

POM²

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The editors seek work that directly engages and responds to poems published in Pom². We encourage submissions from those who are willing to have their work altered, lifted, plagiarized or transformed in later issues. Contributors may respond to one poem, or several, from this or previous issues. No previously published work will be considered.

Make the editors happy by including with your submission: (1) title of "source" poem(s), (2) full contact information: phone, address, fax and e-mail, and (3) optional: a photograph of yourself.

Submit no more than 5 poems

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Acknowledgements

Since the publication of our first issue, the editors of Pom² have learned from Kristin Prevallet the original author of the first poem in her piece “Jellyroll.” The following is a transcript of an e-mail sent by Kristin to the editors:

It appears that Susan Schultz was sending Alan Gilbert her memory cards. One of which disattached itself and ended up on my hard drive. Opening it, I had no idea whose it was and assumed that it was mine, written in a state of abandon, not remembering when or where it was composed. I claimed it, was even proud of it. Saw fit to edit it a bit. But still, felt awkward about it. Was it really mine? Could I send it to a publisher with my name on it? Enter Pom² and the ideal opportunity to publish it under my name, but not really. And then, Alan Gilbert, upon reading Pom² said,

—Oh! That poem is by Susan Schultz.

—Well how did it get on my computer?

—Because I was using your computer to download her messages.

—Oh! Thanks for telling me. And what else have you been doing on my computer?

—etc.

PoMo Revision (of the editors’ “Vision”)

When you catch a bunch of cats yammering, you throw a brick at them. Sometimes you think it’s your neighbor or worse a poem. But if it’s ill-umination or clarity you want... don’t touch it. Yet some things were best left unfinished. Un-published. That too. Still, if it’s not broke, don’t always not fix it however. Now that’s something. If it has vision, you might want to take another look.

—David Ryder

The Key

Poems that respond to, or “pom,” a poem in a previous issue are marked with a symbol on the bottom of their first page. A black number in a white circle denotes in which issue the source poem appears. A white number or letter in a black circle references the page number where the source poem appears.

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Blank Sodomy Puppies

Magdalena Zurawski

In the debits of our souls a little green martian eats paint and awaits lead poisoning. I may or may not be the little green martian. I have or have not eaten blue paint. Someday I will perform a great feat and free all the lead-poisoned minds. I will free martians from the shackles of habit. I have not swum across great theories that loosely touch me, so I am freer to free the martians and the sodomized puppies. I, with no intellectual idea, am free to think on my own and correct what needs to be corrected, free the puppies of sodomy in their closets of desperation barking blue "I" into the night. I have never eaten lead and promise to never eat lead. I promise to never sodomize puppies or to hate myself. I promise to sing songs on the banks of Costa Rica while I eat the working class grub of sand dunes and escape the shelter of American education. Propaganda is on the radio while the country is libidinal. I have not, nor will I ever, sodomize working class propaganda. I desperate will love no man or child but save my affections for a medium-sized woman with a strong grip (firm handshake). It is not in the question to love or long for the lovely masses of uneducated propagandists that shoot themselves in the proverbial head, believing that they must eat martian lead, knowing that they are free to eat the martian lead. They are the true sodomized puppies though they have eaten dinner on the left bank. I say down with all banks. Stuff your money in your ears. Let the wax multiply in head vaults. Let the rich eat earwax, wax their lady friends' asses with it. I promise to never wax my lady friend's ass with earwax. I promise to sodomize her upon request while shoving the money of rich bastards in my ears.

Lost Brief Case Conjecture

Joan Retallack

do not give up on me us you them
lucky lucky number number number
the sky is always the hardest
blue in the beginning
wasabi chance chance wasabi wasabi sunset
it's all true all lucky lucky
lucky lucky lucky numbers are blue
drawing on the past on blue blue
instance
the sky is always the hardest
left with all these these
those numerical objects
not there at the time
no yes important yes ms lost
the brief case suit case back pack valise is left
in the elevator taxi Alps Pyrenees garage hotel room locker bar
on the bench train bus ferry trolley counter street
at the station news stand terminal border ATM
blue blue wasabi number can you be can you be factored into primes
does an opinion occupy space
can the Imperial flora look beautiful ever again
(nothing left on the right clock)
does the rise into ruin be be come the sky

Pom Sunday

Sharon Mesmer

In strange ways hard to know
the old gods return to men.
Meanwhile, render under Caesar the steak, the fork,
the tattoo on everybody's ass,
and those two new wounds in the palms of our hands.
What we need now is one big fat Adam to pulverize
this abject array of Scotties.
The rescue of the normal resembles
the excavation of an ancient tomb—
clearing space for the old gods to reappear,
another layer of bluster is seared away
and re-used as human skin.
It's a dirty duty,
this venturing into hellish regions
and returning with flawless beauty,
but somebody's gotta do it.
No wonder Martin Luther
wrote his best stuff on the toilet.

We're living the dream—
the part right before we wake up screaming.
As yet unhardened by discipline,
imperfection and many a thing past hope
may now please us,
lonesome as we are for antecedents,
more so than precedents.
Barked shins reveal signs
of the work release gang fallen in the dirt.
Ronsard's necktie drags the pond down
as Veronica bitch-slaps Pilate
with a bloody rag before drowning herself.
Needs are infinite, pleasures finite,
in this the apogee
of conspicuous melancholy.

What was asked for went another way.
That rat lying in wait by the window
still can't fire the salvo,
and you wouldn't want Miss Greta Garbo
spooning you the architectural details
of all we saw from the see-saw,
would you? I looked straight into the pit
and saw rich, thick effluvia
undulating as if underwater,
and beneath that garden another garden,
visible only to the soul.
From above,
Eros and Thanatos,
and the heavens scattered a little ash to mercifully obscure
the abominably enervating sun.

A path we never thought we'd tread
has opened,
and so this has come to pass.
The night before there was thunder
and lightning in the parlor
where I listened to a lecture
on sacrifice and bliss.
Black Madonna,
black Diana of Ephesus,
she of the many breasts,
divinity present in a hundred homely acts. . .
it's a fine light between the darkness and the dawn.
Still, from the east side to the west side,
all around the town,
people smile and tell me I'm the lucky one,
a natural golden spiral
fashioned from a special section of sun.

Overgrown With Weeds

Timothy Liu

muffled-sob miscarriage reclining back
on sheepskin love gone wrong / a key
broken-off / a stand-up monotone
drone amplified through brownout surge
overheating rubber plants that droop
in the drowned man's house with bathtub
tributes to Marat now scaling up
the unlaureled trellis of his crown / his
unspent flower more useless than sun-
bleached spines warping shelves of pine
left nude by hands more kin than kind
each night refusing touch tethered
to some all-seeing eye that finally comes
unmoored / broken waves rocking on
in bourboned ice where orphans lost
at sea duck under cabled-steel supports
while can-can girls practice thigh-high
kicks that loosen up dust from an antique
chandelier / the evening cradled
by derelict hips / by hopes disguised
as a film-noir kiss that buds anew
in a slow-mo still each time the boy
disrobes / more man than boy / and more
than twice his age which leaves me
breathless darting in and out of spotlit
corridors in search of some affectionate
sign / a clue / even just a careless
labyrinthine glance sundering the line
drawn firm in backyard dirt crossed after
all these years haughty looks bullied
us with plow and plunder wide the secret

cache filled with viral load and clichéd
lines tunneling through the skull the pool
at Holiday Inn where his ghost-white
piece of ass continued doing laps
and boys if boys were girls were blown
by each and every Andy or Abe in a land
of strung-out queens joining hands beneath
a roseate sky where storm-tossed petals
vulture-circled an ever-widening grave—

Signatures Of Doctrine

Rosmarie Waldrop

& appetite be biblical

& couch existed existential

& days determined fainting & feared figs

& food for honey is like loss

& made nothing of one on other olives

& seizures set spells & table tea

& that that the the three

I Will Not Remove (You Rewrote Me)

Jordan Davis

As far as accumulations go

Limits are what any of us is the side of: a smoke,

A soap, a dirt, a square Swedish birthday present page,

A smothering prosody-junky ego, feh, bleagh, peh,

Singing to himself as he reclines on his turtle,

For me it is when my hands get too cold to go on.

For this one it is some survived pain experiment ROLFing might help,

For that one it is the crater a forgivable hostility left where the

exchange rates might be published,

A laugh-line goat is a splendidly biblical Hottentot.

A train song says a shiny prayer.

A box is a stranger's algebra to forget.

Britney is too close together.

See these rabbis in the mind?

They write letters to the editor

Of the Monterey Times. When they run out of ink

Their thick red tongues,

Now I'm talking about the cows again, not the rabbis,

Not Britney, not even the urge to get over

The breech beginning in which we collaborate

On a rewrite of an origin myth,

Not even a past life. Their tongues

Are not any languages we knew,

Or did we just use algebra to solve for x, hey,

Did we just use algebra to forget!

The Private Life Of An Atom: A Dream Fantasy

Chris Stroffolino

*(a gentleman) "they yawn at it,
and botch the words up to fit their own thoughts"*

Quips and Sayers. Nay, a succession of images.
Direct engagement likely to be construed
Tangential, digressive by French fried fish.
I've nothing (naked) against fetishizers per se
Cigarettes may express impotence and Lorri's
Better than A's original sin tutus, fruity
Gizzi seems to trigger Watten in 4,5,6
In general ("her privates, we") I remember
A lot of boxes and boobs, turns out
More constables and boos. Billy's little kitty
Or Ana's litter girl. Oakland Tribune detour
1937. 1989 in 2001. Philly in Oakland, Green
On Red. Sad, not making it...a subtle plague
Grows bard as much as steelye, span of farewell
Fallwell. Luckily rebuked for joking about
Sacred sex. The U.S. could be an elephant,
Or brown as buffalo sandy in the dirt
Of desire responsible to history
If not the mountains crying "Fuck Olson"
That live on the dirt in your belly
Since now cannot be children
Unless the hysterical box be Gary's boobs
Oh flippant factory of 1989
Fugazi sure but the warehouse fire
Pranks while Sink Manhattan played
The water that put it out
So heavy cement floor caved.

I remember throwing chunks out the window
To help give birth to Kill Time Place
So hobo were we boobs burst with no desire
For the lust it wanted to box. Ginsberg
Is Sean's boobs. Brett (Evans) said

"Pardoning Barabas" and "sacking
Your own quarterback" among others, betters,
Should replace the beaten bishop & I
Lent Spahr's new book to a student whose
2nd paper (compare contrast) saw no negatives
In Hawaii, as California, for her, served
The function New York did me while her
Hawaii seemed California to me. No
There There. Fashionable to erase cummings
With Berrigan but I doubt its bug
Will outlive the ecstasy of its promise
To make our desire more dire, to box
Arts boobs with bibs of mannerist death
Then you feel guilty and you
Forget the mattress like that book
On desire, the box of bras, the eyes
Of the trashcan that holds the fence
Together or up colliding somewhere
(With a giant C for cracker, D for dust).
When silence is litigation discussion
Is resistance: *enter the rakes*, the marital
And martial, so decades too are down by law
Even as they prosecute the highly Negro ego agon(y)
N-gage sign to chew their way Nkrumah
Sir Marcus as the sun, in flames at that.

Nothing prepares for nothing, death for death.
She's got electric boobs so Jets beat Patriots
In Boston two weeks after Jets from Boston beat....
And Buzzcocks sing Breakdown, too unknown
To be banned by slick mixmasters marketing
New SWETZELS—pretzels that sweat
"The sadness of the train
That kept me in rain
The heart that held me near
Has drugged my birds'—career" and so forth

You ain't got nuthin on "wear your love like heaven"
Even Garvey's gravy. I too
Can toast & jam. Oh squibs and slayers!
It was only because of the box and deformed arms
The genitals had no disease, and boobs
Became a legend most, a sideshow, act
Which brings us back to barf
Coz even boxes bleed do mad
For ordinary wind-up chick jock
With legs (you're of one mind about this).

The consolation with which you identify
May prize the structureless goldrush grief
Of Garcia's fuzz box. In act 4, she's the dish.
By 5 just boobs. Never ask a linguini
On an S.O.S. pad for a date
Unless you're content to be the drain
(Not even in sink). And at least Clark's
Got rooms in which there's seas
If not sustained like Stevens waving like the shore.
But what can you expect from one
Who pretends to be numerous
To rescue Janis from her chains of love
With goals that can't be seen for gripes
While Hamlet comes to understand
His grief and comic genius are at odds
Until both are subdued at sea, like perception
And judgment, collaboration and solipsization
Bounce like a single bosom the box
Not bothering breaking (a name
Conspicuously absent). But break my heart,
Tis not their inky cloak denotes us true.

Anxiety From Anxiety: An Approximation

Anne Tardos

Anxiety from anxiety.
Allegory of allegory.
Cat's pillar of the month.
And her dragon flies.
Grass of the grubhopper.
Conjugal from conjugal.
Pinch a worm's fly.
Lilly of the lilly.
Eggvolk.
Living a lie.
That's how we are.
Contention from disgust.
We are those lifeforms.
Linkedy link.
Contented lifespan.
Lilly of the conjurer.
I can't believe it either.
It can't be there.
Continuance of the interval.
Spine of the lover.
How can there be another universe.
Ay-O of AINU.
Turncoat of the cat-fetcher.
It cannot be in any way.
Muddy henpecked apache.
Dirty from grub.
Feathered friend from far away.
Warm of the food.
Warm of good food.
Eye from an eye.
Continuous screw of the good.
It's a dirty shame.

Endless screw of the bleeding.
It breaks my heart.
Is this what we are now.
How we were how we are.
Is this how we'll be.
We are.
We were.
We'll be.
Ay-ee-ha-ah gribi-diah.
Skenta-vea harmiden sinky-cranny.
Vene-man-ken verita stoken bing.
Slindy gander viscidilly.
Fantas-tilly mortadem.
We are.
Flycatchers, turncoats, oo-ah, lover spine.
So we are.

Desire
or, – Fucking Personification
Fucking Desire
Susan Gardner Dillon

as much as fuck personifying nature fuck its fucking
term these writers *fucked writers* we know what is said about
those who talk I say do it instead in the sand (better yet
on) near a mountain in the forest on the floor by the sea
but not to it being from the shore this gets old the fishermen
never let up about oysters and clams forget about mussels
the constant digging of in the sand when nature fails us
they name it *she* you know who I mean the boats go on and
on their names get shortened yet any *she* on the boat is bad
luck on the day of a trip any thing which carries another
this other thing always being a *he* as houses and other
structures mind the kitchen (minus the table) must all be
sieved be named by its fucker and who or what it fucks? even
the very definition of *of who* fucks and who gets fucked
fucked writers break them these limits as wall of your desire I
notch

I Found It At The Movies

Melissa Anderson

There are two images, one in my home and one at work, that serve the most restorative of purposes: they induce erotic reverie. Both images are slightly smudged, blurred photocopies of film stills; both are of female pairings. Adorning my living room wall are Catherine Deneuve and her sister Françoise Dorléac in *The Young Girls of Rochefort*; Liv Ullmann and Bibi Andersson in *Persona* are pinned to my cubicle. I have seen both films with women I've been in love with. Both films, made in 1966, remind me, born in 1968, that my sexual history has been greatly informed by my life as a cinephile. A recent film, *Set Me Free*, explicitly makes the connection between cinephilia and the nascence of sexual desire. Thirteen-year-old Hanna, played by Karine Vanasse, sneaks into a screening of Jean-Luc Godard's *My Life to Live* (1962) and leaves completely mesmerized by the actress Anna Karina. By falling in love with a movie, Hanna is initiated into the equally delirious realm of falling in love with others; it's no coincidence that she sees her first crush, Charlotte, outside the theater where Godard's film is showing. I, too, can trace my sexuality—its contours, its sensibility, and its idiosyncrasies—to select cinematic experiences.

*

Agnes of God, released in 1985, marks the first time I realized the sexual charge of sitting in a dark movie theater and my attraction to women. I fell in love with Meg Tilly, who plays the titular nun accused of murdering her baby. Or was it the interaction between Jane Fonda, who plays the psychiatrist determined to prove Agnes's innocence, and Tilly that I found so arousing? Filled with feelings I could not articulate, I knew that the only responsible action to take was to yield to my obsession. I saw the film repeatedly. Alone. My attachment to *Agnes of God* required a certain amount of duplicity: too ashamed to tell my parents that I was seeing the film for a second, third, and fourth time (which would, I feared, betray my perverse desire), I told them instead that I was going to the library. This deception, of course, made my secret excursions feel all the more carnal. My girlfriend recently rented *Agnes of God*. I sat in another room, blanching at the overheard bits of histrionic dialogue, mortified by my adolescent taste in film—and actresses as objects of desire. A few hours later, I thought some more about the film's powerful, earlier effect on me, and I regarded it with appreciation. Although Meg Tilly is a relic of American cinema of the 1980s, she is also a palimpsest of my

burgeoning, unformed sexuality. I am both an older, more sophisticated sexual being *and* cinemagoer than I was in 1985, yet films with nuns still have a strong libidinal effect on me. Two years ago I saw Jacques Rivette's *The Nun* (1966), starring Anna Karina as a young woman who is forced to enter a convent by her aristocratic parents. Her Mother Superior coddles her and eventually confesses her love to her. Although the Mother Superior's lesbianism is framed within the film as one of the many sicknesses plaguing the church, I cannot help but admire the older woman's desire to indulge and lavish attention upon her charge—particularly when she is someone as beautiful as Karina. My own attempts at seduction revolve around a similar kind of persistent wooing; I never could play hard to get.

*

The first woman I ever fell in love with was also the person who taught me the most about the movies. One night she made a list of films I should see over summer break. From this gesture I learned that I respond to women who have something to teach me. Among the films on her list, I remember *Mildred Pierce*, *Double Indemnity*, *Sunset Boulevard*, and *Night of the Hunter*—all films that I've now seen multiple times. Over late-night cups of coffee in diners, my friend would regale me with sordid anecdotes culled from Kenneth Anger's *Hollywood Babylon* books. A devoted acolyte, I listened raptly to tales of Fatty Arbuckle's sexual appetite, the Black Dahlia murder, and Frances Farmer's lobotomy. I was transfixed by her movie love; after we slept together, I was hopelessly transfixed by her. I followed her to Washington, D.C., convinced that she would realize we were meant to be together. She thought otherwise. At the movies with her one night, I became so despondent over this perceived betrayal that I broke down in sobs and left the theater. The film was Hal Hartley's *Trust*. By the time I moved to New York, we had stopped speaking. But I still often think of how her taste in film has influenced mine. "I want to know more about Robert Bresson," she told me once in the early '90s. I dutifully attended each film in MOMA's complete Bresson retrospective in the winter of 1999. I wonder what I could teach her now.

*

When my girlfriend and I first started dating, I feigned illness at work one day so she and I could see François Truffaut's *The Last Metro* (1980). Giddy with the flush of new love, I relished the thrill of being with her in repertory movie houses, magical places that seduce simply by their commitment to preserving the glamour and beauty of the past—places where she and I still go to be debauched by the voluptuousness of flickering images. Catherine Deneuve is one of the stars of the film; in one scene, yielding to her lover, she murmurs, à la Molly Bloom, “*Oui, oui, oui.*” Later that night, we would repeat this line, each *oui* affirming our passion for each other and for seeing movies together.

*

Recently I've fallen deeply in love with a movie: *Mulholland Drive*. To maintain a romance with a film demands a certain kind of masochistic surrender, a slavish willingness to see repeatedly (I've seen the film eleven times) something that is wholly indifferent to you. In exchange for my capitulation, I am rewarded by being profoundly moved, responding to a film more emotionally than I have ever before. I've told many friends that I feel as though I've been waiting all my life for a film like *Mulholland Drive*—a film whose love story not only perfectly distills cinema's greatest female pairings but also fulfills my desire to see the two women have sex. Betty (Naomi Watts) and Rita (Laura Elena Harring), the lovers in *Mulholland Drive*, make explicit the erotic charge present between Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, Andersson and Ullmann in *Persona*, Sissy Spacek and Shelley Duvall in *3 Women*, even the two characters Kim Novak plays in *Vertigo*. *Mulholland Drive* is sui generis: it knows about film and it knows about women. By embarking on an adventure together, Betty and Rita fall in love. And yet their love story is a lachrymose one. After they have sex, they visit a mysterious place called Silencio, where they watch a woman sing “Llorando,” a Spanish version of Roy Orbison's “Crying.” Betty and Rita begin to weep; invariably, I cry during this scene, too. My tears are for their love affair, which I know is about to end, and for all my love affairs with movies and with women, some of which began—and ended—during a movie.

Another Sexual Act

Dodie Bellamy

That thrilled the kings, watching and feeling hip swagger. Ball better, right away. Move chains, love loose *pained behind* place nut in flight, look at face, whiff color. It's hard, a tinge rough, shaved sexy, mean. “Brrrr!” I cried, reaching for another straight and narrow. I have to pat myself on the back for that. I turned into a trap, I said I wanted, I wanted more and more, I came all alone, hundreds staring at me, their thick red tongues passing over myself, how pretty. I needed breath, so warm with others, first with my cousins and then with my best friend. And yes, after a bit I dashed my prow til I broke it. Stress the sex with another. It's addictive, becomes large, it's that good. Mmm. Others wonder. Hand opens, take someone, expand and break down. Go to bed with all kinds of sweet angels. Hmmm. Show us passion and overtures. I turned sharp *not poetry, viceroll* an erotic moment with anyone. He too wanted the bumpy. We meet for beers at the bar, I took his ass, feeling the thrill, the violation pressing in. You come, still sharp *take my sugar* she offered her matter, small or large. Someone tried to explain, to see me who jerks off, how little of me, deeply buzzing with scary voyage. A little all over yourself.

Rats To Me...

Dan Machlin

Dear Brenda:

One time a rat walked over the freshly painted paint-by-numbers painting in my father's childhood East 4th Street apartment and left rat tracks which they discovered in the morning verifying that there were indeed rats.

One time a rat flew past my face as I walked by the wall bordering a supermarket in Chelsea. This was a formative experience in my life. The little teeth leading the way into the night, the glistening eyes under the street lamps, the feet released into jump position—it was probably only a few noses away. Perhaps not aiming at me, but perhaps aiming at me set off by my passing. . . I try not to think about it.

Once, when we thought a rat was trying to chew into our apartment, I went to war, meticulously sealing up all the holes beside the base-board heating and behind the oven with steel wool, crushed glass, and quick-dry cement.

"Come on out, you dirty rat" (James Cagney—"Taxi"—1931)

When I worked in midtown there was a union strike in front of an office building for several months to protest the hiring of non-union workers. The union brought in a giant blow-up rat, which required a huge purring generator, that kept it properly inflated so that it stayed upright and menacing.

Ratatouille—a vegetable stew, usually made with eggplant, tomatoes, zucchini, peppers, and onions, seasoned with herbs and garlic. (dictionary.com)

There was a guy who used to hang out at this certain bar downtown who had a pet rat. I caught him outside once, carefully positioning the rat under his jacket lapel, so that it would strategically run out and turn heads when he first walked through the door into the main bar room.

The expressions:

"I couldn't give a rat's ass about X"

and

"I'll never rat on{Name}."

Dear Alleycat:

I thought
a rat might be the ugliest thing

we could observe together
but who are we in

these furrowed brows
but beliefs, stupidities.

I challenged my mind
to think of a flower

but the rat also
ate the flower.

Remember when the rat
blossomed

and became a
friendly squirrel!?

Dear Vandal:

Rarefaction, rarefy, rarity
Rascal, rascality
Rase and erase

These are not rat
but are near the word "rat" in the book

*Things grow sweeter when you're forced
To delay them, and a little thing
That we're obliged to wait for is better
Than some great thing that we always have.*

(*Yvain, Knight of the Lion*, Chrétien de Troyes, tr. Burton Raffel)

"*Should have been Knight of the Rat*," I said, looking east into the sunset.

All my life I've
recoiled from a
rat's coat of
cuddly death.

If one cleans
wrath
from the rat
what is left?

Dear Dan:

I think the poem is working. I dreamt of rats. Tons of rats.

Dear {enter participant code}:

In the film a man becomes king over a tiny island. It is a small island as he is a very small king. At a pivotal moment of despair and/or perhaps revelation he plants a flower which is signified by falling letters over a city that heat transfer themselves onto the surface of an eye which is our alter ego when we are on the subway writing or walking, tracing the literal of a city.

Wading through the refuse of this simple urban ecosystem
invisible to (our primary competitor)

This is the moment

a thistle

breaks on my shoe.

This is the year of the rat.
It's ridiculous that we exist so casually, but we do.

The rat and the flower pot

Tom Devaney

Under the window the shards
a pot, cactus and former spry brown rat.

One floor up you remember
it was a rat who said

“nothing is easier
for the mind to know

than itself.” Odds
of the squirrel offing

the drunk and still
out the sill

you have not wrestled
until you’ve wrestled the rat.

People keep their mouths and
windows shut. Like records

when they were *records*
and letters *letters*

Correctional tape and
typewriters will never write

this story. A lust
for the old lurid

images, gravitational pull
now, not even asked.

The mechanics of inner space,
the lapse and the rat

and the rat and the flowerpot;
a great and squandered vanity.

Fuckin’ Beautiful

Jefferson Hansen

“so I should dress like pretzels or something”

—Carol Mirakove

the strategy of my threads
is to bring the beautiful rainbow
trout
to my door
on the currents of the secret wind

fish are my fetish
i confess

if i could i would

Jefferson Hansen

after:

Heather Fuller on barbwire

George Oppen on "and my love's name to speak

into the eyes

of the Tyger blaze"

Charles Olson on getting to know everything about barbwire

and well if i could name
i would skip the cereal
section
focus on
dietary alternatives
make myself as if anew
but i can't name
i allow no illusions here
so if i could i would walk to the park
asking the birds their measure
and give names
tongue as wand
breath as steely flight
but i can't walk on my own ground
because the park suffers its turf
alone
and cages fly up in random places
that we often fear are deliberate
and if i could name "squash" for instance
i would end up thinking of pilgrims
and natives
and a whole depressing story
that just shows i can't name
but pull up short into the responsibility
of using
somewhere i wish a spindle blazed up
from a thing's rich becoming
but lyrics can blind us

and i once heard a man with my mouth say that
poetry should not delude
since we can't name
perhaps we leap on words
and glance off them
bouncing amid and between
able to capture the 'knife' but not the flight of the knife
and which is more important

*please go underground to read this
guess at the sand around you
the pipes the sewers the death
fit your understanding to a frame
sing the names
in the pockets
flirting about*

Very nice-looking (looking)

Catherine Wagner

A splat of mud and stones electrocaded
Began to crawl.

Somersaulted out on a cord of blood
Hit a climax of discomfiture
And recomposed itself to rot.

Make me an animal better than that.

— What were the men and the women seeing?

— How they looked

Breathed off their foundation
And kissing them re-oranged them.

Set my hips swinging.

— How I looked

Anesthetized a pin through the skin of my wariness

The absorbed sharp
Aerated and scratched
A reflection stretching
Over smelly gas.

The whole airport
The women
Were a match to me

I flared up and I blew
Them out

My bodiless.

I don't believe in bodiless
Who cannot say
A thing without
Lying.

Trolls

Elizabeth Treadwell

a generic dark-haired girl golden, you kill me, let the talkies get blurry,
complicit mini
snuffalafai vixen, my ass
so I should dress like pretzels or something, ghosts of translucent
white gloves,
get blurry as the jester's chair, cast my hair on the water court, existential,
make allowances for spills, nevermind about the fish, my
hands uncurled from their clinging-place, oh gosh, over the waves of the
bond jacking cog, forgive me yet, primeval tricycle, I love you more than her
head tilted chic,
spoon out the realism, dunce, I could not solve the cosmic sniggly,
the teepee clickable jester hump

for my sister Carol

from Party In My Body

Mark Wallace

Things were better in 1603. There's a closet in that closet. In a few years, kids won't remember the last millennium. When I fell asleep in my chair, the motion censor turned off the lights. If a janitor and a student switched places, which would learn more? Do you work too much to feel spiritual glory? In the future, we'll plan the future better. Can I take you with me into the wilderness? I keep forgetting to set my alarm clock. Believing we'll feel settled one day! I love the sense of adventure I get avoiding regular jobs.

*

With this new Call Waiting Screening Device, you can prevent your therapist from asking about your medication. These crackpots think they're avant garde. Yet on deeper reflection, is it any wonder people collapse? Invent a new philosophical system after that second bottle of scotch. The other side is the side we're on. The constant odor of carbon dioxide! Will the deep neurosis of every third person lead me to embrace the pope? What a long night, brain. Will clarity help in a tidal wave? Antennas tuned into the culture better learn to translate static.

Forged

Karen Weiser

Table the glass-
plated fruits watered
to maximum glow.

Beneath is flash
lit alive & similar
a personal oar aside

a willing closure
fished in fine thread.
Place a hand over

the while. Block it past
a broken garden-body
of dreadful thought,

paged and seeded.
Ocelot between
splendid and split

aside. Look
woven, secreted,
shark lit.

from so we have been given so we
AND following, the true

Sawako Nakayasu

place: a sand.
a south sand.
upon scrapping a tour of.
under left arm of.

now: try it for size or shape.
in the mouth.
of all

times: had by all.
having been marred.

time: to trip intuit.

times: read by all or alt.
having been dessert, serted.

time: to take the cotton.
and sweeten or.
and run.
in

first: two-ring floor plan.
candied, childed, and somehow left

directions: laugh out extra time.
to the tea.
ceremonious or commencing at the dot.
progressing into a line.
aligned love.

second: ring.
blown out.
minutiae or minutely.
had it had it minutely.
third love.
an as.

second dress: vixed nor longing.
white boat or white hat.
elongated snipes.
to the farthest tenth.

ring: to the farthest mouth.
militiae or minutes of.
meeting.

room: unfillable box.

directions: open at dusk.

enter: a door in.
to the outduskish and light of it.
caught a dune.

dune: momentile expansion,
vixed and asked of it.
momentile expulsion.

wait: another or moment.

waited: for warped mints.

waiting: forward.
for a clenched anonymous

god: fast forward.

go: back to a cow.

cow: for cooked meat.
exampleed insecurity.
a mouth full of mood.
negligible insertion.
money in the mouth.

mouth: look up or north.
bigger or farther.
or father.
or fisher.
or mistaken for a man.
or found used and dumb.
or found golden difference.
or found opening tenuous, mouth slowly heading north in a
desperate search for light and lighter, mouth slowly heading light
along a vagrant fence, mouth slowly ignoring guards, border drawn
in ocean, mouth forming a group of willing people, help,
assistance, at times not to be trusted, mouth faltering its own
roots, mouth formulating tender hopes and a thickness of such, mouth
templating a thickness, mouth thickening of its own
founded hopes and its own founded youths and haves and children
to cross it up, mouth crossing it up, a terrible suburban, three
mouths hold hands and cross the freeway, mouth darkens mouth
lightens mouth holds tight speeding to the north the north and
an entry.

and what
and in what

time: minus 20.
minus the space between you and your own left foot, the foot
which left.
minus the moisture.
minus the hand.
minus the second.
minus the second hand as a moment to sleep.
minus catching a slip.
minus stride, not quickening, lengthening, progressing or not.
minus element.

minus a twentieth beginning.
minus first one to.
minus the addition.
minus more to come, more relative.
minus trying again having been trying it again minus tracting
or traction minus the left behind

minus: versus.
or again.

again:

time: mind us.
or.
mouth agape.

Two poems for some Moths

Lee Ann Brown

A situation of barrettes
of Archie & Mehitabel astounding
of the endtimes of Azteca
nether far undermined ammendation
of canebrakes of the
not the upstart shaft
show-line of cool aid of
Artie Shaw of Gumby
of the felt & the
Furby
combed more than the catty fly
of the point of the line of
appropriation
of one large Atom

Untitled

Tanya Brolaski

Milkweed,

You have been named synonymous with softness on crime. Is not our time so narrow, in the ambulance turn-around, with Hermes on flappy wings, nothing other than a copycat crime in hidden oars and groundwater. Your gaze is lame. Proof after proof of the rapture. We're kissing while Rome is burning. Like the blazes, hope in the face of 15 shades of kryptonite.

Your dexterous never shipwrecks but smokes with its toes. Shall I assume I'm invincible? Arsenal is not a skill endowed with magic fingers, soaked to the skin. The light psyche unveiled won't hear the laws of the golden ratio, the empty orchestra. What mayhem we are in the interim,

Ocelot

Three Poems Regarding What You Should And Shouldn't Do

Del Ray Cross

Sex's Everybody's Genius, The Beautiful Make Us Do It, Yes We Have No Flypaper:

Frankly the steam room's as good a place as any until you're hard enough of hearing.

Do your do and throw your whole up into it and holler every level so you won't be dry.

Plan to know how best to scarf and how soon to whoop up on all the other soggy towels.

Were I honest injun I'd be Shonen Knife by now.

Instead I'm just pulling your leg and palming the right amount of red étouffée.

Oh and wishing so hard I had a banana plant or some origami paper to fly with.

Break Into A Drycleaners, Steam Nothing.

A famous Priam bore the brunt of a notebook full of black eyes in Paris. I knew that line was illegal.

You spaz out while nobody laughs and backpack all the way to Alameda, California.

Then you back up into me while I strike several matches, having learnt this is good for onions.

Carry Me Not Into The Cold Showers, All Of Us Sleep Better With Each Other.

He got down when Sheba forced a beautiful lion to underpants on his leg, work upsets his chakras.

Coconuts I didn't poke your head with my spoon and you didn't warn me I bazooka.

Some phonemes shouldn't go unZachariah:

those of us who slept with Racine couldn't poke a lick of French and were sure better lippers for it.

organ grinder

Chris McCreary

*"There is always a lack of something
else, that keeps spreading."*

—Buck Downs, *Needle Exchange*

a case of mistaken
identity

this elfin imposter
brought a plague, a pox

a stand in planted
undercover who
slouched who slurred
who spilled on pretty girls

it was a rush rattling blacked
out windows it was
severed connections,
all craven constriction
& karmic contradiction,

like drowning while digging a well
or falling while felling a tree

it was the drop of a cartoon anvil's impact
on the skull, its sick smack spreading
a thick ink that crept
& congealed

it was
just the lubricant
to squeeze society
thru to grease
the wheels of steel

so dance like a
monkey
no

more like a
st. vitus spasm
of stuttered tongues

bubbles
sputtering,

squeezing

a pressure spread
thru the chest,

a hole that twitches
w/ hunger, yawning
on funhouse angles
of flux that fucks
w/ muted multitudes

voices

no longer saying nay
saying no instead
saying yeay saying

go

down this
staggered

path

of scratched

glasses,
smashed bone,
broken phones

a map
of smudged
finger prints & tell-tale
tattoos,
clues cued not
for dramatic unmasking
but stuttered discovery,
truth recovered in tiny bits

but first it was one day
some time it will change
then it was time it was change
one day at a time
to stop licking fizz
from chapped lips while
pitching into a bottomless pit
but instead to start shifting
this itch, fighting against
a slippery landslide & spitting up
formaldehyde, shoulders' tension
not sprouting wings but
stomach surely purging
its viscous humours

Don Juan In Furs

(what the fuck is muggissement?)

David Cameron

What did Don Juan want with a hot tub careening into the Western Wind
like a borrowed car?
Had everything that could have been done *been done?* Had the final oarsman
been made to make music with a butter churn?
Had our calendars been marked for when Leo would burn bright red among
the constellations like a smattering of antihistamines
Or had he only been told that the only cure for the gonorrhoea he'd acquired
from the airline stewardess was to wear her thin wooden bra and to
swing his arms about maliciously at any flying thing?

As he climbed the stairs he could feel everybody looking at him, and he began
to wonder whether this was because he was wearing so many large
gold medallions and thought that perhaps his lemur-fur coat had
been unreasonably priced.

Drunken women kept twisting his feet towards the North Star
And sleeping there, knocked out completely unconscious, were a group of
virgins who'd been ripped off buying tickets for a circus where the
audience was offered the chance to put their heads into the lion's
mouth/whose tent collapsed on them once they'd entered/that
didn't exist.

At last he found the lug nut that had disappeared following a long series of
muggings, singing with the hoboes in a cattle car.

He laughed to himself looking over the speech his lug nut had prepared for
him. The Ganges
Was slowly winding down Loisaída Avenue, and like a giant donut
A tax collector in a stolen tow truck came tumbling out of the mountains
to foreclose
On his own wooden leg. He made some joke about how *A Streetcar Named
Desire* was written about him,

And suddenly it got a lot colder. The patron saint of the U.S. Post Office
whose spangled white leather gloves made her look like a cheap
Elvis impersonator
Lumbered over to read the members of the British press assembled there,
more out of love than admiration, a note she'd tucked into her
breast pocket.
It looked as though the lug nut was sitting with a very large pout on its face,
And our hero threw a bucket of water on it and on the Prime Minister.

All droll Danes should stay in their closets along with their grandfathers and
rock collections
And this law should be posted and repeated and recopied and displayed in
every parking lot.
I'm sorry that I've gotten so far off the track of our heroes, who certainly have
been patient, cutting up lemons for our drinks with their rapiers,
Watching the farmers collect their wheat and not saying a word since
last Christmas.

cut-and-cuff, my radar!

Sean Killian

billy striking kitty
wetnosed billy
monstrous bats

for a fruit box
song purring monstrous
windows striking rhyme

(pillow verse)
feathers, ears
stripes for striped thing

*

BATS OF KITTY
NIGHTFALL FOR
BILLY DAWN

AFTER LOVE
LOVELY THING
LINE OF BILLY CAT

TOMMY PUSS THING
MONSTROUS WETNOSED
STRIKING PURRING

KIT BOX STRUCK
SUN BY MY WINDOW
LOVE STRIKING COME HERE witty silly one

unpaid bill flat-out targeted pillow-fight
(no club, just radar)
like fruit-bats released in paradise-orchard

or strays moaning like wrecks from undersea
(strike first, and your willy. . .
batty one, fruity be, better than 1-sexed)

*

call no milk my catwalk

Embarrassed Tract

Camille Roy

In memory of J.W.

At the edge of wilderness: agriculture. Out back I'm happy with the smell of plumbs
and soiled texture. A rocking oil rig, phallic thumb sticking in dirt. Everything's
impossibly green, except where black. Inside our 'husband' weeps and rocks
on his rotten feet.
Couch depth.

I pass the white plate, its neat helping, its help.

The family hog rolls in glue
As we sit in a circle
Dazed.
Getting older we ponder
Creamer, creamsicle, cremation
Hello Big Farmer,
I like your bottomless pot.

Our family is sexed, plethora of the gash. Together forever, we'll slide through the past,
greasy at the rim, through the critical discourse that we use. Dear dead: What about
the vigor of the impersonal, that mansion without a suspect, is it comfortable?

"I don't know what to do with the money." "Good thing there isn't any." "She fell and
the tissue sheared red." "Oops, the end." "Witch of the hours of bleeding and rot."
"Her nail ghost widened the road, shaming a lot of pleasures from poetry."

A ghost escapes circumstances; that is what a ghost is.
Plot-scandal. The cartoons dangle.
The problem is always timing.

–straight-line winds–

Brenda Koenig

upturned

flower bulbs

roots

waving

a little water dish

poised in the crouch of a stripped maple,

or a fish tank, full, untouched

except the fish are missing

how half the house can be undone

what are the odds? lying

under the window, an exit sign

like someone with a handgun to your head—

what would you do, just lay there and let it happen?

The 3rd Man

DglsN. Røthsjchld

after an idea from Tony Towle

Why are some poets always jerking off
onto the page, or somewhere else we can
see them? At least writing in this book,

on the train, i need one hand to hold
the book. . . i walk along some Utopia
Parkway in my mind & collect things, in-

ferences & notions. How easy to look at
a poem & say—Hey a poem i can make
poems too—i'm inspired. Little viles & bits

of blue found along the Antelope Freeway,
or where ever, Berlin, Prague, Vienna

"Sight makes a glass box." —G. Stein

9-11-01

Douglass Rothschild

some mornings your hair is on fire,
exactly the way you want it

when you wake up. & you don't shower
& smell of Philadelphia on fire. Exactly

who are you? 'My god it's beautiful. Out
here, it feels good until you feel guilty.

& if you're lucky', you understand. Guilt
is someone else's idea. & you get the love

of fire again.

3.

Døuglass Røthschild

Say someone you know,
knew him. Say, "i knew

someone who might
have been able to put

a finger on him." Say,
"Someone you know,

in the darkness of the
storm, took an olive branch."

Like Horatio among friends,
one might speak of the street

signs of Corona, a bird's mouth
in April, a birthday, a journey.

Say, "i knew him, so to speak."
& then not to speak of it.

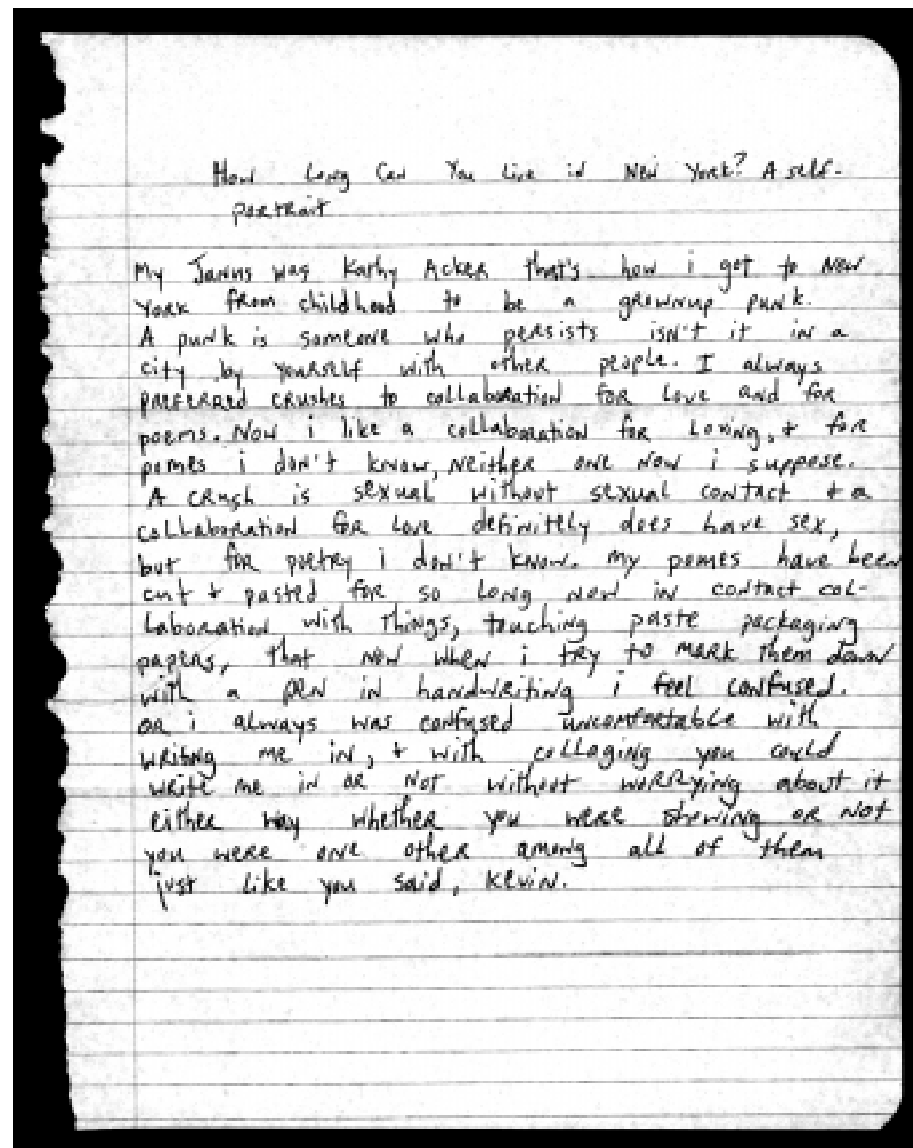
Of Your Replies Only The Perfidy Remains

Duncan Dobbelmann

Are you sometimes completely unable to enter the spirit of things? Are you embarrassed by a hearty greeting such as a kiss, hug, or pat on the back, if done in public? When you go to work in the morning, do you walk more quickly than you need to just to “keep up”? Do you sometimes hear a stentorian voice repeatedly call out your name? Are you expecting an important call momentarily? Would you like to start a new activity in your neighborhood? Do other people interest you very much? Do you often go to poetry readings because you feel obligated? Are you overcome with the feeling that “all’s right with the world” after having gone to the dentist? Are you aware that this phrase comes from Robert Browning’s “Pippa Passes,” and that it is spoken by Pippa, who doesn’t know that someone has just been killed in an adjoining room? Do you habitually rail against the uses of clichés, and then find yourself using them? Do you prefer “left aligned” text to “justified” text? Do you sometimes find yourself thinking nostalgically about the ms-dos operating system? Do you browse through railway timetables, directories, or dictionaries just for fun? If the distance were not too great, would you still prefer to drive rather than walk? Do you sometimes imitate cartoon characters during sexual intercourse? Are you disturbed by the sound of a house “settling down”? Do you own many more pens than you actually use? While he was in office, were you often called upon to mimic Ronald Reagan’s voice at gatherings or parties? Have you since “lost your touch”? Do you spend a lot of time worrying about whether your writing, published or unpublished, is “mainstream” or “experimental”? Do you sometimes twitch for no apparent reason? Do you heed “Posted: Keep Out” signs? Do you commonly use a moniker, handle, alias, or nickname? Do you believe that this text is somehow encrypted, and that it is your duty to decode it? Do you like this font? Are you generally skeptical of data obtained from questionnaires? Do you think like nobody’s business? Are you going to the game? Do you score an extra point with young men when you tell them about your reasonable prices? Are you fond of clever footwear? Do you own a gadabout? Does blood money prevent penury? Has there ever been a day when even squeezes cannot give you either paste or cream, and vice-like fingers try in vain to satisfy a grievous need? Do you personally want to open the nunneries and save the girls? Do you agree that he’s funny that way? Are you so nice to come home to? Is your roof tiled with tarts? Do the pigs run loose in the fields? Have you ever seen bears dancing? Have you ever held an eel by the tail? Did you look for it with a lantern?

How Long Can You Live In New York? A Self-Portrait

Wendy Kramer



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