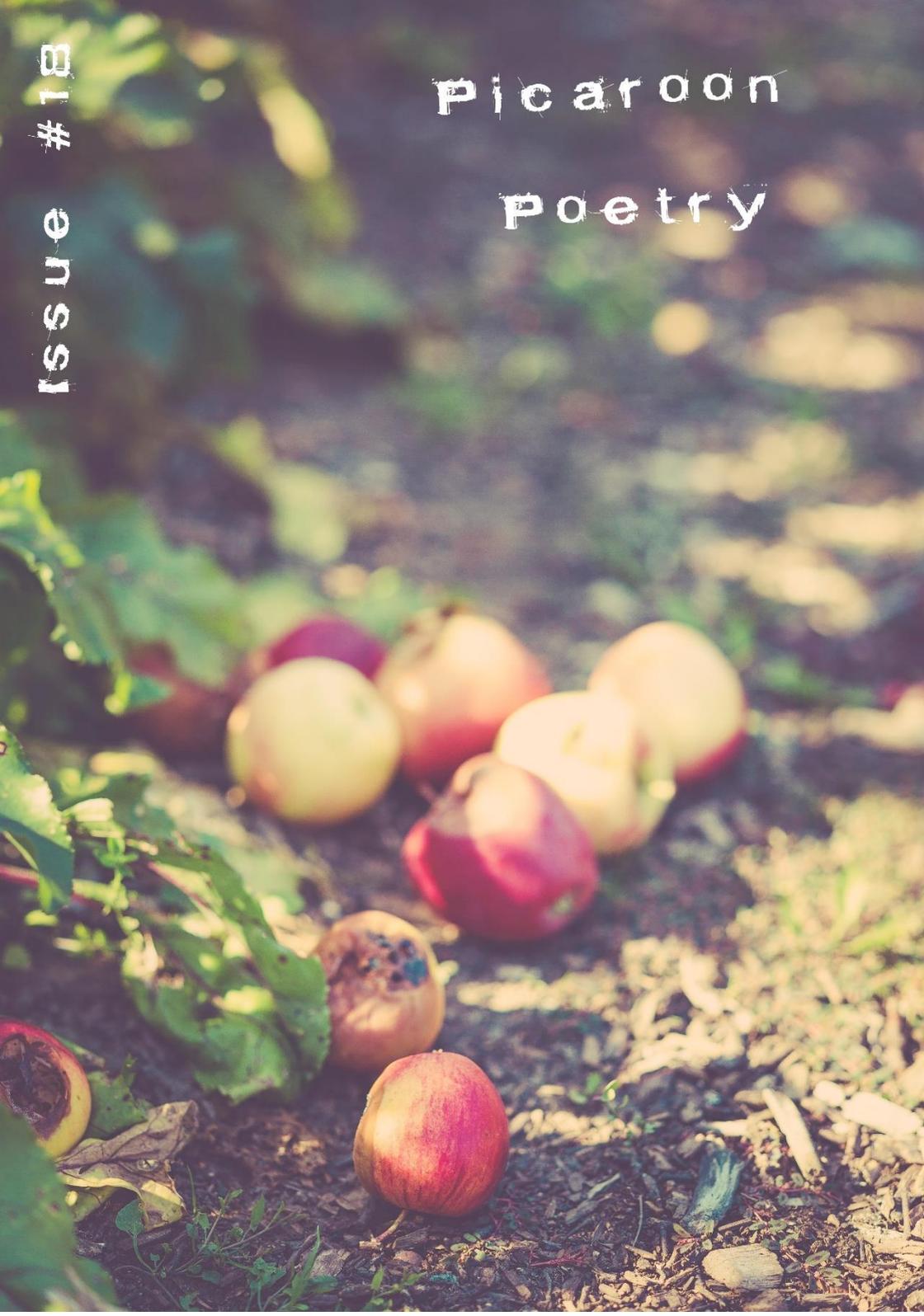


Issue #18

Picardoon

Poetry



Picaroon Poetry

Issue #18
September 2019

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Kevin Ridgeway

The Lord's Day

That's what she called Sundays
when we drank wine and watched
old movies on television,
Robert Mitchum our patron diablo
with a desperate soundtrack
yelled out of Warren Zevon's lungs
her laughter at the ridiculous things
I said and did when I could
be my full tragicomic self
in the company of another sinner
with saucy poetry in her blood
as it pumped into her saintly heart
underneath all the pleasures of the flesh,
a flesh her spirit would one day shed
leaving me alone here on lord's day
in search of the kind of trouble
that made me fall in love.

Tower block warlock

I'm high rising from a paintbox of dreams
that leaked from my head. Last night's typewriter
keys lie in my mouth. The aftertaste of
insomniac syntax, washed away with
the quick swill of a mandrake mouthwash.
I sift dreams to cure sleep paralysis,
but the spell is always forgotten.
It dissolves into ether when I wake
from the hangover of urban living.

Astral projection would be easy from
the balcony, into the amethyst
constellation, wheeling in the twilight.
But a rival's curse means my power lies
confined in this brutal monolith.
A slim, vertical kingdom
of howling lift-shafts,
stairwell shadows
and smashed windows.
So, you see, to me, the city lights are
a cruel approximation of freedom.

My paranoid fisheye peephole is
staring at the morning hallway people,
who shuffle with blankets of pneumatic blue.
Lines of sulking intercoms lie silent.
I have hexed them in payback for the cold
back-chat and door-to-door gossip of my
pale morning ritual.

In daybreak's lysergic glow, pigeons spread
their bingo wings and shit on the
arterial precinct below. The cheap
jewellery of the morning city shines
in the mild yellow of the yawning sun.
I see a jogger smarting on the
towpath, where a milk-float almost drove him
to the edge. The magic of the dawn's

chorus is lost to the heftig of tail-backs
on the flyover, snaking into the
serrated skyline, where I can't see the
wood for the pylons.

In this tower-block, my attitude has
altitude. My signals melt satellite
dishes into glowering smithereens.
I'm making a map to the stars. Chasing
lenticular tigers through safety bars.
But what is it worth?
When all afternoons are spent
rearranging furniture by
telekinesis? Is this all there is?

I was the tower block warlock, but I can't
afford the rent. So I burned a bay leaf and
set it to the wind. I slipped into the
lift and stepped through the coded doorway.
But every lifted curse carries a cost.
I haven't got the power any more.

So I live in a tent on the traffic
island. I'm knocking back dandelion and
burdock in the shock of outdoor air.
So, you see, no more high rising for me.
Typewriter keys rattle in my pocket.

Deirdre Fagan

Everything I hate about you, I love about you, Dear

The way your coughs fill your pockets.
And you leave crumbs like Hansel.

The way the dog grapples for your attention.
And you shed as you walk.

The patches on your sweater cover holes.
Only I know which are truer.

You bought me the wrong flowers.
And by wrong, I mean the plastic ones.

But I love that these flowers won't ever die,
they'll merely gather dust -- and that when you do,
I will not lament your excess in things.

Amy Poague

Asymmetry as a Coping Strategy

I stand akimbo to face off
with your message, left hip
jutting, right eye shutting.

You are currently seeing someone.

Amazement: you see, I see. Through the contrivance,
through my left eye. My reply
will thank you for letting me know.

My reply can smooth both your shoulders
with both of my open palms

because it has an imagination.

Kristin Garth

Secrets are Cigarettes

for Margot & Richie Tenenbaum & Eli Cash

in Q-tip boxes, plastic barrettes. Slow
toes open bathroom locks, neurologist's
incessant knocks in corduroy. Trousseau
slips, theatric taps, wooden prosthesis,

porcelain daydreams of no one's daughter/
addict's scheme — adultery, subway kiss,
the cowboy manchild novelist. Squatter
neighbor, adopted child, memorized each

blonde strand, wild, he brushes back behind
an ear while his best friend's disappeared
to razorblades, excising from his mind,
a sister watercolored twenty years

appears, living room tent, last place they'll hide,
to resurrect this love from suicide.

Brian Comber

the fourth wall

it happens like this,

she sweeps from the garden,
doing that thing with language
about the way we live now;
she keeps me guessing
a week she says, or maybe two, we'll see
and I'm pushed back in the chair like we're climbing a hill;
she glances at her watch with
the little shoulder shrug
saying I haven't got time for this
and leaves me,
a gasping salmon that misjudged the leap

on the other hand

who does she think she is?
she scatters her words like an arc of seeds
her voice pokes around upstairs
but big, as if in the next room, she
clears her neighbour's lawn of leaves
and checks my fridge to crow
holding my hand at the porch just too long
while her husband kicks the tyres with the engine running;
and I am left talking with furniture;
the bloody Queen of Sheba

maybe another kind of language

the carer calls
with soft shadows of earlier intimacies,
the washing of the hair
the tending of the feet
the adjustment of underclothes
the braiding, doing my nails
dusting her palms as if baking;
the touches that bypass words,
as she positions me and, for a moment,
holds me

all without a word
filling a space I didn't know had opened up;
pulling the door to softly, when she's done.

impossibly

some evenings
formally dressed
in big clumsy theatre clothes
I'm taken out on the town
people stare as I've been away and, invisible with age,
look through me, a bear walking on hind legs
with my hollowed bones and palsy,
taking it in before the audience subsides
the house lights go down
and I am removed from myself by the opening line.

grapefruit technology

Gram-positive bacteria are more sensitive than olive oil to the

barking of hyenas. They prey on baboons opportunistically; move

automatically to the head of the queue whenever carrion is smelt;

engage in flights of terpsichorean fancy once they feel the light is

right to do so. Gram-negative strains resign themselves to living

in the dark, but will sing quietly when someone leaves the door ajar.

A Lesson in Anatomy

Behold the workings of the god, observe
Him with your cool, clear eye. That corpsemarble
forehead, unblemished by age, or scored by
fear, those wide, pitch pupils dilated
by obsession or joy; those red, red lips,
slightly parted and moist. His focus is
terrible, and absolute. His right hand
grips the knife. His hold is loose, but definite —
This scalpel was forged by Hephaestus, bronze
sharpened to a Helios glint. Hide peels
away from flesh, untethered from tendons.
The faun's protracted shriek sputters down
to the farr-off buzz of locusts. There are flies
settling, already, against the bleeding,
steaming meat. One sinks onto the jelly
of an uncloseable eye and sucks filth
from its feet. Dry-tongued, the faun breathes. He breathes.

Macaria's Altruistic Suicide

After Euripides and Émile Durkheim

Brothers:

Blue cymes of jasmine skies sough as she flies;
she is a satin white smoke swirl sinking
away. Her blood is dripping from her eyes —
our blood. Her head still lays on the glinting
altar. Her body slipped, fell on the ground.
Competitive cultures by enticing
codes of dishonor to life had her bound.
She was capable of sacrificing
herself for all of us; we should have known
it. She said, 'Brothers, please leave me alone.'

Macaria:

Leave me alone. Before you go, prepare
lavender incense. Did you burn it? Go.
Pale purple flowers flirting in midair
I had seen only once in a meadow.
The lavender's sweet smoky aroma
is the scent of his warm breath on my face;
I never kissed him. *In depths* of chroma
I immerse myself, my self I erase.
I do not die for love, I die for veiled
wrath; love flashed — he exhaled and I inhaled.

Chorus:

A suicide is a red, swollen wound
on the lips of the social collective;
We surely carry on! We make loud sounds,
drink, eat by bearing bitter, infective
pus into our mouths. Gather! Glorify
a girl's young death like you will not her life!
We are so civilized, we abide by
the First Citizen's commands, kill with knife
not knowing why. Thrust her into the 'best'

of deaths! But she of life made small bequests:
her altruistic act, our butchery
of her, is our survival's surety.
A king will pardon us, cloak our impurity.

**In the Athenian tragedy by Euripides Heracleidae or Children of Heracles (c. 430 BC) Macaria, the daughter of Heracles, flees with her siblings to Athens to hide from Eurystheus, King of Argos, after her father's death. Eurystheus pursues a vendetta against Heracles by hunting his descendants. As Eurystheus prepares for war against Athens because the city of Athens provides refuge to the children of Heracles, the King of Athens, Demophon, consults the oracle. The oracle predicts that Athens will be victorious only if a maiden of noble birth is sacrificed to Persephone; Macaria offers herself as the victim.*

Philip Berry

A visit to the organ barn

Over there, behind the bamboo grille, are stacked the livers of prisoners, guilty by necessity. Just below, wetted by dripping bile, are eyes in rows that turn away from the light. In the corner, slapping over one another like blind eels, are the combined intestines of five families, and beneath, in a solution of copper, a gallery of muscles that flex at 2 Hertz.

Take your time.

The most precious collection, behind inch thick glass smeared by the red jets of restless contraction, their life refusing to depart, are the hearts. The hearts. We calm them in ice cold baths, but they are hardwired to twitch to the sound of customers.

What is it you seek, specifically?

Ah. Now nerves, they are difficult. We have full sets, turn left-left-right, enter the annexe. Leave the child here. The nerves live alone, three brothers - a house fire - the feather people. Imagine the veins in a leaf held up to the pale sun on a Winter's morning. The finest of lines, splitting, re-joining, tight near the cord.

Wait until you have adjusted to the dark. Then look for pulses of purple light where the axons fire... they walk, they reach, they try to grab. They are fully sensate, in pain we accept. Everything is fire to them. We make them sleep at night in a fentanyl mist, for peace. They'll be glad to see you, they'll compete, for the chance to be taken. To live.

Don't judge us. They were left. None were wanted.

Michael Durack

Talking Art

We talk Art,
blather about painting, pottery, sculpture;
appraising its subject matter - mythology,
saints and nudes, the natural world.
We talk Renaissance, Fauvism, Op Art;
mull over movements, schools and styles.

Challenged to name a favourite work,
you choose Michelangelo's gut-wrenching *Pieta*;
and, feeling the tug of my agricultural roots,
I pick Van Gogh's *Basket of Potatoes*.

Is there a hierarchy of Art?
Which one has chosen the better part?
Pieta? Potatoes?
Potatoes? Pieta?
Let's call the whole thing off.

Trainspotting

The microclimate of the Northern line sends gale force promises of old loves up the stairs to meet commuters, ahead of the inevitability of disappointment. The weather patterns that govern the underground are seldom investigated by meteorologists; instead ab-scientists gloom in stairwells, poking sullen, captive storm clouds insisting on a shower or a squall more often getting mild shocks for their troubles & patches of dim sunlight. However some brief forays into cool breezes for hot days have been tamed to varying effect by the more skilled meteomages. Boys on the Metropolitan line inadvertently spark turf wars by leaving paper trails & graffiti scrawls micro fiction misinterpreted as historic fact by future gangs. It is forbidden for perfect circles to be drawn on the Circle line and the Victoria line is rarely spoken about for good reason. We have compiled the below information for anyone with a passing or vested interest in the city beneath our city and ask that you ensure you check your travel plans before embarking on your journey.

Chalk Farm is a socialist utopia whose democratically & occasionally arbitrarily chosen ruling class take the form of Basset Hounds & their Buskers on the day of the week that best suits their personality.

Camden Town has been found to be stricken from the records three times in living history. Though examples can be found of redacted stations in archives in the wild, it is largely accepted that only Moles Museum in Oxford offers the extant copy of this formal revocation of status

W H I T E C H A P E L is noted for its tendency to be illegible when written down and is notoriously difficult to send letters to. It is also notoriously poor at responding so fanmail is much better directed to the far more amenable South Kensington.

Aldgate East and I do not talk anymore.
Why am I here? The feeling is mutual. A harried sense of resentment blows in with the early evening commuters and lingers as I depart.
I won't return in a hurry.

A popular pastime in Seven Sisters is baiting the ghosts of old acquaintances that haunt the windows of trains that do not call at the station. This is known as

“bridging the severn” and is frowned upon by many locals but actively encouraged by those strange ones who operate in theatres unknown to the human ken.

Liverpool Street manages to exist in exactly two places at once. The first is in London and the second less renowned is in Mrs Bronwyn's back garden in Tadley, Hants. She charges £1.20 per person to view it but accepts a pack of digestives in a pinch

Discovered by accident in the 1700s Moorgate was technically the first tube station in existence. Due to it pre-empting trains by some decades it was hastily reburied in sanctified soil by suspicious Jacobean and forgotten about for a few centuries.

Barbican Tube Station is widely considered to be the rarest of examples of its kind and is a highly sought after collectible.

It should be noted that due to a sensitivity to light it seldom adapts well to captivity. In a similar vein Tufnell Park is the last known tube station on the map where you can observe the underground in its natural habitat. Young trains will practice burrowing in fields & waiting longer than necessary to arrive at their natural destination, watched over by idle males on lookout. For safety's sake a large amount of viewers discretion is advised including minding the gap which is known to prey on anyone it can.

Farrington is the name given to early stages of verbal synaptic memetic infection. When someone's neocortex becomes overloaded with ideas as diseases the initial syllables they utter sound the EXACT same as the train does when passing through in Winter.

Euston Square Tube Station is unique in that the most common form of signal failures it experiences is virtue signalling. It also has unresolved issues with its parents but that's another matter. It is renowned for its belligerence & is rarely awake or anything less than outright hostile prior to the necessary rituals have been performed, Trainline Acolytes sing it into morning & coax a positive attitude from it to ensure the safety of its passengers.

Great Portland street is greatly admired by those with a keen interest in 'pataphysics as it demonstrates tesseract architecture as understood by the Victorians, and is largely considered unplottable on maps that are not folded according to strict Origami topography.

In the early 50s by a humorous quirk of design the blueprints for St Pancras were actually found to be helpful in medical journals as a "how to" guide for apendectomies

Baker Street tube station is haunted. No one knows what by, but it's immune to most forms of exorcism and it's restless spirits are only quiet on Tuesday mornings when the cleaners are in. No form of rescheduling of rotas achieve this same result at different times however.

We regret to inform you that Archway is temporarily temporarily displaced & we can only apologise for the inconvenience.

Mornington Crescent northbound is a favourite haunt of magician's familiars; ipsissimus, succubi, black cats & the like. It is noted for its role in the unionisation of Magic Workers Assistants in the early 1820s. Mornington Crescent southbound is an abattoir & any magic performed through a third party or representative is strictly forbidden. All spells must be uttered by your lips & all cantrips, charms, & glamours must be cast by your own hand.

Kentish Town is structurally impaired & has campaigned on a number of occasions for the inclusion of condemned buildings & construction sites in OS maps & tourist guides.

Camden Town has been found to be stricken from the records three times in living history. Though examples can be found of redacted stations in archives in the wild, it is largely accepted that only Moles Museum in Oxford offers the extant copy of this formal revocation of status.

We would like to thank you for interest in the apocrypha of the London Underground and should you seek further enquiries into it's unique nature or indeed any ab-cartography why not check out our full library including "Undiscovered & Undisclosed Terminals of Bristol's Beneath" or "The Why's and Wherefores of Wild Grammar in Hereford's Countryside". We regret that due to the unclucid nature of our research we cannot guarantee that the information held is accurate or indeed factual and can not offer any recompense or similiar in relation to any injuries incurred as a direct result of pursuing this field. Corrections that are submitted post-mortem are considered binding in all contracts. For safety we cannot, in good conscience, actively encourage anyone who wishes to explore further and wish you a good day sir and/or madam.

For more information on societies that we cannot recommend exploring further - ask the wind or your shadow or any good lost traveller (they are bidden by unnatural laws to answer you truthfully at least once).

Gretchen D'Huyvetter Cobb

Fortune Teller

Shortly after the funeral for her only son,
she enters his abandoned apartment
alone.

The smell of urine and air freshener hangs thick in the stale air,
follow her around as she moves
from room to room.

She finds the first Magic Eight Ball in the fridge,
and the second in the freezer, its frozen fortune stuck
“Reply hazy. Try again.”

She discovers seven on the bookshelves in the hall,
collects four from the bathroom, and gathers thirteen more
from his car still parked in the garage out back.

She moves them with great care, not wanting to change
the fortunes that lay suspended in inky liquid.
She lines them up along the fireplace and reads them all,

thinks about what questions he'd asked before he shook them.
She wonders what he was trying to find an answer to,
and if he'd ever, finally,
found it.

Womb

Beneath the giant, golden Buddha, before friends and family,
I heard promises from the womb that they would love each other
always, take care of me as a yogi. They met dancing under India
moon. My half-brother shies away from the attention. Still, smiles
and hugs my mother briefly. Father holds him close. Looks into her
meditative brown eyes. Rubs her belly. The room fills
with white cotton, laughter, and watermelon juice.
The revelation— I am a girl, soon to dance into the world.
Later, flowers turn brown. Just Mother and I chant
promises snuffed out as smoke swirls to the painted ceiling.

Swarm

Barely five and bearded in wasps
my mother panic flapping against the buzz,
we'd stumbled on the nest whilst straining to feed a horse
and woke a cohort of angry darts.
Afterwards when the shrieking had stopped
we limped home for ointment
that cooled and dulled a ringing throb
even behind the ears.
Hot chocolate, pyjamas
and a story to trade on
the calm made the stinging worthwhile.

Rodney Wood

I saw wolves circling round the school playground while sniffing the air

mothers usually stay with a male for life
mothers live in family groups called packs
made up of a male and female parents,
their children, older brothers and sisters
and a few other adults
mothers use a birthing chamber three feet wide
and two feet high
mothers have homes that are often reused
mothers are very shy around strange people
mothers are very territorial
mothers are known to travel large distances
in a single day
mothers can eat as much as 22 pounds
and not eat again for many days
mothers will eat grass to purge their digestive system
mothers work together and remain silent in a chase
mothers are often portrayed as the Anti-Christ
mothers were tried and burnt at the stake
mothers prey upon the weak and the old
mothers prefer psychological warfare to physical confrontations
and any aggression is non-damaging and ritualized
as a fight can easily result in injury
mothers communicate by body language and sound
such as texting, yipping, growling, and howling
mothers collect their pups mid-afternoon
to avoid the heat of the day
mothers often wear pyjamas at this time
as it's no longer considered a fashion crime.

Sam Smith

Mock Sonnet XVIII

Under the gaunt arabesque of winter branches
a hollowed-out woman stands alone. While he,
chin tucked into the top of his puffer-jacket,
hands pressed up opposite sleeves, face averted
passes by. His schizophrenia has been
locked into some stones. The stones are
misshapen discs, obloids each with some
pimple-like transparencies obtruding.
Every fourteen steps, snow creaking
underfoot, he struggles to extract a stone
from his pocket, holds it against his face.
Returning the stone to a different pocket
he blows warm breath onto his finger ends
and walks on, crunching over refrozen slush.

Three Sketches

Norman on his bicycle

Neat, is Norman,
riding home straight-backed
and buttoned-up,
bicycle-clipped and tidy -
Eliot in a landscape
courtesy of Tanguy.

Mrs Guntert feeding the ducks

'Quack' says Mrs Guntert -
more a confirmation
than a greeting -
'quack'
and only the greenish water,
the spire of the church of St. Helen
are reflected in her eyes.

Craig tying a bin bag

...with his teeth,
a limp arm swinging.
'I know, I know' his only words -
a private joke;
a grin lengthening
across a once handsome face.

Robert Nisbet

Office Men

A group of us back then, young men,
young bureaucrats from County Hall.
Tuesdays, we'd play pick-up football,
then back to the Cavalier for pints
and the kind of talk we used to call
our spiritual experiences in drink.

The CEO Fred Thom, top target man.
We'd dream we'd lurch off to his house
and piss in his famous rain gauge
(environmentalist was Thom, an OBE)
or peg a row of frilly knickers, pink
and pastel blue, along his clothes-line.

Then that July, too hot for football really,
we were back at the Cavalier early
and had this dream we'd raid Miss Monica
(Fred Thom's PA, another semi-foe).
She'd surely have a line of pastel-shaded,
we'd nick them and take them back to Thom's.

We set out. First time we'd ever set out.
As I said, it was hot and we were well in drink.
And the sentiment, Thom's OBE, the knickers,
it was getting urgent now. Swollen. Confused.
But Monica lived five long miles out of town.
We never got there, stumbled home at three.

Later, we never talked about that night,
but we still play football, Tuesdays.
We all remember still, I'm sure of this,
the urgency that night. The confusion. The urge.

I wish

Sometimes, I would love to be a tradesman,
go nowhere without my own tape measure,
fag and pencil behind respective ears,
a bit of rough, a textbook stereotype.
I wish I could eat pies and fish 'n' chips
with the weight of worlds in my fingernails,
not concern myself with bacteria.
I'd like to stand at the bar in the pub,
laugh at my own bad jokes, play a *fruity*
shout *get in* when it pisses out pound coins,
not fret about the nut bowls on the bar,
the legion urine samples they contain.
I'd like to put up things, be less *me*,
not always have to *get a man in*,
make my father prouder, posthumously.

Jude Marr

Plucked While Running Through Woods

shirt, buttonless over feathered chest
binder: french
cuffs snagged and hanging, shaken

hen-hands feathered, rough, but ruddy
at the root, desperate not to be

thorn plumage horn plumage
torn plumage hanging, ragged

from a butcher's-hook collar-
bone: feathered pink: glimpsed

through bifurcated wings, a universe

every stumble leaves scatter

sticky in my face
on my skin knife-scraped

I am bird, fea(the)rless no
caged breast no
nether bone yes, yes

transformation seen.

Past Due

sometimes, when I feel quiet
I feel them in my arms, I'm not sure which one.
If I close my eyes and run with the illusion there is a baby in my arms
a tiny, warm head press against my chest
can almost hear the contented wheezing of infant sleep.

I try to get the cat to climb into my lap and take the place
of the phantom baby, try to get it to curl just so in my arms
press against me just so and stay still, let me cover it in blankets
fall asleep, but my old tom cat won't have anything to do with that.

I have heard of women who buy baby dolls to fill the ache
of losing or wanting a child has left behind, but I can't do that,
I can't be one of those women
curled on the couch, wrapped around a realistic-looking rubber doll
cooing nonsense lullabies to a latex child.

Cynthia Anderson

The Things She Lives Among

She keeps a jar of baby teeth on the mantel, next to the photos of her children grown and gone. Her own gums are soft as the windfall apples lying thick on the ground among ragged leaves. She looks out the window, where a rusted rake leans on an equally rusted, broken wheelbarrow. There are chores to be done, but no one to do them. The things she lives among fall prey to ritual abandonment. A storm fusses across the valley, heading in her direction, whipping a fury of funeral dirt in its wake. At this late hour, for the first time, she's tempted to take off the mask she chose so long ago.

The House above the Line Marked W

The backyard is silent. The light flickers in the narrow corridor and goes out. I can only hear my mother's voice. But the door between the two worlds, a memorable evening and a protracted existence, is locked. I hurry up to the kitchen, wearing her grandmother's cloth, the skin I have obtained through birth, I ask for my smelling bottle. She stands in the front of a canvas on a wooden easel. She wears her hair in bun. I smell the yarrow flowers in the wet air she paints. Inside a mirror in a house she has spent almost two hours working on, I do not at all resemble my father, and I am glad of it. I am quite a discourse on impudence in answering questions behind the curtain. She adds a vision, viewless to my eyes, a water vapour begins to gird around my thought. She encloses my future in the hands in the darkness and I embrace the invisible being. I perceive streaks of gray light edging the window curtains, she points to a room in that house on the border without boundaries with a pointer.

Richard L. Ratliff

Mourning Conversation

Parked the car
And walked across the just cut grass:
Twenty strides and here I am

Having a conversation with you
Or possibly at you.
You are so calm, taking it all in
Just casually being yourself:
Unpretentious and comfortable

It is such an honest talk
That we should have had long ago;
And finally we are working things out,
Or rather I seem to be.

I would hug you—
But the stone looks so cold

--
now I have been made
alone and by fire
twisted into shape
a weapon
for the masses to use.

which mass is it pushing me to the wall?
the white wall of heaven,
crumbling beneath my hands.
like chalk.

My grandmother's name is chalk
the white wall of Dover,
but there were others before her.

what does the tool understand about what it does?
we know our enemies: the hands who hold us into the fire.
and the hands who hold them,
quiet and warm in the sky.

Daguerreotype

The reminders were glaring on the highway,
And Olan was again in the wind,
Then I knew if I stayed high enough,
on that garbage balcony at Water,
roofs might give up their remaining decades,
Like long rivers their sources,
I watched pigeons croon on the gable
Of our Islamic neighbour,
Church bells rang behind me,
But the traffic near the fringes
of our moving vista was slowed
as if as time raced past the valleys,
to the back of my eye:
haste was forsaken,
Then everything was just cold:
Eight months passed,
and styrofoams and cigars,
were left to show for it.

But in my imagination:
Olan walked through the door,
and the universe awakened
all the stars around us,
Neighbours downstairs,
their windows and doors,
were slammed before our sad
songs began to play,
we danced on that burning carpet,
our shoes knocked down rain.

A Poem Written in Feb 2019

Avant garde avant
Garde,

Je suis
A mouthy
Little slut.

You tell me
To think higher,
To think higher

Platonic
Jesus leaving
The world
Behind,

The flesh
He became

Augustine said
I cannot tell
A lie,
I did not enjoy
Fucking
Those women.

Augustine said
I cannot tell a lie,

I did not hold
On to Jesus
In the desert,

The nights so cold
It felt
Like you're
Drowning.

Reject a good meal,
Reject a pretty lip gloss,

Morons love professional
Wrestling and election
Season?

I mark the square
For pinks and purples,
For neon pornography.

I check the box on the census which
Reads,

"Ave Satanam."

Let one-hundred neuro-philosophies bloom

Impercipient line of a furrowed brow
and string-of-surrender-flag sleeves.
The Right to Silence beckons
the geo-existential questions.
{where, who, Beckett?}

Choosing the end before it arrives,
autonomy outweighing well-being.
Whose control over time,
forms that ethics bright line?
{deprived, jealous and greedy}

Right of bodily integrity
introducing asymmetry,
between withdrawing intellect
and opposing its' ideloect.
{intractable continuance}

Stopping treatment is legal
(negative obligations on others)
unending untreatment is not,,
familial guilt, parlayed and hot.
{flashed with, aye, I, eyes}

Does autonomy render authority
to a past-self sequestering the later?
Its essence, at last, retaining
experience proudly declaiming.
{Rousseau's prosaic isolation}

Some values have not endured
mean nothing to the demented,
sometime present, self.
No formula exists for health.
{an extreme near-harmlessness}

The state deciding when enough is,
I regret the passing transparency,
in these tech-valued times -

the heat-death of the universe.
{welcome as my last old friend}

{The despair, non-mad-non-child, knows no one can possibly ever care or do enough, however much they want to.
The despair - knowing that no one can help, that only persistence will help, and persistence is the ultimate thing you are incapable of.
There's nothing moral about it - give me fun or give me death.}

Wild Thing

Valleyfair, Shakopee, Minnesota

when the last strut
of the tall arch was tight
the roller coaster took a deep breath flexed into position
the airport had insisted that the steel hill was no higher than two hundred and
seven feet
meaning that the ride was the fifth highest in the world
pretty good for modest Minnesota

thrill-seekers queue for hours
loading up on fast food and sodas (most are repeat customers)
so that for three minutes they can enjoy the benign masochism of being scared
half to death (a terrible indulgence)
to go through the motions
of fear knowing
they are safe

screaming riders
rush wildly around the track
without weight endorphins flowing
am I wrong to wish upon a bird strike or disintegrating rail

that sends them

flying

mortars blonde

through a cloudless

blue

mid-western sky

spewing

over the amusement park

locusts
the wild thing shrugs

like

stretches

playing with death (an odious example of hubris)

is nothing

without

some

fatalities

Vacays

Before the wrap-up of winter hiatus, annual
reunion with mishpocha coalesces at an
unhurried pace and place. Caterwauling by
children bonds with the aromas of edibles.
Melody of memory pours into fire water
casting a fence of feelings. Issues sneeze
their way disclosing unresolved chills.
Amplified kerchiefs mop up the mess.
Older the relationship more the pollens.
Swiftness of sanitizers amazes everyone.

Delvon T. Mattingly

Metamorphosis

I grew up traveling from
my parents' houses, unable
to adjust to the differences
in love, cultures, and routines.
Going to school every morning,
under an alternating identity,
some days the son of her,
or him. Some days one race,
or another. Some days stoical,
or gentle. And some days
content, or utterly confused.

Betsy Martin

Love at First Sight

She makes her way down
the yawning stairwell of H entry
in the early morning,
her body a burden, her feet striking
the worn marble steps
like matches that won't light.

She reaches the bottom, startles—
a slender young man her age
standing in the blue air, a stick
left there for no apparent purpose.

She hastens by but notes his eyes
glow like gold-brown lichens
discovered in the woods
by the morning sun.

At lunch in the cafeteria
that day a friend introduces them.
A year later they take a night walk
down a street in the rain,
asphalt flickering in the streetlights.

Beth Bayley

Remember

I can't remember our wedding cake.
It wasn't even a cake. Our wedding dessert.
Something small and pretty on small pretty plates.
Four or five little tarts, maybe? Or perhaps three—
a fruit one, a nut, a chocolate—
that seems likely, me trying to make everyone happy,
me not wanting to commit to one thing.
Except that I was committing to this one guy
who still amazes me, after eleven years and four cities,
as he waits for the elevator
in his horn-rimmed glasses and shirt with the toucans.

Jonathan Humble

Ode To A Lovely Thing

O lovely automated thing,
You make this old heart race and sing.

With bearings oiled and gears divine,
Just how I wish your splines were mine.

I love your springs; your cogs are nice;
You're such an intricate device.

Bell crank and bush, with flange of steel,
What pleasures will you next reveal?

Toothed ratchet with a pawl and catch,
Could anything your beauty match?

But lovely thing that looks so sweet,
I fear you may be obsolete.

Despite your retro old world chic,
The future looks distinctly bleak.

For though you rattle, click and whirr,
And quite beguile this connoisseur,

Your syncopation is too weird
To fascinate and be revered

By those who like the soulless crap
Of every damn computer app.

Thank you for reading!

