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THE ROARING MUSE

Literary Arts Magazine



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THE ROARING MUSE

Literary Arts Magazine

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The Cycle

Ann Niedringhaus

Insight begins
with a flicker in
the corner
of my eye.

Once I'm
snowed in,
forced to live
human pace,

exhilaration
collides with
visceral
limits

'til meaning
is constrained
within bounds
of words,

those simplifications,
restricted
to what
I can speak.

Gradually
words shrink tight
around
my throat,

'til unprepared,
I glimpse again,
peripheral
flutter.

In Response To The Question: "Why Poetry?"

Lance Guenther Molis

I write poetry, and I have reasons. My grandfather is one. I can remember the battered old Ford as it shuddered along a dusty back-road in route to a favored fishing-hole. He was a younger man then, and he sang along with Hank Williams' tin voice as he slapped and coaxed the radio to make it work.

What a character. He is tailor-made for his own poem. A kind of significance hangs on all of his little quirks: his shaking hands, his wrinkled brow, and his faded cap. He is like one of those Mr. Floods or Miniver Cheevys or Ancient Mariners that cry to be written about. They were born to people poetry with their character of mannerism; even if that birth was only an imagined one.

The washboard road tossed the rusty rig and made the tune cut out with each tremendous shake. Slap! Grandpa knocked the face of the loose radio making the music return. "Look der, boy!" he said. "Looks like I got ta touch, yah!" To my eight year old eyes he indeed seemed magical. Life poured pink from his face as he hummed and sang and laughed at his trick. I kept time to the song by knocking my toes together which hung suspended above the floor of the cab. Gramps banged the wheel with a big paw and steered the rattling contraption towards our destination as our poles rolled about in the box.

And as sure as some people are born to be characters there are others who are born to write about them. These are the quiet waiters, the observers in the corners, the cut-off children with big ears listening for well turned phrases. There is nothing mystical in this. Writing is a skill acquired by practice like boxing or mathematics. But, maybe this reality is what is mystical. We learn the language, piece it together, and try to communicate something before the idea of it is lost from us.

Today I listen to the elevator version of that same music which seems to have lost its voice. The hospital I sit in is filled with half bandaged hands, coughing children tossing crayons, and scolding mothers peering over magazine racks. To my left is a ridiculously large picture window. Birds have been flying into it throughout my vigil. I've witnessed in the hour three little bodies smash the clear wall hard enough to kill themselves. I do not keep time with my toes today, but I can still hear Grandpa's hand against the wheel with each hapless crash of bird against glass. I wait until he comes out of the therapy room. A disheveled kerchief crowns his bald head, and there are wraps around his wrists where the I.V.s have been. As I take his hand to lead him home I notice the dried blood on his palm.

I write poetry, and I have reasons. My Grandfather is one.

From between
Caitlin Taylor

the clasped
fingers

of my parents'
hands

mother's
hot with fever

her illness grave—
gleams

an arc of weathered
gold.

No Living

Monica Natzel

Cupcake art
In need of a marketer
Work scoffed at
They have no imagination

Many projects calling
Will there be enough time
Hard to finish
Even a simple rhyme

More than a hobby
Even more than a job
Being driven
Called to this work that makes no living

The Jazz Performance

Peter Church

Horn blows,
mind slowly rises,
surprises self with cunning
improved notes.
The crowd compliments creativity
with hoots and hollering
wallowing in the crowded dive
they cheer on,
snap along to the erratic beat.

Sweat meets brass.
From soul to brow to horn,
pouring your soul into song,
they cheer on.
They demand "Encore!"
You clear the valve
of your tortured horn.
You begin again,
previous genius
already forgotten,
swept away in a bath
of bad martinis,
and pick-up lines scorn.
The drummer nods
implying last song.
You play picture perfect,
note for note,
as if reading from the page,
but no improv. this time;

Your soul is spent from
previous performances.
No, this time
you decide
to ride it out,
by the letter,
rested in the fact that...

the audience won't know what didn't hit them.

THE OTHER WORLD

Nancy Frederiksen

The teen that drove the car
that hit them
pulled out in front
of Terri and her friend in '93.

Mom, the bearer of bad news
the one who makes the call
tells me this.

After the shower meant to cleanse me
I heard a song on the radio
a happy song and I
hoped then
Terri heard it too.

Then that song
that electric
circuited radio
broke up into pieces
of static
like glass shattering.

I heard the crash
in that space
of time
and it wasn't static
it was moving swift as a motorcycle
it was screeching

and I halted
in the middle of the room.
The crash was heard by me
hours after the fact

in another state

The Student

Brian Weber

Overcome by placing and
becoming a thought.

Trouble pacing with regard
to what you've been taught.

Blessed with a curse filled
diversion,

and you can only make one
version.

Trouble facing your placing
of what you've been taught.

Overcome by chasing,
and becoming a thought
—based on what you're taught.

Blessed with a curse filled diversion
—that you do not own your own version.

And become just a thought.

Tulip Time

Caitlin Taylor

When she was three
We couldn't pass tulips at all.
Oh what stumble steps
our walks were then:
The sharp, clear colors
fascinating her elfin self.

The house we moved into
when she was four
bordered itself in white tulips.
Peering, she found the
tiny lavender veins.
Squealing, proud,
she brought me
just one.
It lived in a wine bottle
for days.

When she was five
we found a single perfect bloom
in the woods.
We drew breaths of wonder,
and left it for other wanderers.

When she was six
her too-small hand
stopped
holding mine on walks.
We flooded her grave with
velvety rows of tulips:
bleeding scarlet.



Family *Malenie Pearson*

Untitled

Tera Welbourn

Which part of you is your mother

harsh dyed hair
green scarf pulled tight over temples
perfume falling like dust in sunlight
slumped shoulders
catholic mumblings
veins and knees

All of this proceeding
that winter day
she lay split down the center
squatting in a hospital bed
your two feet pushing against her spine

Before you could pronounce
conga morocca
her husband had broken a circle of treaties
with all of the silent parts

Which part of you is your mother

the cheek bones, sparrow eyes
the stones in your pocket
the black arm hairs that rise
with all of her superstitions
with all of her dark worries
stitching his shadow
to your own life

All of this before you observed
the shifting climate of another's eyes
the editing of teeth
the translated sigh

Before your soft crown
pressed through wakes and waters
before your lungs sounded
before your hips cleared her thighs

a long line of witches waited
with all of her sidewalks and railings
with all of her salts and hinges
with all of her arches and textures
ready for transfer.

Between the Branches

Deborah Cooper

It was always snowing
when I visited.
Remembering, I see you
again and again
opening the door, and then your face
as if it mattered that I came, as if it
made some kind of difference afterall.

You'd offer tea
and one day,
worrying that I was cold
coming out of my boots,
you gave your rag wool socks to me
to wear, warm from the radiator.

Each time I came
there was less of you waiting,
less hair,
less fullness to your face,
less energy.
Only your elaborate eyes increased,
taking my breath away.

Sometimes we'd meditate.
The animals would join us.
Or you would let me read to you,
Audre Lourde
or Mary Oliver.

I thought that there would be
more time,
that Spring might come
and we might see a bit of it begin
before you left us.

Every now and then
I find myself.
looking for you
Just now, between the branches
of the birch, I catch the rich
mosaic colors of your eyes,
but then the clouds close.

The Accident at City Park

John I. Kille

I remember when I first met the boy. It was a cold and drizzling Saturday September morning. The leaves were so pretty to look at, so many colors. Oh, it looked so beautiful, even though it was raining. I was sitting in the shop drinking my coffee, listening to the rain beating down on our new roof. Sounded like a bunch of squirrels was running around up there, but at least it wasn't leaking like the old roof. It was like any other Saturday morning, except for the rain.

I knew the boy was coming this Saturday to help, but I didn't really know why. David, my boss, told me last week, "Mac, a young man's going to help you with your Saturday chores for the next five weeks. The probation office called me this morning to make sure it's okay. I told them it'd be fine. Besides, you could always use a little help."

"What did he do anyway?" I asked.

"I don't know. They said he just needed to put in forty hours of community service for the city. He's got schooling during the week. That's why he's coming on Saturdays."

I was wondering what the boy did, when I heard a knock at the door. "Come in, the door's open," I said. The boy had a little trouble with our rusty old door, kind of had to kick it. Then he came in. I saw his tennis shoes first. White ones, and I mean gleaming white. Looked as if his mama stuck them in the washing machine. His blue jeans were clean and neat. Not a single tear or thread out of place. His shirt looked like something out of one of those fancy magazines. Looked like something he was going to wear in church or something.

I was wondering what this nicely dressed young man got arrested for, then I looked at his face. Rage poured out of him like he was going to kill the next thing that breathed. His eyes looked as they could burn holes in my black leather Army boots. The cold wet rain dripped down from the kid's face, and almost seemed to evaporate. This boy wasn't sick. This boy wasn't physically hurt. This boy was mad.

I looked at him and asked, "What's your name, Son?": The boy only shoved his hands into his jacket pockets and looked away.

"You're not going to work in these nice clothes are you, boy? Your daddy probably worked hard for them nice clothes," I said.

The boy just looked at the concrete floor. Then he looked around the shop at all the lawn mowers, tractors, and other machines we hold here at city maintenance. The boy looked at me again, and in a harsh tone, as if he were talking to some dog, he asked me, "Does this thing work?" His finger pointing to old Betsy.

Betsy was my baby. She'd been around this shop longer than I'd been. The fellows here had kept her in shape before I'd even gotten here, but now I usually take care of her. I admire that old tractor. Mean looking and powerful, yet she purrs like a kitten.

"Yea, she runs. We only take Betsy out on special runs nowadays. She's getting old, and we got all this fancy new stuff." I paused and admired the tractor for a second and then looked at the boy. "You know how to work a tractor, young man?" The boy only looked at the ground, then suddenly barked, "What's it to you, Old Man?"

I looked at him in amazement. Never in my life had a young man spoken to me in that tone of voice. Even back in 'Nam the boys might yell at you and stuff, but it wasn't out of hatred. We were in a war and under a lot of pressure.

"What did you say, Boy?" I asked calmly, trying to hide my anger. The boy just looked at me with his cold, hard face. "Look, if you want me to sign you off on your service hours, you're going to have to do what I say."

The boy hesitated, then burst "I don't have to listen to you. They just said I had to be here five Saturdays in a row. Didn't say nothing about taking no orders."

"Look, Son—"

"Don't call me 'Son,' Nigger."

I felt my heart slam into my mouth. Never had that word hurt me as much as it did that day. Not even back in '58 when that white kid beat me with an old black leather belt while chanting it, and calling my mama one too. This kid was making me mad. I wanted to call David and tell him I wasn't going to do it. I couldn't spend my next five Saturdays with this punk.

"Look, Boy, I told you you'd better listen or I'm not going to sign you off. Then, you'd just be in bigger trouble. The city doesn't pay me to deal with punks like you. You'd best be settling down."

As I said that, I stepped closer and closer to the boy, so by the time I finished my words, I was right up in his face. I think I even grabbed his arm or something. I don't know. I can't even remember, I was so mad. I do remember the boy's eyes though. Those eyes were filled with fear. He had fear behind that rage. Something was wrong.

The rain slowed to a drizzle. We could work in a drizzle. I wondered if the boy had ever worked a tractor or a mower. I was sure I could get him to do something.

After loading up the trailer, we got into the truck and started down to the main park. That was my project for that Saturday, to mow and trim the park. I noticed the rage and hatred fuming from the boy. He surely wasn't happy to be here. I wasn't sure if I was happy either.

"Go down and mow around those trees with the walk-behind mower there. Make sure you don't tear up the grass."

"Yea, right. I'll tear up what I want," he mumbled.

"You know how to work one of those things don't you?"

The boy only looked away and pushed the mower to where I told him to start. I went off and began at the north end, where I usually begin. I mowed, keeping my eye on the boy as he worked.

As I swung the mower around again after my back had been toward the boy, I noticed he was gone down the hill. I told that kid just to mow around the trees. He probably skinned out, the little punk. I jumped off the mower and started toward the hill. I was going to call David for sure. This kid was in no way going to cooperate with me. He was just slowing me down. I thought of the many things I was going to tell David, and the many things I was going to yell at this kid for. Then I got to the hill.

As I came over to the top of that little hill, I saw a sight I'll never forget. The boy lay still in the red grass. Blood stained his clothes while pieces blended in with the wet grass and mud. I could see fragments of the boy's white shoes scattered in the mud. Those white pieces called out to me, but I didn't know what they were saying. The boy's own blood covered his soft face, like red paint had been flicked at him with a house-painting brush.

I ran down to the boy to see if he had a pulse. He was alive all right, but barely. He needed my help.

That boy's legs were halfway cut off, and now he has to use this wheelchair-looking thing. I still get letters from him. He tells me how his daddy died in the same war I was in, and how he's taking care of his mama now. He tells me how he's doing in school, and how he's wanting to be a doctor. He even told me how he'd like to come out one day and hop up on old Betsy, take her for a spin. I told him he could visit our old shop anytime. I'd teach him everything he wanted to know, like a father would to his son.

Life Road

David Erickson

Sometimes I journey the road of days gone by. It's an unique road.

Immediately ahead, it's relatively new. The rich scent of the fresh dew still lingers and each stone of the stone road easily remembered. Every bump, turn, and intersection can be recalled. It sometimes seems so easy to go back and take a different road, but unbeknownst to me why, I find I never can. For each step forward, another stone of the stone road passes by.

As I reminiscence further into the past, the same road transforms from the new to the ancient. Only the largest bumps that jarred me, the mightiest intersections that influenced me, and the most spectacular rocks of the stone road (that I took time to stop and look at) can be recalled. They all stick out like gigantic road signs along my time line. Everything else has faded from the erosion by the sands of time.

Most roads are built when they are built and repaired whenever they need fixing, but the unique roads are the ones that continue growing and can never be re-built or fixed. They can only be left just as they are.



Life Road *David Erickson*

House in the Woods

James A. Vath

Skinny

white girl
slips out of her skin,
to lay

on the roof
Naked all the way
-to the stars!

She

watches the bats fly
just overhead
w/ hushed wings
& hollow wind

The Moon is always hungry
& drools into the lake.

the Moths have no porchlight
this evening
No windmills to attack
& must wait w/o
comfort

Thinking of You

James Kwon

Warm, you're looking out beside the window, peering
at the gray cloud-filled sky.

There you are, staring in wonderment, at the despair
you don't quite see, the sadness that you don't feel.

In that rose colored room, the leaves of your life
are scattered about in slight disorder, your hair
flung about like your smile.

Sitting, legs wrapped in arms, sighing a slow, long
breath of relief, calm and content, thinking of music.

Nimbly fingering your toes, your auburn eyes are
reaching for the gray-tosed sky and making it be;

Warm, sad and slow.

Ropes, Nooses and Ladders

Nancy Frederiksen

And I thought
I really believed
that I would leave
as soon as I got a chance

but you and I
are intertwined
like twisted rope

so many pieces of hemp
wiry and sharp.

Lila At Her Bath

Todd Arthur White

Goddesses are modest
Of things no man should see—
Heavenly mysteries,
Hidden above the knees.

Standing in the hallway
I hear the water run—
Peeping in the doorway,
One look and I become.

Accounted limb-by-limb
This vision costs me that—
Circled three times, my dog
Lies sleeping on the mat.

Eyes to View

Larry E. Hubbard

The word "I" has but one meaning, myself, my inner being
however, "I" pertains to all of us as living human beings
To change one's life, you have to reflect on what you do
and open up your mind to take in what your eyes can view

The future becomes clearer, once you set upon your dream
Your worry lines seem to disappear, your face begins to beam
For as you persist to venture forward in all that you can do
Always, keep your mind ever open and take in what your eyes can view.



My Dad's Trees *Heather Mead*

A Good Girl

Patricia A. Young

At 1:00 a.m. the back door of the apartment opened and Molly's mother stumbled in. Molly's eyelids flickered and she stirred slightly. Raucous laughter and grating conversation nudged her consciousness, but she fought against waking up. She had to get ready for school in just five more hours. She had a big history test coming up. She needed more sleep.

The hall light flashed on and flooded into Molly's bedroom door which was left open a crack so she'd know for sure when her mother got home. Molly rolled over turning her back to the door, and closing her eyes resolutely.

She heard footsteps in the hall and a thud as someone bumped into a wall .

"You are totally wasted, Phyllis," a man's voice drawled with a slightly mocking chuckle.

"I am not!" came Phyllis's slurring reply.

"Like hell you're not."

Who was with her? Molly's pulse quickened at the same time that her eyes flew open staring hard at the black wall in front of her. Was it that guy her mother had brought home a couple weeks ago? Dan something or other? Or a new one?

"Shhhh! You'll wake up my little girl," Phyllis scolded lightly. Their voices were closer now. They paused right outside Molly's door. The door creaked open a hair wider allowing in a broad beam of light, and they pushed inside.

Molly tried not to stiffen when her mother's hands began smoothing her long hair against her back and clumsily draping the faded, blue and red striped bedspread around her shoulders. She braced herself against a familiar shudder of revulsion at the cloud of alcohol, cigarette smoke, and too-sweet perfume that filled her room with the relief that, finally, her mother was home.

"She's not exactly what I would call a little girl," the man said.

"Are you nuts?" Phyllis said. "Look at her. She barely weighs a hundred pounds!"

"Yeah, but she's fourteen or fifteen. Isn't that what you said before?"

"She just turned fifteen."

"So, she's not so little. What were you doing at fifteen?"

"You're not even funny." Phyllis gave Molly's shoulder a protective pat before she turned stumbling against the bed a little, and followed Dan out of the room. "Molly isn't anything like me, anyway," she said on her way out.

"I'll bet she's not"

"Shut up, Dan."

So it was Dan. *Crap*, thought Molly. She should have known better than to think her mother would let him go. Not the famous Dan, the guy she had brought home from the bar two weeks ago and done nothing but rave about ever since. "A lawyer's son, Mol! Can you believe that?" Molly had wondered what good it was for Dan to be the son of a lawyer and not a lawyer himself, but she hadn't bothered to ask. She knew a lawyer's son was close enough for her mother. And he probably wouldn't be around long enough to worry about even though he had been over two weekends in a row now.

A picture of Dan came to Molly. Tall and lean with a cap of thick dark hair perched far back on his receding forehead. Gangly arms and cold eyes. He was definitely the most educated guy Phyllis had ever dated which was maybe why he seemed so different to Molly.

Phyllis like him, Molly remembered. Not just because he was a lawyer's son, but because he really listened to her and her problems. He didn't put her down for being on welfare or using food stamps or not being able to pay all of her bills every single month. He didn't see a thing wrong with a person having a beer or two once in awhile to relax. And he thought Molly's dad was a real jerk for not paying child support or calling or having anything to do with Molly. Molly knew that her mother already had Dan slotted as some sort of savior for them; a ticket out or something. To top it off, he had even said Phyllis reminded him of Sharon Stone. She had really liked that.

Phyllis had forgotten to shut the door. Molly could hear their conversation continue down the hall and into the kitchen. Now that her eyes had adjusted, she could make out her Lincoln High School banner on the wall across from her. With one corner curled up, it was next to her bulletin board that had her friends' school pictures neatly pinned all around the edges. In the far corner squatted a hamper full of dirty clothes, and on the night-stand beside her sat her history book, stuffed full of worksheets she'd grown too weary to study any longer, with her wire-rimmed glasses lying open on top.

Phyllis was right. Molly wasn't anything like her. She would never do things her mother had done. Drop out of school. Get pregnant before she was married, and divorced before she was 21. Go out to bars, night after night, bringing home one creep after another. One of them had actually stolen their stereo system. Molly and Phyllis had returned from the grocery store one night just in time to see two guys hauling it out the back door. Of course, that was the last they had seen of them, or the stereo.

So how long was this guy going to stick around? Molly wondered. Not all night, she hoped. She hated those mornings she would wake up to find a man in the kitchen and have to tiptoe around like a stranger in her own house, smiling politely and vaguely, making toast and bringing it into her bedroom to eat, feeling like her body was made of stone and every move she made was magnified a thousand times. Molly knew her hopes for this guy to leave were probably futile, but nevertheless, she strained for an indication that it might happen.

"Do you want a beer? Or anything else?" she heard her mother ask casually, hopefully. "You're not in a big hurry to get going are you?"

A hissing sound of beers being cracked open came from the kitchen as Dan's interrogation continued. "Seriously, Phyllis. What makes you think your daughter isn't out partying, drinking, smoking, and having guys over here or whatever while you're gone every night at the nursing home?"

"I'm not gone every night. And I don't work nights. I work three to eleven, two or three nights a week. I told you that before," Phyllis argued. "Besides, you don't know Molly...she is not a typical teenager. She's a really good kid. She gets on the A honor roll all the time. Her teachers love her. They say good things about her."

"So, good kids have sex."

"Molly's got big plans," Phyllis continued as if she hadn't heard him. "She's not going to be doing the crap I'm doing. She's going to be a real nurse. Her and her friend, Jenny, they're planning on going to R.N. school after they graduate..."

"I'm just saying, Phyllis, that sometimes you don't know what's going on right under your nose. She's probably got you totally buffaloed. She's probably screwing guys left and right, and you don't even have a clue..."

"Goddamn it, Dan, I know my own kid. She's never even thought about pulling anything like that, okay? She's a good girl. So give it up, will ya?"

Molly's wave of embarrassment at Dan's invasiveness was tempered a little by her mother's indignation. It was unlike her to ever cross a guy, especially one she wanted to snare as much as she did Dan. Thank goodness he didn't say anything else. In fact, after that there wasn't much noise at all, just Dan finishing up his beer, her mother rinsing out her ashtray, and then two pairs of footsteps eventually making their way down the hall and into her mother's bedroom. There was a creaking sound as they got into bed, and that was all.

Molly got up and tiptoed to her door, then quietly closed it. She hurried back to bed and quickly slipped beneath the covers, curling into a ball, and pulling her bedspread over her ears to muffle any other sounds that she might accidentally overhear.

* * *

An hour or so later the door of Molly's bedroom opened. For the second time that evening she was jarred awake. Again, she stared at the black wall in front of her. She didn't move a muscle even though she could feel the presence of someone in the room, heavy and thick and ominous. She didn't even think of turning to see who it was. She knew even before he got in bed with her. His arms wrapped around her from behind and crushed her into the mattress.

"Don't you dare open your mouth," he hissed into her hair. She could feel his moist breath on her cheek. His body was hairy, and he smelled like sweat and sour beer and her mother's perfume. "If you even try to scream, I'll kill you."

Molly didn't open her mouth. She didn't try to scream. She felt as if her body was frozen solid at the same time that she could feel it beginning to tremble uncontrollably.

"I saw the way you pranced around here last weekend every chance you got," he whispered, and his arms locked in a vice grip around her. "I know what you want. You may have your mother fooled but I know your type. You act all sweet and innocent, and underneath you're nothing but a little slut." His voice changed a little growing louder and less controlled. His breathing sped up as he began to move against her. Molly didn't make a sound. She couldn't. She stared at her history book and her glasses feeling like she would never touch them again. She squeezed her eyes shut and waited for it to be over. It was her first time.

* * *

At 4:00 a.m. Molly pounded on the neighbor's apartment door. Jenny's mother answered, a frizzy-haired, lumpy-waisted woman, belting a faded purple bathrobe around her body and looking confused.

"Can I talk to Jenny?" Molly tried to speak normally but all she could do was whisper.

"What's wrong?" Jenny's mother peered at Molly as if she wasn't sure who she was even though she had been her baby-sitter for years; when she had been young enough to need one.

"What's going on, Molly?"

"I need to talk to Jenny. Please."

"Are you okay? Is your mother home?"

"She's home. But...I...I don't think I can go to school today." Molly started to cry, and for a long while she could not speak; she could only cry. But finally she got a few words out, enough to piece some of the story together, and Jenny's mother called the police. Then she called Phyllis who was sound asleep down the hall.

Phyllis appeared within minutes. Her eyes were huge, and her lips were thin and white. She wasn't wearing a bathrobe, and Molly could see her breasts hanging down and her large brown nipples showing through her silvery nightgown. Her bleached blond hair stuck out in chunks all over her head. She looked like she was in shock.

"Oh my God. I can't believe this happened," Phyllis kept repeating. "What the hell am I going to do?" For a long time she didn't even look at Molly. She just stood in the doorway staring at Jenny's mother as she moved around the kitchen making a pot of coffee. Jenny's mother said very little, and Jenny didn't either when she appeared after being roused by the commotion and looking dazed. She seemed to know not to ask too many questions. She kept giving Molly questioning looks, but Molly didn't respond.

When the coffee was done, the four of them sat around the kitchen table waiting for the police to come. Once in awhile Molly glanced at her mother who was staring away from her with her chin in her hand and a scared stricken look in her mascara-smeared eyes; her coffee untouched. Suddenly, she turned to Molly as if she had finally just noticed her sitting there. She let out a moan. "Oh my baby. Oh my poor baby," she said. She got up and made her way around the table to her daughter, stumbling a little even though she was stone sober now.

When the cops knocked on the door, Phyllis was still sobbing and hugging stiff, silent Molly. Oblivious to the phone call that had aroused Phyllis, Dan, the lawyer's son, slept soundly down the hall, just a phone call away from safety, just as he always had been. Molly thought about pulling away from her mother's embrace, but she didn't. She just let her do it.



Photography with Dad *Heather Mead*

Yellow

Kale S. Derbis

if i slip down i will pavement
is this the clean they say
yellow always made me cry
though when they take my blood
it hurts my skin. concrete
windows saddled on the day
like a cold chill i hold.
in my hand you cry
and i see yellow days.

traffic on a bench
in the plastic walls i sat
so if i sit could you forget me
i promised once then i cried.
yellow if you were to wear
i think i'd run away.
or drink just to pavement.

dirty bricks how long
have you sat here before
years i knew the day
or cigarettes or you.
and yellow in my hair
i pretend its plastic
a wall to keep company with
or to keep you out
but it lets you in.
the leaves are dead now
the mobiles drive over them all
leaving only sound behind
the sound you made when i
held you in my hand and you
cried.

Cut Off

Nathan John Ness

I've been brought down by moist rock tower Lief Erickson visions
of rolling down muddy hills naked into the lake to listen,
up close to my teacher, Siddhartha of constant eternity with
moths buzzing up and down my straight spine, singing
Guthrie ballads in the creaky trees, sad stomach nightfall...

The bliss is frightened, the bliss is frightened by repetition and by no
female organ blues (played on silent organ) and the land is
in complete relapse, suddenly careful not to scare off the
lights which guild the evening pen, with Trevor opposite
me, and Nick Cheney...God knows where...

The cut off trees are cut off trees, not so permanent as the cut off
rocks I sit on, or the cut off lake I inhale, or the cut off shirts
I wear, pale and off guard everywhere, or the cut off
conversations leading no-where, or the cut off lives leading
history's trail, or the cut off poem, as ripe as any, or the
cut off, cut off, cut off...

End

Living with Cats, and Women

Caitlin Taylor

I

Slim black tube of cat pounces perfectly from the woman's morning-clad shoulder to the wee spot of windowsill. Humped in half, she daintily sets black haunches on the edge, and stretches proud peering face to the daylight. The woman sighs, "dark sweetness" as she turns away to stir the bubbling oatmeal and to slide out of robe and into attorney-skins.

II

It is evening one of us cinched into blue fluorescent robe, another lounging in loose sweats, the third comical in unbelted plaid shift, bleating sneakers. Three thirsty appetites in as many sagging bodies, ruing the lack of celery for the plotted turkey salad. Save one: "I don't especially like celery." Guess she wont hie to the store to get some. Milk's gone too, and we all look hardly capable of lifting a knife for dicing. "How about beer?" says blue robe, and lounging sweats and shifty erupt with yesses. The iced mugs filled, drain quickly and opening the freezer reminds of the sad pepperoni pizza the only needs peppers and quantums of mushrooms and slivers of onion and chunks of cream cheese and cheddars and bricks and baking.

III

I don't do eyeshadow very well.
You do eyeshadow fine.
Why doesn't she do it?
I don't do eyes at all.
You do it fine.
Okay Okay.
Do I need mascara?
She needs mascara.

Brown?

Black.

Black?

Black.

We want competent, not slutty.

Trust me, slutty is competent.

Okay, black.

Oh no, lots of blinking. I hate doing mascara.

I'll do the mascara.

Oh good.

Lipstick?

No lipstick!

Who are you? We're the make-up artists.

You'll look top-heavy with eyes and no lipstick.

Okay, lipstick. But I'll do it myself.

You can do the lipstick yourself.

Okay okay.

If she gets the job, I think we'll have to teach
her to do eyeshadow.

Yeah. And mascara. She blinks too much with the mascara.

IV

The still house clicks open to my midnight key. Phone messages
in two separate hands stack beside the mail. I turn the corner in
the living room and discover one tawny cat, white muff gleam-
ing, wrapped about sleek black partner, filling up the easy
chair.

Orange Needles

James A. Vath

sometimes, those pine trees w/ the orange
I mean the dead ones, ya know w/ the
 Orange needles on the tope
 right they remind me of somebody.
Or something -they look like something
Like a match almost a big match or
 a Flower ...or a baby w/ red hair

Maybe a stop sign Really, which
 should be a stop & Go sign- 'cause
really that's what happens, Right? We
 all stop,then,go then just do it again.
&on & on- so forth as long as we can Til
 we get too slow to make it
out of the Forest -- when it's got
 so dry so dry & tired



A Midsummer's Afternoon with My Camera
Heather Mead

History: Abbr.

A. A.

Memory
is standing
on top of
the end
of the
world.

Four Riddles

David Erickson

I

It masters the seas great and small,
Tosses 'round crafts of sizes all,
Fish flee to the waters bottom,
Rocks shutter as it rages upon them.

It causes massive destruction,
Kills without discrimination,
And only divine mercy ceases its aggression.

II

Hunger unsatiable,
Vicious unless contained,
And consumes all it can.
The winds carry it,
Water destroys it,
And most rocks are unaffected by it.

III

The threshold of imagination,
its powers are beyond.
Most find it too tricky to handle,
but few continue on.

The fact surprises most—
that it does exactly what you say.
Yet even the dumbest and brightest,
flub up, suffer, and pay.

IV

The lack of it curses all of mortal kind.

Answers: 1. Hurricane 2. Fire 3. A wish spell 4. Time

My Father

Deborah Cooper

Wears his slippers
to my brother's house
for Sunday brunch.
His old, gray mukluks
pace the yard
and clutch at twigs
and leaves and bugs.

I watch his feet,
and then I watch
the bright wool
of his heavy sweater
move across the grass,
again and back,
in the hot May sun.

Close-up is always hardest.
His eyes, behind smudged glasses,
seem now smudged themselves
and far away.
I want to clean them off
so he can really look
at me again.

I wipe his chin,
make it a joke
to save him from disgrace.
Perhaps he is beyond
embarrassment.
I hope so, but then right away
I hope not yet.

We drive home in the dark
in the thick, sad silence
that always comes after.
I imagine my real father
in his wing-tips, perfect shirt
and tie, waiting somewhere
for the rest of him to come.

From the back seat
my son's hand
finds my shoulder
and I remember telling him
once years ago
that there was no such thing
as purgatory.

Water Anthology

Lance Guenther Molis

Dripping drops beating against my window,
hitting the glass in a constant rhythm,
leaking down to gather in a low lying spot,
dripping in pit-pat rhymes,
and creating a poetry of water,
poems pooling in a puddle,
a liquid book of watery words collected in an anthology of
droplets that come from the minds of many different
thirsty composers,
some from the lyrical styles of a fast river,
the rock slapping laughter writing a historical ode in
the soil it chews through,
some from the constant meter of a lake,
the congregation of many thoughts washed into the lapping
waves of emotional white-caps,
some from the irregular pulse of a swamp,
the darker side of streaming, jungle thoughts with primitive
brambles soaked in concentration, all these collected into one
volume, mixed together in a solution of potent wash,
and spewed from gray-matter clouds to land upon my
windowsill in the power of a new breed of poetry,
a poem unlike any other shower before it,
and unlike any yet to come,
but all bearing traces of each other's drink,
and all seeping steadily to the open sea,
which is where all poems must eventually come to rest,
warehoused in a vast vat cased in salt,
mixing in the churning wake of all that has been
written, becoming distant from distinction as it dissolves
into the One,
the one poem that is the creation of the many,
the one poem whose words are only known to those who
enter it,
and the angelic terns who wheel through the sky above it
crying its meaning to the clouds.

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Submissions can always be dropped off at the English Department office. Or you can mail your submissions to:

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See our website for next submission deadline at
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