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Masthead

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No issues were published between 1997 and 2001.

Doors

You never come back.
I say good-by when I see you going in the doors,
The hopeless open doors that call and wait
And take you then for—how many cents a day?
How many cents for the sleepy eyes and fingers?

I say good-by because I know they tap your wrists,
In the dark, in the silence, day by day,
And all the blood of you drop by drop,
And you are old before you are young.
You never come back.

—Carl Sandburg

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Discovery of the Sky

fall winds falling break up
the green clouds of summer
and open up the brittle
countenance of the sky

colorless skeletons
crowd around the house
carrying a robust blanket of
sound balanced on their

on their cold heavenward
fingertips but sometimes
the dense dark hymn thins out
into a mere scrim of a song

Ruth E. Foley

Aubade

I held out hope for one more afternoon,
but knew that soon

the frost would creep along the garden, up
the stems grown tough

with warning. Winter is beginning. So
much for pesto.

Another thing I should have done. Instead,
we went to bed.

In one November night, the basil browned
and curled. The ground

grew colder, shadows stole the sun by four.
We shut the door

and lit the candle on the dresser. We
—or was it me?—

I let the basil die. I thought it was
still warm enough

to leave it one more night. What harm was there?
His hands, my hair,

the thousand different ways that we have learned
to spark and burn,

to turn each other inside out. Aflame,
calling out names—

My love oh love oh God God yes we cried.
The basil died.

I'll go out, pick up breakfast. He'll sleep in,
his dappled skin

the closest thing to God I've ever seen
and scented green.

The Man Who Took Her Away From All That

Here's where I fell in love; caught in the hot pursuit of happiness, that chilly early morning late-September harvest day, tomatoes globing on the bush, demanding that I fondle, pluck them in their redness, handle them, fill mouth with them. A restful season for the dark brown-umber loam en route, exhausted after so much use, a time to re-create beneath the steaming compost layers and spun cotton quilt. The cherry trees had seen all this before. Not I, mouth rounded in unspoken awe, all new to me, each season opened doors to get the fourth reward of Boston Bibb, late peas, my bushel baskets yawning wide for my tomato crop.

I rushed the first heaped basket to you for your mason jars; your tongs and fires ready, seasonings and slotted spoons and strainers spread; you already sweating and the day just stretching out and ready to begin; your scribbled recipes invented by the dozen generations that had gone before. New hands in Paradise, sharing our adventure on that morning with our harvest; a cup of tea ahead at ten, just tête-à-tête on Conklin Hill, nothing but the quiet and the work to divvy up. We put a half a dozen on the shelf for lunch, and I sped out to cull another batch, the sun just breaking through the morning haze and lighting up the maple tree, about to turn. It was the pace of things that came as a surprise. No second could be wasted if you wished to taste it all.

Stock still, I filled my vision first, as though it were a basket, with my apple trees, the vast expanse, the spruce, the poplars newly nude, the paper birch. And then bent to the work beneath the sun's weight, supple, quick, the juices pumping from my plump red heart, enamored of the morning, you, the thrill of being part. I lugged the second offering to you, my gift of work and earth; the kitchen steaming, monster lobster pots on every burner crammed, the mason jars now sterilized and ready, aproned you, hair falling in your eyes, a spoon in right hand, tongs in left, the perspiration pouring down your face. I placed the brimming basket at your feet, and took you in my arms. We kissed for minutes, while the heat grew more intense and juices ran.

With Automatic Hand

she smooths her hair. Where's the album
filled last year, static faces with their open
mouths, dark-toothed gullets a-foam
& humming for the selfsame one

they did so little for back when. & *puts*
a record on the gramophone. She turns in her
little groove, dish rag to hook, light-switch
on, & listens for her past, its whirring

insistent as a mosquito in her trumpet-
pink shell of an ear. *Well now that's done,*
she must have thought when she packed
her vinyl picture-books away, &

I'm glad it's over. Glad to be strewn. Lost
& left to molder in many an attic box.

Bedtime

When I speak without
gestures I feel empty, blank as
the beach in Marina.
Your father is quiet and gentle
as grape flesh.
A pat on the bum is just a pat on the bum.
Did you just spit out,
like betel, our marriage?
Nestle, girl.
It is time for you
to love me. *Look, after all,*
as with any gesture.
Tucked away, my sweet fugitive,
lately?

Kristine Ong Muslim

Sleepwalker

Imagine the width of the bed—
it is wide as long as you are small.

When you have outgrown it,
your feet may or may not
touch the floor.

The Middle of the Night

I wake myself. I catch myself saying: “there’s no time!” Sometimes I remember the dream. On other occasions this sentence floats, then disperses into the almost morning, like a singular puff of smoke from a distant, stupid chimney.

Jessy Randall

I Have to Take a Test: A Found Poem

from an email from Amy Shuffelton

I have to take a test
in which they send
radioactive isotopes
through my blood.

These are apparently fine
for me but dangerous for
the baby. I can't breastfeed her
for 24 hours after the test

and I'm not supposed to come
nearer to her than six feet
until eight hours after.

I'd better plan to be
out of the house because
otherwise I imagine
I'll be circling around her

(like a moon around a planet
or an electron around a nucleus)

wanting to touch her but not able to.

David Michael Wolach

Plans

I'm answering the door
to nobody these days. These days:

again the leaves are sagging the gutter, and the light
lasts as long as that chill I've come to live with.

I'm looking in cupboards, under beds, behind the eyes
of people I rarely meet.

I daydream constantly these days. These days:
of the house we never lived in, of our child, who
vanished

suddenly, like a magic trick.

Andrew Demcak

Stillborn

They smile tourist smiles, packing at
vacation's end. And that's death. Not to speak

of the mother alive, her worming heart.
The mouth's "O" gape gulping air. A stuck pig,

belly undone, whose eyes stare. Now they are
numbered, loose in their amber fluids.

Only a woman could divine these shapes,
intact, pickled lungs and the almost hairs.

Ungrown buds of limbs, the odd distinctions:
palms that won't open, the bulging fingers.

Hygienic foreheads are surely missed.
Contraception, the cold diagnosis.

Zoë Gabriel

Song

for John Donne

Let the sea work its change
if it will
Let the fire search and destroy
if it can
Let space fill my mouth and nose
if it dare

we'll see what they can make of me
make of me and you,
what I can make of me and you

For even in hate, we love what we make
and we keep what we break

Willie James King

Geese

The geese aren't gone,
they are simply off-balance
now by a gentle breeze;
too soon, the cold will return
and they will come, parading
and gliding upon the pasture pond
like paunchy politicians
who feel this is their world,
everything here is for them to own.
But winter will be back and
those gray, sun-streaked branches
will again be wet-black
and so stricken by ice
that for days on end, they will be touched
but not be able to recognize the fondling
fingers of a groping sun.

Steelhead

The steelhead swims upriver,
leaping weirs,
to brood at the bottom of dark pools.
He seldom feeds, then only on impulse,
on a flash of remembered color,
his hunger an evaporated need.

Above the pool, on gravel,
the female falls
on her side, flashing gold and red,
shivering her tail and flanks
to polish her stony nest.
The water boils with urgency.

I toss the fly (chartreuse cotton,
like an egg
with a barbed penis) above them,
and mend the line. Sooner, later,
one will strike or,
more likely, the fish will snag.

Silver Salmon Fishing in Alaska

In handful over handful silvers clear
the skiff side. Weight of their own bodies

in gillnet tears skin from their bellies, scales from

their backs. We rode out thick against the waves
to pull our harvest from the sea. Our arms scoop

net webbing, fingers bending into mesh,

elbows bending into pulls. Handful over
handful over handful through the tide.

At sea our bodies chill to silver beneath

our yellow raincoats. On the water, our
skin grows scales against the cold. Pulling fish

from the ocean, their eyes die open, cold

like hollow light from winter sun. I stand
here fishing salmon in the summer

though air feels cold as mid-November.

I look at these bodies, watching silver
salmon flash like money, then die choking.

I pull handfuls over handfuls like wet

wood to warm this winter and watch fish
bodies empty all their blood about

my feet. The red pool, lit by moon

round silver scales, sloshes handful over
wave crest at my feet.

“The ghosts of fish”

—John Montague

When it slips away from the silver-slick
of the body, the spirit begins to fill
with water, or drifts to the bottom where
it is grained with sand and weighted
with the brown of a few pebbles.
Unlike our souls, those shreds of mist that curl
around branches after a cool rain,
these finally sift to the surface as ripples
of light, waverings that make us squint.
Which is how we react, whether with joy
or tears, to the unnamable,
the blinding transformation,
and doubt— what will we, finally, become?—
reveals its own shining craving.

Fire Turns Things to Salt

White flowers grow wild in the empty lot
next door to Junior's Variety Store. Some
people say it's stayed that way too long.
He dreamed he'd pass it all along to the
next generation. Rumor is a burning cigarette
lit the bed on fire. The official version is faulty
electrical wires. It remains a tragic mystery.
Everyone lost in that blaze. The house, gone,
the foundation razed. He's received a multitude
of seasoned platitudes but it remains an
unreasonable reason just the same. He's grown
weary of trying to place the blame. It doesn't
matter who's at fault. He doesn't care. He
wonders how anything could grow there in that
corrupted field. It hardly matters. Looking back
he turns to salt. "Aren't they beautiful," she says,
putting the white wild flowers in a vase
on the table where her children wait.

Fourteen Line Fairy Tale

One day, once, on a day, once,
I know, there was, once, there was,
once, time was, I know, once upon,
upon a time. Once, I knew.

The next time, twice, twice upon,
up, I know, twice I rose, saw,
twice, not once, up I rose, and saw
one, who once, I knew, once,
now twice. I saw, I knew.

The one I saw, twice, not once,
I know, I knew, once, now twice,
I knew, I know, once, we rose,
she, once, twice, we rose, we knew,
twice. We rose, she knew, I know.

Matthew Hotham

Naked-Eye Astronomy

A map of the universe sagged on her desk.
Twin Pugs pawed at the door. Her double bed—
heaped with two weeks' laundry. I pictured
the New Moon when I fondled her breasts.
We spoke of mechanics. Her car pulled to the left.
At 7:13 the streetlights stuttered orange.

At dinner, we lied it was our free-cupcake-
birthday. The waitress sighed with enthusiasm.
A child screamed for green crayons. We agreed
to blame the parents. A sled bolted to the wall
proclaimed Liberty. Flies broke against the glass.
I forgot not to joke about suicide. We ate
around the onions just in case. An astronomer
with pink hair; she said to call her Star.

Postmodernism

There is a lot to ponder:
What if rain memorizes my address
And becomes my walls and ceiling; asphalt,
My floor. What if I open my mouth to cry *Mary*
And it comes out *marry*, but never *merry*.
What if when the novel is finished
The paper in the book does not meet
The guidelines for permanence and durability
Etc., etc., of the council on Library Resources?
There is a story, rather, *was* a story
About a little girl who woke her mother in the middle
Of the night (3:00 a.m. to be exact) and said, I am thirsty.
This happened almost every night in her fourth year,
But she wasn't really thirsty, she was saying, I got a fear.
A fear of a dark room that echoes solely with my voice.
A fear of stretching out my arms only to embrace an empty space.
She's beginning to understand this fear may come back
To plague her one day, so she deposits that moment
Into her memory bank so when the words quell—I'm leaving
You—she'll be familiar with that kind of loneliness. Let's back up.
A little girl is read a fairy tale at bedtime. She does not
Remember the hard-pressed maiden winning the hand
Of the prince at the end. She dreams of Moon, foxglove.
The happy ending plummets from the book. She wakes
In a conformation solid as quenched thirst and searches
One empty room after the next for the prince's lullaby.
She'll search for that song the rest of her life
And won't be satisfied until she never finds it.

Jeannine Dobbs

Thirteen

One of those rare
days in Ohio
late summer
milkweed pods
unopened
water low

Cousin Ray
carrying me
through the pasture
home. We've been
in the woods
for arrowheads
I've felt
the notches
blazed
on the tree trunks,
the bark
grown
almost over.

Vladimir Swirynsky

A Promised Poem

for Ana Luketina

You are Anna with one N,
daddy long legs, graffiti,
a small bird on a window ledge.

Every day was Easter morning
so you took candy from strangers,
much later you would get drunk at weddings,
always making sure you French kissed the bride.

At the kitchen table grace before the meal,
stray bullets, matchstick mayhem by
the Serbs, a fall off a barn, cracked head,
no doctor, vodka poured over the wound,
an unsure voice telling you . . .
a rose is a long silence.

If distance is measured by laughter,
you rationalize that war is nothing more
than roadside music, hardship an
un-open pack of cigarettes.

You are Ana,
your heart a kingdom of kindness,
you are Wednesday, a holiday,
the loud noise of celebration.
You are love, the whispers of a mad world.
Atlantis is rising, old and new
gods worshipping your smile,
the waters like the color of your hair.
Are you hungry?

Sara Richmond

Cleave

My grandmother died the day they passed out fetal pigs in Biology so I was excused from the inevitable fight over who would be first to pull on rubber gloves, hold the tiny legs or make the first cut, the suspended guilt about who had chosen what. Our teacher let me skip the entire week, didn't want to risk exposing me to an excess of death, to the separation and naming of systems that make the body start and stop. Still, there is nothing to be done about this blue-aproned boy I see unloading the delivery truck outside Akropolis Meats on my way to work, or the frozen cargo that lands in his metal shopping cart with a rattle and clunk. He has perfected the maneuvering of his unwieldy cart over the curb while the pig leans its hooves against the side like a curious child. This one will hang in the window beside the skinned goats stripped of coarse hair and modesty, and in the back of the shop the butcher will try to remember the function of atria and ventricles, the difference between vertebrae, perhaps lecture his apron-clad assistant on the wonders of the cerebellum.

Suzanne Frischkorn

Vista, 4 PM

Black clouds line the east
ridge, west sun fires
its gold leaves. Each spark
returns to darkness.
Autumn, what did you expect?

Late October Rolling Plains

Late October rolling plains never seem to end
When always in one place. Movement needs me
To travel over the last hill: mountains jut to sky,
Deserts dry the daisy, valleys grow good wine;
And oceans touch the edge of horizon.
Days in a man's car,

Driving, seeking a good classical station.
Jazz will suffice. Drive seventy-five
And the motor hums just shy of an F.
I keep hearing a voice ignorant of intonation.
In my head it's all perfect; somewhere between
Thought, hearing, and sound, I lose dreams.

L. Cohen didn't need his voice as much as words,
But my eyes fall apart when a good tenor sings
In bel canto. Tone rolls and rings over plains,
Mountains, valley, desert, ocean;
Past any divide I can imagine.

Big-Rig Through Stolen Night

All night the truck trucks
through the desert, a scene
so familiar as to become
unseen, all 18-wheels
barreling across wasteland,
time sedated but still on
schedule, a look of abandonment
through the windshield, it's all
headlights & highway, cash
on delivery, dropping
off, picking up, all 50
tons of it, tier upon tier, rising
& falling with clammy
palms on the wheel, a dusty
boot to the pedal,
the passage of sleep
in motion— who is it that shakes
in the night, shakes
on the road, shakes through the weather?—
with gears cranking
forward, shifting
back, boxes strapped
to walls, the truck
knocking against darkness,
deflation, desertion,
until the driver
rolls down the window
& comes alive
to the smell of diesel
amid green pastures,
the first sign of light.

Suzanne Frischkorn

Idle

Rain beads the window and to get anywhere is to follow
red tail lights in front of you—

hydroplaning when you run late, but the car's
clock runs 10 minutes fast. No moon, no stars,

water pounding between the swipe of blades.
All day the tree's leaves dove for the pavement.

For the Love of Squirrels . . .

It's obvious the squirrels prefer that tree,
but don't forget that it prefers them, too,
and pours forth greenery for them to chew
because it so enjoys their company.
Look at its neighbors: not a leaf in sight
or one green bump. You see, they're all Pecan:
nothing on offer once their nuts are gone
till June at least. Then, though he holds on tight
to every stem, he'll search in vain for squirrels,
try out another recipe for leaves,
discover brown-spot. You can see he grieves
and does his best, but there's no fooling squirrels.
Look at the fellow: eager to be seen,
ridiculously proud of yellow-green . . .

An Argument Against Abstractions

A rich muck of seed pods and leaves stewed
in the gutters of my parents' house all spring.
My father and I worked our way along
the eaves scooping the tea-tinted crud
into blue plastic grocery bags. The birds
sang the same contrapuntal tune through
an endless loop. There were moments
the light relented, when summer's tall white clouds
and their shade like a cool abstraction came
so swiftly over us that we stood up
and looked around taking the neighborhood
in from the burning shingles of the roof.
What were we working for? Those clear abstractions
happiness, duty, love? We stood up straight
and stared like sailors planted on the deck
of a ship bound for some New World, too lost
to know we'd change and change everything
we touched along our fateful way. The trees
swelled suddenly like waves coming to a crest.
We stood, guys getting by on speculation,
and were carried headlong into the future.
Beneath our feet, the whole cargo of the house
shifted its ticking and clicking weight.
But the business at hand, the winged seeds
and acorns, would soon start again. The world
that awaited us was the ordinary world.
Leaf-meal and slime. Light in the tossing trees.
A seedling oak had to be pulled from a down—
spout clogged with leaves. A nest thrown to the ground.

Laying Up

I haven't seen the titmouse recently,
but all the other birds are back. They know
how much depends on spring: especially
on getting good and fat. You doubt me? Go
check out those red-tipped fluffballs, moms-to-be
(so slender, come July). They know darn well
how rough the next few months are like to be,
and they intend to make it. You can tell
exactly who'll be back here, shelling seeds
for scruffy-looking fledglings. She'll give four
or five away at least, and if she feeds
one to herself, the creature flaps for more,
craning and dancing in its agony.
Spring is for laying up: take it from me.

Sunday Morning Intractable

Dog barks. Train whistle yells: the world
wants my attention. I, unmoved, in bed,
have no intention of giving in or paying mind
to jet planes' sky-splitting rumbles, to
truck brakes, wind squall, the damn woodpecker
on an outer wall, ambulance insistent or the distant
highway hill where every engine pushes rpms
and transmissions shift down. I lie;
I will not shift, refuse to rouse despite the bells
of Blue Church and the feng shui chimes
strung bright along a breeze that taps
downspout against the eaves. Birds dive
into the gutter, chirp and flutter at the window—
No. Get lost. Go elsewhere to get fed. Today
I do not want the world, I want only my bed.

Headline: Events Ordained by Secret Powers

So dance with your dogs when the time comes round.
Let the fridge look on, whirring and smug, trying
to keep things as they are in their inner cold. Let

bubbled linoleum be guest host for stocking feet that
slide, toenails that clatter in grinning uproars, advancing world
satisfaction. Here's your black Lab, raising floppy, comic lips—

he'd paw your shoulders, catch you up in the dull beams
of this sight, his universe of aural wonders—where
all the bodies he understands can only tear up a patch of grass

and wag their goofy hind-parts; where there's
a saintly so-what for the housecat who will never dance
or perform the insane capers of dogs, but will only nestle

onto preciously aligned front paws. Will only jerk
his quirky head at a fly, or hang in the trance of suave ones,
staring from up on the blocky white of the fridge—or maybe

from his paper-lined shelf. And ah, the way it
trembles with the footfalls, the ever-natural drunkenness
of the good in canine form . . . the wild and royal geniality of

wolf tribe types who've migrated in under your roof
for unabashed worship of you and your household that
rumbles its furnace and whining fridge. Do you hear

the call to arms? The call to dance against smug and
whirring machines in their fisted determination
to keep things as they are.

Space Factory

a spam collage

you want to learn the use of patterns
to impress cocktail party guests
between decorators
the next time you're exploited
you can design a simple facade
of the best practices
a proxy environment and more
that lets you put something to do instead
with others who've faced the challenging alone
you have your real relationship
(or worse, a flat tire)
you know trading what and why
isn't as simple as it sounds
but you don't matter we think
look you're not wrong about might
you're just not speaking the language
you want to learn about struggling
and everything that makes you want to see
how the Factory will NOT help
you want to learn something more fun
(own your boss)
you want something that you can hold
(use your co-worker)
you'll easily counter built-in advantage
(books, the experience of others)
with your inheritance of academic science
you'll avoid the embarrassment of principles
(time, matter) in a way that sticks better
load native patterns into your facade
casually mention learning theory format
the next time you paddle up a creek
in the wild you wheel your reinvented brain
at any given moment
somewhere in the world
software applications put you to sleep

Urbanity

The city morning is a clock,
clouded hands inching across
the face of the day. Cirrus clouds
blacken the sky, let loose
peals of thunder. The sun tastes
of rosemary and fennel.
The vagrant touches the harmony
of the swallows songs.
William Blake awakes on a bench
in Shinjuku Goen Park as
wispy clouds refract the sun
in recursive rainbows.
The old mans cottage glows in pale lamplight
its wood rack stacked with bupkis.
He pulls the door handle slowly
throwing it open to the noise
of gridlocked streets.
The morning whispers some
meshugeneh pished the wall
I want you should know.
The exhausted lamppost of calumny
refuses to move or change its story.
The chorus brays Hymn 534
as the poet spews invective
spattering the audience in bile.
The gypsy weeps and cowers
in mad self-absorption. Together
they will deconstruct the opus
rendering a pile of broken words.
The hardened river overflows
the sewer grates. Morning
is the hour for self-aggrandizement.
Kish meer tuchus the wall
tells the vagrant, pushing him
into the unmoving traffic.
The rising sun
set the city ablaze.

Persimmons

Above burial mounds near Ko-chang,
a grove of persimmons softly perches
on a ridge where fruits perilously hang
among rows of wilting pines and birches.
Yellow leaves tumble gently from ginkos
to mingle with the lovely trash of trees.
The old man's knees buckle as the wind blows
through bus shelters and bankrupt companies.
Too stooped to reach the lowest limbs, he claws
in the dirt for globes the blustery cold
has not spoilt. Despite luck from magpies' caws,
he finds split persimmons that can't be sold.
His decaying beauty will soon be gone
leaving barren branches to scratch by on.

That Rare Grin: A Pastoral

You specialize in gardens with high walls,
inspecting them for any hairline crack
in case of prying eyes. No one recalls
What's growing any more—though you've a knack
for flowering shrubs, and we see chickadees
drop from their branches, flit behind your walls,
and breakfast there each morning. Carefully
you shut the door until the deadbolt falls
into its notch—then smile. You look about
and hesitate before you enter in,
hugging your secret, in a little doubt,
perhaps, because you see us watching. Then
on lucky days, it happens: that rare grin
darting behind the walls, and gone again.

On Eating Lemons

I eat lemons. Fresh lemons. Sliced lemons. Lemon slices that I slip out of the bottom of my empty tea cups. I split the lemon rim, fan out the soft interior, use my teeth to pull off each translucent wedge. This wedge, then this one, until there's nothing left but the rind, yellow on white.

My father used to eat lemons. With each eating came this story: One day he and his twelve-year-old friends booked front row concert seats. When the trumpeter came out to play, they fished cut lemons from their pockets and began to suck the juices. The trumpeter's mouth puckered; the manager's mouth uttered unspeakable oaths. The boys were thrown out and the lemon halves confiscated. My father kept the story.

I started to eat lemons just to show him he wasn't the only one who could. Now he won't touch them; the ascorbic acid upsets his stomach. I continue because I've grown fond of the taste. Lemony.

Lemony? What else could it be? It isn't sour. Dill pickles are sour. Vinegar is sour. Acidic? I think of things that shouldn't come close to tongues. Batteries have acid. Citric acid is a compromise.

Once my daughter attached electrodes to a lemon to generate power. A small light came on. This is one of the things she and I agree on. When it happened and why are still areas of contention. She recently e-mailed me from a village on the southern Peloponnesian coast. Every garden there had a lemon tree.

In this climate, lemon trees can only be grown indoors. A former lover and I tried it once, but never succeeded. One of us was always under-watering or over-watering.

Lemons sit in a blue bowl on my kitchen table. Fragrant, the right fit for a hand. Halves like small breasts. I eat lemons and dream of growing lemon trees in gardens that open to the sea.

Jen Garfield

Sea Turtles

When Lanell returned from studying sea turtles in Costa Rica, she told us we should be more like the giant leatherback. Also, she told a story about

the Miskitio Indians, a 3 day canoe ride, an oar and a bag of oranges. *It would be better*, she said, *if we were more like the Miskitio Indians*. In March,

Lanell's father died. He'd left her and her mother to deal blackjack in Vegas and drive young girls in fast cars. Lanell said March is when leatherbacks

begin their nesting. I borrowed my cousin's car, drove us to Chaska for the funeral. On the way, Lanell pointed out landmarks: the 7-11 where she stole

cigarettes, the house of the beautiful boy from art class, the only late-nite diner for miles. We stopped for a cup of coffee, and that's the thing with Midwest

towns, they're all the same things—same bitter coffee in cracked cream mugs, same highways roaring outside, strip malls and beautiful boys you never talked to. Also,

something that makes your breath choke in your throat when you return. We lingered around the sticky table too long. Lanell told us that sea turtles will return

to the same spot each time they lay eggs by following magnetic fields. *When they come to land*, she said, *many note they look like they've been crying*.

The Wound of Being Never Heals

“The wound of being never heals,” he said, bowing his head in prayer before the meal. No one dared say a word until Aunt Martha had the nerve to compliment the china plates and silverware. “What a lovely setting. The forks and spoons and knives are superb,” she opined. It only made him cry. He snatched them up and wiped them with his tie. On the 15th of July, 1965, Uncle George took his life, jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge, the pockets of his coat brimming with every piece of silverware they owned. A witness to the grim event said Uncle George seemed intent. “He looked like someone was chasing him the way he scaled the fence and dived.” Martha didn’t seem a bit surprised. “No one survives the wound of being. This infectious disease leads us to quarantine our rebellious heart and fill our lives with antiseptic remedies and cures that never work,” she philosophized. “Still, I wish he hadn’t taken *all* the forks and knives.

Anne Babson

That May

Who knew that May that that May was the May of
thirty-one Maydays?

Neither you nor I knew the Mayfair was a once-ever May
parade, nor that you and I were the only May queens of
the May hive, nor that each bench seating us was a May
float cruising slowly, nor that each skirt into which
we shimmied was a May mist hovering across our rose
hips masking the rain to come.

That May was a time machine with the combination lock
twisted just so, the chambers unbarred, the latch
unhooked, a music box of chiming May tines against the
May metallic spikes with two twirling plastic
ballerinas—you and I wearing our May best—
delicately posed in surprise at every rotation made.

In the russet satin compartments, that May contained
paste pearls and Bakelite rubies, but that May, that
May when we were twenty-one, we didn't understand that
this wasn't just the first May month of the rest of
our May lives.

If I let the story of that May fly out my mouth like a
Mayfly escaping, but I never will—I promised then
and promise now; loose lips sink ships, even the
Mayflower—who would understand how that May stepped
out with its May babies decades after the big bands
disbanded, the swing was swung and hung up,
after Tommy Dorsey's bomber splashed into the Channel,
and there was a wall, a curtain, and white noise,
absolute static everywhere?

That May, you and I could testify that that May, that
May others spent among crack houses and fax machines,
among punks and Madonna wannabes, you and I know that
that May rang our buzzer in 1988, wolf-whistled as we
walked out. That May, it called us its "dames," and
when it called on us, we learned that that May doesn't
turn with the wall calendar's May page.

That May, that's the May we dangled our toes in the buttered rum of the pink marble snifter of the fountains in that May city, the May soldiers strutted into town strappingly to take us to dinner, ask for the next dance and the next, dip us, then leave us with smeared lip rouge and run lace stockings ill-defended, paraded back to base, not victorious, not defeated, not yet.

That May, that's the May you and I vogued, our single concession to the contemporary, through the woods, gathering the lilies that grew only an hour away by May train from the line of limos with doors that gaped for us like May baby bird's mouths, the smiling velvet ropes that unhooked like May snakes at the rustle of our crinolines, the tuxedoed bartenders and leather-upholstered bouncers who shouted our May names in greeting across the sea of contemporary heads through the pink May smoke and cotton candy steam of the new May lounges.

That May, while we vogued between the velvet-antlered stags and bristle-backed boars fox-trotting between the birches in the pale May narrow shadows, while a gentle May pollen, thick as snow, circled our heads lazily like the cubic zirconia floating beneath the mirrored ball where we disarmed the Foreign Legion and engaged them until they surrendered and no longer pined for the dunes over which they had first appeared so tan and dashing, that May where each chance encounter turned into a conga line, although we protested, winking like film noir starlets, that we wanted to be alone,

Who knew that May that you would be the last May call today left on my speed dial, that all the other Maypole turners would retreat across oceans and back to the modern, die in the crossfire, trapped in the Old Fashioneds like May bees in honey resin, mislay their minds in the caramel endorphins we spun over that May's crème brûlée, or flee, turning to pillars of salt looking back at that May cross-eyed?

Who knew that May that only we would apply all that
that May taught us?

Sure, the May tale is still hidden, and we wear less
May lace today. Our hair is tidier and smells less
like the May meadow where we lay, and our aging knees
ache whenever we leap too quickly over puddles in the
October sprawl, and today we throw coins, not our
feet, in fountains, and the wishes are back in the
wishing well where we first kicked them up to the
surface that May.

Sure, but who knew that May that we would be the last
of the summa cum laude alumni of that May?

Contributors

Anne Babson is founding editor of *Vernacular*, an international women's literary journal, and she was just named the first-ever curator of literature for the Russian Museum of Contemporary Art. A winner of numerous poetry awards, including the Columbia Journal Prize, her work has recently appeared in *Bridges*, *Barrow Street*, *Connecticut Review*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *The Barefoot Muse*, *Bravado*, *The Pikeville Review*, *Rio Grande Review*, *English Journal*, *New Song*, *The Penwood Review*, *Sow's Ear*, *The Madison Review*, *Atlanta Review*, and elsewhere. Babson is the librettist for a new opera, *Upbringing*, and her work is featured on a forthcoming hip-hop CD produced by Da Ovahflow (Orville Lewinson) entitled *The Cornerstone*. She has four chapbooks—*Counterterrorist Poems* (Pudding House Press, 2002), *Dictation* (Partisan Press, 2001), *Uppity Poems* (Alpha Beat Press, 1999), and *Commute Poems* (forthcoming from Gravity Presses). She sits on the Literary Committee of the National Arts Club, and has been awarded residencies at Yaddo and the Vermont Studio Center.

Tim Bellows is a writing teacher, poet and photographer devoted to wilderness, contemplative travels, and the divine and quirky ways of words. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, he's published work in over 200 literary journals—and in the anthologies *Sunlight from Another Day*, *Poems In & Out of the Body*, *A Racing Up the Sky*, *Desert Wood: An Anthology of Nevada Poets*, and *Wild Stars*. He teaches writing at Sierra College in Northern California. Bellows edits an e-newsletter, *Lightship News*, with a focus on the spiritual dimensions of poetry, innovative thought, and crucial tips for writers.

F.J. Bergmann claims to have an MFA from the School of the Americas. Previous failures include steeplechasing, illustrating zoonoses, and rural postal delivery. More of her dubious achievements may be perused at <http://www.fibitz.com>. One of her pseudopodia can reach from the bedroom to the refrigerator. Her hairstyle is deceptive.

Originally from Alaska, **Elaine Brown** now lives in Montreal, Quebec, where she is engaged in a PhD in Philosophy at McGill University. Brown's poems and prose have appeared in *Fulcrum: An Annual of Poetry and Aesthetics*, *Squaw Valley Review*, and *Voices from Prague: An Anthology*.

After a lengthy career as a publisher, **Earl Coleman** turned to writing full time about twelve years ago and has been widely published, with two stories nominated for Pushcarts XXIII and XXVII and one story nominated for the series *Best American Short Stories*. He is the author of a full-length poetry collection, *A Stubborn Pine in a Stiff Wind* (Mellen Poetry Press, 2001) and a chapbook, *Earl Coleman's Greatest Hits* (Pudding House, 2004). In April 2007, his latest work, a collaboration with his son entitled *Like Father, Like Son*, will be published. To see more of his work click onto <http://nearbycafe.com/stubbornpine/stubbornpine.html>.

Jack Conway's poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Columbia Review*, *Yankee*, *The Potomac* and *The Norton Anthology of Light Verse*, among others. He is the author of *My Picnic With Lolita and Other Poems* (North Country Press, 2004). He teaches at the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth and Bristol Community College in Fall River.

Andrew Demcak is Director of Outreach Services for Oakland Public Library, which is a fancy way of saying that he runs the Bookmobile. His poetry, essays, short stories and plays have been published and anthologized in various print and on-line publications. His poetry is taught as part of the syllabus at both Ohio State University in two of its courses, English 110-11, "The Genius and the Madman," and English 245-01, "American Poetry Since 1945," and at Michigan State University in its "Modern American Poetry" course. He is currently in pre-production of his screenplay *Site of the Sex*, a comedy about French author/filmmaker Marguerite Duras, which is slated to begin filming in August 2007, from IFC/Oucinepo productions. And finally, his new novel, *Hot-Foot into Limboville*, should be done in about a month or so depending on his caffeine consumption

An Ohio native, **Jeannine Dobbs** has a PhD from the University of New Hampshire and has taught writing and ESOL there and elsewhere. A collection of her work was published by Alice James Books. Her recent publications include *The Comstock Review*, *Margie*, and *The Southern Poetry Review*.

Rebecca Dunham's first book of poetry, *The Miniature Room*, won the 2006 T.S. Eliot Prize and was published by Truman State University Press. Her poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *The Antioch Review*, *FIELD*, and *The Iowa Review*, among others.

Lou Faber is a corporate attorney, poet and Adjunct Faculty in English Literature at Monroe Community College. He lives with his wife (a poet) and cat (an editor in her own mind) in Rochester, New York. His work has previously appeared in *RATTLE*, *Legal Studies Forum*, *Pearl*, *South Carolina Review*, *Worcester Review*, *Borderlands*, and elsewhere.

Mark Fitzgerald is the author of *Distracting the Rain*, a collection of poetry. He has taught writing and literature at Strayer University and the University of Richmond. His work has appeared in numerous periodicals, including *Crab Creek Review*, *3LIGHTS Gallery*, *Squaw Review*, and *Parting Gifts*. He has also written for *National Geographic*, *Outdoor America*, and *ASCE News*, where he is currently a staff writer. He currently lives in Falls Church, Virginia.

Ruth E. Foley lives in Massachusetts, where she works for a nonprofit adult literacy organization. Her poems have appeared in a number of print and online journals, including *Poetry Midwest* (Summer 2002), *Hanging Loose*, and *RATTLE*.

Suzanne Frischkorn is the author of *Spring Tide*, winner of the Aldrich Poetry Award. New poems appear, or are forthcoming in *Indiana Review*, *Margie*, 88, *Poet Lore*, *Silk Road*, and the anthology *Conversation Pieces: Poems That Talk to Other Poems*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

Jen Garfield was born in a suburb of Chicago and received an undergraduate degree in creative writing from The University of Wisconsin. Her poems have appeared in *Karamu* and *The Wisconsin Academy Review of Sciences, Arts and Letters*. She received an honorable mention for The University of Wisconsin's 2005 George B. Hill Poetry Prize and was published in *Forward! Best Young Poets University of Wisconsin-Madison 2005*. The poem "Sea Turtles" placed in The Illinois State Poetry Society's 2006 Contest and The League of Minnesota Poet's 22nd Annual Contest. She currently lives in Somerville, Massachusetts.

Zoë Gabriel's poems have appeared in *Locust Magazine*, *Centrifugal Eye*, *Unlikely Stories*, *AntiMuse*, and *Cadenza*. She loves books, spicy food and colorful socks. She is from Europe and lives in Maryland.

From 1985 to 2005, **Christopher Guerin** was President of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic. He was nominated for the 19th issue of the Pushcart Prize. His stories have appeared in *AURA*, *RE:al*, *Sou'wester*, *Witt Review*, and *William and Mary Review*, and his poems have appeared in *Rosebud*, *Flying Island*, *Hopewell Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *New Collage*, *Oxford Magazine*, *riverrun*, *Roanoke Review*, and *Wind*.

Matthew Hotham is completing his MFA at Syracuse University and works for BOA Editions, Ltd. as the Larry Levis Memorial Graduate Student Intern. During the summer he acts as Assistant to the Director of the Colgate University Writer's Conference. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Soundings East*, *The Chautauqua Literary Journal*, and *The November 3rd Club*, among others. He is author of a poetry chapbook, *Early Art* (Turtle Ink Press, 2006).

Louisa Howerow's prose and poetry have appeared in journals, small press magazines and on-line. Her most recent pieces were published in *The Antigoniash Review*, *The Dalhousie Review*, and *Sojourn: A Journal of the Arts*. She has been nominated for two Canadian awards: the Journey Prize (short story) and the National Magazine Award (poetry).

Thomas Hyland works as a Librarian at Lakeland Community College in Kirtland, Ohio. He holds an MA in Creative Writing from Miami University where he worked as a Graduate Assistant and served as a Poetry Co-editor of *Oxford Magazine*. He has published poems in such journals as *California Quarterly*, *Flyway*, and *Poetry Motel*. The first play he wrote was a finalist for the Heideman Award, National Ten-Minute Play Contest 2002, from Actors Theatre of Louisville.

Kathryn Jacobs is a medievalist at Texas A & M–Commerce. Both scholar and poet, she has published a book, sundry articles, and poetry. The latter have or will appear in numerous journals, among them *Measure*, *Quantum Leap* (UK), *Midwest Poetry Review*, *ELF*, *Candelabrum* (UK), *Mobius*, and *Texas Poetry Journal*. *Quantum Leap* also recently selected her for their “Featured Five” series.

Dan Johnson lives and works in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He spends his free time surfing the internet, and was recently accepted to the MFA Writing Program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Jennifer Juneau’s poems have been published in *Cimarron Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Seattle Review*, and elsewhere. Her collection, *More Than Moon*, was a 2006 National Poetry Series Open Competition finalist. She lives in Zurich, Switzerland.

Willie James King resides and writes in Montgomery, Alabama. He earned an MFA from Queens University, Charlotte, North Carolina. Previous work of his has been in *America*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Confrontation Magazine*, *The Hawaii Pacific Review*, *Mudfish*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Peregrine*, *Puerto del Sol*, *RATTLE*, *The Southern Poetry Review*, and *Willow Review*, as well as others. He has been nominated for four Pushcart prize awards. He plans to finish his novel while he is free from teaching during the summer.

Poet, essayist, librettist, and educator **Ann E. Michael** lives in eastern Pennsylvania and teaches at DeSales University. She is a past recipient of a Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowship in Poetry and the author of three chapbooks: *The Minor Fauna*, *More than Shelter*, and *Small Things Rise & Go*.

Kristine Ong Muslim’s poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Adbusters*, *Amarillo Bay*, *Antithesis Common*, *Bleeding Quill*, *Color Wheel*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *elimae*, *Foliage Oak*, *Free Verse*, *The Houston Literary Review*, *InkCollective*, *LauraHird.com*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *The Sidewalk’s End*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, and *Turnrow*. Further details about her publication history is online at <<http://www.freewebs.com/blackroom8>>.

Ayaz Pirani has been published in *ARC*, *Indiana Review*, *Blackwater Review*, and *Independent Teacher*. He lives in San Juan Bautista, California, though he grew up in Toronto, the United Kingdom, and East Africa.

Jessy Randall’s poems have appeared in *Mudfish* and *Painted Bride Quarterly* and are forthcoming in *Sentence*. She has also written for *McSweeney’s* and *Brain, Child*. Her first full-length collection of poems, *A Day in Boyland*, is forthcoming from Ghost Road Press in 2007. Her website is <<http://personalwebs.coloradocollege.edu/~jrandall>>.

Sara Richmond is originally from Michigan, but now lives in Washington, D.C. She recently completed her MFA in Creative Writing at American University, and works as a script writer for a software company that makes simulated people. Her writing can also be found in an upcoming issue of *Good Foot*.

Keith Russell is a doctoral candidate at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He's taught at Waldorf College in Forest City, Iowa, and Chonnam National University in Kwang-ju, South Korea. His academic interests include Korean American literature, contemporary American poetry and rock music.

Carl Sandburg is dead.

Ron Singer's poetry, fiction, satires, essays and reviews have appeared in *Borderlands: The Texas Poetry Review*, *Windsor Review*, *Ellipsis*, *Willow Review*, *diagram*, *Oregon Literary Review*, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *Poets & Writers* (online), *The Wall Street Journal*, etc. His is also the author of a fictional memoir, *A Voice for My Grandmother* (Ten Penny Players, Inc., 2006).

Paul Sohar is trying to emerge from his private garden of poetry by serving his apprenticeship as a translator of contemporary Hungarian poetry. After transplanting seven books into English he finally has a volume of his own poetry, *Homing Poems* (Iniquity Press, 2005) and numerous magazine credits such as *Big Hammer*, *Chiron*, *Home Planet News*, *Main Street Rag*, *Pedestal*, *Poem*, *Poesy*, *RATTLE*, etc.

Jack Stewart was educated at the University of Alabama and Emory University. From 1992-95 he was a Brittain Fellow at The Georgia Institute of Technology. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The American Literary Review*, *The Dark Horse Review*, *The Southern Humanities Review*, and other journals and anthologies, most recently in *Nimrod*. He lives in Montgomery, Alabama, with his wife and two daughters and teaches at the Montgomery Academy.

Vladimir Swirynsky started writing at the age of forty-five and has published nine books, the last two being, *This Tear: is my Poem*, and *Secret Life of a Deranged Poet*. A 2002 Pushcart nominee, during the week he repairs the holes in his socks and spends a lot of time teaching math to his vicious pet racoon. His new home will be where his old car breaks down.

David Michael Wolach, 28, is the Managing Editor of *Wheelhouse Magazine* and an adjunct professor of philosophy at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. A winner of the Mary K. Davis Award for Short Fiction and a Broadside Press Poets Award, Wolach's work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Heartlands Magazine*, *The Peralta Review*, *The Missing Fez*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Philadelphia Independent*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. He has written one novel, *Structures of Air*, and two books of short stories, *Electrical Fires*, and *The Archeology of My Face*. He is originally from Detroit, Michigan.

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