

*contents*

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Jules Boykoff / Jen Hofer / Jena Osman / Patrick F. Durgin / Frank Sherlock /  
Peter O'Leary / W.B. Keckler / Lee Riley-Hammer / Kyle Conner /  
Brendan Lorber on Buck Downs's *Marijuana Soft Drink* / Michael Magee /  
Diana Rickard / rob mclennan / Seth Frechie on Toby Olson's *Human Nature* /  
Mel Nichols / Edward Mycue / Lisa Jarnot

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editors:

Chris McCreary

Jenn McCreary



Jules Boykoff

**paradigm as semi-fossilized ideology**

ampersanding through the philacrowd  
deafened in significance inimitable indeed I say  
radar nylon spraypaint concrete scoff  
an army of police straddling their canondales

inappropriate appropriation rivalry  
swivel-lipping mythical fixity  
history as parenthetical microsnippet  
for crinkled panacea for platinum philander

the switch was then switched  
primordial bone socket & dreadlock smoke  
pulse of energy river of wind  
gutteral deluge livid rapidity

the rose opened like a burning book  
graceful & throaty she was thickened & vitrified  
she was & then shattered on the shards of before  
rampant evasive couth drivelblizzard

it was confusing & complicated  
& all other shades of understanding  
like arthur cravan turtling in the ring  
like general generalize lies

seamless brazen canticle plateau  
extolling the less romantic forms of banditry  
paradigm as semi-fossilized ideology  
however nonetheless seemingly but

## facts

i.

autumnal cilantro trollops uncoiled

a two-legged punchline scrim    beneath  
an ashen desecration                    [bordertantrums]  
wriggle the bombastic shrivel joust

ii.

loosened eye padded for public

consumption tectonics consumption tectonics consumption  
fairly treaty-induced dysfunction                    massively judicial swerve  
cookie-cutter lassitude    despondent & dogmatic  
[democracy & other patriotic lore]  
like sneakers hanging from the powerline                    [with intent]  
sisyphyan opacity under the blinking imprecation

iii.

therefore leafblower logic

& the unglued vagabond distances in the glisten  
[thusly eat massified glee]



Jen Hofer  
*corporeal manifesto #w*

## **the decoy of detail**

a claim to being or reading in the avoidance, making  
or marrying a thing which wants a claim in the car  
(in the interim or infantile prorated storefronts  
or the painting was titled how more pleased  
with ourselves could we be) malaise of nausea  
maples or ego. anxiety casts no shadow, therefore  
it must be noon. memory at a distance convexly  
refocusing stammer-like, rental instruments annihilating  
the rust off experience, the thing of the thing or pledge  
of allegiance, declaration of incandescence studied and into  
the shadow of what, subtitled, restored, neglected over  
a period of days or years, posed, collected in aerial view  
in arbitration, north America, decoy vehicles, foisted upon  
fetish reinvented in chiseled nibbled bits, not being  
in the world thus displayed, “no effort, no state” the proper  
window evidently invincible, derailed, sit here on the curb,  
why don't you?

*corporeal manifesto #3*

**“The situation is hopeless,” he said, “and we are nowhere in california”**

a language inside a flowerpot of language  
revolving doors as an outpatient (pay-  
dirt and late arrival, i'm ripping)

a bus line with his hand over  
his mouth, what this has to do  
with the meat industry, young

fellows making \$12,000 in one day

vectors, or tie the legs together  
rub butter over the skin

shelves careen shallow fetters  
straining to listen into the temperate  
cold, unexpected, rift and when  
ever is it walking limitless

feeling at close range  
bad or very bad  
currently eventualities  
singled you out  
or mimeographed regardless

*corporeal manifesto #k*

**“No correlation**

Between inspiration and results.”

I'm thinking of you as I write this, I thought.

It is necessary to availability streets withdrawal.

Into diversion sparingly while subject in question does not know what to think.

The extent possible, however, reduced to the missed last chance.

The mast or head.

An interlude: a claim to being

or being in the car (in the interim

museum profile of a missile titled

How More Pleased With Ourselves

Could We Be) of nausea or masculine

ego. No anxiety cast, thus shadows

burned into asphalt. Distance convexly

refocusing memory, sauna-like, annihilating

the rust of experience, the thing of the thing

a pledge of allegiance or decoration.

Once again, in California.

Trepid refutations gauge troves of enough, dear, in company.

Refusal mechanized, delivery not included.

Do you mine?

Something about believe, I think.

A disease of follicle, dog or viola, don't mention it.

Succulents, then, are not succulence.

Jena Osman

**Parabolic Picture**

*for Deborah Richards and her Parable*

She runs out of the party and says “you forgot this” but what did he forget  
we’re not allowed to see he says thanks it’s what you have to do  
to get from point a to b nothing can be left to chance the looks between  
them from their very first meeting you forgot this

then the best friend from the bench is shot duly there needs to  
be an excuse for the good guy to show the shadow of his father they’re all alike  
and the drunk must cry a lot that is her character and one moment he is an  
alcoholic on the wagon then off then not at all you forgot this

because these things are temporary plot devices what you have to do you  
forgot this how to get from point a to b he decides to quit his job it’s unclear  
why it’s an imperative to “move on” just now to Manhattan as if this were  
easy he must have been saving up you forgot this anyone can move  
across the river to a nice apartment people do it all the time they’re all alike  
the women fall for that

they like his brooding about his father even when they leave him  
they still love him forever because they’re all alike they’re all alike  
it’s what you do to get from point a to b so at the end there’s still hope  
although he commits a linguistic sin the women fall for that sort of thing

when you work in a place you have lots of friends and differences of class and race are  
gently noticed at a distance a plot device because she’s a singer and he’s a  
playwright and in art all are the same nothing can be left to chance so the play is a  
transparency projecting the character’s life people do it all the time memoirs

write a character that represents yourself      they still love him forever      and that  
provides closure      the character who can move forward      an apartment in  
Manhattan      and the character that stays the same      is shot      the one from  
the bench      the many ways a world is divided      the same two halves

the workers are all friends and choose to stay late at the end of the night      to applaud  
each other's talents      particularly the love interest      as she has a decent voice  
is clearly on the move      an apartment in Manhattan      the man who stays the  
same      gets sucked off in a car

and differences of class and race are gently noticed      so at the end there's still hope  
duly shot      then there's the issue of what we know      what we know and  
they don't know      jumping ahead      predicting indicators      calling the shots  
before they know      everything is a surprise for them      isn't life too good

isn't it full of things we don't know      except as an audience we do know      well  
before they know      how can they be so blind      how can we be so much smarter  
the signs are in red      fluorescent      duly lit      if only he had known  
if only she had been a better reader      glaring like helicopter spotlights  
you forgot this

skin stands for the trouble of romance      transparency projects life      device shows  
through the skin      a hero      a bench      a bad father      like that      a life in  
tracing paper      and we project ourselves into the form that waits for us      wait  
for the form that projects us

Patrick F. Durgin  
from **Litmus Redact**  
**5. Pareille**

*In gratitude to SK*

We speaking fetch peace

How do we know some thing to love it?

Leave me alone I ode – all things being equal – one thing

A tactical heir distances the pitch – pinch – it flits fictive

There is never not reference about some little difference for relief

Must shift paradiddle – champion of no fixed regard

Waver on the matter – another bicker for later

Resentful vital and grossly sorry – it's the abject body of the involuntary man

A somewheres ether is voice stipulation

And this is how we love to know the things we love to decide

And this is why we don't take comfort from what's said at send-offs

Cash and carry aspire differently depending

It's paramount that we pro verbalize at send-offs

No we don't slogan – we listen for bounty

An equally tenacious moralizing equation

They will call it a guild and decide loving it

Let's all go to our rooms for a situation

Happiness is not seductive without a lack a loss

And the body repulses me it is here

Unnavigable and always against which

I think I am what's the matter

Wordling window wordling at the window

Leave the body without loss so

Have it too that is at once

Who will let you love them while

This seductive repulsion matters

Suddenly cloistered and undertaking to dim all that is given to recollection for fear  
of the force of what's coming always there

Dank spring I can't smell it so

Scent it with wordlings

A pessimistic exercise or a wrong mocha for murking your romantic picadillos

You can always love mostly mostly never what passes for belief

Everyone on foot stays the pavement. Everyone drafts staid notes

You seduce everyone out of what matters

And a piffle paving stone pebbles

Suddenly a pervasive optimism became our project

Of history of speaking loving and listening

To the whites of eyes fixed away

Frank Sherlock  
**Wayout the Wayin**

so it is written

so it is  
undone

(N)  
(W) (E)  
(S)

understand  
there

is an esperanto  
word for grace

## Quatro

It's true  
while we're checked into living like chess

A bold move like holding  
the zippo against  
a bronze monument won't  
change any shapes

I see a heart colored burnt orange

The animals out there  
move in elusive pretexts  
the toilets parks staked as  
someone or thing's intimate space

This figure sometimes human sometimes  
mythological slaloms around  
the unwritten  
histories of a conceptual life

Yes

the fresh window the fat  
chair the happy tears but  
the day itself untitled

jettison potential to

How many me's does it take  
to screw in the light of love  
visible from the street  
a punchline awaits in traffic

Liberte tagged on the brickboard  
chalk on the tar spells out  
“under the pavement the beach”  
broken glass beyond nonsense

(erase & rewind)

There is this theoretical  
stance that I will die  
it's possible the footwork's  
been a series of missteps

Everything changes in  
the way sex on the moon  
is a different friction  
repetitions aren't the same

Teach me to dance  
in the first second third world  
there is a fourth space for us I  
see two faces colored burnt orange

## Horn Orgy Texts for a Downtown Sex Mob

as serious as – life – levitational  
pull steep – in – ansonia basement science –  
collab – skin – sculpture relent  
lessly abstract – is – tomorrow  
the question – who could hang a name on you

striated vibracording – superreal wooded –  
wind – heteromo blur & a thessaly soundtrack  
desire – of disidentity – harmalodic –  
mantels con – structed – dismantled  
all – eyes all – tactiles tuned – to

the venus feast – via – the third ear –  
focus – who could hang a name on you  
folk – ethics of a nude music – that  
possibility – relief – refuge – release  
in the mat room – caressed cracks in experience

framing pasts – dethroned around – the floors –  
etruscan entertainment – body monarch – consorts  
atonal clusters – pooled pleasure – swim  
in the dark – anonymous – airshot –  
arrangement - split gulf coast of self of

other – steams in for a moment – w/o rule  
of course – come – bent – evershine  
of elements of avant grope ensembles –  
third stream after third stream – rhythms –  
who could hang a name on you – theory

burns smoked – in circular breath in –  
flashwatch – hanging on – the polyphone  
a possibility – anew – a body cushion –  
mirrors on each side of the eye – reveal  
ceiling skies – a strange – magnet field

Peter O'Leary

**Downward Motion of a Mountain**

Rangeland spotted by a Seraph's broken spine. Like lintels,  
like massive teeth in a grass mandible. Smashed vertebrae  
ice like cloud, shapeshift, decay. Arched pinion of  
a wingbone nuzzled by foals, sucking at the marrow, still warm,  
milking from it.

Wild men will one day declare these bones petrific & devour the horses  
in an act of sacrifice perpetrated in dim memory.

When they sing of these deeds, centuries later they will speak  
a language of benediction unknown to them  
sounding like molars crushed by impacted tusks.

Losing your teeth is like losing your backbone. But the meaning  
remains elusive all these aeons. White pelicans  
spun on thermal updrafts  
count time in prehistoric gyrations.

Cirrus ossifies into fibers in upper air, a canopy of coral hairs  
above the sky. Will you dig these fossil images there? Will you make a  
rocky soil  
of your final instinct?

## “A Supersensual Utility in the Sun, and Stars, Earth, and Water”

*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain  
together until now.  
Romans 8:21*

Confined to the innermost shrine, something gentle settles, homotropic  
buzz.

Fertile. Theologic. Glue burns inhalant throughout the minor swale of  
divination. Objects on the altar decorated with shells of crabs &  
fresh-water pearls.

What phantom hugs your breath to its chest, motionless?  
In conjuring the image of God, dislodged by a turbulence  
from a pinched diaphragm, I have chosen  
a transcendent lammergeier massive with alpine  
strength. Have you eaten living chamois? Lambs, kids,  
hares? Rats or little furry animals? I have never  
seen this sheep-vulture. All the while praying, I have only read its name.  
My sacrifice to the image of God  
will be fifteen minutes of prayer each morning.

“Growth in prayer has no end,” wrote Theophan the Recluse.  
The state of prayer lost you replace with the memory of  
that state, abiding there in an idolatry, a  
wretchedness. Growth is longsuffering, only that.

A white-throated sparrow purveys its local dialect. A Zapotec  
relic of this bird strips him of features, cooled with jade.

Is this the image of God? Prayer  
expands like a muffin, as yeasty as the summer scum on the lake,  
as the space that multiplies between days.

## Spiritual Giants

For starters, the cedar waxwing, maneuvering in summer  
leafage, feathers greased with vasoline. Also the lark sparrow's buzzsaw  
song,

a radar. The song sparrow — diminutive — who mounts up *sweet sweet*.  
A glossy ibis, purple Pharoah of salt  
marshes. Black-crowned night heron, master of an  
elusive attention, extracting  
alewives from algae with evolutionary tongs. Blue heron —: a  
God-arrow. Saurian. Light  
practices for moonrise on  
Saturn. A black bile courses, eases. Slenderest  
tendrils a yellowthroat  
leans on —: warrior-stave.

The new Rilke stumbles on pebbles of foam  
littered in the never-used party store parking lot, enumerates  
natural foibles he avoids yet harbors  
nevertheless. Thinks on birds  
he's seen. Their wingbeats like strides. The errors  
of birdwatchers. The angels of Latium fade  
by daylight, meteor showers, migrations. Nothing, he thinks, so sweet as  
some company.

*for DJ & AD*

W.B. Keckler

**Versions**

1.

But plasma senses time more keenly  
so that this is what forms or resembles.  
Filling threads of proteins  
wander in the animal nosing under rocks  
beside the creek, in falling snow.  
Your evening clothes hang there  
from the closet. Subliminal structure

like the idea “the rest of my life.”

2.

After waking, past sundown  
I find myself  
doing voice-overs for the dream I just had.

Using a knife rhythmically in the dim kitchen  
downstairs,  
talking to myself

I know my life as an inspired forgery.

I brush crumbs from my sleeve  
and can't shake the déjà vu.

3.

How do we ever forgive  
voluptuous formlessness

leaving us?

Watch the pilot's perfect hand  
butter bread as he flies into the mountain  
physics tells us is empty space.

If only the holes could match up,  
two solid objects  
could go right through  
each other

without anyone noticing.

The way light goes  
through an "I,"

or how we vanish into it.

## **On Piano**

Lacking a common power  
someone seeks a genetic interpretation

Like pigments in the butterfly's wings

Or the way a garment is hung up  
at day's end

A feeling of steeply sloping land  
exists to make you drowsy

the keyboard, 88 lenses

An accumulation of false radiance  
in the sap of vision, something waving

inside extinction's  
sticky cushioning medium

A pillow for every statement

Dividing like memory, a parasite  
entered the game so late

How can it not feel alien  
returning to the single body

from being all the forest at once?

Lee Riley Hammer  
**Another Black Box**

The perfect girlfriend shuffles through futures in risk-neutral positions. Process is shown onto a balcony, ushered with windows. He sits mute, but has a gift in his head. He plays and she goes out between his ears. Remarks of wild enthusiasm describe silence—social torture not on the map. Edges are collected with a microscope—this is a religious issue. The trick is to find the right probes and cluster in predictable patterns.

A). A Japanese figure describing a neural network is:

1. like water.
2. murky.
3. a mechanism for nurturing.

B). In April, the system will:

1. get a slice of the black box.
2. be placed in the deadline.
3. refine lawn chairs and folding tables.

C). Rules for acting in the end:

1. if you had the money.
2. something will happen.
3. an intellectual striptease.

(How one transforms a secret compiles a hefty manual of fire-drills and jumping over hurdles before running faultlessly on a new set of values measured in the millions who are crowded around trading real with real.)

The short answer is based on the sheer size of the day.

*Note:* Fragments collected and reworked from a poem by Mark Halliday, *Quartier*, and the article, *Black Box*, by Thomas A. Bass (123-4), published in the *New Yorker*, April 26 and May 3, 1999.

***for Edith Piaf***

*The green heron shows a remarkable ability to respond to sight and sound cues...*  
and unlike one of Rod's egrets, stretches his long neck and glassy eye searching  
the 60% of my body prey to regret. I don't mind the wading—graceful guest.

*Sometimes they stalk slowly...lifting each foot clear and setting it down again so gently  
that no ripple warns...*a warm hand pressing my glove draws blood on Georgia's sheets.

Notice the delicate feet of the black-crowned night heron blending in line with a body of  
lyrics refusing the sweet Turkish finger tracing my clavicle—*starving the heron dips his  
neck with a sudden jab of the bill...*

as when I opened my eyes you were gone before I could swallow.

Kyle Conner  
*from* **Radiance Songs**

Vermillion lights, thriving centuries before Civilization and after,  
the aliens in the canal—  
Quenched rockets throb suspicion, elegant cerebral spheres wept  
Humanity's sins.

Any dream contraption, amplify the will of mind, straddles darkness  
to reach the light—  
No Paradise, no prize.

\* \* \*

Lullabies, versions of child-like foot-journeys, illumined frames, mysterious maternal icon—  
Vines creep down the tree, ancient spines of golden fruit, fine leaf rumination.

A child-spire eyes the motionless directions with a precise poignance.

\* \* \*

To be alone, talking the face to force its features, chicken cacciatore, fleece  
of recalcitrant crustacean, the broom must show the piles it keeps,  
speak of exact angles, armaments for quarantined dysfunctional  
desire—

Certain days the coin stands on its side, drop a curtain to oil a veil,  
paradise of milkweed, palsied juggernauts suckle the sand,  
lifeguard escorted from the community pool, dizzy  
with acquisition feelings.

A fast commune weathers any uncertain sideshow, avoid the slapstick  
angst routine, go straight for the blue brother  
with the bells on, cantankerous blighter, breaking  
caretakers out of work.

## Postcards with an Edge: Buck Downs's *Marijuana Soft Drink*

Buck Downs wishes you were here. He's thinking of you. He's having a great time in sunny. He's our correspondent on a tropical island in the middle of an ocean of acuity with a stack of postcards on their way. & just as love arrives only after you've given up looking for it, another Buck Downs poem postcard arrives just when you've stopped expecting one. I was lucky enough to get two this summer, one of which now plays bookmark in his new & elegantly talkative collection of mostly short poems *Marijuana Soft Drink*.

With this book, Downs makes the leap from folk art postcardism, a form which shorts out traditional cultural production a la Ray Johnson, a form which pulls off intimacy & broadcast simultaneously. But what's he leaping into when he transforms these "beaten-up cards / of knowledge" into a bound book? What the poems lose in outsider artistry & the charm of passed notes they gain in continuity – Downs' compressed & chatty language is allowed to develop from piece to piece into longer more complex arguments. They gain enough altitude & momentum to become richly satisfying. The book begins with a quote from Frank O'Hara: "The only good thing about it is that when I get lofty enough I've stopped thinking and that's when refreshment arrives." Taken on their own, the postcards are individual sips or tokens, but as a whole, well, as Downs says in the poem "dumb-bucket", "often / the refreshments / are as important / as the event itself."

It's a book who's very title reads an act of courageously indelible ephemera, & argues effectively that, faced with the bulky mute symbols of America, the incidental & fleeting offer more than a kind of resistance, they provide a secret form of wisdom. With a nod towards O'Hara & Olivia Newton John he opens "Poem" with "let's get ephemeral / as ephemeral / as ephemeral can get." Downs's poems are refreshing pauses in which the tulip value of anything other than leftovers & snackfood is revealed to be delusional.

That the fizz off a soft drink can eat like a meal is central to Downs work. The higher one ascends into Downs' hilarious & biting lyric, the clearer it becomes that his humor is connected to a seriousness beyond the bounds of traditional gravity. The jokey cleverness & accelerated stammer of his speech don't belie a more serious task, they're what make that heavy duty achievable in the first place. Its a form of expansive, playful challenge to despair & death in all its guises, a challenge that couldn't be pulled off through a frontal approach. As he says in "strictly legal", "time grows up / to kick our ass / but we remain fantastic children."

He's writing from the hinge, the moment when we contradict ourselves, when we're both young & mortal. In "the Dead Survivors" he explodes the old plane crash riddle, "where do / the survivors get buried." For us Americans, "their survival it is buried." Amid the short (usu. less than a page) pieces, his longer poem, "trouble play," a kind of homespun Season in Hell, sets the stage for a book that reveals the ways in which everything contains its

opposite. Humor is the most austere form of seriousness, optimism is a half empty glass, “even infinity gives way.” Most of his phrases act less as signs as they do slingshots, hurtling headlong into the next at breakneck speed & oblique angles. Even the manic pace of his work is contained by the cutoff lines.

His love poems, tender but tinged with loss or money problems – become increasingly exploratory as the book progresses. From the grimly funny reductions of the opening poem, “worth” to the epigrammatically wounded “Loving-Cup of Water with Wings” there’s the sense of desire bumping up against stark limits. “now at least I know / stay the hell / off your side of the bed.” But in the longer concluding poem “abortifacient” he moves through the terrain of coming undone in more meticulous ways.

“memory / is a stroke / of vengeance” he writes in the poem where language is pocked by missed opportunities he can neither to set right nor get beyond. Whether the abortion in the poem is literal or merely “undoing the birth / of our next thinking,” the poet’s crushed under his own powerlessness to develop something beyond boundaries everywhere closing in. “even the weather / will get to killing / itself once / it fails to imagine / an alternative” Where this travels beyond simple Prufrockian paralysis is in Downs’ having witnessed the glimmer of something more, having even initiated something, but then, just as quickly, experiencing its collapse. “we’ve let it all out / what happens next / has happened.”

Some of the shorter poems read like medieval PSA’s against mortal vanity, the portraits of young people getting it on with skeletons. Downs’ Dixie Dylan Thomas elegy to Banjo Joe, a “melencholy song / of joy” has as its title & refrain “grief comes as no surprise.” His “Ground Crow” lament at privation & dying says “and there is only one / you and one of me and that / is not enough” Is he admitting defeat? “mail it off to Paris / & never let is heal” or is he gaining a strange strength from the wounds he shares with his postcard community – a community that by the publication of the book now includes anyone.

Perhaps he’s both. The notions he develops in an effort to cut through the illusory nature of our freedom & immortality might not help us become more free or live forever, but seeing things as they are grants us something to cope with beyond the quietly desperate squirm. As he says in “shit in my spacesuit”, “& you may disabuse me / of this useless conviction / only at the risk / of your own personal liberty”

The poems work best when they’re allowed to move unobstructed. Sometimes he becomes too insistent that he’s really doing something here though, as when he explicitly thumbs his nose at the pretension he usually, & quite rightly, doesn’t give the time of day. “trouble play’s” “passing on / the back pack / the six-pack / and the art pack” is a fumbled complaint over ground he covers more subtly & effectively elsewhere. The book’s strength has to do with accretion of mass through the laying on of one lively particle after another.

The cards may be stacked against us but lurking beyond bitterness & exhaustion is a kind of thorny liberation that can be attained only by acknowledging the lack of anything left to lose & even then only for a quivering moment. As he says towards the close “let’s have some exhaustion / in the world and an enthusiasm / for that” The brilliance of *Marijuana Soft Drink* is that Downs’s seemingly incongruous calls to action, are both paradoxical & entirely convincing.

— Brendan Lorber

Michael Magee

**Bigger & Badder than a Sonnet**

the hills are alive with Gucci pylons:  
we-in-the-business meet those-in-the-know

on the bathroom floor of the  
icy internet café latte intolerant

a nor'eastah rains out the party  
politics in Mighty Mouse's trousers: they

beg to differ, beseech your lordship  
lollipop in the hobbieshop, horse

sense dictating, boss, the codes of  
our best peoples: wheres all this

aggression coming from? if wizened  
veterans collect hoarfrost, *why, ob,*

*why can't I?* in word-sized hail  
I'm all back that up bluebird, hand

in the blockbuster late return slot  
and while the egg on my face is my

own ovum, and morning is known as Dawn  
so don't *I* do donuts, Don: on your front lawn

## Spring & Some

*for Michael Gizzi*

penurious chill, sun out                      sun's out  
on the parch                      what's that  
expression – the girls

to come by?

more delusions

than a syphilitic Franklin?

no thanks, ma'am

atomic

cat, atomic bird

vernal bugaboos

the buds

marked: FRAGILE

3) mid-summer: don a

downy chapeau, mister sex comedy

plant this

dig my snug pen

(that's

*penis*, Seamus)

(and that's me

buttercup you

just fucked up

wise acre)

I'm a Gerber daisy, baby,

but I grow like a weed

Diana Rickard

## **Badlands**

she wrote a letter. her mind had a crack in it.  
the people there still vent their rage.  
yet there remain paintings,  
plants, things we paid for. after which I led her to water.  
she remembers feeling prepared for this call,  
she studied science. she is a good person.  
I am a sad one.  
all her hair has fallen out. so much for me to forget,  
for me to tell. trying to read her face. my eyes  
were 19 feet high. each energy cluster  
sets another one going.  
I was violent  
and born in February. arrive like an astronaut,  
slightly older, the only one not panting. I toss colored sticks,  
then lift one out.  
hope no one notices  
how the bad odors knock her unconscious.  
long roll of thunder, stript of chords.  
she is reading a good book.  
yet when she awoke yesterday she was angry at rich people.  
two women laughing. after which I led her to water.  
she wanted to see everything in the store.  
she wrote a letter. the merchandise spread out  
like a stagnant lake. a complex of scaffolding leans over her.  
the time the windshield inexplicably cracked.  
everyone we know gathers at the same bar  
and I recognize something awful, dissary.  
where instantly we could not find our way.  
it seemed she worked magic,  
much as a field of force. the best cigarette I smoked in my life.  
the air is getting colder.  
we climbed into the car accepting all things.  
a dark and downcast and burning continent.  
even after we left,  
turned to ash. I was turning.  
she remembers counting to one hundred.  
how the present becomes historical.  
the time she pulled hairy sludge from the drain.

something about the earth's plates  
and exquisite shoes. the showcat coming towards her,  
her personal summer. I remember  
leaving candy wrappers in her car.  
I grew yellow corn and am falling in love. in the mountains  
a ferret descended or scurried.  
a device in the kitchen keeps beeping.  
she buys newspapers in croton or white plains.



2. duet for fish & a bicycle

to articulate breaks & joints. a couple  
sharing ice cream – the budding  
    & unfolding of august blossoms. a spiders web  
& Robert bruce.

(don't complicate matters, this  
    unfolding & not returned,

    still edging  
    to the blue sun.

a month is a long time. between moons.

open up the eyes again. go blind.

things desert me.

3.

as soon as i wake up, a backlog of recorded dreams  
go mercury. the brain reboots to sunsets.

(the last common reference.)

even mainframes have their critical mass.

## Toby Olson's *Human Nature*

David Antin suggests that Toby Olson's writing challenges the traditional genre distinctions that haunt contemporary poems and prose.[1] Antin, in his qualified praise of Olson's *The Woman Who Escaped from Shame*, argues that Olson's accomplishment is based in his ability to engage the distinguishing features of the novel (its story, characters, and language) in ways that defer, and finally frustrate, our habituated responses to literary forms. So too is it the case with Olson's most recent collection of poems, *Human Nature* (New Directions, 2000), Olson's first volume of poetry in eight years.

Beautifully produced, *Human Nature* continues the work that Antin describes, albeit in context of the poem. Stanza to stanza, line to line, at times from word to word, we experience the same frustration, the same deferral and dislocation we encounter in the novels. Images and events appear and disappear: a woman's breasts, a tent, flowers (petunias, portulaca, honeysuckle), a cabin in the woods, a drunk, the sick. They coil and surge in an evolving array of words, phrases, and slivers of speech that are both more and less than their sum. But this is not the erratic collage of so much contemporary verse, the overwrought music of the torqued languaged pastiche. Olson's poems are grounded in a terse lyrical momentum that is at once poignant and sweet.

Heavenly weather,  
sun's rays filtered through a dark backdrop  
of that final fog wall,  
    shafts of light, as on some panoramic stage,  
        the sea, dramatic voyages, actual white sails.  
Something about vague lust of residual memory,  
each one an ingenue,  
    some play about that.  
Perhaps the old actress will be charming;  
still her ankle bones are disassembled on the street.  
It's still night,  
    though the day is bright, and coreopsis  
dance at the ends of long stalks,  
yellow button  
at a distance above wheat weeds (55)

And so it goes. The ingenue, the actress (her faded glory), and the endlessly recycled erotics of the world. The new bloom of spring and our senses set off to some horizon--another memory, another destination, another encounter with ourselves. Here and throughout the collection, Olson mines his own history in search of characters, actors (there's Barbara and Judy and Mark) who step in and out of the poems, who play their parts and play them again in an endless rehearsal of an unending play. "A woman lives a lonely life in a forest"--and



Mel Nichols  
**Discrete Levels**

The blue motorcycle  
so nobody is worried.  
Onset. Weather.

Where does the puddle  
hold? Time dilates.  
Falling, dreaming.

Lake, lake, lake.

Sequence. Windows. Thick  
sleep and coffee and then.  
Moonless montage.

Crumbling and weeks.  
Map. Atlas. Globe.  
Nothingness. Lightness.

Brick, brick, brick.

The red suitcase fills  
fills again. Lover  
of toward I wish.

Look like other  
holding parting  
being. Like distance.

Sky, sky, sky.

## Demolition

Days after the terrible rain of asbestos  
became a fable  
and we rinsed ourselves freely

Get out of the bathroom she said  
lighting a cigarette  
I pay more money to live here  
than you do

One thing becomes dismantled  
the other cuts its teeth on a chain link fence

Paper trumpets and ice  
cream and little lions  
drawn in crayon bricks

Once were, were

Falling down the stairwell  
it all came back to me

A missing tooth in the skyline  
a pile of dust

Edward Mycue

**This Is Your Kind of Movie?: The Hollowman**

It's about prayer, persuasion, or (in reverse)  
about incentive, indictment, and curse:

1. Twelve brothers live on a magic mountain.
2. The youngest is forced by magic means  
to surrender his maid to the dragon.
3. The girl returns in a dream and tells  
about a treasure she falsely says her father had.
4. The boy is persuaded to surrender himself  
and he falls into the river of mermen.
5. His body escapes but his mind and heart drown.
6. The body returns to his home and appears ok.
7. He takes a cousin behind him in the saddle.  
He rides into a strong castle in the mist.
8. The cousin, Margarete, mocks the hollow man.
9. But nothing can arrest the marriage ceremony.
10. Her body is found the next morning in the stream.
11. Her brother disguises himself as a woman.  
Albret goes to the castle asking for Margarete.
12. A servant tells him Margarete was crying.  
Another servant tells him she jumped into the water.  
Albret hears her singing and enters the stream.
13. She rises, warns him, but he follows, and drowns.

**The Vision of St. Clare:  
The Sweet Nurseryman and the Red Sim Carnation**

A strange thing happening in a dirty playground knocked at my heart's door

where I fretted, strained in the pure-heartedness of marrow and fatness, omnipresent in my transparence,

for before me appeared a Miss Feena Dimphel, a countrywoman with an accent who made cloth dolls sold to benefit the Church of the Oaks in Cotati and dead years ago. Not unlike the vision of St. Clare the patroness of television for whom the celebration of the Eucharist in her illness was displayed on her cell wall eight hundred years ago in Assisi, Italy, there before me on East School Street in Sonoma County in northern California appeared the familiar for of Miss Dimphel speaking to me from within that scruffy playground behind the Police Station. That variety is significant for what she had to prophesy: for she told that its developer,

Tak Yanemoto, born in nineteen twenty would die in nineteen ninety three in flower fields far away. And so, almost, it happened that this sweet nurseryman who had been born in Sunnyvale California dies from a painful bite of an unknown insect; in Ecuador where before the eyes of mystified doctors in this International Executive Corps Service Volunteer when stricken went first into toxic shock, then into a coma; and he died in it in Sacramento in a convalescent hospital four months later.

This is such a strange happening that I hope to convince myself that I made it up in a dust storm.

Lisa Jarnot

**A Holiday for Billy's Dog**

Clocked over the head a noon inside New York,  
the freedom aft of Frankish nations,  
and debts that jog my later push of scorn for jogs  
and music and the targets of East Hampton's 4:19  
and oh that evening has its jars that are so blue that  
build up toward the middle of the folk jag in my ear  
and Jagger getting framed is what I said in all your skulls  
and muddied up with tar, with hamburgers, with beer,  
and ice cream too — I'm full of New World Writing  
for the poultry down in Ghana for the sludge that feeds the tides.  
Lie forgotten til I banken with the gangel of the skulls  
the color of Miss Stillwagon (home wrecker Linda,  
I forename her now) into the belly of the parrot,  
out to the handsome Golden Griffin that has stolen my Verlaine,  
and Patsy the medical technician of Bonnard,  
fast-moving funnier than Hesiod, over Richmond Lattimore  
with Brendan Behans in pajamas on the balcony in black,  
Genet, my jacket turned light blue, and I holler  
til I get back to Verlaine, all for Mike's skell,  
titular, in the spirit of Park Lane  
in a beer in stranger casks, otherworldly sedan, jagged  
on the satin avenue, your tobacco shops are Zigfield  
Theatres with bear pelts apropos chants and a packet of  
Gauloise that acts like Picayunes, and in the New York Post  
the mad hens ask for farms and drop their sweat in tankers  
by the jar, standing looted in a door of words,  
the Five Spot's mens home viciousness, the flying language song,  
to Mal Waldron, god of all men and all women who are overseas.

## Dracula

*To be dead, to be really dead. That must be glorious.*  
— *Bela Lugosi*

safe in heaven dead or heaven in  
the safely dead the normal  
deadly safety of the happy  
hunting dead firs on the  
roadsides that are gory near the  
side of me that's happy in the  
castle with the rodents that are  
light blue in the moonlight and  
in deadness that is warm beds  
that is happy to be leaning  
toward the window with the  
moonlight with a list of all the  
mammals that are names and are  
peculiar, in their castles,  
making up what is the sum of me  
with wolves that are beside me,  
in this simple snake inside the  
window with the wings and you  
in the moonlight, and tomorrow I  
will walk out to the park, to  
where the heaven where the sun  
is where it sets.

**Jules Boykoff** lives in Washington, DC, where he is earning a doctorate in Political Science from American University. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Kenning*, *5th Gear*, *Skanky Possum*, *Phoebe*, and other small press journals. Along with Kaia Sand, he edits *The Tangent*, a zine of politics and the arts.

**Kyle Conner** received his MA in creative writing from Temple University in 1995, where he studied with Toby Olson. In the summer of 1998, he published his first chapbook, *Songs for South St. Bridge*. He has poems and book reviews published in *MASS AVE* and *St. Mark's Poetry Project Newsletter* and work forthcoming in *BIVOUAC*. He co-founded and curated the Highwire Reading Series in Philadelphia and has taught several semesters of remedial and college composition at Temple and Community College of Philadelphia.

**Patrick F. Durgin** is the author of *Pundits Scribes Pupils* (Potes & Poets, 1998). More recent work appears in *Aufgabe*, *Crayon*, and *Untitled*. He no longer lives in Iowa.

**Seth Frechie** teaches English and Communications at Cabrini College in Radnor, PA.

**Jen Hofer** is originally from the San Francisco Bay Area. She currently lives in Mexico City, where she is editing and translating an anthology of contemporary poetry by Mexican Women that will be co-published by University of Pittsburgh Press and Ediciones Sin Nombre. Her essays, poems, and translations can be found in recent issues of *American Book Review*, *Explosive*, *Exquisite Corpse Online*, *Facture*, and *Tripwire* as well as in the a+bend press chapbook *as far as*. Her book, *Slide Rule*, will be published by the Subpress Collective in 2001.

**Lisa Jarnot** is the author of *Some Other Kind of Mission*, 1996, and *Ring of Fire*, forthcoming from Zoland Books in 2001. She lives in New York City where she is writing a biography of the poet Robert Duncan.

**W.B. Keckler's** work has appeared in *Sulfur*, *Talisman*, *ixnay*, and elsewhere.

**Brendan Lorber**, age nine, just won the *Cricket Magazine* art contest for his drawing of an underground city.

or

**Brendan Lorber** is a half-dressed cathedral in the woods. His book *Welcome Overboard* will be published in the exciting world of the future. In the perhaps no less exciting world of the recent past, *The Address Book* (Owl Press) came out. &, while the world of the present may be, for you, awkwardly filled with this bio, it is, for Brendan, all about his e-chapbook *Your Secret*. He's the editor of *LUNGFULL!* magazine, a literary journal roughly the size of a human head, & he covertly edits *ixnay* under two assumed names.

or

**Brendan Lorber** took German in college, but they made him give it back.

etc.

**Michael Magee** is the author of 2 chapbooks: *Morning Constitutional* (Handwritten Press, 1999) and *Leave the Light On* (Boog Lit, 2000). New poems in *New American Writing*, *Callaloo*, *LUNGFULL*, *CrossConnect*. New articles on Ralph Ellison & Emerson in *Review* and *Raritan*. He edits *Combo*. & he and his wife Susanna are expecting their first child, Anabella, on Nov. 15.

**rob mclennan** is an Ottawa, Canada-based poet/editor/publisher, responsible for *Stanzas* magazine and above/ground press, Canada's most active poetry chapbook publisher. His fifth collection is *bagne, or Criteria for Heaven*, new out from Broken Jaw Press. "& between" is from *harvest: a book of signifiers*, due out in 2001 from Talonbooks.

**Edward Mycue** lives in San Francisco and did not send in a bio.

**Mel Nichols** is co-creator of the ongoing hypermedia project *Weepers*. Her poems have recently appeared in *Digital Poetry Theater*, *Gargoyle*, *Forklift Ohio*, and *Frisk*. Her yet-to-be-titled broadside is forthcoming from Hubcap Art. She lives in Arlington, Virginia.

**Peter O'Leary** lives in St. Louis, where he continues to edit *LVNG*. The poems appearing here are part of a series entitled "Auspices." Others in this series can be found in *Fracture & Hambone*; the first group in the series will appear as "Auspices" in a chapbook from Spectacular Diseases.

**Jena Osman** is the author of *The Character* (Beacon Press). She co-edits *Chain Magazine* with Juliana Spahr and teaches at Temple University.

**Diana Rickard** is a poet living and working in Brooklyn. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals, including *Bombay Gin* and *Mungo vs. Ranger*.

**Lee Riley-Hammer** currently teaches composition at George Mason University and is the mother of Stevie, who loves sci-fi and Sponge Bob/Square Pants. She is also the author of an on-going hypertext collaborative poem, *Weepers*, to be featured again this fall in the online journal, *English Matters*, at <http://chnm.gmu.edu/ematters>. She lives in Alexandria, VA, is a Temple alumni, and has fond memories of a previous life in the northeast and Narberth.

**Frank Sherlock** coordinates the Highwire Reading Series w/ Greg Fuchs. His publications include *13* (ixnay press) and *A Kind of Revolutionary Fiction*, forthcoming on Buck Downs Books in 2001.