

Jellyroll

A Journal of New American Poetry

Winter 2010





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Poems

Jeffrey C. Alfier

Taking Inventory at Desert Center

The town's name's a blunt assertion, nothing
but a ground zero only thieves target,
stealing copper from phone lines, figuring
this town's all dressed up with nowhere to go.
Like the foodmart clerk who always walks home
after her evening shift. At 10:00 p.m.,
fresh from her hot bath, she drops her earrings
into sparkling Chardonnay just to hear
the ringing sound they make against the glass,
a quiet jingling like the town's only
payphone, idle for weeks, ringing once more.

Jeffrey C. Alfier

News of the Dancer

He was convicted of shoving his bride
of twelve days off a rock face in the hills
above a resort town beach, her body
unstitched by stone that tore the halter top
and miniskirt she'd planned to nightclub in.
Her flawless, manicured nails and uncut
hands belied the defendant's hard quibble
that she'd lost her foothold to the night's breeze.

Along the coastal road below that cliff,
a homeless woman's slumped over crosswords,
curled in on herself like a burning hand
mutely releasing the riddle of words.

Michelle Askin

Entertainment & Greatest Hits Compilations

How I remember it was, waking from suicide alone.
Or no, there were glasses washed with decay of buckwheat
& cards that opened in soft audio Morning has broken—
from Jehovah's Witnesses eager to multiply in numeric texts.
It's true she returns sometimes from the forest.
Her boots wet with rain & other parts of storm.
But that was the old heartbreak. Now it's waking
each 4 a.m., hitchhiking fifty miles to West Virginia towns
opening another shop daily, with deer slay bows or propane tubs.
I meant the sad part is no one knows I'm gone.

Sometimes I stop at a meth lab shack turned American Chinese buffet.
The billboard: Geishas blowing kisses, Kung Fu men bowing.
A little out of scene like in the restroom: a pale FM echo
of Madonna's "Get Into The Groove" ... at night I lock the door
where no one else can see, while out the window checkered flags
wave Nascar along wind shook power lines & white ash trees
hurling graffiti love letter bark. The Spanish farm hands
pumping water across barbed wire hum in tune.
I am cleansed with the familiar-like Shell gas station signs
& candy barrel aisles of generic supermarkets. So that I am
not bound by time, place, or banishment. So that they come to offer
me water at the window sill for a limping scarlet sparrow,
& I take the jug to my mouth as though it were prayer: a rosary's decade,
milk from the sacrificial goat. And though it was the old heartbreak—
a hand's blood that butchered to feed every rusted rented room,
my starvation, my stomach thrashed & bruised.

Michelle Askin

It Was In This House

October 22: scarecrows along the lawns.
My door frame suiting your coat's gray.
Across the street: the white Buddhist girls
who were above want. Loud and drunk
after a grain alcohol party.
In the kitchen I was baking a cake:
someone's birthday or a church fundraiser.
It's hard to remember things—except,
that for awhile I had wanted you.
And did you know even Buddhists
believe in Hell and all its levels?
So I don't regret those traditional Easters.
Before brunch the admiring aunts, sneaking
peaks at my sister and her boyfriend
necking in the sunroom. But in this house
just us, your boot tracking in the porch leaves.
For awhile it was like this.

Jen Besemer

Delta

That delta there, sand, tiny flag of light under the waves. Make room for this and for the thought that follows, its shirt inside-out, torn pocket, and for the gull-feather floating on the surface. When rock twitches and swims away, vow to go along, vow to trace the last flounder's tumbling word.

Jen Besemer

A Wheel

It isn't right to call a wheel a race. The power of law is the greater thing. Even so, the best part of discovery is the marks it makes on the soles of your shoes. Enough time; with enough time, even a scarecrow learns to hold up the sky.

C.L. Bledsoe

The Wind Riders

The wind blew steadily for three days before they came. The power had been out since the first day from downed trees. The water was out because the pump was electric. We were pissing in the back yard, shitting in someone's child's potty we'd found in the attic. What we missed the most was status updates. They came in hard, rocking the house on its rotting foundations. Everything had already been stripped from the walls, so there was nothing left to fall but our hopes. They entered through the broken windows, twirling in the dust that never rested. We threw the remnants of our food at them, cowards that we were, but they weren't looking for food. They were looking for adoration, blind obedience, worthwhile coupons to respectable establishments. They were looking for things we could never understand. So we gave them cash. They went through all our clothes but refused even our brightest socks. They sat on our couch, which made no sense since TV was dead. They complained about America and its need for hats, the necessity of dry hands in effective business introductions. The syntactical structures of their whines were strange and complex. Their shrill voices pierced our ears like hot pins. When they left, they took only our complacency. And some change from the bowl by the door.

C.L. Bledsoe

Fire

The ants are always hungry. They spit fire to cook their food before they bite. They are much more civilized than us. They chew each bite thoroughly. They never hide partially eaten donuts under the passenger seat out of shame. They never have to run five miles on a treadmill just to stop crying. Ants never count their legs to make sure they haven't misplaced one; they always know by smell. They never fall into the same traps, or if they do, it doesn't matter because there are 2000 more behind them, and ants don't even have names to be missed.

Geoffrey Cruickshank-Hagenbuckle

Mexican Action Fiction

Avoir peur means love of fear
This music sounds like weather
Scissors cover paper puzzle pistol
 pages years
Picturing laughter in slaughter
Remember's hard to spell
I'll never be a writer.

Child, you are led into error
By the denomination of phenomena.

Do you remember the beginning
 of the end?
A world that never was has passed away
 I came here from distant lands
Lots of thoughts like dirty birdies
 déjà vu do ghost of past
Walk streets once known now foreign too
All is forgiven I am in heaven.

Chick sold my Raw Power LP
For beat dope cut with baby lax—

Fuck art eat flesh.
The black hole is a curve in space
So dire it devours matter.

Geoffrey Cruickshank-Hagenbuckle

Tussaud's Trousseau

Today I toured the Paris
Graves I'm not in even one.

If this city is a story
I remember every corner.

When lost in a hall of mirrors
Look at the floor.

Today they are winding a clock.
I am thinking again of the epitaph . . .

How it begins to resemble us
What it so urgently asks for.

We were running out of Horse.
I took 2 trannies, cooked the wicks

Languishing from sentiment on vapor.
Life dealt with me the way an organism

Isolates a foreign body—
Seeking to reject or immune.

The clock stops. (Did I say it?)
Today I don't write for the future.

Before the World Wide Web
Before Virgin Megastore,

Before safe sex, "Friends &
Family," before World War IV.

Weston Cutter

Casabianca

Love's a man
watching his favorite bridge
catch fire, gust
for gust's sake, wind because
what else is there,
fire grows with elemental breath
and if only love's
burning boy could look back,
see the man
at the burning bridge's edge,
say: love is wind
feeding fire, or love's fire, or
fuck love in
poetry: before it falls get to
the bridge's
far side. Let love be the man
with wounded
hand stranded a river's far side
from home,
say love's the stranded man in
articulateless
need, love's the need, the burnt
hand, wind
gusting for gust's sake, the man
closing then
opening his burnt hand, open
then close, say
love is watching a favorite bridge
burn and seeing
an old arsonist friend walk away,
bridge's far side,
love is watching the friend wave
then take the first
left, heading for the stranded
man's home.

Weston Cutter

Reveal

This is the letting go: how the light
slips from the room, arms from
a sweater. Cast wide enough, you'll
find your real wound: the street, alive
with memory, springstrewn: last
year's leaves, debris like fragments
of once-great machinery. I left this
and this along that street; I keep
leaving. Dark and two cars pass,
one red overtaking another. This
is the only view, all that'll ever
be revealed.

Steve Dossey

Whimsy

The children in the pool
become silver fish
The lifeguard is a mermaid
her breasts are hot air balloons
that float about the patina of mountains
I'm in a gondola and the earth
is a marble
I swallow
pyramid shaped clouds
I fall from the sky
landing in the mouth of a trout
diving

Steve Dossey

The Dead

The dead ask awkward questions
for people lying down
holding kites with stiff fingers
A million smoking petals
in their eye sockets
It's raining in America
Feels like Germany once did
Gutter streams daily
thru alleys, down windows
and doors
Rivers run thick and murky
Caravans of sinister eyes
holding canisters of clouds
promising lightning
Look at how the dogs do run
Bloody gnashing teeth

Mika Gellman

twins

your otherness exhausts me

as we walk past the azaleas
at the gates of the city in which
i love you;

nothing before we came here.

i love giganticness, don't you?
a reminder of when the great
white shark ruled.

now consider the politics of birds:
j ran his fingers around perfectly shaped
breasts, and

fairy godmother's dust
makes everything smell like oranges.

there is no time,
ballerina's going down the escalator—
it's assisted suicide for dummies.

you are lime trees
and the gaps between your front teeth,
and cigarette ash,
and a mermaid's tail—
you are not the wind.

Mika Gellman

stone age

generations of

string and masking tape
rebellions downtown

at dawn

witch doctor transvestite
stands silhouette
for sex and magic
eight balls

outlaw heartbreaker

mining with a go-go
dancer in washington
square and someone is
watching

a tv antenna

sticking out of the sand
for rock is
not a photograph

jump into the future
broken electrical
socket

Eddy Habib

The Theme Song to *The Sopranos*

Tonight I will sleep with my body pillow (slightly shorter than my own length)
clasped to my chest
and I will touch the top of it and pretend it's your hair and pet it
I will buy things I see on tv
pizza cutters that double as forks
devices used to cook hard boiled eggs in a cube shape
but wait! if I act now I can get the device and a
lifetime supply of eggs for just two unfuckingbelievable
payments of \$9.97
and with this offer I will possess
a life time of eggs to cube at my whimsy
I will invite you over for breakfast and you
will be amazed at my cubed eggs
you will say "finally my eggs have a sense of urgency
these are the eggs of the future these are eggs that will not fuck around
these are eggs we can depend on forever"
but ketchup will be the same and salt and pepper will still be salty and peppery
you will cut my fingers off and
poke my eyes out with the pizza cutter that doubles as a fork
to stop me from bleeding out
you will order three snuggies: one for me
one for you
and one for my pizza cutter wounds
you ask me if you should order a fourth
just in case we ever get a cat or something and I
say "no that's really tacky"
I have been looking forward to sleeping since I
woke up this morning (got yourself a gun).

Eddy Habib

10/5/10

The sky is like a blanket
on an elementary school sick day, cool and damp,
the last remnants of a fever
soaking into the fabric.
It's a sky you could fold if you
just found the corners, pulled it over itself
until it's the size of a chicklet.
I would love to chew the sky.
My poetry class is in the School of Management,
and this makes me sad
in the same way that the lack of respect
children's bubblegum gets in relation to
more adult varieties of gum.
There are seven people, and I don't know who they are.
I have forgotten more names than I've shed skin cells.
Hyperbole gets me through the day.
These people think I'm either cold and indifferent
or awkward as all hell
but the truth is I'm just high
as shit, and they don't exist to me.
I am going to the bathroom and
will take as long as possible
but I will not "use" the bathroom.
I will sit on the toilet, writing this,
and hear everyone come in
and they will think I am using the bathroom
but they will be wrong.

Kyle Hemmings

The Junkies of Gethsemane

The night air is thick with Tiger Bloom and heavy tropes. Past the trimmed gardens, the clumps of Honeybells or Blueangels, they crawl singlefile: The Frog Kings and the Green Goo miesters, salt on their tongues, the fingers like tubers, the breach of faith, and now the impossible chasm between them and their one time supplier of oyster suitcases and barnacle clippers—Cyrthanthus. One of the betrayers, a man wishing to be a woman who wishes to be a child, rises, and says in low falsetto, "Master, where you've been? You promised to teach us the miracle of The Sacred Hue." Slowly, Cyrthanthus turns, his beard full of bees, dried petals from old lovers, and replies, "Why do you deceive me? Have I not the elephant ears of an old woman waiting for her son's return from the sand wars? Did I not feed you when your ponds went dry or your pastel children went seeking sweet asylum in the oriental night? Did I not command the oceans to give up their ruby queens and imperial dwarfs for you? And this is how you repay me? By giving my true name to the Dogs of Double Bounty?" And with that each of the followers bow their heads and kneel, while the flowers around them turn to Maneaters and the only sounds for miles are the shuffling of a woman's feet, one who is carrying jugs into town, and inside one, the cackle of an apple green calyx that was once a human heart.

Kyle Hemmings

Waiting for Deidre

Waiting for Deidre to wake from this sterile bed of three-cornered sheets, to declare that a bedpan is not her idea of private need that the curtains with their gauzy transparency turn the sun a hazy shade of violet or chemise while it might have hung naked in her cornflower blue coma. Waiting for Deidre to say weren't you the boy with the arms like hydraulic lifts and the fingers tight as cords weren't you the one who carried me from the fire, wrapped me in a wet blanket as I slipped into a shudder of a dream that became my new home. Waiting for Deidre to pull these words from the air, to put together the woman sawed in two the way magicians can make us disappear in the blink of an eye.

Paul Hostovsky

Handle

Because I don't have anything to hold onto,
because I don't have a Bible
or a family ancestor or two,
the way others seem to,
when the going gets
a little bumpy
as they say in airplanes
flying around
up in the firmament—
a word that's probably
in the Bible—not bumpy,
bumpy isn't in the Bible,
though it probably should be—
but firmament, a word that
sounds like what it isn't,
almost certainly
is in the Bible somewhere.
Therefore I hold onto
the words. You might even say
I harp on them
because of the musical
connotation which I love—
harp being the biggest
instrument in the whole ensemble,
a piece of furniture practically—
you might even stay afloat on a harp
if the ensemble ever went down,
if it ever went under. I know
the words can't save me but
aren't they the most interesting things
in the Universe, which is the one
Verse, the one great Poem? I mean
I would rather say spelunking
than go spelunking any day.
In the beginning was the word, they say,
but I think they got it backwards. The word
came after the thing. The thing came first,
and then somebody, Adam probably,
gave it a name, gave it a handle.
But in the end you have to let go

of everything. Even the words, even your own name. Lay it down like a broken thing laid down beside the broken thing itself.

Paul Hostovsky

The Good Fight

Which one
is the good fight
anyway?
Isn't it the good guy
kicking butt but
a little reluctantly
because he's good
and hates to have to,
but since no one else would
and wrong would just go
on unrighted,
he steps up to the plate
and takes a few good swings
and puts that baby to bed? Go
fuck yourself, you said to me,
and have said nothing else
all day. Now it's night
and your silence is still
that choked, caked, kill-
all-the-motherfuckers-take-
no-prisoners kind
you have honed to a fine
squint. But I only
meant to point out
what was wrong—
to right it. I don't know much
but I know I love
your butt more than God
or country, and when we fight
it hurts me right
here—right
here. And now
I think the good fight
is the one we get through
quickly, get to the other side of
with nothing dead or otherwise
irreparable floating
in the churning reddish
air we part like a sea,
miraculously

finding our way back
to each other's
arms.

Kara Imre

When vacuoles won't do,

stick the “-” side of the battery
in the oven, preset to 375°.

The world series will be on shortly
and the zucchini will be cut

in cubes. What zoo did the first
elephant flock to, you asked as

you held a patch to your eye like
Bazooka Joe. There are hours

on clocks when the mind drifts.
Look, the space shuttle is landing

on schedule sweetie, and we have
all this time to lift. I'm surging positive

ions on the ottoman. Just a spoonful
of sugar and craters turn to moons.

Kara Imre

a zombie zeroed out my zipcode

so now I'm nothing
on a map
or was it his arms?
No, there I was an ocean
probably Pacific.
I had the waves kiss the sand hello
every time they touched, met
for the first rendezvous or
the third shore thing affair.
When's the wedding I ask the Ripples.
They waver, whisper
wrinkle, whistle.
I swing, swirl ~
there's things to celebrate.
There's this current I'm composed of
so I bring my blues to the post office
to put in a package.
No return address
a living corpse can budge.

Rich Ives

The End of the Road

I sit down at that precise moment because I understand it's the right thing to do. Then I get up and go for a walk in the snow. I can't see the end of the road. So I sit down because again it is the right thing to do.

So I go to the shopping mall to buy some walking shoes. So I can walk in comfort. And the place is very very busy. So I sit down.

So while I'm sitting there I think about where I am going to go walking and before you know it, I'm there. Walking. And my feet begin to feel like maybe they're going to be developing some blisters. So I sit down. So I can see if I have any blisters.

And I don't. Have any blisters. So I go back to the mall to buy some shoes. But the mall is closed. So I break in and buy some shoes. I leave the money on the counter. Because it's the right thing to do. So then I sit down.

I don't have any blisters and I'm not going to get any either. My feet are comfortable at this moment. My feet are inordinately comfortable at this moment. My feet do not understand what is going to happen. But I do and I sit down some more.

I still can't see the end of the road. So it's a good thing I have new shoes. So I can get up and follow the path meant for walking.

And so that I may sit down some more. Because the end of the road is not going to make itself available to me so easily just because I'm looking for it. That is what I have learned from the sun as it leaves me yet again and that is what I will say to the moon's shepherds when I find them.

Rich Ives

Territorial Imperative

We had a long way to go and the mountain roads were dangerous. Portions of the journey were violated, but the spirit remained. I liked it, but it clung, tightly.

A nightmare of shoestring wisdom. Family members and acquaintances with homespun remedies for unnamed disturbances.

It's the old story. An evil spell.

That's why I went hunting every night.

Yes, I'm always ahead of myself, but I can't win.

It's the politeness that kills you.

Predictably, I devoured some small frightened creature nearly every excursion.

One time there was another world visiting with clouds of pale wispy shrimp in the sky. It was one of my most pleasant diversions. I could have let on, but it's easier pretending you don't know. The baby talk gets me, but you can get as pissy as you want and they think it's all part of the episode.

There's a moment of calm when you think it's all inevitable. It's a moment of pleasure until hope excites the forgotten anxieties again.

I've been studying its architecture. A fine old example of retro-abandoned symbolism. The skin chimney especially creates an aura of undesirability and the large square rooms with high ceilings and so many wavy little windows invite the invigorating and annoyingly ambiguous cold air into far too many otherwise comfortable thoughts. "Institutional" the newlyweds might whisper behind the real estate agent's back.

But all this does belongs to us, despite appearances. There's genius and incredible control in the collusions of the hopeless. Especially the families. It's a clever spell. The most desperate ones shimmy and dart and try to run away. It's no use. If escape were possible, we wouldn't desire it.

John Kenyon

Janitor of the Soul

I sat at a study table
On the second floor of the public library and
Was startled to see myself walking down the street.
I was much better dressed and had an air
Of confidence about me. That was nice to see.
I strode – something I don't do much,
Preferring to stroll or shuffle – into one shop on the
Block, then another, my shoulders drooping
A bit with each empty-handed exit.
Sitting and watching, I wondered what I sought.
I checked my pockets, but could find
No shopping list, no clue.
Was it peace? Love? Happiness? An answer to the
Great big imponderable that fuels life?
Yeah, right. That or a watch battery or a new pen
Or a notebook, I suppose.
Didn't I know you can't buy the former, and the latter is
Best found at the discount store? I'd have to have a
Talk with myself later.
As I exited the last storefront, I saw that my mission
Remained unfulfilled. I was glad I had
Spared myself the time as I sat, wasting still more
Of it thumbing through soiled magazines on topics
Of no interest when I should have been working.
As I stood to leave, I saw myself reach the end of the block
And the corner bar that brought it to a close.
I decided to go down and join myself for a drink.
Maybe I would get to the bottom of this after all.

John Kenyon

Hardly Art

What is the exact point of entropy?
Yes, I know the scientists have it down to,
well, a science.
But what of that pair of jeans slung over the chair?
What is the point between comfortably broken in
and embarrassingly worn?
And what of art? When is it done, when is it actually art?
When asked, the painter Huddleston – don't worry,
dilettante, you've never heard of him because he's
local – told me, "it's done when it's done."
And this poem? Is it really a poem, or a series of
questions, an essay in all but name, written in
broken lines because a short poem is easier to sell
than a short essay. What will make it a poem? Will it be
the next question, when I ask, "What about love?"
Yes, I know the moment when adoration
tipped and became love. It was on that trip when you
slipped your hand into mine as we walked, oblivious to the
clamminess that set in as I thought about initiating things
for several minutes prior.
But what of the end? Of love, that is. You would say,
when one of us passes. No, actually, that would be me,
offering the easy answer, and you would say,
"If you die first, I'll still always love you," thereby trumping me.
As I sit, in the jeans you've told me a dozen times to throw out,
writing a poem about a painter who can never put down
the brush, looking across the room as you read a magazine,
your legs tucked up under you, your teeth biting your lower lip
in concentration.

Caroline Klocksiem

Consistent Stars

If only
only you

were here/if only you were
I have

lived differently
every moment/ I miss

consistent punctuation
in
the
world/ the sound

of your words leaving your mouth

shooting stars

a pail

pale half-
life every holding us
things

together/ stitching everything
together/gathering every-

thing gathers

the way a white thread

shoots
across a mother's skirt
skirt those holding and regular
pauses/ stars

I am missing

Something tiny
And regular

Like swallowing

I wallow—Rilke—
“Silent friend of many

distances, feel/ how
your breath enlarges all
of space.”

The cricket’s call
reaches things, another
through black
iron gate

I am hoarse for something
immeasurably small like this

and regular/ like swallowing
elemental like

sweating
I love you

in/ with every
instance
configuration of salt.

Caroline Klocksiem

Stingray

Coral cut my name on her line of teeth:
Touch and Toss Back. I'm not the one
you'll keep, nor the forest nor the valley cheeks,
desert pearls or prairie dogs. My tail, my spear,
my guide, my one-more-time. My hunted. One last swimming
chance. How I hummingbird the murk. How I hook together
currents, flick back. The stranger's zipper
you trapped, wet-dreamed of reeling in. Spring and my satin
white undercloud caught in a charm: Its teasing, unpinning. My flying
lightspeed into breathing. Your spinning
mouth all over.

J.B. Mulligan

layers of equations

specific math music life
onions of eleven dimensions
each skin of formulae flesh
on inner outer other skin
the variable a name a theme
for so many its and it turns
out and in that the it is
only a mute spokesperson
for themes of the spiritous
flesh of the purest ideas
just beyond of which beams
and notes of darkbirds blaze
and appear out of sight
in other startled eyes

J.B. Mulligan

at how many removes is god removed

ICONS ICONS ICONS
echos echos echos
rings across the skypond
a music spread of idears
flaeshed in the bright and drab
that we praey toward hungry
and perhaps desired by what
by nature must need the most
the rest and all of it outsprawled

THE EARS OF THE WOLF RISE
and twitch from the sound
possible and unknown

THE SOUND SEEKS A WOLF
the wolf only a meal

THE SHARPEST TEETH SNAP
at the wind trailing while
steamy magnificent haunches
the wild untidy head
snorting its joy a valley away
shadow against the clouds
before the clouds beneath a moon
while blood spatters snow
and the wolf thankful bows

Benjamin Nardolilli

Everyday Genesis

The first six days are the beads
For you to roll over like a monk.

Sunday, of course, is for rest,
But reflection too, and prayers.

Monday is the morning of labor,
Out with the tools to sharpen and use.

Tuesday is the time of purification,
The removal of waste, of excess hair.

Wednesday is the heat of the work,
In the furnace and out.

Thursday is spent on harvest and accounting,
For notice of time and the shape of fruits.

Friday is for a song without accompaniment,
For the wine to come out and be watered down.

Saturday is the time to leave the monastery,
Retreat from the heart and inhabit your body.

Benjamin Nardolilli

Serving Mainly as an Object

One of these days I will commit a crime,
But leave enough of a witness
Just to see the sketch of me.

I want to know the impression
I can make as far as appearances go,
And the best the artists can do.

What descriptions will encapsulate me?
Will victims run to the thesauri?
And the artists sharpen their brushes for me?

Will I be too rare for them,
Or nothing more than so average,
As to prohibit any coloring between the lines?

Maybe there will be a word
About the haircut I just got,
Useful for me and the barber college.

If weight and height are left to a guess,
Educated, or prejudiced,
The hair can still be described within reason

Though what officer is ever taken
Out from the warmth of a bed at night,
And told to look for a fine set of follicles?

Michael S. Walker

Just Because

Just because it whistles
Don't make it a whistle,
My grandmother
Was fond of saying,
And I would nod my head, sagely
Wondering just how senile she really was
Living alone now
In the house she had shared with my grandfather
For thirty-seven years—
Just because I'm sinning
Don't make me a sinner,
I would say to infuriate her
When she asked me why I wasn't going to church
On all those Holy Days of Obligation.
Why wasn't she? I asked,
And she would reply angrily she had done her doing
It was up to me now to keep the fires of hell alive.
Her job, it seemed, was to overfeed things
Plants, stray cats,
Her own sense of loss
A finger cutting through the dust
Collecting on glass picture frames.

Monica Wendel

Newton Creek (Brooklyn/Queens Border)

Newton Creek, wider than the Genesee River,
half-canal anyway, old dumping ground for sewage
and the scum left after refining ore.
We are balancing, cannot hold hands.
He shifts from concrete block to concrete block
sneakers steady, as though he is on the jetty
by his mother's house, rocks and skin
covered with the thin layer of salt brought by the Sound.
Two days after he broke his jaw,
he shared his painkillers and we floated,
our feet the same level as the water,
moving like the air itself was water. When I dreamt,
his dream-him had his jaw wired shut too, and in my dream
he could not open his mouth to kiss me.
Now each street turns into dead-ends,
signs read "Guards Armed and Unarmed,"
"Beware of Dogs." The streets are lined with too-nice cars
that don't fit in, that may or may not be mob cars
because there is always a government in place,
especially the places where government has left.
Like the way a tide recedes and leaves behind
detritus: the garbage, yes, but also the creek itself,
oozing slowly, unused locks for ships with nowhere to go.

Lesley Yalen

-from Untitled, Helen

stray waifs

There's you and there's outside

Either a skirt beneath which
The end of gnashing, the return to a
Protected radius

Or a wing on a blade of grass
Caught in the act of acting like grass
Of meshing like the teeth of gears

Mathematics is more than just guesswork.
The parts are purposeful and rarely flapping

The order of operations matters
But I don't like it to
I like to answer the phone when it rings
In my chest
But I can't say
When the time has come

There are two competing theories about me
The first goes Do not take her to a motion picture

The second says my footwork will improve with hopscotch
Just like any Roman soldier

Lesley Yalen

-from Untitled, Helen

the sunshine and the love of our friends

Stories in which animals are made to talk and act like human beings have never appealed to me. I have many friends all over the world, but I would never take pleasure in confusing their inherent goodness with that of a dogwood if they were a linden. Right away I touch people, feeding them from my hand if they're horses, though I'm shy in instances of phrase and inflection. Oh but I love to kiss my friends! It seems as if I were living in the midst of stirring events, like a battle I did win in another lifetime. I don't remember but the letters assure me I was once quite ill, as does the king's face, which he wore as a mask. But again, I touch upon the circle of honoured names I must not mention.

Lesley Yalen

-from Untitled, Helen

the squares are cut out, so that the men stand in them firmly

When you die. When inside no shaking leaf
or thought or breathed feel of saying things
or meaning. When finally deprived. And the
construction and the process of the proof.
And afraid. And Beethoven composed his
music for his God. When forced to be born
all alone again. All normal and alone. When
without a thought of authorship you slip all
egress from the heavily bolted earth when
explosions are tearing holes in iron and
balancing on a peg is no option. When tea
is served in a patternless dress various ladies
being introduced to me by name. And the
borderland of grammar. Can't seem
to catch their names over the hearing.

Notes

Jeffrey C. Alfier is a Pushcart prize nominee whose poems have appeared recently in *Connecticut River Review* and *South Poetry Magazine* (UK), with work forthcoming in *New York Quarterly*. His chapbooks include *Strangers Within the Gate* (2005) and *Offloading the Wounded* (2010), both from The Moon Publishing. His third chapbook, *Before the Troubadour Exits*, a collection of bar poems, will be out this fall. Alfier also serves as co-editor of *San Pedro River Review*.

Michelle Askin's poetry has appeared in *63 Channels*, *Plain Spoke*, *Fogged Clarity*, *PANK*, *Oyez Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Arlington, Va and works in special education.

Jen Besemer is an interarts professional whose work falls under—and transgresses—many different categories, including poetry, fiction, translation, visual art and performance. Most of her work is informed by collaborative and procedural methods of composition, and the use of exploratory fragmentation to synthesize verbal/visual texts. As a participant in the fifth annual Chicago Calling Arts Festival, on October 10, 2010, Jen performed/presented four "recombinant" poems in digital, visual and verbal formats. In June 2010, she performed four pieces from her chapbook *Gorgeous Hybrids* at the Chicago debut of *David London's Sunday Circus*. In 2008 Jen contributed text and sound to Vincent Dermody's *Information Booth* project, some of which was published in the chapbook *Information Booth: Duet for Caller and Oracle*. Also in 2008, she contributed four visual/verbal collage poems to the electronic chapbook *Dust*, edited by Nicholas Alexander Hayes. Jen also supplied translations of four of the ten chapters of Michael Löwy's 2009 book *Morning Star: Surrealism, Marxism, Anarchism, Situationism, Utopia* (University of Texas Press, 2009). She regularly writes features and reviews for *Rain Taxi Review of Books*, and was a 2003 Pushcart Prize nominee. Work is forthcoming in *PANK* and *Artifice*.

C.L. Bledsoe is the author of two poetry collections, _____ (*want/need*) (Plan B Press, 2008), and *Anthem* (Červená Barva Press, 2009), as well as a short story collection called *Naming the Animals* (Mary Celeste Press, 2010). A poetry chapbook from *Right Hand Pointing* entitled *Goodbye to Noise*, is currently available on the Right Hand Pointing website. A minichap, *Texas*, was recently published by Mud Luscious Press. His story, *Leaving the Garden*, was selected as a Notable Story of 2008 for *Story South's* Million Writer's Award. In addition, Bledsoe has written reviews for *The Hollins Critic*, *The Arkansas Review*, *American Book Review*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, and elsewhere. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize three times, and he maintains a blog called *Murder Your Darlings* at <http://clbledsoe.blogspot.com>.

Geoffrey Cruickshank-Hagenbuckle “I who vibrated at the clamor of fucking behemoths, and heavy whirlpools fifty miles off . . .” GeoffreyCruickshank-Hagenbuckle is the author of *Kook!* (para-normal noir fiction) and *Nuit Maudit* (poetry). He has been published in nearly 100 poetry journals from *Action Yes* to *Verse*, including *The Boston Review*, *Lit*, *Fence*, *Beaubourg/Pompidou Editions*, *MiPoesias*, *Jacket*, *Rain Taxi*, *Purple*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *The Paris Times*. He is the editor of the poetry journal *Dear Bear*. He was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2004, and anthologized in *Fence: The First Nine Years*. His film credits include *Tremors*, *Finding Forrester* (directed by Gus Van Sant), and *Our City Dreams* (directed by Chiara Clemente).

Weston Cutter hails from Minnesota, teaches at Northwestern College in Iowa, edits the book review website *Corduroy Books*, has had work either recently published or has work coming soon in the *Southern Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Indiana Review*, and *Forklift, OH*. His first collection of stories, *You'd Be a Stranger, Too*, will be published this winter by BlazeVox.

Steve Dossey's work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Black Mountain II*, *Spit in the Ocean*, *On the Bus*, *Beat Angels*, *The Beat Vision*, *Cutting Edge*, *Haiku Ramblings*, *Blood Lotus*, *SpokenWar*, *Slow Trains*, *Word Riot*, and *Kill Poet*. He has recently completed *The Park Diaries*, a book written from a woman's viewpoint. He lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Mika Gellman attends NYU's Gallatin School and studies post-modern and contemporary poetry. She lives in Bushwick, Brooklyn.

Eddy Habib is an English undergraduate at UMass Amherst. He is originally from Worcester, MA, and was a member of the Worcester Youth Slam Poetry Team from 2006 to 2009. He would like to stop being lazy and start submitting more of his work for publication. He currently works as the Comics Editor for the *UMass Daily Collegian*.

Kyle Hemmings lives and works in New Jersey. His work has been featured in *Ophelia Street*, *Quicksilver*, *Literary Tonic*, *Vis a Tergo*, and others.

Paul Hostovsky's poems have won a Pushcart Prize, the Muriel Craft Bailey Award from *The Comstock Review*, and numerous poetry chapbook contests. He has been featured on *Poetry Daily*, *Verse Daily*, *The Writer's Almanac*, and *Best of the Net 2008 and 2009*. His latest book of poems is *Dear Truth* (Main Street Rag, 2009). To read more of his work, visit his website at www.paulhostovsky.com.

Kara Imre received her MFA in Writing from Sarah Lawrence College and holds a BA in Writing and Theatre from Emerson College. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Spooky Boyfriend* and *Word For/Word*, among others. She lives in the state where the Wiffle ball was invented.

Rich Ives has received grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Artist Trust, Seattle Arts Commission and the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines for his work in poetry, fiction, editing, publishing, translation and photography. His writing has appeared in *Verse*, *North American Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Northwest Review*, *Quarterly West*, *Iowa Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Fiction Daily* and many more. He is the 2009 winner of the Francis Locke Memorial Poetry Award from Bitter Oleander. His story collection, *The Balloon Containing the Water Containing the Narrative Begins Leaking*, was one of five finalists for the 2009 Starcherone Innovative Fiction Prize. In 2010 he was a finalist in fiction at *Black Warrior Review* and *Mississippi Review* and in poetry at *Cloudbank* and *Mississippi Review*. The *Mississippi Review* finalist works appear in the Spring issue of that magazine and the *Cloudbank* finalist appears in the Spring issue of that magazine as well.

John Kenyon is a newspaper editor in Iowa. He keeps the blog *Things I'd Rather Be Doing* (www.tirbd.com), where he writes about books, music and pop culture. He has published short crime fiction with several online publications. These are his first published poems.

Caroline Klocksiem's poems have most recently appeared in, or are forthcoming from *The Pinch*, *Poets and Artists*, and *BlazeVox*. Originally from South Carolina, she's a graduate of Arizona State University's MFA program, a Massachusetts Cultural Council fellowship recipient, and co-poetry editor for *42opus*.

J.B. Mulligan has had poems and stories in dozens of magazines, including recently, *Inkspill*, *Red River Review*, *Cafe Irreal*, *Stone's Throw*, *Perceptions*, and *Vox Humana*. He has had two chapbooks: *The Stations of the Cross* (Samisdat Press, 1982) and *This Way to the Egress* (Samisdat Press, 1985) and also has work included in the anthology *Inside Out: A Gathering of Poets*.

Benjamin Nardolilli is a writer currently living in Montclair, New Jersey. His work has appeared in the *Houston Literary Review*, *Perigee Magazine*, *Canopic Jar*, *One Ghana One Voice*, *Elimae*, *Poems Niederngasse*, *Gold Dust*, *Anemone Sidecar*, *Contemporary American Voices*, *SoMa Literary Review*, *Gloom Cupboard*, and *Black Words on White Paper*. In addition he maintains a blog at mirrorsponge.blogspot.com.

Sam Sebren is a multidisciplinary artist whose work was featured in the *2nd Photography Triennial* at The Center for Photography in Woodstock and in CPW's *Photography Quarterly* #97 publication. Sam's work was also shown recently at The College of St. Elizabeth in Morristown, NJ and at the University at Buffalo Art Gallery. Sam lives in the Hudson Valley where he is also now a programmer/co-host for *Tell It Like It Is* on WGXC, a new community radio station.

Michael S. Walker is a graduate of Ohio State University where he earned his BA in English. His poems have appeared in the *Cornfield Review*, the *Short North Gazette* and elsewhere.

Monica Wendel received her MFA in poetry writing from NYU in May 2010. While at NYU, she was awarded Goldwater and Starworks Fellowships; tutored 7th grade math in Bed-Stuy; did layout for the *Washington Square Review*; and made it to the semi-finals in the first ever Miss G Train Pageant. She currently spends her time teaching English at St. Thomas Aquinas College and interning at the *Bellevue Literary Review*. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Staccato Fiction*, *Paper Bag Magazine*, *Drunken Boat* and *Forklift, Ohio*.

Lesley Yalen lives in Northampton, MA. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *jubilat*, *Glitterpony*, *Invisible Ear*, *Octopus*, *notnostrums*, *Encyclopedia Vol. 2*, and elsewhere. She is a member of the Agnes Fox Press publishing collective.

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