

Calliope

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Until further notice we will not be accepting fiction submissions.

Submissions of poetry (3-5 poems) are welcomed from

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January 15 - March 15 for the Spring/Summer issue.

Manuscripts received at other times are returned unread.

Manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. **No simultaneous submissions, please.**

Manuscripts are discussed with the writer's name masked so that beginning and established writers are read without prejudice.

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Carrie Etter

THE GARDENER

A strange god raises such a motley garden:
black dahlia, bougainvillea, yellow tulip.
Skin's a soil that will give and give.
Instead of seeds, plant a row
of knuckles (or sow a heavy buckle
for faster results). Instead of sun,
expose the blooms to fluorescent lights:
the supermarket checker, the bag boy
bow their heads.

When I walk in the door,
hugging a brown bag in each arm,
I see the silver hailstones across the kitchen table—
a dozen crunched beer cans—
and hear thunder's approach.
I squeeze my eyes shut,
count *one-one thousand, two-one thousand,*
and a meadow of violets
blooms.

Carrie Etter

CAMPING IN LEROY, ILLINOIS

The forest light darkened like berries
as moment by moment the canopy grew
more dense, birdsong undulated
through the leaves less and less,
and like Gretel, when I pivoted to find
my way back, I saw no sign of where I had begun.

The air cooled though there was no breeze.
I still tasted the bitter residue of sap
stretching from a pine tree,
clear as glass but rubbery soft.
I wanted it to be sweet, an enviable discovery
as I wandered further away from my younger sisters
back at the tent.

I had chosen the direction
away from their cicada-whine,
their hands like hooks in mine.
At the center of the forest, I turned
until I whirled, looking for a trail,
until I wrapped my arms
around myself in an embrace.
Bird-screech shot like an arrow;
fallen leaves rustled in deepening shadow.

As branches shifted in a gust of wind,
sunlight cast a white path like a bridal train.
Where the forest ended a cornfield began,
the green shoots early in their season,
only a few feet tall.

Carrie Etter/ **Camping in LeRoy, Illinois**

As I stepped out of the black woods,
the gleam of twilight looked like the light of dawn,
a new day on the other side of the fence.
I was twelve, I could not hear my sisters calling.
I faced the too bright light and a fence of barbed wire
with nothing but darkness behind me.

Carrie Etter

FOURTEENTH CHRISTMAS

The duty of the oldest, I have
put cookies on a plate next to the milk,
knowing that Santa is my father,
laid off last spring.

My sisters will see the gold bows
and the pine's pulse of light
and squeal. I will see
homemade and secondhand gifts,
the lure of chocolate.

It's almost midnight, an hour since
the last child came
pleading thirst and glancing
at the stockings.

My father carries a box
of gifts in from the garage,
crossing the kitchen's
cold linoleum.

Seeing the milk and cookies,
he sets the box down
on the dining room table:
"I'm not going to eat all those."
I shake my head like a bothered
horse. He starts to push
the milk toward me
and remembers I'm allergic.
For a moment he stands there,
hands empty, nothing to give.

Carrie Etter / **Fourteenth Christmas**

He lifts the box shakily,
as though it were heavy.
Carefully he places the presents
under the boughs like he has seen
my mother arrange flowers.
Tomorrow my sisters
will give him the routine
Christmas, rip and shriek
and dance like cheerleaders,
tomorrow he will not
look at me.

Joyce Odam

THE WOMAN IN WHITE

(Aubrey Beardsley)

Shroud figure
of mourning

facing the cold darkness
archaic as ever

tense-bodied
in your white dress

melting into the
black wall loneliness

bride of promise:
'til death. . .

'til death. . .
(such an old demand)

clasping your bouquet
of dry, white flowers

and your small
white bible

close to your breast
as though

all you need
is memory of love

and all that scripture
to sustain you.

Joyce Odam

THAT MOMENT WHEN YOU DIED

I was in the room
or I was not in the room.

I listened
or I failed to listen.

I watched
or I only meant to watch.

A certain hour came. . .
and minutes. . .

and that one moment
that broke forever

and I did not know
which one.

Dianna Henning

DISSENT IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The blood of loganberries spills
from my mouth onto the pillowcase.
It seeps into my hair.

Someone sleeps beside me.

He is and isn't the man
I am married to. He is all
the lovers who've taken
my hot breath, bottled it in green jars.

All night the fan clips the dissenting air.

Outside the gathering frogs
slip into pockets of mud
which might be pockets of other frogs,
but with so much darkness
it's difficult to discern where things
end up. The man's snoring
bothers me only when I am dead tired
and have fought off invaders in my sleep.

Dianna Henning/Dissent in the 20th Century

In every woman's heart
there is a war:

Shall I stay or leave?

Once I was wind,
went where desire led me.
Now I am fully domesticated,
ripe in the effort of comfort,
but safety is a thorn.
It makes the berry blood
spool out the mouth.

The man kicks me in his sleep.
I strangle him with my blood.

Dianna Henning

TIED OFF

My neighbor's daughter is already
sprinting toward adult:
her tight bodice,
nails so keenly manicured
they are art—
the look of promise,
its lure in her eyes.

She wears a mid-length wig
with a paisley band, Indian style,
flat across her forehead,
tied off in the back—
little wing sprouts.

Since the tumor's in remission
her face glows in renewed enthusiasm.
Sometimes we sit on the porch
discuss boys, the way
their affections leak into the tenuous.

Her sweetheart ditched her on account
of a shaved head, the bristle
of what comes through.
Classmates chide her
for always wearing black.
I'm mourning my hair, she responds.
Their words eat into her, the way
a cancer grows and illuminates itself.

Dianna Henning/**Tied Off**

Our legs dangle over the Adirondack chairs.
The cat carries us its trophy.
Like scientists looking for a cure
we study the gnawed off
mouse's head: the eyes
lucid in their emptiness,
the final disaffection for attachment.

Where does thought go when something dies?
I ask myself, putting a silencer
to the temple of further query.

Penny removes her wig, shows me
her *scalped look*,
the thin embroidery of surgery.
After eating the mouse from neck to tail,
the cat cracks open
its acorn head, pulls out the white.

Slips of wind blow across
the wig on Penny's lap. Nothing
moves on her bony skull,
not even the pin-point whiskers
that push their dark way through her.

Dianna Henning

POP-IT-PEARLS

(for Miriam '96)

They were buffed on our clothes
to a creamy translucence,
each one snapping into another
as though fit were precision,
the way memory became plausible.

Sometimes the pearls peeled
and my sister and I flaked off
the outer layer, painted them
with Revlon's pearly nail polish:
a string of pearls long enough
to jump-rope with, though mostly
we triple looped them
around our girlish necks.

Summertime I peeled her back
when she burned, thin flesh pieces
looking as if they were countries,
and she leaned into my hand
as though touch became the only map
by which we tracked memory.

I should have blown into that skin,
entirely flexible, made a balloon
to lift us from further danger:
the way fathers slap their daughters
alongside the face, warning *don't tell*
after they'd visited their bedsides.

Dianna Henning/Pop-It-Pearls

Neither of us visit his grave.
Now that he's buried his hands
no longer map our geography.
Year after year the skin goes on
feeling what the heart cannot name—

a sister's face, pearls,
the way they finally console us.

Browning Porter

STYROFOAM

Hell's marshmallow, and we can't make enough of it.
It keeps the hot hot and the cold cold.
It's everywhere, boxfuls of scentless blossoms,
tepid snow, more immortal than art. Even burial

suits it well. It will remember its shape. Burn it
like a witch and learn its secret poison.
Stroke it and it will squeak. It's here to stay.
Let it live. Leave the cooler at the pond

to slowly brew dead leaves and breed mosquitoes.
Let it bear crab-pot ropes up, black with life.
It flickers in ditches. Decorates a crow's nest.
Leaps and flies along the sides of trains.

Robin Boyd

THE MEASURE OF LIGHT

After the solstice you said
the light grows longer
by a goose step each day,
an inch worm's hump,
the stride of a mouse.
It leaps from the east
as if it would race through
the sky, take the highest
route to the opposite horizon.
But the sun stays low—
ten fingers at noon,
the leap of a cat
startled by a snake.
You say that soon
the geese will fly over,
south to north, their route
tracing the spin of a nest,
the curve of a wing.
And we will know again
the heat of the day,
mark the thermals
by the lift of a raptor circling
above us, aimlessly, without effort.
Until then, we relax in the languor
of lengthening afternoons, waiting
as we always have, for darkness,
and the arc of some bovine shadow
as it leaps clear across the moon.

Barbara Siegel Carlson

BRAIDS

I repair my braided rugs,
pulling, tightening, retying
where the threads have broken,
the blue & brown braids
separated. Elizabeth vanished
in the store today. I thought,
I've lost her forever.
When they brought her smiling to me
I shook & cried with relief.
Tonight I hear the trees' incantation,
the brush shuddering,
leaves being swept by rain.
My rug, made from skirts
& other woolen scraps
lies in the center of the living room,
the weave worn to a dull shine.
Earlier my husband told me his dream.
He was happier, thinner,
in his grandfather's garage
fixing the old family packard,
his father alive & boyish,
his Lucky Strikes rolled up
in his sleeve. Threads keep breaking,
braids coming apart. My son hides
in the car, jumps up and I weep
in a sudden gust of waves.

Barbara Siegel Carlson/**Braids**

He's affraid of his changing body;
doesn't want me
to leave him alone.
I remember the terror,
pushing away, embarrassed
to return. Lily lies on my bed
asking about Santa, steady gray eyes
looking through me. Later I awaken
beneath a quilt of moonlight.
My thirty-year-old Raggedy Ann
whitened on a high shelf
overlooks my sleeping husband,
her stripped cotton legs never touch.
We sway in a web of inscrutable dreams. . .
I step onto the frayed rug
believing whatever binds me
to this earth, to these trees
also lets me swirl.

Barbara Siegel Carlson

ORIGIN

Countries the heart discovers
as it pours into a lisp, a question,
a weeping faucet.

I've never noticed these
shadow blades in the hallway,
that fragment of the banister,
a cold dark arm
cut off by the door frame.

I shiver like the lampshade
caught in the moist breeze
that brushes the screen
because I've lost the map.

Unanswered letters float
in their pollen-covered skins
over the dusty black desk.
Only this—always this
stuttering & I hear no train
to imagine where I may go next.

A red-tinted hair drops
to the floor. A thread of my body
becomes a shadow in a crack.
The web on the ceiling
is broken & dangles. . .

a solitary evening of dense foliage. . .
tires down a wet street.

I am lost in the waves, a house
on a hillside, the scent of autumn olives
flowing over the empty ironing board.

Barbara Siegel Carlson

KOL NIDRE

The stars are invisible
beyond their spinning needles
imbedded in the dark folds
of your face. I remember your hairy fingers
guiding the fabric into its seams,
its blind stitches. Onions & chicken fat
on black bread, the damp prayer house
where you & your sister trembled
under a shawl before escaping across
the frozen river & into Rumania...
these remnants stream
from the long melodic chant.
I smell the pages & spine
of the prayer book. Such cool cloth
& I'm swaying, recalling the sparrow
I noticed earlier on my walk,
lying in a stew of burgundy leaves.
When I came home I opened a hibiscus pod
& rubbed the fetal-like strands.
A red-tailed dragonfly hovered over
a gauzy petal as though a drink
were possible. Wind separated
the dandelion spokes. I broke off a branch
of hydrangea blossoms because I love
the color of their dying—
a blushed & layered fortune in my palm.

Now the sanctuary's a river of voices
over broken stories. Do you know
I've come here tonight for the first time
in twenty years? Who inhabits the moment
of last light, penetrates the tree's darkest ring?
My lips cradle you.

Jordan Clary

DESERT SESTINA

A primal sun fires this desert
land of spicy sage and renegade rocks
that move mysteriously in the night.
Morning finds them, sitting, like toads in the road,
the true guardians of this world.
Voices silent and hard as silver.

Far off, lightening lunges toward earth in a bolt of silver.
But the storm doesn't reach the high desert.
It is caught on the peaks of a mountainous world
and scorns this dry land with its river of rocks,
and abandoned homes on desolate roads
that like the boulders move in the night.

Sometimes I walk in the hills at night
under a black sky streaked with silver.
And leave behind the empty road
for the pocked earth of the desert
to climb to the top of the tallest rock
and for a while feel alone in the world.

I am as rooted as the juniper trees to this world.
Once in the shade of night,
I hid in a crevice to try and catch the movement of rocks.
But I never saw them, only the silver
wings of a screech owl hunting the desert
and flickering lights on a distant road.

Jordan Clary/ Desert Sestina

In the end it was the tolerance of the road
that kept me from despair in this world.
For my heart had grown as dry as a desert
and as restless as a windy night.
I believed, then, that love was a silver
treasure that would hold me steady as rocks.

There must be a magician's society among the rocks
because every day there are more in the road,
in their own way, rapid as quicksilver.
Perhaps urged on by the very world
they watch over and travel through at night,
leaving behind grooved paths through the desert.

Like the rocks, I seek refuge in the desert
where the sun bleaches the world silver,
where I speak the language of night and the road.

W.E. Butts

THE NOTE

How many faces have I seen
the moon wear out?
My own face folds and wrinkles
like a well-travelled envelope.

My lover rises from our bed, and enters
into the daily business of dress and work.
In the city, my daughter
offers a breast to her crying infant.

I understand, also, the rows of trees
in the country that fade yearly
away from the poisoned roadside,
and death, their identical complaint.

Hildred Crill

IN A GREEN CHAIR

after Picasso

Picasso devoured every one
of your thousand angles,
your hair rising

round like brown bread.
Across the table from you
in that flat green chair

I am bewildered by your dark eyes.
The close gazes of your lovers
have fixed them permanently

in different planes.
They have all left you now.

And if I pass you
bread, fish and cake,

will you open out the hunger
pursed in that gray comma

and the agile secrets
you once tasted in his mouth?

Rustin Larson

DEAR ROGER

Ice appears to ooze down the steps
like maple syrup and I slip and nearly
crack my prize coconut on the lumber
to the lush ferned office of your smiling black beard.

Cardinals stick out their tongues and warble
and I'm standing at the front door now
feeling how stiffly it's locked
and admiring with some dread

the little rosettes
crafted near each corner of the door's
window a hundred years ago or more
by a mildly retarded gentleman

named Clem Beesleman, now buried
in Montpelier's Lady of the Protective
Undergarments cemetery and miniature
golf course. I can see you

sinking one among the tombstones as I stand
jiggling the doorknob, see you in double
reverse upsidedown through infinity
in the door's handsome beveled leaded window

swirling in some places with nearly transparent
rainbow flaws and bubbles as I scream
"Professor, tell me, what is poetry?"
Your reflection drops its putter

in mid-stroke upon the headache-like monument
of Edna Cravitz Hungarian Cheesefamine Ross,
dead March 30th, 1876 in ankle-deep snow
with a decanter of pomade in one hand

Rustin Larson / **Dear Roger**

and a Faberge easter egg in the other
and you shout your granite chipping anapests:
"Get your tuchas off my porch and
damn you to southern fried stanzas

of geese disemboweled with Ginsu
pocket assault blades, \$9.95 plus
handling and shipping, in the bovine
humor of your checking account

which spread its gracious cloak
before your feet to enter the Gopher
Gulch MFA in Creative Writing Program
(low residency format) to tread softly,

if you tread on my dreams, with a penchant
for spilling Vermont ale and molten medallions
of aged cheddar on my doormat's freshly cleansed,
and blessed by a well oiled hatha yoga master,

nap and saffron 'Welcome.' Be gone with thee!"
The frozen snail in the parlor window
easily curls in its deathlike shell
and keeps the carcasses of flies in stitches,

so to speak, since there's nothing funny
as I turn to greet your voice trailing
from the putting green, frozen and glittering,
as you sink one in a freshly dug

six-foot-under rectangle of finality
and rejoice, "A birdy! By all that
is sacred on the hoary breast of Moses!"
and fling the metal claw of your success

Rustin Larson/Dear Roger

at a huge black and winged creature
perched on the white branches of an elm
casting its spell over the icy pit,
a whisper in telepathic entreaty:

"Does this mean a job is utterly out of the question?"

Yours, prostrate,

Rocket J. Squirrel, M.F.A.

June Frankland Baker

NIGHTSCAPE: AFTER SNOWFALL

From your window, instead of darkness you see
your neighborhood, each roof luminescent
in a scarf of snow. Streetlights,
under reflectors, cast their sodium-vapor spectrum
to find the snow-lined bush and fence,
outreach of yard. In the middle ground, one house
that glows a subtle amber, balanced
by distant forms of sycamores and poplars
indistinct as if painted into a wet wash.

North, the sky holds a roseate, diffused light
under cloud—so slight a color
you scarcely see it, like the hint
in old, hand-tinted photos. Because this exchange
echoes between snow and the lid of cloud,
because contours of snow extend,
like soft arms of women,
along the porch rails, because an openness
of the yard looks back at the sky,

you feel welcomed, as if you might go out
into a world that is changed, or move
into a photograph of a past that draws you within it
although you never before have been there.

June Frankland Baker

RIDING THE SCHOOL BUS

I

In my dreams I run for
the bus. Thirteen years,
each day I go to school,
I catch it, pulling on
mittens or pushing in ribs
of umbrellas, balancing books
on my three-ring notebook
hugged to my chest like a baby.

Always we wait by the Gettys' house,
in cold, on their porch,
their four children last to dash out.
In storms the mother
lets us wait in her parlor,
snow melting in our socks,
the glass of her windows iced shut,
miles from school.

II

Never is our route home
direct. We take the highway
far as *Fresh Cider*, turn
on Hetcheltown, wander
through woods and deep meadows.
Finding the footworn paths to the road
our driver shifts.
The door opens like a breath.

June Frankland Baker / **Riding the School Bus**

Right turn to Pashley,
we round towards the school again,
Nancy and Russell down steps,
fast as coal chuting
to its bin in the cellar.
On Saratoga, we close in
past Bigwood's Nursery, to Mayfair.
Our door opens.

III

Older, we ride longer.
As our bus traces back ways,
we struggle, word by word,
with Caesar against the Helvetii.

Always we know where we are:
in the middle of slaughter
or on the long march after,
we are ready to leap out.

June Frankland Baker

RETURN

after leaving our daughter at college

Driving home we cross a last reach
of desert. On both sides of our highway: char
where last month's fire burned—
miles of black
skeletal sage. With late-afternoon light
a new green in the distance,
grasses already returning, but for sage
forty years to come back.

I read of fossils
from the Wind River Basin: recent find
of eggs, jaws, and skulls.
Dawn horse.
Primate relations of living lemurs and tarsiers.
Evolution perhaps in dramatic spurts,
overtaking long years when little changed.

We enter our daughter's room,
her desk cleared, her closet empty.
Still, something.
Books from her past layer a wall.
By her bed the labeled collection of rocks.
Almost hidden a display
of sun-bleached, abandoned shells
discovered at the reflux of the tide.

Erin Ferretti Slattery

DUET

After they begin, you notice the piano's spine is worn,
splintered in patches, and the lid-line vaulting into the light
on two tense hinges, converges at the leg, points to the apex
over the strings' shadow. Below, the ring of her hair

glints like a coin's rim, coronal, where it merges
with the profile just beyond your focus (following
the light along the lips) tilting past her plane of sight,
which sees, as he does, the cloth draping at her knee,

how the outline of his sleeve follows the length
of her right leg. When they lean into each other,
with the hunch of understanding, consolation
(the allegory of notes behind the sound),

you feel the audience pull away from them, from each other,
like metal shards repelled by a magnet. You are still,
alone in your seat, too, wanting to bend like that
but not disclose how easily the grief could come.

The faster the music, the more their fingers branch, palms
spindling, arachnoid, pulling nets of sound from the keys' crease
until the audience hates them for revealing
what it won't. You hate them

for making you know the man beside you, running his thumb
over the fabric on his knee, how he receives nothing
tonight from his wife but scorn
when he leans into her, thinking of Brahms.

Lois Westerlund

LAST LAUGH

Taking my 90-year-old father
home
to his apartment,
I agree to come in a minute.

Smiling, he walks to the windowsill where
six young tomato plants
stretch for the light.

Their container a TV dinner dish,
rooted in dirt scraped from the
edge of the parking lot outside.
The seeds he had carefully saved,
wrapped in a paper napkin,
from the tomato slice
that came with the hamburger
we ate at Burger King.

I want you to take them
and set them in, he says.
The experiment is complete.

If they bear, Dad, I say,
they'll win a prize
for the Most Challenged Tomato Plant.
He laughs.

Lois Westerlund/**Last Laugh**

Saturday he and my mother
celebrated their 68th wedding anniversary
in the Nursing Home
where she lives.

Every day he goes,
greeted her with a kiss,
arranges her pillows,
invents word games,
tests her memories of early days,
to divert her.

And she makes him laugh.
Yesterday she asked me,
is your daughter still using
my old White sewing machine?

Yes, I say, she just made
curtains for her apartment.
When did we buy that machine?
she asks my father.
In the thirties, he replies.
It's sixty years old, I exclaim,
a working antique!
My mother's riposte,
"I'm a working antique"
My father laughs.

Lois Westerlund/**Last Laugh**

One day I ask how they met.
She says friends invited
them both to dinner.
He says he wasn't invited,
only his sister,
but he knew my mother would be there.
(He had seen her at an
evangelistic service
in downtown Baltimore.)
Telling his sister she shouldn't go alone,
he offered to escort her.

Last evening,
in the supermarket,
putting his last TV dinner
in the cart
my father said,
"Let's head for the front,"
I did, but turning
saw that he
had turned his basket
toward the back.

From the checkout line
I watch, disbelieving,
Struggling to find words
to call to him,
to make him
laugh.

Martha Carlson-Bradley

DORTCHEN, WHO MARRIED WILHELM GRIMM

Almost a sister, Wilhelm's bride
is thirty-two, her hair turned white
with orange-blossom. It was she

who told him of the boy
intended to be eaten—of the girl
who pushed the crone into the stove.

And other tales—maidens
hewn apart by a sorcerer
hungry for a wife—and brothers

changed to swans,
the youngest alone showing scars
of transformation—

They will lose their first child,
these two who stand and smile, the altar
trembling with flowers.

Claire Keyes

THE SUN MAN

He looked good, she told him,
remarking on his skin. All winter
she'd glanced away from the fierce-
looking scabs covering his forehead
and neck, his nose and cheeks, as if
there were a crocodile lurking beneath
and just choosing to emerge.

"I had skin cancer," he said,
and then pointed to his forehead:

"This is all new skin."

And it did look new, like baby's skin,
pale and practically transparent.

"I was a Sun Man," he said.

"Now I never go out into the sun."

And then he cautioned her,
as if weighing every freckle:

"You need to watch out too."

It could happen—her flesh
exuding those tumors with the lovely name,

"Melanoma."

Claire Keyes / **The Sun Man**

She thought of the Sun Man
that afternoon sailing north
towards Cape Ann, defying his prophecy.
The sun beamed and glittered off the water.
The sail offered the only shade
and only sometimes, depending
on the tack. Hedging her bets,
she tugged on her baseball cap, its beak
pulled low. She slathered lotion—SPF 15—
over her limbs, the tender flesh of her neck.
What was the alternative?
Life indoors: she'd pull the shades
and gathering her fears around her
she'd placate the crocodile, feed it
her least favorite doll—the skinny legs
and arms of Barbie, her soft blond hair.
She'd grow fond of pet snakes, watching them
slide from old skin to new, scales
gleaming, resplendent.

Ken Poyner

MISANIMATION

Two cars parked consider exchanging fenders,
Pulling their ties off for the night.
Streetlamps lean together, talking
Of the electric company, its responsibility
Taken as granted; one's dead bulb
Is a silence that has lasted the week.
Building panes breathe in and out like men
Snoring in beds given to the marriage by their mothers-in-law.
A fire hydrant watches, wound
In anxiety so tightly that a boy with a stick
Might set it carelessly off. In the alley
Garbage cans believe, empty or full,
And are joyous. A cat howls
And a fence holds its ears, tilts into the wind.
Three sets of steps are sad for the mist,
Dependent as it is on temperature both
In air and on ground. On a clothesline
A raincoat flaps, slick and tearing at the shoulders,
Humming tunes for war movies, thinking
What I want, what I want
Is rain and a good wind
And a clothesline weakly set.
A woman two floors up from behind
The blue steam of her tea asks
Who would pin a raincoat out,
And in such a storm?

Deborah Dennis

LA SELVA

I miss your green religion,
eternity within broad leaves.
I miss your wet whispers.
Mulch of night and day, death and life.
Tracks which lead to innocence.
Lute of dripping leaves.
"La selva es vida."
The jungle is life.

Chorus of trees, green sun, green rain.
Basket of fruit, green stars, green applause.
I long to dive into you like a kamikaze parrot.
Bursting at the seams in a feathery green blur,
all petty grief shed like the skin of a burning aircraft.
Drinker of poison from human skulls
dragon of the woods,
I miss your noise.

Zachary Redfearne

LOOKING BACK

Fifteen years ago my father
bundled each of his feelings

into an over-worn coat, his
favorite, and tossed them out

from his body. This one act
stopped his heart, so he

threw that out too, and
with this last sandbag cast off,

he rose. Right now,
I don't know where he is.

But I found a tape
made on my seventh birthday,

the year my parents
gave me an astronaut's helmet

and tool belt of moon tools.
Their voices all around me,

more for effect than lighting,
I was there again, the yellow

plastic dome, the secret compartment,
the years muffling radio static

just enough for me to at last
raise my head to look around.

Zachary Redfearne/Looking Back

The moon rose glorious,
clear from in space. Quiet

washed me inside out
and I thought I saw

my father, scattered in with the stars.
When you're up there,

all thrusters and steel,
you can take a breath, look back,

maybe find an old worn coat,
dig through the blackhole pockets,

discover something about who you are,
where you're going.

Dina Coe

AFTER A BLIZZARD, THE MEDITERRANEAN

On her knee, the cat
swirls its scarf of black
angora in her eyes.
Her husband taunts
the dog who is the child
who can't grow up and leave.
After a blizzard, animals have
no choice but trust.
But she in her chair,
pretending to drowse,
her eyes still dilate
with the wine of blue noon,
marble rubbed and smoothed
in the infinite clarity.
All night at the window,
someone's heartbeat churned snow,
its frenzy bent on shaping
visions from the cold.
She stood in the clean tread
of a snow vehicle and watched
evening replay the storm
in tinted swirls, saw drifts
outpoured by winds so dead
she could only imagine
their abandon with longing.
She loved the unfurled folds
of scarfs carved in snow
as if they'd never melt.
Her body fooled her too,
throbbing with warmth from exercise
as if she could breathe that air
for long, an animal
meant to live outside.

Dina Coe

THE WAY IT REALLY IS

The backyard may return to itself at times.
The air may be its own airship again,
droneless, unmanned, carrying the yard
and Ellie's yard and the Mellan's heap of sand,
concrete blocks, swing set, and dead apple tree.
I'm upstairs, printing green words in the dark
screen unwinding like space as far as where the next

word glows, when I sense the reversion.
Hurrying outside, I hear myself think,
"It's gone back to the way it is."
The sun's shadow finger writes
a mass of shifting objects, brilliant events
I can't begin to write, or read. Enough to see

the spruces blow like fountains on the carrying wind,
needled with green flames. Air, water, earth, and fire,
the yard has resumed its proper state, eternal
as the instant of a painting. I too go back,
expecting it to last, as if irreversible
atoms and acts weren't accumulating,

every moment, in the extending past;
as if paths of helicopters, jets, and small craft
hadn't multiplied above our heads; and sharp tools
split our ground labors in half. But they have, and soon
dumb noise clouds, blots, chops and drowns
the replete May noon, sends me back inside, to words.

Matthew Murrey

FIRST AID TRAINING FILM

Looking up he reaches
for the bottle, but the lid is loose
and hydrochloric acid splashes
in his eyes. He screams,
grabs at his face with his fingers.
A coworker hurries to him, pulls
him to the showerhead in the lab
and forces his face up
into cold water streaming down.
They stand there together,
one man holding the other
as if he held his own hurt lover.
Soft, the rescuer speaks
to the one with the burning eyes,
"It's okay. You'll be all right.
An ambulance is on the way."
In another place and time
the man who helps would pour
the burn into the eyes
of the screaming man.
"Where are they? Where are the others
you faggot piece of shit?"
But this is not interrogation;
this is just first aid.
This is what a man can do.

Patricia Fargnoli

LAMENTATION

No one could bury you.
In the year of no snow—no softness—
the ground froze hard as a tomb.
You died in the season's deadlock.

In the year of no snow, no softness
until spring you lay in the charnel house.
You died in the season's deadlock—
the grass grown brown and sleet-enameled.

Until spring you lay in the charnel house—
the roses, winter-killed, earth solid with ice—
the grass grown brown and sleet-enameled.
Deer froze to stone on the mountain.

Earth solid with ice—the roses, winter-killed,
the ground froze hard as a tomb.
Deer froze to stone on the mountain—
no one, not anyone, could bury you.

Linda Lee Harper

SHANGRI-LA

No Oak Street or Maple Drive for us.
No. We live where legend
makes us younger than we are,
at the top of a hill where the kids,
tow-headed mountain goats,
will grow up, smoke dope,
sneak out into night's belly
as if they were the first ones
ever to find out how silky
it is there, how delicious
to cross creeks by moonlight,
play badminton in starlight,
and yet never discover
how a parent learns all this,
as if omnipotent,
as if awake all the time when
it's as simple as learning to read
the mysteries of a dirty sweater.

Jennifer Martelli

WOMAN MAKING OMENS ON THE SECOND FLOOR

(responding to Kafka)

If, on a day of low-grade rain and siren, a woman watched the sky lower, yellow, but had been hoping *tornado*; if she saw instead, a girl-child being lured into a long grey sedan parked kitty-corner in the schoolyard below her window, and if, as that child called out for her mother, her arm clutched and pulled in a man's tweed grasp, then surely, this same woman would shatter the window with both palms, let the glass rip straight up her arm, and she would run down, run out, arms wide, still bloody, brave, meaningful—but,

since it is true that there was no grey sedan, no girl at all, and the maple outside her window didn't even move, but waited, too—and though her mail, no matter how she piled it slipped and fluttered to the floor, and a black luck spider scuttled across the wood to her foot, and earlier, she caught her hair in the teeth of a metal comb, then in the blow dryer's tiny motor and burnt it out, and her coffee would not pour neatly into its cup, grew cold and bitter, she sat, having turned from the window as if from her own crime, and was unable to look up.

Robert Funge

MOUNTAIN STREET

On city streets trees are just trees, and stones
are what you throw at trees, or someone else.
What grows from the ground has to fight its way
through cracks in sidewalks, and journeys are
by streetcar to another neighborhood
where words are spoken strangely.

In the heart

of the Utah canyonlands I'd like to know
the names of things. I've heard each tree has its own
and a stone is something you don't disturb. At dawn
and dusk the mountains glow like painted scrolls
from a new Moses, hues
the city never sees, and deer
drift in from nowhere to feed
on windfall fruit. On straightback mountains
thousand year old carvings with a name
I can't pronounce still stand, telling stories
I'll never learn to read.

I'd really like to know

the names of things, but I'm a city boy
lost in another world, reciting
a prayer I haven't learned. The land I know
is cold and fearsome, my sisters and brothers
drifting, feeding on windfall
coins, sleeping in doorways. Here the mountains
cradle me, stars watch over me, creek
lulls me to sleep, a city boy
on another planet, not speaking its language
but feeling what it says.

Vivian Shipley

COLOR

Air strikes like steel
down my lungs
 stiffens to breath
 crisp like tearing paper
 the sound of my shoes
 printing into asphalt.

A cardinal poses
brief as blood
 red on white mounds
 silkened tents
 or tissue paper breasts
 swollen and wet.

Ice clear flesh
on brittle bones
 thin as a twig on
 the fingers of trees
 planted by my sons
 who punctuate the snow
 with black periods. My body
 drips no color as I run here.

Vivian Shipley

MARTHA STEWART'S TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR SNOW

1. Make the paths neat with a slight curve. Leave at least an inch of snow. Aesthetics are important.
2. Pack perpendicular walls of snow. Cross country ski through them to the gym. Snowshoe to work.
3. Walk your dog. Always hang a little whisk broom on your wrist. When you see yellow snow, remove it.
4. If you are old, stay in your own home if you have one. Tie grosgrain ribbons on sheets. Wash the gold china.
5. It takes two hours to make a snow cave. If you don't hibernate balled in like a snake, an igloo takes three.
6. You can sleep out at five below zero. It will be cozy. Dream a little. Dye the iced walls with food coloring.
7. Wrap yourself in layers of pastel tissue from Versace. If you are poor, newspaper, cardboard, just anything.
8. Hypothermia could set in. First signs are that you feel weak or sleepy. Keep someone nearby, a bottle will do.
9. The body is a furnace. Funnel or pour anything handy into your mouth—86 calories per hour or 2,000 a day.
10. You may have problems walking on ice and fall down. Don't beg. In calligraphy, letter: *Please Pick Me Up*.

Kristine Somerville

ONE OF OUR OWN

We sit three across in the front of Julian's hearse and drive past music shows, T-shirt shops, old-time photo saloons, all closed for off-season. Cars let us pass, respectful of the dead until they see Reagan's cardboard face in the back window, his springed hand waving. Daniel, I didn't recognize you in a navy suit, white shirt, power tie, your hair parted on the side, a boy posing for his first school picture. With her comb, Annie undid the funeral parlor's work. Friends should be allowed to bury their own, Julian says. He parks next to your grave; he wants to drink one last six-pack with you. Annie turns up *The Cure*, and dances, the gossamer layers of her thrift store dress are like webs on the wind. I stay in the hearse, doors open, fire flies blinking in the back window. From your bedroom window, we watched the sky turn emerald, as if a green filter had been placed between earth and sun. I remember everything about the on-coming storm: lilac petals blown off a bush into a cyclone of confetti, lawn chairs clanking down the front steps, a beach ball cartwheeling across the street. "Sometimes I wish I could keep sleeping," you said. I thought you meant you didn't like waking to the sight of me. I climbed on your back, wrapped my arms around your neck. You were my raft, the bed an ocean, the rain a storm I could weather. Julian and Annie get in the hearse, taking shelter from the sudden rain. As we drive, the windshield wipers smear the raindrops that race but never beat the sweep of the rubber blades.

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