

QUEST

Poetry • Short Stories • Drama • Photography



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COLLEGE OF LIBERAL EDUCATION

No. 13
Fall 2010

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UNIVERSITY



"untitled" by PETER GOOD

QUEST

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AN EDITOR'S NOTE **MISSING MEANING**

What's missing? Because a quest implies that something or someone is missing, I wonder why it is that we so often turn to literature and the visual arts to supply missing meaning. In that shared space, our quest often ends with an "Ah-ha!"

This issue again features work by Lynn students keeping good company with talented writers from the U.S. and abroad. Shawna Mann, Will Garcia, and Marceline Fleurilus, founding members of our new Creative Writing Club, find themselves sharing space with distinguished writers like poet, essayist, and natural healer Adrian Castro from the Republic of Miami; Boston's B.Z. Niditch, whose work has appeared worldwide in distinguished publications; Oma-

ha's Fredrick Zydek, who has more than 800 publishing credits in esteemed publications like *Poetry*, *The Antioch Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*; William Beyer, who writes for the *Chicago Daily News* and whose poems have appeared in *The New York Times* and many other prestigious publications; poet Gary Silva, longtime Bay Area resident and professor, who recently served as Poet Laureate of Napa County; Bay Area Professor Daniel J. Langton, whose poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *Ploughshares*; Pushcart Prize nominee T. Anders Carson; and a quest answered from London's Ivor Treby.

In addition, Ellen Stern's photography students at Lynn have contributed some mighty work, most notably Mallory Kessler's photo that accompanies her stunning short-short story, "The Man with the Old Chain." Last but not least, we have another one-act play from David Fleisher, Associate Professor at Lynn, who has just completed another theatrical summer in New York City.

That moment of insight, that surprise ending to our safari into sounds and sights, that's our quest. Because you've taken the time to read this far, I propose that you continue to turn these pages and perhaps enjoy moments of "Ah-ha!"

- John J. Daily



"paris" by L. KEITH

On the Road

J. E. BENNETT

A question unasked
occurs on the way

A raindrop falls:
a puddle results

I hold my breath
to hear a whisper

Far down the road
awaits my arrival

A circle in water
widens: no question

The road runs on
whether wet or dry

Yet it discloses
itself at the end

A question answers
itself: no question.

Light Down the Road

J. E. BENNETT

They walked side-by-side, man
And boy in gray murk, down the road,
The hills moving in blue effluence.

The boy asked: "How much farther?"
The man said: "Over the next hill."
The boy said: "It seems so far."

A little wind whispered:
"Just over the next hill."
Sighed: "Over the next hill."

A deep silence followed
Their echoing footfalls
As the wind died in the bare trees.

The gloaming embraced them,
And the road tapered to nothingness,
But for a little light down it.

Dusk on the Road

J. E. BENNETT

Another long day,
on the road, driving.

The light going fast,
I'm just a rhythm

of coming and going,
a sound of tire-whine.

Behind--a complex
of memories--I sigh.

But thought is a blank,
feeling for the moment.

A yawn, a sniff--
another hundred miles to go.

A little wind whistles
at the window, cracked--

the sound rankles--of you.
The dark seems to yaw.

I wonder what only
heart and groin seem to know.

In the north-bound lanes,
cold lights pass

and disappear behind me.
They also remind me of you.

Wrong Reflection

HENRY SOSNOWSKI

You can feel
the rush
down to
your toes
when the cop
in your rearview
hits the party lights
and your trunk
is loaded
with bad news.





"30 sec" by KYLE GLADNEY

The Night Heron

DON RUSS

Let's see, you said to yourself
and maybe to me. Any stars yet?
I stopped at the window as you
were turning away.

From the fourth floor landing
one sees at sunset Kiawah's treetops.
One sees some street lamps, a little
of the streets themselves.

Mostly one sees sky.
And then, like a slower under-
current of the purpling light, night
unfolds its long blue wing.

Lonely Is a Two-Sided Leaf

ADRIAN CASTRO

Adiè yé ogun adie pa ogun

Won ni adiè o pa omo rè

Adiè yé ogbòn adiè pa ogbòn

Won ni adiè ò pa omo rè

Won binù bi adiè tá

Won fi wówò rà awó

Awó yé eyin méfà ò pa okan shosho girògirò

Adifá fún Alùmó

Nbe ni so won ò ni kan shosho girògirò

Nje Alùmó bọ bi gere she o o o

The hen laid twenty eggs and hatched twenty

They said it was not enough children

The hen laid thirty eggs and hatched thirty

They said it was not enough children

So they decided to sell the hen

With the money from the hen they bought guinea fowl

Guinea fowl laid six eggs and hatched only one

These were the esoteric words told to Alùmó

When living amongst people yet lonely

So, look how the blessings of Alùmó spread

Not ten feet away from the Alùmò tree in my backyard in Miami, side by side to me stood a Yorùbá Babalawo by the name of Ifábukúnmi Adéwalé. I had gathered together a small group of Babalawo from the Miami area for an informal workshop on traditional Yorùbá herbal medicine to be led by this herbalist, university trained taxonomist, and Babalawo from Nigeria. For approximately four hours we discussed various uses (herbal medicine and spiritual medicine) of approximately a dozen plants in the environs of my backyard. Plants that have transmigrated at some point in evolutionary history through Africa, the Caribbean (namely Cuba), and Florida. Plants that presaged the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade, Cuban, and other Caribbean people's exodus to South Florida. The plants have been here waiting for us.

The majority of these Babalawo, Cuban or Cuban descent, spoke Spanish only, and our speaker spoke English and of course Yorùbá. It was my task to translate the complete discourse simultaneously among the rustle of the fall Miami breeze and the caress of leaves. Their connection to traditional Yorùbá herbal medicine and spiritual practice came by way of folk medicine from Cuba, or by a system of religious teachings much battered

by slavery and the trauma of time. I wanted not only to translate Ifábukunmi's knowledge, but also the essence of traditional Yorùbá medicine in an effort to perhaps reconnect with the past or span a bridge across the Atlantic and history. I also wanted to escort this small group of Babalawo, friends of mine, members of my community, at least to the edge of the Atlantic.

Ifábukúnmi began our discussion of Alùmò tree (called in the Caribbean, Caimito) with the above verse from the Ifá corpus. After chanting the verse to the accompaniment of a shekere (a beaded gourd used frequently in West African and Cuban music as a percussive instrument), he translated to English and I to Spanish the verse and narrative. (The above verse is word from word the Yorùbá, as it is not appropriate to alter a verse, unlike the narrative). I thought that by this mere act of translation we were already crossing so many paper borders, and building a bridge, a bridge that perhaps would lead to a huddle of students of Ifá/Babalawo somewhere in the midst of the middle passage. Perhaps even compare and rescue the knowledge and wisdom and practices our own ancestors brought over and whispered to their communities in the new world. Rescue what died in a secret whimper in slave barracks, in poverty, in abuse. Perhaps an ambitious task, but nonetheless for our well-being.

*

Alùmò was an orphaned servant in the house of a wealthy landowner. He was in fact taken in by the mercy of the Onilé, the landlord and his wife. However, this mercy did not prevent Alùmò from being treated despotically by fellow servants, most of whom were his senior. Alùmò was usually the first to rise and last to sleep. He was made to do the most challenging of chores and rarely remunerated. After years of this toil, he became a long and lanky young man, reticent and frequently seen with his head hung low.

They said it was five or six years later, but one day the landown-

ers both woke dead. Since they had no heirs (their only son had died in a farming accident years ago), there was a palpable paranoia among the servants. There was much suspicion among the folk. Was it bad medicine? Was it an attack by spirits that people these parts? Were these spirits sent? And who would do such a thing? Soon the servants and other house employees began clamoring for the rights to parcels of land. Some took what was the dead man's. (A dead man's property belongs to his family, or to whom he decides, or the earth itself). By the time everyone divided the loot, the only thing left for Alùmò was one fruit. Bitterly he walked by a river eating his inheritance, pondering his wretched existence. As he was sucking the remnants of the pulp from the seeds, he came across a stranger who had just washed his head on the river bank with a handful of herbs that made his head beam like brass. This stranger, seeing the solemn look on Alùmò's face, introduced himself as a Babalawo. Alùmò quickly and wisely asked for divination, albeit not even able to afford the consultation. The Babalawo graciously allowed to be paid in seeds of the fruit Alùmò was eating. After casting the òpèlè or divining chain, the priest told Alùmò he was destined to be a wealthy man as well as the progenitor of a large family. He was destined to be surrounded by people even till his death bed. His name would someday be synonymous with well-being. At this point nothing could be more unfathomable to Alùmò. The priest gave ritual instructions and a burnt charcoal-like powder to be used. He returned one seed to Alùmò and kept another. The Babalawo instructed him to plant this one seed by the river near the homestead.

Alùmò stayed on as a servant to other servants, working small parcels of land for mere food. One day, they say five or six years later, he walked by the river where he had planted the seed. There to his surprise was a tree pregnant with ripening fruit. He quickly gathered the fallen fruit as well as the reachable ones. By the next market day Alùmò arrived early to sell his coveted fruits. He quickly sold out, as his tree was the only one

bearing fruit at that time. He continued in this manner until the tree was bare, at which time the other trees began to sprout. The other former servants, now struggling to reap from their usurped lands, in an overambitious move all decided to climb their trees to pick them bare. As if by a curse, or bad medicine, one by one they began to plummet from treetops. Whole families crashed in their overzealous drive to pick the sweet fruit before its time.

Alùmò arrived to witness the carnage. Was it bad medicine? Was it an attack by spirits that people these parts? Were these spirits sent? And who would do such a thing? Judging from the unripened fruit littered like bodies, he surmised they all had fallen from the treetops. He decided to get help from the neighboring farm to bury the bodies. He even paid for food and drinks and mats to wrap the bodies out of the proceeds from his own sales. There was no one now to claim the property. Alùmò wisely waited for the remaining fruits to fall. He sold them steadily at the market. Steadily he became a wealthy man. Steadily he found a wife. Steadily they had children, even twins. Steadily his children also had children. Steadily he built houses for his extended family along the edge of the farm. He received the nickname Òsàn (well-being, betterment) from his frequent answer on how he became rich: Òsàn agbalùmò, or Well-being is what carries Alùmò. Since then also, Babalawo used the seed from the Alùmò tree as a symbol of general well-being during the divination process.

*

There are perhaps countless stories within the Ifá literary corpus that address ambition and isolation. Some make moral, ethical, and cultural judgments on this state. But here we have one myth utilizing the anthropomorphized metaphor of a tree, in particular, the alùmò tree (*Chrysophyllum albidum*). Robust, sweetly fruitful, crusty, large, tree with two-colored, almost iridescent leaves. I say two-colored – one side rust/brown, the other silvery green. The fruit – depending on your sentiments toward it, how you caress it in the pruning process – can be juicy, pulpy, or sweet lemon-sized.

They are born housing many brown, inch-long, flat, oval-shaped seeds. It is a crowded home. The seeds themselves are never alone.

In traditional Yorùbá society, as with most agrarian societies, community is existence. Your community defines who you are, what you become, and even your eventual death. Individuals exist because of their community, because of and for their connection to other people. To the degree they contribute to the community, they are uplifted, promoted (as in chieftaincy titles, etc.). In traditional Yorùbá society, and even to a large extent today, families gather together in compounds. These are large areas of several apartments, houses, and other architectural structures where extended members of a family, or even entire clans, educate, cook, eat, procreate, argue, settle disputes, celebrate, worship, lament, console, die, and even are reborn. Indeed, so much of traditional Yorùbá religion, the Òrìshà religion, is very much communal. Due to the communal nature sewn into the beliefs, it is very difficult to subsist and find fulfillment in such a religion while maintaining yourself completely isolated.

Alùmò is a character who embodies so many moral and ethical qualities emphasized by traditional Yorùbá culture – community, generosity, lack of avarice (avarice and over ambition caused the deaths of the same usurpers of the land), hard work, persistence, abundance, wealth (material, familial, or spiritual). Indeed, he becomes the embodiment of well-being because he no longer is alone in the world. And of course, he no longer is alone because he was able to afford a wife, children, and the subsequent appendages. By implication, if so many are dependent on him, he must be a generous man. This generosity in turn manifests itself in more riches.

Also what makes Alùmò even more heroic is that the same generosity was never afforded to him. He overcame the trauma of loneliness, abandonment, poverty, and abuse to become an exemplary man. Through this myth Ifá gives practical advice and hope to anyone wading through similar difficulties. Ifá ni Je be.



"tree" by C. PHILLIPS

Winterizing

DON RUSS

What the Ground Squirrel Doesn't Sing as He Falls Asleep

Icy sparks, star-seeds shaken free
and drifting, and then the flakes themselves,
ashy-fat and slow: my afternoon, the universe –
it's all one truth. It has to be.

Dead alive or just dead, I know
no shifting underfoot, no confusion in the spilling
of the sky. If once it seemed I did, it must
have been some narrowness in me.

Freezing is in the fire, night combusts
in suns. From the ground I sing again.

Ice Fishing

B. Z. NIDITCH

It's morning
by the Atlantic seabed
beneath an opening eye
of fog, sand, weeds,
facing a coast
deserted by time.

You catch yourself
in a wreath of excuses
for being here
like gulls
on the deepest shore,
desiring a repast
by shoals and shells.

Hungry plovers
glide by
with a string of alibis
near the incoming waves,
you hand over bread
and a circling rusty hook
on the ocean's floor.

Casting in the Light

MICHAEL S. MORRIS

He was a painting –
that old fisherman,
knee deep in the spring
runoff, hooked flies
banding his ancient furred
cap. His back to the sun;
he is a big man who
has slowly lumbered into
the rushing waters, slogging
towards this destination and
then ambling in the current,
working his way down stream.
He had a way of releasing his fly,
plying out the line in secret
flingings that he'd long ago learned
helped present the fly as a naked
delicacy... He wore rubber waders,
pockets full of string, knife,
and line and two candy bars which
he succored pool to pool. He took
with him a lifetime as he wandered
downstream. The grace of an old
choreograph, a compilation of notes
and movements within him. Of course,
the passing sun of thoughts alternately
lit and darkened, the passing clouds
of thoughts on his face, seeing
each cast carried away on wings
floating down distant years and
and then reeled back, flung out again

Witch

JOAN COLBY

Leggy, incorrigible from the outset
Whaling on her patient dam
Or sucking noisily. She cracked
Your sternum when you were
Tailing her as I drew blood.

Striking or wheeling for a kick
Rearing when the buyer came to look.
Breaking her, Pedro said she'll win
With this temper. That name.

When she hit the track
The trainer shook his head. "She
Clears the shedrow when she comes down
The aisle." Shaking her nose chain
Like a castanet.

Bullet works in the morning
That secular time when ecstasy
Did not roll her eyes.

Her first start she flew so wide
She ran a mile or more in six furlongs.
The railbirds shrank into the stands
Making a cross by her number.

Impertinent but cunning when she kindly took
Sugar from our hands, we locked on hope
Dashed in the afternoon
When the church of spectators prayed
And shouted in tongues over their tickets
And she went mad.

The music in her head
Clamoured for her to dance
To dwell or prop or buck
Whatever a sorceress wants.

A bolter the stewards said.
Irrascible in the gate
A danger on the track. Maenad I birthed
That Easter morning. Ruled off.
My dark and lovely
Filly with a snip.

The Cost of Living

JOAN COLBY

Born with spoons, silver or base
We suck their stems
Fluttering our fingers like green paper.

Obsessed with multiplication tables,
Flat stones graven with undeniable laws.

We were never innocent
Of hoarding, swapping or seeking
Buried treasure. Of gambling that optimism,
Of saving, that absolution.

The price of everything increases with time.
A runaway inflation whose logo is skull and bones
Whose pricetag is pasted over
Beneath a patina of want.

Just a Couple of Minor Points

CHRIS VOLKAY

“WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO
BE SELF-EVIDENT, THAT ALL
MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.”

And the law professors swoon,
the politicians, like Miss Scarlett,
get the vapors, and the public wets
their pants.

Well, just a couple of minor points:

There are no such things as
self-evident truths.

What we have are biased opinions
that we choose to believe,
so we dress them up in
snazzy top hats and tails
that Fred Astaire would be
proud to shimmy in.

But nothing is self-evident.
Just ask Hitler what was
self-evident to him.

Mao?

Stalin?

Manson?

People are not and never
have been created. We just sorta
dribbled up from the ground
like a big heapin' helpin'

o bubblin' crude.

None of us are equal.
As products of evolution
we all are endowed with divergent
physical characteristics,
cognitive abilities,
intelligence. In fact,
we are as different
as our fingerprints themselves.
Barreling grooves on bullets,
snowflakes, diamonds,
never to be duplicated again.

But other than that, a fine example
of the unparalleled genius
of our forefathers.

Bob or Bill or Dave

HOLLY DAY

The strange man at the park
has built himself an army
of gourds and pumpkins
and a very regal-looking squash.

He has drawn faces on each
with a Sharpie pen, because only that type of pen
will glide smooth enough
over the placid, waxy surfaces.

He sits in the park
surrounded by the globular faces
all grimacing with missing teeth
vampire fangs, harelips
himself the lone toothpaste-worthy smile.
I wonder what his name is.

What We Were Before We Got Here

FREDRICK ZYDEK

We were born of some urge that knows nothing about working for a living or learning to clean house. I have seen this same urge fill the space between bumble bees and hummingbirds when they approach our stands of iris and tiger lilies.

You can see it in the photographs the Hubble Space Observatory sent back to Earth the day it caught the universe creating new suns. If you look carefully, it is in every lifted torch as well. The urge thinks it is living for itself and does not

know it isn't much more than the breathless sting that flashes through telephone wires and cable lines carrying a mega second of *Gone With the Wind*. The urge lives for itself, tastes things with its own tongue and burrows into places certain

gods will not go. It is convinced it can make its peace with any bone-crusher it meets and has yet to learn that left to its own devices, it is barren as a stone which can never understand the way in which summer is not the most adult of reasons.

A Different Man

WILL GARCIA

“And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
Thine individual being, shalt thou go
To mix forever with the elements.”
- William Cullen Bryant, “Thanatopsis”

I. “I think I believe in God...”

“I think I believe in God....” John Wakeman said out of nowhere.

“John, religion is the opiate of the masses maaaaan,” complained Dave the Pothead.

“I know, but there is a God. I know there is, like an energy that flows through everyone and everything; we are all one, all that stuff.”

“I see what you're saying, but what about the baby problem?” condescended Allen the Intellectual.

“The baby?”

“Yes, the baby in the burning house. Let's say there is a baby in a burning house, one born to two loving parents, one that has done nothing wrong, an innocent, and it is burned to death. How could there be a God that allows that to happen?” said Allen the Self-Satisfied Prick.

“No, Allen, you're missing my point. I'm not talking about that Idea of God, a loving caring man up in the sky that intervenes directly, I am talking about GOD, the infinite, one that knows neither time nor space, the spirit of the universe, the unexplainable. I think I should tap into it. Be like a Monk or something. I don't think I'm satisfied with my life,” realized John.

“So you're talking some new age transcendental type of thing?”

“Oh, Transcendental! I know that word.”

Allen and John looked disapprovingly at Dave the Pothead.

“No, this is as old as time itself. Like ninjas...”

“Ninjas? This is your rebuttal?” said Allen, the Smug Son-of-a-Bitch.

“Well, if you listened instead of talked, I could tell you my point with the ninjas...Ninjas are able to do things we could not do. They can make themselves invisible; they can be light as a feather; you know, stand on swords and stuff.”

“So?”

“Soooo, I believe that if I go through some sort of period or vow or whatever of serious meditation and physical training, I can achieve superhuman abilities and some sort of spiritual oneness. I've read about these guys, man. And that's what I am going to do. Tap into the infinite.”

“Bro, so lame, what are you saying, you're going to start going to church or something?” Dave the Stoner said, half-asleep.

“Well,” John said sadly, “I don't expect you to understand.”

II. The Transformation

John woke up the next day with an energy he had never felt before. He was light, he was clean, he felt. It was as if he had been in a blackout the past months of his life, spending time in class and partying; it was so.....trivial. He had a new mission; he was going to become one with the earth, he was going to be a completely spiritual entity. He flew to the library and got every book on everything: *Metaphysics* by Aristotle, *Nature* by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. He got books on meditating, particle physics and the occult. He got books on Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Jainism, Sufism, Empiricism, Eternalism, Parallelism and Hedonism. He was going to approach it from all angles, a blitzkrieg of patience and listening. Years of practice and discipline he

was going to achieve in mere weeks. He was endowed with a white light, he was ready: there had been others before him, Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad. Why not him? He thought. Those first days in the library, studying, listening to the energy around the room, seeing in shapes and colors...he was slipping away.

“John, John, JOHN,” cried Becky, his spiritually bankrupt human girlfriend.

He looked up from his stack of books and his mess of rice bowls and pomegranate pits.

“Yes?” he replied calmly.

“Look, I don’t expect you to get up from your disgusting mess, but your fucking Mom called me and she was like totally pissed. You can’t just stop doing everything and read all day. I was at Chris’s house last night and Jessica was like ‘Where’s John’ and I was like ‘I don’t know, he’s fucking reading or something, he’s being totally weird,’ and she was like ‘Yeah, totally weird’ and I was like ‘....’”

“Becky?” he stopped her.

“Yeah?”

“I am on a spiritual journey and I am leaving my earthly body soon, so can you please let me be?” John explained.

“Well, you’re supposed to be my fucking boyfriend and I’m officially mad at you so...”

“Becky,” he stopped her again. “I will talk to you later.”

She left in a huff of unimportant frustration.

He had spent three weeks in the library and the school had asked him to leave. He would leave, he was ready to go out into the wilderness and become the naked eye, transcending his body and becoming one with the spirit of the universe. But first he was going to call his mom.

John Wakeman called his earthly Mother to say goodbye. She would never be able to understand what he was doing. Neither would Becky. People can be so shallow. It made him sad thinking about the poor masses, running around in their little lives, blind to the truth around them. He was certain of this. He knew the Truth, he knew in his heart it was true

for all men.

So he walked out of his dorm, clearing his mind. Down the wet, cold grass of the fields, down the first hill, he could feel the energy building. Down the second hill he came out of it a little, realizing that he didn't realize he had already walked so far. But back into it, his mind was at ease.

At the bottom of the hill he sat. He was far from the buzz of people back on campus, far from the artificial lights, far from the sounds of man: only the sound of the dark, deep woods at night. He sat comfortably, legs crossed, back straight but not rigid. He took a deep breath. In through the nose, out through the mouth, in through the nose, out through the mouth. He felt the back of his head relax and sunk the rest of his body into the full magical nectar. Lighter and lighter he became; the white energy filled his bodily vessel. In his mind he traversed the cosmos, letting himself pick up speed as he went. He no longer felt his body; he was nothing and everything, the ultimate observer. He could never go back...

III. Into the Infinite

John, no longer beholden to the laws of nature, let go of everything and everyone. His phone had long since been lost. He had not spoken with anyone in weeks. He spent his time meditating in the woods, jumping from tree to tree, killing fish with his mind for sustenance, and was no longer bathing. He had been there for months. He could now levitate off the ground, lift objects with his mental powers, and contact entities from around the universe and beyond.

He could do anything; his weeks, or months, or was it years of concentration had paid off? He had discovered the levers that nature could manipulate everything around him, travel anywhere with his mind. John had done it; he was Buddha, he was all, his mind part and particle of the universe. But he was starting to lose control. He would look at a caterpillar and become the caterpillar, looking back at himself. Consciousness was slipping away. He was evaporating into his surround-

ings, the comfort of his physical body dissipating into dust.

He didn't know what he was, what had become of John, John Wakeman, the man he knew before. He had become something else entirely. He could not speak with his mouth, he could not touch with his hands. Everything bended around him, his body invisible. To the animals and plants he looked like a shifting translucent orb, dipping in and out of space. The orb traveled in and out of our dimensions, to the far reaches of space and out of our physical universe but would snap back to the same spot in the woods, stuck in a never-ending, chaotic, random cycle. The stress of rapid inter-dimensional travel shook and distorted the orb coming back and forth to the woods until it shattered, releasing into infinitesimal plasma orbs, sent into every direction, destined to mix forever back into the universe.

*Kindness is in our power,
Even when fondness is not.*

- Samuel Johnson

When Fondness Is Not

FREDRICK ZYDEK

On the day I wanted to say I could
crap a better poem than the one
I was reading, I told the student
instead that while I was aware of all
the effort that went into it,

I was not altogether satisfied
with how it performed. And when
someone from a local church called,
not to offer me solace at the loss
of my father but to ask if he died

in a state of grace, instead
of pointing out they were being
an asshole for doubting his ethics,
my sole comment was that such
privileged information probably

exists only between the one who
passes and the Divine. Then there
was the time the Fundamentalist
insisted there was a difference
between believing in Jesus and being

a Christian. I wanted to call him
a narrow-minded prick, but instead
thanked him for pointing out that if
there is one thing Jesus really cared
enough to die for -- it was semantics.

Secrets Never Told

FREDRICK ZYDEK

Through them the brightest colors come.
We weren't just the offspring of a man
who owned a small farm, we were the progeny
of a gentleman who kept his family on a small farm
that would have been considered luxurious back
in his native Poland. It was a place to raise

food, keep orchards, pasture cattle and cows,
and a way to live near the woods where a man
could teach his sons to hunt and fish and his
girls to cook and take up sewing. He was
more. He owned a tavern in the town with girls
that kept rooms upstairs, a piano player, a dance

floor where a lumberjack or miner could pay
just a penny a dance and get a beer for a nickel.
And there was a speakeasy in Seattle. It sold
bathtub gin and backwoods whiskey, had linen
tablecloths, blue willow crockery, showgirls
and poker in the back rooms. Rumor had it cops

got free sex in the upstairs rooms and twenty bucks
each a month to keep their mouths shut and their
pockets open. No one talked about these things
at the farm. All we knew was sometimes Grandpa
was called to the city on business, sometimes he
had to run his tavern downtown, and sometimes

he played croquet with his grandchildren out on

a Sunday lawn, smoking his Cuban cigar, always checking his vest pocket watch as if he expected company. Every once in a while, he would pretend to pull a quarter out of our ears and insist it had been placed there by a good fairy only he could see.

Courage

DANIEL J. LANGTON

Now I know. It is what they didn't do.
Bill, at the open grave, did not cry out,
Mitchell stood firm about the laws of sex,
Loretta was aloof the times I prayed.
At night they didn't tell me what they knew,
they didn't tell me they would all die out,
they didn't ply me with the sacred texts,
troubled, they didn't fly apart, they stayed.

I owe it to the young to do the same,
assume a virtue if I have it not,
and when I want to scream I will go numb,
I'll be there when I said, I'll mind the game,
I'll stand on guard at the Gordian knot,
contain the wise, the stolid and the dumb.

Heritage

DANIEL J. LANGTON

I only met one parent's parent,
two were in Ireland, one was dead,
my streets were thin, my story's bare,
a third floor flat my stately home.
And so it was wherever I went,
long lines were not of blood but bread
and soup, now and then, here and there,
nothing to start or shape a poem.

Bold cavaliers, bright knights, dear men
in books and movies, come to me
as you did once, to take your place,
come to light, here and there, now and then,
come and show me what I want to see,
be the face of what I shall not face.

Devoted

STEPHEN KOPEL

My mother sleeps in the last pew,
her labored, drunken snoring
gently cushioned by the burgundy seat.

A few shrunken candles flicker,
wooden arches wishbone an early morning
majesty forcing mahogany yawns.
Stained glass windows glow
somber kaleidoscopes of muted hues,
and, kneeling, inhaling her breath,
imagining she embraces a bony savior
all her own, I nudge her shoulder,
my need for closeness outweighing any desire
to question or rebuke this obvious relapse.

Eyelids fluttering, she shifts slightly,
rearranging her voluptuousness to accommodate
his knees and hips in their corporal coupling.
I repeatedly whisper my name
which echoes in the deserted sanctuary —
"It's your son, Chirstian, Christian"
and her face quakes awake,
an epicenter of anguish, and,
she turns away moaning my name.

Knowing our mutual need,
I caress her hair, my fingers combing
the tangled chapters of despair
composed by her own hand,
a text that I'm compelled to witness.

No forgiving angel attends her.
I am the only son to save her,
so, my arms carry my mother
out to the agony of another day.

Let Me Love You

JON DAVIS

Lover, let me
fondle your tree-covered mountains
let me explore your plains
let me touch my fingers to your great wet lakes
let me enter your valleys like a nervous virgin
and kiss your geysers,
let me make love to you until your volcanoes explode
let me jump from your cliff tops
let me sail through your skies
let me conduct a symphony of bees
let me write my name in your sands, lover
let me moan your name loudly for all the planets to hear
let me scratch your back with little wren feet
let me watch as the sun wakes you gently
let us walk under a moonlit midnight sky, let me race
the black butterflies, let me stand resolute
with your six by six elk,
lover, let me know you
before you push me away, lover

Love Games

FRANK DE CANIO

Averse to trading liberty for love,
he gave her piquant charge a stern rebuff
while she responded with an ardent shove
that gently urged him not to give her guff.
But sensing it'd be harder to control
a mollycoddle with sufficient force
than using sweet inducements to cajole
belligerents, she tried the wiser course.
"Come on. I brought you something," she thus cooed.
The something was a little piece of cake
which, like a sop from cops with attitude
inside interrogation rooms, helped make
him blissfully submit to her behest
as though divorced from his subversive quest.

Patricia Manterola Touts "The Rhythm"

FRANK DE CANIO

Honey-tongued Delilah! Who do you think
you're kidding, descanting with charisma
your injunction to dance? A melisma
from woodwinds, modulating on the brink
of song, hardly gives resistance a chance.
Spiced with Mideast, reed-chromaticism
you're concocting more of paroxysms
with your sound stew than dance's whirling trance.
Nor do you give your guy the A-OK
to speak while you get down in the darkness
with him to feel his "boom boom boom." You sway
to the beat, so close to flesh, his lips press
against yours. And all you're able to bray
midst murmurs are "yi yi yi-s" of distress.

Are these the moves your guy enjoys so much
they'll keep him grooving through the night? Indeed
its rhythms so relentless he won't breathe,
still less resist the ardor of your touch.
So why can't he just heed his addled brain
and, with those trembling lips you find so sweet,
start osculating to the crazy beat?
As if he has an option to constrain
his movements. For his hands are in the air
and the "bumping's something I can't control."
You say he likes it. But you hardly care
what he's moaning. Parlous body curves roll
into him, as your mindless "yeah yeah yeah"
envelops both his body and his soul.



"self portrait" by ALLY CANARELLI

The Letter

WILLIAM BEYER

The letter
you have sent,
brief as it is,
asking about my health,
local weather,
current activities
of a mutual friend,
suggests an unusual curiosity,
hints at the lingering,
emotional distance
between us.

Your unexpected letter,
carefully written,
disturbs,
the subtle evasions,
what is left
unsaid,
leaving our personal distance
greater,
more currently drawn.

Ode to a Cuba Libre

SHAUN MCELROY

First:

A glass, heavy bottomed,
weighted,
an anchor in my hands,
too strong for me to crush.

Next,

Ice, cubed like a Picasso,
Not crushed like a peasant rebellion.
They announce their arrival
Like the chimes of a Salsa,
Subtly alarming,
Calling us to its attention.

Third,

To a count of ten,
comes the nectar of the sugar cane,
Pirates of the soul seeking
The ebony blood of sweetness,
Embracing the cubes
Like cousins at a family reunion,
Enveloping and uplifting
the song.

Next,

Bubbles as light as the laughter
of jokes shared,
or stories remembered.
Fantasies encased in carbon capsules,
nothing less than dreams seeking the heavens.

Fifth,
Cut like the Cathedral,
el Limon, sun ripened,
Juice squeezed,
Peel floating
amid the cubic sea of ebony.

Finally,
Secret bitters,
an aftertaste of sweetness
too easily found, too easily lost
Hinting at forgotten generals and their revolutions.

This is the mentira,
A small lie,
A coldness that warms the soul
A sweetness that promises
everything
a bitterness not of your own making
Soured in a sun-ripened land.

The glass sweats
Nervous as a first date.
The Cubes sing with each spin,
Like the turns of the Salsa dancers,
Come lovers,
Tickling my nose,
as it presses my lips for
that all too familiar kiss.

La Force Des Morts

MARCELINE FLEURILUS

She was being possessed by her dead father for a long time. This started when she was about seven years old, and she is now 22. I used to think that it was a joke, until I watched her beat up these huge men who would try to stop her from running away, and try to hurt herself and others. When her dead father takes over her body, she becomes an unstoppable and powerful creature. She would run like a flash, and hide under bushes late at night where no one could find her. Her family (along with friends) would chase after her for miles in the dark with flashlights, but all they could hear were her light footsteps running away through the bushes and the branches crackling to the swaying of the wind.

They would eventually capture her from the bushes and carry her back home. Once she was home, she would be pinned down by three-four men, because she was too strong and they wanted to make sure that she wouldn't run away again.

She would beat up these men with her unusual force, but the men would not let go until they were able to make her dead father get out of her body. After a while, she eventually would lose her strength and calm down. She would talk in a very strange deep voice. She would look over to her mother and say, "Take her to my tomb now!! If you don't take her to my tomb, I will have her kill herself!!!" The sound that was coming out of her mouth was not her voice, and it was not a sound someone her size could ever fake. I never believed that a dead man could really take over a person's body until I heard that deep, creepy voice coming out of her. I was finally convinced that this creature was really inside of her body.

Her godfather (who was a voodoo priest) would open up a big bottle full of potion, and pour the liquid over her head. He said that it would scare the dead spirit off and would make him go away. Once the potion was poured on her head, she would scream very loud and would try to break the bottle. He would keep pouring until she would eventually come back to her normal self.

You knew when she was back to normal, because she would all of a sudden go to sleep for about a minute or two. She would then wake up and look around with a very confused look on her face when she realized that she was surrounded by people. She would lay there and cry for a long time, and no one ever bothered to ask her why she was crying.

It hasn't happened in a long time, but because in the past the spirit has been known to come and go unannounced, I wouldn't be surprised to find that it's not the end. She has many dreams of many strange things happening to her. She wakes up feeling as though they were real. I wonder if this is his new way of taking over her body and spirit.

In one dream she was pinned down by an invisible force. It happened while she was falling asleep but was somewhat conscious. She tried to move her body away from the force and tried to scream, but she was paralyzed and the sound would not come out, only hollow sounding gasps. She remained in this state for what seemed like a long time, but was probably close to five minutes.

This happened to her repeatedly almost every night. She fought and fought until eventually she was able to move whenever she was pinned down by the force. The first time she was able to move she realized that she was starting to gain her own power, and gradually she became strong enough to fight back every time the monster returned. Ever since then the powerful creature would appear in her dreams less and less often.

She feels that he now only appears at her weakest hours, when she is going through a lot of stress and is very weak and depressed. She is a lot happier today because she realizes that she was able to overcome the forces of an evil that she will never be able to comprehend.





"cloud" by MALLORY KESSLER

Turkey Trot

RUSSELL ROWLAND

Here the harem comes, across my yard
without leave: Tom, and four turkey hens.

At each strut, each head pokes forward, like
heads on a frieze of pharaohs. Unlike us,
they are at once ugly and oblivious to this.

Reconciled to being turkeys, they require
no psychoanalysis, confess to no priest
their failure to remain monogamous.

The pecking order eats off the ground,
but won't say grace, achieving effortlessly
the perfection of a nonreligious life.

Indeed, the timor mortis plays no part
in their forage. A gobble is not the prayer
of those who understand all flesh is grass.

And who needs love? In season, they do
the courtship rituals. So there are chicks.

In woods today I picked, not flowers,
but fallen leaves for you, my lady dear:
red-stained maple, Midas-gilded beech,

to decorate pillows of our bed, until
death lies between us like a former love.

Things Fall Apart: Thank You Note to My Brother

DIANE ALLERDYCE

I.

Moving my table from the corner to the middle of the cottage changed my life today, and I expect the change will last at least for awhile. Thank you for holding this place for me in your imagination, as a place where one could write.

Three weeks ago when you were here and slept on my blow-up mattress in the middle of the kitchenette, walls of the bed against the buffet and your feet almost against the fridge, you called out, Hey where are you going? when I tried to sneak out for coffee so as not to wake you.

II.

We had been up past 3 a.m. dancing at the Blue Anchor, listening to an old colleague grieving his colleagues lost in Haiti. They're dead, they're dead, he kept saying. Then we drank awhile, and you and I danced, and I asked him to dance, and he danced, and then he returned to the bar and to insisting that those who hadn't been heard from were dead.

III.

I'm just going for coffee and dog food, I said, and you asked me to open the cottage doors, so that from your mattress you could see the red-flowered vine climbing over the fence in the back, and watch the sabal palm waving in front of the green metal roof of the main house in front.

You asked me where the little shutters on the upper gable go to.

I said the attic. You were surprised there was a real attic.

It's true—there is actually an attic that those purple shutters lead to.

IV.

For three weeks since then I have tried to write but could barely even breathe. Instead I have turned the television off and on, hung on every word and image on CNN until, screaming at the screen, again and again I snatched it off.

V.

On the phone you told me this little cottage where I live now
(which I have taken an absurd dark delight in calling a hovel, hut, shack and woodshack)
could be considered a writer's retreat. You said you could write here.
You would open the back door and the front door and write.

VI.

Instead I have busied myself in arranging doctors' flights to Port au Prince, Jacmel,
Cap Hatien, answered call after call, filled form after form, emailed messages.
I know that doesn't count as writing.
Until today, when, amidst the roar of memories, the imagined lost, missing everyone
I ever knew, forcing slow water back toward its source behind my eyes,
I pushed the table out of the corner, made it trade places with the buffet,
and now at least I am writing.

VII.

We have been losing Haiti forever. Perhaps never like this.

VIII.

You and I have always known how things can fall apart without warning,
our grandfather stepping into the rowboat he loved to fish from in Florida,
the sun blazing suddenly upward on the ocean, he bending over his bursting chest—
A colleague on the treadmill of the Hotel Montana, reveling in the exhilarating
pumping of his own heart, beating and beating toward the opening earth—
A mother placing a sliver of ripe mango between her sweet boy's teeth—
Our sister, rushing from work to feed the horses, her German shepherd waiting at the gate
his tail wagging, our parents, their faith intact, unknowing the earth was falling—
and you and I dancing at the Driftwood Inn, arms outstretched,
twirling and twirling in a widening arc—
holding forever with our centripetal force the center that still holds.

IX.

The sun is going down in the garden. Both doors to my writer's cottage are open.
The boy who lives in the main house is playing.



"untitled" by RYAN STRATTON



"buggy boo" by HENRY EDELSTEIN

Student Has Alcohol-Related Death

GARY SILVA

I drank too much and then I fell? I'm supposed to care?
My grades were good; they liked my paintings
that looked like George Braque, collages of newsclips
from *Newsweek*, black Sumi brush lines, words typed
on an old Smith-Corona in patterns like ants crawling
into a jar of honey. At least it was good wine, a Merlot
from somewhere in Sonoma County,
red as dried menstrual blood, dark and deep, myself
leaking out, with an iron taste. I was so angry with father.
What's to live for? Death is so close anyway, Iraq and
its biology, the China flu, plutonium like some silver
bullet lodged under our ribs, glowing in the dark,
until we let go like the filament in a light bulb
in a flash of tungsten, sagging, a bag of dead bones,
little curlicue wires, disconnecting electricity. It was
glorious, the windows going by upside down, the eyes
of my terrified friends whooshing by. O no, I wasn't that drunk;
I knew what to do, barefoot, the instep on hard
metal railing, like standing on a knifeblade, crossing over
from one edge to the other, the wind across my skin
so tender, the way my mother used to brush my cheeks.

Life's Decree

BRITTANY CONGDON

Nothing more than a pill,
A poison swallowed of my own free will.
Take away the pain and cleanse my core
Just don't take more than the pain away, no never more.
Just one to fill the hollow,
It's just one so I close my eyes and swallow.
At school, at work, with friends, I still feel the gap.
It's all in my head, the emotions that have me in a trap.
My past, future and the here and now,
My home life, bad decisions and mistakes all written on my brow.
How do I rid myself of these things? I wish I had a clue.
Maybe I'll take a pill for now, or maybe I can handle two.
But a failed test calls for three
And a breakup, one more than that to try to be free.
Prescription plastic has replaced Harvard dreams
This compacted powder tore apart my seams.
Am I free you ask? Is the pain gone?
I'm as free as anyone with wings can be
I feel no pain for my soul has left me.
It's the pain I tried to sanction.
But this bottle became my only dedication.
Thinking of no one but me,
I swallowed 30 days of my life's last decree.
30 days pressed to my lips.
30 days swallowed down in one fell tip.
30 days burning, tumbling, wandering straight to my heart
30 days down, now from this world, I must part.

Now a mother has lost her daughter,
Her loving heart lay broken and slaughtered.
There will always be a spot in her heart that her daughter perfectly fits
She traces her daughter's footsteps looking for her. What's the hurt, for it's
Nothing but a pill?
A poison swallowed on a mother's free will.

Shampoo Suicide

WILL GARCIA

Caught between pragmatic and idealistic,
Oh the frustration, I am both or I am not,
Between owning stock and the laughing stock
Controlling shares,
Witness the death of stares.
Up the stairs and into the dark, sweet night.
The east coast overdose,
Begging the west coast to let me in
Where people can just be, while I do,
I do and change and have to be someone,
No comfort in who you are, but what you bring
No Cocaine C's.
The definitions in air endlessly debated.
Be the upright man, accepting seduction,
Not me I have to seduce,
He does not but I do
I am not Roundy, I am not a scene fixture
Nor the light fixture that I hate,
I turn her into literature, turn a new page
A page that always existed.
Forward and backward.

Out Man

WILL GARCIA

A cube, salt and pepper,
It makes no difference whatsoever,
Clever and Bevel- Tom and Huck and,
Other famous pairs, prickly
Girlfriend sickly, losing my mind
Like parsley, sage, rosemary and lime
Or Time, the thing, the box, the plane
X meets Y, X falls in love with Y,
Z dies, to no effect.
She tries, tried and blue
Gone like the winter before I knew you,
An album a year, no release date,
Pomegranate flow, style earthquake, Andy
Warhol looking at me, Mona Lisa definitely
No surprises, paranoid as sloth
Group sex or orthodox, done through a cloth.
Slow motion I know, Show improvement,
You know what I do, or can do,
Cans of Damn You, around the cornerstone
The cornerstone talking, animals walking
Around the blocks we all know, separately,
But we share the seasons, census abound
Get down, shoot a film, and cut yourself out.

Auditory Hallucinations

JON DAVIS

I.

Fascinates me. Thoughts are
thought I always thought,
the continuing commentary of the continuum
and yet, I hear a silence,
the sound of a frozen lake under a frigid Alberta moon
the nothing of a crystallized moment
forever repeating in time,
that used to be filled with skyrockets in flight
afternoon delight
A-A-afternoon delight.

II.

Sounds heard by the brain, bypassing the
ears
altogether, injected directly
into the frontal lobe by a wide gauge needle
and a grinding, whirling bone saw
trepanning the skull of the caveman who
tries every last method
to ease the forever cry
of the dying baby
and the gurgling silence.

III.

We don't need know
education.

All that brings is
thought control,
and black sarcasm in the classroom,
teacher
tell them kids to run on home
tell them independent kids to run on home
and lie still
as still as a brick retaining wall.
Sacrifice their independent lives to be
just another
brick

goodbye all

Sound of My Insanity

SHAWNA MANN

I sit here waiting for my life to end
I stare at this mechanical object
As if each tick were another inhale of nicotine

I'm Addicted to that tick

Don't get me started on that tock
My eyes are glued

I look for the beginning, until then
I'll find no end

I stare and stare
I watch, my eyes glistening

Listen, do you hear the tick
Be careful, it will get you

Repeat, repeat, repeat

I used to just use time
But now, oh now it uses me

Margaret Did Not See the Car Coming

STANLEY M. NOAH

It happened on Preachtree Street.

After she became famous and

Maybe a little rich. The car was

 Skipping by, indifferent like the

 Random pages of her precarious

 Novel (romances are always edgy

 In times of war, more less). Her

 Book was made into a Hollywood

Movie, 1939, just in time for another

War. Today, in the marginal light of

 Theaters in America, the ghost of her

 Characters radiate their lives of hope

 And despondency with the mesmerized

 Charm of film. I can see her, the writer,

 In shy corners, almost coy-like in childhood.

 She didn't look about so much within

Her giant world of adults, horses and

Two-story houses with shaded porches.

But was constantly recording, appraising

 Those acute voices on hot summer days

 Of hanging fruit trees, moss, sugar cane

 And miles of king cotton; stories given in

 Living room visits where old men had a

Kind of slant in the ways they walked

And dancing out loud their pretentious

Haunting memories, incomparable. "Listen,"

One once said, the one with a long beard

 She thought was Moses, "things are

 Disappearing here. Listen!" as he started

Again while the ice in the little girl's

Lemonade melted away.



A TELE CE SOIR

FRANCE 1

19h30 **Le Grand Journal**
20h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
20h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
22h **Le Journal de 20 heures**

FRANCE 2

19h30 **Le Grand Journal**
20h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
20h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
22h **Le Journal de 20 heures**

CANAL+

19h30 **Le Grand Journal**
20h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
20h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
22h **Le Journal de 20 heures**

FRANCE 4

19h30 **Le Grand Journal**
20h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
20h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
22h **Le Journal de 20 heures**

FRANCE 5

19h30 **Le Grand Journal**
20h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
20h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h **Le Journal de 20 heures**
21h30 **Le Journal de 20 heures**
22h **Le Journal de 20 heures**

"watching" by L. KEITH

A Disease in the News

JOHN GREY

A new disease arrives on cue.
The world has been too healthy
for too long.
The newsreader becomes
makeshift physician.
According to his sonorous tones,
if you haven't caught it by this,
you soon will.
Politicians wax solemnly.
Pamphlets flood the mail-boxes.
The planet's awash in prescriptions
like leaflets dropped from helicopters.
Meanwhile, an old woman struggles
with her diabetes.
One jab twice a day
or her sight goes belly-up.
Vision is no use to her anyhow.
Can't see old women
and their needles
on the six-thirty bulletin.
It's all about some sickness
with a fancy name.
A woman in Pasadena
is the first hospitalized
but surely soon
there will be many more.
It wouldn't be the news otherwise.

Dominick Monaco

DAVID LAWRENCE

Monaco's conversation goes one way and his face turns
The other.

There is a squish beneath his eyes
Where time has beaten him with straight rights.
His nose is a bulb to put in a flowerpot
And grow a tulip.

He has had one hundred professional fights.
Every day for the last ten years he tells me about
A case where he is suing a Dutchman who
Stole his property.

He has lost the case twice and it is in its second appeal.
He asks me how to present his argument.

I spent two years in jail for someone else's theft.
How should I know?

I have brain damage.
So does he.

We make quite a legal team.

In ten years he will still be asking me how to present
His case.

His real lawyer is working pro bono.

She must be the nicest woman who ever lived.

Or else she is a secret sociologist studying how a damaged
Mind wastes its remaining time.

She could have asked me.

I have been there somewhat coherently.

The Man with the Old Chain

MALLORY KESLER

I have a photo of a man whose name I don't know. This man is wearing dark grey pants and a baby blue button down shirt. He has large round glasses and salt and pepper hair, well, what hair he has left. It is a partly cloudy day and he is sitting on a dark green bench in the park. He has a somber look on his face and his soft bluish green eyes are glassed over with what looks like tears. I only have a photo of him, so I will never know what was bothering him that day. He looks around at all the children playing and the young couples holding hands as they walk around. He looks at them like he had a life like that once upon a time.

He has an old chain with a small gold pendant on it. His hands are partly covering it so I can't tell what it is. It looks like something of value to him from the way he is holding it. He is not crying and he does not look mad. He just looks like he is remembering. There are so many things that could be going through his head. Maybe he was in a battle and lost close friends or maybe he lost connection with his family. I will never know. I sit here staring at this photo just as he sat in the park. It makes me sad to see such a lost mind.

I wish I could have gone back to the park to cheer him up. I put the photo down and go up to the attic to look for some old family pictures. I never knew my grandparents so I feel I should try to connect. I go through some boxes and find some old baby pictures of my mother. It looks like some of the pictures are cut up or ripped. I don't bother to ask my mother about them, but under all those photos is a rusty old chain. It is slightly stuck to the bottom of the box, so I have to tug and pull a couple of times to yank it out. It had been there for what looks like years untouched.

I run down the stairs to show my mother, but when I find her, she is holding the photo I had taken. She looks at me and says, "Where did you find this picture?" I tell her I took it yesterday at the park. As I look at it again, I slowly clench onto the chain in my hand. My mother puts the photo down and looks at me with tears in her eyes. "I think you are old enough to learn about where that chain came from."

Florida Realty

GEORGE LONGENECKER

By day she shows condominiums, pastel stuccos and beachfront villas.

Every night, when the moonlight is like shattered seashells,
she writes poems on the beach, hoping each day for a closing.

She could sell you a villanelle by the sea in Gulfstream
or a home on the waterway in Lantana; one even has a built in sestina,
another a lanai— you can watch silhouetted pelicans at sunrise—
on its patio you can sauna or shower with seashells.

She can take a sonnet and turn it around like once she'd take a villa
and sell it the same day. Now she'd short sell that villanelle
by the sea. She'll take an offer in rondels or sand dollars.
West of Delray Beach, home after home's in foreclosure,
a yellow bungalow with a grapefruit tree and triolets
still blooming. Now there's nobody there.
Rain spatters a refrigerator, a box of toys,
broken glass, sidewalk of crushed stone
and seashells, the dusty grass.

So, she writes off the yellow bungalow, the Mediterranean
revival, the foreclosed condominium, the pink Spanish
quintilla in the palms. She makes a verse
of moonlight and scallop shells,
she writes an elegy for Florida real estate, yet
she still hopes for a closing
on the villanelle by the sea.



"untitled" by LAUREN DUVALL

Standing on the Steps

T. ANDERS CARSON

Standing on the steps;
evening shawl mutely held,
voice of reason, lost.

Fluffy, with Grief

TWIXT

Now I see on the upside of the loss
experienced these epiphanous thoughts
find freedom not in the why but because.

My Turn to You Turn

TWIXT

In our universe from which we shrink
I take a path of expanding length
to the end I think if not the end
I thought.

Where Music Ends

IVOR TREBY

the undersong is what i hear
beneath creation's joyful shout
the busy world is all about
its far infinitude so near

sometimes i almost catch the phrase
but then the notes float past my ear
remote as candles burning clear
or falling leaves on autumn days

not madrigal nor canzonet
and yet it breathes an antique mode
a soldier on a Roman road
might hear, and briefly wars forget

no marching tune – it underpins -
ground bass beneath life's dropping sand,
in part chaconne, part saraband:
where music ends, this song begins

above my head the planets wheel -
beyond, to the universe's edge
innumerable suns new-fledge:
there the great song is sounding still

beneath my feet are choirs of dust
where protists roam like brontosaurus,
and they, beneath their shining floors
glide over infraworlds: so must

the series downward trend – here stir
great rafts of atoms veering past
in radiant motion – at the last
a fugue of electrons spark and whirr

and could even further prise
down the charmed vault of quarter-tones,
past knotted dimensions – might new suns
once more burst forth to light new skies?

remote as candles burning clear
the undersong is what i hear

A New Beginning

DAVID FLEISHER

SCENE: A Bedroom

AT RISE: MARY is sitting on the bed holding a doll

MARY

Cuchee cuchee coo. Cuchee cuchee coo. You're such a big girl. Yes you are. Cuchee cuchee coo.

(ABBIE ENTERS, looks at MARY a few moments, rushes to her, they embrace)

ABBIE

You're here, I can't believe it. I'm dreaming. Tell me I'm dreaming.

MARY

(Holding up doll)

And look who I have.

ABBIE

How many hours did we spend playing with this raggedy old thing.

MARY

In this very room.

ABBIE

(To doll)

It doesn't seem like so long ago, does it?

MARY

Abbie, how do you do it?

ABBIE

Do what?

MARY

Stay so young and beautiful.

ABBIE

Oh, stop.

MARY

We have so much to catch up on, don't we?

ABBIE

Yes, we do.

MARY

Mom and Dad are so happy we're here. All together, again.

ABBIE

The holidays just aren't the same when one of us isn't here.

MARY

Abbie, please ...

ABBIE

It's just ...

MARY

(Sharply, suddenly becoming defensive)

Just what?

ABBIE

As I say, just not the same.

MARY

Why is it, the moment I step foot in this house, even after all this time has passed, I feel guilty?

ABBIE

Don't blame the poor house, Mary. You feel guilty because you're Catholic. It's our sacred duty.

MARY

What exactly do you want from me?

ABBIE

Want? From you?

MARY

Mom and Dad are waiting for us downstairs. Dinner is almost ready.

ABBIE

(Starts to EXIT)

Yes, you're right. I'm sorry, Mary. Dinner ...

MARY

(Taking her arm)

What's done is done.

(ABBIE stares a few moments at MARY)

ABBIE

It's so easy for you, isn't it?

MARY

Very few things are "easy" for me at this stage in my life, Abbie, but what, pray tell, do you have in mind?

ABBIE

Leaving. You've always had this knack for ... leaving. Poof! On to something else.

MARY

I'm sorry, Abbie, sorry it happened. But for God's sake, can we move on? Are you going to hate me for the rest of my life? I can't erase the past.

ABBIE

A new beginning.

MARY

I wanted so much ...

ABBIE

You asked me what I want from you. A new beginning.

MARY

I just want so much for us to be together ... you and me and mom and ...

ABBIE

Dad?

MARY

Here in this house.

ABBIE

(to the doll)

And what do you think? Maybe we should just go downstairs now and have dinner?

(MARY turns away from ABBIE and faces downstage)

MARY

I want to make things right between us, Abbie. Please, in the name of God ...

(ABBIE walks slowly behind MARY, who closes her eyes)

ABBIE

(sotto voce)

Oh, my poor Mary, God can't help us now. He had to go tend to some other business. He left. Poof!

MARY

I have suffered. I've asked God to forgive me.

ABBIE

(Turning away)

The weatherman says we're in for a big storm tonight. A real whopper.

MARY

Remember how we used to hide under the covers?

ABBIE

(To the doll)

And she'd say, "Don't worry, Abbie, it'll pass, it'll be over soon." And we believed her, didn't we?

(MARY tries to touch ABBIE, who quickly steps away)

MARY

Abbie, please let me ...

ABBIE

(to the doll)

Just you and me all this time. Never left, did you? Loyal and loving to the very end. You didn't pack your things and leave me all alone, did you?

(MARY turns away from ABBIE)

ABBIE

Do you know that I sleep with the light on? Still.

MARY

No, I didn't know that, Abbie.

ABBIE

Sometimes it's the little lamp next to the bed. Other times it's the ceiling light. I like to open the curtains and let the light in. If there's a full moon, the whole room lights up like a Christmas tree!

ABBIE (Continued)

I always keep the light on in the bathroom ... always. Just in case I have to run in there at three in the morning to throw up.

(MARY places her hands over her ears)

MARY

Abbie, please don't.

ABBIE

The other night, though, I forgot to turn on the light. I ran right into the wall, threw up all over the rug. And myself. Mom asked me in the morning what happened. I guess she must have heard me screaming. I usually scream before I vomit. Well, I said, too much whiskey. At the party, you know, Mom. What party, she says. I had to think fast. Why, don't you remember Madeleine's birthday party? Oh, she says, with that blank look on her face, that party, of course.

MARY

I should get my suitcase out of the car.

ABBIE

Of course I don't know anyone named Madeleine, and neither does mom. And I haven't been to a birthday party, or any other kind of party for that matter, in years.

(Pause)

Now that I think of it, have I ever been to a party?

(Pointing)

You can still see the stain on the rug.

MARY

I should have called someone ... the police.

ABBIE

You should have done a lot of things, Mary, but like you say, what's done is done.

MARY

(Defiantly)

On the way here I had this image in my head of you and me hugging and laughing and crying and holding onto each other for dear life. And I thought, yes, I will tell Abbie I'm sorry and she'll forgive me. Human beings make mistakes in life ... terrible mistakes sometimes ... but we're all human, we aren't infallible. I was scared, Abbie. I didn't know what I should do. I had nightmares for years. I can't get the two of you out of my mind. It will haunt me the rest of my miserable life. I should have said something, told someone, but I didn't and I'll regret that decision to my dying day.

(MARY reaches out to ABBIE, who, again, backs away)

MARY (Continued)

I can't go back and change it. What's done is done. In the name of God, Abbie!

ABBIE

You know what I was thinking about last night while I was lying in bed? Whipped cream. He liked whipped cream, you know.

MARY

Please, Abbie.

ABBIE

He liked spreading it all over my body and licking it off. I thought it was fun, you know, a game ... something all fathers do with their daughters.

MARY

I wanted to stop it but you said ...

ABBIE

... I know damn well what I said. I said I liked it. I told you not to say anything to anyone, especially mother. I said you should let him do it to you too. I know, Mary, what the fuck I said!

MARY

I was frightened to death. Can't you understand that?

ABBIE

Sunday night. That was his favorite time. He started on my neck ... then lower and lower ... "don't go lower, Daddy."

MARY

Abbie, please stop this.

ABBIE

Yes, please stop. "What if someone finds out, Daddy? What if mommy finds out?"

MARY

They're downstairs waiting for us.

ABBIE

When he came in the room it was pitch black. Couldn't see him, but I knew it was him by the smell. And as he got closer and closer, the smell got stronger and stronger. And just before he touched me ...

MARY

Cuchee cuchee coo...

ABBIE

(To doll)

... Just me and you. That's what he said: Cuchee cuchee coo, just me and you.

MARY

I'm sick to my stomach. Please, I don't want to hear this.

ABBIE

You want to leave, I know.

MARY

I didn't say that.

ABBIE

You don't have to. I know you better than you know yourself. Right now you're thinking you'd like to return home to your sweet husband and two adorable daughters ... return to your lovely home in the country ... return to your splendid garden!

MARY

Stop it!

ABBIE

Return to a more simple life ... return to those things we have come to cherish in this world. Family. Love. Security. Happiness. Yes, all the things we once had when we hid under the covers and prayed we had lots of presents under the Christmas tree.

MARY

Yes, I have a wonderful husband who loves me and our children very much. And I live in a lovely home in the country. And I pull weeds out

of the ground in my fabulous fucking garden!

ABBIE

(Toneless)

Dinner smells good. Can you smell it, Mary?

MARY

I will not allow you to drag me down into this cesspool of filth that you refuse to leave. That's right, Abbie, leave. Leave! Leave!

ABBIE

Once and for all.

MARY

And be done with it.

ABBIE

May I go home with you?

MARY

I don't think that's a good idea.

ABBIE

Not a good influence on the kids?

MARY

Actually, I was thinking of my husband.

ABBIE

Just because I tried to unzip his pants in front of your daughters? Surely you aren't going to let a little thing like that ...

MARY

It wasn't a "little thing," Abbie. Amanda talks about it to this day.

ABBIE

And what does she say?

MARY

What was Aunt Abbie doing to Daddy?

ABBIE

Did you tell her we were just playing a game?

MARY

Be quiet.

ABBIE

Did you tell her Aunt Abbie does this sort of thing usually when it's pitch black? Did you tell little Amanda that Aunt Abbie has been unzipping pants for years? Pants usually worn by men she doesn't really know very well?

MARY

You're disgusting.

ABBIE

That Aunt Abbie was just trying to make Daddy...

MARY

Thank God you didn't succeed.

ABBIE

Succeed? You mean with Daddy?

MARY

My husband!

ABBIE

Oh, but I did. Just not then. Later.

MARY

Liar.

ABBIE

The children were not present at the time.

MARY

Vile bitch.

ABBIE

It was pitch black.

MARY

I don't believe a word of this.

ABBIE

I didn't plan it, it just happened.

MARY

When?

ABBIE

When all of you came to visit last year. Here. In this room. Where you're standing now.

MARY

You shameless slut.

ABBIE

You know what I said to him while I was ... well, you know. Cuchee cuchee coo, just me and you.

(MARY throws the doll on the ground and stomps on it)

MARY

You make me sick, I'm going to throw up!

ABBIE

Light's always on in the bathroom.

(grabbing MARY'S hair)

Be my fucking guest!

MARY

You didn't have to ...

ABBIE

Yes, I did.

MARY

Why, Abbie, why?

ABBIE

Why not?

MARY

But my husband?

ABBIE

Why not your husband? I even showed him the art of using whipped cream.

(MARY slaps ABBIE across the face)

ABBIE

Never knew you had it in you, did you?

MARY
I'm leaving.

ABBIE
Of course you are. It's what you do best.

MARY
I was twelve years old for God's sake! What did you expect me to do?

ABBIE
Stay! With! Me!

(MARY rushes to ABBIE, crying, embraces her)

MARY
I couldn't bear to watch the two of you any longer. And listening to it. I used to slam my hands against my ears. Over and over again.

(Pause)

Did you know I'm deaf in one ear? I told the doctor my sister did it. She hit me every night. Yes, I blamed it on you. I can't feel anything in my ear, Abbie!

(ABBIE grabs herself between the legs)

ABBIE
I can't feel anything here.

(SILENCE. MARY picks up the doll and begins to gently stroke it)

MARY
I don't want to leave you again. Ever.

ABBIE
Maybe we should tell Daddy you've decided to stay?

MARY

(Toneless)

Yes, I think we should.

(ABBIE slowly strokes MARY's hair; with her other hand she removes a knife from underneath her blouse)

ABBIE

Why don't I ask Daddy to bring your suitcase upstairs. I'm sure he wouldn't mind. He loves coming in this room.

MARY

I think that's a good idea.

(As LIGHTS begin to FADE, MARY takes the knife out of ABBIE's hand. ABBIE walks to the door, turns and faces MARY, who is matter-of-factly examining the knife)

ABBIE

I missed you so much, Mary.

MARY

(As she continues to stroke the knife)

I'll be waiting here for Daddy.

END OF PLAY

About The Authors

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Holly Day is a Minnesota poet.

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David Fleisher is an Associate Professor at Lynn University. His collection of fifteen short, dark comedies, *Grave Concerns*, has been produced at theaters around the United States and three have been produced in Ireland. The complete collection of *Grave Concerns* is in the library of the Drama League of Ireland. His monologues "Flat Tire" and "Mrs. Mygoodness" were published in *The Best Men's Stage Monologues of 1999* and in *The Best Women's Stage Monologues of 2000* (Smith & Kraus). His short play "4-1-1" appears in the anthology *35 In 10: 35 Ten-Minute Plays* (Dramatic Publishing, 2005). He is also co-author of the nonfiction book *Death Of An American: The Killing Of John Singer* (Continuum Publishing Company, New York, NY 1983). Fleisher is a member of the Dramatists Guild and Authors Guild.

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Daniel J. Langton's poetry has appeared in *Paris Review, Atlantic Monthly, Poetry, and Harvard Advocate*, among others. His seventh collection, *During Our Walks*, will appear in 2011.

David Lawrence has published over six hundred poems. His last book was *Lane Changes*. He sparred with Monaco hundreds of times at Gleason's Gym. Since David wrote this poem, Monaco has been in jail for beating up the Dutchman twice, the second time while he was wearing a court-ordered ankle bracelet.

George Longenecker teaches in the Department of English, Humanities, and Social Science at Vermont Technical College. His recent publications include *The Dos Passos Review* and *The Rockhurst Review*. His poetry was a winner in the 2009 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards.

Shawna Mann is a student at Lynn. She is President of The Creative Writing Club.

Shaun McElroy is the school counselor at an international school in Shanghai, China. He writes poetry in between letters of recommendation.

Michael Morris was born in Waterbury, Connecticut and has lived in Sonoma, California for 28 years. His work has appeared in over 55 literary journals and anthologies. Morris is an award winning writer and the author of two novels, one book of short stories, and nine collections of poetry. In 2007 Happy Rock Publications published his collection of poetry, *A Juke Joint Played In*. In 2008 Minotaur Press published *A Wink Centuries Old* as a chapbook and has agreed to publish an upcoming collection entitled *Tales from Bohemia*.

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Gary Silva is Professor Emeritus at Napa Valley College and retired Poet Laureate of Napa County (2008-2010). He is currently working on publishing his selected poems from the past thirty years and is organizing a poetry study group for fellow poets in Napa.

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