

**FURRY CHICLETS**  
**1992-1993**

**idée fixée**

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**a lawpoets  
creation**

## GOD

The man who must be shot keeps saying, Please God, Please God, Please God. Hearing this, the contract murderer puts up his pistol. The murderer seeks God. The murderer says to the man, I'll give you half an hour; if God changes the circumstances (he can't think of a better word), you live, otherwise . . . He walks out, locks the door of the small windowless room and waits. He hopes God will do something. Not a miracle necessarily, but manifest some token. For if there's a God, there may be Forgiveness and for this the murderer will do anything. He hates his life. He hates what he does. He has no memory because thinking about the past is painful. He waits and waits, looking at the door. When the half hour is up, he unlocks the door and walks in. Nothing has changed except the man is in a corner now. He shoots the man.

When the half hour is up, he unlocks the door and walks in. God is there. God forgives the murderer and everything changes. Now the murderer has an ordinary life and an ordinary job. He can think about his job without pain. He has a memory. He can think about the past without pain because his memories are of ordinary years and years and none of the memories contain blood. Then, the murderer's many victims are resurrected. Their memories contain no terror. They have only memories of very ordinary events. They go on to live ordinary lives. God has changed everything.

Robert Nagler  
Oxford, PA

### LENG-TCH'E

This man is being dismembered like a doll. His skin is pinched up like the rubber skin of a doll, a knife is pressed in, then turned until long or short strips of skin can be removed. Like the joints of a doll, the elbows, the knees, the ankles are taken apart.

The men who dismember this man work hard. When they are not working, they sit at board games or cards and they are preoccupied with turning of cards, the counting of spots on markers. When they win, they are satisfied and they are angry when the spots don't add to advantage. They enjoy company. They joke and laugh; loud and soft, they gossip. When their very young children say things that seem clever, they are startled and proud. Some love beautiful things, some can't and just like pretty things. They are dumbstruck by the beauty of certain persons. They touch their skin, the skin like silk, the silk like still water. They long for the act of physical love. They love comfort. In Winter, they burrow the counterpane. When summer sweat drips in their eyes, they curse. They feel pain before they pinch the candle.

These men dismember another man. They are disgusted by this work but it's THEIR work. They narrow their eyes and only look at the cut in progress. The detail. They don't look at the man's face (he just looks like a log with a human head attached now). They recoil, but work. Their stomachs tighten, their throats tighten, they struggle to show no emotion but their faces long to twist into something terrible. But they work. To be disgusted without portraying disgust is work. To show emotion less, less than an autistic child silently picking at a doll, the child revenging its own madness, pinching up the rubber skin, twisting apart the joints -- for these men to do this work and portray no emotion IS work, hard work.

(Df: Pekin qui s'en va, ed. A. Maloine, Paris, 1913.)

Robert Nagler  
Oxford, PA

**ASLEEP WITHIN HIM**

Youthful dreams of theatre and dance  
    locked beyond his grasp  
His greatest role convinces of  
    his everlasting care  
As advice full of air bubbles follows  
    believers to their destiny.

His days now spent imprisoned  
    by walls lined with eyes  
Piles of undone work shielding him  
    from their gaze. Unhappiness  
Pervades the day, escape a constant foe.

Disappearances, naps and newspapers  
    remain his faithful friends  
Frequent jaunts to the local pubs  
    awaken his soul asleep within him  
Searching for the self-destruction  
    that eludes escape.

Daryl Sue Caplan  
Laurel, MD

**yellow onions**

yanked from sandy soil  
by green tops

a quick twist  
leaves on the ground

brown bulb  
stuffed into burlap

lined up  
down the rows

bumpy bags  
bulge across Mesilla Valley

behind  
the pickers

Sheryl Nelms  
Ft. Worth, TX

### An Open Wound

His pick tongue slapped the water  
and slapped it again  
The waves were sent  
A wake was formed

He kept a sharp eye out  
nothing else could get wet  
He knew at the chance his ass  
would be soaked

That would be as inappropriate  
as a flooded street full of  
new automobiles  
All the carpets and upholstery  
soaking wet  
Brand new wheels rusted out  
Completely waterlogged

That would be a disaster and  
if it's not natural,  
usually it can be avoided

He should have known not to eat so  
much salty meat in the  
first place  
What the hell, he was starving

Anonymous

I KNOW BUT I KEEP FORGETTING

I could still  
smell you on my  
skin so  
where are  
you I mean I waited  
went into the  
field behind the  
house digging  
for traces my head a  
rusty shovel  
clues but the  
sand is so heavy  
i can't think and the  
weeks look i know the  
headlights on the  
wall aren't  
coming but I keep  
forgetting why

Lyn Lifshin  
Niskayuna, NY

### Ninth Inning

it was the ninth inning. john wayne stepped to the plate, pointing to the center field bleachers, exactly as ruth in the 27 series.

jesus christ was on the mound, relief specialist par excellence. he had a fast ball that was a blur & a change-up that made no sense.

it was the ninth inning.

Kenn Mitchell  
Eugene, OR



for yevtushenko

if every poem  
is a sin  
committed somewhere, sometime

let us confess our guilt  
let us celebrate  
the decadence of dreams  
let us be poets  
that would dare to be sinners  
in the holiest terms

let us confess our sins in the crumbling of mountains  
in smiles of women  
the laughter of hearts

if every poem  
is a sin  
committed somewhere, sometime  
let us confess our sins

Kenn Mitchell  
Eugene, OR

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Every barroom is at least  
a small theatre extemporaneous,  
ready for tragi-comic romps  
too silly for script or sanction.  
Seldom does clown or fool  
lack a stilted libretto --  
every wrinkled Columbine  
sweetly lilts her early lines.

Every barroom is quite certain  
to become a kind of playhouse  
full of capering buffoons  
and -- naturally -- tragic heroes;  
these may state clearly their  
studied prologues, expositions --  
but they often slur through  
their spontaneous epilogues.

Every Punch-and-Judy show  
turns lurid soon and sudden;  
the hunchback batters his wife  
too often for amusement --  
And such drollery and vagaries  
disintegrate, dissolve  
to that deadliness of silence  
thick with regrets, reveries.

William Dauenhauer  
Wickliffe, OH

**shut eyed**

to see someone  
sleeping  
is in respects  
a portent of seeing them dead  
your wife, children  
can appear so peaceful  
in repose  
but we don't know that  
death is peaceful  
know I often resist  
the lying down, preparation for  
sleep  
drag out time  
reminds too much of  
laying myself down, my own coffin

Peter Layton  
Lakewood, CA

**cypresses**

Jennifer Hannah  
we're  
out off our tree  
drift sixteen new years  
without that once love  
initials, those  
carved into bark words  
more permanent  
than the bleak stains  
of marriage licenses

Peter Layton  
Lakewood, CA

the Hotel

rising like an  
eye  
stands the Hotel

inside

rolling his r's like thunder  
the fireeater stalks the  
carcass of a candle as

lavender green  
meets his eye  
from hers the

dye runs off her  
head like a  
chocolate river when  
she looks down it  
smiles up

and

a whisper  
a kiss thrown high  
and right

a dream for her  
a wish for him to be

drowning in paisleys and  
find what had been  
missing

but the angel caught her tail  
and she caught its wing  
before ...

remember:  
he eats kiwis like words

while

outside  
hearts are breaking like cats  
and dogs.

Leslie Griffin  
Austin, TX

**\* those who abide (cybernetic foreskin) \***

kinder, gentler muses do not exist.  
those who abide know poets are expendable.  
those who abide demand sacrifice, a pound  
of flesh weighed against every word.

those who abide test the neanderthal's mettle.  
(knowing his body & mind were created  
by the lowest possible bidder)  
fill him with desire,  
but guarantee no belief in self.  
he drives himself hard.  
those who abide drive him to the breaking point.  
before he can hold the truth,  
know it is good,  
clocks ring midnight down.  
he is crushed under the hour.  
neurons misfire.  
his typewrite grunts.  
although thought creases his brow, the pinkest  
of dogwoods degenerates into sorry abstraction.

(are we having fun yet? those who abide whisper)

those who abide have limited his options to one:  
write & be damned.  
the neanderthal is emaciated, hands twitching.  
this is not courage; rather, lack of choice.  
before he can make a difference, those who abide  
fatten him on beer, on black jellybeans,  
(a well-tasted despair)  
allow death to promptly jump his bones.  
over & over again.  
the thrill never wearing out.

robert o'neal schultz  
DelPauw, IN

## SHADOW

Perhaps separate vacations are in order, she said. Her husband of twenty five years sits in the shallows, watches her paddle in the mild surf and thinks, Yes: perhaps Separate is in order. -- to formalize the accretion of distance. He stands, ready to return to the beach.

There's a shadow under the water near his wife. The shadow moves -- flies; it circles her. Very frightened, he yells. She shakes the water from her face and just looks at him. Shrill, he shouts again, then without waiting for a response, without thinking, he runs to her. The shape turns away, then banks in, toward the woman. He reaches his wife, grabs her arm and they flounder to the beach.

Standing on the sand together, breathless, they watch the shadow slowly arc seaward. Close, they embrace, hesitate, then as one, push apart.

Robert Nagler  
Oxford, PA

## PIER

The municipal pier in Deer Beach, Florida, is very long. Here, fisherman catch shark, hammerheads and blues. It's illegal but Everybody Knows Everybody (the fishermen are locals and the pier attendants are afraid of retaliation) so shark fishing goes on.

Sharking is a night occupation, partly because fishing is better at night, partly as a nod to the law. Naturally, the police, mostly local men, know what's going on but they don't interfere. Some of them shark too. And they are responsible to the sheriff, an elected official.

Catching a shark is very dramatic; the blues and hammerheads taken can be bigger than a man. Catching a shark is work too since sharks fight long and hard. When the shark is reeled close enough, gaffs are used to haul it up to the decking. Shark skin is very tough and the fish struggles and the fishermen are excited so the gaffs are used repeatedly. Even after the shark is landed, it continues to fight, snapping and thrashing. The hook and butt end of the gaffs, aimed at the head, are used to kill it. Sometimes the shark is so lively the fishermen will not risk getting close enough to use gaffs so the shark is left to die in its own time. Even people who don't like sharks, or say they don't, rarely stay to the end.

The pier is on the public beach. In season, thousands of tourists swim here. The tourists surf here also. Since the waves are not very good, they surf whenever they can, often at night. Then, the sea is black, opaque. The surfers, in pairs, paddle out, talking to each other. Sometimes, waiting for the waves, bobbing on the ocean illuminated only by the lights of the pier, the surfers sing to each other.

Robert Nagler  
Oxford, PA



### **Emissions**

Inadvertent, barely constrained  
in difficult delivery, or blast-  
ing through the silence, asserting  
that no holds will bar a full  
utterance of tuba sounds.

Silent, but with a lethal  
redolence, enough to quell  
most rugged of olfactory  
nerves no matter how inured.

Grand explosions, to drown all  
other noise, to call post-  
prandial attention to the dish  
composed of onions, cabbage,  
broccoli, beans and peas. Least  
noted of man's projections,  
(Boccaccio did note, excessively).  
lacks elegance, but alimentary  
canals in cultured classes also  
exude malodorous cadenzas of  
effluvium at most unlikely times.

Daniel Green  
Sarasota, FL

terror's long, long night

lie still  
let the flowers scream

whisper blood on a face

if you hear your breath  
you're only half-dead

eat your soul  
for supper

Hell doesn't want  
a full stomach

but it can't wait  
for your bare feet

crunching  
bones

Bill Shields  
Youngwood, PA

**what Thru hates most about his job**

despite 14 years of it,  
Thru refused to give tickets at  
rush hour; it just makes matters worse.  
And around Christmas he slacks off to  
near nothing though New Years' more than  
compensates. Thru noticed he cited men  
more than women though he stopped them  
equally. Thru also let slide unusually  
honest excuses like the guy who was  
hurrying home to use the crapper. His  
most memorable citation was the time he  
stopped his ex a year or so after their  
divorce. She'd been speeding in a school  
zone and he didn't recognize her until he  
read her license. Doreen kept saying  
"You'll hear from lawyer about this" and  
nodding smugly. He never did. Thru could  
only shrug when they showed him the headline  
about the Orange County cop who'd given  
over 2400 tickets in one month. Thru  
figured it was just another brown-nosing  
rookie and one more example of something  
he was never any good at.

Robert Underwood  
Redlands, CA

## ACCURSED, YOU RUSSIAN SPRING RAIN

look out window, starts pour down  
thick again will churn up more foul mud  
next to doorstep and is waiting  
laughing wants to climb  
over black boot-tops --  
da, did understand how high mounded snow  
before was my friend but this day  
cannot even step outside of hut  
am getting accustomed know  
what is like be trapped behind hut door  
always shut, is bringing me  
to sob hysterically  
is bringing me to violent rage --  
you look I have almost to begin losing  
all composure am to start  
wildest curse upon spring rain like lunatic  
"out there you disgusting nature beast  
worse you are than  
demented monster from hell"  
but I not do it . . . oh why I am big fool  
to decide surrender to accursed rain  
and be going on wait more days inside?  
nyet, I go slog through you anyway  
watch out I start building  
plank pathway flat across you  
now accursed mud

Jim DeWitt  
Kentwood, MI

## HOT MEAL

Mrs. C,  
in a too-small, red dress,  
a faded green, jockey's cap,  
gray sneakers,  
pushed her metal tray along  
and stared at hands  
that aimed and flipped spoonfuls  
of mashed potatoes, green peas  
and gray gravy  
onto her tray, stared and thought,  
Yum, yum, there really is  
a Sandy Claws once a year,  
and in good years, more than once.

Walter Kuchinsky  
Franklin, MA

### Reading Ann Beattie

I thought I needed a writer to inspire me,  
Beattie rang a bell as I glanced at the vendor's books,  
I almost bought the one on Chinese cooking, but finally bought  
the stories.  
The bookseller, tired and beaten, seemed literate, said "Enjoy."  
Beattie would be the Chinese meal I had turned down.

Women were masters of detail and cooking is just one example.  
She had probably been denied the province of greatness in  
writing,  
But I thought she was cool, feminine,  
She seemed to be in the right place.  
She was making money, was recognized by the critics.

You can't get too far into a woman's voice being male.  
You try and understand.  
Admire, fuse your conception of the writer in other women.

Detail, I think that's what it is. I should water my plants.

Yet, the detective is the one who interests me more,  
And I know he may never find love.  
Ann Beattie married and had a kid, but I don't think  
I'm necessarily less of a writer for not having married.  
Alas, I know I do have a kid -- the detective is his father.

Anonymous

/ No Two People

How artificial we become from the powers  
of the mind, mistaking one thing for another,  
no two people seeing the same way.  
Are they white or off-white, cream or beige?  
I think their wings are small not medium, nor  
large as you say. The sky is a little cloudy, almost  
clear and blue hinting at aqua. They move fast,  
swooping down to pluck up merry souls. Did you  
see that? Sky blue, yes, but there was a cloud.  
Not just a small cloud. I think they do this  
all the time. Their wings out-stretched  
like that, human-sized seagulls from above.  
Mistaking one thing for another.

R. Lee Etzwiler  
Wooster, OH

"The Oppression Continues!"  
Film At Eleven

On "God's" great, gray, grinding earth  
carrying everything we own  
in a rough-hewn box on our shoulder,  
we are whipped until we bleed,  
and fall.

Bullets are put into our bloodstream,  
experimental bullets,  
killing us fast, slow, painfully, calmly  
on this great, gray, grinding globe.

I am told to move now, quickly, everything  
in one trip, no returning. First from here to there,  
then from there to here, next to who-knows-where.

Nowhere-to-nowhere  
and die if I must,  
just get it done.

Put the peace pipe down or die red-man,  
put the opium pipe down or die yellow-man,  
put the crack pipe down or die black-man,  
put the gun down or die white-man,  
put that magazine down son. You must not abort,  
raise the unborn to promote the elite,  
more slaves needed so hurry.

The god of bureaucracy is calling long distance,  
and he is hungry.

I will stop reproducing,  
I will stop recycling myself,  
I will regurgitate my food for my young,  
I will discard all I own, but my spirit and my mind.  
The thing you hate most is what will destroy you.  
I am in the belly of the beast, and I am  
the belly of the beast, and the beast will resurrect  
the purge: 1776 has been filmed in L.A.

R. Lee Etzwiler  
Wooster, OH



Confessing To A Young Priest

When I eat peaches  
I shimmy.  
I wear lipstick morning  
'til dreamtime  
and short dresses  
with love notes sewn up  
in the hem.  
Handsome strangers -  
I imagine them.  
Got a weakness  
for forbidden things  
like a young man who listens  
and preaches  
and sings.

Corrine DeWinter  
Springfield, MA

## Siren

With the sensuality of an erotic dancer  
she conforms you to her soft illusion.  
Now you smile at your reflection  
in the mirror.  
Now you see yourself  
as the mysterious, handsome stranger.

I have kisses enough to cover you  
whole.

First, see the world contained  
in an ebony pupil.  
See the creation of the gleaming bombs,  
enemy of all people.  
Come to know the Shakespeare in your heart,  
the obscenities that are permanent in your mind.  
Delight, as you wish, in the touch,  
in the flesh  
being so beautifully understood.

Every clock is an executioner.

Today you are Robin Hood,  
a saint who is wanton and bold.  
Yesterday you were a whole choir of open mouths  
singing  
to save your soul.

There is no passport necessary  
to enter  
this country.

Corrine DeWinter  
Springfield, MA

Snow Cancels School

heavy gray clouds dumping  
on all thoughts of learning  
a winter suburb blissful  
as the bones of breathing  
my heart bursting to play  
in bright white ignorance

John Grey  
Providence, RI

HIGH SCHOOL REUNION or  
THE BREAD AND WINE OF LESSONS

The halls draw breath again, gasping  
as the rush before fire claims my tail.  
Here they come; A red light fantastic,  
blinking bundle of neurons (neurotic morons?)  
skidding around the corners, climbing the  
brittle bark of preconceived notions. "About  
you..." my laughter slick as water beads on tar.

"Thank you;" I said. "I will stand under these  
trees, being slowly bruised by dusk. I will  
savor your impersonal touch."  
Oh, my brain-stylist, mind-dresser,  
most persuasive of cosmetologists!  
Crumbling lichen filters through my hair.  
My head tips back, waiting for someone with  
lithe poplar arms to tumble me flat on my back.  
The best whips are green, after all.

"This is a hit-and-run of your youth."  
I heard them thinking, but only imagined the  
breath on my cheek and pebbles digging into  
my back, giving up the ground to pierce me.  
Stopping up my eyes with curled fists,  
I took up the taunt, "Make me make me make me  
(but make me what you want me to be)---"

I would be better educated down at the  
Shop n' Pop Gun Mart for all the empathy I  
feel here. But what acoustics.  
I want to sew you all up like little socks,  
my pretty friends, and hang you.

H. L. Gwyneth Lamon  
Kansas City, MO

## **Treblinka**

Move

Next to me

Little man.

I hear your stomach

Growling in perpetuity,

Pumped with air.

Put your decrepit frame

On my bunk.

Rest your bloated head

On the sunken remnants of my younger chest.

Close your eyes

Remove the animal stench

Take yourself away from here.

No hand outstretched

No loving farewell

Simply another horrible passing

Made ordinary

And unknown

By Satan's minions

Yet unsated.

David Vogelstein  
San Rafael, CA

## Foxhole and Two Days

lightman  
vested  
in his soul suit  
bloody from yesterday.  
come with me  
you ain't done nothin' wrong  
you ain't done nothin' right yet, either  
you diseased  
carpets hangin' off your head.  
what am I going to do with you?

David Vogelstein  
San Rafael, CA

## THEMES OF A FRIEND

they took him  
but first they made him play baseball on  
a rare sunny Saturday in San Francisco, by the park  
made it ironic, so he played with firemen  
and paramedics on their day off, and  
they let him hit the ball and then they  
twisted the knife just a little so when he  
hit the ball  
this father of lace and stained panties  
this husband watching his cop-daughter italian wife,  
keep her Sophia Loren figure  
well, somewhat,  
he ran down to first, then, felled by some  
unseen fist he seized up right there in the  
middle of the basepath jerking like a puppet  
on a string of pain,  
they didn't take him then either even as  
his teammates pumped his chest and screamed and a  
wail of sirens sounded off the fog now as  
always rolling in as if to say, you Bagdad have  
had enough sun today no they didn't instead  
they took him to S.F. General which is not quite  
like heaven and there first they stabilized  
him while everyone else became unglued and  
suffered hard death pains of their own mortality  
watching a forty-one year old man croak slowly  
and they gave it just enough time to get his  
beautiful wife and beautiful little girl there  
so they could see their man bite the dust and  
then they turned off the light.  
Well today and now I am here and I say fuck you  
to all of them and each of them and them that took  
him and them in a.a. and c.a. and n.a. and even themes  
of them,  
I yell fuck you at the top of my lungs affirming  
you and my children like some ancient tribal rite and  
that's how it feels right like a wolf's cry in the  
night staking out his turf but its still desperation  
in the windy city's light isn't it and i have to reach  
for some Jim Beam because fear is driving me off this  
planet.

David Vogelstein  
San Rafael, CA

**home ground**

alla police  
mustad their jaw wired shut  
won't speak out against  
fellow badgers  
mean the incident  
in Tecumseh  
three boys and that girl  
beaten back at the 5-Spot  
took their lickin with them  
local coots, off-duties  
joked  
no one knows better howta arrange a posse  
just doin their important paid job  
defendin  
the town

Peter Layton  
Signal Hill, CA



**lizards eat lizards**

me me fellas  
in black jackets  
cars  
all shinin as  
wet lipstick paint  
sweat in the damn things  
grab chips dogs  
smoke cartons  
grin at the girls  
make back  
same as the roads  
ugly but they want you hurry

Peter Layton  
Signal Hill, CA

if

if she could walk many miles  
she'd be Harriet Tubman freeing  
runaway slaves surveying all of the south  
watching for any slaves running away  
in fear of being caught

if she could shoot an arrow  
she might be Marco Polo exploring  
China and telling stories  
of his long journeys

if she lived in the country she'd learn  
the ways of the deer and animals and which  
flowers were poisonous and how to  
make quilts to sell

if she lived on a mountain with only plants and animals  
she'd learn peacefulness

Ana Carreon (age 10)  
Los Angeles, CA

### Inside the Sun

At last  
Thrust right into the furnace  
At long last  
Consumed like burning sacrifices  
All at once  
Ablaze to the center  
Burned alive by passion

A firestorm was all that they wanted  
Too civilized to tell each other so  
To be seared by blood lust until they exploded  
'Til nothing could cool them off  
Now something has set them free  
Taken a blowtorch to their inhibitions  
All it took was too many years alive  
All it took was too much sickness  
All it took was too many deaths  
All it took was too much sorrow  
If that was the price it was worth it  
They're melted down now and white hot

This is what they were waiting for --  
a joyful conflagration  
This is what they were praying for --  
a life-giving inferno  
This is what they were hoping for --  
a healing delirium  
Now they understand  
The tide has turned  
The truth at last  
The ultimate sacrament  
It's 100 degrees in the shade  
A scorching gift from the gods

They're not asking any questions  
They believe; their faith is strong  
Please don't let it stop  
(The gods give and the gods take away)  
They only give thanks and praise  
Every night like blissful animals  
Aflame with the ancient knowing  
The best revenge is apotheosis by passion  
The cauterizing heat of reddest deepest union

Mary Winters  
New York, NY

### **Postmodernism**

In the building built against  
the turbulence of the sixties  
and designated by the acronym  
which sounds like a defoliant  
professor eases into slippers  
and prepares an early lecture  
an ode to Professor Heidegger.

Lon Schneider

### Summer of Lye

In my own backyard, last summer  
a little lye plague, dripped from the grill.

To protect the children, I had cooled quickly  
with water. Swallowed the fire, sputtering  
acid gray suds, at the corner of my mouth.

Just a trickle, a statistic of grass, a small few  
expendable so close to the bricks.  
They didn't so much shrivel, as vaporize down  
to the root, a solitary burning, black-frosted  
and concealed, their joinings,  
a million braided hairs, humming  
messages of emergency  
I couldn't see, didn't hear.  
Until the singular siren and then a thousand  
blades going under, shrieking, snapped like beetles  
in their turning, abandoned the yard to mud.

And that was the summer I caught Patricia  
hiding in her complex cluttered cellar,  
popping her own red blood cells  
like fatty bloated ticks, her imagination  
swollen with false leukemia, those ticks  
exploding between her thumbs, leaking lye.

That summer burned in silence, underground  
a thousand muddy footprints, entered every door.

Jacki Thomas  
Madison, WI

### An Accounting of You

You are a currency.  
I hold my purse open  
and wait for you  
to pour in gold.

Or poke expectant  
coins in vending machine.  
Impatient, you punch-slam back  
with groans like curses.

Or slip in succinctly crisp  
ironed bills sliding to file.

Or a quarter rolling fast away,  
me chasing, breathing hard  
until it wobbles and warbles  
and I pounce, leap upon it  
like a living thing.

But, best, when you feel lucky  
and jingle, fingering for courage,  
like pennies in pockets of boys,  
with value greater than worth.

Jacki Thomas  
Madison, WI

### The United Nations

The sunflowers  
are guardians  
that grow in my garden every year  
and stand straight as military sentinels  
guarding the tomatoes.  
The marigolds  
that ring the garden  
leap up  
around the legs of sunflowers  
like siblings  
prancing under foot.  
The cucumbers drape  
wooden poles in rows  
like a fence  
that borders a country  
between the grass and garden.  
The peppers of green and red  
coexist in a united nations  
of vegetables  
that in the last days will rest  
in my freezer until time  
for a summit on my dining room table.

Hank Roth  
Raleigh, NC

## WASHING THE DEAD

Paul and I sit on the steps  
of the Sonoma Arts Center.  
I tell him my wife and I  
are driving back east  
thru South Dakota and he says,  
"I was married in Aberdeen."  
It's difficult for me to imagine  
Paul with a woman but he says,  
"It happened. In 1960.  
Before I was busted."  
Paul was sent to jail  
for having an affair  
with an eighth grade boy  
when he taught in Illinois.  
His wife left  
when he was sent to prison.  
"Everyone left," he says  
lighting a cigarette,  
coughing, in the twilight.  
"That's why I changed my last name  
to Mariah. It rhymes with pariah."  
Paul has to get up at 5  
to go to work washing old people  
at a convalescent home.  
His long-term lover died of AIDS  
and Paul washed him, too.  
Paul always seems to be  
washing someone. Someone  
always seems to be dying.  
Paul tells me he passed out  
at an AIDS forum two weeks ago  
and his friends  
called the paramedics.  
Paul was wearing black leather  
and the room was hot, crowded,  
and he had worked all day.  
He says, "My sister had polio  
in the forties and I remember  
she came home crying  
because no one would sit  
next to her at school.  
I told the people at the forum  
it's like that with AIDS,"  
and he coughs again.  
"No one wants to sit next to you."

Arthur Winfield Knight  
California, PA



## BILLY THE KID: THE WASP

One of the boys caught a wasp  
and brought it inside,  
trapped in a bottle. He said,  
"It's going to die anyway."  
It was almost fall,  
but the days were still hot.  
The boys began to bet  
how long the wasp would last.  
It made it thru the morning  
and the afternoon. By dusk  
it was barely moving,  
but it was still alive  
when we blew out the lantern.  
I thought I could hear it  
hitting  
the sides of the bottle  
The heat seemed suffocating.  
There was a five hundred dollar  
reward for me, dead or alive.  
In the moonlight I could see  
beads of sweat on my arm,  
could see the bottle  
with the wasp in it  
on the table. As I got up  
I felt my lungs constrict.  
By the time I got to the table  
I was panting. Outside,  
I let the wasp go.

Arthur Winfield Knight  
California, PA

## DRIED PRUNES

I go to see my father.  
He and my mother live  
in a senior citizen complex  
because he is frightened  
of growing old,  
frightened of everything:  
AIDS, frying pans  
with aluminum bottoms,  
creamed soup, frightened  
people who are young  
will not like him,  
but they dislike him  
for other reasons.  
Most times I go to see him  
a neighbor lady brings him  
strawberry short cake  
and Rhine wine. Yesterday,  
Dolores brought him dried prunes.  
She always addresses him,  
never my mother, saying,  
"Walter, I want to give you this  
for mowing my lawn. Walter,  
I want you to have this  
for helping me pull weeds."  
Her husband died or ran off.  
He was no fool.  
My mother says Dolores phones  
five times a day.  
She is 40 pounds overweight  
and she bulges in her clothes.  
Generally, they are polyester  
and have bright colors.  
My father loves bright colors.  
Yesterday, I watched him  
accept the dried prunes  
and knew Dolores will come  
hourly, bursting with gifts,  
if my mother dies first.  
Dolores will come in her  
best K-Mart outfits,  
bright and cheerful,  
bearing dried prunes  
in a plastic bag  
she waves, saying, "Walter,  
look what I've brought."

Arthur Winfield Knight  
California, PA

COHABITATION

Living together  
is a kind  
of purgatory,  
a state  
of not quite  
marital bliss

Its players  
cautious,  
unnerving  
as tigers  
in a  
pen of  
uncertainty

Their pacing  
and prancing  
in tune  
with  
the full  
moon--

Bobbie Saunders  
Aurora, CO

### DISILLUSION

Disappointments  
are like  
stair steps,  
one after  
another,  
as the  
climb  
becomes  
insurmountable,  
too courageous  
for words  
in the  
late  
night  
of the  
mind--

Bobbie Saunders  
Aurora, CO

don't start with me it's been a rough day

i

in a world of no locks and telephones disconnected from tragedy  
i walk in dismay at the absence of dreaming

ii

crows fall willy nilly from the sky  
as defeated farmers aim double barrelled hate  
toward god and squeeze triggers like they once  
squeezed young nipples

iii

killers stalk my breakfast nook like critics  
caught in a spider web and blink mute laughter  
at my sad cheerios

iv

you fail to see my visions as you rush to impale  
vile things in ebony dungeons and scream for conformity

v

you answer my howl with cages but forget i am houdini

Jeff Weddle  
University, MS

### Muffin

Carol, I  
wouldn't be  
surprised.  
That pink child  
spreading  
gnu-butter on our  
Raisin muffin,  
should soon be  
spreading  
amber comb-honey.

L. N. Hayward  
Citrus Heights, CA

**arrested**

moon  
high-sided  
lunatic  
policy wouldn't let  
you testify  
instead they  
hand-cuffed night  
to the Mojave

they wouldn't let  
him drink  
that would be  
unusual  
and cruel to form  
they wouldn't  
let him speak  
that would be  
inflexible

wind  
maleficent  
lunatic  
a voice resolute  
stark placebo  
for them dry  
as the censor's pen

L. N. Hayward  
Citrus Heights, CA

### A Song

In all its sound  
that look like streamers  
curled back around,  
a song,  
it must be a song.

Tapping windows in winter  
storm, scraping  
in to visit;  
a song,  
yes must be a song.

Left over from busy  
hours, conversations  
that taste like hazels;  
a song,  
it must be a song

L. N. Hayward  
Citrus Heights, CA



### **Father Went to the Solid Land**

Father went to the solid land  
And did not return.  
He took his velvet, blue  
Thin hands with him,  
Crawling into the earth.

Grey father, grey man  
Who once stood tall,  
Spanned doorways, blocking  
The light from other rooms,  
At last removed his weight  
From bending bones.

My two brothers, myself,  
Watched with empty palms  
His entering into dirt as  
The crack of history sped  
Overhead, end over end.

L. N. Hayward  
Citrus Heights, CA

## VENICE

I hate the canals today.  
Mann was mutable  
wasn't he,  
and primitives are outside  
in a canvas  
on a black shirt clothesline.  
The futurists  
were wrong about us too.  
Pound was obviously insane  
on the unabashed radio,  
and the balding soprano  
shot across boundaries  
of quarter notes: "Bene," she says.  
Here uncounted promissory notes pass  
in hotels,  
letters from Jewish refugees  
piled high in German and Russian  
with tiny Lenin pins as collateral,  
Jews contemptuous of travel  
almost desiring to hear  
about our ghettos  
for the foggy air breathes  
romance, bred by life itself.

B. Z. Niditch  
Milton, MA

### The Unknown Student

Finding my wallet missing  
from my dorm room  
I called the campus police  
for swift and blinding justice.  
Three days later  
an officer reeking of decaf  
and jelly donuts  
handed me a clipboard  
with an inch of forms  
for me to fill out.  
When I finished outlining  
my entire life for the officer,  
he told me that all he could do  
was give me a copy of the forms  
(which I never received anyway).  
The Student ID Office told me  
I couldn't replace my ID  
without a driver's license,  
the DMV told me  
I couldn't replace my license  
without a Social Security card,  
and the Social Security office told me  
I couldn't replace my card  
without a picture ID.  
Without my ID card  
the cafeteria wouldn't let me eat,  
the library wouldn't let me read,  
professors wouldn't accept my papers,  
even my friends wouldn't believe  
that I was I,  
and after a while, I had my own doubts.  
One night I tied a cinder block  
around my neck  
and climbed to the dorm roof,  
leaving behind a suicide note  
signed with a simple "X",  
"X" for the unknown.  
Just as I was to throw myself  
to anonymous death  
I spotted my wallet  
on top of an inch thick pile  
of official looking papers  
in a bird nest just a few feet  
from where I stood.  
In reaching over to grab the wallet  
I fell and broke my neck,  
but at least the nurses  
that tend to me now  
know what to call  
the paraplegic in 308.

### **Grandpa's Funeral**

After years of an untraceable pain  
Grandpa decided he was dying  
and gathered us all around his bed  
to tell us the news.  
No one believed a word he said  
except for Grandma.  
Together they phoned the relations  
and made the funeral arrangements.  
She prepared the parlor  
to receive the mourners  
when they came to view the remains,  
while he busied himself in the backyard  
building his coffin from the old cedar tree.  
Brother Ed refused to preach the eulogy,  
so Grandpa took the pulpit himself,  
and we learned that a sweeter, kinder,  
more generous man never lived.  
At the conclusion he thanked us for coming,  
laid himself down in the casket,  
and soon began to snore.  
When he awoke the next morning  
Heaven looked a lot like his own bedroom  
and smelled like Grandma's biscuits.  
Life has returned to normal  
except there's a mound of dirt  
where the old cedar used to stand,  
and Grandpa's mysterious pain is gone.

BrYan Westbrook  
Fayetteville, AR

left to your own deviant ices

have you drunk enough to injure the embryo

i am studying honorary hemlock  
obsessions in unshallow places

in a chilly next to nothing room of the dream  
understanding meets the undertaker; they  
exchange lice & the time of day

watches laid on the railway track  
by hens that are hyphen-names  
correctively i do not want to be de-  
clawed; one must sister my womb

in order to what? we hear  
before our ears are formed  
the undefending use of the language  
mime & sign & sparing & trying  
to dry the sealed hands

jonathan levant  
Dayton, OH

**i'm plenty sociable**

i just don't care what you think of me  
and i only compromise when i want to  
less about the immoral relish in revenge  
half forgiven // half punished . . .

understand this: buckeye in the palm  
this is smooth & blind as a blind eye  
the red winged black birds take  
a prick of your blood with them

now here this: imbecile brocade  
what the naked king's fool folds  
i like this // i am like this i am  
more like this than i've ever been

the healthological conclusion  
i have never prayed for a damn thing  
though i admire many prayers  
this is the arrogance of little time

jonathan levant  
Dayton, OH

**an accumulated cocoon**

i know how i would make love to you  
i'd start with the feet  
get the worst over with first  
the tribe of tribulations follows  
synopsis of the cyclops sheepishly  
i as fleece love your woolen eyes  
such a deep sharp blue green  
not glare or glamour but entering in  
your eyes bluntly blundered into  
mine  
handle first as love making ending  
with banal holding hands into sleep  
redeemed by the perfect pressure  
of the grip the grasp the hold upon

jonathan levant  
Dayton, OH

DEAR BOB,

My steps forth  
into actual  
world

left prints leading back  
where I can't  
return. Wakes in-

stead were  
left for movement  
made in confused

world  
which still knows  
nothing

of me. To leave  
wakes, circular,  
zigzag, what-

ever, is  
desire  
for world

to understand  
sadness  
& solitude.

Sincerely.

Christopher Hollister  
Cheektowaga, NY



### Truth Itself

Here it's as edgeless  
as a dream,  
everything into forever.  
The tottering baby  
lets go of her mother's  
hand  
and turns back  
like the truth itself  
looking into my eyes  
and we both waver there,  
the baby wobbling  
in her white shoes,  
blue eyes slow dancing  
through the shadows,  
me shaking  
on the ledge of all things,  
wondering  
if there's any chance  
of holding on  
to whatever it is  
that the child sees.

Jim Mikoley  
Brooklyn, NY

love to burn the weeds away

Well, she checked the back page  
of the Voice this morning  
to see if she was desperately sought  
half a bagel a glass of juice  
and she was out the door  
where the cold air immediately  
roughed her up hoodlum wind  
talking dirty in her ear  
and the sun stabbed in desperation  
losing the fight but still  
strong enough to make her  
squint her eyes.

(Her eyes are blue fish  
transparent  
swimming  
in the tank of her head  
her eyes are master  
paintings  
framed  
in prescription lenses)

She beat the gangster weather  
made it into work sitting in  
her cubicle the day stretched  
out before her like a lazy dog  
nothing to make the difference  
lunch the only thing to strive for.

You could drive a truck  
through the space  
between  
what she wants  
and what she wants to want.

Which is to say: a decent raise  
a good cup of coffee a boyfriend  
with a job  
versus  
a job she likes a bigger apartment  
a love to burn the weeds away.

Well, no one in the Voice  
was looking for her  
and 5 o'clock came entirely  
on its own terms and she  
left  
wanting nothing new or  
better.

But who am I to say a thing  
it's not my place to judge  
when all I dream about  
the only things I want  
are blue fish and  
master paintings.

Jim Mikoley  
Brooklyn, NY

### PRIMA DONNA

The worst thing  
Is not being  
Cursed.  
It's being  
Blessed  
That does you in,  
That damages you  
The most.

You know it's wrong, but  
You swallow your humility  
In favor of pride. The  
Taste of it is incredible:  
Turkish Delight, the most  
Probable flavor of sin.

Poets and poems are  
Exactly the same.  
They're like jokes  
Told at a party, the  
Jokes that nobody gets.  
There's something sad  
And unclaimable in them  
All. They're like sweet-  
Faced, evil children. The  
Heartbroken/ heartbreaker  
Children nobody can love.

Kerry McCaskill  
Charlotte, NC

**THE LONG THIN SILENCE OF  
THIS, OUR CHRISTIAN CENTURY**

Never laugh at the fool  
Who can't keep himself cool,  
Who admits that he's afraid.  
He may have lived his life on the edge  
...On the edge of a sharper blade.  
He may have failed to make the grade  
But he may have seen more truth.

There are good reasons  
To fear the dark...  
The dead hold the deed  
To the night...Which  
Ancestral memory is it,  
Do you suppose, which  
Frightens us the most:  
The baying of pink & oily  
Pigs or the more (or less)  
Civilized baying of wolves?

And just what was it  
That happened to us? Where  
Has our ability to listen  
Gone? When you're deep  
Inside the murder machine,  
You can hardly hear  
The screams...

Kerry McCaskill  
Charlotte, NC

Summer (& the Hotbrow)

She invokes hot

winds

And tongue screws.

She purges Spring

inside

Dead dogs 3-high aside the hutch.

She sucks at the pithy thumb of

dusk.

Kyle Frazier  
San Francisco, CA

**preferably awe**

preferably awe  
    to explanation  
the lovely deformity of her distinctive ear  
    a curtain opening  
not rigid timing  
nor pretending to be  
    a map to how

saying music  
    with most silent twinkling  
roaming genius animal stare  
no herd instinced  
    art morgued museum's  
able to teach me blind me deaf

release uncharted  
    psychic geographies  
rub fingertipped proofs on her every page  
    whose distance spills  
profoundly wasted  
like splintered shardic gods  
    of what actually

Mike Kessel  
Memphis, TN

such becoming esteemlesslies

spindleberg, straddle  
    & spineforth  
inflict journeys of jaw

recreational drugsteins  
    eat the fruitionous id  
discard the egostalk

kindred spirits of rapt  
    attentiveless forebears  
dose on tv

tell a vision  
    i'll never tell  
my innermost tvless

because words approach walls  
    at the speed  
of crumpled paper

you can have them.

mike kessel  
memphis, tn



## AERIAL CALCULUS

you bloated children  
of Tuesday's clouds, strolling over  
I will chip off  
your air blubber puff by puff  
till all crash...dust-remnant parts  
of my new-lint art  
are set beyond the jet stream's  
devouring, and subsequently  
I will mount them pinpointed as  
wise adrenalin leftovers  
leaping onto sandwalls with  
the substance of desert edges --  
but could you respect whoever shot you  
back into a woebegone sky?  
forced to fluff along again  
slow above a lonely floating-oxygen's  
navigation track...

Jim DeWitt  
Kentwood, MI

### He's Dead

You want to be dead sure  
dead set on your rant  
that deadbeat of the heart  
got you blocked in a dead end  
you're dead to the world, dead-tired  
because of his dead giveaway lies

he's deadweight on your soul  
thought he was a  
dead ringer for what you craved  
now you know: deadwood  
and it's coming to a dead stop  
you're dead set on it

he's gonna be a dead duck  
your love's a dead letter  
the deadline's been passed  
you're breaking the deadlock

you'll be dead calm  
when you turn your body,  
stiff as a corpse, on him  
oh, if only looks could kill:  
you'll lower your eyelids to  
make slits of deadly hate  
and not, not, not  
look at his lovely, living mouth

Mary Winters  
New York, NY

### Modern Art

You said it was your first time.  
I knew you'd enjoy this.

On the cold hard floor  
we traveled and transcended  
seeing  
and feeling  
and loving  
the bright new depth,  
but wanting  
to feel more,  
see more,  
and know it all.

With your jaw hung open,  
as you took in short rapid breaths,  
you inhaled the aura  
of a new kind of high.  
Hidden by tousled hair,  
your eyes saw  
through past centuries,  
across the universe,  
and back to you and me, and the wall.

I believed you'd enjoy this,  
love of mine.  
I know these works can seem distant,  
but surrealism, you see,  
is not unreal.

Isn't it amazing--  
the pleasure you've found--  
Making love with the artwork.

Sara Marks  
Greendale, WI

### Who Wins

Friendly little rivalry: doctor says  
he "knows the worst" about death;  
lawyer says she "knows the worst"  
about poverty so who wins -- who's

the one with the broken heart but

he won't let her in on it won't  
talk about signing his mother's  
death certificate; just let his face

and hands and back say: that death  
was no nineteenth century soft-hued  
aquatint of a pretty family gathering

so lawyer saw panicked screaming  
blood on tiled walls, a drain in the  
center of the floor for afterwards  
when the only thing left to do is

hose the place down so who wins not

the beautiful eighteen-year-old  
would-be suicide who only got herself  
brain damaged gulping car exhaust;

lover who wronged her to death wants  
custody of their perfect baby boy --  
that's why she's in her lawyer's office

she's the one with the broken heart

Mary Winters  
New York, NY

sunday

a day of foaming, fermented, feisty fury, a rolling,  
thundering black intensity  
bolts of steel-pelting density  
driving in doubt  
fear, the missing  
hoping  
and the deepest buried, not forgotten  
long of  
me  
myself  
as i am, though rarely appear (in the clouds)  
with him  
(the salt means nothing)

shouting in need of your smile  
to enclose, fold and seal my centre  
thrilled singingly  
tossing golden drops of the future  
because you know, or knew  
i would. Stop.

(Perhaps all that is needed is to jumpstart my parking metre  
and  
buy [no discounts allowed] a ticket)

LAX here i come

[the day before resignation]

Christina Allan  
Playa del Rey, CA

Dear Bertrand Russell:

The land has been raped,  
it is barren.  
Everything is being recycled.  
I make chickens out of corn  
& milk out of grain.  
The togenbergs give the most milk.  
Feather, a 3 year old doe will kid in the Spring.  
I need to dry off Greta,  
to breed Lady Jane.  
& take a minute to walk down to the pond  
to talk to the geese.  
It's cold & I am wearing two pairs of socks  
& I am trying to stay warm.  
Yesterday, I cut down that diseased black walnut  
tree  
for a cord of fire wood  
& burned up two chains on the power saw.  
I sang Christmas carols in front of the town hall.  
Now the keys on my typewriter keep sticking so  
I will write more later.  
Sincerely,

Hank

Hank Roth  
Raleigh, NC

belchertown state hospital

i didn't have a lift for our van so i would get rick out in his wheelchair like he was coming off a big step. it was safe enough, besides i was strong & i had been doing it for years. i was taking him out of the van at the belchertown state hospital dental clinic when this schmuck comes over to me & says, "taking him out of the van like that is dangerous, don't you have a lift?" i said to this guy, "if i had a lift, don't you think i'd be using it?" when i'm pissed, i always answer a question with a question. after hesitating a moment or two, he says again, "that's dangerous. you should have a lift." so i tell this jerk, "why don't you buy me one then, they only cost \$5,000." he looked at me kind of stupid like while rick and i went on into the building for rick's dental appointment. the bastard called the hospital police. the clinic was located on the grounds of the state mental hospital & they had state security police. they came to the clinic looking for me & one of them said, "may i have a word with you outside?" so i followed him outside & so did some of the mental patients. a crowd formed. the cop said to me that i offended the superintendent of the hospital & i said to him, "i could care less, the guy was an asshole." the patients cheered. meanwhile i'm really getting hot under my collar and feeling like punching somebody & the cop is telling me he wants my name & address. i gave it to him & i said, "tell your superintendent i would be pleased to accept his \$5,000 donation at that address." needless to say, i didn't get the donation & we never heard from them again.

hank roth  
raleigh, nc

### Good Enough

Clear-cut bonus, lagniappe, bit-o'-fun --  
and the only one from turning forty --  
knowledge infused, somehow, from Out There:

it is okay, deeply and truly okay,  
to be merely number two, only second best.

Key principle, repeat ten times a day:  
Good Enough is good enough, and  
breathe your sigh of relief.

You do not have to win the Nobel,  
you do not have to be Super Parent.

Now, your behavior tune-up to  
super-confident mode; new motto:  
"what you see is what you get" --  
put it on a T-shirt, a button, a flag.

Practice exercise: "We do not have more children  
because we are lazy and selfish."  
Say it with good posture and a nice smile;  
remember, you are a Good Citizen.

Mary Winters  
New York, NY



## Status Quo

On the evening of January sixteen  
I stood in front of the open freezer  
and weighed Herb Roasted Turkey Cuisine  
against Sweet & Sour Chicken Dinner,  
both low sodium meals, healthy and lean.

In the gulf, American war ships train  
guidance systems of Cruise Tom Cats to bear  
on Iraqi targets, careful to refrain  
from causing civilian deaths. In warfare  
there is always the political campaign.

Diet is the duel-phased interplay  
of exercise and nutritional intake.  
I should briskly walk two miles each day  
and balance protein and carbohydrate  
levels while cutting fat in every way.

At low altitude, screaming Tom Cats blur--  
death messengers so precise, say foremost  
officials, Tom Cats fired from Boston Harbor  
aimed at RFK Stadium goal posts  
would score better than Chip Lomiller.

With my diet, calories, fat content,  
milligrams of salt, and cholesterol  
are common terms. Though neither sapient  
nor exciting, they are the technical  
words and phrases born of weight management.

With war's progression, I develop hot  
verbal skills and become quite proficient  
at discussing Scud and Patriot--  
military and terrorist intent--  
at burning fat. One must be a zealot

about war and diet; but we never learn  
that with either, the status quo will return.

Charles Corry  
Princeton, TX

**Tree**

in this black-  
and-white landscape  
each leaf,  
each branch a smudge  
on the perfect whiteness  
of the sky  
this tree is perfect black  
its edges do not bleed  
into the sky

Robert Beveridge  
Doylestown, PA

## Street Nightmares

The dog  
hit by a car  
with a noise  
of banging

Whirls three-  
legged and  
frantic in  
the path

Of more cars in  
a pinball  
machine  
of blind  
terror.

His master  
watches  
paint-rag  
to nose

Unmoving  
in his  
own pinball  
machine.

Mary Hale Jackson  
Denver, CO

## Maybe A Grandfather

A peripheral irregularly centered  
amidst an American McDonalds  
he must be a regular here,  
every Wednesday morning.  
Maybe a father,  
and if that,  
maybe a grandfather.  
He is a grandfather's age at least,  
wearing grandfatherly clothing  
like my father might wear  
picking apples or drafting a new design.

The carefully coiffed hair  
balanced by his beautician,  
and frosted as a debutante from Finnochio's,  
the thickly painted sienna eyebrows  
as the arcs of uncolored rainbows,  
and Christmas-red fingernails  
makes him by his own admission  
a little different  
from his father,  
and he knows that.

The glances by the hi-hello-how are you-girls  
dressed in clown colors at the counter  
don't let him know as he approaches  
that he has already been studied  
by the ill-fitted, uniformed smiles  
as he orders his breakfast  
and they take his money  
like any other customer.  
In moments his warm breakfast is served  
on a cold thin bed of white styrofoam,  
always an egg, always sausage, always coffee,  
like what I order,  
and then shuffling on the balls of his feet  
he moves towards the same booth  
he sat at last week  
and before  
at the same time, same place other weeks,  
always Wednesday,  
where the shade of the plastic tree  
keeps the eastern light of the sunrise  
from his eyes in this place,  
with LA Times, crossword puzzles  
and himself alone in lace.

Steven Pattie

### **Dry-Lipped Man**

A dry-lipped man,  
like two sections of a wizened citrus are these  
labials.

They are the perfect complement  
to his frame of dry bones  
which stake from the inside  
his withered wineskin,  
this side of dust.

Infatuated by a woman he first met  
in another optician's shop many miles away,  
he speaks again to his advertising adversarial,  
leaning from the inside  
against the film-stained window pane,  
a beautiful dark woman  
with odd but contemporary glasses.  
He talks to her quietly  
and listens to her wordless response.  
Shy, she must be shy,  
he mutters.  
She never looks me in the eye  
when I speak,  
and her name I cannot remember.

Steven Pattie

## Love

Two desperate people, a moon, a breeze,  
Love is in the air.  
She's lost her boyfriend; he has no life,  
Romance can hardly resist  
so when they look  
in each other's eyes,  
choke through some laughs  
and a couple of lies  
they've found their soulmates  
love and life  
like worn-out velcro  
bonding together  
loving each other  
in spite of each other  
Ah, the beauty of couples in  
need.  
Two desperate people, a moon, a breeze,  
Love is in the air.

Scott Sheffield

Good Riddance

Thrifty, can-do son  
tried to clean the pillows  
his mother just died on

he went from place to place  
the laundromat just said  
we can't wash that kind of thing  
why don't you throw them away  
but if you insist on trying then  
go to the dry cleaners next door

who said we can't clean  
this stain; that smell  
well, it's permanent  
why don't you throw them away  
why don't you just

throw the damn things away

Mary Winters  
New York, NY

clamp

dyou know it  
jst wash m scalp n  
starts t rain  
drippn in on m brain, gray wormwood  
dippn the whole polyp in oil drip pan  
got m top down f Friday's  
scarf n th wind, blonde Fidget  
scab tires, rare as red steaks  
frazzln on this electric tape road  
burn pink neon brandn iron  
                    on hot tin metal sign  
brandishn LAS VEGAS only 80 miles  
                    pardna

Peter Layton  
Lakewood, CA



**"BACON DOUBLE CHEESEBURGERS**

are 79 cents, if we use cupons,"  
announced Bag Lady Alice.

"Dust," mumbled Toxic Waste.  
"Man is but animated dust...  
Eternally in a state of flux."

"Afterwards," continued Alice,  
"we'll cruise past the library  
then watch the Red Sox game  
for a coupla innin's or so at  
Benny's Appliance Warehouse.

"Ceasar's corporeal dust...  
Blown over from Ancient Rome.  
makin' me sneeze," said Toxy.

"Prob'ly ragweed," said Alice.

Richard Davignon  
Chatham, MA

## ALICE AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

"Theologically speakin', said Alice,  
"I'm pissed at this Problem of Evil."  
"An all-knowin', all-powerful Deity  
allowin' such a thing...sorta makes  
y'wonder a bit," said the Red Queen.  
"Is God mean?...Overworked?...Is He  
just plumb coo-coo," pondered Alice.  
"He IS old. Could be absent-minded.  
Alzheimer's can be so wicked cruel,"  
said the Red Queen, sighing deeply.

Richard Davignon  
Chatham, MA

### Neighborhood

Move through/ shutter speed fast/ you barely catch a glimpse of my smooth round body as it passes/ heel toe/ heel toe. "Don't smile at me girl." I know/ too many teeth/ not enough gold/ for this neighborhood/ is leering the leaves turning brown before September sunlight hits California asphalt. Summertime comes real late/ in these parts/ and winter lasts and lasts/ like some welfare line at eight a.m. or six /but/ heel toe/ brown flat teeth/ something like the pipe pressed against them/ destroying/ eyes first/ you're next/ it's not so bad/ Toke/ not so very bad. Don't look at the cops shouting orders from inside closed black and white sedans while white/ I look just like them/ blue blue eyes and all. "Spare change?" Baby I live/ in this neighborhood/ its live and let die. And no I do not work the streets/ no two a.m. strolls in pressing black leatherette and lace for me/ but some old Asian man/ in his smooth rounded lifestyle/ wouldn't know that/ don't you know that prostitutes only dress this well/ in San Francisco/ the vistas offer a closer existence to God and therefore reduce crime. Not like/ not like/ here/ for instance/ knife edge threat and cheap gold bracelets be damned. Thirteen year old baby/ big with child/ pressed against some backseat/ and faded sateen unicorn pillows breed art/ oppression lends itself to confusion/ confusion to art/ blah/ blah/ blah/ maybe one in a million if you're good/ very good/ but/ about as much chance as playing with Michael/ in this neighborhood/ asphalt meets asphalt. Cheap old Dodge '77 being begged to run and nothing to do with the daylight except/ dream it/ drink it/ or/ smoke it/ away.

Catherine Swanson  
Emeryville, CA

### A Little Green

Maybe I'm a little green  
around the edges,  
wet behind the ears.  
Maybe I wear my  
beans and rice  
oven don't work  
and the house always just a touch on the cold side  
with windows shattered  
by some neighborhood boys and rocks over a year ago.  
Maybe I wear my poverty  
like some red badge  
just a little tougher then  
just a little more avante garde pissed off.  
Maybe I twist that thing around my tongue  
spit it out at cops  
despise the cleanliness of your lives and homes.  
Maybe because  
I'm twenty and scared shitless.  
Fuck maybe.

Catherine Swanson  
Emeryville, CA

## TEARS

2 cry is tears left in your everyday work,  
2 weep it didn't matter, "So why are U so hurt."  
A stain left in your brain, "A sign of insane,"  
An effort U didn't try harder, "Again."  
2 take care of business U lost control,  
An issue what little people know, "Behold."  
A crying matter is a weeping stain 2 remain,  
The effort was put in 2 business 2 gain.  
2 cry is tears left in your everyday work,  
2 weep it didn't matter, "So why are U so hurt."

Morris Villia  
Metairie, LA

Words to the Wise

Don't wear  
a rabbit  
in  
your lapel.

Back To Work

The hermit crab is loose again.

The Impatient Years

"Peace Be Unto You"  
"Enough already"  
"OK"

Calling All Arachnids!

The web is tethered  
& under investigation

Bob Strauss  
Wilmington, DE

**old toys**

if I could  
only  
fathom your  
heart  
infiltrate  
your soul  
devastate  
your  
mind  
you swine

bob lennon  
hatboro, pa

after ten years I know

Sometimes at night  
when the wind is blowing  
in from the sea,  
the sound of the waves  
floats over this town  
like pearl dust  
settling  
everywhere

Charles Carreon  
Santa Monica, CA



## Roll My Number

Life slips away  
like smoke in a gambling den.  
My mate's faded (pass)  
and I've become jaded  
staring at cubes of bone  
with the final gleam caught in snakes' eyes.

Taking chances with even  
the glance of fate  
and plunging into green glory,  
my story is closed in a fist  
of clittering digits,  
slippery with salt and halting time  
in the space of wet wagers.

I'm caught in the trap  
of risks beyond all understanding,  
thundering along like boxcars  
puncturing the dark or parked  
on a siding,  
waiting to crap out of the game.

Terry Thomas  
Prescott, AZ

5:30 P.M. AT 21ST AND COLLEGE AVENUE

Rotten, humiliated houses encase the street.  
Three lanes leading directly north  
to the proud side of the city.  
Children scatter across the sidewalk  
playing dangerously close to a pack of dogs  
and traffic rushing to distant destinations.  
Too young to notice the commuters,  
they occupy themselves with war games, mime ball,  
and harassing little girls clutched in tight circles.  
This evening they see who can reach the 2 x 4  
patching the face of Wally's Fish Market.

Old men congregate in a nearby parking lot  
oblivious to the dashing commuters.  
Appareled in synthetic fibers, oversized collars,  
and black vinyl shoes several sizes too big.  
They occupy themselves by drinking from papered bottles  
bought at the neighborhood bullet proof liquor store.  
They hide from the heat in shadows of billboards  
selling vodka, gin, cigarettes, and lottery tickets  
promising a way out of mind and neighborhood.

The commuters speed their cars from light to light.  
Eyes remain glued straight in fear of being noticed.  
They occupy themselves with cellular phones, CD Players,  
and relief that their journey does not end here.  
Only twenty more blocks until the Benzos, khakis,  
and paisley ties cross the 40th Street intersection,  
back to the right side of town.

Matt Schafer  
Indianapolis, IN

## **Saeva Indignatio**

you make me so angry  
sometimes  
always pushing, pushing  
closing the vice clamp  
tighter around my head

I feel claustrophobic as if  
I was fighting my way out of a  
deflated balloon  
or caught in a spandex  
straitjacket

give me a razor  
so I can cut my way out  
or maybe kill myself  
or maybe kill you

I don't know if you have  
ever taken me seriously  
before but I swear  
I'm not lying now

and unless you've got a good story  
or a really nice present  
you'd better run  
because I really need  
to hurt you

I need to see you bleeding  
bleating, crouched low in the dirt  
before me, suppliant  
I want to see blood in your  
beautiful eyes  
I want to see you cry

Holly Day  
H. B., CA

forgive me if i look shocked

i actually got a  
hold of one recently

hey man  
what was wrong  
with my poems

he said  
i don't know man  
they were just  
uh  
a little too high  
falootin  
a little too  
literary  
ya know

i tried to mask  
my shock at this  
assessment and  
thought to myself  
hell  
if he thinks my  
poems are too  
damn literary  
what the hell  
does he think  
about poets like  
Strand  
Nemerov  
Stafford  
Bly  
Hongo  
and those other  
snotty assholes  
who can't write  
interesting poems.

Scott Holstad  
Long Beach, CA

# CRUCIFIXION BEATS SUICIDE?

long turgid sketches  
of your so-called loving  
                  asphyxiate my brain  
make sick spells  
every hour       on the hour --  
the night grows  
                  ANGRY  
in its burning

unnatural acts, a part of your  
fantasies you will never know how bad  
I'm scarred

by the f  
          a  
          1  
          1

urge . . . compulsion --

I just want to

smear  
SMEAR your slimy picture  
all over scabby garbage-prick color  
mirror  
don't even dare  
                  look out at  
the broken down  
was-me

Jim DeWitt  
Kentwood, MI

## SO WHY EVEN BOTHER?

a downer-day journey back home (barf)  
yes far too long (yuck)  
and winding is the way (stagger)  
which curves hill-up steep  
de-smoothing my bare feet (ouch ow)  
onto beastlymean & spiky  
gravel-stones hazards plus  
dodgearound droppings  
& carrion (shoo crow)  
for my sequential-bored steps  
taking this unfortunately rutstuck  
only road home (retch)  
because at the end of it (sneer scoff)  
there sure is no "home"  
for me there  
(all set: self-destruct on cue)

Jim DeWitt  
Kentwood, MI