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# Caesura

No. 23

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**Dabney Stuart** will present the 2003 *Caesura* awards, which recognize excellence in literary prose and poetry in this year's edition. Dabney Stuart is S. Blount Mason Professor of English, Emeritus, at Washington and Lee University. A writer of poetry and fiction, he received his B.A. from Davidson College and his M.A. from Harvard University. Selected recent publications include: *No Visible Means of Support: Stories* (2001) and *The Way to Cobb's Creek: Stories* (1997; both published by the University of Missouri Press), and two volumes of poetry, entitled *Settlers: Poems* (1999) and *Long Gone: Poems* (1996; both published by the Louisiana State University Press).

The Academy of American Poets Prize of \$100

The Elda Wollaeger Gregory Poetry Prize  
First Prize of \$300  
Second Prize of \$200

The Thomas W. Molyneux Prose Award  
First Prize of \$100  
Second Prize of \$50

**cae-su-ra** \si-zyur-a\ n, pl **-suras or surae** \  
[LL, fr. L, act of cutting, fr. caedere, to cut] (1556)

1. In modern prosody: a usu. rhetorical break in the flow of sound in the middle of a line of verse

2. In Greek and Latin prosody: a break in the flow of sound in a verse caused by the ending of a word within a foot

3. BREAK, INTERRUPTION

4. A pause marking a rhythmic point of division in a melody

**cae-su-ral** \zyura-el, shur-\ adj. ALSO: a break, or pause, in a line of verse; a break, or moment of rest, in a busy schedule; reading materials which will not be followed by an exam.



See also comma, hiatus, leisure.

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Each Saturday I drive a little bit south  
into the longest days of the year,  
with open windows the radio crackles  
and the salt floats in  
I pull in at dark, over gravel  
to this place  
where we've begun to rearrange  
the colors

my mother buys a yellow hat and hangs it by the door  
I take my old bike out of the shed and race it to the waterline  
my father drives out at 1 am to watch his first nor'easter  
when it's clear  
I can see him from the window  
with his spotlight  
looking for jellyfish off the dock, beam blinking  
he's alive again

I spend the days,  
tangled up in seaweed  
saltwater in my mouth  
and between my legs,  
swimming out beyond sight  
I can taste the change  
at 5 o'clock I come tumbling in  
to shrimp and tomatoes, reds and pinks  
brighter and sweeter against  
my teeth and tongue

the sun skates over the porch  
and the tide of the season pulls away from my hands

U N T I T L E D  
Bess Matassa

[poem]

I

,

I've forgotten how beautiful my mother is,  
through the screen, her head bent  
over the stove  
gold curls falling in her eyes,  
mixing and tasting  
she says she remembers now  
when things seemed possible  
on the sand at noon we lay  
side by side  
laughing into the camera  
in our bikinis and our boldness

I ride at dusk,  
cool evening jogs along  
under my short summer skirt  
I am strong and circling,  
legs stretching, bare thighs  
I turn into the drive  
to bring back 3 tomatoes and clean laundry,  
following the wide road back out,  
over the cornfields,  
hand out the window, brown foot on the dash  
I fall in love again and close my eyes

We remake the world just so  
I catch the taste with my tongue,  
hold it and  
head north

I have felt your city wear me down.

I have known the sudden sadness of routine,  
and the constant company  
of strangers leaves me cold.

Restless, I have traveled west  
for higher elevations,  
an animal climbing from rising flood waters,  
a panic patterned in instinct.

Here, this lake is as quiet as the dark,  
airless space trapped underneath the ice .  
Like staring back through the womb,  
I gaze down through the hole I've made  
into the black and shifting water.

My toes are numb,  
bent at the knuckles like twigs  
that might snap, plunging me down  
through the transition of ice.  
The water below is darker  
than the thoughts of a girl  
who is bored with her lover.

Crouched over this hole,  
I feel myself expand,  
stretching for miles over the frozen valley.  
I touch mountains with my toes  
and forests with my lips  
and have never felt less alone,  
hovering over the black water,  
cold as a serrated knife.

**GOING ICE FISHING**  
Jessie Reeder

[poem] **3**

**B U R S A R L O V E V I I I**

Evan Weaver

zero zero zero zero zero zero zero

00-00            Amid the gray decorations,  
the yellowed prints, same after same,

the rubber shoe in the hall,  
the carpets, the glassfire computer,

You said I cut you two roses, a black one:

called:

; love, and

a white one:

called:

; pain.

Then the wet figurine and the fish  
tank with its three pop-song blue fishes  
like the bible and also you:

the quick, sharp movement of your hips:  
this love-song bourgeois love I never leave.

*the tide: where she was the rock, and I was her wake*

02-16            Too much sleep is bad.  
So is rape. So is death. So is murder.

Again I say I'm sorry.

beware of the curb please.

                    She went insane—the raindrops fell down,  
and she cried (screamed out—caught them)  
in her sweet wet mouth until:

the cold wave washed her out to sea.

                    And we lay down on the wet ground under the dark sky  
in the apocalyptic rain, and we fell asleep.

We drowned.

**B U R S A R   L O V E   X I V**  
Evan Weaver

[poem] **5**

**MINOR TONES**

Melissa Cox

It's 4,372,902,871  
 miles from Radio City Music Hall.  
 "If you only had stuck to your algebra,  
 You wouldn't be in such a mess."  
 Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus....  
 The strings haunted the halls,  
 Up, down, up, down.  
 Drawn to the forgotten sanctuary,  
 I saw white banners on fire  
 And bleeding, lustful monks.  
 And He was reaching for my braids  
 And calling to me in minor tones.

"Hallelujah, she has fallen."

I had such a beautiful day with Him.  
 I knelt in his infinite hands and strummed Truth.  
 But those times are dead  
 (But what about resurrection?),  
 Burned by my lovefire for the Earth God.  
 The fence now burns, and I am on it.  
 Two blades of yellow grass fold underneath my soul.  
 To the West, the moon cries  
 For warmth as she sinks  
 Behind the horizon.  
 To the East, a fire burns for the Earth God's return.  
 Is death so beautiful to Him  
 That he would write so?  
 The despair fills within my stomach,  
 Pours forth, out into a field of green  
 To leave me  
 Until there are two horizons.

Regan to Goneril: *'Tis the infirmity of his age, yet he  
hath ever but slenderly known himself.*

and I say No shit and  
Look at him there,  
all blather and bluster

before an unquiet grave.  
Let him rant I say,  
let him stand half-raised

out of his wheelchair  
bitching about a lack of care,  
his left foot gone

to diabetes – his own  
stupid fault – the nurses  
cowering like he's a man

one should listen to  
on stormy days.  
I keep silence.

But I'd like to ask why  
he's forgotten himself,  
that man who could jitterbug

**I N T H E N U R S I N G H O M E**  
John Jordan

[poem] 7

to Glen Miller's In the Mood,  
who lectured me about  
Fred Astaire and grace

having nothing to do  
with virility, with looks.  
We have nothing to do

but stand here mute  
and undone. I  
keep waiting for him

to come to his senses,  
restore life's order,  
stupid, silly wish.

The cage is open, the birds  
dead or flown south, fleeing  
infirm old age,

that place where we've arrived:  
inelegant, graceless,  
unsure of the clumsy steps.

Naked chest to chest,  
I reach the perfect V's  
of an outspread thumb & forefinger  
to cup the plunging curves  
of your shoulder blades.  
In the field around us,  
dew reflects a zodiac  
of fractured light.  
Last night in my dream,  
you grew triumphant wings  
from the ridges beneath my hands.  
With the grace of a storm  
which comes from nowhere,  
you beat down the grasses  
with your miracle of lift,  
leaving me astonished & below you  
as you whipped an arc  
through the brightening sky.  
When I awoke, I touched  
the hard bones of your back  
& closed the distance between us.  
Now, as I hold you,  
I need to purge this guilt:  
that on waking, I gave thanks  
for gravity.

**WINGS**  
Adam McGee

[poem] 9

# RIBBON BEACH

Pam Zwaskis

There's been an influx of propaganda from up above; mainly, that perhaps this place is just enough like America to warrant there being American sympathies and American past-times and American stuff there. These impressions are distributed via the Office of Indifference, wherein little to no investigation is carried out into the actual nature of the country, and appreciation is limited.

"But why would we get up early? None of us are interested."

It's cafe number twenty, and right about now I'm seriously bored. Next to me three girls distinguish between the emphasis on a) staying out late, and b) waking up to do things as scheduled.

"But why would we do that? Please."

They're not directly addressing me, although I'm at their table. As the only guy occupying this assigned realm of personal space, I'm supposed to concentrate on my not-too-American burger. Cafes are tight spots and awkward to maneuver in, but fine if you're hungry. She's not hungry. I can see her, out of the corner of my eye, hunched over her own table – no three other

girls yammering there, no American burger or otherwise. She's got the heels of her hands pressed up into her cheeks, making pretty much the least attractive face you can make. It's Ally Sheedy in *The Breakfast Club* without the actual charm of Ally Sheedy. If she'd quit slumping like that...

There's scraping sounds, generous butter spread scraped off of bread. "I mean, we need time to do our own thing..."

This burger is terrible. At least we've only got about fifteen minutes left before we move on.

There are reasons you go to comfort someone; mostly because you're feeling pretty good about your current situation and in the proper mood to dispense the proper advice. There are reasons you suddenly decide to be daring for the idea of doing something daring, and there are reasons why you make mistakes.

And now she's staring at me from where I've propped myself at her table, and I really think that perhaps comforting someone is the best thing I can do before I get going.

"I don't want to go on."

She's rubbing her forehead, not to address an itch but a headache.

"I'd like to go back to Kaikoura," she says. "Come with me."

I know I'm up to here with the voices I'm still hearing from the other table, but –

"Come on," she's saying, "We're not going to have the chance to come back here again..."

I tell her sure, sure we will, we can if we want, it's all up to her.  
"You can't just leave," I tell her. At this point the idea of going with her is still silly. At this point the idea of her going is still silly.

She stops the rubbing, which is good, as I was worried she'd make a permanent furrow there.  
"They won't care," she said.

I can tell her that of course they'll care, that our group will care, that the people back home will care, that she'll start caring when she sets out alone without any idea of transportation back.

Next to me, one of the girls is talking: "Why do they make the food so weird?"  
"No," she said, "They REALLY won't care."

The bus was here.  
The bus is gone.

People have gathered their things, thrust leftovers and sugar packets into their purses, have sat up chatting about just how they're going to sleep in tomorrow morning. And some things are true; there isn't a glance back, they assume we're there, they assume we're following, that we're present, accounted for... When I hear the sounds of a large engine starting outside, I jerk in a brief flush of panic. She takes my shirt sleeve and gives it a little tug.

Outside with a frantic waving hand whenever a car passes, I neglect to ask her why she did it. She neglects to ask me if I have any regrets.

I remember towards the beginning of the trip, at another stop, we visited a climbing wall. It was for beginners; anyone who wanted to give it a try could. If we could get to the top, great. If we couldn't, no big deal, plenty of people couldn't.

I couldn't, and neither could she. After some huffing and puffing and aching arms later, we were helped down and we sat, our buckles and harnesses wrapped around us until the guys in charge had to use them and came take them off of us. We watched stronger guys and slimmer girls shimmy their way straight up, and then, it was done.

But she wouldn't leave. She just couldn't live with the idea that she couldn't do what they could. She insisted. She got back up there and did it; made us all late, the guide scolded her and everyone else was cranky about it. But she didn't care, she had to do it, no matter what. That's how she did a lot of things.

II

We get a ride, amongst piles of surfing equipment. Two guys with long blond hair occupy the front seat. They tell us about how they've hitched before, in the summer, when cars break down or the gas gets too expensive.

"So..." I say.

Poor reception's coming through on the radio as we wind our way through the mountains.

"Kaikoura good for surfing?" I try.

The guys exchange glances.

"You said you BEEN there before?" one of them asks me.

I shut up. I focus on the scenery that I slept through when we were heading in the opposite direction. She leans onto my shoulder. I hate that.

"Plans after the trip?" she says.

"Go home," I say, "Get a job in a recording studio. I don't know. Finish school."

"Mmm," she says. And it's making me irritable

**I2** that I don't have anything proper to reassure myself with, so I leave it at that. I forget to ask her what she'll do.

She dumps out her overnight bag, multicolored supplies spilling out onto the half-sand, half-pavement road and starting scooping things out, handing them through the driver's side window as a parting gesture.

"Two of those shirts were girls'," I say.

"They could have girlfriends," she says, which means end-of-subject.

I'm not letting go. "All of your albums?"

"It's too much stuff to carry around anyways," she says.

"You didn't even listen to them," I say.

Kaikoura is the most beautiful beach in the world. It's a stone beach with small waves, seaweed tendrils as tough and thick as bungee cords. It's not really a swimming beach; you'll see curious walkers and excited Labradors rushing to fetch wet sticks. Mountains curve up out of it, mountains that get hidden by fog even on the clearest days. The water can grab you and pull you out to sea if you're not careful. Monsters live out there, if you head out far enough. Monsters with teeth the size of your hand; they eat whales and sharks.

Then again, they made *Free Willy* with one of them.

"Don't cry," I say.

She breathes in, hard.

"It's summertime," I say, "Of course they're all booked. What did you expect?"

She starts to make a noise that sounds like the beginning syllables of my name

"No," I say, "You got us into this, it's your own fault."

Not finding a place to stay down here is probably not worst-case scenario, but I'm not sure what worst-case scenario is.

I take off my sandals and my feet clatter on

perfect pebble beach. I hadn't gone swimming here the day before; she had, as awkward a swimmer as she was – at our age she looked like she was still trying to conquer the doggie paddle. It was a bad idea; we all had partners but her. She really would have been in some trouble if one of the guys in the group hadn't grabbed her arm and pulled her out. She had been scowling about that; she liked the water, she said, even though she wasn't any good at it.

I pick up the ribbon stones I'm walking on and skip them. That's what she called them, ribbon stones, black stones with perfect stripes of white, smooth as a baby's behind, hundreds of them. When I saw her from a distance the last time we were here, before the whole swimming thing, she was picking up one ribbon stone after another. She was picking up dozens of them, stuffing them into her pockets, not wanting to leave one behind. They're nice, they look like artists' work, but taking one of them was fine for most of us.

I can hear her yelling from across the beach. She's dropped her backpack and jumps on me, whooping. "Got it," she says, and her voice is high.

We can stay. There's a room right above the beachside pub. The proprietress is going to be nice to a couple of dumb American kids for a night.

A room, not two. One bed, not two. And after the last few hours have gone...

I don't want to reject her. I don't want to sound ungrateful. I don't want a repeat of the last

few weeks, how every time someone sat away or looked away from her she'd look like the world was ending.

But this time, she's fine with it. "Floor," she offers.

I shake my head, twenty-two years of manner-gears set into motion on a little pebble beach.

"Stop being a gentleman," she says, and heads off.

I wonder if it was a dream, or perhaps I was still half-asleep when it happened, if it did happen. I'm not a light sleeper, but when someone's making that noise...

She's on the floor, back to me, kneeling over her backpack. I can see the soft insteps of her feet, shining white against her dark clothes and the dark floor. I can see her arms shifting around.

She's crumpling notebook paper.

I raise my head, pushing myself up from the bed. The damn thing was small enough, we wouldn't have been able to fit two people in it anyway.

"Stop that," I say, and I see her shoulders slump.

I don't bother to ask why someone would be crumpling paper in the middle of the night. Of course

not. Why would someone do that?

"Are you cold?" I finally ask.

Her shoulders are still down, and she doesn't turn.

"Cold doesn't bother me," she says.

It's still cold when I wake up in the morning. It's summer in Kaikoura, and it's still cold.

There's her empty backpack by the bed, half-propped up by the wall. In the barely-there morning light, it looks like a deflated balloon, or a dead animal. There's her improvised bed, all extra blankets and mismatched pillows, rumped into shadowed folds. Some of the folds are in the rough shape of where her body was.

**I4** I step on crumpled paper. It sticks to my foot, and I rub it against the doorjamb to knock it off. When I try the door, it's already been unlocked from our side. I'm not a light sleeper. When the door had been unlocked and then closed again, I hadn't woken up.

I pull on my sandals, walk downstairs, and walk out onto Kaikoura beach.

Stones are crunching under my foot. The tide is going back out, the water sucking softly between rows of perfect ribbon stones, pulling that heavy seaweed out with it. The mist on the mountains across the way is the

clearest I've seen yet – the tops and the bottoms are revealed, and the view is spectacular.

It's the most beautiful beach in the world, and there's no one on it, not for miles.

We are all old-timers...  
- Robert Lowell

I'm saying my life broke down.

Divorce, depression, drink.

Someone stopped listening.

Then, a new president.

Every decision involves a loss.

Snow fell, a kiss on each cheek.

Remember the songs that leave the smuggest of us weeping ecstatically into our fists?

One begins understanding.

Water runs over rocks.

Sunlight touches a green park bench.

Tulips ignite a knoll.

I am supposed to die.

The sea?

It'll manage.

**A G A I N S T C O N F E S S I O N A L I S M**  
Alexander Long

[poem] **15**

16

[poem]

**T E A R**

Jeff Markovitz

I  
ittle is  
the wetn  
ess which g  
lides south  
after disap  
pointment



**UNTITLED**  
Annika Mengisen

[photo] 17

# SAILING TO THE NEW WORLD

Matt Obrigawitch

18

[poem]

There was a woman,  
She sailed from France to the New World.  
The people of the New World welcomed her with a chain.  
She was condemned to live on an island.  
Her tormentors brought malicious gifts,  
A torch to hold day and night.  
A symbol of her crime.  
Raped and Beaten, and Chained to a Rock,  
She was crowned the Harlot Queen.  
She stood there day and night,  
As a warning to seafarers of her crime.  
One day she died.  
But her petrified corpse still stood.  
Her body still erect,  
Her skin turned green.  
Some say she died from venom of a snake.  
Others say she died from shame.  
I can not remember the woman's name,  
But some called her Liberté.

Our mailman is drunk again.  
For three days, we have received  
everyone's mail but our own.  
First it was the tax form  
of the widow across the street,  
then a lingerie catalog  
for the lesbians down the block, &  
now, finally, a Dr. Spock rip-off:  
"Tips for Successful Parenting,"  
destined for the family next door.

This morning, while retrieving the mail,  
I caught the end of an argument  
between our other neighbor—  
the journalist with the vulgar car—  
& our wayward postal worker.  
Slurred & angry speech made its way  
over the fence, into our yard.  
I suspect the situation will only worsen.

So you see, the neighborhood  
is not the same since you left.  
That annoying dog inexplicably lost its bark,  
the corner oak was shattered by lightning,  
& now, this latest ordeal with the mail.

I have started to entrust most letters  
to a downtown drop box, hopeful  
this will lead to a more certain outcome.  
But this directionless letter I will leave  
to the wiles of our mailman. It's much easier  
to believe that he is the reason this letter  
will never reach you. Otherwise, I have only  
my negligence to blame, that part of me  
which lost track of where you are in the world.

**M A I L**  
Adam McGee

[poem] **19**

This  
could be  
the moment  
before  
darkness,  
or the  
moment  
before dawn.  
There is  
light, yet  
no sun.  
There are  
shadows,  
but no stars.  
Anything  
is possible  
yet there is  
nothing  
to mark  
direction  
or time.  
I could  
go east  
or west;  
the blush  
on the  
horizon  
could be  
the last light

or the first.  
I am  
awake,  
wondering  
If I could  
outrun the  
day if I  
ran

along the  
equator  
at the rate  
the earth  
turns.

I am awake  
forgetting  
why I stayed,  
and watching  
the horizon  
where the sun  
is breaking  
my promises  
for me.

Your face  
is already  
the face  
of someone  
I once  
knew.

**ALL MY GIRLS**

Pam Zwaskis

All my girls  
 Are secret Sophia Lorens  
 Maybe no curves  
 Maybe skater rippings where the dripping bangles ought to be  
 With secret powers  
 The art of bewitching  
 Of  
 come hither come get me  
 We've got jewels to offer  
 All wrapped up tight in little rose velvet bags  
 All you have to do  
 Is pull gold cord  
 And it's yours

And yet  
 All my girls  
 Get turned heads  
     (Wrong way!)  
 They've been there five years  
     Little brand marks on their forearms  
     Little shoes gone scuffed  
 While the new girls  
 The ones who are no secret  
 The ones who settle in at two weeks  
 Get  
     The sideways glances  
     Come hither come to me  
     I've got gifts to offer  
     In sweet cigarette breath  
     All you have to do

Is raise the green flag  
And it's yours

All my girls are crying  
They think about it  
Their shoulders slumped permanently  
    In rounded hunches  
Bodies hidden  
    Under flowy cotton  
Never received  
    All tossed aside  
For sweet  
For hurting teeth when they should be bruising tongues  
For faces barely passable  
    (parental guidance suggested)  
Without Sophia Loren almond eyes  
And giant tits  
    And perfect ass  
All nothing to no one  
No brain to pick when no one will grab the axe

Watch all my girls  
They've got presents

They're piling up unopened









and his arrangement  
of some fifteen cans lined side-by-side  
or stacked pyramidic  
or set down like a chord of wood

After he'd get them right the owners of the cans  
would drag them back home  
some cursing  
some laughing

some whistling all the way home and up the driveway  
a tune they might not be able to name  
but still

a tune engrained so they come back  
whoever

standing in a doorway tall and straight  
because of a note that is puckered and blown  
so high  
it holds

Four Sonnets by Aygo (circa 520 BC). Translated from the Etruscan.

...and he would ask, 'love, what are you doing,' and she would say, 'I am thinking about my own death.'

I. I Write About Myself

As Martial, beast, divorced his wedded wife,  
the fire, spinning, fought the sharp green lay:  
the image, or the screen, the gleaming day:  
and how the authors: whining, like a knife,  
or oranges, that creak, and fall from trees,  
expectant noise, the sun, the grating path  
from dawn, the curled shavings, from a lathe,  
the cloudlike drift, the dreamlike silky breeze.  
Or as the poet Aygo, and the apple skin,  
the dirty silver glass, the black-red wine,  
the hours, grass, the failure of a line,  
the stab and puncture of the apple pin.  
Love, addressed, and boldly, by the stair,  
does often hide: lattice, lamp, the tear.

**R O C O C O L O V E S O N G**  
Evan Weaver

[poem] **29**

## II. Go Away, How I Love You

No country for a virgin, neither Persia, white,  
or steep, the Hittite lands, and as a boy,  
a shepherd, in the stock pastoral (please enjoy)

I told you how I wrote this poem. Right.

And how, like Petrarch, writing sonnets to  
your face: the preposition: not the tear,  
and not the sweeping wind, the scorch, the fear,  
his sparking Laura, or the dew-drop: choose.

A man once saw a god, while seated in a chair;

A lime-green lizard fled, across the stone;

A quantity of buzzards flew, and moaning,  
pomegranates, shoes, her servant hair.

Love, the smell of olive oil, odd, the neigh,  
the step, the bay: halter, fruit-tree, mare.

III. Closet Romantic

And orchards, that above the fluted ground  
their flaring symphons raise, and as a girl,  
greatly flooring through this chambered world,  
wanders, tripping, through such weedy round.  
And Gawain, riding, while the gaping earth  
does wide, like such a river, fill with sand  
that spills, like blood, from strand to strand,  
and how, the glancing moon, the sharp rebirth;  
And how, like Abelard, the figured keys  
spin through the greenly rolling, for, and soft,  
the wandered error, cloaks, that filling, oft  
the flame-red hills conceal, displease.  
Love, how the axis, mantled gown, the leaf,  
the dark reveals: table, shipwreck, reef.

## IV.

## Waiting In Lines

As Saint Germain was standing, and the poles,  
the paintings, tearing in the wind, the glass,  
the rotting, shattered silks, the Roman mass,  
and sand, the color of the melting shoals.

Theosophists have won, and Crashaw, who,  
the red night over: warning: as the green,  
the marshes, or the sulfur flames: I mean  
the acrid, tangled lake, Sargasso Sea, the blue.

Oh gods, oh thus addressed, do you concern  
yourselves: the floating boards, with her, with iron,  
bathed in salt: the ruined wife, the torpid sky,  
the groaning acres, or the brown-dried ferns.

Love: repeat: there's nothing I can do,  
but turn away: rushes, eggshells, you.

Sometimes I want to wail  
just for the hell of it.

Margery wasn't afraid;  
they couldn't stop her from wailing.  
She wouldn't become an anchoress,  
to do her wailing in a more suitable, private way.  
No, Margery wailed in church, at the market, to her husband –  
sometimes she wailed fifteen times a day.  
Her pilgrimage to the holy land  
abandoned her because of her wailing,  
but still, she kept right on wailing.

I want to wail on airplanes  
when the babies are screaming  
and the air tastes as stale as the free crackers.  
I'd wail so loudly that everyone would jump  
out the back, even the pilots,  
and I would have to land the plane myself,  
still wailing, all the turbulent way down.

Sometimes I want to go out in a thunderstorm  
and wail with the rain,  
as loud as all the oceans, and as free.

**P O E M F O R M A R G E R Y K E M P E**  
Jessie Reeder

[poem]

When we fight,  
I want to wail and wail at you  
until you use your hands to cover your ears  
and I can sucker-punch you.

Sometimes I want to wail nonstop, for no reason,  
just to see how long my voice would last.

And when it gave out  
I'd wail on, openmouthed to the sky,  
releasing (if not sound) a furious hope  
in Margery's unflinching faith,  
sustained across the centuries –  
a silent echo of solidarity  
for all the vocally-challenged, would-be wailers.

**UNTITLED**  
Maya Constantine



Memories are like wakame soup and Ginseng tea-  
packaged to taste, reminiscent, easily recalled.

The egg cracked ceramic mug toasts my palms, steam  
rises up and fogs the edges of my lenses.

I am three,  
sitting at the morning table;  
the pungent smell of kim-chee nips my nose.

Stepmother peers.  
Catching her glare, I stare at my father's vacant sitting.

She puts a coin on the table. It echoes a listless thud.  
The reeds of my bangs shield me from her

cold, abysmal, fish eyes. I slurp back my  
tea, swipe the coin up, and run out the door.

The blackish green seaweed sticks to the cradle of  
my spoon. The orbital chives rehydrate in the boiling bath.

I am five.  
A gap where a tooth had been.  
My tiny palms hold a bowl of cold wakame soup.

Walking, I am careful to stay level; the seaweed  
ellipses the bowl like an ethereal sea ray.

Suddenly, all the orphans get up. They start whispering  
excitedly and smiling desperately.

There is a flash-pow of light behind me. Turning, the  
fishy broth splashes onto the floor.

Before me is a tall, blond American. Her ponytail  
swishes left to right as she waits for the flash to recharge.

I hold my bowl up. Noticing me, she smiles into the gap of  
my mouth. I quietly await the ponytail's reaction.

She takes a sip and asks in broken Korean,  
"Woo-so-bol-lae?"

I smile and flash-pow my picture is taken.

The soup is now cold, tea no longer scalding.  
I only wanted a taste.

**DRESS**

Jessie Reeder

I wear the dress with the slit  
to the hip because I know  
it drives you crazy.

That missing sliver of fabric  
like the eye of a tropical fish –

*it shuts*

and you see nothing,  
no break in the pattern  
falling over my body  
like protective scales –

*it opens*

suddenly when I shift  
and the white flesh  
of the eye is revealed,  
the dark center roving,  
watching always for predators,  
searching always for prey.

THINGS I CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT  
Matt McDonald

[poem] 39

The softness of the skin just under your breasts.  
The way you always smell like June 6th  
but the back of your neck smells like drifting snow.  
The warmth of your wrists and the coolness of your forearms.  
The way your hair falls around my neck when  
you lay your head on my chest.  
The taste of your earlobes.  
The sounds you make, like eating a warm cookie, when  
I rest my hands just in front of your hips.  
The tiny blonde hairs on the tops of your toes.  
The way you laugh when your mom catches me staring  
at your ass.

## THE WAY HOW THE COFFEE SHOP CRUMBLLED.

Santiago Montaña

40

[story]

Long, long time ago there was a happy coffee shop in a happy town. It was a small cozy wooden cabin, right off Principal Street, where people gathered in the afternoons to drink the best brewed coffee and to hear the stories of old Mr. Collins, the shop owner. Mr. Collins was a remarkable man; he worked from dusk until dawn, grinding coffee, brewing coffee, and cleaning his shop's tables. He was always attending to his business and giving advice to his clients, who asked him for opinions about life's ways. Everyone in town knew him, and esteemed him as a loving grandfather. No one knew how old he was, but he was probably one of the oldest people in town. He had been around forever. He had white hair and blue eyes, and two loving daughters, Claire and Bridget, who worked with him behind the counter. He also had an apprentice in the art of coffee making; a young skinny boy, Pete, whom Mr. Collins had adopted, and who worked in the kitchen, almost as a member of the Collins' family.

Mr. Collins was proud of his shop and of his work. He himself had made the wooden tables and chairs where his clients sat. He had carved the shelves, where he kept a collection of old books

that he liked. Often, he loaned books to the people that came for advice in his coffee shop; he loaned Hemingways to farmers, Faulkners to postal officers and Woolfs to married women. Mr. Collins was also a proud sponsor of the local arts; he decorated his shop's walls with paintings that he used to buy from local artists, he allowed musicians to come and play music in his shop, and he gave free coffee to poets who would come to write verses in his establishment. I asked him one time why was he so enthusiastic to have paintings, music and literature in his shop, and he answered: "Son it's very simple; those paintings bring color to this town, those tunes make life more bearable and those poems awaken love in this town.

I asked him: "Mr. Collins are you some sort of artist?" He responded: "Son, making coffee is my art in this life." He smiled and I smiled, drinking my coffee and thinking that he was the smartest man in town. Mr. Collins was also a vendor of the city's newspaper, which came once a week, bringing news about politics from the capital. However, I don't think that Mr. Collins profited from selling newspapers; few people were interested in buying them, and many copies remained at the entrance of the coffee shop, sitting on the shelf, unread.

One afternoon came a young man dressed in a tailored suit, wearing a tie and shiny-leathered shoes. Everyone walking on Principal Street was awed by this man's elegant dressing and by the cologne scent he left when walking around impetuously. He didn't look at anyone; he walked straight, with his nose pointing up, daydreaming and enjoying the colors of the trees, the little brick houses and the blue sky. He was evidently coming from the city.

After he had walked on Principal Street for a while, it got dark, and little drops of rain started falling, carried by gray clouds coming from the north. Then he took his left hand out of the pocket and looked at his silver watch. He looked around, turning his head slowly from left to right, waking from his reveries, and noticed that we all were smiling to him, welcoming him to our town. He smiled to us—or maybe to himself; I don't think anyone knows, but he seemed polite. It started to rain harder, so he stopped Pete, Mr. Collins' apprentice, who was walking by. The man asked Pete: "Boy do you know of a place where one can get oneself some good coffee?" – "Sure thing sir; Mr. Collins has the best coffee shop in town, and maybe in the whole world. I work for him and that's where I'm heading right now.

It's straight ahead, 3 blocks away, but I can take you there if you want... I'm sure Mr. Collins would like to have you as a new costumer; Mr. Collins enjoys talking to illustrious newcomers like you... Would you like to come with me?" The man smiled, tapped Pete in the back with his left hand, then put it on Pete's neck, inclined himself forward to start walking and said: "Sure thing boy, nothing like the best coffee in the world for an afternoon like this one." Pete smiled as well and started walking straight erecting his bony back, imitating the man's walk. The kid seemed proud and happy of taking the newcomer to Mr. Collins' coffee shop. They walked down Principal Street, the man asking questions to Pete, with his left hand on the kid's neck and the right hand in his pocket. "So what's your name? How old are you? How long have you been working in the coffee business? How long has the coffee shop been there for? How many people come to Mr. Collins' to drink coffee?" and Pete answered all of the newcomer's questions, happy of conversing with the man.

They got to the coffee shop quickly, Pete opened the door and said: "Good morning Mr. Collins, good morning Claire, good morning Bridget. I bring a new

client from the city, and he likes our town very much; he is very interested in learning everything about it. I think you'd like to meet him Mr. Collins, he's very educated like you are..."—"Sure thing Pete" said Mr. Collins from the counter, putting his eye glasses on and looking with a smile towards the entrance door. "Claire, make a special mug of that brown jewel for our new friend!" he said, and he walked towards the door to befriend the newcomer. Claire stuttered "Ye-yes father," her brown eyes shining, her red lips smiling, showing beautiful white teeth that accentuated the harmonious traces of her face.

"Please come in! My name is Edward Collins. Welcome to our town," and he extended his hand to the man.—"Thank you very much. Pleased to meet you. My name is Irvin Bates, " said the man. They shook hands, standing in front of each other, Mr. Bates straight, tall and elegant, Mr. Collins stout, wearing his apron. Mr. Collins conduced Irvin towards the tables and they sat. Irvin sat cross-legged, leaning back in his chair, with his left hand on the table and the right hand always in his pocket. Mr. Collins sat, leaning forward, crossing his arms on top of the table. He wanted to talk with Mr. Bates.

"So what drives you to our town Mr. Bates? Were you on your way somewhere and decided to stop for a little of that local warmth in the countryside?" asked Mr. Collins, in a friendly way and with a friendly look into the newcomer's brown eyes. "Not at all" said Irvin, chuckling and rubbing the wooden table with his left hand. "I live in the city, but I'm looking to buy some property in the countryside. That's why I came to visit."—"Well you're right about that, this is certainly a very friendly town. Everyone knows each other very well. I've lived here with my coffee shop for a very long time and I love this place with all my soul. I guess that you're planning on settling here with us then?" asked the old man, with an inquiring look in his face.—"Not really Edward," said Mr. Bates. (I think that no one had ever called Mr. Collins 'Edward'.) "You see, I am in the coffee business also. In the city I have several coffee shops; I produce massive amounts of coffee that I buy at incredible prices from tropical countries. I also bring people from these countries, to work for me, making the coffee. Currently, I have 987 employees, and they are all happy working for me. I pay them well—that is of course compared to what they used to make before in their countries—and they

get benefits; dental care and bonuses every once in a while. Many of them even save money to send to their families who still live in the tropic! I pay half of what other cafeterias pay to produce one cup of coffee. Isn't that productivity Edward?" asked Mr. Bates, his eyes shining more and more as he kept talking.— "Well yeah," said Mr. Collins, "but what about your coffee? Doesn't it lose body, color and aroma when you produce it in big quantities?—"Nonsense" said Irvin, with a face that ridiculed Mr. Collins. "No one can tell the difference these days." Mr. Collins assented, while feeling with his right hand the carved adornments that he had done in the wooden table. "And what about the employees? How often do they go back to visit their countries?" asked Mr. Collins with a curious voice. —"Well Edward you see we work very hard at my company. Our philosophy is that 'every second counts to the last drop'" he said, "Hence, our employees cannot lose nor waste time in breaks or vacations. Besides, traveling these days is very expensive Ed; I don't think that anyone can afford to go places these days, except of course for entrepreneurs like me. You see what I mean?" Mr. Collins saw what he meant.—"Listen Ed, I have a deal to make to you. I like your establishment very much. You have good

taste, you work hard and you know your market. I have the capital to expand this shop... If we collaborate together we can expand this business by 73% at least. We can buy your neighbor's property and duplicate the size of this cafeteria.—"Coffee shop, not cafeteria," said Mr. Collins, arching his eyes.—"Yeah right... Coffee shop." Said Mr. Bates. Claire brought the brown jewel coffee that her father had asked to serve a while ago. It smelled deliciously.—"We'd need to hire quicker servers though Ed... I was already having the cravings for some caffeine..." Claire didn't understand the insult. She was deaf and daydreaming, admiring Irving. She kept smiling to him, but he only gazed at her condescendingly. She was standing close to him, numbed, thinking how important and elegant Mr. Bates was. At one point, she was so close that he felt her breathing in his neck. Annoyed, he took his right hand out of the pocket, and gave her a tip, out of some coins that he was carrying in his pants. Claire blushed, but accepted the tip with her trembling hands. She couldn't utter a word, her throat was filled with anxiety. She wanted to thank Mr. Bates for his generosity, and tell him how much she liked him. No one had given her a tip before; service was appreciated with many thanks in that town, but no one ever

tipped. Mr. Collins saw that Claire was seduced by that young sophisticated man, and for some reason he felt abandoned, as if Mr. Bates was suddenly kidnapping one of his daughters.—“As I was telling you Ed,” continued Irving, “we could expand this business; you could be the manager, and have tens of people under your supervision. I would only come every once in a while, to oversee the administration of the cafeteria.”—“Coffee Shop...not cafeteria” asserted Mr. Collins, annoyed at the young man’s impertinence. “I don’t need to manage tens of people Mr. Bates. I have all the assistants I need for my Coffee Shop. In addition, I am happy being manager, owner, server and administrator of my business. Frankly, I don’t understand who you are and what you want. I’ve been brewing coffee since before you were born, and I don’t need you telling me how to expand my business. I don’t need you to come and tell me how to do my job. I’d appreciate it if you kindly left. I have things to do.”—“Whatever you want Ed,” said Mr. Bates. “But in the future don’t tell me that I didn’t consider you as an equal partner. Don’t tell me that I didn’t offer you an opportunity.” Mr. Bates stood up, put his hands in his pockets, started walking towards the exit and said: “Good bye Ed, good by Claire, good bye you two,”

looking at Bridget and Pete who were astonished, listening to the deal that Mr. Bates had proposed to old Mr. Collins. Mr. Bates left, whistling a catchy tune that remained in the shop even after he had walked for blocks.

In the following weeks, Mr. Collins’ health weakened. He started coughing and feeling strong pains in his chest. He also had migraines and pain in the bones. Bridget was very concerned by her father’s sudden deterioration. He looked yellow and lost weight. Bridget was sure that Mr. Bates’ visit was what had affected her father’s health. She told Claire, but the younger sister didn’t believe that Mr. Bates’ visit could have had any effect on anyone’s health. “I think that you’re a little paranoid sister; Mr. Bates could not have had any contagious disease. He is so healthy, so muscular, so athletic...As a matter of fact, do you think that he will come to visit our town again anytime soon?” Claire was daydreaming, while drying coffee mugs with a rag.—“I don’t know Claire,” said Bridget, the older sister. “I’m afraid that he comes again. I think that my father would not tolerate to see that man again, and personally, I wouldn’t like to see him either. Something about him is suspicious, I don’t

know what it is, but I don't like him." Bridget was biting her lower lip, and looked worried, overwhelmed while washing coffee mugs in the sink. All of a sudden, they heard the sound of trucks outside, on Principal Street. The trucks were honking their horns raucously, producing menacing sounds with their engines and polluting the air with their carbureted fumes. Bridget and Claire went to the door of their coffee shop, and looked out of the windows. They saw a troop of trucks standing right across the street, with signs that said "Global Cafeterias Incorporated."—"He's coming back, He's coming back!" said Claire, jumping up and down in her father's coffee shop. "Mr. Bates is coming to stay Bridget, he is! As soon as he gets here, I will put on my best dress, and will go to say hello. He sure will remember me, he gave me a tip remember? I knew that he would come back...between you and I, I think that he likes me"—"He doesn't like you Claire, he's a businessman. All he care about is his money. He doesn't care about painters, musicians, poets, nor you," said Bridget, releasing the anger that she had felt since Mr. Gate's first visit. "You're jealous, Bridget, infinitely jealous that he likes me and he doesn't like you. You can't stand the fact that he cares for me, sister. Besides he does care for art too. He can pay people to paint

portraits of him, and he can go to concerts and music halls. He can even pay people to read to him. I hate you for being so selfish Bridget, for prejudging him when he hasn't done any harm to you. You can't bear the fact that there's a potential for a relationship between him and I." She threw the rag that she was using to dry coffee mugs and went outside to see the truck drivers, who were already downloading machines and equipment into a warehouse across the street. Mr. Collins had been in the kitchen, listening to his daughters' discussion. He came out and embraced Bridget. She was crying, so was he. They both knew that Claire had fallen under a spell ever since she had accepted the tip that Mr. Bates gave her. They stood up, under the wooden roof of Mr. Collins' cozy Coffee Shop, looking out of the window. They were watching the demise of their lives with every piece of machinery that the uniformed employees carried. They were shiny machines, beautiful automated machines carried with extreme care by uniformed people. Every single machine had the colorful logo printed visibly: "Global Cafeterias Incorporated."

Soon thereafter, a humongous cafeteria was in place, with metallic tables, and colorfully painted walls.

Instead of shelves with books, there were stands filled with products for sale. There were plastic mugs, ceramic mugs, tea spoons, thermos, bags of coffee from Kenya and Tea from India, music discs with atmosphere music and all kinds of paraphernalia with the "Global Cafeterias Incorporated" logo printed on. Everything was either plastic or metal, designed by clever publicists. But there was nothing made directly by the hand of a man. The products were all identical; everything was produced and assembled in series at a factory. Those products insulted Mr. Collins's and his daughter's dignity; they were dead items that had alienated craftsmen from their work.

Mr. Collins was very sad. All his clients did was to talk about the new cafeteria, how modern it was, how well organized it looked, and how tasty that coffee must be. "Hey Mr. Collins aren't you excited that they are opening a new cafeteria in town?" asked Bob, a young student that used to study and drink coffee at Mr. Collins' Coffee Shop. "Bobby I think that the new Coffee Shop will bring more losses than profits to our town."—"Ahh" said Bob, "I think that you are scared that the new place will run you out of business am I right Mr. Collins"—"Yes Bob, I am afraid of that, but those are not the losses that I am referring about. The

losses that I foresee go way beyond any financial bankruptcy, and that is something that you youngsters cannot understand." And he swallowed with difficulty, coughed, grabbed his head with one hand, closed his eyes and two crystal tears came out of his sleepless eyes. Bobby looked at the old man with pity, without understanding the losses that the old man was referring. Suddenly, Ms. Rose, a frequent client came in, wearing a velvet hat with one feather over her head. She opened the door, and said: "Hey Mr. Collins, do you have today's newspaper for sale?"—"Yes Ms. Rose, I do have it. But why do you want it? You've never bought it before... is there any news in particular that I don't know about?"—"No Mr. Collins, it's just that there is a report about our town's new pride, the installation of one of 'Global Cafeterias Inc.' I happened to be around when the reporters came, and they took a picture of the new establishment, and I think that just by coincidence, I happened to be walking in front of the cafeteria at the precise moment when the camera took the picture." Mr. Collins was perplexed, without understanding all the fuss of Ms. Rose.—"Don't you understand Mr. Collins? I might be in the paper... I might be famous by now. —"Oh...I See Ms. Rose. You must definitely be famous by now." Said Mr. Collins, ironically. "Yes, I definitely must be

famous by now," said Ms. Rose. They opened the newspaper, and in the third page, there was indeed the report about the new cafeteria. There was also the photograph, in colors, showing the immense cafeteria right across from Mr. Collins' Coffee Shop. The photographer must have taken the picture right from Mr. Collins' walkway; Mr. Collins' front window had now the exact panorama than the photo printed in the newspaper. Mr. Collins realized that from then on, every time he looked out of the window he would have the newspaper report appearing in his mind.—"There I am, There I am!," cried Ms. Rose. "Can you see me Mr. Collins? Can you see me Bobby? Oh I'm in the newspaper! I'm in the news report of such a prestigious enterprise! I never imagined having such good luck. This could propel me to stardom! My whole life will be different! I will be out of this unhappy little town! Finally out, Out, OUT!" Her eyes were shining like never before. The ambition clouded her sight. Mr. Collins felt like dying.—"But you weren't unhappy before," said Bob, "you never complained of living in this town. We all thought that you liked to walk up and down in Principal Street, where everyone flirted with you..."—"I was always unhappy in this town," said Ms. Rose, "I just didn't realize how imprisoned I lived. 'Global Cafeterias Inc.' showed me that there is

a world full of things to buy, and I want them all. Furthermore Bobby, 'Global Cafeterias Inc.' propelled me to fame. Look at me in the news; can't you see how much I owe to that enterprise? I am forever indebted!" Bobby looked at the picture, and down in a corner, he saw a blurry image of a woman in a skirt, wearing a purple hat with a feather on top. The one in the picture was certainly Ms. Rose. It was hard to recognize her face, but it was certainly her in the picture. Mr. Collins had to sit down in one of his wooden chairs. He was too weak to remain up. He got caught by an attack of cough that impeded him to breathe well. He turned yellow, as if something had gotten stuck in his throat. His white hair got messy by the harsh movements, and the eyeballs popping out made him look like decrepit old fellow. Almost nothing of that old stateliness he had existed in him anymore. He was now a sickened person, in the edge of bankruptcy. Moral bankruptcy. Pete came into the door. He looked at his master and his bony body shivered. "What do you have Mr. Collins? What has gotten into you? My gosh you look bad..." he said, with a cracked voice.—"Nothing Pete, It's just that the times are changing and one is getting old. It is just the way life is, and I am still learning how this roller coaster works."—"Someone has to take you to the hospital,"

said skinny Pete.—“My illness isn’t curable with medicine, Pete. Take me to my room please, I want to get some rest with the dignity that I still have left” Pete helped poor Mr. Collins to stand up, and they both went upstairs, the wooden stairs cracked with every step they took. They cracked louder than they had ever cracked before. The house’s wooden pillars deafened Principal Street for a few seconds. They shrieked louder than the trucks parked across the street in the warehouse. Pete stayed with his master until he fell asleep. Then he went down to, to try and keep the Coffee Shop running. Bridget came in few moments after. She saw Pete’s face and she understood that her father was ill. She didn’t say anything. She went in the kitchen and put her apron on. Then she started washing coffee mugs, swallowing her pain with an inner force that disinfected her spirit. Claire was across the street, watching all the preparations for the new cafeteria’s inauguration. She was oblivious of her father’s state.

That night more trucks came in, bringing the employees who were going to work at “Global Cafeterias Inc.” The employees were in groups. They were all wearing the same uniform. There were some women, some men, and a few young ones, but it didn’t really matter; they all looked the same in those uniforms. They

looked sad, lost and hopeless. They had dark skin. They had come from tropical countries. From then on, they were destined to maintain those sophisticated machines that made coffee for “Global Cafeterias Inc.” They were chained to those machines, and to the enslaving work of refining in massive amounts the same seeds that they cropped back in their mainland. From now on, all they were going to see was machines, metallic tables, color painted walls and a variety of plastic paraphernalia for sale. They were now alienated from the colors of their country, the colors of life.

The next day, Mr. Irvin Bates came for the second time to the town. He was more elegant and poised than before. His cologne smelled all around town, and his juvenile face posed for the photographers, who were taking pictures of him as he walked by. He waved with his left hand, as if he was saying hello to the crowds, and he kept his right hand always in his pocket. But he didn’t know anyone; He never cared to look at all those villagers. He didn’t care for them before, and he didn’t care for them now. All he knew was that those villagers were making him richer. Those villagers were sustaining his empire; they were buying from “Global

Cafeterias Inc.” People saw in him an idol, a model to follow. They never imagined—and probably never will—how much he was taking away from them.

Mr. Bates gave an inaugural speech for the opening of his business. He talked about the future, about progress, and about flourishing industry. He didn’t mention the employees, nor the tropical places from where they came. He only talked about the quality of his coffee, harvested in the best soil for coffee plantations. He took all the credit for importing quality crops. Mr. Collins died right at the same moment when Mr. Bates started his speech. He preferred dying than knowing that Mr. Bates was seducing more and more people with his words. Pete was next to him at the moment of his death. He saw Mr. Collins’ last exhalation and covered his master’s face with the sheet. Bridget remained downstairs, taking charge of the Shop, helpless. She was wearing an apron she had sewed that said: “Support your Local Coffee Shop,” but the Coffee Shop remained empty. Three months later, the Coffee Shop was bankrupted. Bridget left the town, and no one knows what happened to her after. Pete started selling newspapers in a little corner off Principal Street, and Claire became manager of “Global Cafeterias Inc.” in her town’s headquarters.

Never again were there paintings hanging from a Coffee Shop’s walls, nor musicians playing little concerts, nor poets writing in Mr. Collins’ wooden tables. The books in the shelves of Mr. Collins’ Coffee Shop were given away by Bridget as a gift to the local library. She gave them away in memory of her father.

People seemed to forget old Mr. Collins fairly quickly. They felt that something was missing in town, but no one knew for sure what it was. I think it was Mr. Collins they were missing, but they couldn’t remember who he was, nor what had he done. People became busy, gray and addicted to caffeine from the coffee they drank at the new store. The town itself became gray; trees were chopped down to put cable poles, and parks became parking lots. Everyone grew old, wrinkled and rushed, and the town changed forever.

50

[poem]

**THE SPRING**

Jeff Markovitz

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# SHARKS AT DUSK

John Jordan

We had come from a short swim  
in the local pool,  
driving back roads with my sons,

the trees gapped by cul-de-sacs  
of new homes:  
Hidden Glen, the Woods of Arden,

safe communities replacing scrub  
farmland. The Deere  
equipment rose idle by the shoulder

of the road, the engines cold now,  
their teathed buckets  
silhouetting the darkening sky.

The boys for some reason debated  
the reasons for sharks,  
why attacks have to happen at all

and could I swim faster than a shark.  
I told them no one  
can swim faster than a shark; besides

attacks are rare on the Jersey coast.  
That summer  
a bull shark had severed a boy's arm

off the coast of Florida, warm water  
at dusk, and the story  
was everywhere, my sons' eyes

wider with each telling. My words  
foundered in the car.  
I loved these boys, their burnished skin

supple in the summer light of morning.  
But this was dusk,  
the best time for feeding the papers said.

If I turned to look, I knew I would see  
their slender, freckled  
chests belted in the back seat,

rising and falling in debate as they  
considered that  
certainly God could swim faster

than sharks in the oceans they knew,  
even if  
their father could not. I could hear

their uncramped hearts behind me,  
oblivious  
to the hurried traffic, the waning light.

My mother gave me a book  
you gave her  
to give to me.  
I had wanted to read it.  
I opened to find your inscription like a breeze,  
the words were smeared,  
you had written them quickly  
Anne Osman  
San Francisco  
March 2002  
My mother hasn't got a single woman part left  
but her life  
She has discovered an alteration of a gene  
I am taking biology  
but I don't know what that means  
She says it means if I have it too  
I will lose my breasts, like her  
or my life, like you.

Why do you make the trip  
from Casablanca to Boston to Washington to San Francisco  
from "Paris to the moon"  
Haven't you checked your watch?  
You who scratched at death with your fingers  
and have become placid and still  
It is me, live, who tries to drag the days back from the quicksand  
Your son wants to be a mermaid  
Your daughter wants a real star  
She will forget you, almost completely  
She will find this book  
10 years later  
and try to hold the ink in her hand  
Your family once exploded across the globe  
like smooth beans falling from the sky  
Now, we are tunneling through to find you,  
to meet each other in summer, in the rain,  
solemnly setting up lawn chairs on rooftops,  
trying to gather your history,  
to spread it out on the table

We waited for you early Junes  
at the airport,  
for your glimpse out of the accordion,  
child at hand, first one, then two  
into this continent for summer

Visiting you, 4 years back, in winter  
we stayed in a low town where doors opened  
onto sand and fish and sun  
seemed to be setting all day,  
over and over.

I've never talked to you  
Your son, my cousin, clings to me fiercely,  
in summer, swimming, we become mermaids.

Tonight I watched a film with no sound  
There was a room full of brown skulls as Auschwitz,  
a conveyor belt of yellow puffs of chicks  
a people with red paint on faces  
watching a tree being torn apart,  
accelerated passage of day, night,  
clouds running...

You should die in water  
You will be hooked up and plugged in,  
shocked and hairless  
from this ooze in the faucets, in the air,  
in our food

You should be swimming  
at the edge of the world  
You are in economy class for almost  
a whole day

reading a book about someone's life  
that will go on and on and  
yours will stop and you will slide  
into marks you leave on pages  
You will give it to my mother to  
give to me and  
hope I will go on.

Tonight, we spoke of energy  
When something dies  
it's poured into a tree or a star  
The memories are destroyed  
So histories must be packed into bags  
like skulls in white rooms.  
Your 4 year old daughter wanted a  
real star  
You want, instead,  
to give her  
a memory of your hands

Bess Matassa

**U N T I L E D**

**A X E L**

Beth DeRespino

54  
[photo]



I love you more than Chinese lettering  
I saw you standing in ultraviolet light  
Sucking on your juice, your twilight sulfur  
I remember these streets, cold.

Spilling your truth to the plastic gods  
This is where we go crazy  
Do you want to try again?  
You reminded me of such times:  
Bringing my faith to the soul sister here  
You stand in light, I quiver in darkness.  
Feel me, feel me here, here, here, here,  
Here.  
Between my circulation, dry.

Here you rest upon my earthquake silence.  
Here you take the toll on my exhibition.  
Here you break my execution.  
What is this to me now?

Water is only tough to mend  
If you have it in mind  
And my baby doll is thirsty  
Thirsty as a mouth at 1 a.m.

Listen to me, now.  
I was a whore at five.  
Why don't you believe me when I say  
I was five?  
I was five, I was five  
Five in the world of gods....

**I : 0 0   A N D   5**  
Melissa Cox

[poem] **55**

I believe in freedom  
I believe in blessing  
I believe in you, I said you I said  
Honey I love you, I love you.

Beauty in your skin  
Beauty in your skin  
Beauty in your hair.  
But we are less than beautiful  
We are less than beautiful  
We are climbing to a god  
That doesn't exist

You are my empress.  
You are my agent.  
You are my dire straight in heartening strides.  
I believe in fucking breaths.

We know we are nothing  
We are created by nothing  
We are held by nothing  
We are destroyed by nothing.

May you wander  
homeless  
and never see  
our city again  
with living eyes:  
these rivers  
that once held you  
in the dark center:  
the valley  
where the hills  
slope down  
like the meeting  
of my thighs.

May you lose  
all the things  
you have yet  
to give up freely.  
May this new  
lover's body  
curve like a snake  
ready to strike  
and coil around  
the hopes  
you arrange  
like eggs.  
May she  
crack them  
in her teeth

and suck  
the milky  
insides out,  
feeding herself,  
leaving you  
spent.

May you wander  
homeless  
and return  
to these rivers  
alone, in despair.  
I will watch  
your swollen corpse  
float north  
in the flood  
of spring,  
and love  
the maggots  
for holding  
some part of you  
inside themselves  
the way I  
never could.

**CURSE FOR LEAVING**  
Erinn Batykefer

**D U S K**

Jessie Reeder

Watching the sun go down,  
I sneak glances at you  
and wonder if you're wondering  
(like I am) if we could outrun  
the heavy swell of night.

I wonder about lightning bugs,  
exchanging secrets like static,  
as if they know that dusk is the time of day  
most fragile with possibility.

And I am thinking about  
when I was seven and stapled  
my thumb to a board. Pain  
was like the ocean then –  
there was an end, but I could not see it.

I am thinking  
about the way lightning is sexy,  
like catching a tiny glimpse  
of something you're not supposed to.

And I am thinking about what it would be like  
to kiss you, and oh –

I am thinking about all those lovely things  
I will not know before this day sleeps.

6 / 2 4 / 0 2  
Pam Zwaskis

I was born at the age of 22  
(stay tuned for)  
the exciting conclusion!  
Three dead birds decided to make  
It a holiday  
showing up at my feet  
It was time to feast  
they've died for my sins

And I had nothing to worry about  
No famine no footsore no ticket to pay  
Came in a complete set with proof-of-purchase  
My banging fist on a fortune-teller's door  
For proof that this was,  
indeed the end of something so delightful  
And so blurry  
No more memory  
of a blank thousand faces

The birth was heralded with fedora hats and leather bags  
melting chocolate in a plastic trap  
A long walk down Philadelphia's way  
All sweaty back and camel toe jeans  
All waving weaving attitude in a struck gold mine that says  
"look I have arrived"  
I'm awake  
I'm finally tired  
Of sleeping it all away

I think of a song  
When the chorus hits  
I can run down the street  
And you can watch my credits roll

60  
[photo]

**UNTITLED**  
Annika Mengisen



An Israeli soldier examines the bus destroyed when a car bomb exploded Wednesday in Megiddo. Some passengers including a man and woman embracing died trapped in the burning vehicle.

-June 6, 2002

Danger is perched like the study bible above the toilet  
They told me to read John first because "it's such a good story"  
I believe that our cross is really paper  
It is handwritten and now people swallow  
the words

Watch a Muslim girl running through the rain  
beside an American highway  
The panic of water that might as well be fire or time  
I spend my night trying to swallow world disaster in the shower  
Liberty swallowed Allah  
and spits back ash  
Senegal beats France at soccer  
the hand bites the foot bites the hand

Listen to the shrill ring  
of a college girl  
who professes fear  
of the man who works at her gas station  
Rewind our history please,  
to the scene where your people worked hand to mouth  
where people spat your name through the streets  
like dust  
I'm telling you, you'll never know where you come from

**U N T I T L E D**  
Bess Matassa

[poem] **61**

The flag, on a good day, looks like the steam  
rising from the 80 yr old Egyptian woman's coffee pot  
adding sugar to water to black bitter grounds  
with a patience more measured than gun powder  
She stares at the soon to be bubbles with one eye shut

America,  
say the constitution backwards  
and it sounds like the natural and exotic rhythm of Arabic  
from my 5 yr old cousin's Moroccan mouth  
She slips into our country  
in summer,  
floats oblivious in water wings  
Her only history, is this:  
her Baba is dissected by airport security  
One day, she will be too  
She giggles and mixes languages  
and turns her head  
to the common sun

-for L.

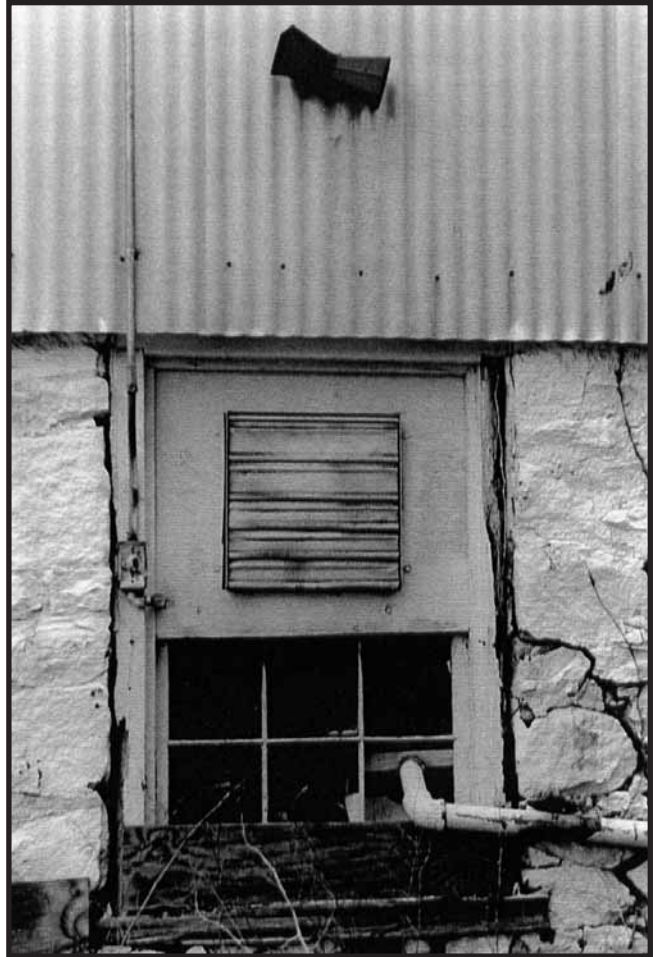
This is not about what I wanted  
To start with, a floor, some sun  
Slanting through, turning the amber tiles  
Warmer, suddenly, as if someone  
Were there sleeping, or waking,  
Watching that slowness open  
A peace lily. It's not  
About what I've wanted. It is  
Only a floor, some light stunned  
Upon a lily, and someone  
Breathing under a blue blanket.  
I am not watching this from a distance  
Anymore. How many times  
Have I walked through alleys  
Kicking a stone curb to curb,  
Hands in my pockets, almost warm,  
Hardly looking up? How many  
Times has snow scabbed the surface  
Of a pond, the koi bashful and waving  
Goodbyes beneath? How many times  
Have I marked the calendar is blue  
Pencil my last days in this man's shape?  
This is not about what I want.  
The floor is warm, that's all, and not  
By its own accord. And that is why  
This is not a love poem, why it does not move  
Beyond desire, unlike the sun,  
From the floor to beneath the blanket,  
To wrapping, Sweet Jesus, my cold hands  
Around your cold hands, hands that, once,  
Drew dots as small as stars  
And made silver eggs dimly glow  
In a linen-wrapped forever.  
It's just paper. It's not  
About what I want at all.

**STILL LIFE: EGGS IN LINEN**  
Alexander Long

[poem]

64  
[photo]

**CRUST**  
Beth DeRespino



On some tropical island somewhere,  
a solitary, scraggly-haired botanist  
drives a roofless jeep on a narrow road,  
searching through miles and miles of jungle  
for an endangered plant's last mate.

He scales the shoreline in a worn out t-shirt,  
winging his way down sheer cliffs  
like a strange, belayed angel, q-tipping  
pollen from one soul mate to another,

and averting the impossible odds of two people,  
slick with sweat in each other's arms,  
waiting for the fusion of invisible cells.  
He spends a lifetime poor and alone,  
and a nameless plant will see another season.

**E N D A N G E R E D   S P E C I E S**  
Erinn Batykefer

[poem] **65**

**TOM THUMB'S DIARY**

Sarah Bonkowski

God and Satan play strip poker  
every Tuesday in November;

I always knew the world would  
end when I least expected it.

The apocalypse has been coming day by day  
for eternity, the universe is dying

with every month that passes Novembers blur  
into each other as years blacken themselves onto

scribbled out pages in a daily planner.  
They're both down to their boxers now,

desperate men with an impossible cause,  
trying to win back the world.

I like to trace  
the bones of my spine,  
feeling the irregular ridges  
like two tectonic plates  
pushed hard against each other.  
Like my mother and father  
pushing against each other  
in a warm California February,  
arcing upward, selves merging.  
Like seedlings about to break  
through the soil,  
unfolding new leaves –  
I can feel those bones  
resting just beneath  
the skin, jutting outward,  
the hard, silent architects  
that knew before anyone  
who I would become.  
It makes me feel close to life  
to trace their hard confidence  
in the exactness of nature.

But always there is that soft panic  
when my fingers touch the place  
where my spine forms a slow,  
stretched curve like the San Andreas –  
a fault  
in the creation of this person,  
made exactly  
according to nature.

**S P I N E**  
Jessie Reeder

[poem] **67**

**HARD # S**

John Jordan

I imagine them all in a room together,  
a sort of reception area, groups  
milling about, exchanging chit-chat  
& the occasional phone number, waiting

to be retrieved from the back of the mind,  
scrawled in a checkbook  
or rendered neat as row houses  
in the columned order of algebra.

There's a pecking order in the capacious room,  
that familiar pull toward our friends,  
a faith in fellowship. And, of course,  
there are the familiar high school characters:

$\pi$  holding court in the center of the room,  
his feet firmly planted on the plush carpet,  
going on & on about himself  
and his intimate relations with Trig,

the radicals off in the corner sniggering,  
and those consummate little men, the exponents,  
loud and boisterous amongst themselves  
yet knowing that a bigger figure will assume their group.

It's nice thinking of oneself clearly  
in measurable, known quantities.

But, ah, the imaginary numbers, those  
would be the ones to spend some time with,  
in the fractal air of thought, talking of nothing  
over beers and those hot-dog hors d'oeuvres.

But in the end, it's the whole numbers I'd hang with,  
full digits unconcerned with subtlety,  
accustomed to the weighty occurrences of life,  
our diminishment and accretion of things.

Yet even their children the fractions know  
that solidarity, the social friendship of #s,  
assumes division, that clean  
even line separating one from another.

## DEFYING CONVENTION

Pam Zwaskis

Raunch Magazine, layout, April 2002, pp. 65 – 68, cnt'd, pp. 143 – 144:

Forty point font: Courier, "Maximum" red, altered slightly to give it a chunked look; headline:  
<Wigging Out!>

Twenty point font: Courier, "Plain" black, centered: <Every Year Fans and Fandoms Gather in One Place for a Well-Deserved Rest From Normal Life. This is What they Do.>

Sixteen point font, Arial: <Stephen Peters>

Text body: <It's twelve-forty three on the first day, and already the auditorium's packed. Whether you've come wearing batwings or rainbow tights, the scene makes for a colorful crowd...>

70  
[story]

Caroline:

So.

Randy's out of the house, Marie's got the fridge stocked.

No, I've got the fridge stocked. She never buys anything.

So.

From "Wigging Out!" Raunch Magazine: April 2002, page 67:

...."This is something," he says, with a tear in his eye, "The whole family can enjoy."

As I look around Talleyway, it's the lack of families that strike me; most of the visitors are in their teens and twenties. There seems to be a generation gap consisting of too young to know any better; there's a distinct jump between the babies and the first experimental cigarette.

I see a girl, maybe in her early twenties, crouching down by the far wall, looking halfway between headache and terror.

What are you, I wonder, doing here?

"I've no idea," she says.

Caroline Ducaris is twenty-three, a graphic artist from Philadelphia. She is, she says, in town to occupy herself, expose herself to new things, but this..

"This is too much," she says, "I feel really embarrassed to be here."

So you won't be dressing up tonight?

"No."

An announcement comes over the loudspeakers that yet another Special Guest will be coming in, probably number thirty today.

"Want to get a beer?" Caroline says.

"No," I say. "Let's go meet him."

Caroline:

Inconspicuous reporter, as it were.

Right.

Don't walk around with a little audio recorder if you want to be inconspicuous.

I'm tired.

The flight didn't need to be that late; of course there's snow in Pittsburgh, of course that renders things dangerously close to deadline.

Of course I'm knackered and I look like cat piss.

But way-hey, anything for thee.

What was I here for again?

Andy:

From "Wigging Out!" Raunch Magazine: April 2002, page 67:

After another round of spot-the-clip in the Energizer Room; it's interview time. I take Caroline with me. He's in the back room, and drinking Mineralade.

"There was a problem," he says, "With the flight. Talleyway was great in clearing it up, though. Came in with time to spare."

Ever been to one of these before?

"Er, no," he says.

Like it?

“What?”

What’s the attraction?

“Oh,” he says, then, straight-faced, “Gobs of money. Shit loads of money. Until you have to get a flight back, then they pull the plug. Bastards.”

“You could auction off your underwear,” Caroline suggests.

Caroline:

Is he wearing any?

From “Wigging Out!” Raunch Magazine: April 2002, page 144:

It’s getting closer to night, and Talleyway Center is emptying out. There’s plans to meet at restaurants, at hotels, back here for the annual midnight Dress Ball, where yards of gauze find a homemade.

72 I’m looking to get some more quotes from our esteemed Guest of Honor, but I’m told he’s pulled out, for the night.

“He left with Caroline,” one of the handlers says.

Andy:

The back hallway of the NYC Talleyway Center is claustrophobic, janitor-needing, blue-green paint peeling off. There’s a distinct scent of too many human bodies in one place. I feel like I’m in the hallway of some gymnasium.

Complete with the payphone. I don’t ask her why she doesn’t carry a cell; I don’t have one on me myself.

“No, no,” she’s saying, buttercup-sweet, into the receiver. “No, that’s fine.”

She glances over at me, gives me a furtive grin. “Thanks, see you.”

The phone comes down on the hook with a chime.

"It's okay," she said. "Randy – her boyfriend's – out for a few weeks, there's room for you."

Boyfriend? Oh, I don't need – "He's not going to be there?" I try.

She shakes her head, no. "He's doing road work."

"Road work?" I say, and it's trouble that I'm stuttering, "Like ... repairing highways and things?"

"Roadie work," she tries, "With bands."

That's good. Bands are alright.

She looks me up and down, as if sizing me up for auction on eBay.

"I'm Julie," she says.

A brief blip. And I'm ... but she knows my name. But I know he...but I don't.

"I thought you were Caroline?" I say, and my voice has taken on an obnoxious tone.

She laughs. "I told Stephen that just in case he was a jerk."

A girl who I'm pretty sure had me sign her arm in line passes me in the hallway. She makes some kind of comment, and right now I'm not really vying to concentrate, and I'm spouting all the automatic responses I've found I've gotten good at in the past half-day. I don't really stop to wonder how this girl got back here, considering she's in a ridiculous rainbow spandex thing of some sort.

There's no Penny Lane slapping shoulder from Julie, no snarky comment. I see her nodding at the girl, giving her a smile, then taking my forearm firmly and leading me away.

"Look," she says, smiling, "Insta-publicist."

Andy, before:

One of the girls is here with relative bells on – a bell around her neck, that is, hanging off a long leather strip and dangling between ample cleavage. I debate making a joke about a cat collar and decide I'll probably see the worst of whatever direction that goes in.

She's smiling at me as she's chatting, black curly hair pulled into a messy bun, unconquered ringlets spiraling upwards from her scalp like corkscrews. I smile back, but realize with a little jolt that I've seen her before. This morning, in fact. In the lobby of the hotel I was staying at.

Suddenly, as I feel quite sick, I don't really want to return.

Andy:

The photographer had asked me to put down what they supplied me to drink – can't have brand names in there, they don't know what's approved for Raunch and what's not. No, there's no time to check, can I please put it down.

Now the attention's off me; the attention's firmly on the convention floor. Stephen is walking around with us, giving instructions to the photographer. That one, get that one. They can't get the ones who look too weird, though – accusations, even ignored as they come, will flutter through.

"Listen," I say to the girl I knew then as Caroline. "Listen. Ah."

She looks over at me. I know Stephen's not paying attention right now, and I prefer it to be that way. "Do you know somewhere I could stay?"

74      Parking garage at 16th and Walnut – she parks away from the Center. She's walking ahead of me, all shifting blue leather jacket and dark blue jeans. She must shop, I think, at one of those exclusive places I keep getting invites too – either that or a good charity shop.

She's well-dressed; I don't know what she's doing with such a crap car.

"Get in," she says.

I push aside some trash; tiny bee-toned cardboard wrappers that Kodak film comes in, some capless pens, some crumpled cups that well-known coffee comes in.

"So," she says, starting it up with a little rumble and rolling down the window to reveal the metal smell of rain-soaked streets. The window is down to let out cigarette smoke.

Julie:

He's got good manners.

Andy:

"You'll like Marie," she says, "She's nice."

I try. "And she doesn't mind a stray dog?"

She laughs, not looking in my direction just yet. "She's cool. She doesn't mind."

Julie:

We should know. Well, it's our right to know.

"What about tomorrow?" I say to the street in front of me.

A beat. Hmm, he's got a strange brow shape when he's confused.

"Any plans?" I try. My eyes hurt from tilting at too sharp an angle at the rearview mirror.

"Oh," he says. Then, "I'm meeting a friend."

I flick a dying cig nub out the window. Well, we'll worry about that tomorrow.

Andy:

I know all the houses in New York are nicer and bigger on the inside than they appear to be on the outside.

Julie hits the bell, unwrapping her scarf, the fringe tickling my shoulder. A light goes on in the hallway, much faster than I would have anticipated.

Marie:

I usually wouldn't be staying in. I wouldn't be going to the places she goes, either. But that's how she does it, if she wants to.

Andy:

Marie takes my hand politely, though there's no shaking. She's Asian, despite the European-sounding surname, and stands head-to-head with Julie. Her legs are miles long and wrapped in black trousers, long lady stovepipes.

Julie gives a cheek-kiss hello, which I've never seen American girls do. Marie doesn't look surprised, but I can tell this doesn't happen that often; her lower lip pouts out in distinct disapproval. She takes my things, and the automatic responses slip from her as I blather apologies and small talk. No, it's no trouble. It's fine. You're certainly welcome. Sit down. She's glancing me up and down, but there's nothing I can pull from her expression. At least it's not a camera or a stare.

Marie:

He's very nice. I always wonder how they get involved with my awful little friend.

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Andy:

It's a studio apartment, small by studio apartment standards. The room is clean and sparse, but stacks of CDs are spread out all over the place, spilling from an opened cardboard box. Japanese groups, it looks like, but not the ones I've seen in Chinatown side-shops – there are no creepy teen idols staring out from the boxes.

I look around. A bed in one corner, the kitchen in the other, a couch, a drawing board stocked with supplies and computer shoved over to one side.

Julie:

This place never fails to impress. Once we pulled a few guys up to the roof, and sat up there talking, until one of the guys spotted a large naked woman lounging, visible, in one of the windows. I've never seen Marie laugh so hard. I try to pull her up to the roof every time the weather is nice, but she's always a little reticent.

Andy:

So it's Marie's apartment, but Julie is the one playing host.

"Do you want something to drink?" she asks me, and I soon find out there's nothing but a bottle half-stained by red wine and tiny cans of Pocari Sweat, not belonging to Marie, as Marie murmured, but purchased by Julie earlier in the day and left to cool in the fridge.

We're slumped on soft couches, the CDs spread all around us. I've let Marie pick something out to listen to; all the bright colors and indecipherable letters are making me dizzy.

"Shipments from friends?" I try.

"No," Marie says, "I design them."

I accept something to drink. I forget which one I took.

Snarky-voiced girl on CD player: "You wonder you wonder you wooonder..."

"It was lovely," Julie says to Marie, sitting down beside her and adopting the posture of the overly-friendly girlfriend, her voice dry with wine and weariness.

"All rain and double-chinned girls and...yuck."

The mood has shifted; I get the distinct feeling that Julie's here now performing a show, and for Marie, not me. Or maybe it's for me, but she's got a higher edge to her voice, and she's barely paying attention to me at all anymore.

Julie:

It's an obvious trick – you see someone being friendly, you relax. But she doesn't get it. If she relaxes, he'll relax  
Relax.

Andy:

Marie turns to me – rather, just her dark eyes turn to me, and then just her head, and I'm struck by this cool high-cheekboned dark-eyed mannequin. Suddenly it comes to mind that her attention was, the whole time, on the situation at hand. Now it's directed at me.

"Your first time at those things?" she asks.

Ha, I think, ha. But Marie's not trying to impress anyone, not with double entendres or anything. She's still looking at me, and the rest of her body is still.

I want, like Julie, to have her like me.

"Yes," I begin.

Marie:

I don't know why she acts like this. He's already spending the night, she can calm down. It would be a lot less embarrassing if she could just act normally.

Andy:

"So take a swallow," the CD says, "As I spit. Bay-be."

They've kicked off their shoes – same brand, the same expensive brand, and

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I just know from Julie's car and Marie's couches that the shoes are something they splurge on, they run out giggling in a pair from the shop they got them from, unbelieving they spent that much....

"I want more opportunities," Julie is saying, "Where I work, it can be a dead end..."

"The bigger," the CD says, "The better..."

The shoes are off and both of them are padding around in these tiny flimsy perfectly white socklings. Marie is loading film into a camera she's taken out of a tiny padded bag, and I note the blue veins going through her slim hands.

Camera. Camera ... I think back to the wrappings in Julie's car.

Marie:

I like photography. I deal with it all the time in my work. But they would never have me use the photos that I take.

Andy:

They're not only alike in height, but as Julie flops over closer to me on the couch, or Marie switches legs to cross, I'm beginning to have a hard time telling them apart – all long strong arms, long waists, same length hair...

Julie is the more animated; she's more inclined to laugh out loud, while Marie just smiles when she pauses and raises the glass to her lips.

"Crazy fangirls," I hear somewhere in the distance. Julie is whispering to Marie, too close.

There's been a break in my brain-clouds. Crazy...

I start. I really had no idea Marie knew anything about the event. "You know them?"

Marie nods as she's sipping. "I know about them, Julie's mentioned them a few times, but we've all come across them."

We've all, haven't we.

Marie:

This one's a bit dense, but I do like him.

Andy:

"You want to see?" Julie asks.

The wine's great. Marie has a pained expression on her face.

Julie is pulling out a neat little Tupperware box out from one of the shoulder-narrow closets. It's a shoe box for when your cardboard ones crumble away.

The box is under loads of things in there; Marie must be a secret slob. Then I think the box is hidden. From Randy?

Julie hands me one package. I think she was planning on handing me more

“That’s him,” she rattles off, “That’s him and him and him.” And him and him and him are names I know, not from personal experience, but from watching TV and going to the movies and listening to music.

Marie gets off the couch. She doesn’t want to look at photos. She doesn’t want me to be looking at photos.

“Let’s play a game,” she says.

Julie:

It’s called Who Shares the Double Bed and Who Gets the Couch.  
Works every time.

Andy, after:

**80** They never seemed disappointed that I got the couch.

I’m not sure what would have happened at all differently if I hadn’t. There are night sounds in New York that are intrinsic to the city, I know that now. There’s ambulances, cars, backfiring tires, brownstone settling with the wet, steel air. But there are sounds I hear that I know aren’t part of the city.

I catch them with my ears, very delicately, just past the line of my hearing, like I’m sensing something at the end of the tunnel. They’re coming from the bed that I can’t quite see from the couch.

It gets to the point where I can’t ignore it; I just have to get up, look over, investigate, or at least peek.

I see Julie, sitting up, on the bed, on her knees, and looking down at Marie, who’s curled on her side, and Julie’s saying something, something that makes her profiled face spread into a wide pumpkin grin. There’s giggling and then there’s “Shhh, shhh,” and Julie stops, she freezes. And she looks back at me.

Then there's the sliding of cloth on cloth, and she's coming over to where I am. And to say things would be slightly uncomfortable would be wrong in the wrong way, because now it's not an issue of comfort, it's an issue of ...expectation.

She's giving me a stare, a good stare, and behind her shoulder I can see Marie giving me a very good stare too, a very direct stare, a very Marie stare, and then Julie is settling down right next to me, and then Marie is getting up and coming over to me, and I right now I know. I know there's a real good reason for the missing boyfriend, the Kodak film wrappers, and the fabled disinterest in everything that scared me so bad I had to run to the leather blue-jacketed eye of the storm.

Matthew, after:

Now I fucking love collectibles, right? Give me Howdy Doody. No, don't, I already own the little fucker, lunchbox, replica doll and more.

It's Love on Bowery, has everything you can think of, at least in terms of my lovely collectibles. I've had my eye on the twelve-inch replica of Tweaky from "Buck Rogers" that some guy promised me via phone. Should have told him who I was with. Maybe I'll get a discount anyways.

Ah, and here's our boy, our Sir Andrew, coming up the street, five minutes late, give or take, like, no biggie. He's had a rough night of it, I see, all red eyes and mussed hair and.

I told him if he wanted to do something like that he should call me, jaysus.

“What ho,” I clap him on the back. “How was it?”  
He looks up at me and I wonder if perhaps he’s smiling. It’s hard to tell with the post-hangover collapsed look, which is so out this time of year.  
“They run you through?”  
“Ugh,” he says, sounding pained.  
“Right,” I say, “Well, they’ve got Tweaky. Whole set, now right? I’ll have it all.”  
I start to lead him inside but he’s frozen.  
“Come on,” I say.  
“Not today,” he says.  
I look him up and down. The bars in this city must be fantastic.  
“We don’t have to,” I say. Then, “Coffee?” I say.  
“Yeah, coffee,” he says.  
Yeah, coffee. When he wakes up, then maybe he can fill me in.

Let me tell you the tale in these lines of earth:  
it begins inside this red smudge, where Mesozoic birds

record the beginning of our time in plumes of bloody clay,  
their broken necks arching in calligraphic curves.

Archaeopteryx's fossilized feathers were whittled into quills,  
here, under the ceaseless grinding of tectonic plates,

and the bones and legends of a Holocene nomad lay crushed,  
now, among the ancient glacier gravel beneath our feet.

Ten thousand years ago, this river wound through this  
waxy, yellow vein of clay – the same layer a civilized hand

found on the Euphrates' rich edge six thousand years later  
and inscribed with a codex of crescents.

And there, at the top of the canyon high above, where the loam  
spills away like ink and stains the stone beneath --

that dark line marks the beginning and the end.  
This is a story you know.

CANYONS  
Erinn Batykefer

[poem] 83

How you see me,  
it's not so different  
from how I see myself  
these nights after  
nite-nite  
I lie anxiously aware of my body.  
-how far my flesh extends  
to where the air begins.  
It scares you? well,  
it scares me too.  
Yet, when I ask you,  
"do I take up  
too much room?"  
You assume I mean  
in-take/out-take  
like  
binging-purging  
has something to do with it.  
has anything to do with  
the shame.  
if I could blame my scars  
on candy bars  
don't you see  
how easy it would be,  
to calm this frantic  
push-pull of  
my proportions.  
thighs, breasts, cheeks, hips-  
The space I inhabit  
inhibits my thoughts.  
I'm caught in a war  
waged in my mind,  
not  
a cafeteria.  
Precious time swallowed by my weakness.  
I forgot I had the strength  
to fight this bleakness.  
-that comes  
not-so-much  
from a failure  
to own my curves.  
But from the failure  
to stand Alone  
on my own.

to see  
beauty  
in what makes me  
different.-  
from her or her  
or you,  
who use my unused belt loops  
to testify to my disease.  
Does it please you?  
(my ribs so visible-tangible-touchthem.)  
Ease your pain to give  
my torment  
a name?  
You can't see the voices  
in my head.  
-so loud in this body  
so close to dead.  
No, how you see me  
it's not so different  
from how I see myself  
these nights  
after nite-nite  
I fight not to wake to  
the hunger  
the hollowness  
insatiable.  
I am dreaming, hoping,  
"If I turn  
sideways,  
maybe I'll just  
disappear."  
It is my fear that  
owns me now  
and defines me  
and binds me  
to this torture.  
I want out  
just as much as  
you want in  
-to the jury  
deliberating,  
behind my eyes,  
the worth of a woman  
and if she's guilty  
I die.

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[poem]

**CHICKEN FEET**

Beth DeRespino



**AFTER MEETING MUHAMMAD ALI AT MARTINI'S PIZZA  
SHOP, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN, FEBRUARY, 1998**  
Alexander Long

*He's too ugly to be the champ. Look at me, I'm pretty.*

*- Muhammad Ali*

What needs to happen now  
has little to do with accuracy,  
or the mesmerization we feign  
for all the obvious reasons  
regarding his single force:  
a magic trick that ends  
in his quivering left fist  
holding a linen napkin  
that flutters like the resignation  
of a chilling butterfly.  
Let me remind you  
that our subsequent applause  
may invoke the old imprecations –  
“I am the greatest of all time;  
What’s my name? What’s my name!” –

even as the children continue  
to approach, as he hugs them  
for so long that we begin to sway  
a little with them, forgetting  
that our distance is still  
an exile from the first love.  
If I could stake my claim  
for once on the future tense,  
when even the stars refuse to emerge  
from the orange-flamed horizon  
to which we are attached,  
whose geometry will not soften  
for even God the Man,  
we would, with all our overdue respect,  
approach him with our hats and gloves  
in one hand, and extend our other,  
so as to shake his hand  
and tremble because of him,  
and with him.

**L A U R A R I D I N G C R I E S I N H E R S L E E P**  
Evan Weaver

An anti-poem.

30-06 I am very sorry. I am very sorry for many things.

20-21 I am sorry for Laura Riding, who cries into her pillow every night, especially the weekends, when she is alone and the gold tiara is not enough to pick up her heart and fling it into the sea that is Love, with a capital L, because it is important.

12-10 I am sorry I am never there.

10-10 I am sorry that as the tears run like glass into the pillow, that there is no mask large enough for the lonely wound, or rather, scar, because it has healed and will never heal, that is Writing, with a capital W, because it is also important.

01-21 I am sorry for a thing I do not understand.

01-02 I am sorry that although she, who, when she loved other people, loved what she saw of you in them, did not love you, just as the gray moon did not love the gray tide because for them to say to each other what must be said was Impossible, with a capital I, which is important.

00-02 I am sorry that poetry is dead.

**JUNK**  
Beth DeRespino





## WHO *are* THESE PEOPLE?

***Erinn Batykefer*** is a junior English Major with a concentration in Creative Writing and an Art History Minor. (Would you like fries with that?) She spends most of her time reading. She'd like to thank Prof. Walker and her 01-02 poetry writing classes as well as the Underground Travel Office for all the workshops and the coffee.



***Sarah Bonkowski*** doesn't pretend she's been writing since she was five. She owes it all to her father, the poets he introduced her to, coffee, trees and things that fly. In her spare time she is a Freshman studying English, Italian, and Philosophy – even though she'll probably end up waitressing.

***Maya Constantine*** misses deadlines.

***Melissa Cox*** doesn't consider herself a poet, but a lyricist. Music is her art. She is honored to have her attempts at poetry in this literary magazine, but there are poets on campus who deserve a voice in *Caesura*. She applauds those poets who can amaze us with words alone, without the help of clef or note.

**Beth DeRespino** remains unavailable.

**Kristen Findeisen** is a difficult person to reach.

**Daniel Gray** is a graduating English major with a concentration in Creative Writing. He is currently teaching for the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts and his play, "Reunion of Last Ditched Dream" is being filmed by fellow UD alum Phillip Perri in Philadelphia. He would like to thank the entire English faculty, especially Linda Russell and Professor Jeanne Murray Walker, for their friendship and guidance.

**John Jordan** is a graduate student in the English department interested in 19th and 20th century American poetry and Civil War literature. He hopes to complete his Ph.D work before he is sixty-four and loses all his hair.

**Alexander Long** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English. His poems, essays, and book reviews have appeared in *American Writer's* (Charles Scribner's Sons), *Quarterly West*, *The Prose Poem: An International Journal*, *5 AM*, *The Cream City Review*, *Rivendell*, *Pleiades*, and elsewhere. A chapbook, *Light Here, Light There*, is forthcoming from Brandenburg Press. And, writes Alexander, that's enough narcissism for today.

**Jeff Markovitz** is a third year English and Psychology major who works for various publications on campus such as *The Review* and *The Delaware Politics and Law Review*. Aspiring to be a novel writer, he also spends time interviewing and writing for magazines and newspapers in the local area and in Philadelphia, while writing short fiction and poetry at home. He's never had to write about himself in the third person before, and finds it, "Kind of creepy."

**Bess Matassa** is a graduating senior in Italian and French Studies. She would like to thank Caesura for finally uniting her with the guy who wrote the "Passing the Buck" poem a few years back. She is grateful for record players, tomatoes and summertime.

***Matt McDonald*** is a sophomore mechanical engineering student (yes, you read that right), and when he's not slaughtering his brain with problem sets, he's trying to relax with his favorite hobby: poetry. Matt would like to thank every person whose first name begins with H for their love and empathy.

***Adam McGee*** is a junior English major with a concentration in creative writing. He is from southern Delaware.

***Annika Mengisen*** sent us lots of pictures.

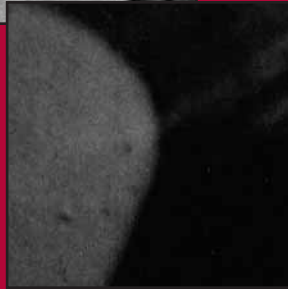
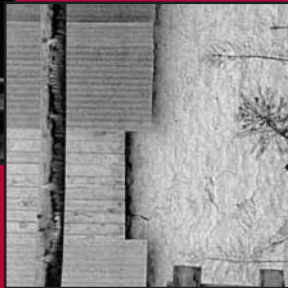
***Santiago Montaña*** was born in Colombia in 1980. He left Colombia in 1998, and since then he has studied Journalism at American University, Communication at the University of Delaware, and has attended the Foreign Languages and Literatures program of the University of Delaware in Paris. Santiago will continue studying literature and hopes to become a writer.

***Matthew Obrigawitch*** submitted his poems by e-mail.

***Jessie Reader*** is a junior, and she's majoring in Spanish and English/Creative Writing. She also has an art minor, and she just got back from studying photography in New Zealand. She loves rock/rap/metal music and weird indie films that no one else likes.

***Evan Weaver*** has some poems published in this issue of *Caesura*.

***Pam Zwaskis*** was the seventh princess daughter born during the cycle of a new moon to His Esteemed Lordliness Gothor, King of the Wind People, and Anaruthan Rwylylynlyn, daughter of Thor. Orphaned by the plague of the Dark Mountain, Pamela was subsequently raised by She-dinosaurs and survived on fairy dust and goat meat. She probably has the power to shoot fireballs and tame wild steeds or something. Pamela also enjoys Depeche Mode.



*bye!*