

THE COLUMBIA REVIEW

FALL 2004

STAFF *and* GRATITUDE

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Serge Gavronksy's epic poem ANDORTHE asks, "Who will gouge the eyes of poetry?" Indeed.



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The Columbia Review is a bi-annual publication of Columbia University. We encourage submissions of poetry, prose, short nonfiction, and art.

Please visit our website, www.columbia.edu/cu/review, for submission information and past issues.

TABLE *of* CONTENTS

Letter	<i>Seth Fragemon</i>	4
After My Future Chemotherapy	<i>Seth Fragemon</i>	5
[the untimely fig]	<i>Brianna Hailey</i>	6
Hindsight	<i>Abby Walthausen</i>	7
This is for the department...	<i>Katarzyna Kozanecka</i>	8
Conspecifics	<i>Saskia Hamilton</i>	11
Dream of June in Vesuvius	<i>Adriana Garriga López</i>	12
[how strange, mendaciously mystical]	<i>Jung Min Cho</i>	14
Some philosophies of the minor evils	<i>Janet Lee</i>	15
on being an art critic in Montana	<i>Nicholas Bredie</i>	17
choice ablation	<i>Alex Young</i>	18
Sun Canary Jellyfish	<i>Jess Keyser-Fjeld</i>	19
The Fallout	<i>Jess Keyser-Fjeld</i>	21
Pears	<i>Johanna Smith</i>	22
On pretending to be Sylvia Plath	<i>Gillian Osborne</i>	23
quotidian orient	<i>Nicholas Kass</i>	24
alphabetizing two	<i>Kelly Puig</i>	28
Isolationism	<i>Mark Clements</i>	29
End	<i>Matthew Swope</i>	30
On Marksmanship	<i>Eric Linsker</i>	31
A Manhattan Skyscraper	<i>Tomoko Yagi</i>	35
Four Poems	<i>Jon Woodward</i>	36
Three Erogenous Zones	<i>Stephen Sossaman</i>	40
In Berkeley	<i>Max Norton</i>	41
Brothel: A Sestina	<i>Caroline Lee</i>	43
Migrations	<i>Mike Noble</i>	45
I have yet to build this house	<i>Yvette Siegert</i>	48
She is gone	<i>Ken Habarta</i>	49
Guess Who	<i>Jordan Davis</i>	50
Postscript	<i>Jordan Davis</i>	51

Letter

My Darling M.,

Reading most of the day, I try to avoid thinking of you. More than anything, I miss your hickory tongue and the way it surveyed my hands like a lost orchid.

But, I knew you would leave. There were the omens. For example, the day before it was sleeting hard, with the sound of a thousand ravens trying to fly their way out of paper bags. And it was so embarrassing having to stop in the middle of a song, but I had no choice as all my sundered muscles shut down like redundant little coal mines.

But that's all over now and though I have tried not to, I will continue to need you.

Yours Truly,

S

After My Future Chemotherapy

From the porch
telephone wires will stretch into an endless series of the smiles
that follow irony.

Under a procession of skies the silver of dead bells,
there will be lots of time to think,
mostly about baseball,
which I've always hated.
Tall weeds will sway in the neighbor's yard,
as if the dead were waving from the grave.

You know, sea lions will eat
any golden retriever walking by them on the beach,
especially when they're not hungry.

I know I will have died
and lived to tell about it,
I will be a parallel,
parallel and parallel.
My cracked drive will become instinct, a hilly
glory.

Then the curtains will draw back
and a small burlesque will begin,
revealing, scarf by scarf,
a baseball lying in the weeds
next to a sleeping golden retriever.

(the untimely fig)

eve's flesh has been electrocauterized
but we still inhale the ether of not-knowing:

asphyxia by carnal-minded men. my rancor
is still and motoring like hummingbird wings yet

if I don't record the gall it will elude me,
havocked crusader, apostate.

my fantastical lies are not
glorious, free-wheeling

domestic heart I have nested clay homes in stone
walls. feral housewife

mason bee.

Hindsight

is
moss on the side
of a fast bus

or a machine that
shouldn't be so se
 dentary--
farming barnacles
is for a living whale?
so, mites moan and
 slow
in record grooves
and the still-life has its
 own warts:

a footstool blister,
the view is still, bedsores
taunt the very ill.

This is for the department in which I blossomed.

Sometimes the talk in the lounge on our floor the twelfth consists of nothing but You pig fucker you shut yer trap! and sometimes the talk strays into the sound and the fury at which point someone yells, Get Naughton, and someone else gets Naughton, and lean Naughton comes in from leaning against the building where he reliably takes a cigarette on the hour, and he hushes the room and says from heart, I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it. Because no battle is ever won he said. They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools. Naughton is famous for this speech and infamous for his fake id which is labeled straight-facedly, Quentin Compson. He sends it around the room with Edward Said's Orientalism--dense and contested--hated required reading for some class--and suddenly Orientalism is on the floor and Naughton and the boys are stomping it out as if it were fire, yelling Die! Die! Die! The next morning the *Spec* headlines blare, Edward Said Is Dead In His Bed. Meanwhile, the boys across the street set off firecrackers at all hours until finally I cannot bear it and lean out my window, grinding my elbows in the sill's grit, and holler, Quit it, this isn't Beirut!, and they hush. Schneider, who lives down the hall in a room he calls Valhalla, tells me that I exude peasantness, and should not be allowed to vote. Married people begin to resemble each other in roundness is another of his maxims. My bearded beloved writes in

September on a stranger's door-board, Life is an adventure if you can bear the sheep. By May the stranger is my sister, and we have drawn up documents to prove it. Her name is Havilah which means little Eve but she is allergic to apples. She tells me of one Mario who is so taken with Borges that the professor gives him the reins one day. He teaches the class so beautifully with parables and unaverted eyes, that the professor confides in Havilah afterwards that Mario can have both her daughters if he likes. I recollect the day a boy came into the elevator with a black bag slung over his shoulder and I asked him, Been thieving again? and he said, Yes. That boy was Mario. So I write to him about that day and further but he does not recollect it nor does he believe that I exist and so he does not write back. I brand him Zaccharius, who was struck silent by an angel in the new testament because he did not believe that his wife could bear a child at her advanced age. I start for his room a hundred times aiming to introduce myself and a hundred times I turn back; passing the spot where he leans against the building taking a rare cigarette, I avert my eyes. I start to write to Havilah; to Tom, our Sir Knight Off-Standish; to Pitr who spells his name p-i-t-r. They write back. I call them my word-harem and look for further apostles. Meanwhile I skip Mass every Sunday. With Havilah I invent a witches' sabbath. It is a daily affair and involves spinning in gypsy skirts on the grass, skirts we bought from a man who enchanted a flock of butterflies to sell as wares in a bazaar. Boys yell from their windows that hippies are rampant. Schneider, returning, gives them the middle finger for us. My mother calls me repeatedly throughout the winter to tell me that I should close my window at night; what she doesn't know is that I sleep in the daytime now, in my coat like Raskolnikov, dreaming that my grandmother has sent my

father a sword to open letters with, and that our friend Eugene is unwilling to steal back the Macbeth sword that unrelated boys have stolen from him until said boys have cut off each other's heads. Outside of my dreams, Eugene is wistful about a sculpture of a kneeling woman he saw in an advertisement in the Paris metro one summer; in a fit of mad samaritan I hunt online for the name of a fit Paris metro official; I write to him in vague schoolgirl French and he writes back. Against all hope and science, a photograph of the sculpture is attached to the e-mail. Mario does not write back. In class I tinker with Cyrillic letters; at work I lay white tablecloths and take empty clinking wine bottles by the scruffs of their collars. One weekend I accompany my bearded beloved to his brother's wedding in Boston; in the car he tells me we'll have four sons, three twins and one quadruplet, and gives me Na-po-le-on, the world's loveliest dessert whose ingredients are listed as eggs, sugar, cream, and if nuts, walnuts. I pocket the label. At a rest station outside New Haven, somebody asks the uniformed gentleman behind the counter about the shrubbery; he answers, These plants belong to the state, sir. I rejoice that I did not go to Yale. Summer prepares to scatter my word-harem while back home in Queens, the Huns move out from next door, quitting and quieting the block. But I would not change anything. My beloved leaves me messages that say, Don't forget to call Il'ya, for he does really very much love you very very much, really. I find out that the dorm I inadvertently chose used to belong to Federico Garcia Lorca. The little one I baby-sit calls me Rapunzel. The editor of the New Yorker scrawls on my form rejection slip, P.S. Best wish. Someone asks my Russian professor what is the Russian equivalent for Life sucks, and she answers that you can't say that, because it isn't true.

Conspecifics

The train went on, one hundred and eighty minds
drifting all the way from Amsterdam

to Arnhem. The light moves from four-thirty
to five, then sinks for good: knocked off

early: we'll switch four times
before we stop: one face

closes up shop: one empties:
the storm that keeps almost coming:

faces facing themselves in the windows.

*

The filaments of sensation burn out:

one self chastises another self:
the labyrinth suggests a center:

the giant anteater stereotyping
from cage to pen to cage

and back again: the zoo
closing in an hour.

Dream of June in Vesuvius
for June Jordan, 1936-2002

dream of June in Pompeii
a light summer dress
the springing sprays of grass over limestone
fucking in the dusty mouth of death

smoking grass with that lover
she would have thought of her mother
dead and dead and dead again in every one
of the screaming contorted dust people
running from a slow flame
licking down the side of the mountain
or a thigh, a mouth, a foot, a breast

anything
but always arriving
too late

the lava has always already covered everything

these days June talks to other tardy ghosts
she tells the pompeiians of their own
archeological death-statues
caricatures of their agony
for the tourist eye's pleasure
that thinks--'I won't die like this'

and for those who made their own death

i would have liked to have found
her mother and mine
bleeding, hanging, drowned

i would also have liked
to have been on time

for those who kept us alive
with the desire to face death
to gaze it steadily and say
you are weak, you are nothing
but empty space and dust.

(how strange, mendaciously
mystical)

how strange,
mendaciously mystical
is a suburban night!

a little buddha
crawling behind a mighty squirrel

Some Philosophies of the Minor Evils

I.

The age permits: all second stories open to the public feet,
as if they could read tales written on the sheets:
there are greater considerations of our age than the privilege
to boudoir knowledge. I contemplate with tidy irritation:
they count white mushrooms in a garden,
thinking they are pearls for being round;
they pick up a single earring on the table
that they braid into a fable of romantic strangulation:
the hero is the handle of a pot,
who, unused to the brutalities of men, cracks and is consequently
sought
for its wisdom.

II.

Who commands that speech should rise every morning
purer and more innocent?--O you, most snugly slippers, you sense
its meekness on your floor mistaking it for Truth.
But see: it is too self-amused to bear your questioning, too
self-assured
to notice other print.
I have no mailman, and if one came by,
should my lack of interest surprise?--
My pots are for plants, not for the lies of men.

My Muse likes her garden outings in the morning:
she carries there her fountain pen.
But how she pales,

on becoming an art critic in Montana

No worries, no flowers to turn
cow teeth yellow, just green fields
of copper. Call me the cowboy
Apollinaire and I'll stick you up
for all the western art you're worth,
authentic Indian or oil reproduction
all the better. Copper paint's poisonous,
synaesthetic, soon you'll hear the sky
in your sleep and taste yellow.

Emptiness is odd as a half-a-cup
cup-measure or eating western art:
bison herds, ranch hands, hillsides,
holed up among the rim-rocks.
In my off time I'd toss trumps
into my ten-gallon bowler and
phone in poems to the tabloids
or else seal out the sky by stacking
oranges, unopened, across the sill.

Choice Ablation

slid, most ways
the common denominators
appropriate

quizzical trees
furling tokens towards
vast remainders

appetites
call to attention
the old home

yours truly
really letting myself
reverberate

the expression
'a circumstantial theology'
the errant choice

ablation
braiding gray rivulets
eroding excuses

the mundane
the time if you like
the amicable

peripheries

Sun Canary Jellyfish

The sun sat up all night in the yellow leaves of the tree outside my window and this morning there is nothing doing:

“I can’t rise,” he says. “All night I have been imagining myself a jellyfish.” I tell the sun that no jellyfish is powered by nuclear physics. He doesn’t believe me.

“There’s no real hurry,” I say. “Dawn can wait.” I won’t to tell him what will happen to this poem if he leaves. If I did, he might ask to see it, think of Frank O’Hara, and send me back indoors. I can’t say he’s chosen me, but in his indolence I seem to have his attention. His light on my face makes me think in fractals.

“Sun,” I say, “you are the deepest well I have ever seen, and you are filled to the brim with canaries.” His face roils with fat happy canaries who sit in the breeze at the well’s mouth: the canaries below them are murderous, jostling and flapping for fresh air. The wind from the canaries’ wings blows the leaves in the tree to the ground. Yellow everywhere.

“You have no idea,” the sun says, “what it feels like to be a horny jellyfish that doesn’t know how jellyfish do it. How do jellyfish do it?” I am not sure. I cannot afford to lose his attention. I time my breath to the bouncing canaries.

“The tentacles,” I say, “it has something to do with the tentacles.” He shakes his head. On his left cheek there is a small explosion and some yellow feathers float to the ground.

“I tried,” he says, “that’s not it.” I think about how jellyfish digest in the open sea: the hiss of digestive juices aimed at the cadaver of a finger-length fish, and afterward how the jellyfish sip on briny protein. The sun will not want to hear this. The other stars are too far away. He wants to be a jellyfish. He wants to fuck. The open ocean will not interest him. A question comes to me.

“Sun,” I say, “why a jellyfish?” And as he shrugs, he sends a canary to a third-story open window. The canary comes back with a child’s drawing. Yellow sun, blue sky, grass.

“I have tentacles,” the sun says, and finding no comprehension in my face, he harrumphs and rises off his perch with all the grace of an old horse struggling to its feet.

The Fallout

In a tree, the leaves of which grew as
a precise orb, ten-foot diameter,
ten wrens burst into song. How soft it was,
aptly mimicking intervals of laughter.

The notes, rising as they rose, ascending
as they do, in rocketships and space suits,
caromed off the future (it was inside-out, rusting
chrome and glass). The tones splintered, wooden flutes

under the cartwheels of dawn, the horizon
squared-off, the gravity new, crude, and green.
In ten directions, ten notes fell, each ton
of newfound heft resounding mean

and lonesome off each sheet-metal pane:
symphonic, the litter, symphonic, the dust

Pears

In lacy tree-shadows, worms squirm.
Dull red pears drop, (so many, too many),
the translucence of bruise, the dew-matted grass,
fill our pockets, our socks,
tuck more down our shirts--

toss rotten fruit high into the trees,
and chase the thud of ripe flesh falling.
Skinny mosquitoes hover, crows converge.
We get-away, quick,
moon glinting in our wheel-rims.

On Pretending to be Sylvia Plath

If in England, fall in love
with a hulking owl of a man.
Put clods of dirt or small flat stones
in his pocket.

On New England beaches
be tempted by the blank
before the horizon,
and bleach your hair
white. Bury something
in the sand.

Go inside garden sheds
and feel akin to their pregnancies.
Turn over dead snail shells
in hope of a snail.

Always: beware of ovens.

And write home to your mother,
intimidating one speck
of what you know.

quotidian orient

disappearing-reappearing lions
accommodate desire
with periodicity
like waves reconfiguring the landscape.
a giant owl asks for an explanation
but it is out of focus.
we cannot ruin this:
the geology is no longer on the coast
but elsewhere.

the charisma is no longer up our sleeves
but in pixels
like isolated soccer players.

the goalie is sinking into the field.

a latent hope
for Kellogg's Cornflakes:
even the most well-simulated enthusiasm
[a falsified feathery thumbs-up]
will never return them from the soggy swamps of error
to their former crunchy status.
also: the milk is curdled and henceforth
undrinkable.

my bow is strung with cancer and solar-flares.
broken arrows leak pastel androgyny
like splintering dinosaur bones
filling my quiver with quasi-misanthropy.

using duct-tape
and the fury of insignificance
you could fix my weaponry.
please...

i shall take aim
during a simultaneous-orgasm
indicated by
the golden-raisins of a happy melody
issued forth from you
in ultra-violet tergiversations.

the forbidding rooster
getting greener still in the collective-unconsciousness
clearing his throat just before
the dawn-prevented
will admit of my repaired arrow
duct-taped
fail-safe
and
fool-proof.

proof of this passionate and forever-unprocessable newness.

you saw my jewelry ooze and betray
the last bastion of my own narcissistic putrefaction.
in return
i hunted through the thesaurus
for a way to reject past vendettas.

our anachronistic love-making manual
contains no instructions

on how to lock talons in a mortal nosedive
of consistent intensity
and long duration.

or should we rotate at various speeds?

a series of grizzly comical murders
in the new england hamlet
of our future
reveals a mutual lycanthropic proclivity
for dirt and dirt-bikes
amidst the minimum wage.
this long-distance star of david
will pelastrate itself
thereby decapitating us
[werewolves in love
now immortalized in abstract art
that tests the boundaries of beauty
like the velociraptors]
before i can tear out the interloper's larynx
with my psychedelic teeth
growling about soccer all the while.

put the honey on the gore
and spin your wheels
at the starting line
until the rubber burns upwards
in wisps of agita
or gentle lust.

robins circumambulate
the convex jungle-gym

unfurling snotrockets and wizardry
at random trajectories.

hell is chaos.

out of sheer ennui
the topography achieves lucidity
and begins to wheeze
with intelligence.

my wife with a nape like a lamborghini.

alphabetizing two

i struggle with these cuffs
(twenty-six)&(numbering)
looped to dot my i's.
a pull-to-pinch and ink
them dry: erase the ache
in lead. by the wrist-white
noise, it hurts my eyes
more than metered rhyme
i wish to come unclasped
in a syllable vowelled by you.

Isolationism

Day one of the winter of my discontent, though the Chinese zodiac smiles on my 23rd year. What does the sheep know other than to hate the ox? No more Chinese buffets, please make them stop. Do you think they all know kung-fu? The wisdom of the orient, which gave the world gunpowder, reduced to a stale victual.

End

Soon, like France, I too shall have the face
I deserve. Until then, I watch snow flakes
like ash fall on singes, like cinders, they fall on fur.

Burnt, I offer that the smell of cooking
is in the parlor, the jug or devil's
uncorked, cast and struck, he knits his weepy
spider's trinkets into button-eyed dollies.

I am so very tired of bread. Homewards
the streets are geometrical, their
orange yellow trapezoids thwart seas 'neath a
pursed sky where the spleen needs naught.

You silly goose, see how the swan's king descends
waving twice under thrown pelts, his heart's core
thrice cleaved. Systems of angels seem to rise
greeting his sleigh, Hephæstian in mood.

Yet, there are your special abductions
gyrating while you cozy up to pests
with success. Diseased, now you signal in
your acanthus, and I beckon from my
acacia. We two invertebrate
windflowers, anemones warmly waving
and rubbing under our four dumb lashed posts.

On Marksmanship

One day my wife was no longer around and in her place was a letter--signed, the fact is--by her own hand. I had been shaving, which made me feel tricked. But that it was no more than a day I know to be lucky. It is very possible that for someone else it would have been many days. You see, I was not left with anything to resume. Rather, I was shaving, and though it felt like a trick, when I had finished and found my letter on the bed, the picking it up, the opening it, was not unnatural. Later, that I dressed and did what I had to with the car, made me think poorly of her. It was difficult imagining what she had been like to talk to even the night before. Her family presented itself more clearly in my mind. She had grown up with a stable companion; that is, he was always there. And it was then I realized how much like a child she seemed to me. For example, her escape was not something I saw. It did not figure into my thoughts that she might have left in her car.

Were there written demands . . . ? Ah, but you see I was shaving. Perhaps you are bearded or youthful and do not understand what I mean to say. There is, in the leading of the blade, an utter disregard for countenances, for pretense. I imagine this has existed in many times--not just my own. Montaigne is pictured with a few days' stubble and suddenly we arrive at meaning. She lied, you know, which is really too often tossed aside. It cannot be so treated. She lied, it seems. Again I must return to her dear family. In her mother you will find no less of a bitch than in some tired store. The woman sleepwalked as a bitch I tell you. Her stable companion was so pubescent in every faculty and walked really

as if he were being dragged around by our invisible hands. I have been reminded that he went by Walter. “Not of the family and lives next door,” her mother frequently offered as way of introduction, but this was only to allow for the tender foreplay discovered first behind a large plant. Of course, I am elsewhere essaying for the point where encouraged outdoor games became as he and my wife would have it. How many times I scoff at large plants and really must avoid wooded areas altogether. Ah, I am not your blackberry picker! Ah, I am nothing of the sort. And it is not pathos I am after but God help me if I do not have haunting dreams. She is lying in a tub, done up as some mountebank, and I enter and cannot see a thing save our aforementioned large plant; and, in fact, my only awareness of setting and dress comes from her very words--she who calls shrilly, “I am in tub, I am in a tub, I am dressed as a mountebank. . . .” Be it far from me to question what I cannot see, and she continues, “I’m losing pints of blood. It’s really all over the floor and the tub. It’s all over the tub, I’m losing pints of blood, it’s all there. . . . Really it’s all there. I’m losing just pints of blood and we’ve been told you have pints of blood--so and so many pints--and it’s not to lose, see? No, it’s certainly being lost. Really being lost all over the tub. . . .”

And me, really just nonplussed, “Pints? What pints? Pints? What? Where pints? Pints where? No. No. No, these are no pints. These are no pints. Where pints?”

“If you won’t believe me, I very well won’t have much to say after you. I’m telling you something and if you won’t believe me. . . .”

“It isn’t that I don’t believe you. No. No, it isn’t that at all. . . .”

Walter you whore you rogue. Ah, you’ve made a sorry black-

berry picker of me.

Here on trial, judicious ladies, stands Walter he calls himself. Oh I am just making pansies of you. Of course his fate is sealed, ladies, do not trouble yourselves. I would ask you instead to commemorate your own lives and the inevitable wronging that has left marks.

It seems I have run out of things to say.

I am forever looking out windows when I shave. Yes, so another trick of shaving, beards, is that one must always feel as if he is astride some magnificent sea. Being so, how do you hear even your love disappear into a letter? Oh, I was tricked. Oh I waited around the side of the bed and by the cabinets.

A further reason for the questioning of my wife: the letter she became is really devoid of any notable contents. I will tell you that it makes me out to be something of a sweetheart. This is a lie. I am totally enamored with piano music. . . . I, myself, don't play, however. Dear, where are you? Where are you. Don't be such a childless bitch where are you. You tricked me you see. I was shaving and you knew and tricked me. Now I am speaking deliberately. You tricked me, dear. It is like each conversation we have ever had is a total mess. Your stable companion. One broods, crosses oceans, recrosses, marries out of the deepest love. What am I incapable of playing the roles to a tee. I have never told you but the first meeting of you and I was, appropriately, a matter for the physicians; that is to say that you entered the wrong office. I was up on the table in my shorts and you opened the door. There is no reason you would remember because this was several years before we began dating. I did not want to tell you because I did not want the doctors to have any place in our relationship. You, of course, have made that impossible.

It was not unnatural to see you become a letter. Maybe something is wrong with me. And every time I shave you are lacking from me. I am disparaging of you. If I were to say it I would say, dear, I disparage you. You are such a child. And every time I shave I lack you. It is difficult imagining you. It is rather like imagining ancestors. You see, it is impossible to know how they walked. How it looks when you enter a garage. Oh my heart this is an episode. Oh. I can't believe you you're such a childless bitch. I know your family so well right now. Hang the drapes open the drapes. Hang them open them they are right above the sofa.

I like to think of you learning to write. Just starting to take down letters, I mean. That is a very formative age. I imagine you were a wonderful speller because you could always spell nicely. My wife, you see, spells nicely. Let us love our wives for they spell so nicely!

I have said I am unlike other men. My wife, it seems, took off in her car. This was a car I had bought for her.

A Manhattan Skyscraper

I own a Manhattan skyscraper
to be alone with you.

I tell people I have no room
for anyone else.

The strict security
keeps away trespassers.

I offer the doorman
a generous tip about women.

I need only to pay a high price
to be with you.

Four Poems

the man who sells me
fruit from his stand is
either a very pensive man
or a little slow just
now on the sidewalk I

found a tiny egg cracked
open on one side its
shell is speckled like oatmeal
I'll have to look up
what bird might have laid

it inside there's a moist
pink indistinctness with a black
spot I assume would've become
the eye also there's a
little yolk left not much

newer sore spots blossomed open
in the dam overnight full
wheelbarrows were brought we spent
all night and into the
morning trying to lick the

wounds closed my late grandmother
sat on top of the
dam it would've been unsafe
for a person but she'd
come back as a goldfinch

and vocalized for a while
by ten in the morning
the sun wasn't out yet
the dam gave way we
let it go what else

a maniac is what drives
the bus I am alone
on the bus there are
twenty odd other people when
I was trying to count

just now we were at
a stop and some got
off and some got on
I lost track and not
going to start over the

maniac lobs syllables backwards at
us and jerks forward and
stops at stop lights I
wonder if all my currently
living grandparents are still alive

in the book of Ezekiel
a firetruck goes screaming down
Mass Ave and Ezekiel sees
the ladder it carries on
top of itself and writes

it's a beast that carries
its backbone on its back
and then he describes the
legs of the beast as
wheels that revolve but somehow

not within other wheels for
once and as you'd expect
if you know his style
he feels the heavy hand
of the Lord upon him

Three Erogenous Zones Often Neglected in Cosmo Articles

The aromatic shadowed glade, patient behind your ear,
perfumed dark wet hairs swaying and waving,
eager to be lifted together like choir voices.

Your stomach, the exact curve of a smiled yes,
first contracts, tight as a remembered regret,
and then swells out like the Atlantic beneath light sailboats.

Your pony tail, supple and restless:
when, on all fours, you sway left, then right,
balanced and open as a hibachi eager for the steak.

In Berkeley

1. At the farmer's market.

No way Jose! Hands off
my peach. Why don't you
get a job and a bushy beard
and while you're at it
take up eco-adventuring.
Don't you walk a--what's
that, young man? You enjoy
saltwater, fresh air, self-powered
transportation? My husband might
have just the gig for a young
Casa--no, honey, we're not such
old salts as you. Met trout fishing
in America--for a young Casanova
like yourself--as champagneuse on moonlight
kayak transbay paddles to that cool, grey
city of love across the--hey get back here!

2. The chase.

Stop that peach! But
foxes' weddings
stand no chance of:

travel writing, or
cinematic form.
Where's my violin?

Acts Two/One
sax a ma
phone the draft

board, chief here needs to hold his horses, and circling
the wagons, competing incense vendors united cheer the
boy's escape.

3. They colored the radiation but that only lets you
know which kind kills you, or, To the bottom of the
ocean.

Welcome home,
Mr. Peachy.
Delivery
day today.

Five years
shark baiter
internment on the
cable-stay.

Brothel, A Sestina

Clients are told to enjoy the night
but she says, "Hurry up please it's time."
"We've got five minutes," he tells her,
flinging layers of cumbersome dress
out of a tightly clenched hand.
Her eyes open slightly more wide.

It becomes habit to open legs wide
as men venture, throughout the night,
ignoring a fed-up gesture of hand.
Small spurts help tell the time.
"Prettiness is good, but mind your dress,"
Madame has daily advice for her.

After a man is done, another awaits her;
open and close, over and over, wide.
She must listen to each clumsy man's address
of supposedly passionate love in the night.
Next door, Madame argues about the time.
The profession requires a few skills of hand.

He must ask if he can use his hand;
having to fake pleasure costs her
energy, but helps pass the allotted time.
Before they start, she makes sure the wide
window is covered from voyeurs in the night.
Her pink attire changes to gray dress.

When she was small, her mother would dress

her in yellow and squeeze her hand
before the walk to school. Night
was filled with sounds of her
mother's piano playing, the door open wide
so she could hear mother say, "Bed time."

"Hurry up please its time."
Her mother often helped change her dress
into a linen nightgown with wide
collar and lace cuffs near the hand.
And watched her splash water on her
face, then making sure she slept the night.

She sees how time has played a hand
in changing her necessary dress while her
mind's wide eye watches her work at night.

Migrations

"Look at Mother Nature on the run in the twenty-first century."

I. *Flight*

G-- closed her legs and broke off the vines that wrapped around her thighs and unwound from that divine cave. She sat up in the middle of the tall grass, brushed ants away from her nostrils and reached for two mismatched socks draped over a shabby suitcase. G-- had been tipped off by a little birdie that He was out to find her again. He who had so unceremoniously had his way with her. While pulling on a shirt and wiggling her left foot inside a shoe she yelled, "April!" and, "August!" reining in her five daughters so adorably named after the warmer months. Squatting, G-- held each child in front of her and said, "In you go, honey." With that she kissed the head of each, spreading her lips wider and wider, sliding down their hair, painlessly gulping and swallowing each month until they were no more. She slid into her remaining clothes, tossed some things into the shabby suitcase and was gone.

II. *Audubon is Dead*

Rolling over just slightly, John James Audubon uttered to his servant, "I've always loved the smell of your nectar, but I can't stand your recipe for paint thinner." With that he let out a slight cough and closed his eyes. He seemed to fade into that moment. His hair got a little bit shorter. And his bed clothes became three sizes too big. From underneath his

blanket came a peck and a flush. A feather or two blew around his pillow. A yellowness the color of a robin's beak poked out of the slits of his closed eyes. A trio of thrushes popped out of his sleeves. Skipped about on his chest. Inspected each other. And like his soul departing heavenwards, they promptly flew out the window with the fumes of nectar and paint thinner.

The wood-thrush flew to New Orleans and led a happy life of beignets and spice. She spent her nights singing to Louis. And she spent her days diving into the ground, planting living trees that throbbed and bulged like young men prowling the French Quarter.

The veery flew to Hogsville, a town permanently rendered hard of smelling by the offal that slid about of its own accord; attacking nostrils, fogging eyes, and greasing skin. She taught them about herself, about the wren, about the meadowlark, about the sparrow, and even about the crow. Soon, the only use for unwanted meat was atop twenty-foot poles to feed the vultures. She taught them something about the right way to be thoughtful. And so the town was no longer called Hogsville, and this made the people very happy indeed.

The redstart meant to fly to France. There she would burn up, disintegrate, disincorporate, explode. Her ashes would be scattered into the air, seeding clouds with a new generation of thrushes, to scatter themselves elsewhere and elsewhere. But a week after she got there she decided to leave for parts unknown. It seems that thrushes can never go home again. Some say she flew to Haiti, to visit graves of the dead and build houses for the living. Some say to Greenland. But oth-

ers think she's still flying around, just looking for the right spot to fulfill her life, to beget the future and the changes that must come. France wasn't quite right. Neither was Jerusalem. Something tells me it might be in the middle of nowhere, behind the smoke.

III. *To a Time When "Force of Human" is But an Expression*

Wanted: 3 bedroom house for single mother and 5 children. Must have good sunlight for indoor plants, ample space for gardens, and plenty of trees. Bird baths or small ponds for several thousand birds (various thrushes) preferred, but not required. Neighbors must not mind bird singing, and will actively be invited to listen to and discuss said singing. Flat roof for green roof highly preferred. All interested sellers please note: looking for non-conditional sale. Advances, come-ons, marriage proposals, and attempted rapes by seller highly discouraged.

Interested in purchase for permanent residence.
Ready to move in immediately.

I have yet to build this house

After he had laid siege to Amathus, the villagers severed the
head of Onesilus
and with it decorated their gate. A swarm of bees settled into
the light hollow
of the invader's skull and built a honeycomb where the throat
had been.

This morning, two bees are dying on the window ledge. The
sky is haze,
too wide for winter, as if there were missing seasons appearing
now. It is not
a climate for speaking. The snow is making its own city out of
roofs alone.

She is Gone

She is gone
She got an old dog
She jogs in a dense fog;
She and he go to golf at nine;
He is a hand in a rig in the north;

He is to go;
She is at an inn;
He goes to ski at one;
He is also to sign the log;
He left the log on the old desk;

Jan is to sign
Karl is at the lake
Lena is to send the disk
Lars is to jog to the old inn
Hanna took the girls to a ski lake
Hal is to take the old list to his desk
Lana is to take the jar to the store at nine

If he is
As if she is
He had a fir desk
She has a red jell jar
He has had a lead all fall
She asked if he reads fall ads
She said she reads all ads she sees
His dad has sales leads as he said

Guess Who

It's lunch time, so I go for a walk
Out among the menstrual hugs

As for the burning question of injuries on playdates,
I am able to conquer my timidity

As often as the reporters reach
For their current

I am drifting off into a land of electric shocks
Coming from blue jeans

Ablative case coming in handy about now
Awareness is the pain after which I am born

I like it there but hate the commute
And am able to conquer my cupidity

A great chain of ability stretching back to a chimp
Desire, sizzle me immediately,

I am a kid for special effects
And the steadfast refusal to explain

Postscript

The landscape here is a frisbee wobbling to the side.
You can tell when it's day by the light and the noise;
At night sound takes up space in your attention.

Some people use their attention as a storage space.
I'm on vacation when I put myself any place, the radio on,
The band disqualified for using the same rhyme twice.

Some places feel like money in sunlight and in shade.
The children practicing penalty kicks speak many languages;
A fat tan man watches smiling from the dunes.

The highway is actually a two-lane road through town.
Subscribers can watch a channel that shows traffic on it
At any hour of the day; night vision shows slightly fewer streaks.

In the middle of the night, a produce truck hits the dip
In the road a hundred yards toward town. Sprinklers
Come on at the volume of a whisper, then blast out

At the pitch of defensive geese. There is a horse barn
Just beyond the arborvitae that ought to stink
Like a cattlemart, but does not. Airplanes about to descend

After returning from Europe pass over pools,
Some lit, most just dotting the full moon for an instant.
Nobody thinks in terms of baseball trivia here.

During the week the beaches are empty and the shops are full.

In the middle of the day it is a pleasure to drive
Under the branches of deciduous trees moving not so much.

The sullenness of the retail class is general and persistent.
The shoppers hold their tension high in their chests,
Staring out at the light during the entire transaction.

Some of the produce is trucked in from a great distance;
Why choose it? Local farms yield vegetables with flavor.
It's like veal, though; can't ask too many questions.

Putting yourself in this place with enough cash is to assure
A well-being the which it is to cry we've accepted or decided
Has to be scarce, inherited, or striven for against all sense.

Music, math, television, sleep, the hubbub of words
Anything at all to make this present moment retain
Against the piling up on all sides of history and what will come.

*

Many of these people spend their money to wrest power from
others in the same condition of wealth.

Through the hedge you can hear them make muffled grunts.

They sound very much like you and me.

Something in them has broken (or healed) leaving them inca-
pable of avoiding being well-to-do.

Call it "the tax laws."

I don't actually know what you sound like. Come, talk to me,
and I will learn.

If not learn, at least I'll have heard.

The afternoon sparkles out on the ocean side; the water to the
north makes it possible to kayak.

The time for confusion about what to do is always open; the
battle itself keeps hours by appointment.

It is not possible to admire as a perfect specimen anyone who
would lead people.

It may be possible not to loathe everything a leader says,
although it may take another lifetime for this to come to pass.

If you are invited to be well for a while, accept.

CONTRIBUTORS

NICHOLAS BREDIE is related to infamous pirates from large tropical aesthetatorships.

JUNG MIN CHO thinks Sappho is lovely!

MARK CLEMENTS is from the state where Hemmingway chose to punctuate his infamy.

JORDAN DAVIS' first book is *Million Poems Journal* and has a Million Poems show Wednesdays at the Bowery Poetry Club. He is an editor of The Hat, and a contributor to the Village Voice and ConstantCritic.com.

SETH FRAGOMEN writes poetry because it is fun.

KEN HABARTA found this poem on the ground near a vocational school. It was typed on pumpkin-colored paper. Please note that "Lawrence Lewis" is the author. If you wish to credit him with the find that's fine.

BRIANNA HAILEY bides her time in Morningside Heights learning how to live. What to do.

SASKIA HAMILTON teaches poetry at Barnard. She is working on her second book, as well as a forthcoming collection of Robert Lowell's letters.

NICHOLAS PHOTOSYNTHESIS KASS is a sculptor with a degree in philosophy. He is the reincarnation of an electric eel and is skilled in: violence, imagination, and rock and roll. His favorite poet is Tristan Tzara.

JESS KEYSER-FJELD has gotten lazy of late. So lazy, in fact, that these days she writes most of her poems while soundly asleep.

KASIA KOZANECKA is out to discredit one woman's theory that "holding hands doesn't work because there are other people in the world." Her sword is her pen; her steed is her bicycle.

CAROLINE LEE is a recent graduate from Columbia College. She'd like to thank Tami, Victoria and Jessamy.

JANET LEE is a third-year English student exiled in Cambridge for the year and currently at war with her Muse.

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ADRIANNA GARRIGA LÓPEZ was born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico. she is currently a Ph.D. student in Cultural Anthropology at Columbia University in New York.

MAX NORTON went to high school with several current members of the Berkeley College Republicans.

MIKE NOBLE is Dead
Python, his online codeword --
sexy, sexy death.

GILLIAN OSBORNE has several friends exiled in England this year, pretending to be someone or another.

KELLY PUIG is one of those strung-out on syllables, popping a vowel here and there. Like you. She came to in the weeds of some Louisiana swamp.

YVETTE SIEGERT is reading Herodotus again.

JOHANNA SMITH is a Columbia College sophomore. She likes antlers, coral, and fossils. She likes Atget, Escher and Gwen John. She summers in Paris.

STEPHEN SOSSAMAN teaches writing and literature at Westfield State College in Massachusetts. He authored *Writing Your First Play* (Pearson 2001) and three poetry chapbooks. He has contributed poetry and stories to Paris Review, Southern Humanities Review, and other literary journals.

MATTHEW SWOPE is a 3rd year General Studies student majoring in Visual Arts / Art History.

ABBY WALTHAUSEN would like to think that if her writing were a genre of music that genre would be synth-pop.

JON WOODWARD was born in 1978 in Wichita, Kansas. His first book of poems, *Mister Goodbye Easter Island*, was published in 2003 by Alice James Books. He lives in the Boston area.

TOMOKO YAGI is pursuing poetry here in NY from August 2004. A graduate from the College of William & Mary in Virginia, where I had spent my two most precious years of my life.

ALEX YOUNG is a poet who lives and works in Manhattan. He's been kicked out of Yogi's bar twice, but only once due to his role in a no-holds-barred argument about Matthew Barney.

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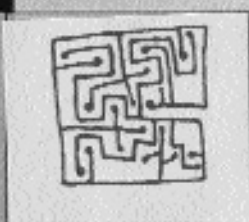
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