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Table of Contents

Introduction

Michael Ceraolo

from Euclid Creek, Book Two

Contents

Martina Reisz Newberry

THE OLD, STERN GO
THE SONNET OF THE LOCKED BOX
AND WHAT I FOUND THERE
NEW VERITIES

Dusan Colovic

Not Showing the Direction
Grandfather's Hands
The Builder
Prediction
Into One and Only
The Yeast of Love

Shmavon Azatyan

THE TWILIGHT DRIVE

Alan Catlin

**The Death of Benjamin Britten
Work(s) of Art as Crime Scene(s)
Martha Ronk's Moth
Dawn on the Fringes: A Still Life with Piano
Little Ashes
Illuminated Pleasures
The First Days of Spring
The Face of Mae West**

Bill Wolak

**The Hammock
The Cure for Unhappy Marriages, 1666 C.E.
Coming to the End
The Seat of Pleasure: Avicenna on Lovemaking
Among the Karague**

Chris Hemingway

**A Poem Without a Name
The Girl with the Jack Kerouac Book
Poetry In Motion
Bliss all around**

Michael Parker

**Word of the day, mucro
Looking at this Autumn night through my window
Autumn is the bold director
Ode to a neighbor's large maple tree
Walking the canyon path is a Communion**

Michael Ceraolo

On Reviewing a Book I Haven't Read
On Where the Medium Isn't the Message
On a Current Fad In Writing
On the Unintended Irony of Certain 'Intellectuals'

Post Scriptum

Allen Taylor

On The Road Home

when he was suddenly seized by the spirit,
the spirit
that animates many,
here and everywhere,
and
he changed his request,
without changing his story,
to ten dollars for a rib dinner
Unfortunately,
I did not have that much money,
and also,
that last increase
pushed his request into the very large area
between the small amounts that would always be given
and the very large amounts that would also always be given
(those very large amounts that would allow
people to be described as civic leaders)
I put my wallet away and got on the bus,
and
he begged his way on after me
and all the other paying fares,
and
had a short ride to wherever it was
he was going to finish or continue his night-----

A man I admire
hosts a local radio show,
a sports show on a college radio station
no less:
two-and-a-half hours,
less
the occasional break for public-service announcements,
of his speaking of sports,
mostly;
sometimes
he jump-cuts to other subjects,
but,
no matter the topic
he is almost always interesting,
and

his program is further unencumbered
by ridiculous callers or idiot-in-the-street interviews
I don't agree with him on everything, of course
(I don't agree with anyone,

even myself,
on everything),
but

there is one non-sports point in particular
I would like to disagree on with him here
He lives in the city proper,

and

often refers to those outside the city proper
as living in the Outer Rim

(Why

do I sometimes hear that phrase as The Outer Limits?)

I would like to give him food for thought:

first,

the reliance

on man-made,

rather than natural,

boundaries:

whether

he or many of the 'Outer Rimmers' realize it,

they have more in common by the fact

of living in the same watershed

(the Cuyahoga River watershed in his case)

than they have differences by living

in different political subdivisions;

and second,

that man-made boundaries aren't fixed for all time:

where he lives didn't become part of the city proper

until 1854,

and where he works

didn't become part of the city proper

until 1910,

in large part because

of the school fire of 1908

And

with a change in thinking,

either,

or both,

of these could change again,

and change for the better-----

Thank you for your consideration

Martina Reisz Newberry

THE OLD, STERN GODS

In female children, the transparency is always there.
The old, stern gods see it
for what it is:

the sweet empty vessel
accepting everything,
a nod and a smile

at their ferocious alignments.
Our female fears
are enchanting,

are the warm, ever-rising dough from which
forgiveness is born.
A woman freezes

when God strokes her. God's touch
makes her an unwed mother,
a pillar of salt, a widow—cast off.

The old, stern gods inspect the troops
in their diaphanous uniforms.
They like what they don't see.

When the new season comes,
all the old stern gods
will volunteer to watch

the changing outlines dance,
and invite them to join in.
The old stern gods

lay with those feminine bodies, offer their lust
and their resentments
of longing.

They will be tended to—as Ruth
tended the garden
of her loyalty to Naomi,

these gods will be breathed upon, whispered to,

made whole.

“Once” the women whisper,

“we were gazers on the stars. Through us,
the asking. Through us
the answers. Now we sleep,

reject our own immortality, barter away our focus
in exchange for fidelity, our godhood
for an easier, longer life.

THE SONNET OF THE LOCKED BOX AND WHAT I FOUND THERE

A sweetness after fear, breath from the rain
(the smell of it and the clarity there).
a perfect apple, a cracked picture frame,
cold beer, a drinking glass, a lock of hair,
a piece of cake sliced perfectly, hot tea,
brown boots, a pen, a pond, a perfect cup,
an arrangement of weeds and a bent key,
a hand-thrown pot with a crooked chipped top,
the sound of a truck going by full bore,
the taste of my spice on your tongue,
straw grasses in a homely, perfect jar,
sadness of knowing you're no longer young,
 the skeleton of grief disguised as rage,
 and finally a kiss, a bandage, a cage.

NEW VERITIES

Faulkner spoke
of the old verities
and truths of the heart
and,
in speaking,
gave them
the weight of Osmium.
What of them? I say.
There are
new verities now
and hearts
must get used to them
the way
a mended atrium
must get used
to a plastic valve.

The new verities
have new uniforms.
Their boots have
high spiked heels,
their stockings
are red
like blood.
The new verities
are listless,
they spray-tan
their bodies
and do not
mind their manners.
The new verities
don't think twice,
('cause it's alright).

Their eyes narrow
and they are
suspicious
of carnival rides
and cotton candy.
The new verities
have
a new language.
They make strange sounds
say new words,
for ALIVE,
WORK,

FOOD,
SIN,
FEAR
and DISTANCE.

No crimes have been
committed here.

All is calm,
all is bright.

But, the new verities
are smarter,
more clever
than the old.

They shrug
their shoulders
and pull down
their hat brims.

You'll never
be able
to recognize them
in the end.

Dusan Colovic

Not Showing the Direction

I am at the crossroads of life
not showing direction to anyone
I know! If I do not turn more eastward
I will block the view to the west
now, around me birds singing
from all sides of the world
happy to share the space
I understand I am
only a small particle
of the grown up world
and the sunrise and ashes
are touching us.

Grandfather's Hands

I remember...
in the hands of my grandfather
a gleam taken from the plough
radiated. He hurried
toward the sunny distance
where tirelessly
he sewed and reaped
our daily bread.
Now old and toothless
beside the hearth
he grinds tenderness
to his grandchildren.

The Builder

The builder
asleep
a trowel in hand
reflection of an angelic face
for the entire world to see.

Prediction

To the eye of the day the night lends
marvel, changes,
and a flash of joy
saturated smell of grass
scattered shine
of the butterflies' wings
and wise honeybees' drone.
Spring transformation – a breath
impregnates the womb
of fertile births
and while trembling petals
shimmer in the sun
a prompt tomorrow
predicts a no-ending youth.

Into One and Only

Condensed into one
and only life
light the path
to a new birth
sew the starry seed
weave the blue of the sky and the sun
return the shine into the world's eyes.

The Yeast of Love

The earth
kissed your walk
the sun filtered honey from the eyes
the wind has
carried your voice
to entice the distance
this play that grows
in the reflection
of the growing softness
is the yeast of love.

Belgrade, Serbia

Shmavon Azatyan

THE TWILIGHT DRIVE

He came out of the garage, carrying two big bags in both hands. The veins, strained from the weight, were standing out on his thin arms. He put the bags down on the concrete drive and opened the trunk of the car. He stacked the two oil canisters that were in the trunk, and then carefully arranged the luggage inside. Shuffling steps echoed in the garage, and a longhaired woman looked out.

“What about this?”

She had a can of jam in her hand.

He looked from behind the trunk, shrugged his shoulders and pushed the trunk shut. She would know it. If she wished, they could take some jam home.

She disappeared in the black of the garage.

He looked at the grape bunches that, twining and weaving, had curled and expanded over the wooden framework that rested on four metal posts sheltering a small, almost a car-size concrete drive that ran up to the garage. Twenty years back his father finished the house with the garage and planted a dozen grape boughs, three of which had sprouted up vigorously and knitted a shading visor festooned with grapevines that were purple and well juicy in September. He and the grapevine. They grew up from a sprout into healthy youth happiness-bound in a prosperous world duly watered and fed. He had everything: his father’s business, money to travel, a car many envied and an apartment; Father had

bribed the military to exempt him from the army; then he got married, and then they had a baby. It was a grand event, when she came to turn his life around—that University girl with a pigtail, pouty lips and big dreamful eyes whom many youths pursued. She was an honors student and she looked gorgeous. And she chose him. But she hadn't changed much in two years of married life, and now ...

He heard her call to him from the kitchen window. She was asking him to go and get the baby—she had dressed him.

He put his son in the car and watched him while she was finishing her evening make-up and getting dressed. He will plant a bough that will rise as his son will be growing up, and when he turns eighteen he will marry him, buy him a car and an apartment fully furnished, will make him the manager in their office. They will clink glasses of vodka and admire the big grapevine bush.

He told the yipping baby to sit still and drove the car back out the gate. When he opened the door to get out, she appeared outside the garage in blue shorts and a navy striped shirt with bare shoulders and gracefully walked up to him. He grew excited from seeing she had changed out of her house wear. He had got used to the dull routine of the gown she wore to feed the baby, do the rooms, do the laundry and wash up. The tall chalky legs, the straight slim torso, the nicely shaped breasts. She was saying . . . She was saying she had packed the child's stuff and had left the bag on the little round table in the hall. Before she forgot . . . the lights were on in the bathroom.

As he was locking the gate, his neighbor told him "Good evening" heartily, extending his crusted hand to him.

"How's Daddy doing? Banking?" The man laughed at his joke.

"Busy. But next time I must bring him over, so he takes care of the orchard."

When the villager was passing by the passenger window, he made a face, and the baby started to cry. Her full lips gently touched his head.

“Oh come, come, little thing. Are you afraid of that guy? He’s a good guy!”

The car started. It went slowly, picking its way on the rough road. Moving out of the dirt road, it took a left and accelerated delicately on the asphalt road beneath the thickening twilight. The handling of his car was great, especially at the turns it made expertly and smoothly.

Every time he drove off from the villa, he recalled what she had told him that time. It was shortly after their marriage. They were on their way back from a weekend party in the villa. She was looking at his arms, while he was driving; she said that they were strangely white, bony, and with fair hairs; she enjoyed looking at his slender hands—accurately cut nails, smooth skin and long nice fingers. When he glanced at her smiling, she said she loved his sharp lined profile that cut off his head from the fleeting landscape.

On the left side, the two huge parallel irrigation pipes that first ran green, then red and brown and then newly painted blue, banked the road. On the right, a broad sweep of meadows, pale and dry, stretched in the background, and here and there, separate houses stood in the perspective. The sunset painted the windshield in purple and orange, and high above, the obscured crescent of the moon was beginning to shine dimly.

He took this road many times. It used to be better when he only drove, with no thoughts of the past or future rattling in his head, just ecstatic from kisses and champagne, from the effect of weed in his head and the whiskey on his tongue. When he was fifteen... But at twenty his life turned direction. Suddenly he wished the road were washed away from his memory. It lingered and it was bitter because it made him feel he used to be happier.

“We must expand the villa,” she said, continuing a previous conversation. “Actually, repairing it will be a better idea. I can clean the rooms more easily. Everything is so old.”

“We are thinking about it.”

“Or maybe sell it? I hate our neighbors. They’re so stupid and ignorant. I don’t want to live next door to villagers. Can’t we buy a house in a better area?”

He changed the gear. He glanced at her: she was looking through her window. She noticed his glance and switched to a different subject.

“It’s so nice to see this road again and again. It brings nice thoughts into my head. It’s the token of our life: the imperturbable setting inside a rose where our family is speeding deliciously protected by the petals. We will always roll on this road, and it will unfold endlessly before us.”

“And the petals?”

“It’s our car,” she said laughing.

But she meant it. She had learned to associate things in life in her literature courses.

During the first month of their married life, she developed her thesis of their domestic happiness, and since then they had held on to that. She said she would be his foothold, and he would be her tool, and this would warrant a lifetime partnership. They would live happy eternally. They would have a great and lasting future. Husband, wife and children.

He looked at his family. The baby was lying on her lap, gazing at the road unconsciously. Later his eyes shut, and a sweet sleep came over him. She turned the baby around in her arms to make him comfortable. It was moving how she was watching the baby sleeping; this picture was precisely what had flashed his mind before he got married. Then he was only a teenager, infatuated by this or that girl,

hitting them in bars at nights; that picture was the end of the tunnel he knew he was going to reach one day, and he kept on dreaming it.

“His looks come from my side,” she said, scrutinizing the face of the sleeping baby. “But he will change a lot through his boyhood and adolescence. He is sure to shift from my side to yours.”

She always told him that she wanted their son to be like him, and it was something very exciting to know. Slender, muscled, fair-haired and blue-eyed. And a stunning girl will fling herself at his head. Finally, she will accept his proposal.

“It was boring today,” she changed the subject of the conversation again. “When your family isn’t around, I feel lonely. Doing chores is sometimes so boring. I mean when there's no one in the house. I love doing it when your mother’s around.”

“And if my sister had been . . .”

“We'd surely have chatted all day, leaving the rooms undone,” she chuckled.

He was looking ahead carefully, for the car was speeding.

“We should have invited Mik and his wife. Their daughter is fond of our baby. She likes playing with him.”

“Yeah, but I guess I gotta ask Father to come along next time, too. So he sees about the orchard. I can't deal with it.”

He slowed down and made a left; the car overcame the arch built over the huge pipes.

She turned and said: “Are you free tomorrow, say about noon?”

It wasn’t a question. He wasn’t sure what it was. Probably a request.

“Wanna go to your mother’s?” he said, turning to look at her.

“Yeah! She said Aunt Monica has sent a parcel for me. I'll stay a couple of hours. They are invited to Karen's. His son’s birthday. He’s turning four.”

The dusk was painting the windshield in darker tones, through which the road had become lonely and invisible; he could clearly see only as far as the solid whites of the headlights could get. He enjoyed the wind playing on the left side of his face. He always had a feeling as if somebody was pressing a cube of ice on his neck. A short woman with dazzling curves in a loose short summer skirt used to put it in the whiskey and tilting his head serve it to his lips. The summer breeze cooled him as he drove fast on the evening empty road; it flirted his left hand and shoulder, whispering velvet words in his ear and stroking his hair.

The car moved onto the highway going to the city. The roadside shops were closing; the windows of the houses were lit; the boys were returning from fishing and picnics or from the city. The plans of tomorrow came to mind.

“I gotta look in the office at ten,” he said. “There's a new partner coming to sign a contract with us. He's seeing Father tomorrow. Father wants me to be present at the meeting.”

The car—a dark iron, two blazing lights in the rear - delicately took the right turn and mingled with the busy traffic.

“Well, you'll manage in two hours, won't you?” she said in a tone that wasn’t interrogative. “I must know when you will take me to mum’s, so I can tell her an exact time.”

“Yes, I will!” His attention was drawn to the traffic; he was changing the gear all the time.
“What's there to buy from the bazaar?”

“Potatoes, tomato, green vegetables . . .”

In the swish of traffic, cutting into the car lines beneath the barking of motors, signals of trucks, on the road crisscrossed by numerous rays of lights, he would feel, not see, how she fell into a sweet sleep. Each time he knew it when she was speaking the last phrases. Then in front of the house, he would gently touch her to wake her. He had felt special driving his wife home while she was sleeping; she showed up before his parents well-awake, amicable, with her nice make-up and well-dressed.

“And cherry,” she said after a moment’s consideration. Then she spoke again, as if something reminded her of what she had intended to tell him.

“The first birthday of this naughty boy,” she kissed the baby digging into his neck with her nose. “We must celebrate it seriously.”

He looked in the rearview mirror. A car was attempting a takeover by signaling with the left blinker. “What do you say about having the party in the villa?” he said rather happily. He eased right, and the car behind took over.

“Yeah, great! Oh my god! We're gonna have a great time.”

She was exulting like a child, but his happiness was rather perfunctory. He maneuvered among a jam of cars that were moving along the narrow road with no streetlights. The road was pitted, and he had to dodge the potholes. He was driving slowly and quietly, his eyes on the road, his mind elsewhere .

..

It was three years that he had been her tool, and it had been enjoyable. But a crescent of doubt had crept into him. Wouldn’t that brightness of their happiness blind him? Like the grapevine his life had become seasonal, yielding fruit and then going on recess and being a good

boy. The grapevine was strong. Nature sponsored it. He's an attractive man driving a car, keen on liquor and weed and casual women. Tomorrow to go shopping, then to take her to her mother's, then to stop off at the office, then to take the baby to the doctor, then to take her back home and afterwards to return to the office for more work. He was falling apart. He wouldn't last long. The call of his past pleasures ran high in his veins, and he pushed down the accelerator.

As they jerked forward, she woke up and in panic screamed.

He squeezed the car between two others and driving in a zigzag made his way clear of them, the tires screeching.

"What are you doing?"

"I don't know. I want something."

He will drop them at home and will drive away. The time had come to make a change. If she won't change, then he will put it right. The pipes, the road, Father... had been holding him up. He wasn't growing.

She was sleeping, as if there had been no desperate attempt to crash.

He will go anywhere, just to relax, a random pub or a hidden out night club, like in the old days when he and his friends would hang out, swilling with beer and courting women. When they would go out of the bar and walk home, the lights around would be fuzzy, unlike the streetlights that were shining bright far ahead.

They were already in the city.

Alan Catlin

The Death of Benjamin Britten

A broken unfinished picture frame

A note affixed to the cracked wood with a clothespin

A crouched, masked man, naked to the waist
reaching through the broken frame

A seated, young man turning away from where
the crouched man is

A draped, black cloth concealing a low table

A small, empty fish bowl on the floor near
the covered table

A black music stand

A pile of perfect bound scores stacked on the floor
near the music stand

A torn in half portrait sized picture of a World War
One British soldier

A rifle leaning against the studio wall

A moment of silence

A pause that lasts and lasts and lasts

Work(s) of Art as Crime Scene(s)

"Some things are where they are because they are besides the point." Martha Ronk

Viewing El Greco's, "Christ Healing the Blind Man" as crime scene: one can see that crowd control measures are already in motion, having an effect, the rabble is being held in place away from the scene so that nothing pertinent will be compromised. Jesus of Nazareth is about to be arrested for: practicing medicine in a public place without a license, for inciting a riot and for disregarding the orders of an officer of the law. There are dozens of witnesses on the scene; before and after Days of Judgement, their opinions various and contradictory; evidently no two people saw the same things. Recorded history of the alleged crime are likewise unreliable as no definitive account may be verified; in the meantime apparently Jesus escapes into the desert, a place like Dali's "Spain", though longer and wider than any canvas can contain or intimate. After 40 days and 40 nights of being harbored as a fugitive, of confrontations and contemplations, said Jesus returns to face the medicine, the charges against; does the punishment befit the crime? Despite a wealth of sacred and profane documentation, Literature and Art are unclear on this subject.

Martha Ronk's Moth

"The movie screen obliterates
memory. We are lost in the
eternal present."

Bumping against the torn
screen, heliotropic, frantic
for light, those bare bulbs in
cellar fixtures wrapped with
ladies' hose, flesh-tints
turning black; heat intensifies
slow burning, the reckless flight.

Dawn on the Fringes: A Still Life with Piano

The piano is an emblem
suggesting creatures from
another world, metempsychoses
and partial hallucination, real
time measured by glowing busts
of Lenin rising from the keyboard
like poison mushrooms, death watch
beetles, spiders with hourglasses
painted on their carapaces;
decaying body of a dead ass laid
to rest beneath the propped up lid
of a baby grand; the apotheosis
of Homer or the nostalgia of cannibals?

Little Ashes

Severed body parts are
falling as elements of
a psychic rain, oddly
polluted, disconnected
by decay except where
they collect in a junkyard
of disassociations on an
astral plane, a silver plate
the brain rearranged
as mirrored images in
restive sleep.

Illuminated Pleasures

look so much different in day
light than in darkness, night:
jack-the-ripper back alley play
bills, cracks in the cosmic egg
shaped like an O'Keeffe skull
brought into the city from desert's
end, bright sun on the reflective
blob devouring unprotected edges
of a painted street, torn holes in
stretched canvas glowing, pulled
tight as a disrupted sky, of nova
stars falling, coming to rest on
bicycles-in-motion balance bars
teetering on the rider's heads as
they cycle part random totems
spiked into an urban waste,
the deserted lover's heel, his face
averted, pressed as it is against a
dissolving concrete wall topped by
trophies from lost wars of night
dutifully polished to an illogical
sheen and displayed behind torn
curtains in the last windows left
standing, all the buildings gone,
fatally reduced to rubble, ash.

The First Days of Spring

are marked by the end of
rational living: the patient
lobotomized on the Doctor's
couch without anesthesia,
a conjuror woman's genie lamp
exuding the genesis of Fata
Morgana, the morphing of flesh
and eel and squid into something
almost human, an offering for
painted-in-black face street mimes
and their sexplay urchins leaning
against a disembodied portrait
painting, a landscape of terror
depicting apocalypse as still life,
a jumbling of like static-to-the-
eyes kaleidoscopic, all shaken up
colors inside a crystal ball where
there is no future just a man seated
in a high chair, a wasteland, the sun
totally eclipsed.

The Face of Mae West

eternal as florescent flames
shaped into eyebrows, crescents
of light above those hypnogogic
eyes lulled into quiescence by
sleep inducing chimes that hang
as ornaments, earrings, making
carnal, tribal music for the lost-
in-lust bodies mingling with
the curls of her perfectly bobbed
blonde hair while other couples
are dancing on the polished floor
encased within her, all the open
drawers of her mind spilling their
contents on the tiled chambers of
her dreaming, a swirl of color, of
semi-precious stones showing
the way in the night.

Bill Wolak

The Hammock

To impress eligible females
with his courage and endurance,
males of Guyana's Macusi Indians
have themselves sewn
into a hammock filled with fire ants.
The longer a man can bear
the painful stinging of the ant bites,
the more suitable husband
he's considered.

The Cure for Unhappy Marriages, 1666 C.E.

In accordance with the latest research
by the the German doctor Sigmund Elsholz,
the cure for all unhappy marriages is accomplished
by balancing of the couple's temperaments
through mixing hot with cold, active with sluggish.
Such equalization is best achieved
by mutual blood-transfusions.

Coming to the End

Miyatake Gaikotsu's brief monograph
Investigation into Annihilation
Experienced as Joy documents
conclusively that the ecstatic
exclamations of Japanese women
experiencing the onrush of orgasm
nearly always invoke death.

The Seat of Pleasure: Avicenna on Lovemaking

Don't rush whatever you do.
Begin with kissing and caressing
her breasts and fingering her pubis;
hold her in your arms tightly
so that she can barely breathe.
When her desire is aroused,
enter her slowly—all the time
rubbing her between anus and vulva—
for that is the seat of pleasure.
Then penetrate her till the moment of climax
which you will recognize when suddenly
she clings to you more tightly
as if she were falling,
and her eyes turn slightly red,
her nostrils flare,
her breathing quickens,
and she begins to stammer
and make unintelligible sounds.

Among the Karague

Among the Karague tribe
immediately after the wedding
the wife's first duty was to gain
as much weight as possible
by eating continually day and night.
The more enormous her body became,
the more erotically desirable
she was considered.
However, she was never considered
irresistible by her husband
until she became round enough
that she must turn sideways
to enter ordinary doorways.

Chris Hemingway

The Girl with the Jack Kerouac Book

she's the girl with all the answers
she spends her day drinking whiskey with lemon
she puts it all in perspective
without delay
searching for the answers in the wrong places
but she doesn't stop at that
doesn't know what she truly wants
except a new adventure every second
rolling with the punches
making every day seem like climbing a rollercoaster
wanting and wishing
to go home

A Poem Without a Name

Hearts ablaze
Torn asunder
Rippling waves
Roaring thunder
Destiny awaits
Foolish plunder
Dancing paves
Pouring slumber
Heavens awake
Clouds aflunder
Billowing caves
Engulfing wonder

Poetry in motion

On a summer's day
Everscent flowers
Twirling all the way
Reveling in the sunlight
Young lovers holding hands
In the Parisian streets
Strolling in the night
Laughter in the morning
Intertwined in love
Falling for
Enchanting signs from above
Neverending excitement
Explore the paintings of life
All around us
Always in motion

Bliss all around

Young-picked tulips in a bow
Omniscient togetherness
Underneath the mistletoe
Aroma of rose colored petaldust in the air like
Refined pearl oyster beads singing
Enchanting waltzes of uncouthed magnitude
Memories that make canyons crave
Yellow-tailed butterflies in a row
Angelic glows of heavenly melodies
Nocturnal music flows in the mist-filled
night as
Gentle breezes of summer days past
create
Enthralling harmony

Michael Parker

Word of the day, mucro

mucro:
a miniscule
point
projecting
abruptly

like the
dessicated
end of
a leaf
piercing
a passing
storm

the sting
from a
bee

the faint
burning
kiss
from the
departing
sun

but
perhaps
it is
you (inside
the funnel
of your own
tempest)

navigating
between two
converging
shores

and all
you desire
is the

safe
passage
through
the needle's
cold
unblinking
eye

"Looking at this Autumn night through my window"

In her dark receiving room
the moon winks and covers
her face.

Her children spin in the folds
and tatters of the empty
sky's fabric.

I am sitting in the room
where the walls keep the sun's colors
day and night.

There is that young me
inside the window.

We smile exactly
at the same time.

We can even touch
palm to palm.

And so we are laughing now
knowing the absurdity
of this thought --

that he is and I once was
young.

You laugh in the silent world,
reflection.

And in this silence
of the silently

silent

beyond the arc
of your faint halo,
Autumn settles its cold wings
in the branches of the oak
and crooked willow.

All the leaves will be spoiled
by morning

"Autumn is the bold director"

Autumn is the bold director
this night, this cold
interminable
night

dress my breezes
in your gold-crested
leaves, he commands
the maple

and to the rheumatic
willows holding
each other
he instructs
dance as if
it were as easy
as to dream

and there, there
and there

where the men
of the shadows
mark their spot
he says with import

be bigger than life
prove to me your villainy

then on the 'morrow,
we'll capture you
holding the fainting
lilac wearing
the vermillion
virginia creeper
about her neck

and the blood of life
is pooling around
your feet.

"Ode to a neighbor's large maple tree"

these are the days
the trees stay proud

weep no more
the loss of the sun

grow their skin
thick like scales

and prepare
their robes of

light and fire

"Walking the canyon path is a Communion"

The glow from the sun on the autumn leaves
casts light (as if from stained glass)
on today's unwritten parables --

ducks at the mouth of the river's shallows
are casting their nets off the shore for fish;

iron-colored, breasted robins stroll the aisles
of the woods gathering seeds left from
our harvests;

and chipmunks, like Elijah, are hiding
along the brook waiting for their meals
from the beaks of ravens.

I have come for manna of such a kind
as this.

I might find it today in the rich, cerulean sky
deep like the sea is deep and I am the river
in search of its home.

I might hear it echo off the slate-rock cliffs
resounding the canticles of the wind
as if it were the chants of holy monks
as if they were the priests practicing
the art of speaking in tongues.

I want you to know there are no angels now
only the small birds of the season who try
to wear the mantle of God's dear messengers;
sing like the child-faced cherubs who take to the air
and remind us all there are still creatures who fly.

I walk past the campground full of campers
like congregants in the holiest room
in the heart of the tabernacle --
the incense burning
the smoke filling the room--
they, ever practicing patience,
hope, and prayer.

Soon, there should be insight.
And, soon, there should be recognition

like the finger of God appearing from the smoke
touches them gently on the arm
and says your meal is ready.

I know we are at the end of the harvest.
I can see it in the thinning of our golden trees.
I believe we are trying to gather ourselves
from the lost corners of our houses
to prepare our feasts
share them together,
malice left at the door,
but thanksgiving overflowing
the cups in our hearts.

The sun is now at the door of the horizon.
All of the scenes in this grand cathedral
will soon grow dark.

I am walking in the same direction of that good sun.
And the beautifully red and gold-robed trees lean
as if in sudden longing
as if they desire uprooting
to follow him out.

Michael Ceraolo

On Reviewing a Book I Haven't Read

The man was hawking his book
touting his wealth-building system
I may be wrong in saying so sight unseen,
but I'll chance it anyway:
nowhere in the book does he say
that the first and most important step in wealth-building
is to inherit three hundred fifty million dollars
from your dad

On Where the Medium Isn't the Message

Some disparage emails and texts
as inane and inadequate,
preferring the old-fashioned phone call
I would argue that emails and texts
are just the even more old-fashioned letter writing
updated with the latest technology,
and inanity and inadequacy
are not the fault of the medium

On a Current Fad In Writing

I'm calling for a moratorium
on the 'stylistic' device of putting a period
after every word,
 which I take to be
either for emphasis or to convey breathless excitement
This is an example of why writing should be read out loud:
to my ear it doesn't accomplish either of these;
it sounds as though the person reading
is learning to read and can only read one word at a time

On the Unintended Irony of Certain 'Intellectuals'

At the approach of the biggest game of the year
a number of people airily dismissed the game as beneath them,
while at the same time eagerly awaiting the commercials

Post Scriptum

Allen Taylor

On The Road Home

It is love that draws me here.

Year after daunting year, I, like a hunter's mad dream,
enshrined by the dew, dawn ellipses trembling, dazed
by the littered landscape, as if rowing along some Russian Riviera
or traversing Esperanto trails, make my way
back, back to nuclear origins, back to my vested youth
and to the vertigo living room where first I
cut my teeth on Saturday morning cartoons
and Sesame Street; perverse Chinese art embalms my journey,
makes it bearable. Ingrained deep within my bones
lies the heart of humanity, engrossed
in photogenic images, embittered
creatures crawling up from the past to explore
the largeness, the depths of cranberry cathedrals and mosques
with minarets made of stone. I do not know whether to return
is an act of grace, but I was born with one foot on the stage
and one hand touching the sky; I was baptized
by a culture of damnation while Christ sang hymns
of beauty and agnostic gurus stripped bamboo shoots
between naked teeth. Aaaah, but to go back is like running
a thousand marathons without cleansing the juice that flows
through aqueductian veins. I took the grand tour through mansions
and wax museums, where golden-haired damsels dream of romance;

dark, mysterious, lonely,
they dance as lyrical ballerinas, toes
curled like corn chips cavorting splendor;

and in their short skirts they flirt with the same fluid style
as their music -- lucid and ancient, timeless as the wings of Icarus,
perfect as Pythagorean formulas, tilted and jilted like New Age melodies.

They wave from behind the dying tree
where, as children, we swung from the circle
of a tractor tire, arms spread out pretending to fly,
our bellies plunged flat against the rubber
filled with filth and father's beer; the tree then was young,
where grandpappy hoisted us up with rope and pulley
and laughed till his dentures spilled out onto the red dust
of Texas clay;

there they stand, these nymphs,
calling me forward with smiles like pensive pale grins
topped by spouts, looking like giant teapots
bathed in blue, dripping of cunning. Lined up along the byway,
stretched from mile marker 333 to the service station
where I pumped my first tank of gas.

They remind me of the camaraderie of soldiers, to feel a part of something big.
Nastassja Kinski and her serpentine slopes could not make me feel
more welcome. In the dire distress of longing
I search for the reasons, the reasons to turn back,
the reasons not to go or postpone until another day,
perhaps May or September, or even another year. Instead
I drive on. Aboard the ISS cosmonauts reflect upon Plushenko
spelling his name on ice. The Bible on the dashboard
is open to Genesis Chapter 11
and the Tower of Babel
screams incoherently for forgiveness,
but I cannot listen.

The nature of Indian folklore is elusive, it is everywhere
and nowhere, and I have begged an audience with teenage rock stars,
with princes, and with monks and priests
to bow or pray before their altars and their thrones.

This possible adventure reels me toward the lurking lunacy
of my childhood, exotic and neurotic, half-way erotic,
fetches me an iron rod from which I gain new perspective,
and hurls me into the bosom, an interlocking chasm of familiar sand,
into the laps and lips of memories with high school divas and dames,
sweethearts damned by their Penelope Pitstop cries, Alice in Wonderland eyes,
or their pulpit flocking thighs sprawled out upon the rocks
of dirty country roads; this trip back homeward
to mother and blueberry pie, to the fleeting glimpses
of lost unwholesome years and unforgotten sins:

once again, this repeated ritual, this honest hassle, to drive
and be driven upon, to wake and to remember
the terrible tears cried upon poisonous pillows
and to know, to suspect that after all it was just
a token or a small friendly gesture, a kind affection
flaunting yet fretting the long awaited embrace of imperfection,
and the waiting to tell stories not yet written
for generations unborn and not yet told to children
not yet heard of: it was all this,
the soft caresses of Maria What's-Her-Name,
and the resting, no, the hiding in the warmth
of her short brown arms, lips biting down upon hardened nipples
in the glare of the midnight moon's keen oversight;

it was the hard harsh hand of discipline
that prodded me
like cattle, the pull of sisterly kisses,
the polite push of inspiration and the manic messages
of Radio Ga Ga, Crosby, Stills & Nash,
and Bob Seger melodically crooning "turn the page;"

it was the flattery of fandango dances that forced me to go. Yet still,
when I think back to the beginning, before igniting of fuel,
before the crank of the key, before the locking of a hesitant house,
when I could have decided not to come -- and here I am
pulling into the willing wailing drive,
yearning for remembrance,
wide open like the mouths of codfish,
and wondering what it was, back then, that compelled me go --

in the grasp of stultifying fears, behind the mask of quaking heartaches,
amid the pain of tender refusals, alongside faltering objections
I had and still have; through all that, and the winnowing windows,
the chiliastic chortles and portals of empty promises -- yes,
even then I knew:

it was love.
All along it was the damned bullish bite of love.

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Submission must be in the body of an email unless otherwise agreed on.