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COBALT

(poetry)

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WILLIAM WENTHE

DAINTY

Early October, gardens and pavements
are fluttering, gold-flecked
with the wavering low flight
of the tiny, migrant butterflies
named “Dainty Sulphur.”

Our friends are driving their daughter,
breathing tubes taped
to her tiny nostrils,
to a hospital in Dallas, and doctors
they hope can save her.

And having mentioned both
butterflies and child, I know
decorum demands
I bring the one to bear
on the other.

But fuck decorum.
The Dainty Sulphurs,
fluent in their flight,
say nothing. The child,
too young to speak,

beneath the crusted blood
of nosebleed caused by raw
rush of tanked oxygen,
had smiled, lifted her arm to me,
and waved, Bye Bye.

AMY ORAZIO

SEDIMENT

When we were kinned
inside or outside our bodies
when we forgot how to hold our bodies
when we were still for fear
of a break when we were thin-spindly
strangling too full
sap heavy limbs
we were folded home from fringes
crumbled we were
needled into soil
pulled and wet-forwarded
submitted up

AMY ORAZIO

THIS IS ABOUT YOU AND I

Now we know
the spinner and the spun
the split lip ravine
where water
cuts away at the shales
unable to change course
river hands threading
through the clavicle of the earth
inflexible animal
bottomer than base
acid and yet
the bleeder and the bled
now we know
to calve from the copperhead
muscle and bone tissue
tell us
if the tip is yellow
run

MAGGIE HESS

ESSENTIALLY PEACHES

It is the nature
of the peach seedling
to suffer,
to frost over,
to lose those autumn leaves.

Resilient as God
against winds
of change.
But nothing ends
in death.

Even the final flame
when it extinguishes,
we all are essentially
peaches.

Pits buried on the ground.
Sprouts that resemble
something else entirely
but tended by kind hands,

defended against shade.
Loved. Watered.
We all battle for our own
competitive heights.

Even Buddhists.
And every flame dies
and most go unknown.

MAGGIE HESS

We are
just like the rest
of nature.

We aren't above
or below.

We suffer frost
and die.

As peaches we let go.

JAIMIE EUBANKS

BODIES #3

Fat girls always shave their legs. Wear the right makeup—not too much—and keep their hair in neatly manicured waves as if to say: look at me. I am a thing worth looking at. I measure the circumference of my thigh before bed, an admission to myself that I will never have the strength for such a regimen.

DARREN DEMAREE

ALUMNI #84

Hunkered amid
the shorebirds
that get lost

& find themselves
in Ohio, I look
thick with my groping

of the landscape
& since I never touch
their wings, they

never touch my song.
We will never part
& neither myself,

nor the off-flight
army know what
will happen next

if this is now
our whole world.
Will we all become

consumed
in awful stasis,
learning only how

DARREN DEMAREE

long we can live,
or will they catch
some scent of salt

& leave me here
alone? That is
my only hope.

HARMONY BUTTON

HACK

dear rich desert
this
rain and rain
has given
us
new fur
a wolfing kind of hunch
and hunger
hackle thick and two
hand lush
right out
of photographs you
blue eye, dead eye
soulful
rush of just
what's natural –

what is weed
and what is plush
or purposeful,
what could be
more beautiful
than thistle
gristle
in the grime
of summer's
palm –

ALISA GOLDEN

[BIRD] CLOCK

He says
the early morning
is divided into three sections:
[Pre-bird] | [Bird] | [Post-Bird]

According to the bird clock sold in stores,
Wren and Tit-mouse are [Pre-Bird];
Oriole, [Bird];
and Mourning Dove is [Post-Bird].

But our live clock says
[paste Mockingbird here]
for [Pre-Bird]—if s/he is on the block—
If not, we just hear freeway.

We have to get up
[Post-Bird] when
all birds are
done and gone.

But [Bird] [insert crows here]
still gives us time to

[This Space Intentionally Left Blank]

make love.
We don't mind the crows.

DANIEL MOORE

WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN

If there is a wall in me
where ruin speaks demolition,
where sparks and smoke scorch your eyes
when there's no other way to say these things,
no other sound till my tongue stops swaying
like a wrecking ball aimed at your mind.

Think of the ball as a steeple bell.
Think of my tongue as an eloquent rope
braided with blood diamond words.

Tender is how I was not made,
and it never occurred to you otherwise.

The tower in your heart, the one with the bell,
ringing your name like a peasant girl,
maybe this is what it might mean
to hear the hardness in me.

KATHERINE VONDY

THE HARBOR, IN WINTER

she tells time by other people's watches. searches wrists in the subway to find out if she is late, if she is early. feels the uncomfortable need to make small talk in the elevator.

from the seventeenth floor you can see the harbor. water has frozen on the surface. like coagulated blood on the scab of a wound. all is stillness. the elevator hangs heavy.

the elevator measures space between floors. measures time between awkward hellos, stilted goodbyes. comments on the weather. the cold.

count along as it counts down from seventeen to one. count along as it counts down the seconds. the days. the winters the harbor has frozen like so. the elevator counts down the winters.

outside her breath suspends, then fades. she walks past the frozen harbor. the stillness. the freedom not to move. not to count. things that disappear so gently: her breath, the weight.

the time.

succumb to the pace of the crowd. become it. match your footsteps to the heartbeat of the woman with the stroller. you can hide behind the beard of the man with glassy eyes. it's so simple, now, to give up all your counting. to feel the waves and blood moving underneath the ice.

JAKE TRINGALI

ROULETTE

it's all inanely true
some galaxies have some stars have some planets

local gangs of black holes pull together
at the center of spiraling milky arms
polar jets viciously spew ejecta
spacedust tearing through spacetime
toward a single planet
one planet in particular

and that at certain specific points in time
and it's all very inanely true
small amounts of radiation
punch through the exosphere

an eon of continuous thunderstorms
planet-shifting, so petty
so petty in the grand scheme of things

within a microscopic refuge
bantlings unwomb
birthing as the storms subside
the dying members trail behind

small friends living in obscurity
fighting for scant food, defying the grim odds

particles sail above the planet's surface as slyphs would
and the universe can see where this is going

JAKE TRINGALI

moving havenward toward a civilization
trying to control tomorrow

there's no controlling tomorrow
our devilish roulette, devoid of remorse delivers
a silent violence

cuts them down to their original protons and electrons
unwholesome and unmentionable particles
deranged

particles sail above the planet's surface as slyphs would
and the universe can see where this is going
it's all inanely true

NIKITA HERNANDEZ

FLEETING

In response to Frank O'Hara's "Meditations in an Emergency"

You say no one
trusts you
because your eyes are blue—
at least you're not
full of shit
because your eyes are brown.
You and I both wish
for different eyes,
but it doesn't matter
since we are
always looking away.

JR TORISEVA

DELTA PERIMETER

The pond asleep. The pond on dream. Reverie, the gravel
of the road shard, rock images flash. Pink lingerie stretched
tight, floating on the duckweed. The braid. The flash of earring.

The slips meeting mine on the beam of road, the vowels
of dream sleep. The stone capped road, grey boulders soft
under the feet. Good night. I draw up the top sheet. I pull

the covers tight over the pond and let the duvet nestle, no
pillow, but the cat tails pom-pom around me, the pond's eye
closes, my dreams, their roots dangling in the water, surface

on the skin of my stomach my fingers nails in alkali water
bring back the sedged bank, the salty soil, the blue velvet box of moss,
the unredeemed single wing of a swallow butterfly. This egg, mostly

yolk, the white, the sigh; the oak log rotting in the center of it all.

ADAM DEUTSCH

CANTICLE KNOWN BY HEART

Look down this schoolhouse corridor
of memory—see one boy
tell another that his father
is a slob, and anyone can see it.

It's a violent observation
for no good reason
and the kid should know
better about quiet shames
that don't need a zenith
but get one anyway.

There's this localized guilt
that's grown, unforgiving, rubber
tree branches that arch
to frame a doorway.

I've passed by it so many times,
scanning the lines, a nailed note
listing names that were thrown away,
looking for my own.

I make a hymn of these regrets
to sing over and over in the open
until it's a semantic satiation
that gently cradles us.

ALEXANDRA SMYTH

NEAR FULL

There is no form of lying that I am unfamiliar with. My favorite, the most subtle: that of omission. I find it is easier to breathe in the locked room of things I cannot tell you. This is more commonly referred to as autoerotic asphyxiation. I am not troubled by emptiness, after all what is a lung but the expansion of air? Sometimes you sigh into the windowsill, a quiet demonstration against my willfulness. What I wouldn't give for a good thrashing, some kind of proof that you still get jealous from time to time. This is but one example of my illness: a pathological need to constantly take up space. I watch you through the liquid in my wine glass and take some small form of satisfaction in my ability to always keep it near full.

ABIGAIL WELHOUSE

THE HUNT

We painted the house green one summer.
When we slept inside it, we heard it growl.

It was more alive than us, and it let us know.
It shook like a wet dog. There was no earthquake.

One night we came home and saw the curtains move.
There was no one there. We looked through binoculars.

For years, we looked for faces.
We lay in the grass, waiting.

We watched the clouds for shapes.
We pointed our cameras skyward.

The viewfinder could be a gun.
Either way, we capture.

JOHN REPP

NAMES & PLACES

In 1945, everything burned
in many places. A boy joined

the Future Farmers of America.
Another dubbed himself “Butch”

& was Butch to everyone--
even children & grandchildren--

from then on. No one knows
how many souls went

from dailiness to shadow
on various stone walls

& benches. I forget this
for years at a time.

I refuse to name the places
where everything burned.

Blossoms unfold
each spring everywhere.

Photographs make it seem
normal. The boy never farmed.

His mother cooked chicken
& dumplings whenever he asked.

JOHN REPP

99% of the souls ever to live
never ate dumplings. Spirochetes

are sometimes the price
of ecstasy. An ex-Marine

named Jimmy in a place
I refuse to name gimped

behind a lawn mower
eight hours a day & drank

a quart of vodka every Saturday,
saying Okinawa didn't kill me,

so what's a little hooch?
Butch was a happy man,

especially brushing lacquer
on a balsa-wood model

or pitching woo (though Anita)
needed no convincing) or tuning

the shortwave to the BBC.
Sorrow isn't enough. Butch knew

what "to bayonet" meant
& liked to pantomime it.

JOHN REPP

Chicken farms by the score
or the million: ash. Happiness

is possible. Love seizes
the content & the bitter

in nameless places everywhere.

JACKIE BALDERRAMA

DIPTYCH

1. Summer Palace, Beijing

The man-made lake beside the man-made mountain is gray.
Boats turn gray too. In the distance
passengers row through a sunny July haze.

The mountain is in the lake, reflected each morning.
The lake, an imprint. In a postcard, I tell my sister
there is a mountain and lake from what was once flat and dry.

Beneath the water, stone is being slowly formed
into nature's sculptures which will be raised
and placed into courtyards between rows of mulberry.

2. Spring Rearing

Before even the Summer Palace, silk worms exist
as domesticated insects, as moths incapable of flight.
They navigate mulberry cuttings on woven bamboo trays.

In winter, two silk worms share a cocoon; the silk is twice as thick.
It's boiled and stripped, so later, four women can stretch it
into thin webs the size of a mattress.

Now, a silk fan returns home with me—
A painted pair of storks in a huangshan pine,
a folding orange sun caught in the branches.