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In This Issue

ASHELY ADAMS

The Skin is a Fragile Border (Hogweed) / 5

Theia / 6

JOE RUPPRECHT

time dirge 1 / 7

time dirge 2 / 8

BOB CARLTON

Light Rail / 9

JESSICA EDGERTON

In Advance of Reproval / 10

Docilities / 11

JACOB BUTLETT

As You're Thinking of Me / 12

To Papa at Mama's Funeral / 13

TAYLOR NAPOLSKY

A Reversal for You / 14

Not into much: intersecting particulars / 15

MEREDITH HANLIN

Cleaner / 16 - 17

ZOFIA PROVIZER

even goddess Athena forgets the light / 18

ERICA GOSS

Leaving California / 19

ELISABETH HORAN

Dirty Sweet / 20

B.J. BEST

a religious shooting at science / 21

gravity and god / 22

CAIT POWELL

Letting Slip / 23

MARK YOUNG

Transient conditions / 24

KIT ARMSTRONG

Ghazal / 25

Inaugural Poem / 26

CONTRIBUTORS / 27 - 29

The Skin is a Fragile Border (Hogweed)

Ashely Adams

Forgive them not their trespasses
against your kingdom of sap and boil.

The sun makes rotten
weak sieges,
drapes your banner into the Earth's heart.

Crown your head in umbels
and cry, "Grow".

Theia

Ashely Adams

Even though we were made
from the same ash and dirt,
you spin your burnished jubilees
like you were the only one who
clung to life with scum-caked claws.
As if it never rained on other shores
and there wasn't the space for us
in all the desolate miles.

But fine, I have no
delusions of survival.

Let's break ourselves against ourselves.
My body to adorn a hateful dawn.

time dirge 1

Joe Rupprecht

flowering absence echo

powerful seeming touch

found another day dream

soaked deep in the valley of my yearn spot

time dirge 2

Joe Rupprecht

sunlight on moving leaves

I am sad today and waiting

as always

as ever

as another far thing

with almost enough time

to be closer

than what

Light Rail

Bob Carlton

Consider:
the com-
plexity of
drain-
age
in
ur-
ban
plan-
ing

In Advance of Reproval

Jessica Edgerton

it is not that my thoughts
are unthinkable, it is that
I have mistaken your hands
for a fish. for a fragiled
hesitation. what small
apologies I make to level
abyssals, what ways I would
grow to your height, breach
your eyes and demand a
return of my slendered mitosis.
I would stand on
 This cushion
 This stool
 This wave
as you pretend one person
to love, but that is not even
yourself. I have unwanted
you so long it has become
a sabbath. a fish at my arms,
in my arms. one can only
hold so much in a hand before
all beliefs are meant to be broken.

Docilities

Jessica Edgerton

approximate earth

shunts a source untraceable, this light bent to matchless grace horizoning
synthesis, *I am a viable means of meridians*, I tell myself, long ago, a
reflection of currency *I am a viable* forfeit of expenditure without
oblation, unspoken pleading this witness *I am* repeats to more
lissome figures approach, *I* a vestige tumefied, speak again
I into the clay grasping for breath of mass to enter, lost
in the alacrity of disguise, acres grown into spires of
tight glory we furrowed into existence, ablaze,
wet sand and purity, I once knew someone
to hold a self apart in permanent stasis
as a state of transition would the
immutable whole relent

As You're Thinking of Me

Jacob Butlett

As you're thinking of me,
I'm the sleeve you're crying into.
You sit in the corner
Like a sheep without a shepherd.
But you don't need me anymore.
Go to your wife, go to your children,
Console them, you bright man.
Your sleeve will be dry again.

When you were seventeen,
You stole my convertible and rode it
Like a shooting star
Into a tree. You had been drinking.
I cried into my sleeve
That night as you lay in the hospital.
I'd never cried like that before,
But your lying there reminded me that
When I was seventeen,
I tried to die too.

Faggot, they said. *Faggot*.
I thought no one loved me.
I drove my father's jalopy to the bridge,
The sky a field of sunflowers,
The river brown as a fresh grave.

But I had promises to keep.
At work I met a man, your late-father.
When you came, a new promise arose
Like a new day. You lay in my arms,
Crying baby-tears into my sleeve.

You don't know that I'm now on the ceiling
Watching you cry in the corner.
But if you can hear me,
Be with your family. Remember me fondly.
Remember: you survived, you endured.
We chose love.

To Papa at Mama's Funeral

Jacob Butlett

you know
your smile
really fills your face
but so does your
frown
so don't cry
anymore

Please

A Reversal for You

Taylor Napolsky

I'm let off work early. Don't
waste the extra hour.

Don't kill it as
wild and pathetic inside

of thinking about
cleaning after this disgusting.

I aspire not to be mean-spirited
though I've developed a face.

Frustrated with the light
and dust I have grown into.

Not into much: intersecting particulars

Taylor Napolsky

Confidence protection. Tomorrow
wake up, go to work, go to work,

go to work, go to work,

famously.

Mayhem brings out
the necessity: swiping my hair behind my ear in a blur
for show. To be known runs around,
visits from friends...good to see.

Sit down at a restaurant, **menu's open**
complaint, **menu's open** complaint,
menu's open escape,
open for a complaint.

Social niceties
brought me back
somewhat

into what

I see of

my dad...(menu's open) I see
in dreams

Cleaner

Meredith Hanlin

controlled burns, that's how you clear
the forrest floor of death

the dank of needles, leaves bitter
for green hiding little bones of birds

concentrate anger in spurts
directed in the places where it will

do the most good, energy so often wasted
in destruction frees a conifer of seeds

i take a drip torch to the floor
to expose soil and my house is razed

no one ever scolded me
for peeling the cedar trees in our yard

desperately inhaling the heartwood
makes my lungs feel cleaner

exposing vulnerability is the only
way I know how to be close to people

any worth i have at must
be cultivated in my self

that's why they put sand in my teeth
when we walked to the ocean

had me mulling over the same grains
with my tongue on the roof of my mouth

oysters know how to gloss it over, harden
so it can't hurt them anymore

she wants to protect herself
she is valued for enduring

a suffering she never wanted
ripped asunder for the burden of her efforts

i string each instance of my violation
for something to wear on my neck

how long until i stop
forcing down sand?

what grows out of me
if i set myself on fire?

even goddess Athena forgets the light

Zofia Provizer

The air of dead time monopolizes.
I've seen it late-night-talk-show type
flirting with my own two hands -
the fridge and back then
the fridge and back.

In September I smelled
like sawdust and the tip
of San Francisco.
I have pale waves that clench
around the entire ocean;
I think I have been away for too long.

I touch the metal around
my fingers in the empty
shopping-mall parking lot.
There is the jade on my neck and
I see my breath over the freeway.

I know I have eyelashes
of steel. It has taken
the flood of each new
moon to remember where
I am standing, when I am
standing.

Leaving California

Erica Goss

We light the vanilla candle.
San Jose is expensive & sad.
It's turned cold again, & the olive tree
drops green & mauve leaves.
My brother talks of loss & marriage
as he walks through Central Park,
his black eyes fresh & firm as young
olives. Next year at this time
we'll look out the window
at one perfect peak like a painting
of Mt. Fuji. Next year at this time,
my brother will be a teacher
in a city deep in dirty snow.
Who will look at the olive tree
with its bloom-loaded boughs?
Who knows.
In the lull before the packing
we count the things to leave behind:
the wasp traps of black & gold,
the yearly crops of olives, &
how the dogs next door cried
with every siren that went by.

Dirty Sweet

Elisabeth Horan

I know to write about your sensitive
Shadows, your changing; the bones
You've left me; I call them mine now,
I claim all that you bequeath me, no
Other fool may bid, no one else derives
True value for a mind, which was born
To vacancy, parents around, only in theory;
Let alone a body, like lukewarm candy
Everyone has bitten; not much left,
And what's there, turned filthy. My plan
Is simple - to hold the line; to cradle your
Head, give it due hospice; convince it
Of it's worthiness, after all, why would I
Stay here if I wasn't enamored, infatuated,
Deeply, in love, beyond reason. That's how
You knew to gift me your crumble,
A brain ripe for scalpel, a humble chest -
One true gift, I lie upon it - monster heart,
Once gone to the wolves; now reifies and
Beats back my loneliness.

a religious shooting at science

B.J. Best

it is seeming like a complaint of books,
and i don't cancer with more of a damn.
thunderstorms you can love
in the calculations of this censer.

this new cat's-work of fat clouds,
their roar of flight, can presume
a sky in a snowflake. you said it was the sea,
a south explode of ice.

clouds for the leaves poem the air,
as my conversation intermittently strewn
mails home a constellation, an old bird.
but i don't know sweet more than the kitchen.

twilight, in satin, argues
the question of wine. like a body communion,
and the forms of broken lover,
you dance, blind and protected.

you say: the commas are both lights
and ashes from the mouths of stars.

gravity and god

B.J. Best

i am true as a graveyard of water
in front of a flag.

soon, it was dreaming, and usually they'll die,
saying, "good hatchets and ready as beech."

and the forest will slice the side
of the lake, the edges gunshells,

the church-blue barn of cards
and problems gone the way of the end of prayer.

next time, we see a glass man.
the sea of milwaukee was breaking

through it by swirls. every window cat a friend
to be got and surprised.

we moved the plastic clean of ideas,
the rocking slamming of gravity and god,

the belly-still things that is done.

Letting Slip

Cait Powell

It's the summer I take the cat to the mountains, preserved in a plastic bag. I surround his body with the contents of my freezer, I roll all four windows down — I can't think of anything but the way we used to put seatbelts on our groceries to stop the eggs sliding and shattering. The way we are each of us subject to the physics of indignity — to the centripetal force of the road.

//

A therapist asks me questions about dreams I might have forgotten. I don't tell her how I hacked at the dirt, that the bag wasn't biodegradable — that in times of panic we use what we can to keep death from going bad in the heat. I tell her instead that I dream about men, which leads to Freud and which is acceptable.

//

Once in a while I do dream about men, but not in the way I expect to. I dream about a little girl opening the icebox to find the head of a man, or the head of a cat; I dream about how pain is like astral projection, how it blends this plane and the next. Once in a while I open my eyes and discover myself in a grocery store, numb hands and frozen cardboard — a man with no head stands beside me, putting popsicles into the cart. The popsicles melt before midnight, soaking his side of the bed and then mine.

//

When I lower the cat into the gutted earth, he goes in TV dinners and all. I sit by the window and watch the grave, the shovel grinding mud into the carpet — it's only a matter of time, I think, before an animal is overcome by temptation. Before someone else digs him up; before I let slip to my therapist that without my grief I'm afraid I am nothing.

Transient conditions

Mark Young

Apoptosis is a cell-suicide program.
If this offer interests you, please
fill out the form of inquiry &
you will receive an answer ASAP.

±

It was the German revo-
lutionary Frederick Engels
who, in *The Origins of the
Family, Private Property &
the State*, argued that the
product of the social & eco-
nomic structure of any
given society is based on
linguistic minorities in
the Spanish-speaking world.

±

Symbolizing the impermanence of
language, the Russian name of the
statue, *Monument to the Liberators
of Tallinn*, has never been changed.
Picks for the series appear in magenta.

±

Surely there's more to come.

Ghazal

Kit Armstrong

I will never be sad enough to sing hymns in the night,
to say *white rabbits* when talking to women at night.

This is a commercial for make-up. I'm an extra in the back.
Beneath jacarandas I pretend to call her in sin in the night.

As if I'm seen when I do, like she sees me too,
bending through prisms into linens at night.

Just look at her cheap jewelry, the hair on her arms;
know that she must eat persimmons at night.

What's it gonna take to know what she knows,
to know where she goes, hidden at night?

I can't hold the thought. My arms are not strong.
This is the oldest I've ever been in the night.

Inaugural Poem

Kit Armstrong

Who should bespeak a generation like this—
what luxurious man in popped lapel could begin it?
Put me under the pestle or down the sluice; render
out my youngest rib meat, to which I will say
eat of it. Just leave aside the *e pluribus unum* which we know,
finally, not to be true. Which has no taste, like the white
of an egg. It was never enough to be seen reciting
old names at a podium, or gripping pitchforks in a frame;
to pimp the pastoral, or service the unleavened dreams
of a man on a lawnmower—who wipes his sweaty brow,
gestures westward, realizing vaguely how the setting sun
stains a purple stole. Leave aside tilling this garden
(the soil fallowed and fucked)
and pretending toward some timely kindness,
thinking mistakenly, like juice from a prune,
that it is or will ever be finished.

Contributors

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