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OCHO #19 CONTRIBUTORS

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Hitching a Tangle

He was straddling his grounded pack on the road when a breeze leaped up and blew a car his way. The windows must have been cracked because even from a distance the woman's hair flooded the seats with crimson whips. He grinned fierce until they suddenly stopped and fell like vicious bells in a tangle around his head.

Hypnotist II

Earth, fixing love like a master
alive on my ribs now I'd give up breath:
Aldeberan's red glint off the bull's left horn,
Canis major, the blue-eyed
god-dog & the winged-serpent
Draco—all fallen salt we call stars
piercing skin, Eros' sacred maggots
glistening naked under death at night.
But you're no priest with soft lips. You're no
sacrificial black magic
goat-herder. You're no phantom. You make me feel
like my heart is packed with chalk.
If I want love I'm forced to torture insects.
If I want to kiss lightning
on the mouth I do it alone. You sleep, ignore me like the floor
O Earth except your body is so soft
your back absorbs green & white fragrances. Beautiful
Aching distances: Milk & eucalyptus. Stone.

Becoming Bull

Some fear he will come in wrath
and some fear silence. Some think
he'll descend in a twist of shrieks,
pop the polar ice caps and spill
the archaic fire. Some look skyward
at noon, summon snow with druidic charms
and march down black-shale hills.
Their cadences rattle the willows;
wormwood peters out of the rocks.

I stabbed a pregnant cow today,
cut her open and tore out her calf.
It was slack, but a couple of slaps
across the back got it to cough.

The rest of this is true: I crammed
into the dead cow's belly, pinched my nose
and pushed my head through her neck.
I ate her brain and settled snugly
in her skull. The rest of this is true:

when he cooks the earth in red steam
I will hide in the cow. If you tell him
where I am, I will find you in paradise,
wrap you in a freshly-slain moose
and toss you to the condors.

And the bull I gave birth to,
knowing nothing but schism and heat,
will settle in a nearby nook, moan
a lengthy bolero and ponder the world
to come: the runnings and impalements,
the laundering of memory, and the wind.

Billy Howell-Sinnard

Butcher

I split rib cages, sever heads--eyes still open.
Trunks and limbs hang on hooks. Between me

and my customers, ice-breathed freezer chests
stacked with tongues, ribs, rumps, legs, shoulders,

thighs, breasts, and brains. A femur. A pelvis.
Sawdust. All the same to me. The rosy flesh

roots to bone that splinters beneath my cleaver.
At the center--there's a center to everything--

manifests the marrow, or buttery soul few
appreciate, sweeter than the blood of Jesus.

Two Josephs

1.

When Joseph walked the weary donkey
into Bethlehem, the donkey carried Mary,
Mary carried Jesus, and fetal Jesus
carried not even the thought of carrying a splinter,
let alone a cross.

Most evenings, during the desert census,
prepared travelers pitched tents
beneath light spilling from old stars.
Some tucked in at the inn.
After speaking with an angel, Joseph learned
there's not much sense in preparing
for anything anymore.
The desert cold crept in
as Joseph kicked neglected hay
with his calloused feet, patted loose straw
into a soft pile. Dust lifted, eddied in air,
sang in his beard, settled *hosanna* everywhere.
Then Joseph rubbed the donkey's ears,
twice for good luck. The hungry donkey
brayed once, looking into Joseph's empty hands.

2.

Sometimes, you happily conclude: *Hey,*
now that I've got this brightly colored garment
the rest is going to be easy.
But then your envious brothers, in their drab raiment,
plot and invite you to accompany them
while they fetch water from a dead well.
You're young and beautiful, so along you go
with them. When they push you, plunging you
into darkness, you're not thinking much

about your bright cloak, or your future
career: interpreting a mad man's dreams.

3.

Sometimes, it seems you're clawing in a well,
nearly dying of thirst. Above you,
in that single circle of purple sky, winter stars
sprout and fall, attaching to your cloak
like summer thistles.

Or else it's seems the ultimate ass
in history relies solely on you
to feed him wild wheat by the handful
before the next savior can be born.

Times like these, it might be best
to open your hands, use your cloak for a sack,
and begin by gathering what will be had.

Non-Christians Bear Chocolate Crosses

You found me naked in front of Canadians—
I was just a good girl playing bad for a while.
I wanted to wade in pools of social lubricant.
To swallow that cum until my throat was raw
and tender...

To fain thoughtlessness until I was fucked
into believing again.

And now, I am back to the moral equivalent
of Mary...

A popped cherry and a few slutty stories are all
that separate me from the nun down the street—
And, you are constantly reminding me of that.

You have a penchant for the truly tragic—
The barely-woman with the scar-bitten calves.
The drama-queen with semi-foreign mishaps.
There were too many in the nineties.
Not enough in the eighties.

But, it is still hard to tell where you stand...
Because you refuse to acknowledge their flaws,
your flaws,

which have steadily been rubbing off in both
directions for the past twenty years.

You clearly prefer to think of them as inherent
traits that should barely be stated,
and certainly never argued.

Proving, yet again that *I* am the Godless one—
With all of this fruit to bear, and nowhere to
leave it.

Meeting People Is Easy

All that remains of Mercy is her head,
in the freezer, with the fish. She does not breathe
or think, yet she's louder than the finches.

Elena was nice; her Guatemalan eyes
float in a jar on the dresser, by the hamsters.
They look drowsily at the palms.

Nancy fell asleep under water.
She surfaced with no limbs and swam
to the pier. A shirtless man reeled her in.

Eating people is easy. They get cozy
in the stomach. They make the skin
tight and slick. In the morning

they reassemble, exit the monster
and run. Where's Alexandra? In a tower
with two windows and no stairs.

She sings to errant ships on cloudy nights.
The crewmen, looking for light, fall to the deck
and wake with mouthfuls of rock.

My Ophelia

Her experiments with ice water and pain
yielded only erotic applications.

Everything sparking tangled
in the margin to burn and turn up

spare parts of feelings decades later
rusted hubcaps crank case in tall grass disembodied

sky blue bed of possibly love is a Chevy.
I said I loved her mind but did I really?

All I could make out in the blurry photo
was the plaid pattern of her skirt against the quarter panel.

Now you can go write a poem, said someone.
And someone said obliterated is like liberated.

Then someone stole my lawnmower and I
tended grounds on my hands and knees to see

for the first time low networks
of nodes, sheaths and fibers

large beetles with admirable pincers.
I shrank, loved only dirt, closing out my time.

Luckily she never calls—
I go insane on my own terms.

The heart rattles. *Breathe* goes in italics. We die
say the professionals but why give up easily?

Descartes tore open an ox's eye (that
should be a poster!). Think

of Moses and Abraham and C. S. Lewis.
Can't we live to distinguish love from other manias?

Ring the nunnery! We're sorry: your party is currently
drown-posing in Millais' cold stream.

Little remains. I prune the true underworld.
Hardly anyone exhumes dead jesters anymore.

I want them hell-bent pimped limp stiff dressed spiced trounced
dumped dead tipped tripped trapped pumped primed ponced
in my cunt
I want the attested the arrested the sorely tested
in my cunt
I want rich men poor men beggar men and thieves
I want take this take that round robin jackshit diddlysquat
in my cunt
I want Adam I want Eve I want the Garden of Eden the Twelve
Tribes and more than enough seating
in my cunt
I want you to arrive I want you to leave I want you to thrive I want
you to take pity
in my cunt
I want you to take shelter take care take cover lay siege move over
moreover
I want you to hold steady make ready
in my cunt
I want your fleet I want your gain I want your storm troopers high
seas heavy losses hard won terrain
in my cunt
I want your sacred and profane prophecies obituaries broken
promises lame excuses profuse apologies and any other business
in my cunt
vetted spellchecked typeset diarised photocopied faxed backed up
graffitied scrawled reinstalled and texted lest I forget: I want you to
meet your calling
in my cunt

3

I want you to make war in my cunt
I want you to abuse your hedonism and then schmooze it
I want you bandit on my road to Apocrypha
I want you to sign a secret treaty and then refute it
I want your Lucifer look-alikes I want your cluster strikes I want your
military order
in my cunt
I want you to drive your tanks along the trackless sand in my cunt
and flatten

the already homeless
I want you to ask the World Bank to pay for it
I want you to forfeit your rights to fresh water
in my cunt
I want you to lie down and whimper
I want your missile code I want blood all over the road
I want Coca-Cola to make soda
in my cunt
I want the company to deplete all wells I want babies' bellies to swell
with constant hunger
I want the ironmonger selling slaughter with your guns
in my cunt
I want your daughter gang raped I want crack cocaine I want all
relatives slain
I want no rain I want minefields I want night raids I want dead sheep
rotten teeth AIDS and phantom limb pain
in my cunt
I don't ever want it to be over
I want to run for cover
in my cunt
I want to shout for my mother
I want your polemics beliefs disputed boundaries your oil sheiks your
gulag factories
your lack of government your dispossessed disenfranchised
repossessed lowest
class your non achievers fervent believers
in my cunt
I want your double-binds your headlines your wealth your alibis your
convincing media bullshit
I want you to stuff me full of it
in my cunt
I want you to live behind dark glasses and an electric fence above any
suspicion
I want your botoxed celluliteless legged fake titted trophy size-
nought wife practicing her catwalk
in my cunt
I want you smooth talking whiter than white your height-weight ratio
perfect
I want you beyond all redemption

I want millions dead
in my cunt
I want your head with its clear conscience asleep on your pillow
in my cunt at peace dreaming of running along some endlessly
Jungian
beach
I want you to teach the children lies:
paradise is paramount
in my cunt

4

I want you to hedge a bet
in my cunt
I want you to stack your deck
I want you to place your cards face-up
I want you to show your hand
I want you to shake your dice in a little plastic cup
in my cunt
I want your ace king queen jack joker
in my cunt
I want your canasta cribbage poker
I want your blackjack gofish euchre
I want your major arcana
in my cunt
I want you trumped
I want you to national hunt flat race steeple chase hare chase fox
hunt
in my cunt
I want you to bring out champagne socialist Range Rovered
protesters drivin' down my streets a cryin' hey it's me and I'm
dynamite an' I don't whyin'
I want Van Morrison Patti Smith Jim Morrison
in my cunt
I want George Clooney with Mickey Rooney's energy
in my cunt
I want J Edgar Hoover all dressed up
I want Damien Hirst maggots I want Tracy Emin's tent stitched up
tight I want her bed her empty booze bottles slippers snot rags fag
ends knickers Saatchi artwork Momart warehouse fire risk

in my cunt
I want Condoleezza Rice as performance artist
in my cunt
I want you to impress your carbon footprint on the world's deepest
hardest farthest highest
I want James Cagney about to fall off
I want you to set foot on Everest and make my base camp a dump
I want your pathetic inadequate outdated sentimentalised Forrest
Gump irony
in my cunt
I want you denied your enhanced body armour bullet proof vest by a
British Army financial efficiency test in a Baghdad nightmare suburb
ignoring Helmand Province poppies
I want their lush plump prime sharecropped lot festering
in my cunt
I want George Bush's best terrorist threat quotations
I want Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton facing off
I pray the lone assassin's bullet tinpot buckshot
I want the unlawfully held let off
I want the condemned
I want you to lose the plot
As I said I want you to hedge a bet: you ain't seen nothin' yet
in my cunt

5

I want you to wake up as my cunt
I want you to do it literally
I want you to make
the metaphorical
defunct
I want you to take liberty
I want you as my cunt to sit tight think pretty talk dirty
I want you to play Walter Mitty: a killer in a skirt a flirt assassin
a pilot for my clit's circumnavigational abundance
I want you to take breakfast as my cunt
and munch all things girl
brunch too
I want you to burlesque as my cunt
and eat fire beneath your testicles

I want you to disguise yourself as something other than
 my cunt
 a similar such as lotus in mud under-sun blossoming
 a worrisome such as a long lost brother
 a welcoming convivial homespun
 a prodigal
 cunt a return to primordial a cross between Archaeopteryx feather
 and atlatl bone
 mythical and useful
 I want you to make noise as my cunt to shout scream and splutter
 I want you to dine out as my cunt to tease and flatter
 I want you to make out as my cunt to spit and splatter
 I want you my cunt to intervene in all matters
 I want you furious spurious curious
 legal and deboned of penis
 I want you inflamed and luxurious
 I want to walk through deergrass to your tropical underbelly
 I want you sleek ordered bordered bothered swelling nethered
 slithering slobbering and smelly as my cunt
 I want you to hone a sliver of stone to silver
 I want you to pee
 I want to flee to you moon phased revolved and argent
 I want you sole agent closed book secret compartment
 I want you my cunt to be a necessary requirement
 I want you speculated upon
 I want you investigated
 I want you to reach number one
 I want you hopelessly underestimated
 I want you to delve dive home hive shelter strive as my cunt
 I want you to stake a claim and cum unbuttoned
 I want you lame crippled bound and shackled
 I want you young I want you old I want you nubile wrinkled and
 croned
 my cunt I want you shy I want you bold
 I want you any way I may behold you
 I want you awake asleep at stake to keep tagged bleeped buggered
 meek
 I want you loose tight all night drunk dunked slunk debunked
 gender
 adjunct'd

loved
my cunt
I want you

The Only Witness

She was the only witness to the affairs, each time catching reflections. The women were everywhere — in the mirror, between windows, in a closet of shoes, the silver, in china and pictures, laundry sink and sockets. They were inside at all hours until she slept, alone. Her husband had a separate room where her foolishness seldom reached. But every night he'd shuffle down, jaded from reading in the den, drag back her shades and beg the porchlight shadows to come alive and strangle.

CHRISTA McAULIFFE

Christa McAuliffe died attempting to enter outer space. Christa McAuliffe may have had a drinking problem. Christa McAuliffe kept a small tong of metal under her left armpit. Christa McAuliffe had a birthmark under her tongue in the shape of one configuration of her back. Christa McAuliffe would have used the restroom 25,604 further times if she had not died so early. Christa McAuliffe was born in a small blue room. Christa McAuliffe thought about filling in her backyard swimming pool but never did it. Christa McAuliffe liked to sweat. Christa McAuliffe. Christa McAuliffe. Christa McAuliffe wanted a window in the floor of her bedroom so that she could see the dirt she slept on top of. Christa McAuliffe did not understand the moon from certain angles. Christa McAuliffe had aspirations to become a sculptor or a dentist before settling on the field of aeronautics. Christa McAuliffe preferred Kool Aid to coffee. Christa McAuliffe soaked her hair. Christa McAuliffe had a dream where she crawled back inside her mother full-bore and kissed her father on the mouth. Christa McAuliffe looked at women. Christa McAuliffe had a growth. Christa McAuliffe wrote sentences on paper that she did not understand. Christa McAuliffe invented one kind of plastic. Christa McAuliffe liked to chew things she picked up in the street. Christa McAuliffe did not believe in locking windows. Christa McAuliffe sometimes woke up beneath her bed. Christa McAuliffe faced the wall.

Elizabeth Bradfield

First

Why should anyone want to go to a place where someone else has been?

—Roald Amundsen

First overwintering. First
foot on the coast, leopard seal shot,
whale oil rendered, man gone mad.
Anne, snowshoeing
above treeline just after fresh
powder had topped the peaks, ran down a slope
shouting with each step *First!*
First! First! Snow kicking up
like confetti, the mark
of her tracks deep and, it's true
from what we could see, first.
Of course she wasn't. They weren't.
Until we narrowed the categories
sufficiently: first woman since
the last snowfall to set foot here.
First time I have felt dismay
since the last time I dismissed it.

Miguel Murphy

Melissophilia

He wanted it on him like an angry rain, he wanted
hurt like one black zero, bliss
biting him in just that blind
ball of pleasure—he wanted to become one
with absence, truth
on him after the stab

raised its pink testimony on the penis. He
harassed the bee in its glass jar
until it was a scrap of black scratch gone mad—he
plucked it like a berry, the ripe
bee between his thumb & forefinger
& he stuck it like a fat tack

to death—the sack
kept working like a lung, pumping the poison
into the Bitter Sock, the Sword of Blood, the man's Flower of Fear.
It was a dare

to himself, to put the needle
where it would hurt the most, to go so far in
the center of bliss
he would become its King, so far in
the sting would intoxicate
fear in the human, the sorrowful man.

Elizabeth Bradfield

**Why Shackleton's Stories Are Being Retold in
Book and Film**

We are all wondering the same things
in this darkened room, the ship not Enduring
after all, the men enduring *despite*:
How do the trials of our lives compare?

What would Shackleton have done
when the baby didn't stop crying. What
would he have done if his credit cards
were all denied or his girlfriend
slept with his brother or if he was downsized.

And would we have survived, too, if
given a chance? Kept peace and sanity
and most of our toes? Kept hope
when cell phone, wristwatch and film advance failed and
borealis was the only electric thing within our range?

A Moth's Alphabet

May a feather groom fur in
summer months? A moth,
itching with the inked "x" of some
cruel pencil, pauses
between the barbs and the cycles, singing:
"Tally, tally, tally to
the nearest ten. I
see a hawk-god—famine, war—bearing
the sun in his beak. His throat
is filled with socketless worms.

"Count the temples built
with red and blue stones.
Count the piles of soiled invitations.
Count the clout, the clot of
swarming aristocrats. The rest
of the passage is under construction."

A moth,
grooved and creased, given a spiral,
grey, plausibly
will never be considered—
concerto, ring!—never side
with the apt
appendage, the mane
of a hairless bonobo,
will never chair
itself off the moving sidewalk.
The monkey in
the teacup hat will never flap,
never flaunt its nave
before a wingless architect who stains
a tree's black trunk, who
stains the tree. The
monkey

is the moth in drag. The
camp costume pulls a bow
across the quartet. Quintet
 pares the tall dreams, pulls
rind from meat, from the ligature.

Sum, like a hole
inside the bird's hollow bone,
splits into twelve genealogies.
The moth is one, the monkey is one,
and the rest are bland souls
falling backwards through time.

Blind blab, foliage barring
the populace from their buildings,
wanders the forlorn municipality.
Slandered bowl fares well in the cold,
backward turning
from house to nest. Moth again:

“A house is a city.
A house is religious, is the small religion
of a dog barking in her sleep.
Slipped away,
say the call for help slipped past
the word's meaning. Sworn to wear,
worn carpet
beds red wine,
winds through life always waiting.

“A house is like a city.
A city is like fortissimo.
A score is like a musical score,
as a devotion is carved in tone.
Bricks beat bricks.
Nothing beats nothing.
There is no copy and all is wet,
being born to be born again.”

Odor is an adequate warning

My eyes haven't felt mine in some stretch. Behind the Rubik's click of waking skull. This face could levitate at building at the right angle. This truck will dissolve in a ditch of rain. Licked the salt sweat in your soft bed where for a long while I didn't lay. Swollen windows on the neighbor's doghouse. Exhale of the dead. I always considered it my fault our Schnauzer drowned with diabetes. I spent several hours this morning watching two black girls swim in all their clothes. A smudge of small remembrance. A crick in my glass knee. When mother comes back please tell her I'm already on my way.

——— *Seen through the slats of some short window: a man lifting barbells with his teeth.* ——— There's never been quite as many vermin in my guts as right now. I'd splay my meat if I had a mind. Coat hanger exit to our drowned car. Felt through the felt for some small hole. Motor sputter. Orange juice in gravel teacup. The house suspended in its bed. The moon gouged on ballpoint mission. Handgun trophy in my sock. Translucent dice game for your wife's knees. No one should ever sleep. You could envelope this city with one small child's skin if you had time. I've never met a penguin I didn't like, but I never met a penguin. The scratched sheets of poly-purpose. Hi-res definition of my bed. Next time you can have the better pillow. Think of a year in peanut butter. Think of what it must feel like to be a rubber band. ——— *The year I ate wild blueberries stuck at Scout camp I shit while running in the night.*

Diggin' Your grave

Last night was souped up—sky bare-assed—
BA, you insisted, and sunset, a blue flamer
without the stink. Beautiful, I pronounced.
I was just a chick wandering in and out
speaking another language. Copasetic,
you hissed. Dig? I dig, I murmured, gnarly
as the ocean; I'm diggin' your grave.
Don't have a cow. So we crashed.
But we didn't sleep. We didn't go
all the way. In the dark, all I could think,
bummed out, is you never gimme
any skin, we never lay any scratch;
you could be anyone's daddy-o,
let alone mine. Our bodies are full
of meaningless parts, souls and hearts
garnered from a midnight auto supply.
I could say I love you a thousand times
but you'd never say it at the same time.
We'll never look each other in the eye
and shout: Jinx! You owe me a Coke!
Now, dawn, fog rolling in thicker
than a five dollar malt, sunrise faint
as a lone taillight. Padunkle, I say anyway,
and wait for a kiss that never comes,
that never existed. We both know life
is just a five finger discount. And love
is just gutt waddin'. Easy, man. Easy.
I was gone over you. Now, I'm not.
So, keep your bowels open and stop
that lip flappin'. If you ain't got nothin'
to say, say nothin'. Be brave. Roll up
your peggers and wade into those bitchin' waves.

Mailbox Cemetery

On a mountain overlooking a swath of corn the dead had a famous view. None of them took for granted their slice of sky. And on most days their families trucked up from the city to picnic and ponder at the blue. Investors soon craved a cut and sent letters to the cemetery inviting the departed to ballgames, horses, concerts, and tea parties. But they never read the letters. Someone had stolen their boxes.

Mike Young

Me and My Friends Have Sarcastic Beards

I don't trust kids my age who don't have Friends In the War, are into war, render war, END DA WAR! Excuse me, you look real-ish: did we go to Sarah Lawrence and protest something? You make me feel like a logger on a spaceship. Like I wash my hair too much. Like my eyes should grow to accommodate these white sunglasses. Raybands? I make up weekday drinking names outside The Basement with a girl who schools me on Brian Wilson. O if we could sack fossil fuels for your discography trivia. It's not like I want something "holy" or I find the prim and lonely Visigoths. It's just a meth versus coke kind of thing. A mail order Neutral Milk Hotel shirt versus a concert stain. You make me feel like if I gave you a tree frog, it would die on Monday but receive abundant mention in your MySpace survey. You make me feel like using the stove to light a cigarette is a photo op. Wait, you have a bank account set aside for laser tattoo removal, but maybe I forgot to click Remember Me. "No, I was in Berlin reading Nietzsche and accelerating the boob to aporia ratio." "As of late, I have been totally loving Tropicana—wait—trip to Kenya?—no, no, tropicália. Tom Ze." It's not like I want something "hash brown" or I don't find Beautiful Losers recitation skillz essential. Excuse me. Not when there is white denim to revive, not when bottle necks still make for good slide guitar, not when you blinged out the dead tree frog, not when you bought a free trade plunger, not when we sang all night in a Sarah Lawrence loft until Eoin pissed on your cell phone charger and solved racism, bisexuality, and how to court a zesty violent twee. Remember when I got all up in your shit and you fed my email address to those porn websites? I feel like a boy made of old man socks and very clever text messages. Joe Cook's knuckles exploded in the desert. God you luv and fuck your world. Just kidding about God. Who is Joe Cook?

Did he go to Sarah Lawrence and protest something?
Remember when you told me I should fuck that girl,
then you wrote "make love" in your poem? So did I. Amen.

Filtered to Code

Where the volcano road steepens to walking with hands, I waited for the soldiers. Their truck grumbled through the jungle gnarl as three standing in the bed lurched forward from the sudden brake. Then the biggest man turned. "What are you doing here?" Laughing at my accent, he thumbed me in while flashing his single front, a tooth like me, a sucker scaled and parching in the sun. For the rest of the day we negotiated that road. We jumped in bed corners to lend better grip. We splashed down to muscle through mud holes. We threw shoulders below the bumpers to shimmytender the axles over ledges. At times we'd even hop out and whistle as the biggest man mounted the front grill and bounded the truck over boulders. When the wind began to whip the cling from our shirts, we finally spied the summit. The biggest man lit up and motioned me ahead with his smoke. "Here's the station where all the voices get filtered to code. But you know gringo, it's the same message either way: a man a plan a canal panama."

Satyriasis

Next in Tempe the train ruined the night
Our two bodies illegally
Screaming in their soft geographies
Doves Limes Hardships Sighs
Arisen out of our stiff chimneys

Again against the town we were smug
One inside another despite breaking-up
Masculine & at once lunar at once
Breaking purple moths from our jaws:

Green stalk in the shrine again your stem
Snaps into milk another drink
Raves another violin
Explodes for not a long moment into song

We are alive it feels good
To kiss lightning to spread lips across stones to worm
Around as if alone on the earth this curl
Rising between us Knife of Pleasure
This same lovely pink horn

Good Thorn on you as good as God
As water on flesh this boat that travels strangers
Other shores other weather the body the past
The drum vibration the storm

As men have done in history on vases
Burning their edges on our tongues

Our secret night nudity
Our dark gods ravishing like dogs
Our rivers Our salt-kiss Our stars
Our destruction Our climb
Our forests Our shirts of hair

Our mean bone desire
Our moon pulse
Our fat blood happiness

We speak unholy fires our tongues jealously
Tallest in the temples of one another

Pose

It could have been bolts, claws or fire
we saw messing with the glass.
The basement did not want the sky.

I watched you take off your bra,
lie back surrendered to my plans.
I lay beside you, arm nudging arm.

Minutes gathered to hours,
hours to clammy days. We saw the little light
do strange things, puff itself to voices,
then, immaculate rumblings.

It was never any other way,
a naked man, a naked woman,
waiting to return to the earth.

Requirements For Sanctity

Sudden things: weather sliding along,
a rifle's report in a valley over, dogs
running off with the bones of St. Augustine.
'Turns out he could whistle with a quill
in his cheek, feather first, then the clouds
would whisper bizarre wisdoms down to him.

Not me. I blow a blade of grass like a stupid god.
Not me. I didn't get my chores done.
Instead, two fistfuls of field mud.

Basement of the Lost

Mister didn't jacket the leather or drag of the earlier generation. Instead, he barechested a car so cosmic it birthed a basement. We'd roll the urban scorch, sticking pool, swishing hoops, and shacking up in his room below the wheels. As baseball began to rage, Mister nabbed a nearby field. First he rented out, a quarter a day, but soon switched to charging per head at the door. Stockmarketing the change, he carved more diamonds, and folks flocked crosscountry to ride in his popular until he branded that car 'The New San Francisco. Then everybody stopped, got out and got lost.

Against Liberation

—*March 31, 2003*

Admit it in the videogame
of the governments' boyish wars
the arcade blue crosshatch
of Tomahawks into Baghdad
unburies the moon's neon thorns
its empty theatre of skulls
& the red black tatters of war. Nightmare
like Beauty admit it—The TV
muted because we wanted torture admit it

to hear ourselves dying
forcing *abs* admit it
moaning the insults
of subjugation admit it
beating deliberately our tied hands
& sucking the blue memory admit it
of sea salt from our lips you & I.
The wreckage of being

safe from gunfire
like the special-ops POW
they're interviewing now admit it
while I interrogate you with kisses
& leave you crying please
stop please
wasting you with love admit it

who hasn't yet softly
crushed his wife's pink nipple
the face of his newborn
daughter or the bullet
sighing into his life like
horror & liberation admit it admit it

the light's destination or the body's
singing through Infinity
the truth of a bullet hole admit it weeping

“Bird, a letter in the lost...”

Bird, a letter in the lost
flock, tilts her glass eye
to the down. Dower
man creeks
through the marsh, stands
in the pre-dawn shallow.

His teeth were broken. His lips
were sanded.
His lips are sand. His teeth
are oak, are cabinet doors:
behind them, ice,
behind
the ice, abbreviations, a
factory.

Everything is smooth. Everything
is short for something else. The doors
close. They shut
a cotton ruby out. On
his lip, the ruby hangs.

Bird nerves through her own
crackle, through her
transparency. An eye
rolls up—the sun. An eye
rolls down, into
the light, the center, it arrows, is
the moon.

Swoop, swoop. She
tucks the cut into her beak.
Red, round, she
keeps this prickle close to mouth.

His far feet are still and still
hold to the ground.
He has no music
in his fingers. Never
a height: no, no.
He isn't, he
doesn't, he
won't carry, he
won't carry the
remaining eggs away.

David Krump

**Quick Dream In The Odd Restaurant
(A Love Poem)**

By the kitchen drain, underpaid early-twenties cooks
beat the marlin's terrified head into kitchen tiles.

Darling, you're always out of reach, out back
behind the dumpster, smoking grass. I know

you'll be back soon singing *Lure my heart
back to chardonnay barrels where patrons prepare*

their own goddamned meals. O crusted salmon,
O sleepy tenderloin, O catfish draped in butter –

But you never come back. My five-table section
reveals fangs. In poor-man's fashion, I toss my apron and crash

through a wide dining room window. The hostess finds me
footed on the softest new sod in this world. She's pert. She hands

me a small to-go box. Inside, that freezer-burnt birthday cupcake
looks unsurprising. *Can't finish it now? Take it with you.*

I take it with me along Soo-Line tracks that zag and sag
ridiculously over battered black water. I stand there

reciting my unplaced orders: shrimp scampi, artichokes
and tomatoes, almond honey broccoli. I read my glyphed

slips, my unfinished work, to the black water. And you, back there
down these tracks, stand calmly memorizing orders

from a table of zealous cannibals. Miles from you, mouth
around dry cake, this one creature carries on, waits in the weeds.

Close

I moved in close—
she was skirted,
skittish, skint,
& I had to pay
for the privilege,

her arm extended
towards my waist,
we were wasted
on a first date
of wine & guns &

roses, kept apart,
coming together,
I rebuffed her,
it was like a
check in hockey,

wounded vanity
became an issue,
for which I was
punished when I
changed my mind,

extended my arm,
what an age of
arms, she said,
I shall never
get my arm in,

Satanic rhetoric,
cause that was
it, date over,
dream ended, I
found myself

singing Lennon's
"Isolation" in a
Void that was
nowhere, nothing,
& endless: I was
high, dirty glass

Miguel Murphy

Turnip

Mother of Otherness, eat me.
Sylvia Plath

A tooth
when it explodes I get dressed in red
mud. Crushed
garlic & the carcass of a cricket
reach me. Footsteps. Drums
bellicose from other living
sound one swollen
fist pounding a door
on the other side of a tomb.
I listen for the river, hushing,
tearing the selves apart. Wearing
my blindfold, I breathe deeply.
I'm trying to wake up but
the perilous starlight is down.
There, there's soft brown pelts
shit-white with mildew—bury
my poor head against a thumb!
Their scent inside is scentless,
softer than a lime's black glow—
The maggot playing violin
like a beggar woman & I
a weeping mutt in a fresh bag of garbage.
I grow fat and fall asleep.
And when a woman picks me
from the dirt I'll be so blinded I
won't even notice the pain
when she bites off my chin & licks
the starch from my wound with her large
& masculine tentacle.

hidden within t/his tetraktys tenderness

...and as I lie with you inside I
contemplate eighteen lifetimes'
deterministic chaos probably needed
for the backwards melting ice cube to
presume the shape this life with you has
taken. My

body is built from a hard
history: uncertainty is wetwired into
its limited frames. Bones too thin with
poverty. Limbs too frailed by unlistening.
Feelings compartmentalized away by fanlighted
closets. You

are my disunambiguated
black swan, modelled after a correct
courting period. I am unused to this negotiated
listening-for. I am often brailleing, lost by humour,
abandoned by metaphor, gagged, tied and drowned
in a sea-irony

especially at moon times. You make
moon real. You make the moon reel upon
these sore joints. I must brace beneath this moon's
traces, your touch diaphanous, its various crescents,
your nightscent, your sense, your utterly patient labouring,
its nascent

pearly accessorizing neighbouring. Your
swoon drool spittle gets me on the quincunxed
turn. I might be ten steps from reliance, from losing
my home-need, from seed. I can plead only with your lace. I
am further out than I have ever been, statistically deluded,
opace. I

conclude blindness and you are gone
into
me

Hey, how are you?

It was one of those days
where you wake up and you know
you are not Simon.
You don't even think about
Simon. You don't even think
about you. You know who you
are and who you aren't and
you are not Simon. You don't
even know anyone named Simon. Then
you walk down the road that has
Gama
in graffiti on one wall and
Atômico
spray painted on the other. You
take a few steps down and see the sign:
Desaparecido: Simon Gomes de Avelar
and the photo of a young man between
the ages of 25 and 30. Curly hair. Dark
skin. Broad nose. No other distinguishing
characteristic. And nobody asks you
how you are. Nobody says
Hey, how are you?
And all you can think about is
Simon. Who is Simon?
Desaparecido. Between
the ages of 25 and 30.
Who am I?
Gama. Atômico. Graffiti.
Who are you?
Skin. Hair. Nose.
And you take a few steps
down the road
of distinguishing characteristics
and you walk up to nobody and say

Hey, how are you?
and nobody says
I am Simon.
And you say
Yeah, me too.

Grandmother: interview

Worn surfaces reveal too much—
an open wound, a patch of earth,
the cavity in one's mouth—don't
you find? Get a rug; hides bloodstains,
my neighbour said. Yes, I liked him,
my son, but loved? No. As a child,
he'd cling to my thighs, dig right in.
Oh, his love just wore me right out.

How was I to know he would take
a life or two? His wife, his son?
How could I know? What could I do?
We thought they were happy. Their house
was so new. Everything paid for.
Nothing owed. Oh, what do I know?
It's obvious I don't. I feel
just horrible. Like it's my fault.

He was desperate to go home
but there's nothing for it, is there?
If one's home does not want you back?
He loved her so. Maybe too much...
Did he hurt her? I don't know. Oh,
what about the stains? Who's going
to clean that up? I'll buy a rug.
It's the least we can do. The least.

Miguel Murphy

Sacofricosis

On the lap my grandfather's
hand pinches
my pocket while he tells
the story:

*He used to cut
his slacks just so.* I did not wonder
if there was a name
for this, this

ruining
of blue jeans & denim pants, this
hole in the sack of that

in which I placed quarters
for bus fare, love notes passed in class,
my high school I.D., a few
pieces of cinnamon candies

to suck
for their good burn. And what
about the name
for that other thing, that hard Lance of Blood? That
Tunnel of the lime-scented
dove citizen? That white
lie in the Holy Throat, Betrayal's Purple Stem—
What about my nights of slick delights?
And what

about the grandfather my cousin
accused of molesting? Here
underneath me at the family
table, re-telling the story of the girls
he rode the trolleys with, girls
whose hands he worked

around that broken, fat stick of fear until the wound
was wet as it was

hard with loss, my grandfather
touched my cock.

I'm not about to tell
it was o.k., but it
was one way I learned

an urge can make the reasonable
person inside
disappear—it was the way
I learned.

Fondest Posse

Clucking wildly, a deputy drops
from the balcony of a sandstorm.

A puny deed dupes
the engineer's boiled son—a steel

knob dissident, rustling
already, so early in the song.

These days, words are soft, found
in empty bottles, in blunt epitomes.

These epidemics walk long roads,
orphans sifting, foundlings looking

back and going there, to
long-lost, sewn-up hems.

The thorn is not
a ringing alarm, not a glowing clock.

The term is not
known in this county, comes

from one living in the lake, from
her surfacing to meet the herd.

The merit is not in the breath's long hoof.
The dread is not in the length's stiff line.

The sheriff reads
a novel where

stone voters turn
into unhatched eggs. On

ostrich legs, baskets filled
with townsfolk run

for the wooden cactus.
For the can of cocoa,

pages turn
into tumbleweed lace, in-

to flutter, wobble, into woo.

Yo Soy Celoso

Shadow, when you lie you speak the language
I recognize—though you sound like a clown
ruining good words: *revolución,*
bicicleta, jardín. Why do you have to be
such a thief? *¡Hombre*
yo te voy a dar
chingasos hasta sangres—en la calle—te lo juro!
I've been here already touching family photos.
I've been here with alcohol
your eyes melting onto my hands. Now
I don't exist. Here's your new boy talking with you in my
language: *Adan,* let me tell you how your balls
shall be eaten—let me
show you how the tongue
offers itself to a dark god, a crimson
& velvet cannibal aroused by little golden cymbals.
To be angry & in love is to be a tired
dog, the hairs all spiked down its back.
A jealous drum across the sky's blue slur
summoning those who don't know themselves *¡Yo*
sí quiero la vida de tu siempre matarme, Corazon!

Count Your Toes

The secret is, line up your steering wheel
with that of the car beyond the vacant spot.
If the driver's still inside, stare into his nose;
if not, peer sharply through the air his tiny nostrils
would be sucking. Shift to reverse; turn your wheel

all the way to the right; creep back a good five feet.
Stop. Turn the wheel left a revolution and a half,
release the brake and jam the gas. You'll hear a crunch
behind you (preferably from a cop's fender)
and feel your body jolt into your seat. Do not heed

the cackles of scandalized passerbys. Shift to drive
and jam the gas again. Another crunch: your body
and that of the driver ahead, whose name is probably

Jesus, pull together. Smash the cop, smash Jesus,
smash the cop and run proudly out of your car.
Strip to your underwear, holler Allah
and kiss the hot dog lady. Jail

is not as bad as you've been told.
You sit naked in your private cell,
count your toes, eat bologna sandwiches
and sing till your throat flies away.

Accounting

After a while one becomes very adept at counting paces while simultaneously assessing the terrain, yelling at the dogs, noting features for inclusion on the map and perhaps carrying on a conversation.

— Syd Kirkby, Antarctic surveyor

I've paced the coast, nine hundred
double paces to the mile. I've marked
peak and inlet, inked the map
with my own guesswork. Tell me
why I'm here. My sleep takes
nine thousand double paces. Breakfast
three hundred. Breakfast for the dogs,
just eighty. In fifty double paces
I can remember the rings worn
by my sisters, sapphire & opal.
Wind erases my tracks as soon
as they're stepped. How many paces
to a season? How distant am I now
from what I left? Time calves
from my memory into bergs of image
which, too, melt. I cannot sleep without
footfall running my dreams into some race
toward a finish I am not sure I want
to know.

Answer the Phone

My phone calls me. It says *You're low on memory.*
My mother is screaming. No, it's someone at work
or some place where people stand or sit in large boxes.
'Talk and stare all day long. It's my phone calling again.
It says *Don't forget the milk. Avoid I-285. Something
bad will happen there. Oh and the cats are practicing
Feng Shui on your furniture. Pay it no mind.* Knock.
Knock. Who's there? It's two Dead men delivering
pizza. I ask *is this some kind of joke?* But they just
stand there dumb as the living with arms reaching out
like pale rubber supplicant statues. I take the pizza.
It's warm. I'm hungry. I try to tip them. Quarters.
Dollars. Cat food. Fish Food. Raw meat. Old carrots.
Goldfish from the aquarium. But they won't move.
I go back in. Bite into a slice. In it, a little fortune
slip says: *Answer your phone.* Sure enough. It's
blinking. It's my phone texting me. It says *Two
dead men walk into a bar, one says....*Immediately
I cancel the beer-with-a-friend thing. Go straight
to the cellphone store. Notice a trail of people
following. A line beginning to fill the parking lot.
I scream *My phone is calling me!* All the phones
ring simultaneously. Simultaneously we answer
them. I roll over and reach out to touch your
warm body. No one's there.

All the world's a balloon

The sun is a great big balloon,
orange and indefinite
at Key West.

It sits and warbles, blinks and sighs.
The fish agree. None appear
to argue its case.

*

The balloon is the sky itself, blue and sumptuous
and carrying all the ground
in that direction that balloons choose most
often when left to themselves.

*

In the time we have left, please adjust your seat backs in the upright
and locked position. This is Captain Balloon speaking on behalf of
all our flight crew in wishing you a safe and happy landing should this
balloon ever decide to come down. In case of emergency no jumping
over the side as that may present a risk of imminent death.

*

And the balloon said to the balloon: "What party are you from?"

*

We are the hollow balloons, stretched thin
and lacking definition in any particular direction.
We bend and curve, but not in any way, shape or form
can we be considered anything but concave.

We are stuffed but not with straw.
We lack all conviction, except when we soar.

*

Are we not balloons? If we are pricked do we not burst?

*

In the helium is the balloon. As the balloon escapes
the helium collapses upon itself
like a giant deflated bag.

Thus is the world made safe for oxygen.

*

Her face, a balloon of enormous girth
trode the earth in ancient times,
bouncing from field to field,
trampling the grapes in the vineyards
squashing the olives in their trees.
The land was scorched with her wind,
scattered bare by her fiery breath,
flattened by her circular anguish.

*

Never steal a goddess' only balloon.
Not for all the rubber in Brazil
would I attempt such a travesty.

*

Contrary to popular belief the moon is not a balloon

but it does a nice impersonation of one,
hanging by a thread in the night
making all the lovers coo.

Only the dogs know what it is all about,
and they howl in protest
unable to latch their claws into its skin
and shock themselves when it pops.

*

Over a sea of mirrored surfaces
and concrete canyon lands
the blue balloon rises
mimicking the heron
in its grace.

*

An old balloon never dies.
It just slowly fades away.

*

Tie them down and do they not
deflate?

Better to let them go their way
even should your child weep.

On Brother Bernard

Last season, many industrious monks
along the hillside, handpicking corn. I think

now of brown robes waving beside the stalks
they cleared the tassled corn from, hand over hand.

Just last week, Brother Nicholas finished two fine clocks.
In the monastery shop, planed maple in hand walloped

the heart. Tonight, Brother Bernard drank too much beer
driving the brown county roads, pointing out good rivers.

On this Minnesota county road, police tazed and tackled him.
Pulled over, he decided to run. His brown robes caught

on spindly ditch branches that held him. I saw from the monastery
pick-up truck, through the swept open driver's door, a dark

blue trooper's knee, hard-down between Bernard's shoulders.
Brother Bernard spoke softly, only prayers in Latin.

Brother Bernard's warm prayers went up in the cold air.
The troopers let me go. From the truck in the ditch, I walked

five quiet miles to this other bar. I called the abbot about our habit.

Ramona & The Devil Rooster Lover

The girl loved her black rooster with the sun under its chin.
When she carried it under her arm like a warm storm of blood
& black fire, it went mad & slashed her face with its 6 small knives.
The girl screamed horror & the rooster inscribed her with beauty
like a demon, softly clucking her name. His eyes were black pearls.
His feathers soft as warm mirrors at night. He fought & he sang

to murder moonlight. Each morning, he called out Blood by singing—
his voice the axe that chopped its neck off night, staining his chin,
tearing the sky apart like a heart at dawn. He watched the pearls
of stars spill like music & die. He was the Master of Blood
& Silence & he strut on the dirt, this prince of beauty
striking matchsticks on the ground. The girl touched her cuts & dreamt knives

flew through the air where she willed them. She was the Carnival Knife-
Thrower-Woman, impaling red apples on weak men's heads. If she sang,
the song was for heartbreak & to spill the dark lover's beauty
into a bucket—for blood was her only happiness. On her chin
one claw left red letters. One hook split her lip & the blood
looked like the rooster tried scratching his name into her flesh. Pearls

of blood flew down her face with hot tears, for she loved the pearly
darkness of his looks & how they pierced her from the garden. Knives
stood up in her eyes! O She'd make the sunset of his love bleed
down her neck, breasts & hands. She wanted to paint him while singing
a scream, a jet of red—a portrait flooding out from his chin,
the black flower of his head plucked off its stem. Her beautiful

Orpheus wearing his slick outfit like a matador. His beauty
was her pain. She stayed in her bedroom for a week & drew the oval pearl
of his portrait in her sketchbook. His eye was her mirror. Where her chin
shone healed & her hair glossed like a sad black plant's. She held a knife
in her miniature self-portrait, in the eye of her dark love whose singing
she was clearly going to murder in this small opera of blood.

When she picked him, pressing both his wings tightly to her breast, blood
in her body spoke to blood in his. It said, *love me*. Beauty,
she hacked until she screamed & she screamed until she sang, she sang
across his neck laid out across the tree stump. His head dropped off like a pearl.
His body flew headless, death-mad through the yard. His feathers flashed knives
in the wind like a butcher's soul. The girl laughed—he marked her chin

& she drank his blood in a soup her mother boiled later. The moon pearled
that night on her belly where she buried him. Beautiful knives
slept inside her. Then she woke like a neck—& sang the cut sun of his chin.

kiss on the camber

I want t/his kiss
I want t/his hole a moth mouth
I want its jizz-probiscus curls not to miss
I want night festered pluck suckerered on a
my piss opportunity
I want lip occurrence
I want itasit unfurls to slip
t/his salivaspot honey-hun runnel

I want t/his kiss
I want t/his jadeblue zest taste
I want its anything more than just the gist
I want deep dug freeze thaw cleaver coombe
whorls to pucker
I want spume abundancy
I want it predated, heirarchied
t/his inhumed haste presumptative

I want t/his kiss
I want t/his sharpness
I want its finger print bloodlet acuity
I want unfettered access to its fuck potentiality
my let impunity
I want rush salinity
I want it pre-adrenalised, re-
realised t/his repeat phenomenality

I want t/his kiss
I want t/his swallow fluency lissed
I want its rinse property frisked bonebare
I want care hurled'a tenacity city horizonless
my daring normality
I want boundaries stalled
I want yours mine theirs hers
t/his s/he enthrallment bought to climax

I want t/his kiss
I want t/his wet promise hapaxed
I want its chastise-enfranchise branded
I want it doublestandarded backhanded singlemalted fizzed
my dime, my risk
I want swerve rapacity
I want its unexpurgated remiss
I want her kiss

Important

When you are still there,
Just that one peremptory step aside
And the dark fuming bus vortexes past you
And you are still there
Looking out from your envelope head

Continuing on your way
To something else so important

Importance gesticulates in as quickly as it soirees out

- Another thing
The bus can't carry:

A brown desiccated leaf
Dancing across the snow

All these things that you do
These things that you have married yourself to

Disclaimer: The call for poems in #19 went something like this. “I need to edit #19 because the original editor is going to edit his Ocho in 2009. Send me poems.” The issue fell into place. No one knew what the other was submitting. Towards the end of the selection process, I advised the last few stragglers that the issue was taking on a lovely macabre old/new testament feathery feel to it. It just so happened that they actually had something that fit. I decided to end the issue at 19 poets. The poems are placed in the order as I saw a story unfold.

Didi Menendez
March 16, 2008

Didi Menendez wears the hat most of the time. Sometimes she gives the hat over to others. It is a lovely hat.

NOTES