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E&P bridge over the Shenango River at Jamestown, PA

by Nate Clark

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Alfred Dorn

In Simultaneous Rooms

How many doors open, how many close
while your eye skims this “moment’s monument”?
Holed up in a slum lord’s apartment house,
an old man dies, alone, irrelevant.
Another life is pincer’d out of the womb,
from tropic sleep into our arctic day.
In a deluxe hotel’s Edwardian room
a widow fiercely hugs a rose bouquet
sent by a charmer half her age, with card
warbling silk words that curtain his design.
In the Sahara of a hospital ward
a bed explodes with pain like a land mine.
And meanwhile the galaxy, that spiral ear
carrying us through darkness, does not hear.

Alfred Dorn

Fifty

Mornings he's shackled to the telephone,
plugging insurance policies as if
his life hung on each sale. Flesh weighs like stone,
with one leg varicose, the other stiff.
At lunchbreak, in a tavern's oak recess,
a blonde young waitress shimmers through his drink;
his mind's hot fingers rip away the dress
that hides a Renoir bather, ripe and pink.
Back at the office, his whole body hums
as an olive-skinned brunette bends over a file.
He lurches, muscles fired by jungle drums,
toward hip and shoulder sinuous as the Nile.
The ring on his third finger glares. He groans.
A north wind thrusts a bayonet through his bones.

David Landrum

Whitefish Point

Whitefish Point, Michigan, June 2003

In the grey and wet, in fog thick like the sea
you walk a beach of bread-loaf stones, not made
for bare feet, bruising tender filigree
of fine nerve networks as your soles explode
with pain and gouges. On this foggy rim
by Lake Superior the gull's cry cuts
the air, the breakers labor, fog-horns hymn—
clammy concerto singing of what abuts
the bottom of the lake: the shipwreck hulks,
ruined rusted frames where sturgeon probe and gawk.
This is the place where nature broods and sulks,
fish stink, sunlight hides out, and lake-fowl squawk.
This is the place we came, this is denial,
this is land's end, hard rock. This is your style.

David Landrum

Παρθένος

Her natural posture!

Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed

Thou art Hermione . . .

—Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*

You were a virgin, white, up on the hill,
Athena's caryatid votary,
a statue shouldering the goddess's will,
your sculptured feet anchored in stone debris.

No wisdom could dislodge you from your home
high over Athens, at the Temple site.
Your form immobile but your mind lissome,
your body like the moon, distant and white,

you stood a thousand years. I held the hope
you might transform. Then, like Hermione,
you changed, walked down the Acropolis' slope—
whether by stealth or by Zeus's decree

I never knew. You gave the moon away
and bathed yourself in Aphrodite's day.

Note: Παρθένος is the Greek word for virgin.

David Landrum

Mink Coat

for Luann

You were the muddle and the beauty then,
that winter, clear and cold stars all the way;
our first kiss on a snowy evening when
we drank dark beer, heard a panhandler say
she needed a ride and money for new shoes.
We gave her money, back when it was good
between the two of us; when we drank booze
and danced, talked until two, those nights we would
smoke cigars, those nights when you would wear
your coat—real mink, a hundred different deaths
sewn into it. We would converse and share
hopes, words, and you had not thrown me off yet.
The snow came down like death—like death and lies
from both our lips, stuck in-between the sighs.

Nigel Holt

Devotee

You cannot know how much I do not miss
your absent fingers; your hands cropped at the wrist.
Your lack of forearms fills me with a bliss
almost as keen as holding in my fist,
the sensuous contours of your right leg's stump.
Electrically erotic to the touch,
your shapely shoulder's butcher's-joint's a bump
untainted by prosthesis, frame or crutch.

This absence in your presence is a fire;
my altar of devotion to your praise.
Though open and abandoned, limbless trunk,
positioned on the plinth of my desire,
you are nectar: sweet though unimbibed, and drunk
through the veneration of my awestruck gaze.

Nigel Holt

First Fruit and Tithes

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith...
—Revelation, 1, 7.

The whisper of religion stalks the corn,
its tongue of promised-harvest soothes the sheaves:
each starved ear despondently forlorn.
But yet, though having been, it quietly leaves.

Trees clamour with the matins of the rooks,
hedges chant an *a capella* charm
to keep the earthbound mother from the stooks,
or the sacrificial beasts that field the farm.

Their lowing rises higher—horses stamp;
blood-roses huddle in their wooden box;
absence clutches silence like a cramp
that spreads across the throat, and locks.

And then, the glowing censer of the priest
unleashes something smoke-like from the East.

Paul Stevens

Seef Mall

Along the promenade of Seef Mall, a flash
of light burning black from the black on black
female night of abaya and niqab,
tricked modestly about with blue and purple,

has set these djinni of desire astir.
They blunder gaping from the higher air,
to slide dizzily down to the lower air,
skimming the crisp white keffiyeh of virtue.

Your bite into my hand is sharp as citron.
The taste of you upon my mouthed words pierces
my palate; I slaver bloody pomegranate.

Ghosts wag and flutter about the tree of life,
then dissipate into haze. The wind is hot,
blows dust from out the pale land of tombs.

Paul Stevens

Beit Hanoun Aftermath, Viewed on YouTube

Despite the buffering, it jerks and freezes,
then starts again: the ululations roughly
severed mid-cry, jump-cutting at random
to howls of impotence, siren symphonies.
A medic's gloved hand tries to wipe death from
an infant's head, as if death were mere spillage
that could be cleansed by earnest application.
Oxygen clamped against a face—the spirit

pumped into matter which declines to matter.
Mis-spelled captions criticise the slaughter,
ignoring Israel's right to self defense.
Massacre? Too emotive. Technical error.
Regrettable. A hundred pays for one.
Despite the suffering, it starts again.

Leo Yankevich

Ezra Pound Enters the Tent

No, this is not a station in the metro,
this is an open cage outside of Pisa.
Ezra Pound now sits inside of it,
his beard a burning bush of grief made new.
Gazing at the moon, and looking retro,
the better craftsman grins to bars, and sees a
night of stars implode, his touched eyes lit
and posed for labour. If not he, then who
will scribble truth into a timeless croon?
Twenty-five days will pass before the good
guys offer him a tent, his face now wood,
his psyche worn by rain and sun and moon.
He leaves the cage, and is assisted in,
his mouth ajar, his grin not quite a grin.

Leo Yankevich

**Ludwig Wittgenstein Visits
George Trakl in Hospital,
Cracow, 6 November 1914**

O stolzere Trauer! ihr ehernen Altäre,
Die heiße Flamme des Geistes nährt heute ein gewaltiger Schmerz,
Die ungeborenen Enkel.

The doves alight. The rooks cast shadows down.
And yet more trains arrive in Cracow Central
with wounded soldiers, while still others leave
for Gorlitz and the not too distant front.
Ludwig Wittgenstein arrives with a frown,
his logical thoughts not yet transcendental,
his gold watch rubbing his grey jacket's sleeve.
He doesn't know yet what he will confront.
He doesn't know that he is three days late,
He doesn't know that Trakl lies cold and dead.
He'll take a tram and then walk down a lane.
He'll put his fingers on a rusty gate,
hear howls, smell wounds, behold a sky that's red.
And for the first time he will fathom pain.

Leo Yankevich

The Poems

From nothingness the poems came to me,
warm and sensual as cats, their claws
digging deep into my aging shins.
But when I looked into their bright green eyes,
they told me that they had no remedy
for madness or approaching death. Their paws
rest upon my lap now, and their chins
press soothingly against my mortal thighs,
as if to say that when I don't know how
to cope, disgusted by my life's deceit,
and forgetfulness has committed theft,
touching the many wrinkles on my brow,
they will be here to soften the defeat,
reminding me they're all that I have left.

Carl Brennan

Vagrants in November

You find them in the parks, obscene and drunk,
with the lank hair spidering down their shoulders—
dead or asleep on benches, sinking or sunk
under the heavy wind, a sky that molds.

Passersby ramble; peddlers hawk their junk;
disturbed, our men of leisure curse like soldiers.
Some contemplate the ponds in a vague funk;
others, the calm that blankets trees and boulders.

Work is the people's opium, not theirs.
Mandarins decked in rags, they save their strength
for gathering tribute up as night returns.

"I'm hungry," reads the placard that one wears;
and pity lines some upturned hats at length
to mitigate the cold that nearly burns.

Carl Brennan

Altarpiece: Madonna and Child Enthroned

Too beautiful for any other throne,
she still appears remote, the present good
eclipsed by memories. That azure hood
just emphasizes sadness; even her own
angels (sage adolescents nearly grown,
singing divisions played on gilded wood
mandolins) who would cheer her if they could,
attempt a hopeless task: their queen is stone.

The child rests on her lap. His fingers curl
to bless the world his world of sorrows bought—
grave for his years, ignoring the poor
girl who bore his fatal pride, mastery caught
far from this shield of fingers pale as pearl...
Indeed her crown is heavy. It is thought.

Jared Carter

Nightfall

Now while I sit here in this dark chamber
By firelight, a lost traveler returned
From a distant country, and half unlearned
In his own tongue—I must risk the danger
Of remembrance. Pensive, I would linger
Over old books, yellowing pages burned
By unquenchable years, that I once yearned
To know: the verse of forgotten singers.
First almost nothing remains—a fragrance
Of blossoming trees, a single footstep
On the cobbled stones beneath my window.
Yet every line reverberates. A dance,
Perhaps, in the way the music has kept
To an old balance, among these shadows.

Jared Carter

Voyage

Comes now the lull of summer and wind,
Bedclothes thrown off except for a sheet
Of white sail barely touching the skin,
Its texture soothing the way to sleep,
Starting to work free. In the same way
Outgoing words ebb over the past,
Smoothing and shaping, their subtle play
Erasing, charting a different tack.
Images drift through a panoply
Of aimless thought, the flimsy tether
Of association slips. Furled, we
Enter stillness. A darkness gathers,
All is dream, we know ourselves to be
Ancient again, fit for all weathers.

Jared Carter

Raspberry Moon

O, I will come for you when the moon
Utters its great golden vowel to the sky –
When the cauldron of night and the spoon
Of stars have been hung on hooks so high,
The earth itself, in sleep, interposes—
When all the slithery creatures make merry
And the trellis is heavy with white roses
And the light spilling down turns raspberry—
For then there will be no gold or silver
Gimbaling the long reaches of the stream,
No sheen on the far steeple. In the room
Where we embrace, no lamp, no sliver
Of candle to show us the way. The dream
Will do that, and the pale gaze of the moon.

Joseph S. Salemi

Stoned Students

You tell them by their wobbling zigzag stride—
They stagger into class for one half-hour,
Head down and collar up, so as to hide
The fact that eyes are glazed, and breath is sour.

With brains unhinged by hashish, pot, or coke
They sit there in a semi-conscious fuddle.
They don't buy textbooks, never take a note;
Their prose is sheer confusion, utter muddle.

Their mouths breathe forth a narcotizing vapor;
They sleep in class, or leave before the bell—
They miss the midterm, don't submit a paper,
And log four weeks of absences as well,

And then drift to your office, in a daze,
Inquiring why they haven't gotten A's.

Joseph S. Salemi

To Any Imbecile TV Talk Show Hostess

You laugh and cry and smile and frown on cue
(Have you a face that hasn't been screen-tested?)
Your show's a masterpiece of managed hype:
Fake conflict, bogus feelings, and a slew
Of low-grade louts. The sponsor has invested
In a niche market, and this sort of tripe
Is the best vehicle to do his hawking:
A freak show based on voyeuristic gawking.
Who are your guests? Two sisters who have shared
A boyfriend doubling as a pathetic harlot;
A group of teenage dorks absurdly paired,
Each one as crass and vapid as a starlet.
But only Nielsen ratings get you scared—
No shame could ever turn your smug face scarlet.

Joseph S. Salemi

Bismarck's Dream

The God of Dreams came and placed in my hand a map
of Germany. This gradually grew more and more rotten
in my grasp, till at last it crumbled away like tinder, and
vanished into shreds.

—Otto von Bismarck

How to make a people? How to forge
A nation from the Baltic to the Rhine?
I throttled Europe—forced her to disgorge
The letters-patent of our *Staatsverein*.

Diplomacy, and war against three crowns:
The Austrians, the Danes, the feckless French,
Until the little princedoms and free towns
Were firmly in the Hohenzollern clench.

At Versailles, in the mirrored hall, we stood
As rigid as our *feldgrau* grenadiers—
I showed the stodgy Germans how they could
Drink blood and iron wet with foemen's tears.

And now I see the future of this land:
A map that turns to ashes in my hand.

Margaret Menamin

Obsession

“Well now,” the shrink says, “do I have this right?
You think you are obsessive. What you do
is have sex with your Mrs. every night.
That’s wonderful; there’s nothing wrong with you.

I just call that a healthy appetite.”
“But, Doc, I go home on my lunch hour too,
and not for lunch. You understand me?” “Quite.
A little much, but then, *chacun son goût*.”

“Then there’s my girlfriend. Every other day
I leave work early, go to a motel.”
“Well, just as long as you still feel o.k.—”
“I have a boyfriend whom I see, as well.”

The doctor’s jaw drops. “Good grief, man, you’ve got
to get hold of yourself.” “I do—a lot.”

Margaret Menamin

My Wake

Well, here I am, laid out in Sunday best,
these damn pretentious clothes I never wore.
There's all my scheming kinfolk. What a bore.
There sits my son—as usual, pants unpressed—

hoping he's going to land a big bequest.
There sits my daughter with her paramour,
and there is Connie, that abysmal whore,
buried in rouge and loudly overdressed.

There sits my lawyer in his pinstripe vest,
licking his lips and crooked to the core—
he's bled me dry and hoping for some more.
The undertaker's greedy as the rest.

They'll cry hard water when they read my will.
I've left it all to Murphy's Bar and Grill.

Margaret Menamin

There Is No They

Why are we shocked when we must face the fact
that no man's inhumanity to man
is isolated, that no brutal act
on any other soil is harsher than
our own atrocities, that our own boots
compress the throats of dying men, and screams
evaporate from our complacent dreams
to expurgate the blood that feeds our roots?

We share a cruel planet's history
of greed and torture. We have not come far
beyond the days of paleolithic war.
There is no they: The universal we
remains too often arrogant and blind.
Mankind is man; mankind is seldom kind.

Contributors' Notes

Carl Brennan's poems have appeared in countless small press publications. He lives in North Syracuse, NY.

Jared Carter's work has appeared in a number of print and electronic journals. His fourth book of poems, *Cross this Bridge at a Walk*, was issued in 2006 by Wind Publications in Kentucky. His web site, Jared Carter Poetry, contains additional poems and stories.

Alfred Dorn began writing poetry at age ten after reading James Russell Lowell's "Aladdin." A prolific, widely published writer of metrical verse, he is the author of *Voices From Rooms*, and *From Cells To Mindspace*, both published in 1997 by Somers Rocks Press; and *Claire And Christmas Village*, issued by Pivot Press in 2002. He is the coordinator of the World Order of Narrative and Formalist Poets Contest, which offers large cash awards for the best metrical entries. Dr. Dorn's interests include art history, philosophy, travel, antiques, and psychic research.

Nigel Holt has had poems in *Snakeskin*, *Worm*, *Melic Review*, *Envoi*, *Orbis* and *Artemis Magazine*.

David W. Landrum, teaches Literature and Creative Writing at Cornerstone University, a small liberal arts college in Western Michigan. He has published poetry in many magazines and journals, including *The Blind Man's Rainbow*, *Small Brushes*, *riverrun*, *Driftwood Review*, *Hellas*, *The Formalist*, and many others.

Margaret Menamin lives in Pittsburgh and is a regular contributor of poetry to *Iambs and Trochees*, *The Lyric*, and *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Her book, *Sonnets For a Second Summer*, was published by Westphalia Press in 1996. She has been, among other things, secretary, court clerk, librarian, newspaper editor and feature writer, ad writer, and currently works from her home as a medical transcriptionist.

Joseph S. Salemi teaches in the Department of Humanities at New York University, and in the Classics Department of both Hunter College and Brooklyn College, C.U.N.Y. His work has appeared in over one hundred journals and literary magazines in the United States and in Britain.

Paul Stevens was born in Sheffield, England, but has lived most of his life in Australia. He has an Honours Degree in English from the University of Sydney, and teaches Literature, Historiography, and Ancient History. He has published on the Julio-Claudians, as well as poetry and literary criticism. He is the founder and editor of *The Shit Creek Review*.

Leo Yankevich lives with his wife and three sons in Gliwice, Poland. His poems have appeared in scores of literary journals of both sides of the Atlantic, most recently in *Blue Unicorn*, *Chronicles*, *Envoi*, *Iambs & Trochees*, *Staple*, and *Windsor Review*.

Links

Publishers

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