the Mitre '84

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Many thanks go to Merritt Clifton with whose help the Mitre has been able to attract the culturally diverse International writers. Thanks also go out to Avrum Malus for conducting an Unfinished Poetry Workshop. And a great big "thank-you" to all the contributors, donors and friends who have supported the Mitre this year, thus ensuring its continuation as a strong, independent literary publication.

-Dianna Hamilton

Editorial

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-Dianna Hamilton
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UNTITLED

A short poem
An hors d’oeuvre
very nice
But when do we eat?

— By Michael Medland

GRAND PRIX

There’s the green
and I press down hard,
Fangio at the keyboard.
Like Villeneuve, I court death
from unnatural clauses
as I run my Smith-Corona up a tree.

— By Michael Medland

MOVING TO YOUR MUSIC

moving to your music
I stepped on a match unknowingly
moved my foot on it
had I known it was there
I’d have been less aware of it
than I am of a small pebble in my shoe
there is a hiss from the floor
the explosion takes place at my feet
I stamp out the fire
I stamp out the fire
with the foot that started it
had I not put out the flame
I’d have been consumed by the fire at my feet
as I am consumed by your music

— By Avrum Malus.
heteroscedasticity

time
is a figment
of
modern
imagination
and i
am
its
victim

* * *

you slip into my bed
in the middle of the night
and fall asleep
your arm wrapped
around me
i turn my head
and see,
staring at me
the fluorescent face
of your watch.

the clock says
11:26
but it's wrong

it's fast
and i can't
be bothered to fix it

you and my clock
what a pair
you keep walking

and i keep
falling behind
and you
keep failing to notice

—By Stephanie Lindeburg

THE ACTING IS EVERYTHING

the curtains have closed
the lights have dimmed
and the crowd have gone home
but the acting goes on

the wife feeling her naked husband
stirring beside her
and his hungry fingers crawling over her body
sighs her pleasure

the man not seeing his face in the mirror as he shaves
and thinks of the life he lacks the faith to end
and his wife flipping eggs and buttering his toast

the unmarried son entering his sick mother's room
to peck her forehead with his dry lips
choke on his kiss one more time

the insecure teenager ending her date
in the loneliness of sex

here there are curtain calls and encores
but no cheering
here the lights are always shadowed
and words all too often only lies
but the acting is everything
— the acting is life itself

until the day the toast burn
or the razor nicks
or the eyes flood unexpectedly
and the casual words are forgotten / forever

and only a scream
erupts deep inside
as night closes in
like a darkened theater

—By Real Faucher
A LAST STAB AT OPTIMISM

Sing to me of hope
For though I do not
live in utter dejection
I can see no way out

I fear the shimmering
Pools of Plutonium
So tell me of Incandescent Fish
and nightskies lit by Blazing Birds

If all mankind could dream
a similar dream
and respect each other
value all life as he values his own
if he could change his definition of success
and abate his greed
humble himself before some God
of love, of life
worship Him in a positive joyful way
then maybe.
But who will teach us
short of the Necessity of Disaster?

Don’t chant hypnotic tunes
of wealth and prosperity
Sing the simple blues of survival
Talk of the real chatter of dolphins and magpies

I don’t know where we can hide
our malevolence or our Relentless Weapons
But I do believe
that when no one is looking
and all is satisfied
The Lion, in the tall cool grasses, does lie with the Lamb.

—By Andrea Schwenke

THE AGE OF NON-SENSE

Down in dark dribbling depths
Ominous cellars connect
Omnivorous gloomy husks; omnibus carcasses
Moving nowhere between hopelessness and Destruction
Oily images glowing
Objectionably in phantasmagorical Monotony

This is the mood of our age
Age of depression and regression
useless aggression and grave despair
endless doldrums
All for nought BUT there is NO Door
Out of this
Offal, this obscene
Malicious mechanical madhouse.

—By Andrea Schwenke
THE DIALOGUE

My body speaks to you, takes you
Naked

And your body speaks to me
Softly lifting me
Above my fence of
Bone and past and into
The blue watercolors of
Morning.

—By Pierre Comeau

undressed
no make-up:
the underneath you

—By Réal Faucher

ordinary daylight

dear etcetera, tell me
how

many shadows must i watch
before i find
ordinary daylight? shall
my own flower, dry,
dream its petals shut songless?
can’t this bud burst open
amidst faces, rain, hands (your smile)?
dear etcetera,

let me taste the cradle
of your breasts

etc...

—By Pierre Comeau
WHAT COULD THE BLACKS HAVE DONE TO HAVE MADE THE REVOLUTION WORK WAY BACK THERE IN '68?

the question is put to me over a half empty bottle of boonesfarm (tickle pink, i believe) by an ex black revolutionary who's got hogs & cows & goats now in upper ny state, & a wife & a couple daughters & a dog named howl & the ex black revolutionary is shaking his head sadly & he is weathered & farmer looking most of his neighbors thinking him safe & a helluva good shit likes the yankees votes left & right on & peace & they can forgive him that cuz he's a worker & a provider & he's a helluva good shit & he's black & i'm white & the wine is neutral & i have to tell him the truth cuz he asked & it is the truth & i know it now just like i knew it way back then

kill us i say you shoula killed us every last one of us when you had the chance brother & then i think maybe he's gonna cry & i think of god somewhere maybe crying too & Him probably with no wine at all

—By Don Roger Martin

ALMOST: 1957-1984

when your momma was your age she was almost light enough to pass for white ...

& when you wear your hair just right, girl accent your features you can almost pass for black ...

during the exchange of lifetimes i wonder if you ever once met & talked it over...

Cont'd on next page
TAKE ME TO THE LAKE, RICHARD

take me to the lake, Richard
take me fishing

where I can be alone
where I can rest
I want to check the cottage
make sure
everything is alright
and put away the outboard
but first
just to fish
to hear nothing

Richard
get me away from all this white
pull this damn thing
out of my arm
let's tell them to go to hell

Richard
please
take me to the lake

—By Linda Gintowt

OCEAN SONG

If you can gather up your feelings like clamshells
we found amid the seaweed
(remember we opened them together-forcing the hard shell
the sun beat down and we were shimmering shiny with
sweat each other's mirage)
if you can gather up your feelings like clamshells
give them to me
I'll understand the hard shells can crack.

If you can polish up your thoughts like pebbles
we found in the water
(remember we saved so many surprised at their unblemished
smoothness-collected them while our footprints followed us around)
if you can polish up your thoughts like smooth pebbles
give them to me
I'll hold them surprised at their clarity.

If you can form the words cautiously like sandcastles
we built on the beach
(remember we played as children until there arose from
nothingness the beauty of sand and water-two elements coming together in caring hands)
if you can form the words cautiously like sandcastles
tell them to me
I will understand their fragility.

for when we returned
the sandcastles had separated into sand and water.

—By Wendy Haad
as rocks give way

to pebbles

so must pebbles give way

to sand

and the sand moves aside

for the waves to pass

and the water parts for fish and boats

and the boats and fish obey the hand of man

and the man faces his own God one day

and only demands more power

and his patient God simply says

Here is the knowledge

And there is the rock

You must build upon

—By Real Faucher
Grey. Dull industrial grey. Pressed plywood tables covered in flaking varnish. Grey walls and a grey tiled floor with flecks of yellow, red, blue and green. Faintly reminiscent of vomit. The fading yellow notices curling upon the bulletin board were the only signs that someone had once been there. The nurse’s station was empty and the telephone kept ringing. As Sara stood in the middle of the empty corridor, she wondered at the lack of bustling efficiency and sterile whiteness she had expected to find in the psychiatric ward of a reputable hospital. The beginnings of fear began to uncurl and spread within her, the quietness and the emptiness were disturbing.

Suddenly, a hand clamped down on her shoulder and Sara screamed! The sound echoing down the empty corridor.

May I help you?” A deep sonorous voice asked.

Taking a deep breath, Sara looked over her shoulder to see a giant of a black man firmly attached there. Not capable of speech at that moment, Sara could only stare at the black giant.

“Are you looking for someone?”

Sara nodded.

“Who are you looking for?” The Giant asked indulgently, speaking to her as if she were a patient.

Sara cleared her throat. “I’m looking for Kevin Barnes”. She wiped her sweating palms on her skirt. “Would you happen to know where he is?”

“Certainly, ma’am. Everyone on this floor is visiting the zoo. Why are you not with them?” His voice was indulgent again. The telephone was still ringing, like an alarm. Sara licked her lips, swallowed again, very much afraid of this Giant.

“Oh, don’t misunderstand! I’m not a patient; I’m Kevin Barnes’ girlfriend and I’m just here to visit him. But, since he’s not here, perhaps I can leave this package of cookies in his room and I’ll come back another time.” She tried to remove her shoulder from his hand, but he was determined to keep her there and she was desperate to leave. “Would you mind giving me back my shoulder please?”

The Giant kept looking at her, she stood docilely as a doe who is mesmerized by oncoming headlights. He moved his hand, slowly sliding it down her arm. Sara stood there like a mouse in the claws of a hawk. He slid his hand across her stomach, up over her rib cage to rest beneath her breasts; one of his hands could span the entire width of her chest. His hand captured one of her breasts, measuring its fullness. Sara’s breath quickened again, but not from fear. Unable to will it otherwise, Sara could feel herself responding in her excitement she arched her back, pressing her breast against his hand. He smiled. The ringing was louder, more insistent, but Sara ignored it.

The Giant’s hand moved upward to encircle her throat; his hand began to tighten around her neck, barring entrance to her life’s breath, yet Sara began to quiver. Le Petit Mort. As she died a smile touched her lips.

The Giant swung her into his arms and walked to the end of the corridor. His footsteps echoed like thunder in the empty ward, his eyes flashed, he was all powerful. The Giant walked to the last door, paused and looked at Sara’s serene face. It wasn’t such a bad way to die, the Giant decided as he unlocked the door.

Beyond the door were thirty-three snarling, salivating animals. Their eyes gleamed in the darkness as the mighty Giant stood in the doorway, carrying food. They all arched their necks and began to howl. Even the Giant could not stop the shudder that ran through him as their howls reached a piercing crescendo. He threw the food to the animals. They pounced on the body, their fingers and teeth clawed at the flesh: shredding it, eating it, drinking the salty blood. Kevin Barnes’ eyes gleamed as he ripped the flesh off an arm.

The only sounds to be heard were of snarling animals, the crunching of broken bones, the ripping of flesh, the splattering of blood and the ringing of a telephone.
HEART BREAK

We’re not supposed to
call in the emergency unit

   Your break time?

There was nothing that I could do.

   Then I’ll get the coffee.

Her chart wasn’t at the end
of her bed

   Shall I put it here?

She was so old

   This is fresh.

Everyone went pale

   Cream or sugar?

They couldn’t accept it.

   How many?

All of them were hysterical;
the noise spilled everywhere.

   Careful!

A woman leaped on top of her
and started thumping, pounding
and screaming  My God, OH MY GOD!

   Was it that bad?

It was too late.

   Finished?

It was over.

   Already? Is there time for another?

Finally the doctor arrived;
he said it was for the best.

The woman cried, choked, cradled
the body and called him heartless...
Heartless....

   Hmm, let’s ask the head nurse;
she should know.

—By Steve Balkou

RECOGNITION

In my lapel
I’ll wear a flower
from the bush of black roses
in our history.

The Times,
folded to the obituaries, carried
under my left arm.

Ask me if I have a match.
“Not since Superman died.”

You, in your Isadora Duncan
scarf and ‘Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein’
t-shirt.

Keep looking in the lobby
of funeral homes.

The time? Don’t worry,
take what you need,
I’ll catch up.

—By John Stickney
I hold my years like pennies in my hands
How many I don't know
They slip continually through my fingers
I cannot hold them all
And though the principal of my account decreases
Yet my fingers grow weak
And when the pennies are but few
I fear from weariness I may give up
And toss the last ones on the ground

—By George Engelbreton

HIGH QUEQUE

er-i-choke
trying to fold back
times layers
to reveal
truth's silent
heart

—By Ray Tyler
THE SEDUCTION

What is this whisper of wind that makes me shiver so?
It is cold and has the air of death about it,
Submit, and I would surely compromise my fate,
Shall I be passive then
And let the icy fingers slowly mark a frigid trail
from the nape of my neck down and around,
down to the softness of an inner thigh
There to leisurely circle round and round in icy unforgiveness?
What languid anticipation flows through my body.
The shivers subside and I am warmed in sultry malevolence.
How could I have called those wondrous fingers icy:
they are so feverish in their omnipotence,
And I so utterly lost in the flame.

— By Sue Jeffery

CRUCIFIXION

His long, pointed eyes pierced her breasts;
his pounding hammer nailed her to the soft cross repeatedly,
and she moaned during the raising;
but without pity he hammered away,
forcing his vinegary white wine through her dry lips,
making her suffer for being a woman.
Even the bed shuddered in pain, yet she endured
as women do, submitting in silence.
At the end she lay spreadeagled, crucified, empty.

— By Real Faucher

first sexual love:
in back seat:
smell of dying sperm

— By Real Faucher
CREATING THE WEALTH

North Sutton
makes a picture-postcard now.
the marble shafts of patriarchs
sharp against green hills,
tree-covered again,
concealing the scars
of 150 years past

Gone King Copper. Gone the shanties.
The trains no longer stop
down the hill at Sutton Junction.
Century-old farms suggest eternal peace,
just the family names remaining,
on every road and mailbox.

At the bases of those shafts,
and around the sides, other names.
Girls' names. No maiden names. No birth-dates
Just 'Nell, 17', 'Bridie, 19'; 'Mary, 14',
& of course the death-dates.
Daughters?
Wives. Irish An afterthought,
Her Infant', sometimes gives a clue.

Lucius Huntingdon is still revered here:
—He took 'em off the coffin-ships,
gave 'em work. A chance to eat.
Him & Asa Foster built the railroad, by God!
in 1873. Yessir, INCO
started right here! & in Ascot, Belvidere,
the Bolton Pass, Mansville, all hamlets
like this, almost off the map.

A philanthropist, he became.
And indeed, some of those children
revered him too. One married 'up':
sent passage to her sisters.
Her brawny foreman, dead himself at 29,
made each in turn,
his genial grin recorded in tin-types,
calling each by the name he loved first.

He lived to see his eldest son
a miner in his footsteps.

"My mother mined," the son raged later,
lay preacher on behalf of labor laws,
"and I've mined and my boys mine,
but I'll never send a daughter into those pits!"

Goons busted his head. Yet he kept his word.
Some city feminist joined the ladies' historical society,
maybe ten years back,
called him a chauvinist pig.
Called Huntingdon an exploitive capitalist.
She got her frost early

—Yup, come the second generation,
the women picked stones. Pitched hay.
And believe me, son, they were proud.
Of themselves. Of their men. Of their progress,
and of their parents' place in history.

There are the unmarked graves
the plowing turns up now and again,
though not so often lately, with the soil so poor,
the farmers selling out to city damn-fools,
seeking the old-time country atmosphere.
Injuns. Boys,
who never became foremen,
to woo colleens—swiftly, for life was short
& the land was young.

—Hell, Huntingdon himself
wasn't much older than them govern'ment planners,
fresh out of college, shit for brains.
Think they're givin' that Third World a break.

—They done a lot wrong, son,
because they didn't know better

They were children, son. Every last one of them.

—By Merritt Clifton
TO BE LEFT UNCLAIMED

Silence like death
To see yourself
In the state of death
Not to hear the children play
But see the scene of it as in death
Moment of confusion
Not hot nor cold
Not there but there
As in the state of death
To see yourself
But no mirror is to know yourself
As in the state of death
How can it be
The body warm once again
The sound of the children
Playing once more
Without the scene
As if the state of death left you room
To claim another for its keeps

—By Bryant Neal
Twinkle, twinkle little star
Now we know just what YOU are.
Nuclear furnace in the sky
You'll burn to ashes, dim, and die.

Tick and tick, pulsating star
Now we wonder what you are;
Magneto-nuclear gravity ball
Holding secrets from us all.

Distant, nebulous, quasi star
We have no notion what you are
We watch you glimmer free from care
Without a clue to why you're there.

We theorize and contemplate
About the nature of your state;
Pond'ring how?, from our earthly shell,
You play this guessing game so well.

Infinite unbounded universal state
We even fear you at this date,
Winding down to your lowest state
You'll kill us all at this rate.

—By Dixon Kenner

I walk about
one shoulder
leaning on walls

the other dismantled
bleeds puddles
by the sink

I bend
to pick up
my fallen hand

I can still see
where it touched you
a small time before

I hold it to my cheek
and try to rub
a little of its soul back into us

I try again and again
again until my face is yours
and my hand a part of us again again

Your mind and mine
are like
two lovers
who lack
imagination
they touch but can't get it up
just like reading
poetry is a small assed discipline
making love becomes disciplined
whether it's small assed
depends upon your white
crickAtlantic glazed with
tales and truth and love perhaps

—By Maria van Sundert
AT THE LION

Who are these people
wearing faded manhood
fallen beauty?
How did they come to be here under dimly lit rooms
not caring to notice the man by the door
in his weathered raincoat.

They make their own fun
of the grind and despair that is their life.

Who knows what they could have been
had they not stopped in this little town
to trade living for existing
arrested
in this stage.
Thinkers of the future
doctors, lawyers
men in business suits
instead
are hollow-eyed poets that see flashing visions that shaking
hands and aching minds cannot record,
and they are old men now singing the blues and playing a young
man’s song and dance
so desperately they sing always busy dying
and they are the wayside people bored in this little town
turning to synthetic highs to conquer the lows.

They talk amongst themselves
in dialect
of vacations away from it all
and going back to school
and getting things done.

But time stands so still
they cannot go forward
cannot remember back
to the reasons they came
of the beauty that failed
the dreams that crashed
to make them stop and grow old and pale and weary
in these dimly lit rooms.

— By Wendy Haad

CAL’S ALL-STAR JOINT

The band plays a shufflepulse
ragged, but who cares;
and the tribal rites commence.
You don’t want to join
and you do, so you go
and like it as you go,
and like it as you move,
and sweat and reflect and forget,
and like it in spite of yourself.

A nod brings a tall one
warm, but who cares,
and you feel your reserve melt away.
You don’t want to stay
and you do, so you stay
for awhile, and like it
for awhile, as you stay
and drink and reflect and remember
and remain in spite of yourself.

It’s hot and it’s loud
and it’s late, but who cares,
and the talk is of no consequence
You don’t want to talk
and you do, so you smile
and you nod as you answer
a question unheard
and laugh and forget to reflect
on your troubles in spite of yourself.

— By Michael Medland
MORNING

The barn was cavernous and cool. The sheep would be warming it soon, but for now they ate the last of the summer grass. “Going to need more hay this year” the farmer thought as he watched a young lamb feeding. “Almanac says it’s going to be a long winter”. The lamb came towards him as he entered its stall. He felt curiously hesitant as he balanced his sledgehammer. In his thirty years as a sheepfarmer he’d never thought twice about killing. “It’s Laurie that’s got me feeling this way” he thought. “Begging me not to kill it. But hell, I’ve got to feed the guests”. He raised his hammer and took aim. One last moment of hesitation, then release, the hammer acted of its own volition, the lamb crumpled to the straw. The farmer moved mechanically as habit took over. The knife was drawn across the jugular, quickly, efficiently. The farmer tried to avoid the blood pouring from the lamb’s neck but his forearms were soon black. The straw floor soaked up the blood. He dragged the body across the floor to hang from a hook. The blood was first a smear, a dark slickness across the floor, then a pool beneath the hanging carcass.

AFTERNOON

The kitchen in the farmhouse was a large, high-ceilinged room, with an enormous wood stove standing in a corner and a rack of guns whose stocks were smoothly aged by years of loving hands spoke of the pioneer years this house had lived through.

Today it was a madhouse. Food in various stages of preparation littered all available surfaces. Women in various stages of undress flitted from task to task. Laurie stood on a chair in the middle of the clamour. Her mother and her cousin fuss ed around the hem of her wedding gown, pinning, snipping, tucking. Jean’s mother, Cecile coordinated the confusion of the kitchen in two languages, “Marise, si ta fini avec tes cheveux viens faire les patates; Nancy put more mustard in those eggs”. In the midst of the mild hysteria of the kitchen Cecile, with her securely girdled hips, her steel grey curls, her best maroon dress and her sensible shoes, was solidity itself. She took charge of the preparations while Laurie’s mother became more and more withdrawn and fluttery. “Oh this hem will never look right” Francis exclaimed in despair. “It’s fine Mom, really” Laurie said as she gratefully escaped from her perch. Cecile noticed her daughter-in-law in the hall way “Leonna come here and chop up these vegetables”. Leonna continued applying her mascara. “I’m busy now, if you don’t mind” she replied in tones of mock politeness. “Well you really don’t need all that make-up”. Leonna ignored her mother-in-law and began to tease her blond hair. But somehow, none of her ministrations seemed to work. Everytime she looked at Laurie’s long red hair or her large brown eyes, Leonna felt old and used.

Laurie stood by the window watching her father and Jean set up chairs and tables for the reception. She rapped on the window but neither one heard her, she watched a long white paper streamer be pushed and pulled across the lawn by a breeze as playful as a kitten. Laurie’s father entered the kitchen with a dour announcement: the lamb would not be ready by dinner time. It would need at least an extra hour “I told you, you should have put it on earlier” Cecile complained. “You wanted to start it last night”, Francis snapped back. “It would have been as tough as a shoe”. The kitchen was soon filled with chopping and slicing as all the women (except Laurie of course, she was Queen for the day) were mobilized into producing extra snacks for the wedding guests.

EVENING AND NIGHT

The last cars were curving up the hill with their horns blaring. Friends and relatives were spilling from their cars, smoothing skirts and jackets. The women tottered down the long driveway towards the farmhouse. Bright streamers fluttered from all the railings and bannisters. The women’s dresses, in left over summer colors, were unexpectedly revealing as the wind exposed dainty slips and pressed against breast and torso.

The wedding party coalesced, then spread out to form a reception line. Meet the mother, meet the father, kiss the
bride. “Laurie you look lovely, lovely”, “Thank-you”, she would say, “Thank-you”. The reception flowed smoothly from one time worn ritual to the next. Sign the guest book, present the gift, stand by for the recognition. “Oh yes, it’s just what I’ve always wanted, needed, hoped for.” After the gifts, it’s time to toss her bouquet. Laurie flings it over her shoulder as hard as she can. It lands at Cecile’s feet. Leonna laughs hysterically.

Five o’clock. The guests surreptitiously check their watches and casually gather around the hors d’oeuvres. Six o’clock. The trays and plates are picked dry save for a few sprigs of parsley. The guests assume the peevish look of the underfed. The low grumblings change to excited whispers as the lamb is “finally” ceremoniously transported to the porch for carving. Cecile and Francis bring the big platters of food from the kitchen. Laurie’s father starts to carve the lamb but he can’t fill even serve a single serving plate. The guests keep begging for morsels. “Try this” he would say, “Tell me that’s not better than pork”. The guests in their best suits and dresses, stood around the meat, licking their greasy fingers. When everything is ready, the guests squeeze in behind Laurie and Jean. There is some jockeying for position, but all in all, the struggling is quite civilized. Plates are piled to dizzying heights as the sun drops below the tree line and the wind begins to gather bite.

When the food is gone, the drinking starts. Young children are packed away to various bedrooms. The older ones are allowed to run free as their parents pursue their own preoccupations. Last ritual of the evening. Laurie and Jean have the first dance. Finally, their official duties are over. Let the party begin—The band plays a French country tune. The guests dance enthusiastically, clapping their hands and yelling. The sky turns black behind its cloud cover. Every gust of wind makes the dancers twirl more frenetically.

Close to the make shift stage a group of burly young men huddle around a bottle of rye. They laugh very loudly and eye all the females. Laurie turns to ask Jean who they are, but he is gone. An uncle looms drunkenly, “C’mon Laurie, let’s dance. Got to keep warm you know” he says as he staggered into her. “I have to find Jean” she says as she disentangles herself. But she can’t see him anywhere, “and it’s getting damn cold”, so she decides to change into warmer clothes.

In the kitchen, friends and relatives have gathered. Someone’s aunt grew bold and flirtatious and for awhile she was twenty again and all the men looked intriguing. Her husband laughed at her and called her an old woman. This, of course, made her bolder.

In her room, Laurie slipped into a pair of jeans and a sweater. She laid her dress carefully on her bed. She was annoyed to find a large greasy stain near the hem. She didn’t notice Cecile and Leonna until they raised their voices.

“...never gave us a cent. Not even when the baby...

...I warned Mario... too young

...admit it. It was me... I’m not pure and sweet like little Laurie.

There was a pause. Unconsciously, Laurie strained to hear the next words

- you’re right. I think you’re a puritan!

Laurie heard her mother-in-law’s heavy footsteps disappear towards the kitchen, then the bathroom door opening. Very quietly she opened her door. Satisfied that the coast was clear, she escaped toward the kitchen. From the bathroom, Leonna screamed, “I hate you, I hate you, I hate you”.

Laurie was glad she had put on an extra sweater as she stepped outside. She wandered between knots of people, gathering the fringes of conversation. “Andy was real mad...dragged her out to the car...was she drunk?..she jumped out, started walking down the highway...” These conversations usually stopped as Laurie approached as if she couldn’t be bothered with the sordid. But she couldn’t help but notice the middle aged man in the cowboy hat dancing “too close, too close” to the teenage girl, a fat red-headed woman with eyes as violent as the print on her dress. Even her parents were bickering. Laurie felt a bit frantic. “Where’s Jean?” she wondered, as she scanned the crowd. The band ended their song. The muscular young men began to yell.
“Play some rock n’ roll froggie”. Laurie was relieved to spot Jean, but alarmed when she saw him confront the hecklers. He had his aggressive look on his face. Laurie saw that he wanted to fight. She made her way through the crowd toward him. A sense of urgency possessed her. But the hecklers just melted away into the crowd, probably feeling it unwise to brawl with a groom at his own wedding reception.

A gust of wind was caught and amplified by a microphone that had not been shut off. The sound filled the night like thunder. Most of the guests glanced to the sky in surprise. Laurie was struck by the way the clouds were brightly sharpened as they raced across the moon. Their swift passage reminded her of a black panther, with its silver spots, running down its prey. The forgetful musician turned off his amp, and the sound died. Laurie could hear Jean regaling his friends with his handling of the hecklers. She rushed to his side and huddled there, but she could find no comfort. “Jean, I want to leave”, she whispered to him. “Not now honey, I’re having a good time”. She took his car keys and headed towards the parking lot. They argued all the way to the car.

- Be rational Laurie, people always fight at weddings, you can’t let it get to you.
- Look, let’s just say I’m not having a very good time. Why can’t we just leave?
- Because I want to stay.

Neither one noticed the red pick-up truck that came towards them from behind the barn. The truck picked up speed as it came abreast of them. A beer bottle came hurtling from the back of the truck. Laurie screamed. The bottle exploded against a car behind them. “What the hell” Jean yelled as he ran up the road after the truck. Laurie looked at her hand, a sliver of glass was embedded in the palm. A thick rope of blood crept down past her wrist and became a spreading stain on the cuff of her light wool sweater. “Jean”, she screamed. He hesitated and then turned back to her.

- Are you alright?
- No. Take me to the hospital.
- Shouldn’t we warn somebody.

No, she cried, right now, please.

He helped her to the car and pressed a cloth against her wound. They drove down the lane rapidly. Light and music floated down from the farmhouse. Jean stopped the car suddenly and rolled down his window. “Did you hear that” he asked Laurie, “It sounded like gun shots”. Laurie leaned back against her seat and closed her eyes tightly. “Don’t worry”, she said, “It’s just the wind”.

Cont’d on next page

LOGIC

Think, don’t think,
Thoughts cause pain
so fill your head
with nonsense
For nonsense
is nothing
and nothing causes
no pain
so think and don’t think.

— By Mary E. Welsh
UNTITLED

Bach
fuses
with those household sounds
of constancy
and you
dissecting your would-be computer
swearing under your breath
counterpoint
as Bach builds
builds
Ich liebe dich
crescendo

—By Linda Gintowt

UNSEEN

Come to me
as the stars come to a dark sky
not as the moon comes to the sun
Eclipsed.

Fill my emptiness
do not consume me.

—By Wendy Haad
les petits pas

c'est facile d'aimer:
on se croit au cinéma
ou tout est en couleur
quand l'amour fait
sa grande entrée;
mais tout se change
devient noir et blanc
lorsque le rideau tombe
et on se trouve
   face à face.
on demande pourquoi l'amour
ne dure jamais
et on crit toujours
pour une autre chance;
mais c'est avec les petits pas
qu'on apprend la dance

—By Ray Tyler

FEBRUARY FLURRY

Snow came
sifting down like powdered sugar
as if to ice February's dusky cake
spinning a cocoon of virgin skin
around the earth.

Crystals alighted
enchanting me
   as demurely as sylphs
sweetly
like souls of doves
whipped frothy by wind.

Trees arch now
frosted
   wooden beaters I lick with a stare
suggestive
in blankets of white
beckoning me with swaying limbs
provocative
tapered torsos
swallowed up in suds
   I brush away with my mind.

Earth lays
   a table of chastity and delight
before my hungering winter eyes
luminous, uplifting
exposing her soft white underbelly
   for me to stroke
or thrust teeth in

—By Ursula Leduc
MARCH BREAK

Vacation
a simple collection
of nights
with the reading lamp
a shade between each
memory

as shadows
flailing scythe arms
carve pain
in measure
of seconds,
the clock unwinds.

Fire collapses
into smouldering ash,
smothered regrets
drowning
in darkness

a bottle shatters
a stained cracked face
bleeds scars into dreams.

Shards of early light glisten
yellow
a razor waits
in the stand.

—By Steve Balkou

SALAMI SALAAM

One lost afternoon while wandering through town in search of absence of mind, I noticed a sign in the window of the Storefront Philosopher’s and Delicatessen:
“Smoked meat and enlightenment; No angles too acute.”

I was hungry, so I went in and ordered a ham on rye.
The waiter and metaphysician remonstrated, “Man, that’s no food for thought. Try our special dialectic lox on an onion roll.”

I’ve an open mind, so I said all right and hold the pickle and how much is it going to cost?
“Cheap, you’d be surprised, we’ve got a government grant. Just two bucks, and fifty cents extra for an after dinner aphorism, your choice a hundred different flavours.”

I never could make up my mind, so I had a coffee and split, leaving a wooden nickel for a tip.

—By Michael Medland

* * * *

Another party has just ended,
Stella is busy watching the sun come up.

Thelma fires up another pot
of coffee, she’s just watchin’
it perk away.

And there’s Fred in the middle of a staring contest with his eyelids, starting to snore.

What about me you say?
Hell I’m here for the duration!

—By Mary E. Welsh

—By Steve Balkou
Almost spring
and there is a sadness
sifting through branches;

an archipelago
may vanish
into long paths

pool

weeping
narc roots

like a memory
grown wild

—By Steve Balkou

CUL'D'SAC

almost spring

anomalous allusions*
calculated casual calamity
periodic idiotic confusion
of original syntax upon the wages of meanings mundane mediocrity
divine inspirations
delirious despirations
imagination infidel ordinations
or illusions concluding confusion:

NOTHING WORSE THAN POETIC CURSE!

visions of vanishing verse
viewed with creeping resignation
from heaven's hell-bound hearse.

(* or what I despise about the “poetry game” of publishing...)

—By Ray Tyler
Silly imagination on a warm September afternoon

ever been kidnapped by a poet?
if I
were a poet...
i'd kidnap you!!!

you would be
a clowning jester
in the simple lines
of a silly limerick

a gallant knight
in shining armour
galloping through a
stirring ballad
upon a
magnificent white steed.

i'd simile and metaphor you
in countless comparisons...
maybe to make you smile
or perhaps
bring a silent tear
to your eye.

Cont'd on next page

in a moving sonnet
i'd lavish upon you with my pen
emotions and feelings to
break down your façade
of assured self-confidence;
strip it down to the revealing core
fourteen times over...

oh! how many wonderful things a poet
can do...
i'd colour your world in every
breathtaking hue of the rainbow—
dazzling, exciting, beautiful—...
Love you. Love you. Love you!

in metres and schemes
you'd be penned—
trochaic, iambic, spondaic...

you'd be present in my
most intimate
thoughts, hopes, and dreams...

oh, yes!
if I
were a poet...
i'd kidnap you!!!

— By Lynne Roberts
List of Contributors

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