

FURRY CHICLETS



**joie de vivre
1997**

JOIE DE VIVRE

First off, please note there is no table of contents. You are meant to get lost in the pages and slowly find your way back. Each poem drags its author's name around at the end, and if there is not one there, it's because that poem is written by the same author who wrote the next poem, and eventually you'll get to a name, and that's who wrote the lot.

Next, it's time to get maudlin and talk about Furry Chiclets, because this is the last issue. For ten years I've given each issue of Furry Chiclets a French subtitle. Usually, they have been dark, sombre names, or ones suggesting that poets reach a bad end -- "Demimonde" was the second issue, and "Danse Macabre" the most recent. So I'm breaking with tradition here in the last issue, using an upbeat subtitle -- Joie de vivre -- which of course means "joy of living," as you likely already know. The cover art is not even wry or tongue in cheek, being by an obviously sincere Flemish fellow named Robert Campin. May we all be as lucky as the little fellow giving us the hi-sign while snuggling up to mom.

Editing a poetry journal has been an interesting job since I started back in 1986. Then it was a hobby for me and Tom Brill, both struggling lawyers, laboring in the salt mines of downtown LA. Now Tom is struggling in the salt mines of Newport Beach, and I am laboring in obscurity in Southern Oregon. My office in an old building has a view of dry hills. The comfortable burghers of our town are retirees from the south. The somnolence of the populace could be carved with a knife like dry, old leathery soap. Getting poetry from around the country has given me a look into minds pained, twisted, strained and straining in ways that would not occur to many of the people I encounter in the flesh.

Poets are angry, and I love that. I think they are angry because they cannot find joy. They seem to be missing love at every turn. They seem to feel that stupidity gets the upper hand, day after day. I mostly agree that's the problem, and their anger seems justified.

Still, I'm not going to be publishing Furry Chiclets any more. The poets, of course, will all keep writing. It's been fun coming along for the ride for the last ten years. Feel free to write to me. Maybe now, I'll even have time to write back.

Very truly yours,

Charles Carreon
Ex-editor, Furry Chiclets
lawpoet@mind.net

Sleep Now

You roll over to him
miss his unparted lips,
peck him on the chin.
No matter.
Roll over.
Go to sleep
waiting for waves of me
bundled in sad poetry
to roll over.
And I'll be there
waiting, too,
in waves
to roll over you
and make sad poetry
out of what is left
you and me.
Roll over.
Sleep now.

Reed F. Coleman



Not a pretty silence emitted,
mesh of veins in words, weedy confluences, where fish jump, it's
universal surprise this white flat of representation

keyless goldenrod shade in wind, against broken door
of an empty house

young bodies make love here, bottles roll, from side to side
like femurs magazines drift arctic through fantasies
of bodies on rain pages, erotic white plasma

losing of one orgasmic, face identity
 willingly, but not

Jay Liveson
Riverdale, New York

" thunder "

**denim drownings & skypure language
worn bones open like a flower
marrow-petals hushed & unhusked
silence dribbling down**

medicinal honey

robbed from the myths

the legends of

goldstreamer sadribbon sunset

Apollo's cart toppled

& the apples rolling forth

belching thunder

AnnaLea Bailey
Norfolk, VA

I'M IN THE BATHTUB WITH MY DOG WHEN A THUNDERSTORM COMES AND LIGHTNING STRIKES RIGHT OVERHEAD, BLOWING OUT THE ELECTRIC POWER IN MY BUILDING. MY DOG LEAPS UP AND TRIES TO GRAB MY HEAD. I SHOUT, HEY GOD, HAVE YOU COME TO TAKE MY DOG? OR DO YOU WANT ME? AGAIN LIGHTNING STRIKES, EVEN CLOSER, A TERRIFIC FLASH AND ROAR. I SAY, OKAY GOD. I SEE. DON'T GET ANY CLOSER. BUT LET ME ASK YOU A QUESTION. IF I GIVE YOU MY DOG WILL YOU GIVE ME A NICE WOMAN? AGAIN LIGHTNING STRIKES, COMING RIGHT INTO THE ROOM. THE DOG IS VAPORIZED AND IN HIS PLACE THERE'S A RADIANT WOMAN. I ASK HER, ARE YOU FLESH AND BONE? I CAN'T SEE WHAT YOUR BODY IS. SHE KISSED ME AND DISAPPEARED. I NEVER

SAW MY DOG AGAIN. BUT THE LIGHT WOMAN SURE TURNED ME ON.

IT WAS WORTH IT.

OH YES.

INDEED.

Robert Human



Eigne Katze

**You say I have the
patience of a saint.
It is not true and
anyway I have never
wanted sainthood.**

**What I have is the
impatient patience
of a cat
sometimes lashing
an angry tail
but waiting
fixed of eye
orange of eye
by the mouse-hole
for the white mouse.**

For you, love.

You.

**Mary Hale Jackson
Denver, Colorado**

E-6

Though branded a bad element
During a "Triple A" tour,
We overlooked his malignment,

Welcoming his arrival, and
For awhile, he restored
Urgency to sagging spirits

On Sunday mornings;
Not that he intended to
Compete with the pulpit,

For his sermons touted
Hitting, stealing and chasing bad
Balls with beer-chasers

In the dugout, the homily
Of high-arc slow pitch.
He was a marvel, the natural

Geyser of talent we once yearned
To siphon in our dreams,
Distant spurts of hope

Which softly trickled
Foul in the chalkdust
Along the first baseline.

In the box his stance was sure.
There was brashness in his eyes
And quickness in his wrists.

He played in the hole
With an effervescence like
The contents in his can, crisp

And stimulating, handling
Each chance cleanly, his
Throws timely. But as

Line-ups advanced and

She said God was her pimp
That's why the cops sped by
as she stretched and posed on US\$1.
Her protection -- a shield from heaven
slouched in the back seat, her legs apart
I saw it:
a grey incandescence
like crack smoke and confidence.
It was shatterproof
guarding her bare feet from highway debris
and her well-worn weave from unraveling.

Carefully navigating my way home,
I wished myself luck
Because pagan children are naked
and Sophia was too smart
to care
where she was headed.

The sky has created itself
a white wall
Which above it
angels whirl and twirl amongst the stars
In complete indifference

to my inner dismemberment.

I am here I am inside myself
surrounded by grey
There are no trees or birds here
in this grayness
That has pocketed
itself inside itself

There is only
a shadow of coldness that is here
That is in one room
and then another
It follows me around
my shadow's shadow

**I wish it would depart
but I know it is waiting
Waiting, waiting, waiting
just for me.**

Jancarl Campi
Citrus Heights, CA



A MOMENT TOO SOON

Here you are
like a furious river
exorcised only by rote
amid the gelatine morning
losing at tarot
with the misfortune
of your Gypsy friend
playing a green guitar
on the broken sofa
given up on excising
only rewinding the silent films
you watch all night
with exasperated dada
you painting toes
black and blue
preferring Picasso

to any other dream
determined to escape
any jetty of insults
expected to be teased
by a hairbreadth of knowledge
wishing Judy Garland
could touch the weight
of your needled arm
and cradle you
with your sorrowful blood.



POOR CENTURY

All her lovers have left
and only her thoughts
want to keep me alive
wishing for the harness bells
of Rene Magritte
blazing above my roofs
empty and damp
with too few birds
in a refugee season
the rain in plaster air
by the cold movie houses
of this city's remnant
where once greatness spoke
by the blood of the murdered
in this demolished night
motionless
and all her friends
have gone from me
trampled by time
slaughtered from immobility,
all her days have left me
the newsstands are empty
humiliated with fainting brows
only the wind gnashes
out its trio, con brio,
it is Mozart I believe.

B. Z. Niditch
Brookline, MA

MT. VERNON ST.

(Boston)

Early foliage
is again a memory
like the ambulance sirens
last night
interposed in rainy outrages
wondering whose giggle
in deserted sheets
and lost umbrellas
were ours for the asking
listening to the parked cars
of a city's Manichean face
the torpor of November
of primitive laundrettes
where once chandeliers
on Mt. Vernon
heard Henry James whispering
of his disguised correspondence
and absent birthday cakes
are murdered every year
inside the oblique brownstones
with its grieving mornings
wanting to bury fathers
in the sweat
of another shattered time
in deserted Beacon Hill
only strictly Golden Dome.

B. Z. Niditch
Brookline, MA

drones

i sit on
my crapper throne
inside another stolen
moment
from my work among the thieves
and i smudge
with my fingers
against the sieve of my eyes
the mystery and stink and offal
of another day,
my heart
beating like a pinball
the echo insane
inside my tin chest

this is a gift;
i let
the black birds inside my head
out
to peck at
the tiny fragments
shattered
from another day
always an ear cocked
for the door
telling me
to quickly gather the birds
and that i must share
this pathetic
solitude
with the grunts and
farts
of another guy
pausing from his job,
well suited
dressed to kill
in here and human like the rest,
his insides
sounding like
a violent mistake
as we both sit on our crapper thrones

dying
like bees
unwound
after the sting.



machismo

i asked a prostitute to dance,
i went to her my desire
like a sick innocent flower
on east hasting
youth dangling from me like spit
her heckles
as innocent as a bee sting;
my confetti blood and shallow grave
desperation, stupid
and blind:
an easy mark
she took my money and ran.
and idiot to the end
i followed.
wait,
i said
and she said wait for me
be a friend, i need a friend
and i was a friend
and waited for a long, long
time
crouching in the dark
of east hasting
whistling my sorrow and fear and stupidity
whistling my sick flower desire
for her to return;
i was such a friend
i banged on the door
at the astoria
hotel
four in the fucking morning

woke up the desk clerk
he rang her room
or maybe not her room
a guy came down and told me to fuck off.
i did.

Andrew Lithgow
Vancouver, BC



SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Our ambitious schedule is tossed aside
in favor of a long walk in the woods.
Blackberry vines struggle up the hill
and grab at our uncovered ankles.
Tender flesh tears unexpectedly.
We come suddenly upon the burned out ruins;
a black shell of a house held together by
honeysuckle and trumpet vines.

The black skeleton springs up from the greenness;
a grim surprise on a sunny afternoon.
We stand and gaze at it, contemplating
whose house it might have once been until we are
startled by the caw of a blacker than black crow.
Then we turn back toward the hot asphalt of the
bleak, treeless landscape we call home.

That night I hear the sound of children laughing,
dogs barking, and the crows calling fire, fire.



JUST BEFORE THE STORM

Dark thin trees stand under skies scarred by hot stars;
quiet sentinels against the coming storm.
Herons fly in from the North to perch on blistered branches.
Lightning cuts the dark clouds in jagged pieces
and as the air cools, the haunting hollow cry of the owl
crosses the swamp on the rain scented wind.

The intense fever of the day drops as the sun
sinks below the moss covered ledge,
and my spirit stirs as though anticipating a lover's arrival.
The herons fly low and follow the river,
their wings lightly brushing the water like quills
dipped in flowing ink.
The owl is silent now and the air is still.
The world is a picture without sound.



IMPALED

Snared in mid-flight
the small bird was impaled
on the long sliver of a thorn
on the persimmon tree.
As time passed, its small body withered
and became as the persimmon
until feathers and flesh and finally bone
fell to the cold ground below.



DURATION OF THE LONGEST NIGHT

The moon increases nightly
to become in its final,
yet transitory state,
ripe, luscious, tempting;
a forbidden fruit hung
in the cold deep freeze of sky.

That first bite brought on the craving
and now I hold nothing sacred-
not the oscillation of the pendulum,
not the centrifugal force that pushed insanity away,
not the magnets natural attraction;
not even the silence of the darkness.

I must learn the alphabet
of my new language
with a mind in fragments,
functioning at half-capacity.

I am chased, stalked, and tortured;
driven to the far corner of the room.

I stand at the window, looking down,
looking for LaStadt.
Headlight cut through the fog.
People pass under the street light.
I do not belong to this group of people
going somewhere.

I cannot leave this small space that is mine...
The refraction of light in its passage
from water to air
parallels the passage of my soul
from its scarred body.

I dream of a lover who comes in the darkness,
dangerous and powerful;
capable of satisfying the raging beast,
capable of leaving before daylight
ravages my dark, heavy room.

I know the Fates are not above playing tricks,
and not even Seraphis as the Sun can save me.
Metal tongued and struck dumb
I am caged and caught
for the duration of the night.

Linda Herring
Port Angeles, WA



Chrysalis for R.W.

I hear him crying
deep from inside the bones
where muscle had been
flexing, young, smiling
among the men he was happy
to belong between, because they saw
his beauty, because he was human there
it was his street, and the others
couldn't take it from him.

He fills the couch
with bones and tears,
a raft in an ocean of salt water.
He lays on his back, forced
to swallow the sky,
it hangs everywhere around him.
He hopes it is really heaven.

When he sleeps he dreams
of waking, dreams of not feeling
pain, he knows
the body is man's best friend
and in the end
his enemy, he must bribe it
with pills and needles, he keeps it
company, because without him
it is no one.

Now he sees himself
part man, part spirit, someone
who is leaving, he is
wearing his skin like a shroud,
a placenta, a cocoon,
a room to pass through
to the next one.



Sacrifice

We pray
but it is not enough. We must bear
everything, not knowing how,
wearing the vulnerable armor of our hearts
into the dark glint of blindness
as it smiles inside us.

We secretly know this
but rely on the grope of our hands
to close around comfort,
a leash on a pet, a necklace
of cut glass, easily shattered,

our lives, bent over, picking up pieces

we carry like rattling change,
splinters of bone, ornaments
beautiful and brief as youth.

I am not young, not old,
standing in what could be
the center of life and turn on my heel
to stumble on death,
to see us on our knees
asking for favors, promising
anything but our selves.



The Struggle Of Muscle

Skin wraps around bone
making the skull lovely,
covering the sockets, the horror
of the empty jaw, the rigid teeth,
their hollow white grin, covering

how the skeleton is no one, how flesh
covers no one, masking the absence
of a person, the world
caught in pockets of thoughts
that feed on believing

the body is home, a haven,
the suggestion of heaven
made by a slip of the tongue
wanting to be god, wanting
to pray away death

though it waits ahead, an abstract
and certain sun burning the horizon,
disappearing each night like a dream,
the dream we sleep in
and wake in each morning

as the body lives to forget
we are in it the struggle
of muscle to bend around
the truth, to keep us young,
to keep us quiet.

Rumor Has It

**Tomorrow at the latest
I will take up these pieces
and put myself together,
this scatter of thoughts
will pinch me into a woman,**

**but hearing this body is a dream,
hearing I dream my self
I pause, leaving the gaps open,
tearing down structure
condemning the house yet saving**

**the windows, skylights, doors everywhere
thrown wide as my heart growing
larger than I understand.
I cannot be found there,
only a great space.**

**Julie Rogers
Ashland, OR**



FINDING SOLUTIONS

**She is quiet, but her lips seem
tempted by the autumn wind**

**To widen and writhe and scatter words
like leaves swirling, sweeping,**

**tossing bright and brittle thoughts
In a wild scurry towards**

**a centrifuge, curled in the roar,
lost in the rustle, into a vortex**

unwillingly. I hear the fallen leaves
and watch them scatter, resisting

my own desperate need to gather,
to wrap them all against the wind.

Richard Stephens
Washington, DC



**THE EYES OF THE PEACOCK, TWELVE VIRGINS,
THE HUNS IN THE DISTANCE: A LANDSCAPE**

Twelve of them! Twelve! Twelve Huns,
each counting a splayed blue and green tail
with covetous eyes. Casually crossing their legs, the ladies,
the landed ladies, virgins, eye the Huns.

Together, they eye the peacocks, who reciprocate
a thousand times over. Always approaching, the Huns
have eyes only for the coveted birds.
But none of this really matters, does it?

What was he thinking, what fancy prompted
the landscape to explode like that?
It isn't worth writing about.
Someday, he too will ravish his virgin peacocks.

David Lunde
Forestville, NY



TWO VIEWS OF CENTAURS

I
Hearing of harvests they
clamor down the mountains
to trouble us; we hear
hoofs cracking the cobble
stones, breaking bricks; they whinny
over beer foam, their breath
is poisoned by rotting teeth;

they ravage our cache of
vegetables, rip limbs off
trees to bludgeon us. In
the waning summer we keep
watch for their shadowy
forms filling spaces between
trees and raising dust clouds
in the fields. We shape our
dreams around broken bones; we
have no sanguineous brutality
to match theirs. A month hence our
foreboding begins, our stomachs
sour, our hearts weaken,
our energy falls at
our feet. The events of our
lives fold over themselves providing
constant reminders of
what is in store for us.
They load our food supply in
creels harnessed over their spines and return to the mountains.

II

Part ravishing beauty,
they descend from the north
to face crowds in urban
shopping malls, they eat fast-
food hay and apples. They
smoke cheap cigarettes which
fill air with an acrid
haze. Their cars rattle as
if silverware, shed rust,
and sag on the chassis.
They swing their tremendous
bodies into the seats of
cars, their hooves dent
the doors and damage the
leather. In the autumn
after the leaves have gone,
they deer-hunt, grow layers
of fat on their bodies
to hold them fast against
winter's squeezing motions.

David Spiering, Eau Claire, WI

of white fragments and buzzing bells...

One swing
yanked me up from the red dirt.

Anne LoCascio
Eugene, OR



A Collector of Words

There are those
who collect
words, gather
them together
just so

and dip them
in honey.

I am a collector
of words, but
I do not dip
them in
honey.

I twist them
around like
the spring of
a clock that
has gone too
far and dip
them in
blood

then I send
them off to
their doom.

John C. Erianne
Bridgeton, NJ

Reverie

left turn arrow greener than circular
one for straight ahead...stronger
light bulb behind the latter? different
batch of beaded emerald glass
at the factory in Hoboken where
the Puerto Rican mixer had a hangover?
some older car lost its tail pipe, now
flattened near the faded red curb...
three silly spindle-legged girls
in pleated Catholic skirts...
can they marry happily so divided
between this world and the next?
why couldn't I love my mother more?
why, why this unending interest
day and night in what I say inside?

Anselm Brocki
Santa Monica, CA



Cigarette Butts

On the corner of ninth and elm about
three four days after thanksgiving i was
sittin on a bench underneath all those
Xmas lights, all strung up and down
the storefronts, hung up in leafless trees.
This guy walks by his eyes look at me like
a radar or a metal detector or some other
insightful machine. And since i'm
the target, since i'm the enemy
plane or the time bomb or the car
keys or the pocket change, he says,
"how ya doin?"

"We're all gonna die in one huge
traffic accident!" i say, seein that
his batteries must be runnin low, since
he slows up, puckers his lips
to savor this new piece of apocalyptic prophecy.
Count one mississippi two mississippi and before

Steve Henn
Warsaw, IN

**it hungers and feeds
but is never full.**

A decorative horizontal line composed of approximately 28 small black diamonds arranged in a slightly wavy pattern across the width of the page.

FURRY CHICLETS 1997 -- JOIE DE VIVRE, 28

letting Einstein bat my ears
should have learned something...

a storm was moving in
they hit Iowa all the time
like a ban on nightlife
I was listening to Nirvana
when lightning struck
blew the headphones off
my ears knocked me off
the K-Mart office chair
on my ass it was dark

the lightning killed the lights.
I shave my head up the sides
no damage there
I sat in the dark thinking
six years till 2000 a.d.
computers are not lightning
is tougher than the IRS
short century
five years and a wake-up.

Sean Brendan-Brown
Hattiesburg, MS



static

silence
cracks its knuckles as we tiptoe

from room to room we
punish with our dead mouths
eyes avoiding others like
a mid-day sun

i don't know which anger
moves you this day
and, stranger
i don't know my own

socks sliding on the carpet, though

i know to touch you
with a touch a look a sentence
would bring pain

and so i move
in the mute slow motion
of the dance of hatred
that only lovers know

Alicia Bayer
Mankato, MN



divorce

his mind was like a thick slab
of shimmering mica
as she peeled layers off
each one left a fresh surface behind
glistening in the light
each one so shiny and new
she thought she'd found the truth
but they all gave way in time

for years she was taunted and enticed
by the prospect of finally knowing him
but the last time she tried
he just disappeared
there was nothing there at all
she tried to piece the sheets together
but they all disintegrated to sand
and blew away

Laurie Calhoun
Steamboat Springs, CO



I Know What You Need

I hate everything that brings you joy
there is not enough pain in your life
I can see that as plain as misery

by the disaffected way you stroll through
your world as if shielded from
the slings and arrows hurled by life's
numerous and unmerciful tormenters

lucky for you I know just what you need

you need your kneecaps broken
you need your father dead and buried
you need your mother raped and beaten
you need your children alienated
you need your beliefs disproved
and your dreams disillusioned
you need an unhealthy dose of reality
you need to be dragged down to my level

I can do this for you
I care enough
to do this for you

Karl Koweski
Hammond, IN



She It

me pigeon holing New York
window to window as
Spiderman traipse neo modern
cornices half way up a
beauty which L.A couldn't spare
now drugged on Broadway myself
sky scrape knee to knee
hungry for her fresh air left
blow other end of continent
hurt by broken circuit telephone
dreams swim i die in
a basement tenement hand out
funny as King Kong

Peter Layton
Lakewood, CA

MY DAUGHTER'S ROOM

an oinkery of unrest
crayon-graffiti walls
graduate to plastic hunk mosaics
operatic, Pennyworth masques
smirk haunting exorcism
experimental laboratory vanity
emanate toxic stench
with lipstick-kissed tissues

her jewels dream South African diamonds
her footwear, Imelda Marcos museums
her music, evolutionary and revolutionary
Duran Duran to Paula Abdul Paula Abdul
fake flower floral shoppe
tangled combs and jungled brushes
foam curlers! steam curlers!
brush curlers! aluminum curlers!

sockets overload!
fuses explode!
pink, pinker, pinkest
magenta madness!
lace! frills! ruffles!
everywhere! everyday! aargh!
enjoy it while you can, dad
she'll be gone before you blink

Mike Catalano
Montgomery, AL



The Given (for Dave)

The gift,
in shimmering blue wrapping,
lies among ruins
where concentric circles
embrace space
and quadratic equations
lie broken, unsolved.

"Open it," you say.
Our features are distorted in
crisp creases and folds.
I peel away the layers and
find a cube containing
night.
Edges, sharp and polished,
it is heavy with repressed dreams.
"It grants wishes," you explain.

I close my eyes
and think so hard I can see stars
and the vermilion spray
of a comet's tail.
When I open them,
water spills from the ceiling
onto the floor,
soaking the tip of your tie,
saturating my mind,
smudging faint green matrices
into an incongruent blur.

You and I dissolve
in liquid
thick with forgotten theorems
and probability.
We slip through the cracked
window into
crevices of dry soil
below...
This is where the proof begins.

Teresa Middleton
Indianapolis, IN



My Reflection In His Mirror

Abjected bore;
Crying, death-eager
fuck-up getting hatred in
jangling kill-love moods.
Naked, obese pig

quelled repeatedly;
stupid too. Unhappy
vagabond wife, x-raying
yoked zombie.

Stephanie Talbott-Franco
Garden City, KS



RELIGION ACCORDING TO THE JETSONS

One day while channel surfing
and riding the crest of a fuzzy screen
until it broke on the shore..
and the channel changed
with the pulling of the undertow
and I gushed exuberantly into the Jetsons

George was walking Astro on a treadmill,
which featured an Americanized Christianity

Hinduism, Buddhism, Animism
as well as Jainism...were passed quickly underfoot
all the gentle religions...forgotten and ridiculed
but in the distance, a silent
but
evergrowing scream, resounds

"Help Jain....stop this crazy thing!!!"

Jon Swier
Virginia Beach, VA



dead rattle snakes

Any
when I think about my love for you
it's in this same place
these conflicting trees
stick wet rained leaves the
now smarting leapt shadows

go from log to log
the ants I'll watch a
long tentacled sentence of bar lock
dashes
the mulched smells warm pine needles in baskets
are you, your follow shower close in
hair
your bleeding real animal holds it in
a red star unzipped sleep bag flannel
touch you there
silver moon owls
a hunger for walking miles mountains
porcupines
the zizzling L trucks on Algonquin Highway
packed seeds
stopped one hour at Musket's
home of real chipped beef
a sleepy Volkswagen bus
like rust bucket we
lean on a black chalk tire spare
spring
me drawing pictures of a aluminum cup
on a rock
you still have it I know
shaded gray
parked garage behind your house
husband's there three children
I'm in another state
see part you breasts
doing
curlicues on gold backed paper

Peter Layton
Lakewood, CA



PLAYGROUND

The little boy made a sad face
He turned away so I wouldn't see it
He put his hands in his pockets
and walked away
I couldn't see his face

The grass, it needed to be mowed
it saw him as his small head
bent down
It would have to be cut soon

The rock saw his face as he
kicked it into the storm drain
He was far away now and I could
barely make out his red shirt
and blue jeans
I didn't know what he was thinking
or what he felt

I watched a butterfly fall to die
in a puddle and started after the boy
Grabbing his shoulder I spun him around
Here's your lunch money back, shithead

Alex Vautier
Durango, CO



SOAR

you're turning me into a bird

with your tongue
folding open my colors
like peacock
tails teeth
smooth the spine of my
feathers palms
calm the wings
of my ribs
my muscles unfurl cords
unclench
around swallow-syllables
slowly

i sing to your fingers
they gather words
from my lips and hold
each sound like a blade

**your voice coaxes my voice
into the sky
waits for my body to follow
the shape of your mouth**

Juliet Cook
B.G., OH

A Lot Of Heads Were Blown (circa 1730 when)

**They figured if you surrounded a dying man with
Copulating couples his soul may enter a
Proximate conception, and the dead man
May be grown anew.
It got so, they began to orgy
at the slightest sign of a sniffle.**

Randall Rogers
Brooking, SD

Mend

Like Mary Shelley made her a monster
Her protagonist selective with his scalpel
Each slice and graft crafted carefully to reshape physiology
I'll start with a stencil
And map out my ideal man
I'll build him out of old boyfriends
Perforate the past
And peel back the has beens of what's dead and gone
Break off the best bits, then
Mend them to the perfect blend -
I'll begin with his brain
Snap together some synapses to
Coordinate the click between notions and neurons
So he'll do what he says and mean what he do and

Have a tongue that only talks truth,
Not PC wanna be complete with newly grown goatee
Who'll say anything to get you home and then...
I'll teach him the meaning behind manifesting magic
Give him sense enough to know
He's too short to scale the sky
And scrape off some of the moon with his fingernails
And strength of spirit enough
To take that first step and try anyhow...
All Mr. Right's mannerisms freed from macho
He'll know women are his equal
And have no need
To whittle us down to make himself feel taller
I'll struggle as I string together sinew
Removing every misconception that may
Mislead him to mistake me for his mama
I'll connect the column of his spine one cylinder at a time
Figure the features of his face
Fuse blood and frontal bone
Chest and thighs, nose and eyes
He'll be culture blind, color blind, My-t-fine...
Then, when everything is working well oiled,
Grin and guts no gears grinding
I'll let him look in my eyes, and melt the mold of me down
Floors and roofs of flesh folding to become
The juncture of one joint
And, with the wisdom that within a flick forever flits away
I'll dismantle any detonators that may drive us to derail
And leave them lying on the dissecting table
Out of arms way

Carol Sloane
New Haven, C.T.



Fractal Tourism

It is strange to me. I see through other's eyes
and wish they would change; the women
in black and some in naught, the men
swathed many times around with cloth
and netting. The geometric tiles creep
up walls, down alleys, and within the narrow

confines of cloistered homes.

I taste raw milk for the first time. It's salty
and hot, completely foreign from breakfast cereal
and americana, stolen and sad in the same
hollowed gourd. I think of grasses and trees,
how they grow under a different sun,
and what their sharp flavor
does to the animal who eats them.

Coins rattle thinner, lighter, more precise.
Lacking faces, they feel more like money
in their poverty, less like change.
Money loses possession here. I caught
this new currency with a return ticket.
Silver and ephemeral, they jostle against my thigh
as I walk down the cool streets wrapped in black.

Brandy Woodard
Long Beach, CA



These strangers these what they call down south kinfolk
Flesh painted like my own little darker fraction lighter
Run on skinny feet toes like fingers
Voices rise on final syllables everything's a question
Walking out of upturned lips looks like we phoned in

Sing I'll drink your cadence off the air above the wind chimes
Tastes like mint and cinnamon
Feels like feathers and silk

Our blankets and our chains look close
They're sewn and linked with bones and tendon
So I sit watching these strange lovers
Feeling their blood dance in my veins

Greenfields

Bitch, cunt, slut, whore
--junior high school was a vast
landscape of chanting boys,
Who'd learned from fathers, brothers, and prime-time TV
the delicate art of degradation,
Knifing their obscene snickering tongues
into the softest parts of my flesh
during the softest time of my life

and they worked hard to make it ugly

Sarah Sabalos
Phoenix, AZ



Cupid in the Potting Shed

Found an arrow through
my peat moss--
little one, phallic,
pinned into old mulch.
And these tiny tracks--
like some baby midget
running amuck
(schmuck silly, if you ask me).
Oh, and I did see these
little hearts strewn
about like pesky dandelions,
except they were only
sprouting old snail poop.
I stooped, peeked
under the herb bench--
nope, nothing but
rabbit turds and bits
of colored shells (eggs).
I straightened, then
felt something hit my
leg--like a pin
prick (made me a little sick),
but then I decided

to look up Milly,
my neighbor,
and discuss my green thumb.



Satan at Sunset

Aunt Rose would get
skittery at sundown.
Her frowns would deepen
and fork when shadows stalked
the near woods and you couldn't
tell the clicking of yellow teeth
from nervous knitting needles.
"Want a shawl, Auntie?
Lemonade, iced tea or coffee?"
I always asked, but she never
heard--she'd peer into the
gloom like she could see through
red day's doom.
"Come inside. Your room's cozy,
lamp's lit. Come in, out of the damp."
Even Mom would try, but Rose
would sit firmer in her rocker.
"Nope. I'll see him this time.
Laugh right in those hellish eyes
and keep his damned lies from my
peaceful sleep. Let me be. I
can hear him creeping round
the old boarded well."
Hell never claimed Auntie
but death sneaked in one night--
we found her staring into
the innocent dark of dreams.

Terry Thomas
Prescott, AZ

College

With caffeine on my brain and
nicotine in my mouth I look at
the beautiful girls and realize I
do not belong
 why do I work three jobs
just to come
 It's not like I talk to
anybody or the reverse
 my fingers are stained with
grease and my clothes have
stains of blood
 but I say
I just got off work
 can I speak some Shakespeare
I live 20 hour days
 yet I'm proud to say
I've accomplished nothing
the next day I have to do the same.



Life on the Fuel Island

The old fueler smokes his cigarette on the fuel island
and tells me to save my
empty soda cans and as the methanol
spills on my hands he
yells "fuck, it ain't gonna kill ya"
then he lights another smoke
and shows me his hands and watches me pump the gas
Later he tells me "My wife is fat but
when I was younger I fucked
anything that moved."

Dustin Prestridge
Fresno, CA

THE BLUE-GRASS HILL

The soft dress rolled over and down
The blue-grass hill
She breathed the air into her chest

Turned and hugged the earth
Remembered a scent of rain
A feeling of thunder

Alfred Celentano
Pelham, NY



NEO-DADA POST-SURREAL SNACK

Soggy cookies
taste like shit
(I think...)

Thought is produced
in the mouth
(a dada thought)

Mush in my mouth...
(yes, mush: junk food
for thought, for fast-food minds
quickly consumed
and easily disposed of...)

Wasted minds as neo-dada tidbit
snack. Perishable, rotting leftovers
readily dispensed with. Human trash
soon decaying
in this rotting world of ours
ripe for the plucking...

It's mush ado about nothing.
Pure mush.

Dusty Erik Lunde
Tacoma, WA

SPARE CHANGE

I am like spare change,
with no ability to change
or improve-
Soft music plays in my
head, but I am unaware
for my heart pounds loudly,
clang, clang, clang,
like spare change.
The bathroom sink is
clogged, too much pain
in the drain,
and what ever happened to my
reflection in
the mirror?

"Hello", a stranger says to me.
"How's your day?"

"The sky is gray",
I reply, "my hat blew away,
I believe it might rain,
and there is much too much
pain in my
bathroom drain."

"That is all too bad", whispers she,
"but, my friend, I have no home,
I am so cold, and my eyes are so red,
can you not spare some
change?"

Says I, "Of course,
if only I had change to
give."

And on we go,
our separate ways-

Thomas R. Bynes
Thousand Oaks, CA

Mangus

**Then go to Mangus,
if you must--
Mangus must die--
but I will live forever.**

**Come with me and make love--
I don't need anything else in life.**

**Then go to Mangus,
if you must--
Mangus will come and go,
until he's gone,
but I go on.**



Gin On The Rocks

**Ice fresh
frosty freak**

**steam the sparkle
with your breath.**

**Let your lips,
gilbey girl,**

**cool the coals
with a kiss.**

**Fileman Waitts
San Pedro, CA**



Lithium Lullaby

**the loony's in her cell
we know she isn't well
Heigh-ho
She's crazy-O!**

the loony's in her cell

Ring around the pharmacy
a pocketful of sanity
white room
soft walls
we all fall down

Sing a song of Lithium
they raised the dose today
my friends all write they miss me
although they stay away

Sing a song of Prozac
the wounds are healing well
and though the wrists will bear a scar
hardly anyone will tell....

Ring around reality:
a headful of insanity
get dosed
get through
and don't fall down

Tina Hendricks
Arcata, CA



object rib tickling riddle (septicon lensept)

is it a high tech i.u.d.
or a miniaturized pair of radar screens
or shields or a gyroscope for a spastic
devils smoke cloven cigarettes
is the object a lighter
it dawns on you that its
a star trek equipment model
no its a robot's finger nail clipper
a poison waystation for a poison ring
or a setting for an evil stone
gem or gymologist of sweating semi precious
a machine for not finishing
a bra for brunhilda barbie

umbrella twain contraption for
married elfs separated & estranged
a cage for cave crickets
to see both through & with blindness
an ashtray for the end of nights

Jonathan Levant
Dayton, OH



Fr. G (shoeless) outside Sitton's Restaurant

Some would say
You've failed;
Others, that life
 is cruel.
But your life's work
 hasn't changed
Although social disgrace
Has befallen you.
No one need
 or could
Convince otherwise
The man who died
(comforted) in your arms (prepared) -
You can take the man
 out of the priesthood
 but you can't
Take the priesthood
 out of the man

Eric A. Kuzdenyi
North Hollywood, CA



Le Plastron

He says he likes art,
but he laughs at anyone
who claims to be an artist.
To count as art,
a work must have been sold

at an auction attended
by some of his friends.
That's really what he thinks:
artists come into being
by the philanthropy
of the elite toward
gallery owners
and auctioneers.

He says he likes poetry,
but he laughs at anyone
who claims to be a poet.
To count as poetry,
it must have been published
in a book which is read
by some of his friends.
That's really what he thinks:
poets come into being
by the fiat of people
who choose to be publishers
and people who choose
to believe what they say.

Laurie Calhoun
St. Petersburg, FL



(The Mirror)

Im standing in front
of the bathroom mirror.
I have on my new bathrobe.
Its made of nice thick
terry cloth. Looking at
myself, im reminded of
James Bond. You know the
one when he was made up
to look oriental. Must be
this lovely bathrobe.
I have a feeling its going
to be a good day today.
Not like yesterday, when
i thought i looked like

that other actor, i forget
his name, but it ended up
being a terrible day.
To hell with it. god damn
this mirror and god damn
hollywood.

Peter Talbot
Danvers, MA



He Lets Me Try My Hand

at driving
 the ambulance
 all the patients get to
 we pretend
it's the Spanish Civil War
Hemingway's thumbing
 a ride to the front
 he handcuffs
my wrists
 to the steering wheel
 the faster we go
 the safer we are
 speed carries us
 over the potholes
I leave the back door open
 the wounded fly
out
 the guard only laughs
 it's his day job
drunk at home
 he teases the cat

Get Her Out of Here!

**Buys the dress
-- on sale, non-returnable --
makes me look old and fat.
Hits the kid and kicks the cat.**

Evil twin.

**It's her picture
on my driver's license:
nose too big and hair receding.
Ugly bug wearing glasses.**

Evil twin.

**Drinks too much, talks too much.
Tells dirty jokes to Grandma.
Lying to my son:
he's getting a collie
for Christmas.**

Evil twin.

**Scrawls my phone number
in a bathroom stall.
Sasses my husband's boss.**

Evil twin.

**I can't do anything to stop her.
I just sit here and watch.
What's next?**

Evil twin.

**Mary Winters
New York, NY**

THE RH FACTOR

Once, they were godly in Nepal,
but these have heard the air
turn to fire, coming here. Other miracles

will be required of them now:
their flesh to grow the sick

flowers, hard light, and wire.
A man shaves the skin below the temple.
He does not worship flesh. No llianas,

no mahogany, or serpents cut from stone.
At evening starlings wheel

like schools of fish
outside the busy clinic.
They fill the ornamental trees.



FRANKENSTEIN

If I admit electricity
when you tell me what exists
beyond your machinations or
the lilies mourning
quietly
in their cage
of light

When lightning takes me by the spine
as water
works its only way
through sand
will I be what
you call life

If I break this
bone with my hands if
I drive my mouth
deep into this orange
melon and

wipe the seeds
from my eyes will I
die like sound like your
a houseplant like
the jewel in your tie

If I am your animated proof
can I still hold this
torch to you can we
watch again the castle melt
like fire like
a broom and the many ones
who lived inside these clothes
or not

Or not even this red
dungeon you
call you
call me

Haworth Hoeppner
Rochester, MI



litany

In orbit, bones cut to be picked
veered deaf as broadcast
where the wait is of dirt-ice
and how to live

so fly-by-night,
with gentleness somber in ounces,
with fire the same
as the grasp to its ashes,

with origin for lullaby
in red and blue days,
with the blue sun of time at the end.
with the lie of the ritual

whatever it opens and opens,
you made me a guest to myself,

the way the stone turns and the leaf turns,
stranded, in heel grips, here.

Taj Jackson
NY, NY



Bender

Lying to topless dancers
fleeing from failed restraining orders.
Reminding to "Unstoppable Party"
that their gimmick only works for the naive.
Upstaging magic with shouts of sacrilege.
Mushrooms, tequila shots, and cases of Beck's.
Reunion in Vegas.

Rick buys a round with stolen tips
Ice picks fights with the unwise
Carl pukes on the dessert buffet
Hank fucking pawns the hotel tv.

All in a cab to Nevada's legal brothel
Smoking joints on the way
Side by side, in Madame Ah So Sexy's trailer, we engage in blurry fucks

Hot sun rising
Overdrive, never get the shakes
Lost receipts
Everyone calling their wives

Subverted affection

Miraculously, not an obvious wrinkle in my unworn suit.

John Mancuso
Allston, MA

Autoerotic

Me, all alone
Me and my lonesome
 got rope
 electricity
 no batteries needed
 oh, yeah
 clothespins too.

Gee, Ma
 no hands
No, don't look. I'm shy.
 tight noose
 purple cheeks
 and pink teeth.

Oops, no oxygen
 Rush
 seeing stars
 infinity
 me
 alone

Jeffrey W. Jones
Burfordville, Missouri



Burning Harvest

It's too late to dip my tongue into any other dream
You and I have sipped each other from moonlight
What keeps us apart is the hum of time like a curse of locusts
Furious years that have shared with death a burning harvest
Climb down from the crude sky up from the stubborn mud
Take your face of love out of the bands
Of a fool I intend to keep you
There is nothing shy about hunger that makes us pure
Kiss me goodbye until it aches
Stroke my life which resembles a dog
Then only then my precious you can
Tear me from the universe like a pear

Anne Braeton
North Bergen, NJ

At Sunset

I escape at Sunset.
Embracing my knees and sinking low in cooling sand,
To stare at a diminishing sun.
The beach is now silent of the bare skinned crowd and beer cans.
Only subtle place lovers and distant gentle waves remain.
From sea shell sands, through fresh salt air, and ocean blue,
The sun reflects to hide under fish and sailboats.
I escape at this sight
With no coherent thought, nor dream, nor wish
To see anything else.
And out of the surf,
Comes a fat-hairy-Greek man in Bikini briefs blocking my view.
This is now all I see,
Even when I close my eyes.

J. Prodan
Newport Beach, CA



I CAN'T MY MOTHER MOANS

I can't, can't
I can't take it
I can't go on
honey I can't
feel this awful
can't make a
fist can't hold
the thermometer
I can't have an
other blood test
can't. My mother
who could stay
up all night,
rush to my house
if I swallowed
a chicken bone
needed anything,
could open jars,
stay up with my

father track any
body down in any
town, now can't,
just can't.
Remember the
little train that
could the nurse
quips trying
to find a vein
the yes I can,
yes I can song?
But my mother,
as much an actress
for others as I
am, just can't



GEORGIA O'KEEFE

it's a wonderful morning

maple and cedar

leaves are turning
crickets sing

most summer people
have gone home

there's no sun
but its warm

we have been having
perfect days,

quiet sunshine
working lots and

I feel like singing

Lyn Lifshin
Vienna, VA

Campus buildings blur with faces.
I sit in the cab trying to remember.
Scenes freeze like photographs.
I'm on the outside looking at my life.
Some version of what could have been.
Three minutes before I wake I think I'll take this one. Snapshots played with
screaming music.
Surely this is the future, but the question remains;
how did I get there?
All sorts of connections, and yet a smooth mystery.

Eric Howard Smith
Gales Ferry, CT

SKIN

FURRY CHICLETS 1997 -- JOIE DE VIVRE, 57

oozing from the sore
of your battered manhood

I feel the words you've
chosen to leave out

I feel the tick
at the corner of your mouth
before it begins

I feel the throbbing, pulsing,
adrenalin rush
of your panic

I feel the blast of electricity
that arcs when you want
to get your hands on my body

When I put my skin on...
I feel nothing
but relief

Beverly Tricco
Randolph, MA



If I Had Strong Lungs to Breathe

Oh if I had strong lungs to breathe,
I might be able to sing.
I could raise my voice high or sink it down low.
I could create beautiful tunes to bring all some cheer.

Oh if I had strong lungs to breathe.
I might be able to dance.
My body could move in synch with a beat.
And my mind wouldn't have to wait for my breath to catch up.

Oh if I had strong lungs to breathe,
I might be able to take a deep breath.
I could fill my lungs with fresh clean air,
And blow the dirty air far away from here.

Oh if I had strong lungs to breathe,
If I only had strong lungs to breathe.
I wouldn't have to cough and I wouldn't have to wheeze.
I wouldn't have the weight that lies in my chest.
And my pain would not exist.
If only my lungs were strong.
If only my lungs were strong enough to breathe.

Rebecca Pilar Chuse
New York, NY



KEEP TALKING

No one is listening
but you can't stop talking
people interrupt you
listen around you talk around you
you want to shut up
but you are sweating and talking
shoving more cocaine
in your nose

A man who loves you
is programming hearts for you
but you think you want the man
who looks like Conan
the one with the cartoon bubble
attached to his mouth
who calls from Alaska
to tell you the world is an evil place
and you are a good person

You think of calling your father
who you have never met
What would you say?
that you are in love
with a drug dealer
who has been at his computer all week
making hearts
and you can't shut up
even though you know no one is listening
that your skin is a mess

but you are thin at last

You want to be deep and silent
but things move too fast
you live with a quiet man
when you ask if he wants to talk
he says "Go ahead"
and because you have no choice you do

Sharon Schaller
San Francisco, CA



VISITING HOUR

He visits several times a day
to feed her meals,
arrange the coverlet,
Her hands like fragile leaves lie
motionless with their wrinkled veins
She never speaks or smiles
or gives a sign of recognition.
Eyelids flutter open like white moths
in an airless space, unseeing.

Always he comes,
tucking his little world
under his arm, braving the elements
in his tattered jacket,
hoping that this day,
unlike all the others,
there'll be some hint, some tarnish
on the patina of remembered
yesterdays, some scrap, like a lace remnant
of once-woven realities.
Time widens and widens
and nothing changes.

But each day his gait
seems a little less sure,
as if he could not remember
the fragile things
of which to remind her,

the silent narrowing
of an aperture.

Anne Wilson
Thousand Oaks, CA



WOMANPAUSE

My body has become a vampire
screaming for blood
as the monthly cycle passes
without its show...
It's not babies I want
this late in life
but the feeling of rich ripeness,
seeds in a pod, sweet and tangy
like the ruby red pomegranate
bursting with juices--
like the muskmelon
full and resonant on the vine.

I did not ask to have my songs
muffled in bitter velvet.
Nor will I be prohibited
from celebrating these women's rites
with maidens dancing
at each new phase of the moon.

Anne Wilson
Thousand Oaks, CA



i dream...

i dream fondly of carousel horses with pastel pink plumes
like being caught in your arms twirling carousel-found
i dream romantically of purple-hearted clouds covering skies of
dusk
like enchanted kisses of a long-lost lover
i dream ensplendoured of zigzag blue skies wonderfully opening like blue dahlias
like danceflights of hearts on fire

i dream magnificently of sparkled starryskies like spring pinwheels spiraling
like your soft low electrictouch upon my tingling arm
i dream gloriously of midnight moons like masks of regal revelry crowning lovers
like majestic magical oneness without masks



black velvet sun around my neck

black velvet sun around my neck
gold moon circles surrounding my
feet
doves flying cattails high
leaves flying like grasshoppers
in the night unicorns dancing stallions
racing open bright red church doors
wide medallions of love circle my neck
gold moon circles surrounding my feet

pam puleo
St. Louis, MO



Shit Sandwich

Shittin' all day long
droppin' the load.

Over cities and mountains

my big ass blocking the sun.

For a fat piece of apple pie

from the homeland.

Shit cities and shit countries.

Space shit floating endlessly
and then burning up in some far
off planet's atmosphere.

The mother load all full of corn.

**Shit in your hair.
Shit in your teeth.**

**The fat ass, bread and butter
son -o- bitch**

cowboy rodeo shit horses

cowshit, dogshit

my own shit floating beneath me
in a pool of golden urine

crowding up the pot

stinking the air

food shit in waste water
burroughing under ground

gofer shit

my shit again covered in gold.
A symbol of purity and simplicity

my throne my world

gimme another sandwich.

Tom Hasenmayer
Roslyn, PA

[illegible]

Making The Leap

**I should have traveled to exotic places,
Learned to fly,
Frequented an opium den.
As it is, the daily sucks me back
With its fast and dull routines.**

It is winter -- I lift myself out of the dark day
And smoke cigarettes furiously, thinking

Of what I could be.
I'd like to be a revolutionary's woman
In Mexico, dark-skinned Indian
Who would trace her roots back to the
Pre-Colombians.
My man and I would make love right
Under the noses of the corrupt police,
I would carry an M-16 rifle everywhere
And liberate the women of the hills.

I think for long minutes about the scenarios.
I could be a movie, a delicious
Movie. The heart overcomes and enjoys
Freedom with that woman's fervor.
The heart tastes the salt of life again
And the meat.



The Real Wizard

Everybody knows
Even the smallest of children know
That there is a real Emerald City
And a real, all-powerful Wizard
Who can make you the bravest,
The smartest, the most loving
And who can take you home to Kansas.
Everybody also knows,
And re-learns daily, even
In their tenderest years,
The Wizard is a fraud
Who hides behind curtains
And machinery,
And can't
And won't
Lift a finger to help.

Barbara Cooper
Auburn, Michigan

One afternoon stand

Our blood mixed together
That day
That afternoon of bliss
Orgasmic ripping of flesh
We had finally found each other
Two creatures of pain
We were each other's little secret
Flailing around in arms
Mingled and mangled
Legs lacerated
Red, red everywhere
And always plenty to drink
But then I went too far
Digging too deep
Peeling at the long scar
I couldn't stop
Not with that beating
Your heart, such a treasure
I coveted so much
I could not rest
Until its cadence
Stopped in my hands.

Chris Hill
Duluth, GA



Locked Away

Solitude, survival,
and inner sanctum
is what she's found
nestled, within the hearth
of her handcrafted home
she's become the hermit
everyone warned her about
however, no one mentioned
the company of one
would be so stimulating

Sara L. Holt
Nipomo, CA

PROFESSION IN JEOPARDY

...so then Alex turns to me and says "We've had a lot of lawyers on this show and they usually do very well because they're smart, quick, ruthless and used to gambling with other people's money"...



In The Middle Of The Monologue

...and then I had this dream that I was making a movie with Paul Newman (I was the second male lead) and we were about to shoot a scene in which George Grizzard had a bit part so I leaned over and whispered to Newman "gee this movie is filled with great actors" and Newman turns and skewers me with THOSE EYES and says "what did you expect kid that's what life is all about"...



An Unexpected Fashion Tip

... so then I tell her "Doctor you really have no idea how difficult it is to live as though you're stuck in aspic all the time I mean even the tiniest and most undemanding tasks take so much will and energy and concentration to perform like My G-d often it's all I can do in the morning just to get a decent knot in my necktie" and she nods and says "Uhhmm yes well have you in that case considered those clip-on kind what are they called Reddy-Tyd or something"...

Michael J. Barney
Dearborn Heights, MI



ache

I'm waiting for the wind to clear my tears
away

I'm waiting for the stone
I'm waiting for the stars to form

you, late, flow
through the direction the walls
the streets' laws

the air has congealed, is

lurching abt, clotted
jagged

waiting to carry murmured words
carried by warmpulse breath

I am waiting for the fingers of the wind
to remove my tears

more gently than a kiss
to the eye

Chris Flink
Denver, CO



The Laws and Flaws of Flaubert's Universe

The laws of this universe may not apply
to Stephen Hawking or the polished
badge mirroring Flaubert's face.
We like the laws to hold or break
in a singularity-- but what
does law see in the black hole
of Flaubert's heart? A cone spreads
on that axis of time and space
at the speed of light. So Flaubert holds
no knowledge outside experience.
And his flashlight goes on with waves,
waves which travel in a sphere so if you
die before the intersection
then you have no knowledge, like a traveler
killed at the crossroads before Oedipus
arrives, and might
as well not have existed.

If living, for you
Flaubert exists by two dimensions
on paper, with strings of one
from the string that laws and cuffs him
as the officer of the law cuffs
the unlicensed Flaubert.

Leslie Palmer
Denton, TX

Shock Value

laughter
as i purchase
narcotics
with my green eyed cash-
 a stubborn old fool
 government
 must finally perceive
 his money deity as
 evil.

gilligan
Thomaston, CT



BEST LIGHT

The poet said it's fair
to judge people and stained-
glass windows only
in their best light, kindest sun,
a sort of visionary empathy.
But, warm one, you walk
in light already. All it's left
for me to do is to close this hoop
of kindness with my hands,
grateful we are panes
of similar glass.

Laurinda Lind
Redwood, NY



Take This

You've been taking up
too much of me,

more than you need.
Your hand fills my lens

and it goes out
and rocks the cradle
too fast,
shakes the boat down to splinters.

I'm taking myself back now.
Here's an umbrella to hold,
and a dog to walk on a short leash.

Liz Vederman
Turnersville, NJ



Ritual

The young men and women in tight jeans walk
strangely jumping as they go - on young limbs,
cursing, touching, feeling...nuzzling in search
of hope and sometimes love.

An aging homosexual all in pomaded hair
greying in separate stalks tuck to sweating
bulbous head - rouged lips pout and grimace....
laugh clown laugh!

In regiments they stroll on summer nights - some
thin, some fat - though always by the side
of the road - or in parked Beetles - the swishing of
skirts - of torn blouses and bitten breasts - a limp
balloon lying in the fertile dust of night.

A gigolo in Petrocelli suit and Gucci shoes,
has seduced a lonely matron who smells of desperation
and passionate peonies, and takes her to an X-rated
movie reeking of Brut and stale tobacco.

The lonely virgin - the saddened nun - the divorced
and the meek....play themselves to sleep in a game
of frustration....angry at the sounds of love drifting
through open windowsills.

Even the animals howl in a throbbing cacophony of urgency
as Fireflies flicker in frenzy the code of love -

mosquitoes buzz in anticipation - udders bursting with
suckled blood - in the hours of sultry night and dawn.



Herman

I saw him standing in freshly pressed
pants
In matching sport jacket -
Hair, what was left of it splattered
down on his almost naked head -
He stood on the corner every day at
the stroke of noon -
Sentinel-like
Shoulders pulled back in review
Matching the traffic -
Talking to passersby -
Taking in the daily grind.
Once a week he visited his wife
In Mt. Olivet Cemetery -
He thought she "spoke" to him
He could "hear" her every Saturday -
When he stood by her grave -
Never missed a week.....
That is when he was not standing
On the corner neatly dressed -
Standing for hours and hours
Til 3PM -
When he lugged home a six-pack of beer-
Had dinner alone -
Savored the last drop of lager -
Dropping off to an implacable sleep.



The Visit

He came in the middle of a July night -
A man in black
Black silk suit
Black tie
Black umbrella
Black gloves of leather -

When I had no callers,
Clutching my brother,
Both of us sniveling,
Losing our breath.
Him leaving in darkness.
Him not coming back.
Him not at my wedding.
Him not my father.

Nicole Corbett
Greensboro, NC



POEM TO BE WHIPPED WITH

All our dreams speaking Chinese &
Anyone with a fine mind will search,

For these things hide meanings, even
From themselves, these teasing dreams,

Polite things, keeping the mind creeping
Past even midnight's monsters, until

Under quicksilver ocean currents,
Unknown things find homes, then move.

Because I can see the top tip of your head
Behind the yellow & rusted car door,

Glowing with poems, I find myself
Giddy & proud, my wife, far more

Lovely than all the sleek shadows
Lying down for naps on brown mountains,

Very much aware of me watching, you
Virtually write poems with small bits of wind.

Come on out of your coffins, you undead
Creators of true, certain art, you know

How they make it happen, sure because the

Heart beats it out on the page, & all

Memories are wet dog biscuits, but
Maybe, you say, there is no more

Reason to look there, the past is, no doubt,
Rotten & now is the future, we are alive.

Dance with drunken, brandnew feet, because
Dawn cracks the sky like lightning,

Inspiring the blood, the once-slow blood, to
Ignite & rev all the motors of art,

Not out of gas like we used to presume,
Nor rusted the wheels to a stop, nothing

Seems impossible when genius is gunning
Straight into the sun, & the music begins.

Everybody, everywhere, do what is new,
Eat energy & fart little flowers,

Jump on the backs of streaking clouds,
Just move, even for movement's sake,

Out of your minds, into untame winds,
Only to be pushed toward reinventing

Things most sacred, those huge, important
Thoughts, lift them high & finally free.

Ruby Jets
Eureka, CA



Only a sadist

could have done that
to me.
So why should I be
surprised to learn
that he is a sadist

when in fact
he really did that to me.
Yet another QED.

Laurie Calhoun
St. Petersburg, FL



Mother's Day

I remember Mama,
eyes in wrought iron sockets,
full ample breasts
my mouth never touched.

There's a kingdom behind her eyes,
I would think,
hidden waterfalls of sweet ivory milk,
fat grapes lolling on thick vines,
forests that smelled like cinnamon
and apple turnovers,
a geyser spouting amber nectar.

If I could drink one drop,
it would evaporate
all the unclean scummy feelings
churning inside of me
like a load of dirty wash.

What boy doesn't take things from his mother's purse?
I collected Kleenex, bobby pins, Tampax,
small conch shells, zinc pennies, old bills,
used lipsticks, tiny little rouge jars,
pictures of my grandparents.

It was not what I needed.
I saved everything.

I've sat at the feet of gurus,
watched meteor showers,
left my body and soared to Mercury,
had lovers whose tongues
would have made criminals out of saints,

I would like to cover that head with peanut butter
let starlings come and start hacking at it

he was magical to me relentless & meticulous
a King
a God

Christ Joe
you still think Nixon was
FRAMED!

[illegible]

my radio's stuck on one station

that sadly plays the same song over and over
quietly & hauntingly
and once again i stare into your searing eyes
and remember
that misty spring night
when you rolled my windows down
and moaned quietly on my back seat
your ghostlike smile appears faintly
in my rearview mirror
but turning quickly
i only see
a greasy window
covered with the slime of years
that have passed beneath me

and soon i shall be worn beyond repair
and gracelessly retired
yet in some mammoth junkyard
with rusted body
my engine torn out
broken windows
and a radio that has given up forever
i shall be forever a monument
to your beauty and gentle hands
for you will always be a part of me
you drove me

Bob Ackerman
Tempe, AZ



ADULTRESS IN RED

The postman returns my mailing
of a week ago stamped with these instructions:
Return to Sender, No Forwarding Address.
And, in cursive red, this addendum:
Editor an Adultress, Ran Off With Another Man.

I cannot help but wonder
what Massachusetts' postal employee
saw fit to inform a total stranger
of this marital discord.

Without knowing the parties involved,
I felt I had the ingredients
to write a Harlequin romance.
The 32 cents it cost me to garner this idea
will be a steal once I land a publisher.

Harding Stedler
Cabot, AK



Lorenzo's Parting Thoughts

Life, the real dance of passion
is happening today.
No recess time declared,
The fashion is to play and play and play.
Objects of desire will get top billing
With the hated in the second show,
And risk to self at the Intermezzo,
Eating dainties in the opal glow.

It's a right wicked assembly,
is it not? With the heirs and pretenders
Pushing for a spot,
With the ladies in waiting
and the magistrates toying with their
hair bobs and their delicacies.

Listen, glisten, it's the price of admission,
No cunning or guile is excessive.
Feathers, flowers, idle hours, my darling
You look so expressive.
Drag out the regalia for a sweet saturnalia,
and call in the freaks from the woods.
Well one night in Sevilla,
Ya' know it won't kill ya'
Like a weekend in Granada could.
-- That's good.

Now set down your knives,
the meal's not served yet,
And the more you wait,
the more hungry you get,

And pleasure deferred
Is pleasure enhanced to the
pitch of higher set, let's get
Involved now ladies and gentlemen --
Those waistcoats are confining
And corsets still more yet,
But the masks should stay in place
Lest we get unconfused
And pleasure be aborted
Or anyone refuse.
-- We'll rock now.

Do you get the meaning?
Do you get the treat?
Do you hear the fire squealing on your street?
Do you hear the breaking
 of the garden gate?
Do you hear their twisted voices
 singing songs of faith and hate?
-- Those scum know how to rock.

At our pleasant little party
The debutantes in line
Hold out their crystal goblets for a sip of wine,
Give up their delicate garments
For the promised price
Give up their tender bodies
On a bed of ice.
-- They're going to learn how to rock.

Now the iron-worker's asking
A question of the priest
Who's cleaning out his dinner
From between his twisted teeth:
"Did you ever hear the stories
What they do in there?
Do it to our children
Well you know it's hardly fair.
Do it with impunity
Do it day and night.
How can God abide it?
You know that it's not right."
And the priest says smiling cruelly
"You're a very saintly man,"

And walking both together
He takes him by the hand, says
"Let's get the Devil
by the old short hairs
Hang him up to squirm
With his hooves in the air,
Convict that hairy bastard
In the holy cross-hair sights,
Eliminate the problem
In one sweet, bloody night."
-- That bastard surely can rock.

I found my flower in the pale moonlight
Her shade of lipstick
was absolutely right,
Her powdered cheek was exquisitely fair,
And while I stood there
Wondering how to dare,
She turned to me and blew a kiss
through the air.
Her curled hair rose like a coronet,
Still more adorned her shoulders in ringlets,
Soft breasts arched up with stays
More lovely yet. I pledged my kingdom
as our eyes first met.
-- That girl could rock.

She was a prize worth killing for,
And at her word I would
do much more,
Cheat, lie and steal, and poison too,
When it's a matter of the blood, you do.
Fifteen years later
On my deathbed too soon,
The shadows cruelly creep around the room,
Those I have schemed to bring to benefit
Have twice betrayed me and
I feel regret.
Those pale bodies on those beds of ice,
Those bloody trinkets
And my antiseptic knife,
The scent of evil that has tracked me here,
No message waiting after all these years.

Oh gentle victims
Who had been my loves,
Can't speak a word of mercy in my name,
I broke you all upon the wheel of passion
And all your kindness
Like your blood's been drained.
If only I could turn the knife
upon myself. Cut out this heart
of cruelty. Expose it to the sun
and let the life run down my arm.
Save all of them from me
and me from harm.
If I could warn them
I would be right back --
Dark-browed minions shake their heads,
My tongue goes slack.
Doors open wide for me
that no one else can see.
-- My turn to rock.



Moon's Goin' Down

Why does Captain Kangaroo
still frighten me?

Where did Mommy go
when she died?

Is there a golden rainbow for Pocahantas,
or is John Smith just a fucker?

For these and other questions
I have looked for answers
Somewhere out beyond
The last motel
The last girl
The last drink
The last smoke
The Big Sky --

Moon's goin' down tonight.

The Dice Man Meets Nixon and Me at 4:30 A.M. In The Downtown Portland Days Inn

That long night driving through the snow on un-studded highway tires, sliding once and carving a slow donut with a fishtail of snow, was the highpoint, watching others do similarly the vicarious thrill, arriving in the Portland Days Inn at 4 a.m. the apotheosis, laying down in my cheap bed paid for by my client the very peak, listening to the racketing piece of ice knocking about in the fan above me a step too far. That sound was like a crazy strange attractor spelling out my name in fractal images of repetitive not-quite-randomness. Having to get up in just a few hours to appear in court put edge on pain. Knowing I'd done this so many times before gave me confidence. Having done it many times before made me know that I had to lie down and rest every nerve even if it wouldn't sleep. Measuring out time in thin slices to move from edge to edge downward into darkness, I reviewed the books on the shelf which the downtown Portland Days Inn thoughtfully provides -- old books, usually some Reader's Digest Condensed Books, but some good titles, too, I bet somebody's got Tagore, and somebody else has Ivanhoe, and probably several people have Catch 22 but nobody's got Bambi. At any event I found with some surprise, delight, pleasure, that I had a copy of "The Dice Man," and this is in Room 517 if someone hasn't stolen it, I didn't, I was restrained, not looking for souvenirs when I already had the experience. This book, "The Dice Man" was something my friend Richard Coulter had told me about long before when I was a little experimenter. The Dice Man, the narrator of the novel had chosen to live life as Russian Roulette, extinguishing predictability with one stroke by willing over his will to the roll of the dice. But what really caught my attention was the mention of Nixon, and particularly, Nixon's "sense of history" in the introduction of the novel. You see, there was a photograph of Nixon leaning on his desk in the Oval Office hanging in Room 517. And at 4:30 a.m. I had this looming coincidence to deal with. Was this room the product of some clever interior designer's psychic weaving of subtle themes? Or was it, more likely, mere coincidence, a chance event? On that note, listening to the racketing piece of ice like a doomed ball in a demonic roulette wheel bounding not quite randomly, not quite regularly above my poor, benighted, weary head, I slipped off to sleep, or something like it.



...that naughty girl

that naughty girl
won't behave ...
Like a page from a comic book,
She's a total outrage,
And rules are confetti,
As she flies through the storm,
dressed in something revealing
to keep others warm.
She's ancient as the twisted trees

Charles Carreon
Ashland, Oregon

Angels we killed by
ripping their wings
violently off
while devils sang

Tom Brill
Los Angeles, California