

# milk | volume nine

[ed baker](#) | [jessica baron](#) | [michael bernstein](#) |

[daniel borzutzky](#) | [william corbett](#) | [steve dalachinsky](#) |

[steve halle](#) | [duriel harris](#) | [reginald harris](#) | [zach harris](#) |

[pierre joris](#) | [megan kaminski](#) | [vincent katz](#)

[amy king](#) | [rob mcLennan](#) | [k. silem mohammad](#) |

[simon perchik](#) | [kathleen rooney/elisa gabbert](#) |

[spencer selby](#) | [jordan stempleman](#) | [steve timm](#)

essay

[Reflections on the First International Poetic Ecologies  
Conference, Universite Libre de Bruxelles, May 2008 by  
Arpine Konyalian Grenier](#)

online chapbook

[unusual woods by gene tanta](#)

review

[tony trigilio reviews \*the making of  
collateral beauty\* by mark yakich](#)



photo by Gautam Narang

# Ed BAKER

## 1. Ch'ien

beginning  
&  
ending

a  
law  
emerges

## 2. K'un

is she  
that is  
space

to  
go  
into

/the Receptive

3. Chun

thunder & rain  
ten years  
we

bide  
our  
time

/Difficulty at the Beginning

4. Meng

water  
flowing  
fills

the  
deep  
places

/ Youthful Folly

6. Sung

full  
moon  
seeing

myself  
reflected  
in your eyes

/Conflict

[back](#)

# Jessica BARON

## Election Year

Be indifferent or neutral to the little game.  
Bash indifferent or neutral to the little gamma.  
Your vulgarity turns me on.  
Your wadding trundles me on.  
To red belief, intoxicating and in vain.  
To red bellwether, interspersing and in vain.  
All these potholders can not compare.  
All these potsherds calm not commiserate.  
To the softness of a bright fluorescent.  
To the sojourn of a bright flue.  
Or a hip four-wheeler, rugged and unwieldy.  
Or a hip fracas, rugged and unwieldy.  
Endorse this candidate or that one.  
Encourage this cane or that onset.  
No matter.  
No mausoleum.  
Hard work doesn't pay.  
Hard workman divulges patrol.  
Take sides.  
Systematize sidesaddle.  
Neutrality helps the oppressor.  
Newscasts heave the opus.  
Our illicit activity aside.  
Our illicit adage aside.  
You spoil me.  
You splash me.  
It is a lukewarm bath of neglect.  
It invokes a lukewarm bathysphere of neighborhoods.

# Regardless

all sort of things think about how  
scholars label

African Byzantine  
mentally lost perspective

counter approach it  
ways in which crux

equation reversed constrained within  
text insisting

the fourth experience  
building blocks logic games

define content  
pick one outcome

form as a problem how do you write  
generative new form

whether you see black mountain  
small magazines terms

shifts and disruptions pointing arrows

# Lightning

In the question:  
the questiny one holds  
back from renouncing.

From renouncing, from giving its answer  
forbid me to meet its answer for  
which I did not desire.

I was before  
that misfortune I did

not define  
and also far away,  
the feeling me.

I was human.  
Not persons;  
not to meet its home.

Lightning, from a human.

Not persons; not totalities,  
there is the look-incited place.

The look incited place.  
The love of wholly.  
What the door, the answer!  
Its end! In the feeling—  
to death. Yet what glanced  
on and continues  
to enter; I was Beauty:

to meet its home.  
I was before the question  
should happen to me: Look!  
I burned and preserved  
on it; I was Beauty:

to pursue the signs.  
Flashes of which one  
continues to pursue  
that I adored a face,  
this strange desire was outside.

Somewhere was before  
the face that continued to seek,  
that glanced on and named being,  
that destiny, the door, the answer for which  
I did not pursue,  
so powerfully cast.

## Grass Roots

There is that thing in the sun,

boulders, one stone not left  
we find at spring. Between.  
We go, the work another:  
the dogs, the gaps, just game.  
Of kind some loaves some so,  
it is not we: OUR BACKS  
ARE TURNED! Only make good  
across apple. No cows  
here, there; his head notion.  
Was I in? Out? It's not  
exactly to me he moves.  
Make good again behind  
his saying top by stone.  
There is something.

[back](#)

# Michael BERNSTEIN

## **the rot to light**

up for  
it—

the de-  
mon  
push  
tough

on my  
skin,  
a vol-  
ume of  
gore.  
festers

the  
names  
wrath  
takes—

ex-  
pels its  
sherking  
host.O

tenure in  
knots,  
each hour

a dragged,  
cloaked  
botch,drawn  
up

from worse  
wells,damn-  
able.kill  
it

now,the  
flood to  
snuff  
sense:

gan-  
grene for  
yr vision  
shore—

gears' pitch  
all frantic

working,  
worked

[back](#)

# Daniel BORZUTZKY

## From *The Book of Interfering Bodies*

### The Book of Prayers

To Whom it May Concern: Let us annihilate our bodies, says the first body in the Book of Prayers. Standing in a corner that is drawn onto a page of the Book, the body looks down at the other books and prays that the other bodies will die as the pages turn. The next page contains a body inside of a television screen. Veiled with hair, wrinkles, filth, and slobber, the body prays that the first blow it receives will be the last. Let my suffering end as it begins, the body says, and the screen shifts to an image of the body's skin. The camera climbs up a pole where the nation's flag is laminated in the skin of those who live on the pages and in the screens and in the dead valleys and ghost towns that dot the remains of the land. And let us pray for the nameless corpses, says the body on the cover of the Book of Prayers. The corpses are everyone and they are alone and alive in the grass and the sand and the forests and in our nostalgia for graves and tombstones and flowers that mark the memory of those bodies that once had names. And let us pray for the nameless corpses but let us not name them, says a body on a page of mutilated trees. The body looks out at a page of crawling and fluttering bodies that gyrate in the dead bushes of the dead fields near the books that mark those who have lost their names. A strange race of flies fills the page. They swarm and gurgle and suck the life out of everything and they live on the nameless bodies and they are the subject of the prayer uttered by a body on a page of fly infested bodies. When the flies suck our blood, says the prayer, when the flies suck off our skin and blood and when our bones and hair fall out, let our bones and hair form towers up which our bodies will climb out of this book and into the book of eternal ice. And the

bodies ask the readers to pray with them. And the bodies tell the readers that by simply turning the pages they will be uttering the prayers for the dead. And the pages turn and there are bodies and murmurs emanate from them and we hear the prayer for those who died of hunger, for those who rotted away, for those who were eaten by dogs and vultures, for those whose faces were obliterated, for those whose eyes were removed from their skulls, for those who see and for those who refuse to see. For those who fell out of air planes and for those who were thrown into the sea. For those who were buried in the desert and for those whose disembodied legs floated down rivers and were found by children playing on the muddy banks. And the pages flip and there are bodies praying atop barbed-wire fences for the years to pass quickly, for the forests to belch up the nameless bodies, for the elevation of the bodies stuck in mud, for the journeys to be short, for the prayers to be silent, for the faces to have names, for the eyes to be blank, for the mouths to have teeth, for the teeth to chew, for the food to give warmth, for the warmth to give blood, for the blood to give life, for the life to give more life—to the people and the grass and the air that are dead.

## **The Book of Voices**

The Book of Voices begins where the Book of Prayer ends. The voices emanate from the mud which the bodies have turned into. The bodies that have turned into mud speak all at the same time but not in unison. Body ABC speaks of the last blow; body DEF speaks of the first blow; body GHI speaks of the blows he was forced to give to body JKL; and body JKL speaks of the moment of silence between blows, the moment of anticipation, relief, anxiety, fear, horror, and ecstasy that comes in the pauses between blows. Body MNO speaks of the clouds and the breeze that she fell through; body PQR speaks of how soft and wet the mud is; body STU speaks of the daggers, the blades, and all the instruments they jammed into the bottom of his toes; body VWX speaks of the bottom of the sea, the fish and

the algae and all the dead animals she saw as she sunk deeper and deeper into the dead water. Body YZ speaks of the dogs that ate his leg. The bodies speak all at once, and to hear them is to listen to an opera of voices that are muffled by mud. They speak of their loves, true, but the loves they speak of are now chained to rocks, tied to animals, electrocuted, or buried in different puddles of mud. The priests who could save the bodies from this purgatory have lost all interest in God. The priests gather dead flowers and throw them on the graves of those who have names and in so doing they try to recall those who lost their names. The priests scribble in their books that solitude is now their god, and that the dead rivers and mountains and forests and deserts will come back to life when everyone here is alone. The priests pray to the flashes of electricity they see when the skin of the bodies is singed. The priests pray to the traces of gun powder that are left on the hands of the men ordered to obliterate the other men. The priests do not eat. Hunger is their god and in their hunger they pray for all those creatures for whom the church does not allow them to pray. The priests pray as if they are in foreign countries whose languages they cannot speak. The priests think there must be some relationship between their prayers and the secrets of the world, but they are wrong. There is no relationship between their prayers and anything living or dead. Their prayers benefit no one: not the ones who pray and not the ones who are prayed for; not the silence and not the voices. The prayers flee reality just as the voices flee reality. The prayers speak of light and water and death but no one is there to hear them. The voices of the bodies meld into the prayers and together they gather as shapeless formations on the horizon and they are like countries with no continent, like continents with no world, like worlds with no universe. The reader finds these formations in the Books; she finds them in the air between pages and in the spaces between punctuation marks and letters. The reader hears the prayers as she reads and in the prayers she hears an absence of breath, an absence of death, an absence of reason. The reader hears the prayers and in them she hears all that her body has tried not to be. One doesn't get used to this with time.

[back](#)

# William CORBETT

## In the 1950s

Villains and heroes  
Of the small screen, fuzzed images,  
Pennsylvania nights black and white:  
Killer Kowalski, monocled Baron Von \_\_\_\_\_,  
The Zebra Kid, his deadly skull butt,  
Antonino Rocca of the flying leg kick  
Remembered because  
Rub-a-dub fresh  
From the tub, pajamas  
You are loved in comfort  
And entertained by the drummed mat,  
Shrill women with hat pins.  
Francis Gary Powers  
Memorable because  
Richard Boone, *Medic*,  
Eye of an eagle, heart of a lion,  
Forehead on scrunched up knees,  
Hard, shined hallway linoleum,  
Metal lockers or under  
Your desk the world  
Ends in flash and cloud  
Francis Gary Powers  
Handcuffed, short haired,  
Liar Ike sitting up  
Alert in a wheel chair,  
Pajamas, over his heart  
Script, "Feeling Better, Thanks."

## On My 63rd Birthday

The specialness  
Of this October day  
Is long gone.  
If I can I celebrate  
By doing what I please.  
Today it's reading  
John McGahern's *Memoir*,  
His hateful father  
Who, unable to get his way,  
Looked at boy John with hate.  
Thoughts of my own father  
Who never looked at me that way  
I'll not write here  
But douse with vodka  
At birthday drinks with Ed.

## Green Packard Convertible

Day of the telephone joke:  
A woman calls around 9 a.m., "Is Fred there?"  
Then a man, same question,  
More men and women call all day  
Until just when she's setting the table  
"Hello, this is Fred. Any messages?"  
And her friend the funeral director breaks up.  
Days of *Forever Amber*, *This Is My Beloved*,  
*A Stone for Danny Fisher*.  
Remembering Bette Davis  
Her way with a cigarette.  
Days of Lucy's comeback to Ricky

Or the night Lucy and Ethel  
Working a candy box assembly line  
Fall behind and cram chocolates in their mouths.  
What could keep her busy?  
Bridge club, bowling league,  
She worked for Robert Taft's campaign  
GOP Garbage on Your Property  
Who orated, she joked  
Like he had a mouth full of mush.  
She played the lead  
In *Chicken Every Sunday*  
Whose director she fucked in back seats.

[back](#)

# Steve DALACHINSKY

## DREAM BOOK

1.

smear'd in numbers

3 figures

6

7 4

combo                      diablo

devine   winner

taken                      under

elk denote marriage   embalmed

serious suicide

an unexpected event              brings good news

a happy but solitary life

white swan

disordered.

2. house

a.

it was

that i thought was never

there

river takes house

sea

somewhere in the

midwest  
loud )

flat

my life

06497 - 111 46  
washed away

a space off of a space

where i felt

safe

of covered wagons

b. but.....

big house by

storm comes erosion

i scream (she does very

but calms – relief -

it is not my house

that will be

### 3. creature dream sans creature

crossssshatched sleeper interrupted

by a lagoon of edges &

polarities

/ maplike indulgences

of elements

( land / water / air

empty > mass < flow

treeshaped arrows & buddha-johns

cross(-)circuiting creating typos

### 4. creature dream minus the dreamer

at 126<sup>th</sup> Carmeela enters the bodega

asks what her name is

2 men approach her w/a 40 in their hands

speaking dots - she joins them

@#\$%&\*#@\$ como se llama ??????

?????como me llama ????

the mass become empty

the emptiness mass

both become finger prints

)))))))((((((((a language all their own

a pretext for signing

sounding singing speaking writing creating

typos -- me/se llama CARMEELA.

## **tilling the air (eating dream)**

articulate complaints

de party insults

re: leaf

tables alarm edibles

edible muted sleep (others)

exhaust (fumes) open

multitudes din smoking lobby

separate race flounders

desist <0> 1 (9) 2 other repeating count –  
habit various shells squeezed young herbal gloss  
hard-of-seeing sour scowl while missed appetite

brook goes strangely adlib unfamiliar  
yrrabil – frequent stranger debunked

away print

smharb unique textiles text styles  
tiled mosaic against grave seriopus pen  
appalling thief transpires rickety  
br(other)  
m(other) - appear weak week collection  
glared hard furious

uncover = take off  
recover = put on

bathe refrain betray s(tale) late emit  
flush precise stub toward unnatural death  
within the parent mill  
vile nt e labor ate emit time  
immerse weight  
scowl sour  
scowl sour

curly cropped miden

bathing born astonished

munching feline stew

g(r)aze greys grZE grays

confused lost scuttled

curly cropped denim

immersed weight mined

wet

up hold story

upholstery sheets choice alc dov tis

shower

elom elom articulate and mol(e)ded

peril formed too late u tu late

born astonished.

**soaring thru tin**

her bet by sel (b) (f)

click

click passed imprint

\ imprint

(b)land

precisely

looks in e radicable precise

looks

click

click

perish

parish pew pyou pee-u podium mike enclosing speaker nibuo cigam

emit

emit

omit wager strip nickel down snarl

money

money

money honest

honest

g(amble) flush

flush

magic wept yavoni yavoni lace

honest flush pro snarl

honest flush marker marker hum drum

music/art

settle

unsettling pag pro test

wager strip sprayed

cling

cling

mur nosbig clave clave insectuous grope

select

select

ants

dalachinsky nyc g.sorrentino reading at ny public library re-scramble 10/12-13/04

5. bird dream

652

timbre of doow

long shadows

bad weather

so afraid

the red speckled bird

downing

it is raining lightly

i am shooting a rabbit

feed that bites the hand

atroph inbelment w(one)

excuse be perferated

prefer to eat the foot for luck

tin whilt good temper ate meant

in all things

[back](#)

# Steve HALLE

## **Before his first steps, he's off again**

funnels of rock smoke charnels of purse. this venus arm found alack a hand in pumice. "fuck you" besmirches the monument but "if" is monumental. spit smears to wipe words an "it if" the missing arms about me. what Stuart Dybek's rough tumble tangible Chicago nay-say air ozone alert black steel rumbles in waves of snodgrass? how about melanomic mornings at no-nose cafe? another cup supple bubble incarnation the beast lives thanks to guitar and compact trashes styrofoam and sudden infant death sesame street. glasses are drug enough the arms of the valley launch as wisps of orange zest in smoke. or sawdust yields to flame. syndrome: the plague of the death sculptor in reverie embalms everything covered in silvers and grays. sunset crater storeroom or portrait profoundly addicted to asleep the outstretched arms of a minor goddess. he lifts St. John of the Cross up to the tree twelve or so nights ago he feasts venus she sleeps. the usual distance from subject the camera attache briefcase spyglass hill walks the long view dimple the longest ball. listen to the smells of subway greats. buskers deal the death of masses for coins etc. or night amasses. pentagraphic videos fingers walk with keys the ivory box my coffin my hand up from the swirls and froths he disbelieves my ship aflight my fools in the hold. charnel house the high sierra void and breakdown bluegrass banjo the handless lover of fire in the airport en post en route. the hunger of desert or maelstrom siren tune to heavy arms so over whatever and out slash off. snow altho beatified while happening rug burns and after a broken arm no venus to rise midmorning nothing for my periscope hand or her telescope love or god sodden eyes over microscope, discovery! live at the five spot seven nights.

## **Adding background to your body belie**

all i feel is see. the plunder! the looting! crest & belch. it's cold in books and you don't learn under impossible combinations. scholar's count this non-pear Western Night pine cone at the envy of violence. gray enough pray you say me say mean. the lamb of guest without template for many nightyears said buttonlike. there was something quiet in the way light entered her and what she's written in. J.J. says to me from across miles human flyscale whitecaps. the other side of the river receives a telegram interpolated. green space opens to minerva. sutra suture: the art of medicine breath...my word...ah, there! tambourines again frenetic Saint Patrick the keeper of serpentine purgatories. American lawn novel larval models England this earth, this realm up the slide instrument muddled trombonist burning for the ancient high- risk royal kings. roil in our war surplus. taut lies change lightly *andante*. shrubs in leaf of starflake falls like fingers under which i hide. water in midsummer moccasin, Chaucer, a heaven of Anne look-alikes fall-shored, sanded alabaster and bloodied. in flat country the ocean, the trough & yaw slap my eyes shut a salve of nearbitten, nearby.

## **I don't know what he brings but he brings something**

post-a totem too strong to black. knot of in-between faces symbiotic upon you i crawl before you i stand sinned and six legged. perch-lined into blood borne before a feast aficionado Octavian. all night battles heat-cold paranoiac. pastoral. suburban foothills decorated, gnarled animals like wild god post no wasted. horned owl. hawk. turkey vulture. wool mitt scrape silicone runs raptor turn in tools. come drum or durum a duration in hold. blue satin wreck arctic art-tic and what her feet cannot be saved or salved. fingernails and off i fly self-inflicted moon-winged wild goose liver her pate in drink. o her sweet harness in a theoretical system of superfluidity. never her battered then bad her blue madder than mad at the crack of her facts gone chin-up like an underlord. souled on a fowl but roll treated like rodents then grow til you growl the never senator. satansaints redacted if shadows were shadows to frag.

## **Follow the gps to French lick and connotate**

umpshot flu and backboard vomit, a porcelain headstone and legend. years and four knees, lawrence, nicked under linen like memory, whiskey without oblivion, lenin w/o funny nose glasses. the body remains jersey for sex, my skin olympian. if you strain, the anthem plays, but not every time. punch drunk i fall off the

pedestal. drunk drunk i curse jordan country or man. dunk dunk void or vessel or void of vessel, the shim of desire is whim or moment or pigtailia. for now the doors of perception planed and hinged. the white towel pantsed and all. if ever whether to wind the winner to violins. bounce bounce the marble into infinity on the crest of the powderless mirror. a mother to us.

## **Tila Tequila**

among Mémère memoirism & Menominee i lie to lay lay to grow & grow to wrinkle my smoke can in hand pent-up lath pap to pacify the bee box that young man raps upon skulls you said yourself the arbiter of streetlife and nightfrond that warmonger! you said in stumps sell me her fins Merman ensnare in sails too deceive or delay dally all the concrete of north-pointing roads i am one woman my conversion Arc-like van bears mud-flap ill on folly the clothes of the dead are suffixes not found in obituaries how i loved my sugar peas my drug i strained to drag her the river the falls over rot algaebloom above dark tresses and tails where's she hidden? the ardor's remorse inlet in lemon drop ponds the current an eddy of often or over we cracker her diligence one afternoon tea la la Tristano and bloodhounds aforethought aroma amidships the timbre of August the flake of its zephyrs to folly midwinter to spring it confounds all the ices gone icing chase after our hounds the opossum transfigured deadly tubers abound and crushes of stone polished solid i write what i do when i do it i'm writing life life is all writing in script encode encrypt kneel flower sting pray dust and if a remember then a corpse to redress.

## **Phlebas from Waco a fortnight**

we exchange the being of January for the being of mid-April. dvds like stonehenge the monuments of the past second life living is reliving, credits roll. police rap rapt on the backseat of our subego subcompact. and what we do there gets bootlegged. i'm mileage running—aileron over airport to airport a runway late model consumable. the snow drop of Denver lovers the raindrop of deadlands O'Hare tailwind to windless Logan. i zagged over Rhode Road. i swam jigs in current looking for suspended teeth of deep fried meat. winter's figures mistake ghost roses for energy saving bulbs. what light shoots up nights makes perennial malaise. my midspring mind runneth over the churchbell of doggerel not dogwood. this ghost hand landscape no better for describing my father's fingers figures in flowerpots of dust and dander. all night shelter from water. tub rings rust over porelain hard water lover rings white on Egyptian cotton we middle our love to cupboard if indoors to spite the cruelest month's mud blizzard. not a word but radio or

fingertip. the oblong of pigskin synecdochal for disappointment bounds away screen name her pen name was Shay Lampasas, Texas but i say broken shoelace to remind of phone lines.

[back](#)

# Durriel HARRIS

## self portrait in desire

who thought it was a flood or an issue of faucet, or a tinny ringing  
and favored the cupboards' trembling, quaking proximity of trains  
and the antiseptic play: swab along rim. who, bookish, loitered and loafed,  
enticed by the boy in a dream of snow, who, beastly, scurried, low  
to ground, blocking the vents, stuffing blowers with down; whose mind  
was a tailored maze of hare and hedgehog, rabid skunk and radiator  
ruffle: a puff of heat escaping, stenciled along the surface where some refuse  
and others multiply, milling.

who, begging, thought it was a flood or a surge of lava, or a chemical  
bonding: a molten slur repurposed, imagined terrain spun from myrrh, a cone,  
a brocade smother, twisted pine chord and altar brass. who, hard wired, fled  
in human tongues, suspended, syntax and inflection, foreign intoxicant.  
who, moved, heard nothing, everything from the gut splattering wet;  
who, strapped in, strapped on, and became, flowed out into silicon

filling, suction.

who thought *surely it was a flood* or felt baldly arthritic, a red joint before rain  
or divined reaching, nurse to the floorboards' weepy eye. who swallowed, feeling  
little more than without speech, wedged into bedsag, hunting looted silver  
of a future's dream. who faked, picked, and prodded into half days. who held  
the heater singly to the throat to coax the slimy membrane of sickness out  
into hospital for the pill, broth and gelatin, for the walking away—every letter  
shifted forward seven paces—and the official papers hidden in all that crisp negro  
hair.

## **self portrait (with vial & corn tash)**

I know the rituals of snake jaw & skin.  
—I am not an agent of radical acts,  
fringed tongue, I am a word full of E's  
—a cool porcelain belly, a spore,  
a briny rusted lock, a passing scab,  
an errant cell turning. I do not thirst  
to destroy. I do not carry in my pockets:  
roaches, forties, hardness, lawlessness, sloth,  
the outer part. A symbol of grief & nettling

strops, I do not spew bright colors, do not  
practice holy rolling. I am not contagious.  
— In the path, I am the point nearest the sun,  
a shunt in night, a gradual cumulative effect  
—an involuntary stop, a deviation from  
common rule, a macule, an intermittent flash,  
a gleam, a deflected blow, a steeple, sleep  
ripening in the break. (Certainty breeds  
localized death, composts viral drills, partial dis-  
closures, paralytic furnaces & vague complex mocking  
sounds, fierce where the curves cross themselves.)  
My transformational grammar, a shaking, gray  
passage, a puddle in the sentence: the darkest  
layer of bone, a huddled shrug, a current. I know  
—the smarting parlor gait, the level, the lot,  
the lurching shadow of the aeriform house  
—where, upon shingles, rage once reached  
into a boy & the boy into his mouth  
& pulled from the root a permanent tooth.

& still I eye the lid behind the lid, translucent  
refrain, the crevice, studying the spoiled needle  
scrawl, the giddy fist's flick against water's  
particle force.

—I am what is left  
when the body has been thoroughly burned.

## Unfurled

### The Pain-Body Speaks in Repose

i.

Where there is will, apathy and subjection  
I am a faithful servant gone to market.

ii.

Gradually, purity—the blood idea—  
will soften the contour of each living man,  
drawing out the will to power, to command  
enormity, vagrant and enrapt, a body sorely knit  
like mine, a mighty swirling column  
of refuse and scraps.

To see after it and see to it, I am.  
That I am, I cater annihilation, I will  
break your restless walking to flickers  
and taps. Burrowing, I torment dreams  
and waking fears, clear wind  
and notches of smoke. I scrounge  
and make do, scuttle and mangle  
and roam to make barren. Seeking,

I find—the inflammable ligature  
—the human thread,  
and use it as fuel.

iii.

Yet, who can but come to table at the invitation of a feast?

Charity compels labor  
and conscience begs no pardon.

Traversing the earth, I whistle and build,  
chisel and chirr, amassing  
roving death dealers' porous ghosts  
and memories of the bewildered dead's pathetic squealing.

I nurse hatreds to dress hatreds,  
marshal squadrons of dogs, locusts, and carrion birds  
and send them forth with poignant clarity (they shall run  
and not be weary). O drunken momentum. O sun-baked splatter.

Insatiate, they, too, shall devour.

iv.

Come and celebrate with me this triumphant living sin.

In praise of its stench  
low and spiraling downward,

hawkish whir, nexus of the eye  
fallen to seed the ground.

In praise of its deep structure  
and obscenity, its flesh wager  
and decomposition wilding, wagging  
into subtle architecture, fingers, isolated  
joints, remnants of suppurating wounds.

In praise of its bald-faced supplicants  
coaxing the unseen with jars of jaw fragments  
and teeth, bits of scalp and hair wrapped in brown  
butcher paper, and trinkets, obstinate vertebrae  
brushed a metallic blue, the bony burr  
of hatchet holes and skulls in rows like shoes to pick over.

## **Visitation: Pain Body**

It haunts with a smell  
like vomit or vinegar  
or a psychotic would-be lover's  
sweat. A pressure in the armpits  
driving the chest. Bloated, it trails  
dragging its parts, smugly appears ahead

slumped over, mocking sleep. It circles the pelvis,  
pinches the nostrils shut so the mouth must open,  
then crawls in and down, thickens to feel itself filling in.

Taking shape inside the skin

it sings its name into constancy.

[back](#)

# Reginald HARRIS

## NOM DE PLUME

The urge toward erasure:

If you can't tear it  
down, mess it up.

Looking for a mirror

give them paper, all  
surface, no reflection.

Tongue a clotted machine

for making, telling it  
like it 'aint.

A hole in my voice

where a name might have been:  
Mythology of ever-changing objects

Inscrutable blank space

turning everything that enters

Colored, impossible to see

Haunted whisper

troubling the ear.

Same as your memory of me.

## **POEM STARTING WITH AN ASIDE BY ANDRE CODRESCU**

*No similes – similac!*

No metaphors – mystery

No symbols – cymbal crashes

No categories – cartography

No rhythm – rhizomes

No syllables – sea sick pills

No meter – monotony

No rhyme – reasons

No discipline – disciples!

[back](#)

# Zach HARRIS

Snow is beauty before tomorrow's truth:

Beauty hurts.

[back](#)

# Pierre JORIS

## **A Certain Shabbiness, or: The Circus is Leaving Town for Good**

It is not because the initials of the Lydia Zavatta circus — large golden letters, less baroquely adorned than one would have supposed, against a less-then-scarlet red cloth above the band-stand — immediately brought to mind a major American poet who has yet to receive his dues and is unlikely to do so in the present climate, it is not because of that that this thought came to me immediately upon entering the circus and after some fumbling around finding our seats — hard and narrow benches covered with faded, threadbare cloth of the same red. Or that the thought stayed with me throughout the show, growing more obvious or even banal with every dusty act, and then after we traipsed out into the lukewarm summer night, and drove back in a quiet if not overtly pensive mood and gazed at the ocean, itself oddly subdued under a lackadaisical moon, for a few minutes before going back to our rented summer cottage and its so-so mattresses, where said thought, still unsaid, remained with me throughout a night of slapstick dreams that must have been distant cousins, if more chaplinesque montages of the circus. And has now lasted into this gray day, this thought — if this bitter-sweet mingling of nostalgia and foreboding deserves to be called a thought rather than just the ring of shabby sadness that clings to all such occasions like the ring of gray soap flakes marks the water level of the drained bathtub. So that even now, having left the occasion behind me, the taste lingers and wants to be put down here, now, instead of the aubade that habitually opens day. The banality of it all so apparent — a simple analogy with all its inaccuracy, vagueness, with maybe only that bitter sweetness to make it stick, to make the link hold. It is this: that this provincial French circus, small, shabby, on the brink of bankruptcy, with only one clown, with

only a few doves, half a dozen dusty dogs and four moth-eaten brown bears, struck me as a clear analogy for the situation of poetry today.

## Reading Theory Today

I admit that I merely flicked  
through Being and

Nothingness I have never regretted  
the disengagement this encourages

for art, offering images,  
a consolation rather than

a challenge, is an evasion  
of responsibility, leaving that

up to criticism and its attendant  
concept talk. He slipped on

a deep mistrust of banana heels

while she slipped into

something more confusing that  
clung to her thoughts like

imaginary hypnotic inertia.

It is difficult he opined to

make contact with the real  
world, and yet that is the

only chance we have. A theo-  
rhetorical S.O.S. if ever there

was none. He tells of the  
ineffable.

*from: meditations on the 40 stations of Mansour Al-Hallaj*

## **31. consideration (tadabbur)**

is the other category  
of understanding.

it signifies. try to  
find the full meaning

of every word, Ayah,  
explore behind those

words, metaphors & parables,  
discover the textual

cohesion & underlying  
unity, determine

the central ideas,  
delve into lexical intricacies,

tanzil, & historical background,  
undertake a comparative

study of different tafsir. Then  
discover all

the implications for the relations  
between man, God, fellow human

beings, own self, world;

derive laws & morals,

rules for state & economy,

principles for history &

philosophy, implications for

the current level of human knowledge.

We are not entirely separate

nor mutually exclusive

categories of understanding,

we overlap.

[back](#)

# Megan KAMINSKI

mountains and landscapes wrap the west green  
long after water portends future growth  
swamp grass vernal pools valley immigration  
manmade lakes flood brown matted sod  
your discipline is lovely but is not ours  
we thank you for it  
search for  
the door to the sky far below the lake's surface  
where stillness speaks of what will be  
gulls and egrets skim shuffle surfaces  
wind sweeps across the soft ruins  
how many different permutations of this rule  
problematized hues and tree failure  
snags pepper the estuarine marsh  
the signifying process joins

-----

Shadowy figures loom on the horizon  
Trees collapse into streams  
Branches become bivouacs  
Take a break from the sunshine

Turn soft and dark and eat persimmons  
Let the coast crawl across your couch  
And leave scarce traces of ash and alchemy  
Sounds of trains wide off in the distance  
Pepper the day like boot prints  
Sit tight and buy us a few more hours

### **Twilight correctives**

A flowering of unexpected seasons emerges from dream  
broadband distribution costumes frivolity  
my hands open spilling out spring and autumn  
broken into countless tiny deportations  
remembrance of purple flowers, the tree outside a second-story  
I see proliferation or green spaces  
the tree uprooted in wind storms a week before winter's official  
tarnished gestures meringue endpaper bottle miseries  
without shorter days ahead striated lives diverge  
your shoulders only open for a moment  
the speed of chance increases in time  
tank the cellophane and let the stars sing  
unravel

unvarnished waxwings tree fragments  
five rings spill out into pockets

### **Pantoum**

The city groggy as if  
It would fall asleep on them  
Crossing the last of serial  
Bridges to old city walls

It would fall asleep on them  
She laughed and babbled  
Bridges to old city walls  
And other things collapsed

She laughed and babbled on  
Past the vernacular of gothic arcs  
And other things collapsed  
Your hand presses my inner arm

Past the vernacular of gothic arcs  
Emerald wonders pushed us  
Your hand pressed my inner arm  
And we made past unneutral

Emerald wonders pushed us  
Those ancient neural pathways  
And we moved past unneutral  
Remnants of empire

Those ancient neural pathways  
Festooned with frivolity  
Remnants of empire  
If not already a poem

Festooned with frivolity  
The picture would be complete  
If not already a poet  
He would be a superb geographer

A picture now complete  
The only way to govern democratically  
He would be a superb geographer  
In the black shadow of the sun

The only way to govern democratically  
Will he compromise  
The black shadow of the sun  
For stations within days

Will he compromise  
Crossing the last of serial  
Stations without days  
The city groggy as if

## Pantoum

The man viewed things from  
Citadels like chiseled cliffs  
Shadows of something else  
Streaked with strange passion

Citadels rose like chiseled cliffs  
Throwing foreground figures into shadow  
Streaked with strange pensions--  
The proportions of the mind

Throwing foreground figures into shadow  
Their distance an illusion  
The proportions of the mind  
Differ places on the abyss

Their distance an illusion  
Four figures on a tapestry  
Form different places on the abyss  
Small gouges in the screen

Far figures on a tapestry  
Sliver light of ice  
Gouge into the screen  
Windows glittering like canvas

Slivers of light off ice  
Confront the people  
Windows glittered like caves  
And the law is revealed

Comforting the people  
Through its monopoly of violence  
The law is revealed  
Attesting its non-identity

Through the monopoly of violence  
Shadows of something else  
Attesting his non-identity  
The young man viewed things

[back](#)

# Vincent KATZ

## A Man In Uniform

You mean a thousand years ago  
they had the avant-garde?

## Columbus Day

from afar, fitted  
solitary in a field  
lie down a bed of  
leaves, colored dots  
hair, crackling  
yellow into green  
a dead ochre against  
the sky, fully alive  
friendly grey of  
autumn, field opens  
through hanging  
branches, Porteresque  
green a personal  
slope backed by  
earth-patterned  
trees, grey mountain  
behind, blue pokes  
through clouds  
trees reach a  
certain height

## Frankfurt

lip service television  
musical days and hours  
day darkens early  
by the Main trees  
barks silent shuttle  
hovers light on frozen  
ponds fields dusted white

a blaring open sun  
blends fields background  
paintings already  
saw all you're seeing

## Jim Dine

This night is surreal, or is there a better word?  
Don't show this to your wife, at least not yet.  
I know you know how it goes: poetry  
Or war or something else taken for granted  
By us, which doesn't make it less significant.  
Walking in night past Basta Pasta, low lit,  
Why is it you take certain routes, or  
How is it routes you happen to take provide  
Chance gold: down short 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Rare showcase "JIM DINE" bathrobe  
Ax, to Great Hall talk of Happiness  
In economic welfare, Benthem etc.  
Lively dinner includes talker Krugman.  
The bathrobe so personal, says Ronay,  
Past City and Country promise, form of  
Woman, worship you could understand  
In devotion, beyond intellect, child's state,  
Fallen to knees in front of one, or all.  
Oli call from Brasil, on tube Krugman.  
Bush will kill country, but can't, really:  
Whatever was good in it moves, things

We don't understand or love too well.

## Lothian

a great rush  
to confront solidity  
events planned  
co-exist in space  
drawings' grace  
a way of breathing  
properly, not too  
furiously injected  
to others' arguments

but landscape's  
imagining unreal  
presence behind  
tension, desire  
eventually, if noticed  
paths through epochal  
hills, sheep where  
soul cries out  
as elsewhere  
stones of  
cathedrals  
universities on  
rocky coasts subside  
long histories  
do not face  
echoes in geometric  
window glass

then return  
to cities

of races  
mixed places one  
moves to interpret  
change in weather  
rhythm a constant  
hum of living  
one knows  
tempo of, is  
never short

## Moment

The style is sex  
Touch football games with my friends  
Suddenly I'm happy  
That is who I was and am

PA

UL

FR

ANK

You see a woman get into a taxi  
New York is still open, still

Unscripted

## Over Cleveland

Look at those mountains  
Things come out wrong

Broad, untroubled land  
Below itself spread

Far as eye can see  
Flat peace given

By lights, deep band  
Orange thick sunset

All that order, calm  
At a price arranged

[back](#)

# Amy KING

## THE WAVE OF GOODBYE

I have the pleasure of requesting that you just  
recall a lawn of lemon and pear trees  
which won't always be so obvious nor so  
carefree. The itch sets our work boots off,  
the eyelets winking against the blur  
of cough commercials and paid retirements,  
should we expect them. Lashes wipe away  
such gerunds and hammering pangs of talk.  
Your promise to be more assertive flies  
off the shelf with an elegy that I'm being extra  
satirized. Your promise to be more  
is met with the decided derision of mice  
that chew up your bed. How does selfishness  
feel when I have just the one body  
for those who use language,

for those who cushion words,  
for those who love your lips  
with the soft kiss I emit in your ear.  
Let the sun bake  
Let them trail us with the dove of love  
Let the hammers resign  
Let the walls bear up the angle of the floor  
Let the mice be tragic for all that is caged  
Let time's contagion mar us  
until spoken selves lie as particles of wind.

## **WESTERN THOUGHT**

Films that owe their breath  
to words pulled from a throat  
by the writer's pen and widow,  
now full of medicines' anti's  
and probiotics, histamine holes,  
iodine and juice to preserve

against the rot I keep my margins  
bare of, a pseudo-frame  
that contains everything outdoors.  
We have twelve weeks so plan fourteen  
like the time you were left with nothing  
to say, so much so, you thought  
to say it all with the smoke of China  
from your pipe and anger you adopted,  
so you bought all things made there  
and ground them down, and swore  
to leave the leaf's tobacco  
for a country of gunpowder, paper,  
the compass of calligraphy.  
We should say all things,  
though not in the service  
of preservation we like to think,  
simple sufferer of reverses,  
easy goatee on impossible chins.  
Instead of idle solicitation,  
begin to tell me the flavor of things.  
Open the can, let the dragon win.

# I CAME TO STEAL THE DARKNESS

On my oyster afternoon  
the sea's a safety, how we rise  
then the grass grows back, again  
and the short history of summer  
is when you work you get your beer.

Why the weight is worth its gold  
I'll never recommend. We may be  
deprived of the life we need to live  
but so's Easter snatching out our souls,  
little beloved creatures.

They abandoned them like a snake his old  
and useless skin behind the shadow  
life of ethics and in each step  
the labyrinth's daily floor gets unswept—  
who creates the pattern of what seems?

And if I when my boat is bread,  
I'll push dark warm folds  
into two accents I live between,  
along four walls, the breath that scalds,

the brain's eardrum wanders  
without permissions given—  
I become the cradle of maybe, a toe  
half in, wet with black wet and thin.  
I ate all that was green and still  
and a little after nudity's bareness,  
how much we want we  
forego and hold to great fears  
to eliminate obstacles that would throw us  
from the great wooden horse  
we thunder and rock the sky upon  
with oxygen and particles that would  
break the sun into a mist we might,  
finally, bear up under and blossom in.

[back](#)

# rob mclennan

## a short history of the chinook

it is the mountain range  
of unfurled combinations

a slow hybrid breeze  
, to address you as such

careless is red  
& apology, too

riding kitchen-care blue

when I said undress,  
I did not mean to bone

but you are, there

warm wind, or

a passionate alter

where nothing remains here

unchanged

## **a short history of the space program**

if the moon you were after

a delicate mint, popped up quick

to your mouth

the progression was slow

not a place where you wish  
to be held back

if you wish to be held

one small step for another,  
golf balls litter the pale rocky surface

I mark window resilience  
to lower atmospheres

& experimental rocket boosters  
, you are still building airplanes

if the moon we were after

the days lining up a cold unwound coil

## an old poem: in like (errol) flynn, in like flint

There are a whole bunch of great stories of Americans coming up into Canada and having all sorts of adventures and misadventures, and then other stories not so great, of Americans getting trapped somehow, like Malcolm Lowry or even John Thompson, two writers who made it across the border, and somehow never made it quite back. Then there's Errol Flynn, the American actor who pretty much killed himself slowly through sex, drink and drugs, nearly dying on the airplane before it landed in Vancouver on October 9, 1959. The poem makes it sound as though he died before the airplane landed, but he was said to have finally gasped his last, dying of a massive heart attack, just after a week in a hotel room at the infamous Sylvia Hotel on English Bay with his seventeen year old girlfriend Beverley Aadland. Aadland, whom he'd been involved with already for a couple of years, and, according to her, was set to marry, couldn't even get him back to the airport before there was further trouble, and was looked at by Dr. Grant Gould, uncle of the piano player Glenn Gould. Was the troubled actor, once known for his swashbuckling pirate roles and that of Robin Hood, three times the poor girl's age, or four, by that point?

### errol flynn's last lover

breaking 40 years of silence & bad stigma,  
well after his swash & buckle days.

dying of everything in vancouver, a failure  
made complete—of liver, heart.

like malcolm lowry, death by misadventure,  
an accidental yankee caught for good.

theres love at seventeen & then theres this, the starlet  
& the alcoholic cad, old misfit.

the magic of life & bigger than, shrunk down to copy,  
when none of it matters. never did.

as the couple lands in canada, 1959, the final stop  
in all adventuring. the airplane touching earth.

I always mistakenly attach him to the film *The Misfits* (1961) instead of Clark Gable, who was actually in such, an accidental obituary for Clark and Marilyn Monroe, both of whom died a year later, he of a heart attack and she of her infamous drug overdose. Not the last film either of them did, but the last that they managed to complete, somehow involving Montgomery Clift in the whole mess. This was close to the end of the period where actors were owned and operated by the big studios, kept at certain weights, certain hair colours, seen in the right places and cleaned up after various indiscretions, with quiet denial to rumours, if there even were any. The media still too polite to talk. There were things they could still get away with. Mickey Rooney managed to somehow survive it, but not poor Judy Garland, a train wreck on stage by her later years. They even got Rock Hudson married, for the sake of his image. Not everyone could handle it. Some fell into drink, some fell into drugs, some threw themselves headlong into both, and a few other distractions as well.

Even when Malcolm Lowry died of an accidental overdose of drink and possibly sleeping pills in 1954, it wasn't called such on the death certificate, but politely referred to as "death by misadventure." Flynn, on the other hand, was pure defeat; his body simply gave out.

This is one of the poems that John Newlove picked for my section in the anthology *Introduction: Poets Present Poets* (2001), writing the bare bones of his introduction that barely said a bald thing. It's the poem, too, that Stephen Brockwell still calls my best, partly for the rhythm of it, and probably a few other reasons too. I can never quite fathom why, but I like it too, but perhaps for some other reasons.

I've slipped Flynn into a poem or two since, and recently. How is it he keeps to my imagination, so dashing, so charming, like the fictional James Bond, but so bent on hedonism and self-destruction? He sits in my imagination far more than, say, John Barrymore, father of Drew. Is it better to burn out, as they say, than to fade away?

[back](#)

# K. Silem MOHAMMAD

## New York

I have recently moved to New York  
and am trying to put together  
this map of the musical youth sex trade  
and all the animals who work for it

twelve years' reminiscences  
of ice cream sundaes  
boyfriend, boyfriend's in the stars  
making beds together in his absence

Nightwood uses what sculpture police  
called "curled lip in straw"  
(Anna Freud seen briefly  
as Nazi baroness)

Jesse shot Boyer and Boyer knifed Jesse  
boring office messages uses "green"  
that they includes presented  
earthbound construction keep the richness

the works on mirrors  
usually best if uppercase  
has been folded out of the kitchen  
but does crazy sell books?

when welfare workers  
arrive together we can totally  
eat animals made of brains and nerve  
always wanted to and now I get to

## Interesting Rocks

scientists have identified several  
interesting rocks they'd like to study  
in front of this niche  
which I had never been to  
in the defile of what's now standing  
where the "information" goes

it had not erupted and is not expected to  
every child matters to museums  
I don't back up like I ought

anyway I managed to avoid  
obstacles we hadn't gotten around  
as well as make mixes  
of classical CDs

to listen to in the car  
till I got specifically airborne

## The Name Mom Stitches on All My Shirts

I'm sitting in a hospital dying a horrible painful death  
I can recite all the presidents in order  
but I have no shadow  
I am in a land of ringtones all alike

I am dying to sing that shiny song  
the worst by far of all the hourly jeers  
is not a nuisance to me at all like any other  
that ex-lovers are really dying for

then I get a little bit lonely I'm grabbing your hand  
or zoning your home in undergrads' laundry  
or frozen asparagus to children's programs  
and things like that

your machine is a baby talker and my ice cream is dying  
lying in bed, dying of nothing, and naturally  
that little engine in your body burns all day  
like hearsay that can't turn itself into history

Joan of Arc was a piece of land  
thousands of French bacteria own it all the way  
sex, it was sex for them  
yeah and dying that's good too

as long as you are over 18 you should hope it all works out  
after all what is life  
deer and quilts and getting hit on  
it's very important, I tell my old lady that all the time

## Wyatt Earp

instinctively igniting outfits in an ocean  
I spat and began zooming  
stupid gymnasium more than I could grunt

I shot the coyote into a certain pattern  
abrupt and just publicly plastic flesh  
the quiet feature taking up the funeral

now I have li'l yellow paw-print next to my piano  
naked, fragile, the odd  
footpad not the same

she took the dirt bottles of her sincerity  
and slid it up a blank tasty jerking sign  
fringing her meat bowl and leaf walks

cuddled the merchandise below anything  
she was getting it now, unworldly  
as she was she massaged my nuts

but perchance the friends of blast teats  
admire both binocular naturist contests  
hadn't been with a dad in grounds and bang on me

verification is unto toothache characteristic  
and I would get better deals at the garage  
if I had a dingle dangle of my own

Wyatt Earp proves there's an upside  
so I tease the other world with one toe  
and distorted to smooch it

being a humorist is what makes me great  
the makeshift laptops of valuable realism  
are capital and addicting ages ago

[back](#)

# Simon PERCHIK

Tighter than a branding iron :my flashlight  
worn down --I will name him  
and his cheek melt from the wound  
--he will bleed, recognize the kiss  
that clinks :an anchor torn open from  
outside  
delivered in the dark, letters tangled,  
missing  
and from his crib the cries  
the way lost-at-sea  
sailors listen for their name.

I will twist these batteries  
so no one hears creaking in every oak  
chosen from among the quietest leaves  
as sails still bandage a breathless mast

--his name will heal :a scar  
where a star still alive  
over his cheek heavier than water  
and in that dark  
sent to the bottom  
waiting to say his name

--two names :the second chance  
--flames favor the dead, refire  
but only once :my son  
named after me, at night  
with a burning-glass :this flashlight  
as if some need-fire  
without any ashes  
names him and trembling.

\*

Nothing enters painlessly, the Earth  
chucks up our hubcaps, puddles, rust  
as mothers long ago learned

--we are taught to kiss  
with our mouth closed, to hear  
their dark, bent  
and the creak we cannot see  
unrolls the Earth  
the crushed lullabies, mufflers  
and evenings

--I'm hauling this sun  
back into the ground  
into an ocean never heard before  
--carting a light that wouldn't wait  
whose first breath came from this dark  
and the last, half asleep, again  
carried down in my arms.

\*

The cots, the stove, the crew  
unclaimed in this Nissen hut :my mailbox  
between twelve more :a camp  
ditched, the road too narrow, curved  
from rain and letters home, tissue thin  
too weak to lift my lips, my slow  
wide, rippling sweep  
crumpled to tin, its great arc  
now eyes and claws and thirst, the flag  
soaked in blood, waving where it fell.

People I don't know send letters  
promising to lose. I've already won!  
A SOUTHERN CAPE FOR TWO that couldn't wait  
printed on the envelope --my hangar's

full. Too many capitals and these stamps  
each day heavier : monuments  
defaced the first time up  
tenacious as fly paper

--I can't separate the mail  
just by calling out, every name  
sounds as if mine at some briefing  
we agreed the last one left  
a prize that sounded more like laughter

--the letters too heavy now : a heap  
as clouds still gather each evening red  
--the last carrying their dead  
to the pile : every sky

waiting on my table to be sent home  
as a flower reaching into the world  
or letters with my name outside.

\*

No hardhat and this stubborn doctor  
too close, my heart  
battering his head --his timid fingers  
knocking to unearthen from my chest  
the great cave, the fire that listens

for flesh --he collects and keeps a chart  
slants is pencil-thin light  
writes on my eyes  
something I want forgotten

--without a rope, the light  
lowered through my throat.  
He says my breath is still in place  
warm from human sacrifice.  
He asks how old I am

and my heart by milliliters  
is carried off on a tray  
as if a wince could tell  
what blood was like in ancient times

the blood that always saw me naked  
the blood long before the Earth  
began to beat :the avalanche  
still gushing out my arms  
my colors and perfumes.

This doctor's used to snapping nerves  
with pointed hammers and whisk brooms  
--he digs bareheaded, uncovers  
the murmur stone by stone :so many deaths  
for one brief grave :my heart  
as sometimes an old school song  
and the soft drizzle that was a name  
before his cold fingers, the fierce cough  
he tells me to try.

[back](#)

# Kathleen ROONEY & Elisa GABBERT

## **DIAGONAL LINES ARE DYNAMIC**

The "I don't know what" to taking an enduring  
"I don't know what" is a line of rebels rising behind  
the heat-shimmery horizon. What the camera sees,  
the mind unravels. I still can't find the water's  
edge, or the border of the frame. For the good  
of the class, I make no suggestions that aren't also  
double entendres. Sometimes we have a hateful  
debate about the value of debates: Gold  
standards can't stop downturns in the general  
morale, & kids who are scheming to be adults  
sometimes fail at growing up. Holden Caulfield  
gets an A for banging his head against a wall.

But I'm feeling banal, semi-kicking my sense of self to provide punctuation for my lateness. The first tenet of Auteur Theory is in the *Cahiers du cinéma*, so when in doubt, shout something French. A blank in a workbook begs to be struck through. A portrait w/o a frame begs to be stolen, looking so naked & nimble on the floor against the wall. Sometimes I step out into the hall, become a symbol, & the lockers wave open & shut, signify back at me. Other times, it's like a still life. Like I'm hardly more than a well-placed skull.

## **THERE ARE NO STARS IN ANY OF THE PHOTOS**

In the uncut version, I cut right through the empty lobby. It doesn't hurt, just kind of renders the thing obsolete. This is a documentary that's going to teach no one anything. That's about all I can reveal; we don't know ourselves—familiar yet peculiar between

the hotel sheets, the hotel TV off &  
reflecting our own reflections, all convex  
& perplexing. We totally freak out  
when the power goes out & then the phone  
rings. One of the rules was *Don't ever stay  
the same; keep changing*, so—out of boredom—  
that's what we did. A sign on the coffee  
maker will only convey so much authority.  
Beyond the hills out there, maybe the highway  
is decisive, but in here, life is an inexact  
sequence of unrelated events. When we learned  
the task of the artist is the education of  
the masses, we wondered which classes—working?  
middle?—felt special. But alone. An empty  
set. The hidden cameras & the obvious  
cameras, side by side, must make the crew curious,  
but this is as much about the human condition  
as it is about inertia: an extended stay in ignorance.

**BRAINLOCK**

I made a list of the "charming" things I've done  
while ingratiating myself & I couldn't exhaust it,  
as much as I gave myself the benefit of the doubt.

From the vantage point of some expressway,  
I spun out. What really flashes through your  
field of vision when confronted w/ absolute  
darkness is not a mysterious light, like they say,  
but a boring gray, a deliquescing expanse.

The basics of sex, learning to dance. Words  
are not horses, but they do have ultimately useless  
beauty. These & other things occur but are not  
quite feelings to me ... will I keep on spinning?

Is the guardrail guarding anything or am I  
some kind of omnipotent being? The optical  
illusion is actually 3-D—I can touch the blocks.

I'm going crazy. I miss my sense of disproportion.

I'm afraid of dying obscure & dispirited. If I could  
do it all again, I wouldn't. Or else be someone  
else. Last night I checked, & checked again,  
but this morning my phone was not in my hand,  
where I keep it as an obstacle to too much sleep.

Wake up restless. Turn off the white noise  
machine. My morning ritual sunsets the bad  
dreams, & my days persist in calm obsolescence.

[back](#)

# Spencer SELBY

## **COLOR SCREEMY**

Interferes with itself  
in blue green chill

Wide primal meaning  
from all angles  
the frame devours

Oblivious in excess  
for milk monster cartoon

This gap thought relief  
crossed body with  
clairvoyance we feel  
between lines of chalk

On Saturday Sunday  
before paper creation  
shapes street building cars

before method calculates  
force by distance from  
the timeless universe of  
red yellow image or not

## **DENIED IMPORT**

*for Drew Kunz*

I not me but version  
shot through pocket

Suffers exchange often  
by letters illuminated  
to admit a time I don't

Black sky under  
awakening from your face

Selected from pose dropped  
in local fashion

Need sublime not  
recognized as such

Punctuates city clock  
obscured forever in rush  
of late cars

Hear someone whisper  
behind a nonexistent door

Over almost as we  
address first nature

Twisted shaking bewilderment

A woman's hand evoked  
the luxury of your collapse

Either will death  
confuse one who appears  
to work the market

History taken personal  
for a ride

The old game  
and a normal day  
nods at shallow end

Does love  
sad ring I remember

So delicate that  
I don't have the strength  
to acknowledge

Like this fragment given  
the most attention

Envelops merciful cloth

No words want  
to be here when  
the ghost makes a choice

## **POETRY GATHERING LESSON**

Perhaps you seek other memories

As detailed as smooth shade

Some moth-eaten starched tracing  
Rubbed bones and catacombs

We cut them along edges  
Labeling the stuffy classroom

With its maps of time lost  
In branches and roots

Made possible by the bad secret  
Reprinted with support not given

But implied by those who never  
Accept unsolicited manuscripts

## **LATE BULLETIN**

Always notebook vibrating  
section of page eclipsing  
arm next to funny lamp

Certain order within noise  
graphic disappearing diagnosis  
doubt behind outrage leading  
to my room freshly tainted

Trouble released upon waking  
from obligatory shadow world

What appointment forgotten  
what desire propelled by  
knowledge of something inert

Hypnotic blob or bubble  
just now shifting focus

stubborn sly counterpoint  
drawing each other deeper  
while threatening illusion  
at the bottom alone

## **BASIC BLUE (1)**

Late comes escape from  
self trusted own self  
cut down by layered  
anxiety into course  
streaked with sun drawn  
to employed rock, stone  
and appropriate cement

Different origin discovered  
bridge swimming below  
mouth in distance  
water earth fingers feel  
body gulf across skin

amorphous clouds that  
offer help identified with  
time no time to make  
a plan floating out  
to sea when there is  
no chance of spotting  
another kindred soul

## **BASIC BLUE (2)**

The light bed theater  
divested lament whose  
desperate need remains

Luminous upward

by thread staring  
at letters scrambled  
in a lucid dream

We chose experiment  
over subject empty  
from pressing allegiance

Posture alone turning  
keyhole at birth

Trace of interest  
which orb must situate  
by controlling supply

Thin volume through  
my bedroom window  
with dawn as metaphor  
causing laughter when  
this story first appeared

[back](#)

# Jordan STEMPLEMAN

## May Mean

There is that driving again. Every day, sitting in something not made for you, entirely suited to a larger body, a belief to be taken along with songs from this time or another time, and nothing else. Well, there's also the awful attentiveness. The planted and unmoving parts from us, swimming beside before falling behind, that add to the panic, the childish and unrational wind, unclear and lumbering on the outside, the speech of places left behind.

## Primers

and after these years, once their speaking is made complete, not for them it's said, but alongside a life, they will begin to tell of what went into them, what amounted to, time apart and the well formed tour, nights and walks for lunch, counted as one, the first evening at home, when home meant not leaving or wanting to leave, totaled as two, those arrived at days, recalled exactly as they were, and so, extended,

no longer to go on as what was left of them, but to settle  
without sift, to consider each moment that coursed as able, as  
so good at what they do that, when they spoke up and announced,  
this is how we are to end, it began, and what once stood  
as surroundings, moved behind these times to form  
the unheard of hours, waiting to open without falling  
forward, vacant and unlike any other time before

## For Rest

There is a  
doubt for all  
the rest. There

is a kind  
of time that  
lifts time without

risk of hanging  
on. Nothing to  
dig, no sight

pushed along or  
wound too tight.  
This marks the

notion to stay,  
to delay leaving,  
there to remain

still enough, hoping  
to sense one  
side of the

face or another.  
There is a  
dream that stands

for light and  
that often calls

out for what

is left. It's  
there, sight goes  
frantic when approached

by what's now  
bent, what once  
swayed for those

chance locations and  
distances. It's here  
what's looked at  
appears certain that  
if there were  
an occasion to

remain still, things  
could actually appear  
to move, could

eventually be the  
unknown, the thoughtful  
and unthinkable concern.

## **Always**

Today the weather dropped, and tomorrow  
there'll be this and that, and it'll be all around us, well deserved  
to go after this day, as all is from following.  
Either way, pretend you'll think of me, return  
with new words having nothing to do with us, with wonder  
or living, just those thoughts, bothersome if not overtaken,  
inside to say I heard you, unbecoming what you had in mind.

## Ways Fill

the sort of problem  
aimed, set against

the last of it,  
in its own

mixture, the closest  
brush against what  
won't remove the

building or the making  
up, hung, carrying

the crawl of  
having thought whatever

could, and you,  
having done it

before, knows how it leans  
for light, lined  
immediately, the clearing

that is, with never  
the unease of neither  
eager or otherwise about

[back](#)

# Steve TIMM

## **Twenty-eighth Chapter Masking swanker virtues**

Howl it's nowing  
this is your winter for ya  
why the windows look back  
take it up with invernal afraids  
just then went epaulettic  
and there went the vasionaries impursuit  
all those youngs stooped up on stoops frays  
whereoff the quadres dear depinted cleared to  
even a jack's wan  
the times got no cygn  
it's just another cynic dangling a cyg  
there is no new corner under no new sun son  
dispalled I averted my shoulder  
the time for diving came unfunded

## **Twenty-ninth Chapter Ghost bucket**

Font as ma  
as maw  
a new whisper in town  
in tow  
than damned

before the invention of borders  
of brokers  
it was my face too  
they would rub coal along the together  
knot for luck  
a race of forders  
of flatters  
funny how it's not a blizzard to be caught out alone in to die  
where're you for  
what faint what  
veined what  
caught me the lyrical tremens and voted

## **Thirtieth Chapter Trusts**

To each one's own oblivion  
thus the extended collectivity  
the cozy ditto voice  
I will not calm down  
or you or  
patter 'n you'd think infinite act  
when Hackatoe off-erupts  
not just the premium  
example endeth in death  
shall allow the inside stutter  
and into the copier the supraream  
boy oh man oh god  
it's a good gad  
and just looks 's though the dropoff's ultimate  
is all that  
absolves that  
cheap democracy  
a lien on all your houses  
the fie-er connects iambs  
here it's the one missing whose job's to keep the sunder

## Thirty-first Chapter

### Come it matters

It's me I'm worried about against the tutti pastels  
the stout front of directionist thrust  
it's a frail a swale a swell 's well world everyone's speaking of  
un or not  
like a gift or a rattle  
did you want your now or later  
it's only a twist if you'd thought it through  
they're always doping us so  
a passel a bunch just as soon draw blood or lots to  
rows of shops catering to the codes of 'em  
they bristle and bring  
strange is how something's or someone's something's stove in but it takes no agent  
they say it's not being and shouldn't a fella throw one down  
I cleft 'em where they studded  
said I'll not X a box of any  
and this is where I speak from

## Thirty-second Chapter

### Tempi

Death by ricochet  
a mighty buttress is ours  
the boneless fortune an instant can offer  
the instant the instant that does so  
anyway limping like a communiqué  
the caresses the rifles used up  
the lanterns in windowless window places  
someone to come end all plurals  
away the verbs  
the way of reverb  
where have all the studios gone  
the researcher his grin  
kids squatting over a platelet count  
not knowing wantable what  
across each scape the endless sharing of wind

[back](#)

# Arpine Konyalian GRENIER

## Reflections on the First International Poetic Ecologies Conference

Université Libre de Bruxelles, May 2008

Crossing the tarmac, the final hop, the boarding pass, shoes off, yes, yes of course I will work on the chocolate and beer in Brussels. There but not there I am, woozy and beaming, part of the landscape female, villager and city dweller female, deeply rooted in yet uprooted from several cultures and languages, music, poetry, science, art and major setbacks brewing my genderless mind, societal or private, as indicated. However, to lose what is given, the certainty, at the same time stand ground, not into but through, evading colonization and quantification is my main agenda.

We're at the Country House Hotel facing Heroes' Square. The hotel lobby is crowded and noisy. I hear someone back and forth impeccably in French and English. Her name tag spells Franca Bellarsi. I remember she is the convener of the Poetic Ecologies Conference, the first international conference of its kind to be hosted in this country, organized by the Department of Languages and Literatures of the Université Libre de Bruxelles. I am a delegate. It feels good.

Good four days of conferencing and connecting during several parallel panels running from 9AM to 11PM, poetry readings in-between, add to that two coffee breaks with scrumptious mini-desserts, a healthy lunch and later dinner. The participants are post-modern, eco-conscious poets and scholars from all over the world. First-timers, old-timers, everyone is here because it matters. It being poetry and ecology.

I think poetry opens hearts and minds to dialogue, be it the emotional and metered text of yesteryear or the cutting edge sound and sense of today. The commitment to repetition and return plagues me. Braids of thought, words, phrases and circumstances where edges of writing meet, none overtaking itself or the other. Nature has no duality, I hear. Like water it flows and ebbs without competing, is continuous, non-restrictive, inclusive. Poetry (and politics) are most effective when they utilize these principles. (That may be the only kinship between them, as unlike fiction or critical discourse, poetry has nothing to say. Art bitten by poetry longs to be freed from reason, said Maritain. I am happy to remember this.)

Concept to content to sound relationships are exquisitely well articulated here, the outer, the inner, the global, the personal. No dazzle by wit or conceit. The longing to connect just because we're human overshadows the politic of the human. This is innovative exploration/ exposition as it resists definitions to avoid exclusion: Seamus Heaney's *Elemental Eco-poetics*, from Spain; *Metaphysical Conceits and the Re-naturalization of the Mind*, from Germany; *Catastrophic Thinking and Poetic Remedy*, from Canada; the *Eco-ethical Poetics of Found Text*, from the UK; the *Mobile Non-places of Post-nationalist Identity*, from Ireland; the *Chthonic Voices of C.D. Wright*; *Sustainability & Modern Australian Poetics*. Neither self-consumption nor self-sufficiency is in vogue.

How about deleting the verbs and words like self. I am reminded that the physical is not in conflict with the ideological, that laws of nature inhabit long range patterns, each element, variable or formula affecting the other, language as yet another dwelling opening up, evolving in and of nature along its cultural constraints. I am reminded that mutually exclusive states create conflict, that our poetic ecologies need a creative vision and adherence to it, exposing, denying, re-evaluating, freed of gendered tropes, self absorbed, instinctive, less observant, more open.

Circumstance does not bring satisfaction. I must bring satisfaction to it. Seeing steadily and wholly the vastness of nothingness that belongs to no one, I am woozy and beaming again. There can be no colonization or quantification. Categories validate and collapse. Turning away from them is to be informed by them. Therein lies dialectic we need not dominate or subjugate. In a world too fast paced for metaphor and irony, change and chance continue to rediscover language and create new symbols and metaphors. I want to slow down to recruit and discern the process. To write is to die, for it is to move from one world into another, a world in which one has nothing, no country, no language, no grammar, no knowledge, said Cixous. I feel a meta-linguistic polytonality that disowns itself to be carried over to other terrain where poetic engagement occurs with ethics, spirituality and aesthetics. It is apocalyptic in nature.

In Brussels, the sun goes down around 10 PM in May. It is a joy to walk downtown or take the bus in the wee hours of the night, alone. There is history, hospitality and respectability everywhere. These are the Belgians. They take pride in the multi-cultural and multi-lingual challenges facing them. They welcome change. Professor

Bellarsi is not only touched by an angel, she is one, with a flock of mini angels around making sure delegates are well taken care of.

At the airport, Judith and I are on the same flight to Washington DC where I will say goodbye to her and continue to Tucson. We are early. We buy chocolates with our left- over Euros, munch on, talking faintly. Escaping the elitist and the insular, we have been traveling the poetic ecologies of heart, we decide. There were no protagonists, antagonists or narrators, only participants. It feels good to know we can choose to align with the poetic ecologies of our natural state of being, the Heisenberg Principle and *maya*, Higgs' neutral non zero and *maya*. We're good. Good Good.

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*Arpine Konyalian Grenier's work has appeared in How2, Columbia Poetry Review, Sulfur, The Iowa Review, Phoebe, Fence, Verse, Big Bridge and elsewhere. A former scientist, musician, financial analyst and author of several poetry collections, Arpine lives in Tucson, Arizona.*

[back](#)



painting by Gene Tanta

# Unusual Woods

by Gene Tanta

(click on image to open the PDF)

[back](#)

## Tony Trigilio reviews *The Making of Collateral Beauty* by Mark Yakich

*The Making of Collateral Beauty* by Mark Yakich. Dorset, VT. Tupelo Press, 2006. 29 p. \$9.95, paper.

At first glance, the prose poems in Mark Yakich's chapbook *The Making of Collateral Beauty* might seem only like a zany labyrinth of explanatory footnotes to his first full-length collection, *Unrelated Individuals Forming a Group and Waiting to Cross*. Each of the poems in *The Making of Collateral Beauty* shares a title with a poem in the first book; and each poem purports to unveil the inspiration and context for its companion poem in the first book. But the poems in *The Making of Collateral Beauty* stand too well on their own to be seen only as ancillary extensions of the first book. As this book explicates and extends *Unrelated Individuals Forming a Group and Waiting to Cross*, it also confronts our craving, and sometimes our fetish, for explanation. It reminds us that comprehension is an organic experience, not a product reducible to hierarchies of the declarative sentence, the nested footnote, or the tidy logic of explication.

Yakich adores those moments when an artist's "explanation" of his/her work expands into its own associative extravaganza that rattles our need for explanation. He tells us in "Index of Lawn Bowling or Index of Teenage Intimacy" that "the movie version of this poem" is "bound to be bad." With a mad-hatter's smirk, he adds, "But I still hope it's made during my

lifetime." Language entices us, but, as Yakich writes in "Every Force Deserves a Form," the seductiveness of form easily can interfere with substance: "In our age italics are overused. Like celebrities." Yakich's world is one where the telling of a tale is at such remove from the intentions of its teller that willful, hierarchical explanation robs "collateral beauty" of the glories of chance. Here, even the idea of God is "an aleatory act"; metaphysics is reduced to "a moment when the pen slipped a little causing the writer to forget about the number of eggs gathered from the hens, and that the weather was usually foggy in the morning but sunny by early afternoon." A strange ontology comes from these gaps between thoughts. Yakich writes that "you learn things by doing them the way you didn't start out thinking *Thy will be done*. Classical: Faulkner wanted to write poems, got novels; Shakespeare wanted to marry someone he loved, got plays; Yahweh wanted to create a small garden, got a compost patch."

Yakich's debt to Nabokov's *Pale Fire* is obvious and well earned. Like *Pale Fire*, this book reminds us that authorship is a fiction loved too much to be abandoned. The fictive idea of singular, proprietary authorship endures as something necessary and exacting, as another moment when "[e]ach writer limits herself to the story of her own execution" ("The Teller is the Only Survivor of the Fairy Tale Ending"). It is too easy to misread Barthes's "The Death of the Author" as a form of critical homicide. Thankfully, Yakich enacts what Barthes's essay actually argues: the "death" of the Author produces the simultaneous "birth of the Reader."

Like any experiment, *The Making of Collateral Beauty* demands participatory readers, not passive listeners. The rewards for this experience is a delightfully strange and innovative collection of prose poems. The poems are weird in ways that defy our everyday overuse of the word, as in "Dreams Hardly Ever Seem to Change Things for the Better," a road-trip of a poem that goes everywhere and nowhere at once, coast-to-coast -- and with Algonquin, Illinois, in between -- then builds to a short romance in, of all places, Baden-Baden, and a train to Trieste, looking for "the ghost of Joyce and the origin of the color yellow." At the same time, Yakich's associative logic, and nicely erratic body humor, falls for its own

excesses. In these moments, his technique is too self-aware, too pleased with itself, as in poems such as “Saturday Night” or “Matinee,” where, unfortunately, you’re left wondering where slapstick ends and surrealism begins.

I finished a draft of this review savoring Yakich’s “Blazon” as I sat next to the left-field foul pole at a San Francisco Giants baseball game, squeezed between two families with ball gloves and sodas and hot dogs -- and re-reading odd, gorgeous lines such as, “The body truly is an amazing machine for worshipping the hug.” Most of us in the crowd that night wanted to see Barry Bonds hit his record-breaking 715th home run. (He did it the next day.) I re-read my favorites from the book and jotted final notes between innings. The woman behind me, a loud season-ticket holder endeared by all the ushers and concessions staff, detested Colorado’s left fielder Eli Marrero and cursed him the whole game. The rest of the time, she begged Bonds to turn around and look at her as other fans took photos of him with their cell phone cameras. (He never did.) I tried to write faster than everything was happening. I could not stop thinking of Yakich’s own adoration of the creative process, his self-reflexive questions that revel in their own inscrutability like snappy, absurdist koans (“If one could write out one’s life faster than one could live it, would that constitute time travel?”) Clumps of the crowd left after Bonds’s last at-bat, in the eighth inning. The woman behind me cursed them all: “Good riddance! The rest of us are here to watch a ball game!” I imagined Yakich nodding, encouraging her to continue, saying, “I wanted to sleep through the rest of the play none of us could play. One thousand times I set down my lines; one thousand times someone else picked them up.”

(end)

[back](#)

# Unusual Woods

by Gene Tanta

# Unusual Woods

## **Acknowledgments:**

I gratefully acknowledge that versions of poems in this collection have previously appeared in the following journals:

Ugly Accent:

XV [Yes, puppy dogs are cute and yours in no]

Woodland Pattern Book Center's Poetry Archive:

XIV [Suddenly, I will make miracles in the attic.]

Ploughshares:

XXIII [Your hair blown back by hope]

**Part 1: Unusual Woods**

- 6 I [Dear machete, dear solace:]  
7 II [Where the ladies draw water, I wake up cloven whispers.]  
8 III [In the darkest creases of my skin little acorns grow]  
9 IV [I would rather live in the nearness before this time,]  
10 V [The moon overhead, the root burls of desire below;]  
11 VI [My devils work where the meat sleeps on my bones;]  
12 VII [I yawn and stretch out my body, I grow cross-eyed]  
13 VIII [I told them to find God in the fields]  
14 IX [I was sunlight waiting on the bus, a fragile egg of nothingness.]  
15 X [Draw the curtains, make the widows forget.]  
16 XI [I am no calf slothful to the knife]  
17 XII [Demur as a switchblade, I retract nothing]  
18 XIII [Lorine, your faceless dolls await.]  
19 XIV [Suddenly, I will make miracles in the attic.]  
20 XV [Yes, puppy dogs are cute and yours in no]  
21 XVI [Dear Nephew, I beg of you to take your startled daylight]  
22 XVII [Who among the lowercase gods in full beard has not poked]  
23 XVIII [Broad sheets of flame, demon tongues]  
24 XIX [Dear Tacitus, she was crushed by crowds in the moonless,]  
25 XX [Fear labors in mysterious ways, o fiery one.]  
26 XXI [You never could play]  
27 XXII [Down when I'm dead in my grave,]  
28 XXIII [Your hair blown back by hope]  
29 XXIV [What I saw, I gave a filthy tongue to.]

## Part 1: Unusual Woods

I

Dear machete, dear solace:  
I have failed to heed your last ghost-wail  
under black waters  
one centimeter out of lantern light;  
I have flit my last sleepy kiss  
as you dry;  
famously, I have signed my last autograph  
under your skin;  
I have laundered  
your fluorescent two-way eyes  
inside my stairwell ...  
Still the bones stick out of the poor  
and someone's heels are silhouetted there.

## II

Where the ladies draw water, I wake up cloven whispers.  
Through alabaster horse teeth,  
I offer you my azurite face  
usurped and sharpened to stare into  
and be a snake of pearly breath wafting  
above the head of Adam's son, wafting above  
the virgin Eve he left behind  
dilated. He lay naked sleeping,  
un-coerced by spats or miracles or anything.  
He lay naked beyond the shadow of a doubt,  
supine, spot-lit to an even goldenrod  
through the bamboo that minces everything into evening.  
Is this the promise through the valley ...

### III

In the darkest creases of my skin little acorns grow  
and grow. Such streets are swept by coughing people  
and drunken people. Mustafa demands more from the deep well  
to sweeten his daybed.

Mustafa, your surname past the ossuary taproots  
braided into lovers' knots of knowing full well  
a thing of beauty is a thermostat forever,  
leaves mating on the wing  
with death.

All the more to embolden your tongue with  
to lap in the Emperor's pond of lovers' tears.  
Mustafa cuts under the Eucalypt: a fool and his head are soon parted.  
There is no other way to skin a tourist.

#### IV

I would rather live in the nearness before this time,  
one centimeter out of nobody's business,  
but I can't.

In the middle of squat night,  
I would rather  
blend with the stone than dig out the dead.

I would rather lick your dovetail joints  
than rip an old bootstrap  
digging out the dead.

I would rather piss in the desert moonlight  
than give you a hand.

I would rather weep under iron fittings  
than burn in the nearness before and after this one.

V

The moon overhead, the root burls of desire below;  
silence in unusual woods.

I've got the authority-figure up on a lathe  
puffing his brier pipe in the open air.

Over there,

the tight sex-kitten in jeans with her feet  
swinging of laburnum and acacia.

Silence is a rhythm  
that burns my tongue.

The fire marshal warned me against myrtlewood  
but I fantasized with the gentle speech  
of the mountain laurel floating on its back.

What I cannot hold, I blot my insides with ...

## VI

My devils work where the meat sleeps on my bones;  
my rocking-chair matches their labor with a sigh.  
My devils eat at the Peacock's ugly feet.  
My leathery thunder  
on butterfly tables lay. Jesus cut a graceful figure  
high up on the cross: his jet-black widow's peak,  
a drawer of new ideas.  
When the physics of his bones could no longer hold him up,  
we developed the curbed cresting at such a time as this.  
We smell the blood of English children  
playing kickball in the yard; the barred windows say: stay.  
I'll be the horse-joint fluid in your split-second whirl.  
You can call me every cloud in the book.

## VII

I yawn and stretch out my body, I grow cross-eyed  
from the fishery stench. The roofer is late  
from his second job of feeding his own flesh  
to a hungry murderer  
in Dante's personal vision of hell.  
It weighs on him. Vehement raven before hale,  
he squirms under the armpits  
of the devil, stuffed with sisal leaves and sea salt,  
and the opened mouths of gouty flesh-children.  
The traditional information of night  
plugs our ears with cornmeal polenta.  
If he dallies down deaf in no amatory flame,  
that's what the devil does.

## VIII

I told them to find God in the fields  
and on the path to overtake me before I reach Segovia.  
Later, we fathered an argument  
near the fireplace. All morning I had gathered chickpeas  
in the garden. After sunset,  
blindfolded by night, beloved,  
you let me suffer  
the sweet cauterization of fashionable men. Now let me  
neither bathe nor count my wounds  
but permit me to get mine.  
Stammering and unknowing, I toiled  
on a hillside among the aqueduct stones and workmen.  
Chris, I'm down to the white meat.

## IX

I was sunlight waiting on the bus, a fragile egg of nothingness.  
The birds in the eaves added up to oak, ash,  
little painted furniture survives. My sweet mortician  
brushed my cheekbones; my feet were round or somewhat flattened  
as light flattens water.  
Someone chased a Grizzly through a forest-fire on TV  
but I saw as through jewels.  
My mortician has a joint brow, terrible stubble, and  
an emperor's pond of lovers' tears.  
I am a pond of lovers' tears  
on sunflower-and-tulip inset panels surrounded by common brick.  
Wide-mouth sunlight rimmed me silver etchings  
and my eyes dripped ice-water.

X

Draw the curtains, make the widows forget.  
Blackest day tastes and sings him  
until sunsets withdraw their undying love.  
Likewise, elders beat it  
when the sky darkens with locust song.  
Your beauty stinks of holocaust hair  
and holocaust clothes.  
There is a linger to the dead,  
the whispered odor of hard-used animal,  
tending toward the floor.  
With wild mulberry grief,  
she swears unkindness upon the urban air:  
my steed no longer knows my name.

## XI

I am no calf slothful to the knife  
bellowing an oath of learning  
circled in fleet flame, not a flock of wrens fighting  
over leftover bits  
in the early morning eves.  
Coins are made for tossing up feeling good  
not for envying the dead.  
A shaft of smoke  
and sentiment runs through me,  
runs through us all:  
the profile of a mean horse-driver  
with his cold hands and hot whip  
passing us slowly on the stone-cobbled streets.

## XII

Demur as a switchblade, I retract nothing  
in the one-way mirror of your itchy eye  
and then we'll talk  
over my footnotes. One morning,  
the dream crawled down from the attic  
into a great scroll of smoke  
because a historian has got to eat, write history,  
and eat again.  
Walking at a smart pace,  
trust your feel-good step,  
your theories of the grim  
awakened by the morning sun doling out the light  
until the pretty flowers bring flowers.

### XIII

Lorine, your faceless dolls await.  
In that roadless-dark  
the milliner hung herself. The museum photo  
fades to black. Black Hawk,  
blood-soaked, blood-blotted  
peninsula light, northern country quite  
rides the river trees down  
and drinks in reflection.  
In the pilgrim photo  
you are all elbows and voiceover  
under the passing dressmaker.  
I miss you. I carry the longing with me.  
Drink and drink of it.

## XIV

Suddenly, I will make miracles in the attic.  
I'll do the chicken drunk as hell.  
It's spring for everybody else too, you know.  
Lean in, *liebes kind*, speak into my curls  
bitter little nothings: I am a garbled razor  
thinking its way across your throat.  
Your spit tastes like spit in your mouth  
and your tongue is bite-size. Listen, I  
didn't mean it that way. I'll make you make it make sense.  
I let the sorry out of the bag  
and stuffed you in instead and sold you to the gypsies.  
With your no-nonsense hair, *mein liebes kind*,  
please take me back into your hot, hot mouth.

XV

Yes, puppy dogs are cute and yours in no  
exception, madam, but don't pretty please me inside  
your bolted boxcars. You may not like it  
but a quiet screw behind closed doors  
will clear up that complexion. Tongues  
are in the open mouths of fire dark and sharp  
as sword blades: dark, madam, and sharp,  
are also the crossed-out stars that just won't quit.  
Where the night always tastes of human flesh,  
I stir and question mark the ashes  
charred into a pyre burning in reverse. As if! As if!  
Specks fall on our shoulders, light enters our flesh,  
you look away as the thick and semifinal snow falls on.

XVI

Dear Nephew, I beg of you to take your startled daylight  
off of me.

Fear not, for the teeth with which you chew  
will be counted by the waves as favored tokens.

When cicadas start to lose their voices  
in the dark pit of history

and your love for me no longer sprints,  
but ambles through the eras,

then shall sunshades rescue us like a flea, a holy grace  
and provost to all newly married couples.

Fine, how the light was bright and played the scoundrel  
atop the oaks. No sunbath after cold-bath

to look upon the cloud of death nearing the scientist of Vesuvius.

## XVII

Who among the lowercase gods in full beard has not poked  
his nose into your pot  
against the garlic sauce  
to only minutes later  
play the soggy cat upon the roof  
till you give in  
and feed him  
whatever you have on fire?  
Ash and pumice fire from the blackened sky settle.  
Clothes turn to scales and run teal  
and purse up in the heat-vale as drake down does.  
Helmsmen, to lessen others' panic,  
ask for their baths.

## XVIII

Broad sheets of flame, demon tongues  
larger than I stand before you,  
lick and suck our lengths and midsections  
with saltwater tips  
on the unfavorable shore  
now more vivid in the nighttime,  
in the open and strong tremors.  
With pillows tied to our heads  
for protection against the falling rock,  
the smell of sulfur in the archived air  
revives him:  
then the flame that does not touch his body  
but takes up all the rest.

## XIX

Dear Tacitus, she was crushed by crowds in the moonless,  
in the cloudy night, in the unlighted rooms above us.  
She was a little amber swash through charred oak barrels.  
Sellout panic brimming over the house seawall,  
yet another monument to collapse.  
Dazed as I was, nothing seemed to stay put,  
stones failed to block cart wheels from rolling; I scolded the dawn  
for being lazy but the dawn stayed lazy.  
When the shoreline grew afraid of the land, uncle, I wrote  
on how during the mother-frightener night I felt depthless fear.  
Uncle, my sole and greatest consolation  
was that the world was ending with me in it,  
dwindled to lurid smoke in a faint fog as after an eclipse.

XX

Fear labors in mysterious ways, o fiery one.  
The story of labor swings  
and makes our terror run on time.  
Our terror runs in the exciting corners of language:  
burn alive if I catch.  
The police hound on my trail  
asking over all the wrong graves  
with his teeth,  
sniffing out my flinching heart.  
A coal-black wretchedness,  
a wormed-over wretchedness  
stumbles into a woodlot. That's right, hand it over:  
the gold shivers in your mind.

XXI

You never could play that thing  
worth a goddamn  
so how humiliated you will feel  
when you watch me  
eat you later  
with a plastic fork and knife.  
When the good knives are asleep  
in the kitchen drawer,  
we'll listen to the bad knives  
slightly tremble.  
We'll watch  
the moon light up our bandages  
and frighten us to death.

XXII

Down when I'm dead in my grave,  
leaving all  
my cigarette butts  
in her lily yard,  
not a word  
before I talk to you.  
It goes  
without saying.  
It goes  
without saying.  
It comes and goes  
without saying  
like a strange tongue in my mouth.

XXIII

Your hair blown back by hope  
and teased by failure,  
you want to do math like bricks do math.  
Hold up mirrors to gods by the baker's dozen.  
Knowledge becomes a layer,  
means a look,  
a tilt my skull to better  
seesaw from this to back  
to finishing for a kiss,  
to lean on the fall of your hair  
my thumb and forefinger:  
like the rain  
pooling gain by plurality.

## XXIV

What I saw, I gave a filthy tongue to.  
The outpost officer at the border  
said he liked my poems, his hand resting on his gun.  
Dirty, you bet it was dirty! I buried  
a couple of ancestors with my tongue this morning  
before retiring it live out  
the fair remainder of its days  
strolling on the beach listening to Bach.  
I licked my fur slick with it,  
up and down and sideways, until I vomited  
a brownish muck on your trousseau.  
Gentlefolk knew me by the cyst on my left testicle.  
Ruffs threw stones at it on their way home from work.