

estuary

acadia's creative arts magazine

Edition 5.1

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Rebekah Higgs

Parasite

I did not ask you
to enter my mind,
or sift through it
like you flick
through your old loose leaf.

I did not ask you to come,
but you did, and stayed, stuck
to my armpit, sucking my blood
without my knowing.

I thought
I had searched
meticulously my body
once escaping the water.

I thought
I was clean, redeemed,
till the parasite reappeared
thick bellied
a mouth full of me.

Powerless to fling you off
I tore and squirmed
writhing in my own flesh.
You latched on,
held tight,
kept sucking till I felt faint.

You had become so much of me,
filled with me,
drinking of me,
when it came time to light the match,
to burn you off,

I felt the pain
escaping from you into me,
me into you.
Exhausting us.

Prometheus bound,
struggling again and again to unlatch--
you persist,
keep coming back.
I try to squish you
our blood and pus
mingling on the ground.
But you stay,
unrelenting.
For I cannot bear
to tear you off.

Chris Turner

Dry Roots

dry
rasping quietly in the bite of wind
forceful and forever
a flower once bright
now withers in empty moments

saline water
borne from tears of joyous sorrows
bought in twos by two as one
still bleeding from inner split
reflecting laughter and contained facade

roots cease to expand
cease to draw life from
a broken heap, bleeding meat
quivering yet in the chill
outside the ribs of warm memory

Colin Crowell

Lucid Sensation

(Intro 4x)

[Em9, Gadd9, Am4, Cadd9]

(Verse 1)

[Em9, Gadd9, Am4, Cadd9]

Liquefy the patterns

Lift your chin to the ceiling

Stare at the haze above

Stare at your own feeling

Magnify the patterns

Lift your eyes but look away

from the specter you will face

Dream tonight and stay

(Chorus)

[Em9, G, Am4]

I can't explain how and

I can't explain why

But I get the same feeling

[Cadd9, Dsus]

And I don't even try

(Solo break 4x)

[Em9, Gadd9, Am4, Cadd9]

(Verse 2)

[Em9, Gadd9, Am4, Cadd9]

Analyse the patterns

Lift your mind from your reason

Enter your uncharted self

Enter a new season

(Chorus)

[Em9-rake, G, Am4]

I can explain how and
I can explain why
This feeling I get
[Cadd9, Dsus, Em9]
Lifted, risen, high

(Bridge)
[Em, C, Am, B,C,D] x4
It's a Lucid Sensation

(interlude breakdown/buildup)
Em, G x8
Am I dreaming?

[chorus]
I can explain how
I can explain why
This feeling I get
Lifted, Risen, High
Lifted, Risen, High

Jennifer Read

Mud

Mud clings to my dark leather boots
The stench of a thousand moons trapped in soles of rubber
No introduction is needed to the tragedy
My head
Screaming for release
My mind
Tortured by those scenes I cannot understand
The world is cold
The fog collapses my soul

And you have joy in this
Many find the key to existence in such lifestyles
Hypocritical with their guns and bombs
Creations of the Devil which I am yet to understand

The gun metal feels icy to my grasp
Pulling the trigger remains a formality
Forced to care
Damned by the people above me
Those men who sit in their big comfy leather chairs in a Stateroom
No desire to fight for their cause
Or die for their freedom
We fight blindly because we must
We fight quickly to dull the pain
We fight honourably...

I killed a child today
His heart captured in my brain
A snapshot of his life frozen in time
The terror streaked across his immature face
Eyes of wild fire
A beast am I for obeying the powers above
A soulless bastard encased by the need to find myself

The fog eats at my uniform
The bog tears at my feet
I can smell the death
I can feel their crunch under my boots
I can hear their cries from heaven
I can see their faces of terror
I can touch their hands with my fingertips
For they protrude from the surface of the muck
Looking out
Even in this fog
I can see hundred of bodies
Floating on a sea of brown
Slowly dancing upon a glassy surface of slime
I remember that boy
I remember my innocence
And how I took his
With only two shots to the head.

Mpho Maruping

Crimson Dawn

I stood upon the hill long after Shitha, mounted upon fiery Raman, had slipped beyond the horizon. Snow had swallowed my hooves and ankles to the pasterns, but I hardly noticed. I was waiting for someone. It was important. The chill wind blew snow from drift to drift, casually cutting through my winter coat. But it did not matter. I cast my eyes up to the great blackness straddling the earth. It was sprinkled with stars but I noted that the eye of the Supreme Guardian was rising. Full and bright, it had already begun to blur the stars. It bathed me in blue light so that I cast a shadow as black as my mane and the streaks upon my horn. I could not hide. But I had no desire to hide that night.

The wind quieted then ceased and the world was silenced for a moment before I heard footsteps whispering through the fresh snow. The sound of well oiled armour plates scraping lightly against each other carried to my straightened ears easily in the stillness. She had arrived at last. I watched her figure grow larger as she climbed the gentle slope of the hill. Pausing half-way up she lifted her gaze to meet mine. The reflection of the Supreme gaze eclipsed the expression in her eyes so I could not read it. Nor could I read her face, masked as it was with the same haunting blue light that gave her a vague glow like the spirit of a dead warrior. Her battle-worn dagger hung deadly and gleaming on her right hip; her slim elven long-blade hung on her left and her studded steel shield was strapped to her left arm. She was every inch a prized warrior maiden of the Supreme Guardian. I looked down at her, my heart swelling with pride. She was ready and so was I.

“Why do you pause, Kiesha old friend?” I asked with a toss of my mane. “You have come to kill me have you not?”

“I have. I only wished to look upon the abomination you have become that I may remember why I need not harden my heart for your sake,” she replied with a voice that rang clear and solemn. I pawed the snow drift at my feet before continuing.

“Then let us begin, old friend. Before the dawn one of us must lie in the snow and the other must leave with a heavy heart.”

“When I prove the stronger, my heart will soar for I will have freed you.”

I laughed at that. She was still so naïve and still so beautiful. It was a pity I had to do this.

“Come, come now Kiesha. You and I both know that I shall best you. I have faced foes greater than you and lived. Or have you so soon forgotten why you are still alive?”

The white fire of the Supreme Guardian flashed back at me through her eyes. "Cease your delay, come and take your punishment," she cried as her visage morphed into a war mask I recognised.

"If you insist." Slowly I made my way down to the plain below, circling Kiesha as I passed her so that she could not swing at me before I was ready. It would be swift, this conflict, and it would be the most painful either of us would ever engage in. It crossed my mind as I waited for her to make her way down to the plain, that it would only be the end of the one begun those ten years ago. I could still hear the wurm's flesh as it tore on my horn. I could feel its cool black blood running down my forelock and crest, staining my mane and beard. I remembered its death cry mingling with Kiesha's cry of relief. She had been so afraid then. Now her strides were longer, more confident than her partial climb up the hill. She was as determined as ever. At last we faced each other on level ground. Our time had come.

I struck first, rearing to grate my powerful hooves along her breastplate. The silver plated armour took the damage and came up badly scratched and somewhat dented. I had deliberately not pushed her to the ground. The anger flashed in her eyes as she unsheathed her sword and raised her shield. Uttering a familiar war cry she charged me. I stepped aside, let her pass me then shoved her firmly with my hind hooves. She went sprawling into the snowy hillside but maintained a strong grip on her long-blade so that as I descended to pin her, she almost struck my chest as she swung her blade in a wide arc to force me back.

"You have improved," I commented, hoping my pride and approval were eclipsed by the mockery in my voice. I stepped backwards to let her recover her feet as I continued.

"Are you so eager to kill me, old friend?"

"I am no friend of yours," Kiesha cried charging me once again and unexpectedly the fine edge of her elven blade sliced through skin and flesh as she struck a solid blow to my left foreleg. I reared in pain and swung about again to slap her in the face with my tail. I heard her cry out in surprise even as her blade slashed and incised my flank from stifle to dock. The new injury, though not as deep, affected me enough that I could not recover quickly and lost any advantage her handicap awarded me. The pain of both wounds slowed me considerably. Again I stepped out of reach of her long-blade. The battle had continued on longer than I had anticipated and my injuries would quickly weaken me further. I had to put an end to it before we were both seriously injured or killed.

Kiesha recovered her sight, though their constant tearing showed me that her eyes still stung mercilessly. Finding me she paused for a moment. I saw her eyes widen slightly at the blood liberally scattered and churned with the snow. But any remorse she might have harboured soon disappeared. Advancing cautiously but quickly she raised her sword as her eyes met mine.

I remained where I was and watched her approach. My foreleg had begun to quiver and threatened to collapse under my weight. My flank fared not much better. I could not last much longer.

“Well now, Garalor,” she said unexpectedly pausing just out of reach of my horn. “It seems that strong as think you are you cannot defend against me, a mere mortal.” There was no mockery in her voice, only an earnest zeal in her eyes. She was trying to show me the error of my way, smiling sadly as I collapsed. Weakly I tried to rise, causing my wounded leg to bleed more aggressively so that it stained my hide and the snow like a crimson dawn.

“Do not worry old friend, you will feel no pain, only relief,” she said soothingly as she raised her sword above her head. She would aim for my horn, the blood stained mark of her failure, my ill-begotten gesture of eternal friendship. As she paused to adjust her grip, I lowered my head and waited for the tell-tale whistle of approaching retribution. It was not long in coming and as it descended toward me I hesitated for only an instant before raising and sweeping my horn aside employing my entire being to parry the blow. The impact jolted us both and left me with a gash that would scar. Kiesha was thrown backward into the snow, disarmed but for her dagger. Before she had the presence of mind to reach for it, I firmly placed my injured leg just below her left elbow. My blood now shone on her bracer.

“I would not worry too much about that,” I said as her eyes strayed to the steam rising from my hoof and her forearm. “My blood will not taint you. You must understand that we abominations become so by choice and it is not for you or anyone else to decide when our time is done.”

“I am a handmaiden of the Supreme Guardian. It is my duty to protect life and -”

“And take it if it affronts your fine sensibilities?”

“It is -”

“Not for you to decide. Look at me. I bleed as you bleed for my heart still beats, my lungs draw breath and my spirit weeps.” I paused, my injured leg beginning to quiver. “It has wept ten years for you. It weeps still for it cannot believe that you came not for our reconciliation but my death. Tell me, in all these years since my banishment, when I have kept you in my broken heart, have you thought only of my end? When did you forget that I bought your life at the cost of my integrity? How long did you work to bury my sacrifice so you could plot my demise?”

“I came to redeem you, Garalor,” she said struggling in vain against my blood stained hoof and the tears in her voice. The chuckle that rocked my pained and weakened body came, laced with anger, of its own volition as my trial played across the creases of my memory. I had broken the law and stained my horn with blood for a love deeper than Jitha’s Well. For the life sprawled in the snow beneath me I had thoughtlessly cast away eternity. And she had come seeking a salve for *her* guilt. An

angry drop of blood rolled down forehead and muzzle to drip with a hollow splatter onto her dented silver breastplate.

“Death and redemption are two very different things, Kiesha,” I whispered hoarsely. “Many survive redemption, few walk away from death. Redeem me. Oh, I have no doubt you have come seeking redemption, but I wonder if it is not your own you wish to claim.” I could no longer look at her. The lesson was learned and it left a bitter taste on my tongue. “Find your redemption elsewhere, old friend. I am not your mistake to correct.”

Kiesha lay still with her eyes shut as tears fell, leaving salty white traces on her cheeks. Her chin quivered and her chest heaved and shuddered with her efforts to keep from sobbing aloud. Though I felt a great measure of compassion for her, my disappointment would not let it show. I lifted my leg from her arm and stepped gingerly away from her. Torn and crippled by the night’s events I turned to leave, a trail of steaming rubies marking my path.

Near silence settled once again over the plain as I left Kiesha’s sobs behind. Overhead the eye of the Supreme Guardian gleamed.

Ian Hussey

Body of Water

When I looked to your eyes I never found enough courage to admit how I felt.
I pushed you and you pulled me down
A mind races in descent – isolated, a cocoon of insecurity; life feeds off obscenity,
true
intangibility, paranoid egotism; the body suits a shell for the mind, itching with
ideas.

Anything you say has been said, anything you do already done,
perception begets position, we judge by what we see and how we hear.

I erected a temple to ensure solitary peace, pretentious blankets console sleep,
intuition covers and pressures injury, impulse follows repetition and stimulus.

Stigmas – an animal instinct, a triggering device, a pointed finger, a fired gun,
an image tainted by eyes, a wave conjured by hate.

Wipe the water from behind your ears, the raindrops race to the river.
The impact: sudden, shocking, the drops bounce off before being corralled.

Please, sit silently,
let us fashion form.

Now open your chest, show me your worth; bathe me with your feelings.
I'll push if you pull.

Look around, part the pieces, arrange them as you wish,
there are no rules here, only principles.

Sickness swells below your skin.
Suffer your self or embrace the darkness and find what hides from the light.

You feel out of place – surpass insecurity, focus your vision, eliminate all limitations.

Purpose fills the empty space, a climate of discovery.

There is a body of water beneath you.

Used to cleanse the spirit, the shackled sink, picking a lock isn't easy while drowning.

The far shore – a mystery.

It's rumored the flesh runs with the soul there, dancing, intertwining; absolute.

Nick Morraine

An Answer of Redemption

Naked she stands,
Dancing atop a dangling dew-drop,
A clumsy pirouette spun atop
a falling wish.

Piety lost,
Buried under snow,
Battered by hail,
Viewed
Behind a blurred lens of frosted glass.
A dying, crying,
defiant flame.

Mercilessly

Extinguished

Loss universal
and,
ironically enough,
Tangible.

Broken wings,
Feathers falling, like

Cherry Blossoms,

Settling amongst the
Fallen soldiers in
an ill-stepped
a played-out
fragile emotion bottled,
within, then without of
a Bursting joyous
Pin

verdant grass –

Parade,
Charade,

Grenade.
pulled.

The wingless one still waltzes,
Shambling, without grace,
On top of that dew-drop,

(A falling wish.)

(Bursting)
A one-sided smile on her ageless face,

Fragments of a harmless grenade,
Spilled like Petals at her dainty feet.

(Answered.)

Duncan Philpot

Heirluck

“Who’s that?” An old dog, who was taking a swig of his beer, asked his companion, a potbellied horse. He pointed to an animal wearing a brown trench coat.

“That’s Heirluck.”

“What, you can’t be serious? He’s that small?”

“Taller than you.”

“I’m five eight. I thought the legends put him over six ten.” The dog waved his hands in emphasis.

“Shut up... hey, I never knew his fur was grey...”

“So?”

“Well, s’not like you sees a grey fox everywhere...”

The two animals were sitting at the far end of the bar from this Heirluck, huddling over their drinks. The dog pulled his hat up a bit to catch a better view of Heirluck.

“He smokes?”

“Never without one in his mouth.”

“He always come here?”

“Yeah... now a’ days...”

“Why.”

“He lost some things. Real important...”

“Like what?”

“Won’t say. He’s a cold one... I seen him trash a group a’ thugs who touched something of his. All this kung fu and boxing stuff, man...” The horse made a few fancy motions with his hands.

“What they touch?”

“His kid.”

“Where’s his kid?”

“Dead. That’s why he trashed them. Didn’t kill no one, but broke ‘em real good.”

“Why not kill ‘em? I would.”

“Don’t really know. Something about evidence and a testimony.” The horse gulped a large portion of his glass’s contents. “But one guy he did beat up was someone real important...”

“You mean that lion. Morti’s kid?”

“Yeah. Last I heard they did something real nasty to Heirluck. Real nasty.” The horse shivered.

“You know what they did?”

“Somethin’ to his arm. All I know is he had an operation recently.”

“Humph... Sounds like he’s gone through hell...”

“And then some...” The horse downed the rest of his glass in a swig.

“So, does he still work?”

“Yeah... but everyone says he’s lost his edge.”

“How so?”

“Used to be he could look at a scene for two or three minutes and have the crime figured out... genius like stuff.” The horse motioned the barkeep for another round.

“They say he helped solve that murder of the Muledor couple.” The horse blew the foam off the glass before sipping. He smacked his lips after the first satisfying taste.

“Yeah... I ‘member that one. They was saying it was the fastest collar for a murder ever.”

“But he’s lost it.”

“Look, he’s gettin’ up.” There was a pause as the grey fox swung towards their end of the bar.

“Oh man. He’s comin’ here.”

The grey fox loomed over the two animals, blowing smoke in their direction. He took a long drag, held, and blew out another in a ring shape.

“I haven’t lost it.” Heirluck’s raspy voice had an English flavour to it.

“Y... you heard us...?” The horse said fearfully.

Heirluck reached under the lip of the bar table and produced a radio. He then took out a small transmitter out of his ear.

“Never crack a case without one.”

“You wired us...?” The horse tried to sink further into the bar stool. “Why?”

“I guess I’m bored...” Heirluck said, taking another long drag on his cigarette.

“What the hell do you want?” The dog snapped.

“Him.”

“Me?”

“You.” Heirluck emphatically blew a great cloud of smoke into the horse’s face.

“What did I do?” The horse coughed.

“Worked for Morti. I need some info.”

“H...how should I know where he is? I got out of that...” The horse didn’t finish his sentence. Heirluck had picked him up out of his seat with his right hand.

“Listen, I don’t have time for you to screw around.” The horse wrestled with Heirluck’s grip on his shirt collar. “You don’t need to know exactly where he is, just the general whereabouts.”

“I don’t know.” The horse whinnied. He swore he could hear the barkeep shouting at the two of them. Something about ‘outside.’

“Gladly.” Heirluck was talking to the barkeep. His voice was level. Controlled. As if he was doing something other than holding a two hundred and sixty five pound pot

bellied horse in the air with one arm.

The horse couldn't quite keep track of what happened next. All he remembered was feeling like a rotten rag doll lying on the rainy street. The animals who passed him on the sidewalk paid him no attention.

He rolled over to see Heirluck's frightening silhouette in the street lamp light. Smoke pored out of its mouth, and though the horse couldn't quite see, he could swear it smiled.

"Now, back to business." The raspy voice sounded happy.

The horse could no longer take this. He reached into his crummy jacket and produced a pistol.

Wasting no time, the horse aimed and fired at the silhouette's head.

The bullet never made it anywhere close to its target.

The silhouette's right arm had gotten in the way.

The silhouette grunted. "Still hurts... guess they still kept it somewhat real." He picked up the horse, lifting him up with ease.

Heirluck stared into the face of the horse.

"Okay... you had your chance, now you can answer my question."

"Please, I have a wife and two..."

"Little girls. I told you, I haven't lost it."

"Don't kill me..." Tears streamed down the horse's face.

"Where's Morty?"

"I don't know..." The horse felt Heirluck's left hand across his face.

"Where's Morty?"

"I don't know." Another slap.

"This is your last strike."

The horse was sobbing loudly now. "Oh God... I think he's in the fifth district... don't hit me anymore..." He moaned, snorting to keep his bloody nose from gushing.

Heirluck let him drop like a sack of potatoes. "Thanks." He turned his back and walked off.

"Why go? He'll kill you for sure." The horse yelled. Heirluck seemed to pause.

He glanced back at the horse. The horse shivered in the cold, sniffing and sobbing.

But, it wasn't the horse who he saw. He instead saw an all too recognizable sight.

He swore he heard someone scream. Not in the street, but in his mind.

He took a long drag on his cigarette, filling his lungs with the intoxicating smoke.

He rolled up the sleeve of his right arm. Touching the pink scar that ran up his arm from his wrist to his shoulder, he began to shake.

"If you give us your arm, we'll give you your kid... It's a fair trade I think..." A voice spoke in his head. "... You touch my son... I touch yours..."

Heirluck flexed his hand into a fist, listening to the sound of gears audible to only

him.

“I guess I’m bored with life...” Heirluck said. He was talking to the horse. He was speaking to himself.

Heirluck took another drag on his cigarette, but found it was done.

Maggie Graham

Dreaming of the Future While Watching Your Play

Strong, dexterous hands,
with calloused fingertips
coaxing fiery guitar strings.
A roving blacksmith,
a poet of fire,
plying his skill
on the cobblestone streets
of some European city.
We'll see so many
that they'll all melt into one.
Struggling to live
off love and pocket change,
out of fear I ask,
"What will we do today?"
You hand me your guitar
and ask me to play.

Pamela Jamieson

potential tune and you

pudgy fingers stroke ivory keys
step, carefree and light
skin unaware of burn, blister and callous – smooth
middle C, march back down to
bass F, she wants to learn piano please
potential meets ambition in a tune.

twinkle, twinkle little star. light-
ly row, lightly row – la, la, la – smooth
keys invite fat fingers and musical dreams to
come to life. eventually, she plays to please,
but not yet. passion comes from song, tune
tempts a melody and each note is the key.

Chopin, prelude #12 – a slur means smooth,
connected notes. chords too
wide for teenage hands. please, please, please
may that be good enough. the tune
is familiar, this performance the key
to enter university. feeling negative, not light.

Bach makes one entity two.
“practice hands separately please”
each hand carries a tune –
distinct conversations in the same key
tip of finger graceful, wrist light
hands together now, one fugue – smooth.

two hands join in concert, you and me please
hold me (if just my fingers) you can tune
my heart and restore my soul, the key
is your eyes, your lips, making a step light
drive me to distraction – a smooth

ride, a bicycle built for two.

you came to me, with a tune
“About a girl” - it was me - your key
fit a locked up tight soul, light-
ly. rough edges sanded smooth.
rough hands stroke smooth hair too
“reply to our acceptance asap please”

hands, hair, caress the key, slender fingers please
learn my notes, the tune, play with light
brown hair, sing a smooth song to me.

Sarah Balanoff

Overwhelmed I Stand

Overwhelmed I stand
Undecided;
What's justice?
Eye for an eye
Or Christian charity
Must anyone die
For truth to be seen?
Electric chair
Poison needles
Shaking now
The convict wheedles
Guards can't listen
Can't change orders
Teardrops glisten
Down the corridors
Zap or stab
It makes no difference
Mortician's slab
Hungry again since
Accidents happen
Manslaughter is punished
He'd take it back but
He's six feet finished.

Andrew Graham

The Invitation

The ascent began through the left nostril
It being slightly wider than the right

Gripping nasal hairs I climbed into the dark,
Groping ahead
Pulling 'til my arms burned from the effort

From outside, the distance had not appeared so arduous,
And as time passed I tried to remember if we had discussed allergies

Eventually the climb was over
Standing on a bony ridge I looked around
With eyes now accustomed to the dark

The beauty took my breath away
Neurons fired like fireflies in a velvet summer night
Describing fractal patterns conjured by unseen intelligence

Synapses filled the air with perfume that I can't describe
Familiar yet unlike anything that I had known
Touching on shared memories and thoughts

Despite the newness, I felt at home
There, in the rhythms and the scents an image of my mother's face arose
Then my brother and my sister
A deep calm engulfed me

I could have stayed
But that would have been ungrateful
It's not every day that someone invites you to look inside their head.

Ian Armstrong

Untitled

When repentant Cesare de Borgias
Confessed to deeds lurid and orgy-ous
The Italianate priest
Himself quite a beast
Said winsomely, "Isn't life gorgeous?"

Alexis Morris

On a Crisp Winter Wind

Once more they came, voices of eire,
Higher, more soft, more strong,
All night in chorus, gaping attire,
Silence of sky filled treetops in song.

Wish me through, joyous entirely
Whistling mixed sense of soundy-see,
"Oh won't you dance, oh won't you?
Won't you join the dance?"

And so round-elay, a looking, a peeping
For somehow someway, that Child had broke free;
Spark of a dark eye, now calling, full leaping,
"O' years, years O' Talking Trees!"

"Where have you been to?
Where come and gone?"
"O Laughter, O Light, how long, how long?
Tis you, you yet, deep-still, still you."

And Fade on and on, in cycles retiring,
So went that star, so still-small serene,
Heavenish hiccups, soundless, resounding
Moment of memoir, wild-wondrous scene.

Andrew Snook

Tip My Hat

Do you tip your hat at me sir?
Aye that I do.

But why does thou do that?
To share my joyful content with the world.

I do not hold against myself the foul wretchedness of society,
Nor do I hold against myself the pieces of past endeavours gone sour.

The world is not a good place, nor is it a bad place,
But what you make of it.

And from my mind's sea I shall pluck an oyster
And create my own world anew,

And no matter what I draw from it,
Be it a pearl or a painful sting
I will be content, and tip my hat
To my new found fortune.

Then I will thank the world for the gift it gave me,
And place it back in my mind's sea and start anew.

And to you sir and all other simple fortunes I encounter,
Within my many oyster
In my shimmering blue ocean,
Where my mind and soul doth be content,
I tip my hat and say good day,
Good day.

Anonymous

Untitled

everything seems circular now
samsara back to you
and still
 i feel the butterflies
 you gave me yesterdays ago

last week / on the street
 i passed a man
who had stolen your eyes

 they had aged
but i found myself still loving them
 still lost in their forever

but now its Only tuesday
 with only eden silence for comfort
and i cant help but wonder/
 if i see you again
will you
 see
 me?

Meghan Badun

A Lifeguard's Nightmare

Water laps gently
Against the sides of the pool;
I look down – she's gone.

Carolyn Sloan

FIRE (for Allen Ginsberg)

Poet of the sacred world –
you resonate to find love
always resting in its necessity
in the loneliness of our kind.

The tidal elation
is tuned to a fine ear –
the round sound sermons
your beat and its appeal
in expansive contradiction of awakened mind alive without hesitation.

All your loves,
transparencies
with or without warmth and perfect friendship,
find their way
are electric and simultaneous
angelic and furious

of fire and its pleasures

heat and wrath
and luminosity.

Mark Gardiner

her blood coloured hair / a place in the desert

one hundred miles out on the sand
bohemian lounge of secrets and twilight monsters

playing games in the hall i let my androgyny slip
you move closer and i'm lost in the red

reckless and angelic pictures of us taken between our crashing words

we can go south for days
where the only times are 'sleep' and 'awake'

under the lights and under the smoke
our hands lock and become the arm of God
safe

our waves move over the crowd through the dirty glass and unhinged doors
into the red desert of rebirth

Ryan McNutt

Ruby Red

I saw three people die one day
Two were actors – I think they were okay
The other one was a different deal
The other one seemed really really real

The plot involved an assassination
Of some leader of some powerful nation
Some said Marineman pulled the trigger
And some said it was something bigger

And just as a man broke through cops and crowd
And shot Marineman to make us proud
I turned the channel – static away
Who writes this shit up anyway?

So who the hell shot JFK?
It doesn't matter anyway
Blood is blood, dead is dead
Reality painted Ruby Red

Late 60s – war docudrama
Guns, napalm, and post-war trauma
I watched as Charlie took the street
I laughed as Notacrook denied defeat

A crazy man in 1981
Shot the Brady Bunch's long lost son
He was aiming for a movie star
To impress the young Jodie Foster

Now:
7:00 – action/drama in the Middle East
8:00 – election coverage – vote out who you like the least
9:00 – the dark-skinned villains are subdued
10:00 – Big Brother's watching you

So who the hell shot JFK?
It doesn't matter anyway
Blood is blood, dead is dead
Reality painted Ruby Red

I want to be on TV
So I can shoot whomever I please

Ryan McNutt

Pacifist Love

Mascara, movie lines, and silhouettes
No greater lie than “No Regrets”
You shot your shotgun at the night
My fear of darkness kept me polite
The earth shifts, the ice-fields melt away
It’s your empty eyes I cannot betray
Another photo album in the ground
Another beautiful bystander safe and sound

I was born in a suitcase like all the rest
Still it is my origins that I detest
Waste baskets full of dates and times
Serve as a reminder of history’s crimes
So tell me fairy tales of friendly fire
Charades and conquests to inspire
My first impression will never change
I will always be your shooting range

K. Johnson

Reading of Haida Poetry

In a concrete room, filled with academic excellence
The poet reads translations of Haida poems
intones the native world into
tweed jacketed words made to glide over perfect teeth,
falling like a storm coming in the distance
The wind first, trees hissing gift laden
Out of forests, barely visible out of plate glass
windows
on the fourth floor

The green humid of the Haida
Are constant companion to blue sky
breathing creation of black bear
red dogs black mouthed biting white tails
moving like snake, just beyond the grasp.

K. Johnson

First Snow

31 degrees
Individual parachutes, no sound
The house the trees the yard
Frosted in crystals
Filtered and soothing white unguent
Anointing the piled tragedies of longing
Frustration, implacable non movement
Of the most basic desire

Snow welcomed
Fragile large tears floating to earth
Accepting, tenderly covering
The most obscure items
with care.

Crystal French

If Only

How leisurely the rain falls,
Without anguish, joy, or spite.

If only tears were that indifferent
I'd be a much happier person.

Jennifer Rieswyk

Shiver

I wonder how it happened
A moment in time
You consumed me
You used me

Your beauty—
Unexplainable
What goes on
behind those blue eyes?

I love the way you look at me
A half smile
Sends shivers down my spine
I write this for you...

Tears come with your hands
Gentle
Seductive
A Breeze...

Coolness caresses my eye lids
And you left with my heart.

Washed away with silence
Time and time again

A moment...
Or two...
Or a million
For those blue eyes—

Shiver.

Noah Gataveckas

I remember old buildings

I remember old buildings in the same way the old men remember trees.
Where they sit in the downtown core, on a patio with news to the traffic
they realize that trees couldn't keep up with the fashion of buildings
And now they feel so upset they can't even talk about it.
If the trees were still with us the old men would still be sad
Because time passes nonetheless,
and we can't take every tree with us to the coffin

Jennifer Starkey

Cat Howard's Soap

She bathes in sandalwood and nutmeg
practicing the speech she will give on Tower Green.
Earlier they brought her the smooth wooden block
and she knelt with her head upon it
imagining it opening
its sweaty jaws snapping shut.
She can almost hear the thunk of the axe and wonders
if the blade will feel like teeth against her neck.

He used to love the way she smelled.
Tom.
They would submerge themselves in the folds of sarcenet,
listening for the footsteps for the knock for the clang of the bell.
When they kissed he tasted of pepper.
He bit her lips until they tasted red.

She drowns the soap in the water near her belly.
Touches the curve of it and wonders how it would have looked,
swollen with the next King.
Wonders if Anne had the same thoughts but
Anne was cursed.

He used to love the way she smelled.
Henry.
Drenching his fingers with her hair. Whispering about children he wanted.
He told her he would like to choke on her scent.
Die with the taste of nois muscade beneath his tongue.

The water drip drips between Catherine's fingers.
She wears her wedding ring but knows it is all a lie.
Tomorrow morning, before the sun rises
Henry will show all of Christendom
that she was not clean enough.

Rebekah Higgs

Love Note

You stole my soul torn from my core
in one quick slap stick sucker comedy act
a punch to my solar plexus
I felt my lunch hit my oesophagus

What have I done
in response to our on going battle
I have made you immortal
you ass hole

Bridget J. Nugent

Personal Column

She walks briskly into the coffee shop off the corner of Rodeo and West Pico Boulevard, wearing her grey Gucci pant suit, and beams at her reflection in the mirror panel on the wall; her hair newly coloured, her nails freshly done. She finds a corner table with lighting to best accentuate her cheekbones, and anxiously waits. What if he is ugly or fat or poor, or bald or too pale? How will she deal with such humiliation?

Suddenly the brass bell on the door chimes; he walks in, tall and dark and handsome. She spots the white rose in his hand, and all of her anxieties disappear. He can feel her watching him and notices the perfectly manicured French tips grasping the white rose. His anxieties skyrocket, and he darts back out the door.

Steve Hebert

Remembrance

1. Where was your father when you were born?
2. When did you see him last?
3. Did he used to read bedtime stories?
4. Did he teach you to catch and release?

1. No one remembers
if he was in Rwanda or Sarajevo.
Your mother will say he managed
still to reach out and catch you
when you took your first step.

2. At the airport, dressed in fatigues. Someone was crying.
He stood apart, immersed in a sea of green,
a gentle eye giving lie to the grim line of his mouth.
You lay awake at night yet, your cheek expecting
the caress of his prickly shadow.

3. He wasn't a reading man
but you have long forgotten,
minding instead the strong, steady hand
that propped your head the night
he broke your fever with a cold bath.

4. You remember casting for steelheads with him
as they swam upstream to spawn in Carson Lake.
One day, you will find a yellowed news clipping
telling of the landmine buried in the shale of a dried riverbed,
a relic of a shattered past he tried to mend, in his way,
the one that got away.

Mpho Maruping

Life Melts Roses

You wake to unfamiliar cracks in the ceiling above you. The breeze billowing through the musty, yellowing curtains brushes across your mouth and into your nostrils. The flowers on the carpet aren't familiar. Their stems and petals weave in directions you don't know. They have no scent. But there is an odour.

Beyond the carpet a red-wooden floor claims its share of gold as the sun floods through the open windows. It is interrupted in spots by the silhouettes of wilting Cornelia roses on the window frame.

"Life melts roses," a voice whispers across time. You recognise it, but your head is empty. There is no name and there is no face. You turn your gaze back to the ceiling. Your neck is more comfortable in this position. In the stillness of the room where only the breeze rushes in, you realise there is no sound. You can't be deaf because you hear the blood rushing in your ears and you are certain that if you could, you would hear your heart beat. You wonder if you are alone and are uncertain how that makes you feel so you decide that you're afraid, but only a little.

The sun moves a fraction higher into the sky, peeking into your peripheral vision so you have to squint. The motion alerts you to a vague ache in your cheek and the start of a throb in your head. It isn't crippling, but you think that it might be if you don't shut the curtains and keep the light out. Resolutely you try to brace yourself with your hands to rise only to plunge back into the pillows as your aching muscles tremble and collapse beneath your weight. The sun stabs your aching head through your stinging eyes and your breathing evokes pain around the tightness in your ribs. Your arbitrary choice to be afraid looms before you as the fusty drapes billow in the breeze. You can't stop shaking. The light is red through your eyelids. The breeze plants dead roses in your nostrils. The silence is white in your ears. Your fear lays over you.

There are echoes on the dead rose air that turn the silence to silver ripples and the light is gold and red and cracks on the ceiling. The echoes are louder. They must be coming towards you from somewhere but you can't tell. The choice floats before you again; fear or relief. Fear wins. You are already on the road so you stick with it pretending it is your decision.

The oiled whisper of a door on the carpet. You can hear the fibres catching the splinters, or the splinters catching the fibres. The bed creaks and sinks beneath some weight. You dare to open your eyes.

A light blue shirt, rumpled across a solid chest and high collared against a golden neck with hollows in all the right places. Your eyes move past the pulse in his neck up to the hard plane where the jaw leads to the ear. There's no earring in the lobe but there is a hole directly in line with the bridge of a strong but rounded nose. The nostrils are also rounded but the eyes above them are half shut, like crescent moons. Fear fights relief. You think you recognise the face. The scent fills you like the pain.

“Are you in pain?”

“Yes,” your first word uttered and urged. Tender, expert fingers probe and stroke your arm. You flinch.

“I am sorry, my love. Did I hurt you?”

“No,” you lie before you can change your mind.

“Nothing broken, just bruised I think.” The bed bounces as he turns to look at you. His gold brow creases. “Your cheek is really swollen though.”

Life melts roses, a voice and a face and cruel intentions. You were warned, you remember as you start to look toward the waving silhouettes on the red-gold floor.

“The roses are wilting,” you say to hide your fear. He shakes his head.

“It happens. I told you it would.” And he did tell you, that morning between the Perle d'Or and the Paul Ricault. Between the kisses and caresses he said the roses would come apart in his hands. He held the petals out for you to see and you blew them off. You did not care.

The bed bounces again as he rises to his feet and makes for the door. His back is rigid, his grip hard on the handle. The curtains get sucked into the vacuum left when he opens the door.

You are left alone with the slow shadows and the yellow curtains. The dying roses drip brown petals to the floor. You are not a rose, you can walk away.

Ashley Ward

Pensive



Cathy Wamboldt

Untitled



Heather MacDonald

Untitled



Iain Whitehead

The Vastness of Mind



Kelly Cuvilier

Life in Red



Laura Gilbert

Self



Sarah Balanoff

Untitled

