Sand River Journal

Welcome to the Sand River Journal. Our goal is to provide a proper setting for some of the better poetry found in the newsgroup rec.arts.poems. We aim at an objective standard, if such exists for poetry, but also strive to include diverse voices, not excluding our own work. These poems have all been previously posted to r.a.p. and appear by authors' explicit permission. They constitute copyrighted material, and we claim ownership only to any poems we have authored.

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♀ ☾ ♂

The Lotus Flower

If you cannot find the rose
That tireless, blooms,
Here within these arms,
Find instead the timeless lotus flower
Which once you offered and I refused
In a white-hued winter,
Drawn in brilliant colour,
Under a cloudless sky.

If you will not speak of these
Silent whispers,
There within the day,
Speak instead to the snow white lilly
Which grows within my only cavern
In a heart filled with light
Grey and lifeless in pallor,
Under this cooling skin.

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Lovenest

Two cream fledglings and
yellow beaks click wet,
knife and stone's ringing strokes
in jagged nest.

But jelly eyes and soft membrane
push through fresh lids
and blades fold,
and beaks nestle in downy necks
when I've been as honest as eggs.

Ron Rankin
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in shamrock, texas

(Note on pronunciation: "hoooo" is an unvoiced "who", like blowing wind, 3 seconds.)

find me, brush me, pocket me, keep me.

to the longing in the clouds
i say,
in the high, high heaven,
please do away
with your forever blue
hugging you

and drop them jeans
in a sacred rain
onto this forever plain
that's wrapped in a forever hoooo.

now i'm a pony
buckling
under you, dear load.

dear load, please grant me thy grace and guidance
and don't withhold your sweet open
thighs
either
while you are in the granting
garment-chucking
mood.
should you weigh so heavy on me
in your absence, dear load?

immortal kisses, kindnesses
and an afterwife.
this is the land of divorce,
there is virtue in widows.

however, i want to hump with innocence.
miss innocence,
oh, to throw the good book at you
and put a ski on our child...
and a mac on our table...
and to teach you how
to pour your charm into e-mail
what's that
and to show you off to other women
show what?
like a he'll-marry-me! ring.

i wish to watch you brush
our moments
out of your swollen hair.

heaven is, if heaven were,
helping you with a stocking or two.

there is no discipline i would not abandon
to learn the texan twang from you
that patient, exacting kindness:
no, silly goose, you say it like this...

in the cleavage of the dark, in the bluebells of the blossom
...sweetness... i don't want anything else...
of a country house porch swing
...moreover, i never wanted less...
across the unfinished kitchen table
...this is enough for me...
in a plastic booth in a dairy queen
...you make me so very dizzy...
in the tall grass pearling up around us
...i once was lost but now i'm found...

miss innocence, i have a prayer to offer:
let us take this moment, dear load, in pails
like pig slop
or manna from heaven
my lady of the immaculate nails
a red like a church-going ford pick-up truck
and 14k jewelry
and may i have me granted thy welcoming pussy.

on my way to the bloodkissed
santa fe, new mexico
i stopped here,
with friends
but i could have settled
instead on your shy open hand
and drunk your scent
at full strength.

the texan sun raineth on your head for 20 years. okay.
monday to sunday, sunday to monday. okay.
from it you soaked some mysterious rays.

and they produced true love, aimless and wanton.
until it has. yes?
seeped into your lashes, dripped into your eyes.
slipped into your speech, leached into your walk. my walk?
and now it wisps out of your pores.
at the slightest shift of your perfect. perfect?
ass.
and it is gleaming
in that look.
in those eyes. my eyes?
trapped under that hair. what about my hair!
focused in your face.
and it says.
hi... boy... you crazy on me yet?
you've got 5 minutes to axe me out...

i'd never say thaaaaaaaaaaaat!

you are a walking country diction
sweeping succulent idioms aside with your scentful breasts
and so
my heart gets yanked from san francisco
on arrival, out of breath it says:
girl... we have... not... yet met...
but between you... and me...
i would have you...
framed... in this voracious sky...
dry...
framed... in your... sweetness...
swarming... like bees...
all hot... and bothered... warm and

wet.

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Dawn

waking to the light
rising from water
the new dawn turns
wind swirls
to buddha robes flapping
orange across
the surface
of a dark animal eye

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Bring to Me Spring

Arrives the Burpee catalog,
Canterbury Bells peal Springtime's chimes.
Wishful mass of floral flash –
page upon page,
like the budding roses
unfolding,
each turn,
each aspect of the unfurling petals
a divergent portrait
of splendor seeded...

I plot my plot,
paint my patch
in pastels, with Pinks!
Clumps of lowlying crops
cover the border bricks
I dug in, dirtied kneed
and broken nailed
eons ahead of this year's
new arrivals.

Stakes impaled
Impatiens sturdied,
I plan my planting
cycled with the moons and tides,
germinating when the Lilacs bloom,
bury the Mums by Mother's Day –
my mother's dead, but the day survives
like perennials, always room
for another Hallmark sowing.

Burpee's Best
are always better
in pictoral propogation,
anticipation – my best attempt
to burrow the Four O' Clocks
beside the Morning Glories
o' course creates Circadian conflict –
time and Cicadas wait for no woman,
they grow when they feel like it,
no matter what Sam Burpee says,
and grasshoppers do eat Marigolds...

Susan DeCarlo
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Pleaides

Butterfly flapping chromatic dots
Sparkling around a dark illumination
Careless determined flight
In a jellyfish bag

Chalk-black shroud evades
Organ humming city lights
Spasmodic dancing
In quick personal orbits

Eternal brushstroke
On a thick-dark molasses masterpiece
Twinkling command performance
In a spectator sky

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Of the Night

My love rides the night,
And the fortunate have not laid eyes upon her.

Which of the rising mists is she?
What paw print or black wing
Off the corner of sight
Tells of her passing?
For she has become the great evil
Stalking the land, the stuff of legends
Future and past.

Her skin has grown cold, and her eyes
Blacker than her hair.
Her love has turned dark, into lust
For any blood of the human.

She will come for me.
My stake and mallet await,
Ready to pierce the heart
That once I cherished,
And free her to sleep.

When this is done, the world
Will be left to contend with merely the evils
Of average men.

Eric Thomas
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The 1950's

The doctor thinking he's
got to learn about the world
all over again from
    square one
    start

Looking over words
as he'd peer
over a newly trimmed hedge
seeing something just beyond
    and to one side

The doctor doesn't think he knows anything for sure
only the hula hoops and twinkies,
the blues and violets of his mind
    very late at night

He doesn't know what he's putting down
only that he's noticing,
noting, noticing
his stethoscope here
    and here

Red and pink lipstick cases
with a little mirror on one side,
hats, stockings, garter belts
    and gloves

There is sound
there's the refrigerator
    and the water dripping

He bought a shirt in 1950 the most remarkable
    feature of which
is a snag or tear will reduce it
    to nothing.
It's a shirt made of a single cell
that, when it's reduced to nothing,
a single cell remains.
    The original cell of that fabric.

What he is seeking is a quilt
made up of the original cells of all the fabrics.

What the l950s does
like a blow to the back or side of one's head
it relocates your mind

The doctor in Intensive Care
where he belongs
if anyone else is here or still here
    that's fine.

* * *

What were the 1950s? Teresa Brewer and the Korean War

It was hard apples and the popularity of DDT
Popularity was a word heard a lot of in 1950

It was James Dean
and Peter Lawford,
TV's Karen and Chubby,
    the Mickey Mouse Club
        taken seriously

It was the time many people who came into their own
    in the 1960s
first got laid
or had wet dreams
the last wet dream the doctor had was sometime in
    the 1950s

Basketball games on Chicago's north side
and the walk home at 5 o'clock
    carrying a switchblade knife,
    the two Rosenbergs frying in the electric chair
    McCarthy and his crony Roy Cohn
the atomic bomb already five years old

Plastic surgery
and nose jobs
fame
in a new light

* * *

Nixon saying, "California politics is a can of worms"
Captain Kangaroo, Howdy Doody
Arthur Godfrey on television.
the Outside
the Inside
Outside
Inside
Fresh hot toast with butter on it from the mother
    of a friend
the doctor's own mother dead at 42
the knowledge there were two different worlds
giving
taking
Epistemology
Involved elaborate schemes for not making up your
    mind anyway
"Saturday night is the loneliest night in the week–"
Taking No-Doz and staying up all night for exams

Right-handed angel playing a trumpet
and Moses coming down off the mountain
not with the 10 Commandments
but a set of scrolls

and where the commandments
would normally go
double sets of chimes.

Moses coming down with castanets
Saul of Tarsus with a set of drums
Christ fluting
Buddha blissful at the keyboard

* * *

The jazz was good
Death was softened, advancements made
in the salesmanship of everything
The doctor's own deepest impulses
were not to nurse or nurture
but to attack

Hanging out at Sonny Berkowitz' Pool Hall,
wearing blue suede shoes,
Levis and navy blue shirt,
he bought a zip gun,
joined a street gang

Once, doing reconnaissance,
exploring the intricacies
of the Chicago Drainage Canal,
he entered a sewer
and ambled deeply as he could
reflecting all the while
on his chances of surviving
the synchronizied flushing
of three-and-a-half million toilets.

For the first time in 2,000 years
one went four years to a University
without saying one true word
going to work for Hallmark Greeting cards
or the phone company
one knew something was at hand because things
became easy.
Richard Wilbur's poems
arrived at one's door
in little four-line stanzas
Tin-Pan alley
people in college dormitories subscribing
to the *Kenyon Review*
and listening to Pat Boone

Five foot two, eyes of blue,
cotton candy hair
strapless white lace dress
zipped up over
a snug corset

seated on a sofa
in a dormitory
in Champaign, Illinois,
touch me, touch me
black patent leather belt open
and matching black patent leather
    pocket book
beside her,
'petting' it was called,
one foot touching the floor at all times
("that's right you two,
    or I'll have to ask you to leave"),
ejaculating beneath her dress
somewhere or other
discreetly as possible

Birds flutter and when they walk
they flutter too.

The doctor sees giant mushroom cloud
father of the H-Bomb Edward Teller
Police Action Korea Harry Truman
and Dwight David Eisenhower,
each with six legs and arms
dancing to the music
    of Lord Shiva and Judy Garland
    doing it
        on a pink velvet loveseat.

The doctor makes a mental note to turn
his socks inside out to empty
out the sand before putting
them into the laundry bag.

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Boundaries

The old man went with me when I walked the line,
checking boundaries. We drove round the mountain
to an unkempt farm on its western slope, parked,
and ranged its pasture for a survey marker,
dividing blatting sheep among the trampled
sedges along a line of willow. The sign
of success was a cap of brass, much chewed by
bush hogs and sickle bar mowers: the section
corner. We cut a pole from willow for our
chain, and taking compass in hand, set out south
along the invisible section line, straight

up one knee of the dark mountain, floundering
through viney maples, over old hemlock logs,
around the huge stumps of shipped-out firs, with their
deep-set eyes, which were the notches cut by men
to set their spring boards in to stand on, drawing
their singing misery whips through the bellies
of the silent giants. We flagged the line as
we went, hanging the orange strips from chittims,
blackcherries, huckleberries, bigleaf maple.
Across to the south side of the hill we shanked,
breaking out into sun sometimes, waist deep in
bracken ferns and trailing blackberries, pushing
through young Douglas firs with their rich Christmas whiff,
down to the alders with ancient yews lurking
in their shade, and crawled through tall salmonberry
at last into my new-made clearing by my
new-built house, hanging a flag only fifteen
feet off the flag we'd hung before we drove out.
The old man admired the results, and said to
the old woman, standing by, "That boy is just
the same in the woods as I am way out on
the water; always knows right where he is." She
nodded, and handed him a cup of coffee,
with cream, no sugar, and not too hot or cold.

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monet's old studio is a gift shop

I received the dream of the six gardens:
wandering the peculiarities of light -
painting again the damp stacks of hay
by the edge of the Seine, eating lunch.
the old man's celebration
of a simple pond of lilies –
the reflection of long-armed willows
hanging limp in remembrance
of modernity. please, can i return
to the studio now, so i can buy
that small reproduction? thank you.

John Adam Kaune
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this place in winter

snow blows through an open door
and I curse him
for being so careless

inside
blue pears
      no longer ripen on the settee
flurries blur
      a windsor castle watercolor
            a lincoln family lithograph
from the pantry you can look up at the sky
      where paraffin has crumbled from the lids
            of mason-jarred preserves
clover and violets uprooted
      in the marriage bed
have I forgotten something?
      family bible promises
            on a homemade altar

I forgive him
for not closing the door
on his way out

this time

I feel a coastal winter wind
      slam.

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Northern Skies

The sky above this garden is ablaze
With shimmer running almost to Orion;
A ghostly movement crosses half the sky
A living luster trembling through a phase.

Finding star-to-star form we plan by,
Remembering by murmuring of ion,
Here between a willow and the stream,
Let's wait awhile to watch our planet dream.

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reflection in the fountain

i smell the smell of entire tribes,
order and a grass as fine as hemp,
in the division of water below
my potted palms. bourbon-minced
saliva creeps like cloth.
lips curve an alleyway,
a hardened rot of spilling for substance
and down the coil;
i fall into small thimble,
tip myself into relic
without a thought for foe
or even the flinging out of love that
will replace my lips for conversation.
the waking mouth
hangs just so, off to one side and
then parted. underneath tongue rises
and falls and rises
and falls. sharp-tuned tunnel
catches and i spin out into
stain, rubbed and postured for
future. swells of water
ripple form and swoop the snail
in me – my criminal in apathy.
i regard my shadow with malice
and adorn its shape
with giggles. boots loop my feet,
bulging ankles strapped in leather
as to walk on glass
without fluttering. naughty speaks
through the fountain, hickeys and
tenor visions like stalks. what do i
see but hiding?

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wind

an empty poem
that has lost its heart,
a sky

as hollow
as the mouth of heaven.

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The Changeling's Wife

i am like the piano you play
that always falters somewhere up ahead

a man but also a dog needing
something to be brave for

i praise the day you filleted me
zipped away the offending spine

pull me to bed with you tonight
let me sleep this curiosity off

the way that the lion feels
for his mate when she brings him red meat

it's the love of the dog that sleeps
curled at the monastery gate

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The Death of My Son

I sit in a smoke-filled room
A half-empty bottle sits near me.
Glowing cigarettes walk around
In the mouths of black-suited guests.
Mourners, they call themselves.
I know him, he who lies within
Though the bottle takes away his name.
A boy. He used to be my son
Though he never once called me Dad.
I used to see him once a year.
I haven't seen him at all for three.
His mother sits next to another man.
The man is rigid and staring at me.
He is angry that I have come.
I drink again from the bottle.
I find little solace in its contents.
I sense that something is missing.
I sense the wrong one is dead.

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Enigma

cryptic dissertations
seek to enlighten
those despaired

existential incantations
espouse revelation
behind reverential masks

can light emanate
from between
dark, parted lips?

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bellybutton

bellybutton
through
cigarette glasses
waves slippery
still
silver and black
bearing
unblemished
taut ripples
either
freely
poked loose or
blasted
gasping
desperate cotton
shrieks
remove me
young pedophile
listen to my
pupils resonate

Jon Litchfield
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pauper

    you stand on the street corner
    like a blind man
waiting for the clink of money
in an upturned fedora
my pockets are empty
please do not hold
your heart in your hands
    i am a pauper
i do not have gold coins
to fill the emptiness

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Imaginary lovers' conversation overheard on the CNR spurline trail

I would steal you a water tower in winter my dearest
and we would walk around its smoother bevelled edges.
I would climb the circular stairs and use my largest
ray gun to puncture the unruly strands of steel.
Not even all the lawyers in the office nearby could
stop our rivers of empire from unfurling in frozen
abandon. And we would kiss each of our blue lips
desperately, wanton in the existence of frigid solitude.

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having fallen in love

for the first time real
time frying bits of white onion
in a cast iron pan with
olive green burning to jump
sauteeing sweet smoke and
wanting desperately and coldly
to put my hands into the oil

Karen Hussey
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Else's laughter

In March, 1993
totally without warning
I changed the way I eat apples
and the way I laugh —
I'd been borrowing someone
else's laughter before then.

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Coffee

Out his kitchen window, he watches
a bus pull away from the corner.
He holds his coffee cup,
swirling it although there is
no coffee in it,
considers taking a bath.

She always told him not too
much coffee, just the one cup
in the morning, and that he should
remember to bathe every day,
as these were just the kinds of things
he would soon forget
once she was gone.

He places his cup among others
in the sink. The bathtub is clean
and damp, still warm.
He sits on the toilet
watching as the tub fills.

By custom, he draws too much
water, so that some always runs
out the overflow as he gets in,
leaving behind as much water
as will fit,
making a sound he always
liked hearing.

He images a spider trapped
in the overflow, washing
down the pipes.
As he slides into the water
he thinks of her, so many years,

and although she is not here
to scrub his back he smiles.
His toes surface and submerge:
he watches them break
through floating rafts
of bubbles, then sink again,
like a shipwrecked crew
of drowning men.

After his bath he watches the water
circle down the drain,
but without his glasses
he cannot tell
if the whirlpool drains
with or counter to the clock,

although he understands
or thinks he remembers
it always turns the same way,
like a dog circling nose to tail
on a carpet looking
for that one best spot.

The word “coriolis”
surfaces slowly and submerges again,
and eyes closed he watches it
as from a moving vehicle,
experiences it as he would a neon
sign flashing past

in the nighttime.
He makes a note on his mental
blackboard to watch closely
next time which way the water
circles as it drains.
He smiles again,
as he can have
his coffee now
that he has bathed.

Michael McNeilley
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City Square, Buenos Aires

An outdoor room of bowed walls
and low defining trees,
the city square is railed off
to enclose what no cloister could:

a fountain made of broken columns
and a squat equestrian general
who spurred civic pride
by surpressing laws, punishing foes,

curtailing lives with a high necessity.
This is Borges city,
a place of traffic, where grey
historical clouds define oppression

in other terms, other pantomimes:
the fidget of pigeons and old men
pensioned since the last revolution
or the last coarse drought.

Yet the boulevards are wide enough
for tanks, close enough for walks,
the city square more barren
than sunlight on catafalques.

David Barton
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Leave as you have Lived

You are costive in your imaginations,
like Corundum in muddy thought
sinking to the complaisant image
of a prosaic, adequate Self –
All for sake of comformity.
And wiping out your
individuality as you content
yourself out of being.

And you will leave as you have
lived your life: Dead.

Kirian Chowning
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The wind is a pillow

The wind is a pillow.
It rustles like bed clothes
in the temperature of night.
I can sense your skin.
It feels like molten glass
wrapped in cashmere.
It's singing!
I love it like this.

Ross Munro
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South Seas Rumba Party

The Wind flew softly to my side
Playfully lifting my hair from my eyes
Kissing my cheek in passing
On his way to a South Seas Rumba Party
Party on, dude, I said!

The Rain flowed down my face
Tickling my sides and legs
Licking my ear in passing
On her way to a South Seas Rumba Party
Party Hearty, sweets, said I!

The Lightening sped across my sight
Electrifying my every orifice
Shooting sparks in passing
On her way to a South Seas Rumba Party
's Party, I slurred, dazed!

But when Thunder came rumbling my way
Growling up my spine to my head
I roared at him in passing
NOT on my way to a South Seas Rumba Party
Now your Party's mine! (and I swallowed him!)

So if, by chance, you happen upon
A South Seas Rumba Party in progress
Just know in passing
Thunder won't be there, oh no, not him
Party'd out, we'd say!

Terry Schorer
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everybody's favorite lunger

and even pussyfaced doc told wyatt to leave
coughed blood and gargled
the way to live life ain't sittin'
here to grieve.
then he died, laughing. end of movie.

hey pistol pete would you believe
i need a mean ol cowpoke.
or a pussywhipped eyetalian, movie-sized.

this crimson a on my chest ain't
like the rest, for school spirit, boys.

i want that stain.

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copper of age

take dilaudid in a spoon
add water heat quickly till
a foul smelling smoke is produced
and the liquid bubbles and seethes
this burns off the impurities and
the things that will kill you.
add a bud of cotton wool
insert the needle into the cotton and
draw back the plunger
notice that no matter how carefully
you do this there is always
a small bubble of air in the syringe
this must be removed
so depress the plunger until
a droplet of solution glitters at
the end of the needle.
it is now safe.
you may find it easier to wrap
a belt around your upper arm
watch for the large vein
insert the needle
if you do it right, then
a tendril of blood should shoot
into the solution.
you may now slowly press the plunger.
sit back. relax. sleep.

Adrian Preston
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another NYC-ku

Penn Station after midnight:
even the shadows have echoes.

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Danny & Andre

Danny finds a throw
away medicine cabinet
burned out bulbs
sliding mirror
jagged, tarnished frame
pried from wall.

Danny props it atop
concrete fencing
next to Lady Luck
Laundromat – he preens
picking his face, nose
wiping fingers
on tan corduroys.

Andre slides up
in chrome wheel chair
spray painted red
with green glitter flecks.
Chicago Bulls emblem
brands the back rest
in black magic
marker and dyslexic hand.

Danny turns round
high fiver – high
fiver. *Ma boooy.*
He dances everything –
tribal incantations,
polkas, jigs, Swan Lake.
Andre's rag doll legs
impact with callused
palms. He mouths
every instrument
with rhythmic echoes.

Danny yo yo's
Andre out and back
out, back. Twirling round
popping wheely's.

Andre's vision flies
up to sky, the world circles,
Andre's arms raise hallelujah.

On the outspin Danny catches
his profile and stops,
throwing Andre forward.
He sneaks up to glass mumbling
eyes unblinking. Andre
readjusts his legs.

Danny tilts his head
left then right,
then behind and in again.
pointing dirty fingers
blackened nails, spitting
the reflection.

Danny pulls his hair.
clumps of blonde
oiled and gritty curls
sprout from knotted fists.

Andre pulls Danny's
corduroy leg. a dog
begging attention.
He pulls harder
the second time.
Danny flies round
inhales a gust of wind,
propels forward.
the curls sprinkle
Andre's high-low fade.

Danny belly laughs, grooves,
skipping, knee slapping,
butt shaking, high fiving
down Park Street.

Andre pulls Danny's medicine
cabinet into his lap. Leans
forward curled to view
his upside down image.

Danny beckons from
the corner *yo brother get*
ya dumb ass ova here
Andre tosses Danny's
medicine cabinet into
the busy street. The glass
breaks. You and I swerve.

Erica L. Wagner
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Standing Prematurely Before Benedictio's Tomb

I have never looked for Guy's name in
The Funerary Times or Gestalt World,
Preferring to chuckle on finding it
In unexpected indices.

Adroitest of scholars,
Impeccably reticent,
He understood the commonality of
Socrates and oaken tables.

It took two generations for me
To comprehend that the internal link
Between the elegant poet and my blunt father
Was the purity of their honor.

Dave W. Mitchell
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nightmare in bflat, op.31

parades of soft vienna clowns
with lanterns of the hungarian princess
swung before my eyes, laughing their hungry thirst for
smatterings of shattered love letters
which hung like ice crystals on a clear prairie winter morning

living in the shadows of deaf giants
who stole the show right out from under me
leaving me naked for no-one to see
                                        but me

i've played these same scales
over and over and
candles burn down over scores of songs i will never play

in these nights of forlorn horror
of stampeding ghosts
and heckling monotonies
there lies only wicked prostitutes of time by my side
selling me short
selling me....

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Ruffage For Ruffians

Whore mold creeps soft like flu fingers,
picking ear-wax, slave to sleep, while onward it comes,
somnambulant – hungry for the earlobe, the drum – and blunders
an awkward chicken-motion, clucking this noise:

our charters, our hooks, our redundancy sunders
the waffle-irons of suburbia, out there
gleaming, twittering like nerves before the numb.
Skulls satiate on raw beans and these words are the bean curd
clusters of the middle-man, supply and demand.

Throw thrift to the dogs, brackish clog of my love there
sitting, there sleeping, there pissing on the cushion
And you were house-broken, trained to beg for coffee grounds in s. america
before the whip rode miles of thigh,
Forced you to cry.

Door slam, I'm fucked. I'm outta here. I'm not writing poetry
for you,
for approval, for me – even amounts of discourteousness: I frown on the
artform and the hyphen –
but you've crawled this far, you've sucked my spoo and here we meet at
last: toothy plumage blooming in the sweaty hole-mind of hate.

Whatever this means.

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Go Figure

Ten tuna tins with fifteen fins.
Zero zebras and twenty twins.
Thirty ponies pull three red wagons.
Six sneaky snakes chase four dumb dragons.
Seventeen seagulls in the sky.
Eleven hippopotami.
Eighteen red headed boys named Willy.
Don't story problems drive you silly?

Grandpa Tucker
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