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American Goat - 1991

Shannon Thomas

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american goat

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

1



american goat

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY 1

A Publication of **Apocalypse** literary arts coalition

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Contributor's Notes

Submission Guidelines

American Goat is now soliciting manuscripts for its biannual publication. We are interested in poetry and short fiction. We publish Experimental Fiction, Science Fiction, Erotica, Traditional forms of fiction and poetry, Children's Stories, Romance, etc. Send us your best, most original work.

Submissions must be typed (dot matrix accepted) and double spaced. Margins should be one and one-half inches all the way around. We will accept up to five poems and two short stories per contributor.

In each issue we print contributor's notes. To save correspondence time and paperwork, please enclose a short (150 words max) biography, or a personal statement concerning you and your writing. Bios will not be considered during the selection process.

We also accept submissions of *cover art*: black and white drawings and/or photographs. All cover art submissions must be 5 x 7 or larger.

Please include your name, address and a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you wish us to return unaccepted submissions.

Send to: Editorial Staff
Apocalypse literary arts coalition
 Northeastern Illinois University
 5500 N. St. Louis Avenue
 Chicago, IL 60625

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From the editor:

It was my intention to save the world. But, unpredictably, the Marlboro Man developed lung cancer, and a shopping-mall mime told me that 'I am what I eat.' Then I couldn't decide whom I believed in the Thomas hearings and felt ill-prepared to deal with the fact that all the psycho serial-killers live in the suburbs. Consequently I gave up, tried to find a job, then settled for returning to college.

So one might naturally wonder what in the name of Mike Jordan has this to do with *American Goat*? It has nothing to do with the journal, really, except possibly suggest that it neither portends anything profound nor does it have some vague or mysterious agenda.

American Goat is meant, however, to be a medium (other than the U.S. Senate) that allows mention of Long Dong Silver while also appreciating the kinder gentler observation. It is our desire to print a wide variety of works ranging from Science Fiction to Romance, from Traditional narrative styles to that of the Experimental. Our editors wish to solicit new and established writers alike, therefore, bios are not considered during the manuscript evaluation process. We also welcome cover art submissions. All guidelines are detailed on the previous page.

Ok, I've spoken my shtick. I hope you enjoy the journal.

Sincerely,
 Shannon Thomas

american goat

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY 1

HOUDINI'S STOMACH, THROAT LIKE KAFKA'S

Trace Reddell

1.

Neither Houdini nor Kafka can eat. For several months, Kafka has subsisted on yogurt and nuts, a sparse vegetarian diet initiated in order to anger his father. But over the course of the last two weeks, he has eaten nothing. His throat has swollen shut to the extent that he can barely even take liquid. And he wouldn't make the effort if it weren't for the surprise visit of his old friend Harry Houdini. Harry pops the cork from a bottle of champagne and sits on the edge of Kafka's bed. The doctors of the Kierling Sanatorium have inserted a tube in Kafka's throat and Harry pours champagne, spilling much on the bed, into the hole. Kafka is dying of laryngeal tuberculosis. It's 1924. He's been begging the doctors for morphine but they keep giving him shots of camphor and Pantopon. These drugs had worked for a while but he wants more. All of this Kafka writes on a note pad for Harry to read. Harry leafs through more of

the pad and finds some old preliminary drafts of *A Hunger Artist*. Houdini never eats before a performance, he tells Kafka, and he's been so excited about an upcoming stunt that he hasn't eaten in over a week. Harry's chest is broad, his stomach flat and muscular, mythic. He stands beside the bed taking deep, vigorous breaths and although fifty years old, he is full of an almost boyish enthusiasm. Harry tells Kafka that he's just gotten back from a trip to Egypt and wonders if Kafka's ever seen the pyramids. Kafka shakes his head, no. In the year 1999, Harry says, New Year's Eve, that's where everyone's going to be, and they're expecting the pyramids to lift off into the air and go to the moon or further. If not that, the big pyramids will at least lift up into the air, just a little. At least that's what some people from Italy were telling him. Harry says he'd like to go there and disprove anything strange that might happen. Other than escaping death, exposing spiritualistic frauds was Houdini's favorite thing to do. The two things are intricately connected, he says. Kafka writes a note saying that he understands Harry perfectly and that he doesn't need to speak so loudly. He isn't old, Kafka writes, handing the note to Harry, then another begging for morphine. Houdini slips down the hallway and into the pharmacy, rips off a small vial and takes it back to Kafka. After fixing his friend, Harry decides to dose up himself. He'd had some laudanum slipped to him once in a glass of rum, at a seance, and he'd almost believed in that one, to the point that he'd told his wife, right in front of everyone, that if he died first he'd come back to her on Halloween night through a medium. Then he'd seen a face in the flame and, feeling the unusual tension in his head, ran to the bathroom to find his own face distorted in the mirror, flickering just as the vision in the

flame had earlier. He splashed his face with water and found the empty vial of the laudanum on the counter. He fought to overcome the drug's effects. Then he beat the shit out of the medium, a stocky little guy from France, and took his wife home. Still, the laudanum experience hadn't really been at all painful. He'd even kind of enjoyed it. And while he'd never planned on mainlining anything, when Harry sees the look on his friend's face, he decides it looks worth trying. Once he's taken the drug, he crashes out on the empty bed next to Kafka's where the day before an old guy had died of the same sort of tuberculosis. Harry dreams of being lowered into a pyramid on a rope, gagged, blindfolded, straightjacketed. It was like going down into a big, empty, never-quite-satisfied stomach. When he came out of it, he caught Kafka studying his face. Kafka wrote him a note asking him to water the flowers that filled his room. The next day Harry leaves for America, scribbling as he rides on the successful maiden voyage of the Hindenburg a sketchy account of his dream. He likes it so much that he passes it on to H.P. Lovecraft and the story gets written under the ghost name of H.H. Lovecraft. They call it "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs" and it comes out in the May 1924 issue of *Weird Tales* just a few days before Kafka's death in Kierling. Who would doubt how happy Kafka would've been to have read that story the night before his death instead of the proofs of his own last, failed effort, *A Hunger Artist*? Not Houdini. He knew better than he let on what lengths you'd go to escape from that place that was never your own.

Houdini and Kafka sit around a table drinking Mai-Tais and discussing the virtues of Prague's prostitutes. It's

heaven, they both agree. Quite the life. Houdini speaks of lost keys, Kafka of spacious rooms connected by winding hallways. With napkins, some business cards and bank receipts, Kafka builds a model pleasure palace as large as the surface of the table and three feet high, then Houdini takes a doll made of toothpicks and the decorative umbrellas from their drinks and places it inside. Houdini lights the model on fire, igniting it in various places with little drops of alcohol. While the paper model burns and catches the table itself on fire, Houdini repeatedly puts on a pair of handcuffs and slips out of them, taking less time with each effort. Kafka cracks a walnut between his hands and chews each kernel seventy-two times before swallowing. Both men are oblivious to the fact that the fire has spread from their table to the rest of the saloon, even when the bar collapses with a shatter of glass, and whores and lawyers and police commandants covered in quilts made by the whores' grandmothers orderly file past them into the snowy night.

After two years of written correspondence with Houdini, Kafka travels to America to meet the great escape artist. They meet in New York and travel by train to Appleton, Wisconsin, Harry's home town. They ride through the town in an antique horse-drawn carriage owned by Harry's father, past the little carpentry shop where Harry'd worked as an adolescent next door to the newsstand and smoke shop where his father had hung out. It's nearing Christmas and snow drapes over the roofs of the shops and houses like frosted icing. All of Appleton looks good enough to eat. Harry and Kafka go to the "Y" and lift weights. In a little room Harry'd gotten permission to build onto the locker room is a big clear tank filled with water and

on a bench next to the tank is a straightjacket, some thick chains and padlocks. Harry stands there without his shirt, in his underwear, taking deep breaths to warm up for the tank. He pats his handsome stomach and tells Kafka that he can take any man's punch, just as hard as possible, and he'll hardly flinch, and Kafka hits him before he finishes the words, right in the gut. Harry flinches but that's as phased as he looks and he laughs and Kafka says that he could escape the afterlife if he wanted, and Harry gives him a real close look and nods his head. Now Kafka and Harry climb onto the little platform on top of the tank and Kafka straps the straightjacket onto Harry and twists the chains around his legs and neck. Houdini is finally dropped through the trap door. For once, he doesn't come out breathing. Although it baffles the best doctors, they'll find out later that his appendix had burst because he'd been hit before he'd tightened his abdominal muscles and that he'd apparently died from an exceptionally rapid onslaught of appendicitis. That's why he hadn't made it out of the tank, not because he couldn't get out of the straightjacket or chains. A truly remarkable abdomen, the doctors will report, mythic in every proportion, even in its diseases. Kafka stares at the chains coiled up at the bottom of the tank, pulls Houdini's body out and lays it on the bench. He doesn't exactly know what to do with it, so just looks at the athletic torso and arms for a while before covering Harry's face with a calendar sporting different sorts of aircraft. The paper is thin and a water-blotch negative of Harry's face lifts up through the portrait of a German zeppelin. Kafka leaves the body there and walks to the house of Harry's parents. Always uncomfortable around old people, when Kafka introduces himself he can't help but think how much they

look like skeletons covered with brown wrapping paper and he feels embarrassed and unable to tell them about their son's death just yet. It's as though his throat has swollen shut. But fortunately for Kafka, Harry's parents think that he's come to pay a visit to their son and that Harry will join him there later. They show Kafka up to Harry's old room and invite him to play some records on the Victrola if he wants. Kafka gets a kick out of winding the handle too quickly, so that the horns of "Yankee Doodle Dandy" sound like needles on a blackboard. On a shelf in the closet, Kafka finds a box of old letters, the results, he comes to realize, of a publicity stunt he and Harry had put together over a year ago. Houdini's creative fans were asked to write up scenarios for his captivity and he would then perform them. Harry'd written Kafka that he'd received a lot of letters from people who had all sorts of deathtraps for Houdini. Some kind of fan mail. But as Kafka rifles through the letters, he finds that while every one is signed by a different author, they're all in Harry's own handwriting. Most of them take place in exotic lands Kafka knew Harry'd never been to, where he would be dropped into an Aztec pyramid or encased in a block of ice at the Antarctic. He'd written Houdini some wild ones, that's for sure, though they're a bit too dependent on padlocks and straightjackets for Kafka's tastes. Harry's mother calls for Kafka to come downstairs and get a piece of blueberry pie. He reorganizes the letters and goes downstairs to sit at the kitchen table and toy with the pie for a while without eating it. Harry's mother washes dishes and tells him how Harry'd made that table and how she wishes he'd have stuck to carpentry instead of trying to get himself killed every night. Now the old man comes in and tells Kafka about how he'd been in Prague during the world

war and how much he liked the whores there and Harry's mother threatens him with a rolling pin. Kafka lets the conversation drift around him, writes on napkins some possible life-or-death situations for Houdini. He ends up with two that he doesn't immediately throw away. In the first one, Houdini turns into a mole and has to cross a four-lane highway filled with trucks swerving with great speed. And in the second one, Houdini's a blind five-year old who walks a beach and gets taken by a wave. But this one's more enigmatic because of the bent and shadowy figure, like an isolated letter of the alphabet, which stands on the beach while the child get carried out into the Atlantic and jots down notes. The smell of Christmas cookies fills the room. This is when Kafka realizes that the difficulty of escape has to do with quickly adjusting to an alien mind. Harry's dad calls him in to join him in front of the fire and smoke some fine American tobacco, which he says he'd made a killing selling to German whores and deserters. Kafka feels queasy but suppresses the urge to vomit in front of the large old man. He sits in the creaking rocker made by Harry when he was eleven and tosses the napkins into the fire.

2.

Now Houdini's suspended above this Kafka, dressed up like a Senator wearing a skeleton-mask — he's a Dead Politician, he explains, ombudsman for the people from the Land of Shades that Still Can't Forget. Houdini can't move, caught up in a tree on the Pearl Street shopping mall. It's Halloween in Boulder, CO, and Kafka's braved the Mall Crawl, which isn't so much a festival as it is a mob-scene. A lot of people have brought their video cameras with them

and with the promise of being immortalized in some stranger's home movie, the crowd has been particularly explosive tonight. Someone just went through the window of Falafel King.

Almost everyone's vying for attention but this Houdini guy's the best, the energy of the whole crowd located in the body of some poor bozo dressed in a suit made of Budweiser cans and with a twelve-pack carton over his head. He can hardly move in his stiff armor — earlier, Kafka'd run into him downstairs at the Sundown where Houdini'd tried to play pool and ended up on the table with his legs stuck out behind him — he can hardly move and somehow there he is up in the tree.

When the Houdini-pheromone shot through the crowd, went from person to person like a charge between synapses, Kafka'd gathered around the tree with everyone else. The red light on someone's video camera is flashing and Kafka can see a little version of the guy plastered to the convex lens. Now some cops join the scene. Five guys dressed up like huge orange traffic pylons start cordoning off the area which pisses off someone on the other side of a cone and Kafka hears a bottle shatter. One of the cops goes over to talk to the cones.

Kafka looks up. The guy in the tree is big. He's gotten himself twisted around so that one of his legs is actually elevated above his head. As he moves around, his chest keeps him locked in place between two branches. His hands grip and loosen on air. Kafka looks down. That cardboard helmet will be useless on the bricks if he hits them head-first. This is going to be a tough one. Houdini's plowed too, probably psyched up on some kind of hallucinogen.

"Disperse!! Disperse!!" the traffic cones yell as they move from the tree and circle up just a little further off where a fight has broken out between someone dressed like an axe-murderer and a giant internal organ, a stomach with some intestine swung like a boa around the stub of esophagus. The bodies thud to the ground and most of the crowd flows toward the fight. Kafka keeps his place at the tree. He tries to maneuver so that he can see up into Houdini's eyes. He hopes to let something pass between them, to let him know that they've both come back, that their fates are somehow mutual. But he can't catch his eyes and figures Houdini's probably too busy adapting to the fabric of sound the drugs create, the generic blend of voices and sirens which suddenly locates itself in an isolated sobbing and a voice asking for a cigarette. Then the mind goes off wondering why asking for a cigarette should make someone cry or why the sound of crying might make someone ask for a cigarette. It's all connected, hideously connected, connected enough to drive him crazy. Kafka'd like to tell Houdini that these efforts at adaptation are pointless, it's the drugs making him think this way and they're distracting him from the escape.

The crowd surges around Kafka again, pressing him up tighter against the trunk. The fight's broken up and the police have handcuffed the axe-murderer. Between legs Kafka sees the big stomach lying on the ground with an axe lodged just below the esophagus. And now someone starts shaking the tree with both hands until a lady with a video camera tells him to cut it out and the guy smears some white pancake makeup all over the lens of her camera and some other guys dressed up like cave-men with day-glow fraternity caps pick him up and pass him over the heads of the crowd until he floats off like a tiny boat on the ocean. Above

Kafka, Houdini's body wriggles around like a metal larva and he's slipping downward and he's almost come out of his place between the two limbs. The cans crinkle and there's a shower of hot, sweet-scented beer. Kafka moves away from under the tree and even the cops are moving further back and so does the rest of the crowd until a sort of invisible boundary forms around the tree. Everyone knows he's falling. And Kafka knows, most decisively, that it's the real Houdini when the sirens of an ambulance trying to work its way *upstream* through the crowd sound like heaven's harps being torn apart and heaven itself is cracking open and up on the roof of Winberie's some girl dressed like an angel takes off her sheer robe and throws it into the air, holds out her arms and leaps off the building but the pack of fraternity guys who are supposed to catch her step back in unison and she hits the concrete with a wet sound. Now Kafka looks back up at the most recent incarnation of Harry Houdini, who disappeared before World War Two, whose absence should have signalled to everyone that there would be no more escapes, not from the rush of television Nazis hyping their way into the living rooms of the nation to kill off religion, to kill off the Jews, to kill off stage-magic, to permanently close the door of escape forever until they left him in this place of hysterical media overdrive where no Houdini could take him through the radio and carry him by soundwaves into the stars and to some planet where the broadcasts of his escapes are just now being heard, where he might hear the lock's tumblers click, when the straightjacket slips off and it's announced that Houdini's already been under the water, without air, for over twelve minutes, when — how does he do it? — he comes out breathing again and again. Kafka's waited so long for this. Meanwhile the

crowd taps with their feet against the brick sidewalk, sending a subterranean express telegraph to Houdini's bones, saying that they're getting tired of these routine shows of his, the losing streak that's lasted well over sixty years. But Kafka knows they're merely desperate and that they will, once again and as always, settle for failure. For it's these annual failures alone that punctuate the zero-time they all live in inbetween Halloweens. Behind Kafka, some paramedics drag the big stomach away, its intestine drawn tight as a tourniquet around the bleeding esophagus. A bloody patch remains on the bricks, barely visible on the periphery of this nucleus, and Kafka wonders if we'll ever reconcile the history of Houdini's absence and just move on? The sound of beer cans scraping against tree bark draws his attention upward. The guy yelps and someone in the crowd yells, "DO it!" Now he's suspended in mid-air with a good foot of space between himself and the tree. Kafka thinks like a prayer. May Houdini perform his escape tonight.

Clouds

She had a body
equipped with a fire escape,
thighs that could grip
like radial tires
where you could fit as tightly
as a fisted towel
dug deeply into a coffee mug.

She was desire on horseback,
sending you spiralling
into unconsciousness
with every steeplechase.

And she rode out of my life
when November clenched its teeth,
and particles of ice fractured
with cold indifference.

This is everything
that the mind remembers,
but the body wants
to forget: a codicil of lust
more perfect than death
and the sky, a history
of clouds breaking up.

Glen Brown

Inferiority

words whirl and buzz inside my head
a hive of outraged bees
and this is what I would tell you, doctor
...if I could

carpenter of pain
handyman deft in constructing egos
and demolishing insecurities
rummage in your repair kit
bring out the ready made, processed cure-all
and give me answers:

what hand has drawn the circle round my feet
and placed the hushing finger on my mouth?

marred and flawed
repelled by my own breathing
caged in the diving bell of self-hatred
I am the runner who falters and falls
and cannot rise, can never hope to touch
the winner's tape
forever hesitant, I am he who stands
before the door of love:

how can I face the firing squad
of the world's fierce measuring eye?

healer of the psyche
protected by knowledge
and appraising objectivity
behind your desk
nourish me with reassurance
comfort me with answers.

this is what I would tell you, doctor
...if I could.

Hannah Alexander

Safety Net

I catch inside you like a whisper:
how you would like to stitch
the air between us
into a web
how it hangs
like a hat
between us
how you would like to see it dissolve
from ice into water
how you would like to see it
become a book
that we could read
together
repeat after me
this is not an illusion
repeat after me
three times
in a whisper:
the air is a net that catches us
like flies
it is useless to struggle
the air is a net that binds us
catches us
when we fall

Effie Mihopoulos

Years Later, Sophia Starling Bennett Remembers Her Travels
With John Sprockett In The Colorado Territory In 1873

It wasn't landscape I went after,
but adventures big as my dreams
of escaping the kitchen-gardens of England.
My two sons and daughter would be horrified
that I longed to shrug off duty,
the prospect of a family, for the specious joy
of traveling with a half-corsair, half-poet.
I told my granddaughter,
a new woman learning the typewriter,
each key clattering "Freedom!"

All I can now recall of Mr. Sprockett's face
are those terrible scars, lightning-blasts
seared into his cheek by the bear he slew,
or so the story grew before I met him.
I dared not stare at their grim artistry.
Had I a daguerrotype of the man
I would have destroyed it when I wed Edward,
out of respect for the institution
and for his calling as healer to the poor.
Besides, the time for journeys was over;
England had won, and duty and usefulness.

When I learned that John had been murdered,
I sat for days in darkness; Edward, for once,
unable to ease the pain of another.
Memories shimmered, of kissing dreadful, raised skin:
for an instant, the beauty of Michaelangelo,
the saintliness of a man—lethal as a mountain—
who would have gladly died to see me smile.

I never regretted marrying Edward
and giving our lives to the care of the poor,

not even when my heart was ripped by John's death,
as if by his near-fatal, legendary grizzly.
Yet, some nights, I can still hear him
reciting Keats, the Bard, his own rough rhymes,
his hands gentle as if with an unnested owlet.
Early on, I forgave Edward for reserving
that touch for his most pitiful destitutes,
just as he never asked about John Sprockett
and our nights of holy flames amid the snow.

Robert Cooperman

The Paranoic

he lives each day as though he hears
the creak of tumbrils at the door:
above the roof, hawks nest in trees
poised to dive and blind
fallen apples burst with worms
cellar mice are unafraid
to gnaw foundations of his house

stones menace his uncertain step
each thrust of grass
becomes a thorn, and when he smiles
there is a grudging show of teeth:

with head in hands, love becomes
a plague created to destroy
music lies empty in his ears

from out the prison of the mind
he is paroled to Time who pours the years
a sour medicine, down his throat:

horsemen of the apocalypse
ride through his dreams, destroying earth
he cannot love: their midnight swords
find and pierce the mouths and hearts
he neither understands nor trusts.

Hannah Alexander

Background

Bob the moon
bops the sun
doffs his hat
cops a feel

His dreams were not his own. At first he was confused because he could not recognize the colors. Clearly this time was a place of its own making and he waited for the past.

Infinity closes in
languid
stretches
meets herself

But he woke and he was here.

Who hides the city
while the castle crumbles?

Jennifer Aquino

Getting Away

Vacations were always forced on us —
dragged every year to the Hotel Perdida
where there was nothing but boats in the bay
and bodies of starfish along the shore.
Clusters of sunbathers formed constellations
along the infinite stretch of beach
with that rambling hotel looking down on it all.

Guests who went there to meet other people
would stand alone on the flypaper floors
or stay in their quilted rooms waiting
for breakfast. And lunch. And dinner. . .
thinking of things they could do back home.
Or they'd wait for hours on the hotel porch
rocking in rhythm to no special tune.
If ever they'd speak to one another
their words would fall dead on the porch floor.

Postcards they mailed were cries for help
saying, "X marks the window of my room,"
or often hinting of wild times
with pictures of fish or boats in the bay
or beautiful girls at the Hotel Perdida.
In the Grand Ballroom of cream and gold
a few would dance their tangos of loneliness.
In the lounge of a thousand chairs
I'd only seen the manager's mother,
barefoot and petting a stray cat.

We could have left. We should have left —
the water was much too cold for swimming
and none of us cared for dogwood or sorrel.
But our parents lived up to their strict rule

that vacations must always be two weeks long,
so we'd suffer through one of them every summer
in this ancient hotel of listless people
where melancholy seeped up from the ground.
What if we ever came home too soon?
They'd probably feel they had failed as parents
or make up stories to tell their friends.

John Dickson

THE TRAIN OF THOUGHT

Terry Jacobus

The monarchs were gliding south. I was on the train of thought. It was Fall. There was no time. I answered the door on automatic.

"My name is First Love," she said.

"What do you want?"

"You should know."

She could feel the noise inside me. I opened the door wider. She came in and sat on my couch. I watched her think and it gave me pleasure.

The train would race inside you. Inhaling. Exhaling.

I turned on my cold kitchen light.

"I'll have a Seven/Seven," First Love said.

I served her in hearts and diamonds. I looked into her eyes and saw what I was supposed to see.

"What do you do?" She asked me.

"Look for truth," I said.

"Isn't that like smoking a cigarette at both ends?"

I sort of nodded my head.

The Fall sun was going down glazing the red trees of heaven, the golden maples, the oak reality.

As brilliant darkness settled in we played games with wild cards.

We got straights and flushes and pairs. We won and lost and won again.

Then we stood motionless and listened.

"It's always there."

"What?"

"The silence," I said.

I saw my reflection through the glass where the mirror is yourself and its depth the motions that you make. My spirit soared a story every micro-second.

"I'm a Cancer," First Love said.

"I'm a cure," I replied.

A whistle cried out and the train stopped for a moment.

"All I want is a house with a big backyard where we can grow potatoes and carnival colored zinnias and I'll take zinc."

We kissed.

"And we can ski down the fragrant slopes of winter. And we can have Christmas. The kind they show you in the movies if we're lucky."

"Are you lucky?" First Love asked.

"If love works it gets paid. That's the only luck I know."

She put on her lucky ring. She seemed so sincere. So beautiful.

So Queen Anne's Lace.

There was a tenderness in her sphere. A tenderness that never lets you forget how sweet the first dream really is.

I asked her what she was doing on this train.

She said she took it to get rid of her eX.

"Oh I know what you mean. I had an eX once. It lets you know you've got a mark."

I told myself that when First Love and I married we'd name our first child Oklahoma cause that's where my daddy was born. And we'd name our second Toledo cause that's where we met. I'd become an environmentalist and she'd be an actress that carried the sacred money charm.

Eventually we'd be warm castles in each other's moat hearts, stretching our imaginations into the good and evil doors of knowledge.

When the train hit the station we both knew well we got off and hung out in one of those dugouts where they sell it all from wisdom to whiffle balls.

It's a place where you find everything you are. Everything you want. Everything you're afraid of.

Outside the streets reeked of beauty and ugliness. Caught between a crossfire of the living and those that pretend to live.

"Want some?" First Love said.

"What have you got?"

She showed me a prescription of nothing and everything and we took it all. Then we walked the city streets wearing poetry as a glorious rage upon our sleeves. We carried delicate beauty through mazes of people until the beauty wore off and you wished yourself home.

We finally cabbed our way back to the train and found ourselves. When we got there we rode an elevator up

to a party thrown by beautiful older people.

The beautiful older people said the party was for the poet who died.

I apologized because I knew so many so many dead poets I was near death myself.

First Love squeezed my hand. I resurrected. We mingled and the train moved fast.

"Hey First Love's boyfriend, where you been all night?"

It was another voice from the train.

"I've been alone with First Love," I said.

"You just look alone to me."

First Love and I drifted in a precious package.

We were plain souls in undefined morality. When we left the party we signed the dead poet's ledger and took a holy card that I saved. Then we grabbed the elevator down where we stayed.

Before she said goodbye we played the peace/war game until we both surrendered at the right time parting in one childish piece.

"It's always there you know."

"What?" I said.

"The silence," she replied.

And First Love never lied.

And First Love never died.

She Is Gathering

Three eggs wait beside a mixing bowl,
the wall clock hums,
she sits at the oakwood table,
gathering folds of her apron
like children in her lap,
static-ridden voices on the long distance line
that only call before 5:00 on Sundays.

swoosh, swoosh, her pink taffeta skirt,
the World War II Victory Dance...

Cape Cod, she and Al on the shore,
waves speeding white toward their honeymoon
cabin
and receding,

back and forth...

for years, a ring of children in the yard
hand-in-hand, rushing together,
pulling outward.

Yesterday, Hugh called, her oldest son,
from where voices bounce off steel-and-concrete,
echo in subways.

She told him about the day
he and the other children stretched
their circle too far, fell
laughing on the ground,
wouldn't come in for lunch.
Was it really Hugh's voice,

hollow, changed, "Ma,
I don't remember."

Ellen Lieberman

Tectonic Shift

the Hauchucas
pre-empt my horizon

bump across the picture window

like a mountainous
herd of pachyderms

meandering south
toward Mexico

Sheryl L. Nelms

Round Trip

A) JERUSALEM.

All the values I grew up on crystallize
in the clear air
and are a burden on my shoulders.
Too many holy walls, too many stones
with heart*
make me small.
The Muezzin calls, the church bells ring
obstinacy
and children wearing yamulkas running across the
Via Do lo Rosa
the echo of their joy floats between the market stands, mixes
with the spices' hot smell and
evaporates.
Nothing of this reaches the silence of millions
of graves planted on the hill slopes
down to the valleys.
On Mount Scopus, a nonchalant camel
ruminates while excited tourists ride it
and video cameras roll.
Beyond the Judean Desert the Dead Sea winks from the lowest
place on earth
as if it knows how much I envy the foreigner's
euphoric admiration of the place
that I was taught to love.
I wasn't a very good student.

*There is a popular Israeli song that says that the stones of the Wailing
Wall possess a human heart.

B) CHICAGO.

My first grade teacher said the sun always sets in the sea*
and it really did, at Sharon Beach,
making a perfect movie setting for my first kiss,
which had a sandy taste.
It took me many years to understand that the sea
isn't in the west everywhere.
Maybe only now, in a boat on Lake Michigan, when Chicago's

sky-line appears in front of a true red satin curtain,
I realize that sometimes the sun can set in O'Hare.
I tell my three year old, "Look!"
my hand points towards the highest tower on earth,
which proudly rips the pink haze.
But she keeps nagging me to go to McDonald's.
She doesn't understand why all of a sudden I say,
"It doesn't matter where the sun sets when you have your
first kiss. . ."
she hugs me in the
quilt of darkness.

* The Mediterranean Sea creates the western border of Israel, so in
Hebrew the word sea is also a synonym for the word west.

C) TEL-AVIV.

Nervous drivers fill the moistened air with horns
which fly above the white Bauhaus
buildings like a group of frightened birds
disappearing behind the line where the sky meets the sea.
Every wave that touches the warm sand brings another
memory. I can dive beneath them and be back in the womb.
The first Hebrew city is a young woman,
her light curls floating around the changing
hue of her eyes.
She is wearing a see-through blouse
over her naughty breasts.
I hate and love her capriciously
like every other part of me.
It's home.

Haia Prossor

The Cruellest Month

After winter's final snowfall
melted, the backyard was a mess—
strewn with deflated camisoles, Cola
cans, tennis balls. Twigs snapped
off, making room. Buds pointing up,
like rude, sticky fingers. Antennae
wavering, an insect paused: anything
doomed may have a fine sense of it.

Thunder, rain, blood. Sprawled on
the lawn, gladiator schoolboys
pummelled their prey; spectators
cheered. An authentic rainbow
shot a wet arc behind billboards,
rooftops. Sibilant winds stung
the birth laden trees, forcing them
to eject their leaf-pods, headfirst.

Gertrude Rubin

Past Lives

When light falls in a shark's slant,
when it glances off the fins of the river,
an image returns, a moment that remains

intact as a photograph: a child
swimming under the musculature of moving
water, diving for stones; that woman

beneath a broad-brimmed straw hat,
shadows obscuring her face.
Where are they now?

I left them behind. But when
did one life move into another
without announcement like

a snake sidewinds through sand,
leaving a linear imprint?
How many skins are left to shed,

how many friends, where are the men
who held me once and no longer remember?
Are they going home to dinner, children, wives?

If you listen, the past is a husk,
a whisper in scorched grass, breath drawn
through marrowless reeds. What

we fear is cold-bloodedness, how easily
we slip from one life
into the next.

Beth Copeland Vargo

Peter Stubbs Packs Up And Flees To Chicago Via Time Machine To Escape Bad Press

*pursued by the mob of townspeople
and the shaky glow of their torches,
he finds refuge crouching under a mossy bridge.*

-- Billy Collins

Imagine somewhere in Chicago,
he takes out the folded Tribune ad
stuffed loosely in his shrunken trousers
with growling, snarling defiance,
his restless, furtive eyes glowing
under the hazy light of the full moon.
"Call a Gregory Clinic today for permanent removal
of unwanted facial and body hair..." It reads.

What could this be, he wonders.
He had petitioned the devil,
even omitted the parsley from his cauldron
of hemlock, opium and henbane on occasion,
hoping for smoother, hair-free skin.
And now he was only a phone call away!

Imagine his brilliant, white teeth flashing
beneath his yellow-green eyes,
dark patches of fur standing on end
as he reads about the International Academy
of Professional Electrologists, modern alchemists
with state-of-the-art technology.

More effective than rye, mistletoe and yew,
he supposes. It's time to escape
certain beheading, the ubiquity of legend
and the bad PR that folklore had produced
these past four hundred years.

"Sure I'm a bit overzealous at times
with some girls, but linking lycanthropy
and parthenophagy is iconoclastic,"
he mutters to himself.

Near a telephone booth, somewhere in Chicago,
he paces wildly in circles.
He removes his wolf-skin belt,
rolls around in the dirt three times, then dusts off
his soiled trousers. A cloud crosses the moon
as he begins to dial...

Glen Brown

Union Depot

All things are echoes —
suitcases klumping
gates clanging
people who wait for the night train.

We sit on a hard bench
hair and fingernails growing
to wait for the train's arriving and leaving
its coming and going.
I am a seagull mired in oil.
She is wearing a mask with no mouth.

The voices of sailors who have no ocean
the footsteps of soldiers who have no war
the banging of baggage
the various bells —
everything is an echo.

I say, Of course I will write,
but her eyes are grey with doubt.
I dredge up legends of memory
recall our afternoons by the river
our evenings on the porch —
guitars and roses and silvery moon —
but she is like someone already gone.
My words are mementos tossed into a grave.

The hanging clock clacking its minutes
echoes in the cathedral fog.
Even the shunting of freight in the distance
and the deep drone of the station master

blend into leftover rumbles of thunder.

People walk by like migrations of birds
their minds filled with different faraway places.
We follow them to an iron gate
and I watch as she walks away to the train,
stare after the leaving her.

I walk through streets that no one knows
in a world reduced to cigars and saliva,
pass restaurants of shabby night
recalling the echoes of her face,
aware that nothing has ended.

John Dickson

SOW MOTHER

Jennifer Aquino

I am the keeper of the pigs, midwife to the sows. I live in a house of tin, a bucket surrounded by a stench of waste that I no longer notice. I have big bones and soft hands, but who is there to notice me? My charges are pink and their sparse hair is white and only those of us who know them well know there is hair. I do not love these charges of mine, this is only a farrowing factory and I am the line supervisor.

I name them Maude 3 and Sara 5 and Elise 4 and it is I who decided when Maude 2 had to go. Someone else picks the new Maude, the new Maude was under my care once before. My duties cover the newborn to a mere three weeks, and, of course, the sows. This is their fulfillment and their death.

My days and nights are long; they run on into the

fall 91

other. I rise before the sun, padding naked in front of my windows, for who is there to see? Even the pigs lay enclosed within metal and do not see the night. I brew the coffee of the morning and by the afternoon it tastes as it should.

My dress is always the same; it is no dress at all but only manpants and a manshirt over cotton underthings that are indeed a woman's, mine. Coveralls to cover and boots of rubber. These boots must be replaced, for the acids and the grime eat their fill no matter how much I keep them clean, which I don't so much now. My hair is long, luxurious—does that surprise you? You wouldn't know, I wear it pulled severe, but at night I spend long minutes under the running water, scrubbing away the stench, thinking the stink goes down the drain with the swirling. And I brush 1000 strokes.

I check the temperature for the sows, and make sure they are well ventilated. I feed them, check their water. They eat like pigs; it is their only pleasure, but one. Sometimes I will scratch them behind their sow's ears, and they don't know it's not a silken purse. Then I walk the line.

They come to me when their time is near and so I check these first for signs. On to the already mothers. These are separated from their children by metal bars. We cannot allow closeness, bonding, for the sow might crush the delicate ones, and so the children huddle together a foot away, while she lays on a cement (warmed) pad, her teats exposed. Sometimes, though, a child desires his mother and somehow squeezes through. Sometimes I remove them warm and alive, sometimes still.

I assist the new ones into this world, and I decide if they are big enough and healthy enough to stay. I'm good at this. Some are too small, or have no teats, or have organs

of both sexes, or deformations. If they are odd enough, I call the University; sometimes they want these. Otherwise, I put them to rest, their tiny bodies pyred, the ashes sent to make food.

Three weeks, then they must grow up. I remove sharp teeth which they might use to eat each other's tails. The smaller young boars I turn to barrows, removing their tiny acorns. I use a very sharp knife. The initiated use their teeth to prove their manhood, spitting out the tiny seeds and laughing.

Those not cut are sent to grow and be tested, living in a bachelor paradise. They exist solely to spurt semen into artificial vaginas. A good boar will fall in love with the fake sow. Sometimes, if the libido is lacking, they will get to mount a real female, but the sperm will be detoured and she will never receive his gift. The sperm are studied, separated, extended, frozen, and shipped in glass vials.

When the cycle of the sow dictates, she will be washed, poked, prodded, and inseminated with the contents of the vial, and sent to me. Each sow must be identified. The tags are metal and are stapled into their ears. All the ears have notches. When they were babies, I notched them with the ear punch. It looks just like a paper punch. The notches are identification, in case the metal tag should ever be torn free.

In the summer, young men from the University come to learn from us. They will never be the farrower; that is for women. They are with me for three weeks and I am to show them all I know in that time.

Today, my first summer man arrives. He looks like the others. He smiles and speaks to me, and tells me I have lovely hair. He compliments my competence and assists to

pull five, six, seven from Maude 3.

Number seven is too small and a hermaphrodite. This one must go, I tell him. He asks, do we have to? I consider making him do it, he should learn, but I take the tiny pink thing and pull the membranes from the nose and allow it to take life from the air. It breathes and squeals exuberantly.

I take it to my house of tin and swaddle it in wraps and turn on a lamp for warmth. I feed it with milk from its mother's teat. She will never miss this tiny bit. The battle of the hormones does not affect the appetite of this one. I can't decide on a name.

Later that night, the summer man pays a call. I ask him of his life at the University and does he have a girl. He strokes my hair and holds my hands, and asks if they are so soft from the time spent in birthing? He watches me feed the little one and christens it Mo.

He comes to us often, reminding me of life outside. I was not always mother to the sows. I too was at the University, I learned my trade there. I knew people; they knew me. I lived like the others, with the others, in high-rise dormitories where laughter echoes and we made jokes about the food. I wore a robe and a smile at my graduation. When I became sow mother, I left all that behind, becoming grim reaper to creatures which are only hams and pork chops after all.

My summer man laughs when I speak of the grim reaper. Melodrama, you are just a farrowing house manager. It's a good job, isn't it, a free place to live, all the meat you can eat, virile young men? I ask him why he wanted me to save Mo, if all it was was meat. I felt sorry for it, he said. He told me I needed a pet, why not Mo?

Why not Mo? Mo was a good pet, clean and soft. I told my summer man I was glad he had me save the pig. He would scratch Mo's ears and stroke my back and watch me in the moonlight.

When summer left, so did my summer man. I shed no tears, but Mo missed him. I moved Mo outdoors, for Mo had grown and no longer fit in the box. I built a pen and kept it clean. Mo would play and never eat like a pig, always fastidious, never rooting in the dirt.

Fall is like the spring after all. Only summers are different. I am still big-boned and have my long hair. But, my hair seems even thicker, as do I. I can't abide the smell of the morning coffee, and spend an hour retching before I can even find the strength to feed my Mo.

Mo is maturing. The sex organs have grown and both sexes are easily discernible. The male gonads are like pink buds, lying below the exposed and oversized vulva.

I wonder can Mo conceive? Can he impregnate herself? I see Mo watching me and I look away from those small wise eyes. How is it I cannot look a pig in the eyes? I should get rid of Mo, there is no use for a pet pig of any sex, much less two.

I get thicker along with my hair. I have missed my monthly bleeding and since being sow mother I have been as regular as one of my sows. Does Mo have a cycle I wonder, a lunar or solar, a male or female, or has Mo developed a Molar cycle, rising with testosterone and falling with progesterone, fertile and virile at the same time?

Now when I walk the line I hear those fat sows snickering as they lay on their sides. Does she have a nice warm cement pad? Who will remove her young and

separate them from her by bars? Will her teats have abundant milk as ours?

I make the appointment with the doctor in town. I know what he will tell me. Like me, the doctor is a specialist. He grins as he gives me the news, isn't it wonderful? I ask if he can rid me of it and the grin fades, he writes down an address, and hands it to me.

I go home to Mo. I tend to the work. The sows laugh openly now, the tiny piglets squeal with delight, scampering and cavorting, full of glee, pig glee.

I stand in the morning shower, washing out the stench. I stand a long time and imagine I can see my belly grow. My breasts, never big, are big now, but brown, not pink, like teats. Eventually, the water turns cold.

Sow mother, earth mother, mother-to-be, what right have I, keeper of the pigs, to maintain this life, to choose not to terminate, not to abandon it to the pyres of the baby dead?

My cycle is still incomplete and I am wretched, still retching in the morning. Should I call the summer man? I can't even remember what he looks like. He looks like Mo. Or Mo looks like him, or me.

Three months now. Mo is reaching puberty, the puberty of the doublesexed. I am the decision maker who will not decide.

In the end it is Mo who decides for me. Calling to me in the light of the night. I go to Mo and open the gate. I follow Mo and s/he leads me past the tin abodes of pigs and men to the fields now barren, the short dry stalks poking insolently upward. S/he trots expectantly to the middle of the field. Have you ever seen a pig trot? It moves the bulk easily, gracefully.

I am still the uninitiated. I keep my knife strapped to my belt and it is sharp. My boots are cracking, it is time to buy new ones. I look into those eyes and see my love for Mo reflected there. Then I take the knife and make a grin, under the chin, from ear to ear. Then I remove the small pink seed sacs and sit with her in the field till the moon passes and the sun rises red.

Blow Job

Alone

at the summit
of a gray granite arete,
my teeth twist a smile.

Below me lies the world

a world I created, understood,
built with my cracked nails
and carefully chosen words.

Then Sara's

soft palm and fingers
tenderly touched my exposed prick
and I slipped off. . .
And I chose to fall
from my gender
my cold majestic maturity.

In silent shock

i lie
in her arms
like enormous death
quiet changes working quietly.

Randall Foster

A Letter To Carol

What I need is some wide open space:
an empty landscape to match this empty page.
Ice boats gliding on a frozen lake
far, far away. . .

Across the street Russian immigrants
air their bedding from concrete balconies,
white sheets frozen stiff as sailcloth.
Geraniums sleep in urn-shaped planters.
Buried seeds, never to awake.

Carol, you sent the same quote
two years in a row. Once, xeroxed on the back
of your letter; again, typed and pasted
on a postcard:

Who can deny the thrill
that comes with the realization
that less than 20,000 years ago
the site of Chicago lay under
a sheet of ice as
enshronds Antarctica today?

We are still in that glacial grip.
Limbs of a water oak split with the weight
of sleet, pulpwood splintered to slivers and sap.
Earth creaks with ice, cracks in the crust
buckle with rock, frost-thrust. The river hardens
to stone beneath its skin of ice, refuses
to flow south. Every time I speak
something freezes in my mouth.

Shafts of sunlight reflect from blank windows
across the street, striking flints of snow on the
sidewalk.
I'm remembering a white clapboard house across the
street
in the North Carolina town where I grew up,

watching from the porch one night as it went up
in flames. . .

How can I describe these winters?
Did I mention our janitor thawing frozen pipes
with an acetylene torch and almost setting himself
on fire?

Or the winter of 1979 when the blizzard hit
and trains shuddered and stalled on the tracks?
My face was like glass in that brittle wind.
I waded to the bus stop in snow up to
my thighs, trying to get downtown to teach
my first class at Roosevelt, cursing
as the buses passed, already packed,
and I crawled back to the apartment in tears,
falling face-first in a bank of snow
scorched with yellow dog-piss holes.
How could I have forgotten to tell you that!
And a year later when our child was born
we rode to the hospital on a night
so clear the stars seemed carved
from milk quartz.

And now I haul the child behind me
on the sled as we trudge to the grocery store.
She whines about the sparks of snow
that shoot from the runners and pierce her eyes.
I whisper, Hush up. We'll be there
in no time.

The worst thing about these winters
is how slow your life becomes, how even a trip
around the block takes twice as long.
Overhead, telephone wires crackle inside casings of ice,
voices carried on glass cables across the prairies.
That electricity, the words you write,
my daughter's warm breath turning the air white
as she rides behind me, the crunch
of my boots in sleet-crusting snow. . .

I'm writing this as we go.

Beth Copeland Vargo

Cantata For Tires And Wind

Spotted on the side
of the road like
caterpillars
black tires and metallic
strings torn from their
whole
lay with feet ripped open
in a terrible wind.

This is not like Bach's Mass;
this would not have happened.

The voices and instruments
would have stayed together,

not dispel on impact
into a scenery of trees.

Bill Hennessey

The Dig

To resurrect
an image of your face
I sift through years of sand
but when I close my hand
nothing is there.

Why dig up old bones,
stir up fire pits.
I should be glad
we never grew to look alike
or bickered over bridge.

If we met
would you forget my name?
Would it come easily
as a coin at your feet,
or would you mumble syllables
as you tried to winnow memory?

I tossed your photograph,
old letters,
into a pyre of leaves.
All that remains
is the silver violin
pinned to my coat,
to many coats.

Silver doesn't burn.

Constance Vogel

Gifts From God

Hillside, Illinois — Joseph Reinholtz, after making a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, was divinely directed to Queen of Heaven Cemetery, where he was healed from blindness before a cross that some say bleeds, changes color and turns rosaries to gold.

— from a news story

They are discovered on tortillas,
on cankered walls in distant villages,
in bowling alleys and on strands
of pasta printed on Pizza Hut billboards—
these messages of fasting, faith and peace,
gifts from God to his people,
the Roman Catholic Archdiocese.

But this is the place of miracles now:
Hillside, Illinois, at the Queen of Heaven
Cemetery, where people drop by
before tennis and brunch
at the Oakbrook Mall
to watch their rosaries turn to 14k gold
with a Midas prayer
before a bleeding, chameleonic cross
far from the villages
where sins are forgiven just for devotion,
and a diet of cures and conversions
is served for the faithful each day
before a weeping Virgin icon.

Ask Joseph Reinholtz.
He saw it with his own eyes.

Glen Brown

I'm doing things today
that I haven't done in a long time
eating fruits
talking to Donald
reading poetry
I received old letters, clogged in the mail
I saw old movies, black & white
and old friends
what shadow of catastrophe do they imply
or does it merely mean that I am getting old
and old things seem familiar?

Effie Mihopoulos

Impression: Camille

She was part of Monet's pastel landscape,
that pastiche of pink snows in Argenteuil,
posed in a field of summer weeds and poppies,
her bouffant skirts and muslin petticoats
spread out like a parachute, a dark girl
in a green-striped dress, looking over
her shoulder at us from another world.

It's hard to bring her face into focus
as she leans dreamily from an open window,
watching white sails passing on the Seine,
champagne-colored light christening the stones.
Her face is the featureless face of a woman
drowned and miraculously revived, the face
of others who have moved into a bruised fog
as an empty boat might drift off the edge
of its canvas without leaving a trace.

If you take a few steps backward,
you can see her face more clearly.
Young Woman in a Massif of Dahlias.
Femme en Rose. Camille reclining
on a flower-chintz chaise in Paris,
her womb torn from a clumsy abortion.
Was she thinking of peaceful places

in that laudanum-dulled pain, of the garden
in different grades of light, of blue-and-white
vases from Holland, a spray of chestnut blossoms?

At daybreak he sketched the thin
wash of September light as it crossed
her face, famous for its clouded beauty,
the eyes always shaded by parasols and bonnets,
submerged in an arch of ivy and wisteria.
Death's palette had no black. Pigmentless,
white and swift, the alizarin crimson
hemorrhage staining her nightdress until
nothing was left but Camille's table set
with melons and bread, wine, an empty glass.

Beth Copeland Vargo

DIARY OF SUBSTANCE

John Jacob

1) Percocet/July

Cold flashes so hard that my teeth chatter and my guts feel like liquids being frozen. Strange smells—blood, a nasal infusion. I feel like the membranes are collapsing, dominoes, rows of chairs, piles of books toppling. And then the burning in my heart, just blood infused with dissolved crystalline powder, and the smooth muscle interaction that drops a lid over my eyes.

I stay awake.

2) Hydrocodone with APAP/August

It goes right to the gut and hangs there in the balance. Fingers tingle until, from fear, I take a Tigan against the sea of nausea on neural ends. My skin jangles and pops, feels like it will come loose in my hands. I hold

it together until the drowsiness floods my body like a warm rippling wave from the sea in summer.

3) Opium w/Belladonna; Codeine; Caffeine/September

Hot tingles and a version of chills across my abdomen, my chest. The buzz in the back of my head carries across my body like a wave rolling in sand by the sea. My voice grows hoarse and I jitterbug in the cool air from the window. I stumble on stairs but can't stop moving. When I do, my hands drop like lead weights at my side.

Nothing moves. I absorb the wind and the TV's ion, frozen forever in this heat, in this icy permanence.

4) Flagyl/September

Sleep pours over me in waves, as I imagine drowning to be as it begins, for the real act of drowning involves strangulation, swallowing liters of water, vomiting one's life away. But it begins like Robinson Crusoe waking up, in the sand, the bright seafoam upon him like a blanket some airy hand draws away and replaces until he awakens.

This sleep is airy but deep, and I don't turn often, don't open my eyes, dream in the physical frame within my mind, an orange pallet upon which I draw figures and scenes, then wash them away like shallow paints.

And I do not remember. I drag myself up and down stairs, only to fall back into states I cannot control.

5) Opium by Mouth/September

The gut winds about, serpentine. The object is to

relax the smooth muscle fiber without opening its valves and other machinery, like hoses. The villi and the colonic bacteria still need to do their work. So the opium goes up and down, clouds both the brain and the small intestine, but only temporarily. Sleep, and all returns as it was. There is no cure.

But to think of deQuincy, of Polidori, those laudanum addicts. Surely it was different for them. Do I trade years for shades of normalcy now, for ecstasy, for equilibrium? I want to sink slowly to the floor but can't.

I have things to do.

6) Rectal Opium/October

Moon of the Falling Leaves, I cannot forget. Snow like a filter over the black leaves carpeting the street, obliterating gutters. My left toe's boot admits rain. The substance floods my brain like a sponge thrown into a bucket of soapy water. My abdomen is instant anaesthetic, armor against pain. My eyes burn at the corners, but I force them open to the splendor of the last leaves dying on the limbs of trees, in heaps on the ground, strewn about in brush like discarded papers.

These effects will last a long time, and as time passes, my nerves jangle like a telephone turned up loud, like someone sneaking up from behind, like fires burning and crackling of which I am the most insignificant part.

7) Darvocet/November

The cold floats about the window whose screen has never been washed, amassing strength against the rippled

waves of radiator heat. I watch it with dull fascination until my colon rumbles for the fifth and final time, its nerve endings telling me the Darvocet was not a good idea, and I spring up and rip my belt off and bolt out the door.

The bathroom lights are off; I flick them on and lunge into the first stall, fumble with my pants zipper and snap, push pants, underwear, socks down onto my boots and collapse onto the toilet seat.

It is as if my body is coming apart, cell by cell. Pain floods through my temples and I hunch down against the abrupt onslaught of diarrhea. It is green, fat, frothy, with bits of collagen and red-flecked intestinal tissue spotted throughout. Disgust is beyond me, behind me. All there is is this moment, on this toilet, in this stall, me, alone in the world, defenseless, no matter what waits outside.

8) Rectal Opium w/Belladonna/December

My voice is gone. Shouting and a drying of the secretions has finished what little was left. Outside the breeze is soft, supine. Warmth within grows like an ember dipped in ash. The fire burns my eyes at their edges, numbs the frozen shock of cramps in my chest and back.

It is like the entry wound of a bullet: cold and sudden, then hot and forever. I would like to take parts out, like bullets, foreign objects, fishhooks, small growths. Take them out and sew it up.

Turn my back to the night's mysteries like my body has turned itself upon me.

9) Dilaudid/December

Pain to my eyelids. Dizziness like rolling black waves. It is all gone out of me now.

10) Percocet; Lomotil; Rectal Opium/February

Now I rest. I am flooded with chemicals, and electrolyte imbalances. The drug that kills the pain smooths out the colonic nerves and muscle, the bowel becoming a tube whose vacuum flow is reversed.

When I walk out in the damp, unseasonable fog, I take slow, short steps, zen-like in their precision, to slow the flow of rectal bleeding. I want to leave it to the devices of the storm, to let it drown in the low waves that wash from the lake, up onto the black rocks of night.

This chiefly pains me. Not to live with half a lung and half a heart, but the thing entire that will not, that does not work. This unnameable thing heaps me, burns at my groin and my eyes, my clothes shrouds in which I live in this fog, outside of this fog.

I think suspenders.

I think blood.

I think colostomy.

And I arch my back in swells of cramping against the fabric of the rocking chair. My fingers swell and tingle. This is all.

Tomorrow, Tylenol #4. The pharmacists shake their heads.

Outside, in the warm sunny air, I hold the amber bottle to the sky and wonder how long it will last, how far I can walk, how long I can last.

In Winter

In winter the naked trees seem
to reach higher, into fields above the wind—
When light drops
anemic ash around the body
one remembers
the raised silence of lovely things
surpassing the frosty forest.

Carol Granato

Psychopath

hoopla!
here I am, king of the maypole
unreachable, surveying the dance
of those who circle round me

mother, father, holding fast
to the streamers of guilt and love
siblings, clutching ribbons
of envy and hatred-
and you, doctor, capering as they do
bound to me by compassionate hope

all of you my prisoners forever
chained by a mood, perversion,
whim that quickens or slows the tempo
of the idiot ballet I choreograph

on my airy pinnacle I reign
beyond seduction of tears or words
never beguiled by pity, since only I
feel neither love nor remorse nor shame
having been born desensitized
to awareness of evil:

hoopla!
triumphant, untouchable,
I am king of the maypole
with empire inviolable
salute me, make your obeisance,
bow low to me who rules your lives!

Hannah Alexander

Paperwhites

Defying gravity, the blossoms rise
from a bowl of stones, like origami birds
balanced on ibis-leg stems.

We take relief in small measures
of defiance: in this green and white
flower forced from winter's

dormant bulb; in Julie's dream
of snow falling on summer's hottest night,
moving in her sleep into fields

of seamless flower and freeze,
accepting these fragrant white rebellions,
this gift of energy, released.

Beth Copeland Vargo

Instructions To A Novice Gardener

When I die, place a cutting of me
in a glass of clear water. Days
later, observe a pale-eyed foetus
swimming wildly along the sides.
Unravel its tangle of afterbirth,
plant it in your backyard. Next,
watch a shiny green head puncture
the soil, arms jabbing at the sun.
By midsummer, you'll recognize me—
near the fence, third plant right:
clotted with leaves and toughening.

Gertrude Rubin

Worlds In Transition

We left that El Cajon treetop far behind
With the Bitch in the Bar hussling
Long-haired greasy shitheads.
The white van pulled into a truckstop
Along the interstate late at night
for some regular gas and rubber cheesecake.
The kids were asleep in the back
But they stumbled into the sticky restroom.
The forty-year-old waitress in pink polyester
Had her black hair pulled back in a bun.
"What'll ya have?" she asked, cracking her gum.
Black coffee, a snort of crystal
and back on the road again.

Jeffrey L. Waters

Lately I've Been Opening Lids

On all the containers,
 hiding places, I always loved
 those carved wooden boxes,
 inlaid roses on the covers,
 Baskets, Chinese woven,
 black-ivory checkerboard,
 Hand-painted canisters, Ginseng
 leaves, berries on black;
 Lids to open, drop in bits—
 a rhinestone off the street,
 an orange glass marble,
 the kind Helen used to fry
 in her Mom's pan.

But I'm finding scraps,
 lost buttons, paper clips,
 names of books I've meant to read,
 phone numbers. . .to something.
 I go back.

The top drawer of a wooden dresser
 I last closed twenty years ago
 at the cottages in Union Pier—
 three comic books and
 a drawing, crayon, I remember
 choosing the different greens
 for the trees of Warren Woods.

My old dorm room in Evanston,
 down from the closet shelf,
 caked in dust, the blue jewelry box
 Dad bought me the week before college.

Inside, the ballerina,
 one arm broken, still
 guarding: a pendant without a chain,
 diamond dangling in a gold heart,
 a key—bicycle, I think,
 silver earrings Sue made, ART 105,
 a piece of raw amethyst,
 a lead elephant, thumb-nail sized.

I reclaim each to my fingertips,
 the familiar
 curves, textures, weights in my hands,
 then crank
 the ballerina alive
 to music box song.

Ellen Lieberman

Dreaming The Net

Where else but the depths
of a cool dark, here where

Her embrace surrounds you
rewards you

Reminds you of the place
of the thousand sighs

Jennifer Aquino

A Dream Of Beauty And Loss Of Symmetry

Snow falls upon the city where cars sleep
in single file under lamplight
burning long into the night. Maples and elms
moan in a mad duet, and the light
hurtles somewhere else at light speed.

Once we watched each crystal explode
into an eternity of dreams upon the glass.
You said each fractal held a replica of itself—
a hexagon of reflections in a kaleidoscope
of mirrors. The stars had disappeared.
The clouds had ushered them away. And then
only the moon lingered, its pale light insisting
without confidence, borrowed from one last star.

Tonight we wake to the sound of steam
knocking like a metal lung
while moonlight dozes on our floor, and plows
rumble from their sleep to shoot white dust,
like an opiate, into the veins of Chicago.

Glen Brown

Elbow

I am in love with
a word.
I glide
down its
'l' and
'o'.

It doesn't sing
of joints or creak
of cartilage,
but croons of
consonants,
and tastes
of watermelon
vowels.

Ell-bow.
I have not felt
like dancing on
the grace notes
of a sound
since
'limm-pid'.

Constance Vogel

A Short Romance

He waited nervously beside the concession stand.

"Can I buy you a coke or something?"

He asked with hands in pockets.

"No thanks," She said,
Smiling much too widely.

He didn't say, "I've loved you since the second grade."

She didn't say, "You've never been quite good enough."

"OK, see you later," He said,
And went back to the gym alone.

Jeffrey L. Waters

LAST EVENING

Thomas M. Hochman

Marco pulled the knife from his stomach, muttered "Shit" and sat and sighed, then he lay down with his hand to his headache and went to sleep.

Just as Marco had never died before, Dale had never killed anyone. So he knew this was the big one and he, too, got a headache. It was rare for Dale to ever really express himself in any way: Dale felt his first catharsis since potty training, and as far as he was concerned, it wasn't good. Creatively, Dale's life had been limited to explaining his own stupidity.

As Marco lay his lack of familiarity and discomfort became nested and conventional. Dale and Marco's argument had its roots in Monka: the Papuan ritual of pride and pig exchange. So naturally Dale's primary concern was what

his status at school might be, which for anyone else would be moot.

The buildings grew and began to lean. As darkness did its thing, the paint can bore itself into Dale's behind, and a car collided with a person and his street light at the corner, and a fire escape wavered. Wind blew the clouds and day away and the purple sky gave way to the bright dark orange of night.

Marco had stopped bleeding and his consternation gave way to his ugly indifference, which was closer to contentment than he had ever been previously. His left hand lay fallen from his head and his right hand lay prone at his side, it was pale and bloated with a resemblance to a sleeping infant. All of his stubbornness and curiosity was satisfied. His fallacious, youthful immortality had been disputed and replaced and his room was still a pit. The speculation on death of clouds and floating or fire and seething evil was ultimately all for naught as he lie dead and uninspired.

The alley became a temple; cathedral ceiling and woodwind and percussion piped in, as the sole mourner filed past.

Of Bean Soup And Peat Bogs

Disheveled trees,
the wild tossed look of death.
Her garden overgrown, snarled with
impatiens, begonias, rusted marigolds.
Panicky squirrels dug holes. Rabbits
streaked by. Pumpkin-faced leaf bags
slumped, grinning with hollow eyes.

She warmed some soup,
and stirring it, found the
yellow, brown, and amber tones
of autumn. Lima beans shone like
half-moons in a thickened sky.

A few hot days, without warning.
Time to drag her houseplants,
set them on the porch to catch
the last rays. Her back ached
from the heavy pots, but plants
were children needing air and sun.

If only summer would stay.
She'd cut, dry, and burn summer
like peat from Connemara bogs.
The Celts knew magical ways to light
a peat fire just once. Then,
fan, coax, stoke, and make it
smolder for days. Keep the glow,
the heat of summer. At night,

she thought of Connemara,
the south coast of the Isle,
tiny ferns and fairies locked
in primeval bogs. Outside,
a banshee wind whipped gusts of
leaves, and dropped them like
gold coins on the porch
of her deepening dream.

Gertrude Rubin

High Holiday Services

The old man
in his best suit
sat straight as a
taper listening to
each word of the
sermon when

suddenly his
hearing-aid sang
out, at first in a
squeaky voice then
spiraling higher
higher above the

pulpit, it became
unnerving like
the long smothered
cry of some dybbuk
that shocked the
congregation

pretending
not to notice
until at last the
man with slightly
tremulous hands
unscrewed it

and sighing,
dropped it into
a back pocket, the
place he kept all
his unanswered
prayers.

Gertrude Rubin

Running Shoes

Last night I looked for pads
to insert into my shoes.
Shoes for running.

The pad fits into the heel
and softens the shock from
ground to bone.

In the desk your holy card
fell over my fingers,
In Memory of Bob.

I remember your call
that summer your voice vibrated
with brain lesion fear.

You said
this doctor said this doctor
said that.

You called me because my own
problem was lodged
in the left eye,

a pumping vascular racecourse.
When I ran I saw spirals
outside myself.

Bob fell down the stairs
in front of his children
when the sickness grew.

After months of cortisone groans
your eyes begin to float.
You smile lopsided.

Tonight the card with a flower
and cross surfaced from a pile
of bills,

and I'll use it as a pad
to soften the shock
as I run.

Bill Hennessey

A New Atlantis

suppose I were to tell you
the sea waits for a new Atlantis
the first one is outworn

no signal will be given
no foghorns blown
when the greatest of island-cities
loosens its handcuffs of bridges
shakes free of its moorings
and moves outward in soundless drifting

the city raging with light
beyond the scope of census or catalogue
will move in soundless drifting
its people with hands clapped to frozen eyes
mouths muted by disbelief

will move outward in soundless drifting
as far as the destined space
then sway and fall:

with what grace we will dance
to music of sea-flowers
making a mock of gravity
encircled by our household gods
in and out of windows
nodding behind veils of hair
violence renounced, quarrels resolved,
eyes remote, empty,
all languages the same
in this world of clean bone and sunken ships
beckoning, greeting each other
in forgiveness and love

companions and friends
at last.

Hannah Alexander

Piano Lessons

It's an in-between time,
before shadow falls on the piano keys,
the sky through the window
greys to match bare branches.
Children on the street clutch
moments before dinner,
I sit at the piano keyboard,
conjuring ancient notes of
a Bach minuet I lost
the sheet music for
years ago—

Crisp staccato notes,
across the treble range,
my fingers used to know
how to flick off one key,
hopscotch to the next
and land,
sky-blue melody, flowing
girl's soprano voice.

The bass, dark,
I didn't understand,
fragments of birdsong
in an alien tongue.
Over and over I practiced
the right hand;
bass notes in my lap.

How could I have known
in that time of pink
ribbons, petit fours,
that bass rhythm can live,
not muted, like gentle piano timbre,
but pounding

through the floorboards,
a dark guitar energy
that you can love
too much,
hold too close, the untamed
vibration, to your heart.

Both hands on the keyboard,
my amnesiac fingers awaken
hidden patterns in the ivory
and play stilted,
bars of a minuet I don't remember,
at least the complex dance:
treble and bass
in balanced counterpoint,
stepping
octaves apart,
their harmony intertwining—
curves and juts
of one jigsaw puzzle.

Ellen Lieberman

Silver Bars

the drops spatter
stretto

subito

stringendo

as it rains
across Tintown, Arizona

down Gold Gulch
up Cochise Row

the corrugated symphony
resonates

reverberates
over half sheets
full sheets

drips from the eaves
to blend into

a Brahms Rhapsody

as the sun
sets

behind the Lavender Pit Mine

Sheryl L. Nelms

Folding Banquet Table With Pop-Up Family

UTOPIA FURNITURE GUARANTEES SATISFACTION!

Choose any number of guests
wearing ties that repel gravy,
crumb-dispelling clothes.
Participants depart when host refolds table.

Cassette included.

Excerpt:

Dad: "Wonderful turkey, dear. Not too dry.
Just brown enough."

Mom: "Thank you, dearest."

Grandma: "Mildred is the perfect cook.
She was the perfect child. Always
did the right thing."

Biff(son): "Mom, you look smashing
in that green dress. Dad, I won't need
the car tonight. I'd rather stay home
with the family."

Muffy(daughter): "May I be excused before dessert?
I love your double chocolate fudge cake, Mom,
but I must rid my room of troublesome clutter."

If at the end of three months
you are dissatisfied with
FOLDING BANQUET TABLE WITH POP-UP FAMILY
your money will be cheerfully refunded, BUT
you know the risks!

After barbecued ribs,
Biff will mistake Grandma's Battenburg lace
tablecloth for his napkin.
Dad will say to Mom, before the main course,
"Time for the BEARS!"
Grandma will weep from the wine
and reminisce about Grandpa
in Florida with wife #3,
as Muffy sneaks off for a cigarette.

Anything could pop up

Constance Vogel

POWER

Terry Jacobus

1.

It was the New Year's of innocence. Seats for the live performance of the Rocky Horror Picture Show at the Granada theater with True Love.

A gorgeous theater before they leveled it. The Granada faced the city the way a city is supposed to proudly face itself.

Sometimes old buildings are treated like old people in our country. They just want to knock them down and throw them away no matter how wise or how beautiful the antiquity. And if you're lucky, you're left with the pleasure of the memory.

Secure in its deep rich European balcony, sitting and holding hands while the actors vlogged, we left the Granada high on life sliding on the ice holding on to each other the way True Love is supposed to hold you and keep you

standing.

I was living in the diamond thoughts of my past as I presently layed powerless on my kitchen floor.

The Monster upstairs had overflowed his tub for the third time. His water cascaded down my bathroom wall short circuiting my lights, soaking my wires, and blowing my breakers.

So now I was in darkness the way Baghdad was in darkness for the 100 hours war.

In peace or war being without power is a terrible thing.

Whether it's personal power, electrical power, or the internal power of the heart, only when the power's gone can you recognize how important that trilogy can be.

Like the era when I worked for the Chicago Film Festival and I felt like a pretend celebrity.

We were deep in jewelry on Michigan Avenue. It was a party for the cast of "Cuckoo's Nest" which they were premiering at the Granada.

I was dressed like something out of Rolling Stone seven O while everyone else had on tuxedos and splendid evening dresses.

Jack Nicholson was standing in the eye of the power. And I liked Jack because I figured he was riding the right roller coaster.

2.

While everyone was himming and hawing him I figured I'd throw a natural change of pace by coming up from behind and tapping him on the shoulder.

He turned to me with an impish glare and I said, "Jack, you know you're the third best actor in Hollywood and you don't move up until somebody dies."

He measured me, squinting with an innocent evil smile when he replied, "You're a little late son, they're dead already."

We acknowledged each other with a toast of champagne and chatted about basketball diaries. It was a one on one I'll never forget.

But that's when I had power, before True Love faded and the Monster moved upstairs.

I layed in the dark clutching my transistor.

I saw the Brewery on Broadway when the 70's ruled. The place where No Love at All worked when she was body hot.

Ike and Tina Turner were playing a club down the street when they came to the Brewery to eat. When Ike saw No Love at All he immediately wanted her.

"Is she yours?" he asked me.

"Yeah," I said.

"I'll trade you for the night."

"You mean Tina?"

"Dat's right."

I declined on some righteous inclined plane but we haggled for hours.

Everyone was just water seeking their own level. Bleeding beyond dreams and coming within them.

If you were caught between a poem and a hard place you knew how cheap and precious life really was. And if you were counting there were times you couldn't count on anyone.

I put a slide in my mind mirror and had a bad karma dream of what'd be like if the bombs fell here. Dark and powerless. Surrounded by new truth.

I thought of myself in bed with Karen Black's eyes

wanting to make slow delicate love with youth.

3.

As the Monster pounded above me I slid into the mountains of the poet's kitchen where I was the week before.

The poet hadn't changed. He had the gun, the hair trigger, and was still as quick as ever.

We stepped off ten friendly paces as I told him the silver anniversary Superbowl story. How the Buffalo kicker missed the winning field goal then tried to commit suicide by shooting himself the following Sunday.

"Oh, really?" the poet said.

"Yeah," I replied. "But he missed wide to the right."

It was a shock radio joke and we both laughed with the power to heal. But when we finished the poet added with his eyes ablaze;

"If the kicker had any power at all he wouldn't have used a gun. He would have got someone from the Buffalo Organization to cut off his foot, wrap it in a flag, and send it off to Baghdad in care of George Bush."

I took a push at paraphrasing Hemingway, "A good writer will never like the government he lives under, his hand should be against it, and its hand will always be against him."

I wanted to dance in my darkness unselfishly.

Like the Uptown time at the super hip party doin' the skate next to Adam Cartright.

"I loved you in Bonanza," I said innocently free.

And he turned away arrogantly informing me he was really a serious actor in some Shakespearean way.

How did I know Adam wanted to be Hamlet instead of a cowboy.

He did off Broadway for a while but soon was back on a TV series he appeared to be happy in.

TV power hour by hour.

It was the fire of the Old Age and the Corpse of the new one.

I heard the Monster upstairs screaming, humiliating his wife.

The Monster who almost obviously killed me by blowing a stop sign near my school.

There were Monsters everywhere when I went to the card reader out on the coast.

4.

She told me I had power but was powerless. She said I was an old soul that was very hard to crack when dropped from space.

In spacial light I wanted angel thoughts. Like the poet who said she had an angel thought every three seconds, every twelve years.

"Don't they come more frequently?" I asked her.

"The angels only speak when they want to."

And I asked her why we couldn't command the angels.

And she said that's why they're angels and we're not.

It was something to contemplate over pancakes.

The old standard "To Each His Own" played in my head.

It was my mother's favorite song and it put me at peace the way Baghdad was at peace now.

I remember being at peace when Jim Morrison and I met on the same plane. He had reservations. I didn't. We talked Dylan Thomas and Blind Boy Oedipus. We both sang codas from our new singles then canceled each other

out the way spirits cancel when consumed with self.

If you have everything you might think you have power but that's not necessarily true. There were some with nothing that carried power infinite.

My power came on. It was the next day. Cool and windy.

I was on my way to the coffee house for an afternoon's discussion.

As soon as I arrived someone started talking ISM's and Deconstruction.

"Didn't they try that in the south?" I said.

Then I turned to Frank the street legend of the southside who adored St. Augustine.

I told him I gave the dance lady the elaborate horoscope he did for her.

"She's a powerful figure," Frank said. "What kind of an ass does she have? I'll be she's got a soft momma's ass. I'm into momma ass worship you know."

And he made the sign of the cross.

As I made the sign of the times.

And the Power of God ticked blankly above us.

Profiles

Carve in plaster a painting
lines of model genitalia
on a cellar floor
intervention empowers
the way a poem launches
toward tornado or itch. The poet

is coming
but you don't want the bad light
the too high podium
atmosphere that tries
to make you something
you don't want to be. He's
probably bad news anyway
judging from the pics
like being thrown out
of a bedroom with valium
tossed like bones

in a pink g string
afloat on powder
sand a third eye perceives
mayan mirage lure of sin
swallowing between thighs
presses rapid tour
opening cotton shadows.

Grasses over pubic curves
of shore under southward sunglasses
anticipate arch and stretch
down a wet tide
of sandcastles and early autumn
dark explosion of crickets and katydids.

Joan Payne Kincaid

Point Judith

for R. & E.

There's a taste of salt
in the mist
in which one seagull flies without crying.
The sun has just risen
as two people descend the grassy bank,
their shoulders bent beneath a green canoe.

It sat in their basement from Christmas
through April, upside down on two
sawhorses, its skin smooth and perfect.

Days and scars accumulate.
"That's where we slid over the big rock
under the poison ivy." "This is from
the fallen log that time we saw the red fox."

He steadies it with one hand
as she walks, smooth and balanced,
to the front. They shove off,
grating over pebbles on the beach.
Backs are straight, hands relaxed and easy.
It's the muscles across the shoulders
that clench and tighten, dip and lift
the dripping paddles.

The sun has burned the mist away.
The gulls are out, wheeling and screaming.
Gold is on the water and each drop
falling from paddles raised in unison
is gilded as the paddles are gilded
and arms catch the morning light
at the same perfect angle.

Carma Park

Slipping On A Glissando

On stern wooden chairs
students would wait
in the gloom
of Miss Albert's hall,
practicing etudes on their laps,
hopelessly watching
dust motes float
in a pointed finger of transom light.

Usually a girl
with spiral curls
her mother had wound the night before
ironed and ribboned
sat pigeon plump
knowing she wouldn't miss a note,
Miss Albert gleeful
with each key,
rewarding her with another new piece—
Malaguena, The Spinning Song.

Sometimes a boy
would bolt from the door,
run down the stairs
two at a time
music clenched
like a baseball bat
red-faced from pounding
the same measure over
as Miss Albert hammered the baby grand
with her merciless metronome hand.

At recital time
he'd shuffle
toward the piano,

a gallows away,
his fate hanging high on Fur Elise,
The agony of forgetting the song,
of playing again, playing again!

The puffed-up girl
would stifle a laugh
knowing that someday
it might be she
losing a grace note
ignoring a pause
watching her music slip
to the floor
hearing the audience roar and snort
as her shoes unbuckled
her hair went straight.

Constance Vogel

Backbend

love is a leash that binds us
 by heartbeats
 six times you have been betrayed by me
 five times you have bent me backward
 reaching for the floor until
 I have formed a circle
 love is a war of wills
 how each time we bounce back to each other
 renewed, refreshed
 with regrets tied round our necks
 like a ribbon
 our reunions are like a basketball game
 that we never watch
 each team keeps the ball dribbling
 for hours
 how many baskets
 have you made
 see if you can count them
 how many points have I scored
 see if you can count them
 what a masquerade we play, love broken into
 fragments
 each evening we break bread together
 as if it were the last supper
 reach round behind you
 hand me the chalice
 reach round behind you
 from the corner of your eye
 you can see judas leaving
 this room
 as if it were
 any other

Effie Mihopoulos

A Night To Be Remembered

when i wake up in the
 morning theres
 all
 these cats on
 top of me and
 my mouth is full of
 fur

 this is a bit weird and im
 wondering just
 what it was

 that happened last night when

 a strange woman walks into the
 room

 im starting to have some bad feelings—
 you know, hangover crossed with fear equals
 a near religious experience but

 then i notice that the woman's shirt
 looks familiar

 i take a closer look and think

 'hey, thats MY SHIRT'

 and i figure that maybe this won't be
 so bad and she's asking me do i want
 any breakfast and i don't mind the cats,
 do i?

 so i tell her, hell no i don't mind the
 cats and i'll just have whatever you're
 having

 then i roll back over and fall into
 sleep thinking,
 well,
 at
 least
 i didn't
 screw all
 those
 cats

Tom Caulfield

Contributor's Notes

Hannah Alexander - Hannah is a graduate of William and Mary College. Her career includes some script writing for studios and directors in Hollywood. She was on the editorial staff at the Sat. Evening Post. She has won numerous awards for her poetry which has appeared in books and anthologies. Her published books include: Images and Sounds, Of Time and Distance, Islands, and Damocles at Midnight. Her work has also appeared in The Right Brain Review.

Jennifer Aquino - Jennifer used to raise baby sheep at Purdue Sheep Facilities, but is now concentrating on her poetry, and works for a software development company in North Carolina.

Glen Brown - Glen teaches composition at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn and Creative Writing in La Grange, IL. His poetry has appeared in Willow Review, The Right Brain Review, Prairie Light Review, and The Windless Orchard. Glen's first book of poems, In the Cross Hairs, is nearly complete and he has poems forthcoming in The Spoon River Quarterly and Slipstream.

Bill Hennessy - Bill is an English teacher at Glenbard North High School and a graduate from NEIU.

John Jacob - John has published a novel, The Long Ride Back, and a book of short stories. He lives in Oak Park, IL.

Haia Prosor - Haia was born and raised in Israel where she once wrote a personal column in an Israeli magazine. Haia is currently a student at NEIU.

Trace Reddell - Trace lives in Boulder, CO, where he's working on a novel entitled, The Real American Dumpster.

Beth Copeland Vargo - Beth has had poems published in Aphra, Ascent, Carolina Quarterly, Mississippi Valley Review, Oyez Review, Rhino, Southern Poetry Review, and other magazines. A graduate of the MFA program at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, Beth has lived in Chicago for over ten years.

Constance Vogel - Constance's work has been published in: Blue Unicorn, Oyez Review, Rhino, Spoon River Quarterly, Overtures, Ariel, Willow Review, Chicago Literary Review, Writer's Gazette, Parnassus Literary Journal, Interior Lighting, Hammers, and has been featured on Dial-a-Poem, Chicago. She's been a panelist and conductor of poetry workshops, and won the MUSE Literary Award in 1989. An English teacher residing in Glenview, she is the author of an unpublished novel for young adults, Cows Are Never Orange.

Jeffrey L. Waters - Jeff is a technical instructor who lives in Des Plaines, IL with his wife and three children. His work has appeared in Midwest Poetry Review, Proof Rock and other small press publications. Jeff has also published articles in the Des Plaines/Mount Prospect Journal and the arts entertainment paper, Vagabond.

Thomas Hochman - Tom has been ecstatically confused since 1968 and happily married since 1987. His life experience resume' is extensive and diverse (available upon request). Currently Mr. Hochman is looking for a job as an *observer of the shape of things*.

Effie Mihopoulos - Effie is a Chicago resident and an established writer in the Chicago area. She frequently writes for Strong Coffee magazine and has participated the the Taste of Chicago Writing Conference.

Terry Jacobus - is a native Chicagoan who's work has appeared and disappeared in magazines throughout the world.

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