



Die Young

DIE YOUNG

Number 7



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Die Young is a literary magazine for cartographers of the abyss, toad smokers, connoisseurs of coma, the metabolically challenged. Our motto: Let's put the youth back in euthanasia!

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome but cannot be returned without a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Please send 4-6 poems or translations.

Mortua sum ergo sum.

Editors:

Jesse Glass
Department of English Culture
Fukuoka Jo Gakuin College
2409-1 Ogōri, Ogōri-shi
Fukuoka 838-01
Japan

Skip Fox
English Department
P.O. Drawer 44691
Univ. of Southwestern
Louisiana
Lafayette, LA 70504

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send to: Skip Fox
English Department
P.O. Drawer 44691
University of Southwestern Louisiana
Lafayette, LA 70504-4691

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Antonin Artaud

Antonin Artaud set out for Mexico on January 10, 1936 ready to stick St. Patrick's cane in Middle America's stinking red earth. Through Vera Cruz, Mexico City and up north to the land of the Tarahumaras Indians he went, groping for the scorched "ka" inside poetry's punkhole. For the first few days he sat between himself and the mountains. The instinctive poisons of scorpions and snakes that run wild beneath the sun passed as divinatory sense until he was sitting inside his own skeleton. Insofar as he imagined his own extinction against a blue backdrop, his experience of the peyote rite in the land of the Magi Kings was both epiphanic and tragic. It was after he dropped a third peyote button that the rabbit in the moon visited his skull. The women of Tarahumaras were dancing into the night while he dreamed of a day in a French clinic when this rabbit would bear the teeth he would lose as a result of electric shock treatment. "In a short while I will be dead or in a situation such that I will never need a name. I am therefore counting on you for the 3 stars," he whispered into the ear of the rabbit. Only a shaman would recognize the celestial animal gnawing at his anus was clattering away in relation to a rectal cancer that would take his life.

Kenneth Warren

Spring and Tucker

Dogwood blossoms profuse enough that when they fell in the suddenly sultry heat of last weekend, pushed off the stems by the emerging leaves, they littered the ground so deep I shuffled through them coming up the driveway. Sixty-seven trees the count from the mailbox uphill a thousand feet to the house.

Now the locust and black cherry are the most visible upper-story blossoms, snowball bush blooming outside the study window, tiny woods irises with their washed lavender blossoms mimicked by the siberians in the terraced garden, the gaudy deliquescent flags saved by the poppies below. Cranesbill passim.

The various thrushes, indigo buntings, hummingbird in the house, face to face with two male scarlet tanagers in a hickory sapling not ten feet from me, the young cardinal pecking a hundred times a day at his image in the truck mirror.

&

Transiting rose-breasted grosbeak in the walnut top, clear through lenses among the sparse spring leaves. Is he the author of that solo, a restless extension as much as five seconds long but intense like five minutes of Charlie Parker.

Quarter
right profile, his breast rose indeed, though i could not

see his throat move. But no song while he dug at
the lice nested in that rosy glow, and
the variation stopped when he flew.

&

Two days later it was a wood thrush, same spot,
speckled breast barely visible in profile his
lower mandible trembling with each finishing
trill. Plump, a sturdy bird in the last light.

It is necessary to write only
when silence can't be sustained, the solitary thrush
at twilight in the walnut top—all shadow below
him, all brightness above--splitting his throat.

&

In the yard, mock
orange, peony just

opening, a lemon lily
among the poppies. Already

the poke grows gross.

&

Scarlet tanager bathing in the run, a
luxurious preening, feathers fluffed while he

tossed water from his bill over his wings and back. Then he flew away, passing through a patch of sunlight that revealed that red I've been trying to describe all these years, brighter than fresh arterial blood even, or the topknot of a pileated woodpecker in the snow: dazzling red, saturated with light, none of the dark undertones that enhance its warmth at the expense of its chromatic clarity, the image resonating in my head well after he disappeared into the beeches beyond the fence.

&

stay away, stay
away. silence when
possible

&

Today the female rose-breasted grosbeak, no rose on her, warbling in the walnut. Yesterday, it was the male on a dogwood limb, his throat barely but perceptibly rolling with song. They must not believe the books that call the Ohio Valley out of their range, or they know we are in for a short summer.

Damp and mild thus far, old leaders won't loosen, ache an ironic compression of Eluard's apothegm: body the sensible extension of the soul. Is it really what we call touch that connects the pain inside us with what we know of it, or does some nameless sense monitor our guts that keep us, part of the world.

Coda:

Things Fall Apart But Slowly

the eye loses detail
at fifty, hummingbird poised a second
in front of my face has a male fork to his tail
or no? The young thrush on the woodpile gathering
strength for flight over water, how spotted its breast,
wood, or hermit in the quiet?

The world still here
creating distance as distinct forms cut into
a background, wave after wave. Trees changing color,
solitary barns blocked in against the ridge across
the river that laid this one long horizontal
reach into which the eyes fades, unable to catch
the distinction of squints, yearning for each
edge, the things difference makes.

Brian Richards

Peeling Oranges at Zander's

The glasses balance on the ridge of his nose.
He gazes from behind the bifocals towards London.
He coughs and leans towards the carpet.
His glasses slip. He nudges the rims, raising
Them. Up. Back to their proper home. Where
They belong. I continue peeling the oranges,

My hands turning sparkly. On the orange
Wall he has all of Daddy's hats. His long nose
Swings towards me. He stares at the suede chapeau. "Wear
It," he says, quickly. I imagine myself in London,
A cowboy hat and a gingham dress, racing
Away from Zander's house. Away from the Arabian carpet.

Zander says that he bought the carpet
in Tangier. Or was it Fez? The orange
Dust swells from the floor raising
Above our knees in puffs. He knows
I will squirm. I stand up and clutch my map of London.
I want to run out the door to where the bowlers were.

I want to take the A1 South where
I can forget the orange dust of the Moroccan carpet.
Zander exhales. Whiffs of London
Fill the room. He still looks at the orange
Suede hat, blinking rarely, his nose
Facing the orange wall. "It's too big," I say, raising

My head while my mind races
For the exit on the A1 South where
I will toss the hat away. Perhaps the wind will take it. Who knows?
Moving towards the wall, Zander carps it

On that knows the stories behind all the orange
Suede hats. "That one was bought when Daddy went to London

Bridge." And my mind wanders on the motorway to London.
But Zander brings me back to his living room. Raising
His left hand on one deft movement, he throws the orange
Peels into the kitchen. They hit the wall where
They fall on a piece of purple linoleum. The carpet
Has disintegrated. Zander's glasses slide down his nose.

I don't think I'll leave London again and my brother knows.
He knows, and raising his gangly body, he walks across the carpet,
Next to the orange wall where he hands me a worn train timetable.

Susan Best

museum piece

there was nothing left but dry wood shaped
like bones by the time the experts arrived

we were waiting in a garden some sort of enclosure
ordered as if in payment for what remained
outside tendrils suggest (inadequately perhaps)
the shower of flight we had come to see

a more reliable guidebook would've led us
to expect less in the way

 relics in quiet
rooms between glass sunlight
 curtains even the gas
drawn up fall drawn out
 or follow

a tour of some smaller cities
the guesswork out of history

Dean Taciuch

Prescience, or execution

The child resists sleep
until the fourth day
tears wet the dry eyes once
events fall into being, having been known
are then written in, once again, over
generalities, the sparrow, the gull
plays higher, freer, it is like that:
give up to the low flight over the field:
what you know comes true, be happy enough.

Intelligent eloquence and politeness
deserve death unless they evidence
contrition and remorse: no rehabilitation
is merited in light of the terrible crime,
this feigned honesty. The punishment will be
the denial of Paul's apparent repentance.

Contrition by proxy: Jesus was a female prostitute:
he has really changed here in prison—
four classification officers said so, at least 27
gardeners, executive clemency has nothing
to do with her, commensurate with come what may.

Natural conformation and other fauna
abound like crossed fingers—
copy down what they leap over, the bell—
Life: a very good documentary.
Please run down and get me some time
at the corner, my pastrami sandwich— I
need to replenish my puss by the ear—

("What's that, dear?")
Death or 199 years.
"Up to you, at last."
To the governor, to little kids and things
and to the binoculars.

Karen Driscoll

Discretion

I waste my time thinking madly, not writing
smoking cooking teaching reading writing
applying drinking talking crying doubting
dying the evident outcome of all this hard work

how can this voice come back so surely tailing
the art of daydreaming melancholy, jealousy,
assure metal piqued by skeletal trees in winter.

why do you look at me like I might recognize you
at any moment
gently like a fawn whose only hurtful gest could be to flee.

Oh, wordful origins! Please spare me your implications!

Karen Driscoll

from **Six Waltz Steps**

i

The undersides of leaves
show in the wind
before dark thunderheads.

Unfurling
in this birdless air
I can't but think

if there is a form
full-standing
within the candor of the world

it's nothing
I feel privy to.

ii **Fool's Gold**

A plumber's plunger
seven inches
from the toilet
gets pissed on.

Objects are
surrounded, not
by context, but
intelligence;

'the spirit speaks
poetically; the lunatic
takes the literal sense'
where Eros laughs

and the ear in the air
where music ought to be
remains, superbly pragmatic
dispersal through hearing,

extra Mercurius nulla satius

iii

cinnabarinic 'red dawn' @ midnight
like proprioceptive twitch of dog
w/in alembic sleep, the tincture
dreamt, the dream relayed, a trill
so throned in flesh an moment
zoned without interpretive behest
this lakely blight, encanticed
conceit of syntactical round
breathes back in to swelling
mesh of aleotropic signs behung
in meaning's claim, red meat
bluster as blows aeolic cluster
of stars, black ones, printed
thus to know the rinse now made
as ode toward rise of other-than-
heliotropic 'light', the Yggr
one mounts as equally mounted by,
heterodoxillogical axii crosst
ikon to motility, dropped seed
as notch-time marks add up

to composite flower, the petals'
moments fall to indivisible
congeries of independent parts
all given up to ecstatic hours,
efforts timed and now dispersed
to foliate flood, unfolded rose

Stephen Ellis

Deposit

Dark flame entrance of the cave.
Soft spot like dream fallen that is
stuck for approval.
Self inflicted informant
of comprehension,
identified authentic because
normal use decoy isn't feeling it.

Unaware of the person standing
just inside, acoustic torture
of the real not far enough guise
plus incendiary impulse.

Dept I owe saturated of rats.
Time I have for trapdoor
blocked betrayal of innocence.
Talk I know is cheap unless I use
the name myth exploded of itself
in lifelong darkness.

So unlikely now the loose end
penetrating axis, lonely at the place
I imagine as motion carved from
underground silence.
Deep red glow that brings me
air and precious stone,
shell and shield encasing the light
I want to call endless.

Open my thought when I quit
coming down on the outside
of this sharp circle or that.

Illuminate mass grave absence,
profane exhausted appearance,
confounded contingent
tunnel of difference,
raising what I look for
in a friend.

Spencer Selby

Patient *for C. R.*

gentle patient
American god

nature deathlike
sign before Adam
go right morning
bless the everyday
attitude problem

force under a spell
blue sky lyric times
recourse prior to action

I'm Selby says he
I sailed up the Mississippi
proud with no assets
started out when
it didn't matter
but now it does

objective sun and
irrelevance my thought
the hustler

vicarious warm fix orbit
old fashion sensitive
lips sealed mouth from
my own work devious

I not me where men are men
the hardshell wings accepted
challenge of an era

I rushed to the hospital
they strapped me in a chair
so fast it's a moment
looking inward

center of nowhere
flash field stone image
come face to face with
feeling enough to break
summation value

gentle patient
no decision light the only
dream eternal

for the time I have left

Spencer Selby

Frontier *for K. W.*

Word eye gets text of midwest myth
looking back to contact hinging on
devotion to the dead.

Glyphs treat mindset rooted in
exclusion from literature,
clean story of interpretation that
would explain away its fruit
according to Christian language
in communication with
the new epic score.

Glyph practice courts fallout
to perceive fluidity
within the exchange of systems,
looks through the field of memory,
sees behind knowledge where
poetic elements are stored.

A fantastic chain points to
theories and values likely
to remain stuck in lingering irony.
This situation is enriched by
the old method of blindness
cleansing history to indicate
shadows as measure.

Snake time entrance into the human
land of narrative we were
given as a cure.

Traces of blood at the crossroads
described by counterpoint.
Rainbow serpent connected with
conjecture below the baseline.

Story bones recalling
various means for joining
a journey to the underworld.
Late legends of Quetzalcoatl
demanding an unraveling primacy
in chthonic form.

Snake deep tremors of the artist
whose appearance opens up
the space thought muddy canals
and keys of reflection converting
images to love.

Spencer Selby

Temperature

It climbs higher and higher
Up the mercury of the thermometer,
Up the backbone of death,
Recognized almost immediately
Upon the neck at forty,
When it begins to grow more intense.

Its line passes the 402nd mark,
Jumps clear off the thermometer,
Until a series of mountain ranges
Appears to me, with my own death
Bursting upon their precipices.

Don't worry, the 403rd mark,
The summit which does not exist,
Will appear soon enough,
Where the thermometer's mercury is shaken off,
Violently covering the mountains at night,
Just enough, so that soon nothing will be able to exist.

Julian Tuwim

Translated from the Polish by Ed Cates

The Distant Tiger

it's not evident from here, of course,
So naturally you can't hear it--

How the crafty tiger wades
Through the lush jungle, sneaking by in pantomime.

When he stretches across the darkness,
Tearing apart the forest with light, gold across the green,
In one powerful, lazy stroke:

A shining baptism, a murmuring,
Is wrenched out from the masses of foliage,
And it's not apparent at all,
So--of course--you can't hear it.

The peacefulness here, the tranquility.
The bolted door, the padded window,
The fifth of four corners,
A cigarette, a cup of tea.

Here, an ecstasy, an oasis.
A bright yesterday, gray today.
Only the moment of my own darkness
Pounces forward, gleaming with tiger's blood.

Where the self lies in ambush
Ready to leap in an instant--exactly . . . now!
This anxiety which I hold and marvel at,
Licking it clean again and again.

This thing which you learn--in time--to marvel at,
Vibrating, hunted for amid the current,
Which makes you face the things
Which scare you white.

Julian Tuwim
Translated from the Polish by **Ed Cates**

Travels

No limelight for the ambassador of pain. No independent passion. The means to a neutral end is simple, a skin song. It's riskier the longer you keep playing.

The name of the song is the same as the name of the game: health care. Travel, marry, bring a child up without warning or simply be prepared for silence, travel. Never just a single reason.

The reasons to seek a health care plan mount beneath the skin. The ambassador of pain is worn out but cordial. Jersey to St. Louis and back. He makes a phone call for whatever reason. Some part of him is mileage. Overvalued maybe.

The cost of health care has risen at an alarming rate. The ambassador of pain puts more money into his car, keeps moving. The shadows are sucked under the floormat.

Daylight creeps out from under, tries to loosen the handle on the wheel, the tautness. Slow death is a cover story that's boring. There's more than one reason the ambassador of pain lost interest in the road. He's no longer willing.

His car moves on. Getting there--just a reminder.

The tabloid of memory. Alone in rooms, cars. A driver can never release the eyes, the median's a reminder. Even if the heat is on too high, if the game is the slip-the-skin.

Tim Kahl

Sibelius

You must hide something, it's a matter of survival. Then you must study counterpoint. The silence can intensify even though it's hard at first.

You may like the gypsy life, it tends to favor those who know the way to hell, the pathetic, the hard to find. The distant stories with swollen parts.

Conjunction of the verb "to be". To be in more than one place is counterpoint--muted first violins over pizzicato bass. Keep a lot in the head and don't put it down until it boils up to a trill, the crescendo. Three movements. Brass in layers. It makes a kind of stucco for the eardrum. I wonder about the different versions of the water nymph, the broken octaves in Sibelius. The water nymph as it appears in the painting then as it appears on the bookshelf but seldom seen as a legible symbol among the runes so meaningless and hidden. Largo finale. To forget the beginning creates a suspect out of motto or motif, disbelief as a result of major and minor thirds. Dissonance. Meaning out of conflict. Pianissimo grumbles from the timpani--silence. A hole you can think out of, hide the details of what is called living.

Pax ontology. The lament taken as different versions of a medication. Inner change of key, held whole note toward a theoretical behavior. Action. Sequence. Curious as a will played off genetic blueprint.

Sibelius suffered from stage fright in Berlin. He sought an extra rehearsal for the Lemminkäinen Suite. First movement: *Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of the Island*--a dream landscape, a triad with an added sixth scored for horns, theme-dance until fanfare. "Why depart, O handsome hero?" Finale: *Lemminkäinen's Homeward Journey*. The hero and his *weltschmerz*.

Zigeunerleben. To pin the pelvis on a nymph is just an action verb, a children's game. Kids and gypsies don't believe in meaning, it tends to favor those who know the way to hell. *Lemminkäinen in Tuonela*.

Tim Kahl

Grid Chthonics

Beneath the city streets are the card catalogs where the shadows must be crossed regularly. The city rests on this knowledge. All the office windows watching the streets fitting together, growing monoliths baptized in the name of public places. It rains on the streets, the books get wet. As adults we read the banners instead. We are the faithful—part nomad, part farmer—it meant taking sides. The temporal vs. the intemporal, like breath and weather, stirring all matter to life. The rain fell on her forehead; she was the girl in a parade and a statue, smooth eyes, a tear between two ages. Why have the faithful been left with smaller decisions, left to their normal spaces and their interior sweeps?

There are trees that look like people. An arm had broken loose from the stump and divided the population. The conch shell calling across the great divide, but no one was ready for contact. Not even the hero slaying dragon-shaped clouds, his conch shell suggesting easy grace--going through the motions. The stump is stone and flesh, roots shifting over the rock. The shadow cast by the loosened arm is difficult to cross.

Beneath the city streets the seeds grow to merge with the sky in the name of method. The details define rhythms, mechanical Ch'i. The two arches coming together are the human skull and the hair acts out its wild symbolism with the forehead. Knowledge, age after age, doesn't catch. It pushes. The water pours from the larger shell to the shell below. The parade continues, implies motion. The statues are aligned in crosswalks between the curbs. They are nomads, migrating in lockstep to a song. Where is this year's hero singing? Beneath the city streets. Take the escalator down to the second level.

Tim Kahl

Four for My Prairie, Ripped Solitaire

I.

It was not my backyard. The stray dog curled its eyes as if mile-high sunflowers could guide it into the next incarnation. Lust prowls in spite of *la jouissance*. "One cannot be in beauty and yet fail to see it"--*Plotinus*. My mowed lawns are never secure. The mimosa tree split by its own weight suggests the very contrary: to see the divine as something external is to be outside of it. I'm restless with breathless night. Can't you see me now, sweating with abandon? Being's skin of language has ripped--tires squeal like plastic knives on my Jello mirrors.

II.

My eyes are like ships passing in a waking dream. Your suit smells of Elizabeth Taylor's *White Diamonds*. I crave song from your fingertips, howl from your kneecaps. You are everything I ever shopped for. Save me. Save me like prunings from your favorite eucalyptus. "All doctrine concerns either things or signs, but things are learned by signs"--*St. Augustine*. Smoke indicates fire, tears indicate too many encounters with the answering machine. Carpet burns my back like smoke. Machines answer tears like encounters. Indicates many the same as too, or before. I am desolate again now, in winter.

III.

The Imperial Valley map said flambée when I asked for procedure. You can guess the rest. Thorns look like abandonment in this light. A single stalk of Mountain Tansy Mustard has roots like time, flattery like green leaves of eternity. I am not sure of the stretch of my tendons. I don't trust my own pulse. Can time slip backwards when I am asleep? I'll never believe the oil scummed over ponds, over my best white gloves. I fear what I cannot place into a cardboard box: "this Secondary Pleasure of the Imagination proceeds from that Action of the Mind,

which compares the Ideas arising from the Original Objects, with the Ideas we receive from the Statue, Picture, Description, or Sound that represents them. . . . It is this that makes the several kinds of Wit pleasant"--*Joseph Addison, from "On the Pleasures of the Imagination" (1712)*. I've never known anything as generous as your organ donor card. The needle still inflames me with maps. The desert will not lead me out, and you will not rest while I guess the procedure for carrying out the inevitable comparisons.

IV.

Say what you will. I gather my gaudy, baubled rings in heaps. The grim horizon backfires like mud clotted with thoughts. Bargello masks her upholstered sense of forever. She will bring simple matings to the waves. Tide is never conditioned or drooling. "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in an manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling"--*Edmund Burke (1757)*. Have you any idea? Tablecloths of paternity soak up spilled contentedness. You are never scrolled like Georgian collectibles. You merely persist with mere leather and spectacular sunsets. I am deckled like courage, scorned like a mahogany chair meant, sweet as longing, for lolling.

Susan Smith Nash

Candy Land I

I like a little candy, *do you?*
I bought you a bag full of candy,
red and peppermint and round like
stones, handled by the many,
for your delectation.

This sullen, silent room
is airy like an MTV room.
Figures of stereo women
are running from robbers,
doves crying, smoke swirling.

Men with vague, perfect
haircuts stare into the camera
For ten seconds I feel very
Melrose and then

then I remember, this
is Candy Land.

Once upon a time there was this poor
widow with glasses in a rocking chair
and her glasses fall, and she sees
through a fishbowl, and the children
tie up her mortgage to a kite tail:
Our Gang episode two thirty-one,
when you're young and healthy--a
child, in fact--you believe it all:

there's a future so watery
widows rock in it, death's just a
wave of your kite, and money's a
crack in a pair of specs no one
need you know except for the
square, and sickness is only a
kind of health viewed backwards,
the way the old do.

You have a sucking candy party
instead of kissing everyone sits around
and sucks on candy, and their lips
are red, their thighs are red

great grinning faces all red and
sticky pop out of the gloaming
like fireflies, out on the street
signs and posters announce the
party *come in and suck candy*

In New York I went to this bar
for kids, a ghastly mug of
orange juice in my hands and
Morrissey playing on the jukebox

I wanted to make a Bloody Mary
from a glass of blood
but I thought it would choke me
blood and vodka, would churn up
like plasma in a dead man's vein

I felt restless as though a drink
would kill me, I looked from face
to face of boy to boy, they had a
smug candy look like pumpkins

brains on a side dish

there is a whale of difference
not your shallow candy plate

Outside the bar a dog died on the
sidewalk, a bitch too pregnant.

Gravidity and the summer heat
melted the candy, red stripes, green

Kevin Killian

In Winter, Soft Rain on Windshields . . .

In winter, soft rain on windshields, roads glisten towards the sea,
a traveling lady with pink gloves, like a formal carnation--
dead beneath the ravenous howl of night, a lotus flower in the snow,
a sea urchin lost in the deep,
a wind forever scours the streets speaking your name.

*She came down the sidewalk from the blue glimmer of Central Park.
Just seeing her go by pulled my heart.
My love with lily smile and heron eyes,
I saw you go by through the smoke of the café,
your body a white bouquet of orange blossoms . . .
What music, what riotous champagne of youth.*

Silent, golden, the neighborhood gardens wait, enclosed by grillwork.
A sigh of snowy sirens starts, a wind that shakes curtains.

*Every night, in the cafe,
my feverish eyes followed her.
My whole winter in New York
my eyes sought her among snow and neon.*

Airport offices with clinical lights.
A paradise of painted lips, painted nails, a smile, platinum blondes, low
necklines, the sea green and dark.
A sword in icy darkness, a jasmine frozen in time,
death comes, like an anchor plunging among luminous reefs.

*New York's cold clouds the windows
My love was a swan, skating in Central Park.*

The orchestra has a saxophone, a drummer, a pianist, singers. There's a
stripper and a magic act.
The killers wear patent leather shoes, smoke cigarettes, smile, open fire.
When we left that night it rained. The sky was alluring copper light.
A spotlight for the fashion show, for smoking pistols.

by Pedro Gimferrer
translated from the Spanish by David Bratt

In the Telephone Booths . . .

In the telephone booths
cryptic messages drawn with lipstick
the last words of the sweet young blondes
whose bloody necks seek refuge there to die.
On her last night under the counterfeit sun of pale neon-
streets newly painted with magnolias, headlights of patrol cars
yellow in the dawn:
"I'll meet you at 1:30, when the movie lets out,"
but by then she's dead in the morgue
her body a bouquet of orchids.
Slapped around in nightclubs, cornered by spotlights, wounded in
a nighttime shootout,
my sweet love weeps in my arms.
A final light, sharp and clear,
seems to slip from her hidden places:

a light that stops wanderers
and murmurs to them of childhood.
Old music--a song in time with those stale notes
 one night I met Ava Gardner,
a girl wrapped in a raincoat--of course we kissed
 once in the elevator, in the dark between floors--
 she had very blue eyes, and spoke
 in a low voice--her name was Nelly.
She closes her eyes and listens to a siren song in the silvery
 night of lustrous omens.
The night has hot blue streets.
Shadows embrace each other in puddles and bars.
Stars fight in the dark sky
as she dies of love,
 amidst a bouquet
 of perfume. . . .

by **Pedro Gimferrer**
translated from the Spanish by **David Bradt**

Stiletto Heels

A rattler isn't poisoned by its meat.
It swallows what it kills.
That's how it feeds.

Maybe the first specimen of vertebrate with venom
had no stomach for it, died
digesting its first bite.

A little failure in the scheme.
Call it narcosaurus for the sleep it now enjoys.

Of course I made it up! So what?
The planet must have sired some such sometime.
Guesswork too can shed an honest light.

See then in the narcosaur's small failure
how the law succeeds.
The planet isn't hipdeep yet in oxymorons:
fish that panic out of sight of land,
acrophobic eagles,
gophers freaking out in tunnels.

Go ahead, relax. Logic rules.
Rationalists thrive like
women dressed to kill but not survive.

Stephen Thomas

The Invalid¹

Sickly, idle, drowzy as a fly
he lay in bed and dreamed our horrors up.
The flies like stars upon the ceiling
were a story he invented to himself.
The grid of analytics was his zodiac
See how it emptied itself!
The flies are gone. It stays,
crowded with conic sections, with statistics,
ravening abstracts, glutted with vacancy.

The body is a robot,
like any animal,
a fluid and tissue machine.
Mind is lying apart there
with nothing at all to do.

The body is a dark shop,
like any animal,
Mind is crowded alone there
hunched in its humid slicker,
fingering its crotch.

Images flicker there on a yellowing screen.

Here's what's become of Socrates.
Here's what's become of Plato.
Idle little perverts,
greasing themselves in the dark.

Stephen Thomas

¹Descartes is said to have invented analytic geometry when laid up as a boy he idly devised a means of keeping track of flies on the ceiling above him by means of a grid.

The Wader

Is it fun to cry into a mobile phone
your plans for the decrepit city?
Possibly, but a sliver of doubt
works itself under your nail.
Ow. I confess to you, defrocked
or not. The name for cannibalizing
yourself, please. It was writ large,
but has retreated from its precarious
stance. Intermediately, generically
weird mail arrives, and goes back
unopened to whoever pressed the print
button, believing that I believed.
And I do, in the inane spectre
at the park, ambling, avoiding looking
straight at a wedding in a copse of fir and pine.
The month ends the way it does,
"indeterminately" parched for
a gin fizz. That is, my lens pretends
to be heading into different weather,
and I'm sure the way they spoke
meant they meant it, because their eyes
had a glossy spit shine.

Robert Thompson

A dusty, musty book of poems

mildew odor

Basho's "The Records of a Weather Exposed
Skeleton"

Skiing with an old friend
through a farm field,
deep snow covering
most corn-stalk stubble

Old books, lies I accept without regret, what do they propose? Do I have any say
about it?

Close rows of fir trees,
shuffling clumsily between them,
avoiding dry dead branches,
faces unscratched.

Steve and I had come to this glacial trail, a railroad bed raised five or six feet
above the farm fields, which stretched about us for a couple of miles, along with
silos, patches of woods, and a few hills. Convoys of snowmobiles, headlights
snaking towards us, came from front and back.

"Machines" or "sleds"
got closer, grinded, flopped in the snow,
passed us with a wave, or, inscrutable,
left an acrid trail, macerated.

After following the railroad bed for a couple of miles, we ventured away from the
flat unchallenging route, with its chipped up snow and packs of ski-masked
snowmobilers, and skied off into the farm fields to the left of us. If it weren't for
the snow's commonality, we wouldn't dare trespass on strangers' land.

Thick, unmotored, unpeopled foot
of snow, the farm yard a mile off,
only the far away power saw
or snow blower grates, and a barking dog.
Bold, but nervous skiing.

An irrigation ditch blocked our way between farm fields. Bushes before it had to be stepped through on skis, and then a four foot drop made steep by stiffly piled snow, no footing. We stamped down sideways, and climbed up the other bank, less steep.

A field of snow, wind-carved,
blue, red sparkles in the sun,
like sandstone worn by water,
layers and bands, the grain of the storm.

As we skied, we talked of this place, our affairs, the war. Skiing this way and that, a woods, a prairie grass field, a snow-glutted stream bed, we used up the last hour of daylight.

Final sunlight on the snow,
soft blue shadows, a field mouse's
tracks serpentine stretch out,
a tan grass stalk pokes sideways
out of a drift, its perfect shadow.

Robert Thompson

The Daughter's Helmet of Puberty

squirmy little girls
and the driver's warm neck
abash me, son, she said,
if your name is Jessup and
if you can't help it
and then go on with your meal

they polished off the princess
every drop but one:
the alphabet is just a way to praise
this one last closing flavor

the things the dreaming fat man kicks from the path
turn out to be the fragments of insidious inconceivable
infant reality
or items left behind from a sudden unexpected withdrawal of the
powerful dead
one that leaves unrighteous cats asleep on a hot sidewalk
lungs with hair and reverie

Responsibilities,
everyday makes no fist of mine
no witches roar approval of these values
the bird and the cat are writhing together
but elsewhere

something new she said needs to while everyone is talking it

Robert Gregory

Milk in a Cup

under branches sweet with rain
a false road
and in a shining place the sky is waiting

her mouth hibiscus and salt
she sang for me in an improvised language

at home they're all asleep before the screen
the blue light goes inside their faces and comes out again

today
in the mountains the wind investigates a lovely rag
today
two boys in a van that trembled at the stoplight
and a white-faced man who couldn't see
his staff was trembling, everything was hidden
the question of grass

Robert Gregory

Definition of Happiness

undiminished by distance, wet and shining, unable to speak
the horses seem serious and glad
several have collected scattered bits of umpire and bishop
don't ask them, they can't talk about it

the fragrance of scattering is like
sage & devil's finger when crushed by little girls
busy inventing a game to get at their real ferocity
chanting some hot pleasure-sound and nonsense

so that these very bare branches
decorated with doves and orioles made of tin
some still warm from the fire, start quivering
although people are standing still, the wind tastes like milk
and the world is dancing inside itself as always

Robert Gregory

In Regard to Truth

Once again
a spotted green world
of dying
and mourning-flies
chicory coffee and cake
you have been there before
and know how it is
to be alone and want someone
a blessing in disguise
unwrapping gauze, finding
a hickory cross buried
in red clay, good
morning to the blues
sievelike the rain
down at Little Chicago
it is Doomsday
for your wedding, child
the maidens there euphoric
constructing hollow tarts
for the framework of art
but for me
simply work and study
keeping to myself
the nostalgic story
of Sophia and her stay.

Errol Miller

Only a Theory

Sweet life
an anonymous thing
of time and place wrapped
in a brassy blue flute
words, they're only words
and vibrations from out of Little Chicago
lately, late at night
in a sea-green lawn chair
from the 40's, I saw
the sun go down again, I saw
magic kingdoms disappear into the sea
this transcendental passage
through whirling iron turnstiles
an awesome distant charting
gigantic waves pulsating into a New Age
comes the wrecking crew to Paradise
the bower of a Ceiba tree
change and that is all
hairy authors of this world and others
preparing pulpy manuscripts by hand
long grey epitaphs scrawled upon
smokehouse walls, letters
to the literary masses
and songs of despair smelling
of death and decay
and newmown hay.

Errol Miller

from **Just as Though a Person Were Listening**

2.

Two bowls upturned, the moon and a man walking away from the lake.
He has turned his back to this poem, to the lake
in whose reflecting surface he seeks gold, his own face.

Much darkness, tears,
and many years, sediment on the bottom of the bowl, the withered
grass and a shadow
from which he beholds all that could not be born.
In the mirror of faces he sees his own face.

6.

I'm looking for land, straw and a shoulder,
I'm looking for a roof beneath which I can be born.
A boulder beneath rocks,
I am a petrified tree on the ocean shore.
My fingers stay frozen in spring.
I just keep walking, looking for my birthplace.

33.

On a rim windier than earlier
and on the outer side of the border
I am cycling on a deep emptiness
and encounter, needlessly, so needlessly
familiar faces.
Something wild cuts a wound in the cloth

when I painted a new house,
something savage has shoved me into emptiness and
warm moments are
distant memories of a world that I knew.

41.

I went to the shore. I talked to the stones
and to the leaves quivering in the cold wind
because it was autumn.

I also talked to the wanderers of the stones and bark and moss:
the insects.

I talked to the birds and to the restless or calm sea,
I talked to the sun.

And the whole time it seemed as though a person were listening.

46.

abruptly
in the summer of youth
when life should unfold and
the stairs of light be clearly seen,
only waiting for death and a deep dream.

47.

The wind rustles
my notebook pages.
I stoop over it
and the wind lowers a cape on my shoulders.
Completely humbled and alone
I scratch out this poem.

48.

I wish a short life
for my house of clay,
which bears a shattered body of light like
a tattered cloak.

49.

If only the gods of nature could
from time to time raise my consciousness
out of this miserable anguish of collapse.
I am no longer on the path,
I have been thrown into a bog beside it.
Still I desire
the cooling touch
on my guiding journey towards rest.

46

53.

I'm suddenly at the door,
doesn't do any good to say anything and still
I set it to memory.

54.

Withdrawal, solitude,
occasionally a chilly draught goes through you.
Don't you see:
Zarathustra sat here
worshiping his icy sun.

55.

I desire the birch, I desire the stone,
I desire the moss's embrace,
I desire the earthen humus as a mole.
I want to become a voice everywhere
and to keep this pain from being.¹

Leif Färding
Translated from the Finnish by **Karen Driscoll**

¹WSOY first published Leif Färding when he was in his early twenties. *Just as Though a Person Were Listening* was his last publication before he committed suicide.

