves,
turning the earth over,
warming the colder layers.

Marcia Pelletiere/**Stray**

We're all here,
two daughters, two sons.
She wants more, wants
the first son back again.

Five is the number
for the new beginning.
From a bucket
she is filling five pitchers,
she is planting five trees.

6. Women Playing Knucklebones
—sculpture, South Italian Greek, circa 300 B.C.

Two terracotta women
crouch on their platform
one on each side,
heads hunched forward, spines curved
so they form a parenthesis.
The one on the right aims precisely.
The other grips her dress,
ready with the piece she'll throw
when she gets the chance.
For them it's play, the knuckles
nothing more than dice.

My face floats into view
in the display case, soft contours
hardened in the glass. I let my fingers
touch my fingers, let my mouth breathe
on the mouth of one who has waited
too well, dulled from so much loss
carved carefully in, turned to stone,
hands overfull with your bones.

Marcia Peletiere/Stray

7. It Falls

Where shadows had drained
even the last half-light, and echoes
courted echoes, a wind gathered
into shape, and ferried me
to land in wilderness

where pine needles nest
between exposed roots, and birch bark
curls back to reveal crosshatches
detailed as Dutch etchings.

Once he may have rested here
where I feel my blood run fast
then slow, and I feel the acorn's
brief weight caress my hand.
This is what I have wished for:
to find, for a while, the world
and finally lose the absence
that falls on almost everything.

Timothy Muskat

GRASS FIRE

My brother & I set inadvertent fire
to Katie Crothers' apple-filled pasture
& ran: I remember eloping with the wood
at its east brow, clambering through
still pines & disconcerting mushrooms
along the way, sharp sirens
howling zigging pellmell amid the timber
& out-tuning the parula's twitter,
hot knells of flame trailing us
to the brink of the lake we dove in
shedding innocence like a skin,
seeking water, seeing everywhere reflected
the scattered, disconsolate cows.
I remember riding back through town
with Mr. Webb's chickens, imprisonment
without supper in our rooms,
& some years later in the air
a strange unspoken forgiveness on
returning to that sea of greenest green.

Timothy Muskat

IN THE DISTANCES OF THE AFTERNOON

I remember the horse how it
burst its tether & almost wild
broke the straggly splintered

fence to lay blind & breathing
slowly near that
cold Montana steam:

I remember how we stayed
snowbound in our cabin, our
love unsolved, watching

the snow cover him, the sheathing
white, an old, slow,
palpable death taking hold:

the night we heard the sound like coughing,
went to the window & said
see the stiffened legs

the gleaming mangled hooves—
What were we then in our moonlit wonder,
our young marriage dissolving,

a love of natural things, love we knew
for each & all?
I recall I watched you gently

bend to the shimmering flank,
I saw you stroke
the dampened, quiet throat.

Now that horse has dreamed me back.
Those last days, the one-shot
lawyer, a muted parting

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Timothy Muskat / **In the Distances of the Afternoon**

amid the bloom of spring.
Amid new blooms I stand & stare:
I see again the makeshift

paddock, the stall sides
kicked & spattered, the rain-laundered
dung: all around me

thrasonical dandelions are toasting
the bold May sun.
Where do ghosts of horses go—

did I miss somewhere
a meaning, could I then have known
the scent & shape

of sorrow? It's sentimental, strange:
a woman I loved,
a horse I lived by—

both gone from me now.
I see in my rumpled backyard
the unfurling tulips,

a goldfinch at the feeder
I've tangled in the vine.
He seems so yellowblack in

the wind that's blowing,
in the blowing wind this afternoon
when nothing is brought back:

I sense I'm speaking here
through some hollow
of myself, some cone:

the memory comes to me, the
poem: the poem comes on its own,
unasked & unavailing.

Rustin Larson

SEASCAPE AT SAINTES-MARIES-DE-LA-MER

after Van Gogh

Colors of the Mediterranean—
changeable as moods or seasons.
Green to violet—outcroppings
of sharpened stone; blue to pink— waves
dissolving onto canvas, body atomized
into spectrum of sunrise.

And Theo, there are sailboats!
I should write you:
these thoughts change to wind
just as the lone fisherman sails
from the stern—rudder cutting
the sliding sea.

The vision
assumed in these paintings:
crescendo of waves: chaos
frozen

as I stroke the dream
of walking jagged waters,
to grasp the salted gunwales,
the drenched sails, to speak to him—
the grey rudder still in his callused hands—

as I would speak to myself,
argue the hundred variations of citron
lighting the roofs of Arles—

but his rejoinder
is not a voice—I don't know what it is—nothing
more than an intimation of storm,
maybe, something I imagined
resolved with a brisk stroke of cobalt—

But

Rustin Larson/Seascape at Saintes-Maries-De-La-Mer

paint is the hunting water
for irresolution—
see it when I rest my vision
from a long day's work—
a hue-shifting sea on which all longings
drift for land—
a citron coast from where longings sail
stark green bottles toward Africa.

Rustin Larson

1984. The Library of Congress: My Lunch with Richard Wilbur

Nobody in the world knows or cares,
but in my spare moments I am working
on a piece in blank verse called "Father"
though it isn't my father conjured there
but someone who reads MacBeth. It's my usual
turkey on rye with large soda with ice
twinkling like that section of ocean

that swallowed the Titanic. And far
as I know, the whole table is mine and the view
of the church spire, and the freeway,
and the general hypercardia of D.C.
High atop the Library's Madison building
in the cafeteria, and my heart flutters
a little because who is heading straight
for my table but Anthony Hecht,
Congress's Consultant in Poetry,
grey lion's head in a well cut three piece
pinstripe and glimmering black shoes.

I'm just a clerk in Labor Relations—
he hasn't a clue about "Father"—
and he leans toward me and asks, "Would you care
terribly if I seat a few of my friends
at this table?" which in retrospect, I'm sure,
translates, "Would you please leave?"
But I wave my open palm over the tabletop
like a sultan to indicate it is no skin
off my weasel who sits to my front
or to my side. And so, rolling his eyes
Hecht motions for his entourage to come
forward—a boy, my age, with rotten teeth
and crutches; a white haired woman;

Rustin Larson/1984. **The Library of Congress. . .**

and the poet, the guy I want to be when I grow up,
his face unmistakable—they kerplunk their lunches
down at the table. I stare out
the window again, knowing for certain
I'm too scared to say anything.

Turning to my sandwich, though, I see his tray
and notice the slicked steak on french bread,
the fries, the coffee, the little slice
of pecan pie. He bites into the sandwich
as though half his mouth in abcess
and I think, "This is how a real poet eats."
The rotten boy turns

to the poet on eager rump and says,
"Tell us about the time you went sailing
with JFK." And the poet inhales
like a lost cavern of gold and sighs,
"Ah yes, Jack loved his boat."
I feel the crisp pages of "Father" poking blindly
from the inside pocket of my blue jacket.
I pull the artifact and unfold it.
I say, "O, sir!" and he looks at me kindly.

"I just want you to know I know who you are
and . . ." I stumble on, "I am a poet, I've begun
to be, sir. I was wondering if you could sew
your opinion on this, Mr. Merwin?" Midchew
his eyes widen to moons and he coughs like a gun.
Never since have I seen steak fly so far.

Allison Joseph

SKINNY LEGS

Scrawny, my father called them,
and he was right, my legs
thin as Mother's, so thin
I thought twice about
any skirt or dress. Not only
thin—they were awkward, too—
knees jutting out like a movie
hero's chin, shins bereft
of shape or curvature,
ankles narrow, then flaring
into long clumsy feet I hid
amid taunts of *bird girl*,
chicken legs. I yearned
to change them somehow,
prayed to wake one day
with legs like Ruby Keeler
or Eleanor Powell, those
old-time song-and-dance gals
Mother watched in countless
late night movies, women
who moved with aplomb,
hoofers no one's seen
the likes of since. I even
bought a book, mail order,
of exercises "specially designed
to sculpt unattractive legs
into comely ones," its promises
backed by a 60 day pledge,
its pages full of photos
of a pallid woman in black
who did leg lifts lying
on her back, side, stomach.
She didn't look happy.
The book advised,

Allison Joseph/Skinny Legs

"repeat each move slowly,
all the time thinking
of how wonderful shapely legs
will be, how beautifying."
I followed the plan
faithfully for a week,
maybe two, hoisting my legs
like a ruptured emu, quit when
I didn't see results,
legs as bony as before.

Didn't know that years later
I'd be watching for saddlebags,
cellulite, cautious that fat
might bloat my legs to trunks.
Distortions don't die,
but mutate, my legs and arms
and body mine to mold
with help from the latest
scientifically designed plan,
a scheme so effective it comes
with a three month guarantee,
twice my money back
if I don't see desired results.
Of course, individual results
will vary. Void where prohibited
by law.

Allison Joseph

LITTLE RASCALS

At ten I only thought of them as cute,
not a metaphor for race relations
or gender dynamics, just resourceful kids
intimate with junkyards, scrap heaps,
full of Busby Berkeley ambitions:
Alfalfa with his strangled singing
and stray cowlick, Spanky with his
fat waddling rear and quick mind,
Buckwheat, whose wild hair never
knew a comb, that mute cherub Porky,
all of them charter members
of the He-Man Woman Haters' Club,
as if they even knew what a woman
was like—how one walked, talked,
smelled. Of course, they had Miss Crabtree,
perfect blond teacher with perfect teeth,
manners, pursued by some stupid beau
the kids just had to foil before
the atrocity of marriage took place.
But I prefer the Rascals no longer
talked about: Mary and Wheezer,
two kids clearly caught
in the fist of the Depression,
Stymie, who pondered life under
a bowler almost as large as he,
Waldo, the scheming nerd
who always wanted to steal Darla
from Alfalfa, Darla herself,
with her sassy song numbers,
snappy comebacks. She
was the real talent, crooning
"I'm In the Mood for Love" better
than Alfalfa ever could, with
seemingly more knowledge

Allison Joseph / **Little Rascals**

of the future, about what could happen
once the cuteness wore off, the checks
stopped coming. I don't have to tell you
that Alfalfa died tragically,
but it does seem relevant
that not too long ago some man
claimed to be Buckwheat,
though the real actor
had died years before.
Maybe that's what we all want,
one shot at fame, a chance
to be remembered as superior,
greater than our ordinary selves,
our performances captured on film
so that generations to come
could exclaim over how darling
we were, how poised, how young.

Allison Joseph

PERFUME

Looked like Jean Nate, smelled
like Jean Nate, so I bought
that bottle of sickly yellow water,
proud to spend my entire allowance
on something my mother would
surely use, happy to splash it on
after her bath or shower.
She placed it on her dresser
along with every other bottle
anyone had ever handed her—
Avon colognes she purchased
from a friend at work,
the stately bottle of Ciara
given to her by my father,
such gifts his idea of love,
dusting powders she'd pat
on with a fluffy glove,
dousing herself in heady scent.
Then the Christmas gifts,
their names meant to conjure
foreign mysteries, intrigues:
Emeraude, Aviance, Enjoli, Tabu,
bottles of every size and color
perched between her lipsticks
and face powders, a collection
I hoped never to knock over,
careful not to send those
perfumes, lotions, and waters
spilling to soak the carpet,
infuse it with an aroma so fierce
no scrubbing could ever
scour the evidence away.
So I held one bottle at
a time, sprayed on some

Allison Joseph / **Perfume**

Wind Song, then a little Charlie,
dabbed Jontue behind each ear,
even splashed on that yellow water.
I didn't know why women
had to smell this pungent,
didn't know what that had to do
with being a woman,
and I wondered why everyone
wanted to smell glamorous
when they weren't, every woman I knew
ordinary despite the bottles she coveted,
those heavy floral potions
no daughter could resist.

Allison Joseph

PURSE

Never knew what I'd find
when I reached inside
her battered leather bag,
too curious to keep hands
from zippered pockets,
torn linings. Unearthing
all contents, I pulled out
every item wedged
in my mother's purse:
pay stubs coded in money's
arcane dialect, scissors
too tiny to cut paper,
leaky ball points that seeped
their ink all over,
pencils whittled
with a kitchen knife.
I thought everything
was a present for me,
felt free to roam fingers
over anything inside:
blue plastic compact
with its cracked mirror,
vials of rouge she carried
even after no color remained,
faded billfold of receipts,
few credit cards. How I loved
those symbols of her:
perfume bottles, prescriptions,
stray bobby pins, hair clips,
brush she pulled through
glossy hair, its bristles
stiff with spray, pomade.
I would have given anything
to switch lives, to leave

Allison Joseph/**Purse**

my ten year old body
to live in hers, my life
important then, so crucial
I'd have to carry it with me
wherever I went, all I needed
tangled inside a handbag.
I'd never feel empty
with that full bag slung
on my shoulder. Mother
didn't snatch her purse back,
didn't scold when I stole
all her pens, her chiseled pencils.
She let me keep them,
and I signed our names
over and over, scrawling
our signatures onto every scrap
I found, marking us both
onto the world.

Martha Marinara

**THE BONEYARD, WASSAW ISLAND,
FEBRUARY 1994**
for Dana

We name the place with our marrow
metamorphosed in bleached wood and air. Spaces
that hold sacred another's pain hold the walking through
arthritic hip twists and elbow branches that ghost my living flesh.

We stand between histories; the waves keep
and sound decisions already made,
choices still to make.

We mark raccoon prints, delicate tracings
point to language offshore,
chart the knowing when to leave,
what to leave behind.

David Garrison

NOVEMBER

Start anywhere, syllables like coins
in a coffee can. It's both the inside
of feeling and the absence of the usual,
webs of sycamore lacing the moon,
which, at dawn, are a glitter and a loss.
In the afternoon, intelligence is
a function of one foot, and then
one foot, nervy wires to the eyes, the hands—
somewhere there's an hour alone, maybe
two grand a year on the side.
Maybe not. Touch is a last resort,
Autumn slipping into her winding sheet.
We rotate and fuel up, we abide.

David Garrison

GENIE

Until the age of 13, Genie (a pseudonym) lived in almost complete isolation, locked in her bedroom in Los Angeles, strapped to a child's toilet chair. She was discovered by social workers in 1970. Today, at 37, she lives in an adult-care home in LA. "Grammar," wrote Walter Goodman recently in The New York Times, "was apparently beyond her."

How kindly we *can* be, together,
like a breeze among the curtains, and we
begin to relearn the loveliness of recoding
the world. Little dark eyes. Little sentences.
I don't mind holding hands with your stories,
and I don't mind beginning to know passion
with my face. My knees glow
in the sunlight, and hundreds of words.
This is a day I give myself completely
to yellow blooms, to these spools of thread,
cascading, yearning. My sleep's a stanza
of deep black spindles, unlike my smile,
which is the sea, the sea, and my brown hair.
I am haunting my own beauty like a shadow.
There are many fire-engines I may bring you,
vowels in the throat of what was, this touching.
"What"—words in my shut mouth—"red blue
is in?" I push back a loose hair, for you.

Shoshana T. Daniel

AIDS QUILT WITH ICARUS DESCENDING

A stitch in time saves none.
I wield my needle through
landscape and floral, clouds,
borders, raspberries. Air.

This counterpane is my
country of loss, world's-edge,
insect whir, what ocean?
What sky? What absent son?

I quilt cartographies,
mapping I don't know what.

Shoshana T. Daniel

TERZA RIMA: TWO STANZAS FOR TWO MONTHS AFTER

This dull, oppressive, bitter month of June
the air itself lies thickly on my skin.
I wait on downpours, whistle without tune,

open the curtains, call the thunder in.
Your absence is a stillness in this room.
The door slams. Windows rattle. Rain begins.

Shoshana T. Daniel

SONNET AT INDIA POINT

After that dream, I awoke in sorrow,
then walked through the ruptured, dangerous night,
still wishing you were sweet as April rain.

Dry, quiet snowflakes hang in this grey sky,
not melting as they tremble in my hair,
not disarranging their bright molecules
to bloom and liquify on my cold skin.

I pass by rooms you might be sleeping in,
not dreaming as the city slowly cools.
I print the whitened streets and rend the air,
breathe in the silence, pass the river by,
charcoal and indigo, then ice again.

I stretch the shadows in the breaking light.
Winter lingers. Roads erode and narrow.

Martha Carlson-Bradley

WASTEBASKET

Beside the porcelain basin
of the library rest-room,
the wastebasket grows
more exotic every year,
flared like a lily
that thrives in shade.

Salvaged in the forties
from the office, it fills
its frugal duty here,
its open net devoid
of memos, carbons—messages
capable of being answered—

elegant nevertheless
in its reduced station,
catching the wet palm-prints
we crumple and toss.

Robin Boyd

QUODDY HEAD

A whale surfaces
and
disappears

its fin cutting
a watery trough
the length of its arching stride.

It is gone
and all that remains
is a stillness so fine

it enters the bones as easily
as water accepts
the cresting bulk of whales.

It is gone
and what endures
is the rise and fall

of every tide,
a constant pulse
of blood and sea,

long wings of breath
and the terrible silence of sky
pressing me to this rock.

Robin Boyd

RECOGNITION

Out of its hugeness,
the sky gives what it can.
It is what you want it to be:
a bowl, a palette, a fleece.

Sometimes when I throw my head back
everything else disappears.
I trace the shape of the bear
with my finger. From here

I remain constant—
larger than galaxies, able to hold
a constellation in the palm
of my outstretched hand.

Stars coalesce into familiar forms:
sleeping mammals, a warrior brandishing
his shield, the horn of a bull
rising to a fine point. If I cannot

see you in patterns of light
or sound or texture, you might
just pass by—a mere breeze,
a whisper, if I'm listening.

CONTRIBUTORS

Robin Boyd is a public relations writer living in Jaffrey, NH. Her work has appeared in *Poetpourri*, *Green Fuse*, and is forthcoming in *Yankee*. **Martha Carlson-Bradley** has work forthcoming in *The Chattahoochee Review* and *Yankee*. She will participate this year in presenting the "Poets in Person" reading discussion series, a nationwide library program funded by the NEH. **Shoshana T. Daniel** lives in Providence, RI where she is pursuing her doctorate degree. Her work has appeared in *The Third Wave* and *fiction international*. **David Garrison** recently received a poetry fellowship from the Kentucky Arts Council. His poems appear and are forthcoming in *Blue Unicorn*, *The Southern Humanities Review* and *Northwest Review*. **Allison Joseph** is a frequent contributor to *Calliope* and the author of *What Keeps Us Here* (Ampersand, 1992). She teaches at the University of Southern Illinois. **Rustin Larson** is the author of a chapbook, *Tiresias Strung Out on a Half Can of Pepsi* (Blue Light Press, 1993) and a forthcoming collection, *Loving the Good Driver* (Mellen Poetry Press). **Martha Marinara** teaches writing and rhetoric and directs the Writing Center at Armstrong State College. Her work has appeared in *Forum*, *The Manhattan Poetry Review* and *Negative Capability*. **Timothy Muskat** teaches literature and creative writing at Lake Forest College. He is the author of *Murmurs from the Bogswamp's Gloaming* (Grapevine Press). **Marcia Pelletiere** lives in Brooklyn, NY, and works as a writer, teacher, and singer. Her work has appeared in various publications, including *Southern Poetry Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly* and *Quarterly West*. **Allan Peterson's** work has recently appeared in *Agni*, *Indiana Review*, and *Kestrel*. He received a fellowship in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1992. **Chris Ransick** teaches journalism, literature, and creative writing at Arapahoe Community College. His work has appeared in *Bakunin*, *Mississippi Review*, *California Quarterly* and elsewhere. **Cynthia Riede** lives in Bloomington, IN. Her short fiction has been published in *Kalliope* and she has poetry forthcoming in *The Georgetown Review*. **Vivian Shipley** directs the creative writing program at Southern Connecticut State University and edits *The Connecticut Review*. She is the author of *Poems Out of Harlan County* (Ithaca House) and

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