a spring/summer number cauldror
Highways are cold dead concrete things
And if part human,
they are the patterned cracks traversing dead skin
beneath which there is soft life.
so seeming useless yet
Highways bring distance together
For the forehead implacable, breached
by a mane I cannot comb
there is no sense without knowledge of the part.

I do not know why
I find no roads to your realm
My maps are a senseless unmarked palm.

--MarthaMaryAlvinaDuersten
the women in A & P's
line up along the shelves
dry and dusty, discussing the disease
of age, comparing themselves
to bad meat, stale bread, such
as can be bought here for an eye
or an ear, and sometimes much
much more, I mistrust their sly
bargain-sharp eyes, their faces flat
as cereal boxes; they glow
as cans of stew; dully, with that
metal edge. faded labels, old
gray contents, waiting to be consumed.

--Sally Urang

April first

The desk lamp
winces because Janis Joplin
tastes a little like
the blue concrete blocks
that have strained out
her d's and t's.

The poem
is sitting out in the rain.
I can see him from my window,
and he looks at me
and blows his nose.
Sensitive little bastard -
hates cemented music.

--Debby Wierenga
Kick the Can

In the blue darkness
We ate green apples,
Watching IT prowl in search
Of our suspended breath.
Summer sweat
And close dirt smell
Kept us secret behind the
Honeysuckle.

A touch, a warm tingle
Began the summer of
Green apples
And blue gropings.
We found earthworms
And leaves
And a secret thrumming
In the hiding places
Of night.

But then in the starlight
I'd see a tooth glint,
His earlobe shine.
Honeysuckle heat, prickly.
I'd jerk quickly away
Into the yellow porchlight
To kick the can.

--C. Bostwick
Young Woman
(Manet)

White shoulders sweeten
your indelicacy,
your breasts lob beneath the frame
I can't see them.

someone has just kissed your forehead
and drawn away.

--Lisa Archer

Bathers with a Turtle
(Matisse)

her baby pasted on her stomach,
she watches;
renewing the slant.
today he crouches.

the other looks down,
twining her toes
to warm them.

--Lisa Archer
Old Poet

The old poet comes
limping, carrying ideas on a bad leg,
he sits, legs stretched out
hands searching for something
through large green pockets
his face juts out from the chair
like moving modeling clay
at spoken words

His jaw gnaws on passing phrases, rechewing,
redigesting from numerous stomachs
then a sudden echoing laugh
with bobbing head
fluctuating to the ends of his legs,
the room vibrates as one

--Joe Ferrara

Silence

There's nothing to say
but if I didn't tell you
you wouldn't know
what I wasn't communicating.

--David Ungemach
Sunday Morning

Short and hard his hands on Sunday mornings
buried mine, or clenched tight against prying,
burst suddenly blossomed lily-thorned.
Touch this my body broken for you this my
blood in remembrance of me. For God so loved
the world. Our Father who art in heaven
hardened be my father's hands ungloved
rough from hammer and saw and nails for YOUR

Carpenter's hands, soft within, water and
blood rust iron nails. Oh my fatherson,
a child Sunday morning powerless I stand.
Nor God nor I keep nails from hard lily hands.

--Debby Wierenga
The Brown Spider

There's a brown spider in a corner of my room
he hangs on strung sentences, silently guarding
If he falls, there's always a thread
holding him from extinction
he returns floating back

Still silent
he walks across empty space
weaving a transparent fence
mending unseen holes
and there he rests his thin body and sleeps

Spiders never die from falling
Only they surround themselves within webs
quiet, invisible
Spiders only die from the cold.

--Joe Ferrara

Dawn

First light after many moons
horizons glow breaking in the day
the human rains have stopped
the fog has lifted from a mind

A glow of freshness
a flower has begun to blossom
First light has revived a -ycle
thought dead in the months of darkness

The flower grows in its blossom
expanding its petals at a given chance
reaching toward the sky, thankfully
to the First light, the break of day

--Edward Ungemach
Two eyes
gleaming
with reflected light
stare up
from the pavement.

The wheels,
forced
to stop
against inertia
glide to the curb.

Too late
to save
the creature.
Tonight is his time
to die.

Pitiful critter
tried to grin down
a speeding Chevy.
You were bound
to lose.

There
you crouch
and wheeze
as blood surges
into your lungs.

You cringe
when I approach,
but your gaze
never wavers
from mine.

Back in my
mobil destruction unit,
I thrust toward you
but then shy to the left.
Forgive me.
The Bears' Dance in Spring

Mid-March they emerge
Ruddy-haired and greasy with love
They begin the movement slow
As winter water
To a strange rhythm--
The crack of thawing earth
(The moon glows in wonder of them)
(The trees' outstretched arms go limp with joy).
The tempo increases to the
Hindleg wobble, the
Forepaw flap--
The forest shakes concentrically,
Their feet so heated the snow melts underneath!
Smaller bushes away with it--
It increases.
Yet the bears stay with it
(It goes until May)!

*   *   *

All participate--
All feel the earth shudder
All of us.

--Sally Urang
"Some Harvard biologists have, through long and meticulous meditation, and expense, and work, sufficiently reproduced a simulated stream by which they have been able to allow and photograph a species of trout to spawn."

Rainbow.
Impressive.
It is not an easy thing to do.
Trout aren't easily fooled.
The pebbles must be the right size.
Pebbles.
She fans them.
She strikes them.
Space is cleared for her bed.

Oh, but she floats above it.
He, the devil, shudders at her side.
I watched it on television.
It was a special.

Di-suspended bands of spectrum
The glass in the tank is clear,
the lens, clear
I watched it on television.
It was a special.

I'd never seen it before.
Mountain men,
the rugged crags, bearded,
see only backs, black blobs,
hair on top of heads

He, the old salt, shakes at her side
She can't close her eyes
lidless
nothing but protective film
Hook scarred mouths open. 
Extended time
the mouths stay open, shudder
opened by a peg
mounted on the bar-room wall
bulging eyes stare forever
at the plastic fly

I look at my brother, smile. 
He returns one, knowing why,
yet not. 
Three channels of static and then
a Western.

--Randy Knolle
Tulips push their scarlet faces
from the womb
up into a universe of gum wrappers,
moldy leaves, unretrieved baseballs, soggy
comicbooks, broken condoms, ill-thrown
newspapers.
Fledglings fall
to the concrete Pleistocene
where their carcasses are torn
by cats or transformed
into tenements for the worms,
easing under their downy softness.
Dogs copulate wildly in the streets.
Humans follow their example,
though more discreetly,
leaping upon each other
in mildewed alleys and barren
parking lots,
copulating ecstatically to the tune
of "Tie a Yellow Ribbon
'Round the Old Oak Tree",
their twisted limbs
entwining AM radios.
Lazarus emerges from the tomb
worm-eaten and half decayed.

--Terry McGovern
Before I ran to the end  
I asked of another  
On your way to madness  
    do you stop and talk to anyone?

I touched your other woman tonight  
She has quiet hands  
and a silence you alone must speak in  
-ear pressed to the bare opening  
    of an ocean shell  
another mind's distance to gulf  
    on the rhythm of waves

She too is an artist  
and one who understands age  
and the patterning of wrinkles  
    whose separate language  
only years can understand

I envy so precious a collection as yours  
and like  
    a jelly fish washed to new shores  
where only chance paves the reception  
    with a rare red carpet

I reach my ear to every music you hear  
in the symphony of a shall  
Searching for the mother of pearl  
in your most inner eardrum
And for all the hands I touch
who touch yours
making myself a part of a silent web
whose design only you can know

there remains an ocean of waves
whose salt I cannot taste
except on your tongue

But I have heard a small music
whose strings you tune,
and my imagination
understands those waves you ride. . .

--MarthaMaryAlvinaDuersten
Night Cycle

Part IV.

The shadows sing tonight,  
as if teeth were  
pierced by needles of ice.  
Cobwebs hum electrically,  
the moon throbs, neon-like, to my throbbing eyes,  
scuttering across  
the shadeless sill.

Whose, though, are the eyes  
behind the walls,  
whose the second voice  
that enters, calls.

I see a light of otherness  
among the halls  
and passages of sleep,  
I taste a touch that creeps  
and crawls.  
Night-knowledge, close the gap,  
deny the voice,  
I would have blackness,  
I would have  
no choice.

I will stop though,  
I will fall, into my  
sight-soft strong and silent  
bed of dreams, and  
night will be all right  
it will be all right.

--Tom Braham
Night Cycle

Part V.

Blank back-dazzled, beaten, bound, jolted shadowed shuddering, darkness tagged and tattered, stark tail-battered snuffling hellhound, (on my trail -- shining eyes putrid breath, the wheeze of aged and unrepentant mindlessness).

Dark lover
take my heart again, close my eyes against the heat, say that it will end, say that shadows are the all that morning will not fall. Say this, if not, say nothing.

I have lost, I am leaning, in the night, against a hidden door, which I will not escape opening.

--Tom Braham
At the Asylum

We meet
through lacy windows.
I am touched.
You are offended.

To you, I'm another
curious Sunday tourist.
You're a circus novelty,
your home, my zoo.

You've seen my type before.
Many times
you've caught our eyes
and minds through metal netting.

Then you laugh
as we trouble ourselves
with the issue-
Who draws the line, and where?

--Ann Furniss
walking in night
I remember our brokenness.
Where are the king's horses?
Where are the king's men?
Cigarette smoke and ashes
Will not do for glue,
Even when mixed with tears.

Promises can break -
Sound of my wooden shoes on the wet brick (red).
We have both watched the leaves
Gush down the storm drain.

Perhaps we can follow the yellow brick road
To find our way home. . .
But roads lead only to Rome.

Then will the pain sear us together
Like solder?
Twisted, melted mutation.

Separation sinks on me
Amid wet shoes and swollen, soggy ashtray.

--C. Bostwick
Trying
to try your pretense
your medium, medium

Blacking my eyes, posing poison lips
Plucked of softness
Stripped of Clothing -
So as NOT to parade
Fluffed Frills
On YOUR doll-shelf.

Yet your puppet twedes
And clowned mustache
Drew my straws and strings

--Teresa Claire Tucker

I am a woman of closets
like all Women
who hide their menstruation
as if custom demanded
that they also deny their name

I sit behind closed doors, afraid
of all that which might
even remotely
imply new Creation

For I am only pregnant with secrets.

MarthaMaryAlvinaDuersten
Angel Blood

Angel blood
spills when some angel,
wounded in flight,
wobbles, spins, and
crashes earthward.
A red stain the size of
my fist blotches
the angel white,
white thighs seeping down
angel blood
when dry
turns blue and powdery
dust in a
dead lady's drawer.
I paint my face, my eyes, my hands
with angel blood.
I run a long red line
down to my curly belly hair.

Now I fly
hard to some stellar sky
Once aloft,
I too shall be wounded
and crash earthward.

Then, smear your darkest self with
angel blood
and begin the
ageless lament.

--Dennis McCarthy
Red

(for Alfred North Whitehead)

Let us report the fact only: against the blues, greys, greens, occurs this patch of red. It is not woven cotton, nudged to shadow by a collar bone and the shifting sand of a breast. There will be no buttoning or unbuttoning--and there has been none. This red never sat on the steps reflecting on the want-ads and is not now poised above a bicycle, about to ride, as the day cools, to Almena Corners and Blocker's Pond.

This red must be perceived as simply as the spot of sun below a burning glass. But wait. Smoke circles the instant. It cannot hold. Driven by its own light, the red burns through, flaming into another time.

--Conrad Hilberry
Being II. (A Nuance)

There is a hollow insect on a beach
Too small to be infested by maggots
Too small for the wind to lumber through
hollow top, bottom
no ends
black ectoderm
boulders of sand around

The being likes it there,
he supposes,
and supposes
The being built a table inside
from parts of transparent insect wing
moulded

Someone else is there too
He does not know who
(should there be a quarrel?)
The being would fight
by taking off his hat
His hat
waving in the ecto
setting on the table
(should he not?)
After all
the beach is a lonely place
Ha. You may say
If you wish
The being
quote - If you wish, the small nuance will show,
who, show, I cannot speak

Poor being
He has no chair
He must lean on the table with his antenna
Listen to the wind in his ears
He has sand in his shoes
He trains the white worms
to connect
head to foot
a radiating chain
to decorate his house.

--Randy Knolle
Four Images

I. Nostalgia

Whiteness,
a fading suntanned breast,
heaving,
trying to remember
when my soft touch
was exciting.

II. The Gift

Purity,
a dead-eyed trout
removed from green water and
left on the dock
in the drying sun
until it is tossed back
into water which is
no longer wet,
but black.

III. Our Beach Alone

A woman,
wearing a white skirt
with a grimy brown covering of dust,
walks slowly
separating the gray sand
with square footsteps
that are washed into the sea.

IV. Too Late the Night

A candle flickers slowly
in the heavy air of evening.
We lie beside each other staring
like two prairie dogs
before they dive into their holes.
Tonight, asleep we are together
Tomorrow, we shall awake alone.

--Randy Gepp
Ebbing Impressions

She runs along the beach
making impressions in the sand
hoping they will last

Her sand castles made of laughter
built with expectations of centuries
are ebbed out in a tides time

I've asked many times
if I could play upon her beach
building castles in the sand

But she runs further down the shore
escaping my impressions
the sands sifting through my fingers

Now time erodes us further away
scattering us to the breeze
washing us out to sea

--Ed Ungemach
Going Back

Going back to a garage that smells
Of fertilizer and motor oil

Or to an upstairs room where
You lay awake to the rain
And the moving cars--

Going back, you do not expect
Pleasure. You hope to find

That words broken open
Spill on a dry tongue
A taste they have been saving.

You hope to find
Water still cold as iron.

--Conrad Hilberry
Pages from Leather Bound

A book with two covers
about love and the deranged
a story of many lovers
a friend being estranged

Cover one is a lover's face
maternal, tender, and consoling
Cover two is a painted face
scarlet and candied for whoring

One face, the lover's cover
was gentle and listened with care
painted face, the second cover
was running about from affair to affair

Trapped between these conflicting covers
stuck like the words written upon this page
I wanted to be one of those many lovers
but instead I'm trapped in the covers' cage.

--Ed Ungemach

Patronage

"Superlative", he said
and the word was floating lightly
as an unabridged dictionary
falling off its stand.
How stirred his heart must be! thought I
that he sprinkles his approvals
so unconstrainedly.

--David Ungemach
The Candle for S.

In a dark room
with a candle's flicker
dancing a shadow
above our heads,
we lie
unsure of what to do.

Our hearts question harder
than our lungs can ask for air.
We have too many thoughts
left untouched.

The candle burns too bright
for our purposes,
you face the light
but do not look,
I can't even do that.

--Randy Gepp

Grandpa

Grandpa used to teach me physics
whenever I'd visit.
He'd answer my questions
then pause
and give me a rough-faced smile.

He never went senile,
just slow.
His legs stiffened
his back hunched
and when we'd play ping pong
his hands would shake so much
that he couldn't hit the ball.

One day,
while teaching math at a high school,
he began to sit,
but missed the chair
and crumbled into
a pile of broken bones.

--Randy Gepp
How was I to know that life's great problem
Lies between our bodies locked together
Limply now? That this exciting union
Would move us to banks split by a river?
It's too unfair to think that I could know
The thing which drew two lions primed for fight
Would be the thing to make division grow
And leave them mangled lonely in the night.
It was impossible to see that fuel
Which made the raging fire soar so high
Would change between torn sheets to some cruel
Beast who suffocating it, let it die.
A faith I've held since childhood has flown,
Leaving me to battle this pain alone.

--James Rosen
Eventually, for each and every one of us,
There is the awesome and bitter reality
That our lives, our loves, and our happiness
Will be severely tested——battered about,
Knocked to the floor and then spit upon.
Turn inward for reflection and strength,
But do not ever abandon or subordinate your loyalties.
Face each and every challenge as it is set before you.
However, be ever mindful to avoid proving the proven,
Speaking the spoken, or fighting that which has been fought.
The price of competition is high,
Compete for survival——not for reward.
Conserve strength of spirit and body.
The essence of life is a full and meaningful participation——
Live your life, love your loves, and pursue your happiness.
And if you must do these alone——then do them with
Neither praise nor criticism.

--Rich Conway
Spring Landscape, With Horse

I

I am Nowhere.

"Now, TROT OUT!
LEGLEGLEGLEGLEGLEGLEGLEG!"

II

My beast quivers.
The strength of beasts
flows through her
into me.
A surge of pure
animal lust--
My beast's belly
tightens.

"TURN AWAYTURNAWAYTURNAWAY
POSTPOSTPOSTPOSTPOSTPOSTPOST
Hold her back--
--NOW GO!"

"TightenUPtightenUP!"

III

this shuddering
is not mine--not all.

"Now DRIVEHERDRIVEHER!"

IV

Something wants to run away.
The clear sun of noon
aches my legs
gripping like huge meats.
She smells my fear
which is not fear, but
my outrageous strength.

"UPdownUPdownUPdownUP
Now loosen up and WALK!"

V

That bigger beast
frightens us. We rear--
we are nowhere.

"WALK! WALK WALK WALK
...turn away, then..."

--Sally Urang
Peach

You sit before me,
The warm, red
Glint of summer
Touching your
Soft skin, a light
Blush.
    You, who are
Perfectly formed,
Golden skin, soft to
Touch; flawless
Curves; sun red;
Ripe. Like a
Cloud ready to
Burst with rain.
Sunlight silhouettes
The soft hair that
Covers the two
halves of your
Being.
    No longer can
I hold myself
Back. I plunge
My way into
Your virgin fruit,
And you, like
Others before you
Are softly yielding.
Juices of summer
Ooze out over your
Surface. I drink them
All and then eat
You; gently at
First, then voraciously,
Leaving only your
Seed so that you
Might beget another.

--J. Mandrell
Missy

My sister, a bookworm
By nature, has developed
A penchant for
Rollerskating to school.
We think she read of it
In a book and have
Searched frantically
For the tome to no
Avail.

It's not her
Reading the book that
Distresses us so, but
Watching her coast
Down the steps
On her backside, hit
The slope of our driveway
On her elbows and slowly
Cruise out to the street on
Her nose makes us feel
We are somehow not filling
Our familial duties.
But, then again, asking
Her to stop would be like
Requesting a tree to
Stop growing- due to the
Fact that there are
Wires overhead and the
Telephone crews will
Chop him up. Of course,
His scabs will heal with
Barely a trace - and so
Will hers. But I hate to
Think of her nose.

It
Will be a disgrace to
The family.

--J. Mandrell
soft notes

Oh Celeste,
You are not merely
more than a
page turner.
You are the notes on the page.
Where you go,
so do my hands
and the music follows
such as God plays
from the book of truth
though mine is as seldom
as His is only
of Love
and that's why I tire
of music.

cello player, is it fun
to sit up there in your cumberbun?
couldn't you manuever
in a pair of tall boots
or loose fitting cloak
with narrow sleeves?

--David Ungemach
Behind the nunnery
about a half a mile back
the stream was once wider.
Now it leaves a pleasant grove
of young trees.

The nuns have chosen it
as a place of meditation.
They have placed small benches
between the trees.
They have placed a statue
of the Virgin
in the middle.

In the evenings
they come
and wander from
tree to tree,
bench to bench,
speaking in low voices
as they watch the sun set.

In the afternoon
the boys come,
after school,
to wade in the stream.

They throw knives
in the banks,
hide behind the trees
laughing,
making small chips
in the statue with
the BB guns they got last winter
for Christmas.

--Randy Knolle
Side Show

Punch and Judy shows
Have always been-
   Dammit the string
   Is tangled-
My favorite thing
At the fair-
   Princess will have to
   Go on without her
   Prince Charming-
I enjoy off
Color humor-
   Shit Get the show on
   The road man We ain't
   Got all-
Told in a bawdy
House way that
No-
   We can't use the wolf
   For Prince Charming-
One understands-
   Who ever heard of
   Him being an amputee-
Except me-
   We'll just pretend that-
They're-
   The mother is-
Dead.

   --J. Mandrell
the party

chimera conscious in haze-air ed room
   (For Steven I breathe the ocean)
gasping grey walls, gathering mad
   (Ah Steven, drink only rain)

into my mouth and swallow hard
   (For Steven I breathe the ocean)
to melt my eyes down burning throat
   (Ah Steven, drink only rain).

And where are you, for Steven
   (For Steven I breathe the ocean)
the smoke strange faces circled sit
   (Ah Steve, drink only rain)

and I am alone am grey-walled mind
   (For Steven I breathe the ocean)
see only smoke only breathe only dust
   (Ah Steven, drink only rain).

--Debby Wierenga
He-who-deserves-wealth

His company is good fortune,
    his hello so simple,
so free of unmentioned desires,
    that few who have dealt
with less generous friendliness
    know what to give in exchange.

Unlike the sound of trees
applauding in the wind,
his laughter is divided cleanly into sylables
    almost cascading,
yet unlike an avalanche of small stones
    or of water
for he makes only one at a time,
    and unlike dominos
falling one, then another on another
    and on,
for he laughs not in clicks
    but in separate chimes
like coins dropped one at a time
    but given without counting.

And when he is tired or lonely
he neither hordes nor sells his holdings
    but takes what is given him
and shares with who will ask of him
    cursing not who left him in his poverty
for his riches cannot be stolen.

--David Ungemach
Passage

1. Heaving down the land,
dark sinews taut against the earth,
growth and greeness flashing off the flanks,
we are the night train,
moving.

2. In bleeding light of crossings
the twisting leaps of smoke devils,
torn whole from roots of flame,
haunt us
flaring on sandpapered eyes
behind the windows,
tearing sleep from the eyes of night.

3. Beneath us, rivers flow
to ends outside our journey--
pulling away to the lower shore
while we speed higher
at the inland grain,
the wound of distance, burning,
in the night.

--Tom Braham
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