

Love Love

Oh I love love you
 Viper snake love
 Elephant love
 You love me
 Outstanding love
 Used to love
 Yay Yay Love
 Escaping Love
 Si
 —Asha Wilson (7 years)

THE ALLEY CAT

eating
 a can of tuna
 near my feet

bolts
 under the bumper
 of my car

as i
 reach down
 to scratch
 behind his ears

two eyes
 lit up like a
 lake of fire

adjudicating me
 in the
 moonlight.

you

and every woman
 in this town
 lately

my friend.

—Justin Hyde

PITY THE SEMICOLON

(Not fully dressed
 without a bracket
 or parentheses;
 the punctuation
 mark is but a naked
 set of eyes; no dash for a nose;
 not quite sexy enough
 to wink; hanging on only
 long enough to think; so faceless
 and without emotion in, of all places,
 a poem. Smile semicolon;
 smile;)
 —Kristen Henderson

VACATION

I am preparing for vacation
 making a sort-of list, and
 I only wrote things, just things,
 but they say we can't sense time, only
 its momentum. Where is the tug
 of the sea against my salted legs
 in this litany of goods? Could I,
 should I tally the stars at night, after
 the steaks, wine, and rusted beach gear?
 Should we mention the blood-drunk mosquitoes,
 that hiss that leaves the air at dusk,
 all the old old songs sung way way too loud?

Every trip is a retreat, both ways.
 Heading out, we back up from a world
 far too close to list.
 We return, looking away, while
 the mirror sea ebbs out to an eeling edge,
 far too far to see.

—Stowe Boyd

NO GOOD

I got rid of my best friend
 he was no good
 he took advantage of me the greatest enemy
 is a
 treacherous friend
 Henry Fielding said
 so I got rid of him and I got rid
 of a drinking partner
 who became too
 assuming
 I didn't need his talk I
 didn't need to be reminded of shortcomings
 failures
 so I got rid of him
 and I got rid of my friends at the club
 and I got rid of my golf partners
 and
 in the morning kissed my wife
 before heading
 out the door to work
 and again I kissed her coming home
 but the rest I got rid of
 I wanted to be clean
 none of them
 are any good
 —Richard Donnelly

i have this balloon
 and the more i blow into it
 the smaller it gets
 —p

AUTUMN WASH

If I'm to be caught in a wave of terror
 My whole sky life, wiped out
 Blown to a tiny dirt speck end
 Vaporized into my next life
 Without the long good bye
 The eye to eye pull kiss ending

Then catch me hanging sheets out in the sun

Out in the yard with the worms in the dark
 Beneath the green beneath my feet
 With the sounds of this small city murmuring around me
 The smell of clean of apple of breathing earth
 The memory of love sighing sobbing

Airing out the rhythm of rising and falling
 Of giving in and letting go
 And rising again
 Finding just one edge to secure

Wood on cloth on cord
 Forming a waving wall a flag a sail
 Catch me hanging sheets out in the sun
 Exposed unveiled and holy
 undone
 —Amy K. Benedict

FIGURE

In death the hands are folded flat
 in the opposite gesture of a mudra pose in which
 the nerves of the fingers poise tenuously holding
 an awkward figure at the level of the manipura chakra.
 The thumb and forefingers meet and grasp
 the surface of the world's umbra.

Undoing movement is the body's final act as the artificial center,
 the place where tongues meet the rosary of touch,
 the smooth wooden beads, the silence between prayers
 like the drumming repetition of sex—
 the body, arched taut as a snare and released, undone.
 —Paula Orlando

MOURNING

Sunflowers wept over the naked crop
 Washed away by the Wallkill.

One towered over the others,
 Hovering like a tree nurturing a grave.
 —Zan Strumfeld

HUDSON VALLEY FALL

Lawns of the lazy like me
are yellow crunchy carpets
red and orange mountains
burst against parachutes of blue
I want to lie down in the day
but it is cold.

—Linda McCauley Freeman

RETURNING HOME

The neglect shone in sunlight
Reflected off of our spider's thread,
A cable across the railing
Ends
Of Our Backdeck
Steps
Like a claim,
Some barrier.

—Thomas Perkins

TONIGHT'S FESTIVITIES

I never give up
on a poem. Three
words makes a quorum. Seven
and I'm committed to the oceanic.
I'm loyal like the Titanic.
Others with more
legal minds exercise judgment
rapidly and with
certitude. Not
me. I'm
compulsive. I think
I've got a
problem.

No putting the brakes on sounds.
Cries, whispers,
teasing, singing
out, in, down, up, across, through
and under every
activity. Hello,
hello, nice
to see you!
My good wife
in the next room, tasting
spleen: "Would you PLEASE
take part in tonight's
festivities?"

I'm still paying child
support on poems
from five years ago.
Imperfect? Yes.
I add words here
subtract there
eventually

—Allen Livermore

GOD'S AND MINE TOGETHER

I cry like the sky does
in late July
fat raindrops
litter pavement and jeans
pulling heat
from the air and hearts
hot wet drops
wobbling through stratosphere
down rounded cheeks

—Zeta Sion

I APPROACH MY SIXTY-FIFTH YEAR

I approach my sixty-fifth year.
Quietly. Carefully.

From behind.
So as not to frighten it away.

—J.R. Solonche

EATING OUT

Like a moth to the grease fire, I head inside
to the counter to look at the menu, at thick
oiled sandwiches and half-chickens, skin
almost crisp where it's blackened, the result
of charring and steam tables, at combo meals.
I try to catch the cashier's eye, but she spits
out her spiel while staring away at wall tiles,
looking down now and again to press buttons
with pictures on the semiautomatic register.
Here, at this place, the mavens of eating locally,
of regional cuisine must arrive, touch their lips,
and head to their cars to MapQuest a bistro,
as I should, looking around at this place, a place
like the place near my home, far away, also filled
with fluorescent lights, French fries, and strangers.

—John F. Buckley

SHORE OF THIS

My mother is between worlds,
Watching TV she turns and says
are you real?
I'm Gilligan I say
I'm Mary-Ann says my brother
Then this must be the island she says
Yes, we say, you are the Minnow

We all look forward to banana cream pie

—Rosalinda McGovern

DAFFODILS, DEODORANT, AND YOU

I will not die on my birthday. I will not die on my birthday. I
will not die on my birthday even though the daffodils are up
and alive already on this weird coast reminding me too early
that my birthday is coming and that I will be another year
older and that I still do not have myself as I want myself. I
will not turn my birthday into a death day.

Dumb Daffodils.

I will not have a sobbing phone call. I will not have a mass
email. I will not have a friend find me dead and alone in my
kitchen. Birthday cake will not be eaten at my grave over the
next few years because I will not die on my birthday.

I will not copy you. I will not copy you. I will not copy you
even though I used to copy you I will not copy you this time.

I will not do heroin. I will not do heroin. I will not do heroin
because I only did heroin once or thrice with you and I want
it to stay there—with you—only you, with you on your
wood floor, melted hot in your spoon by your bookshelves in
your part of Brooklyn during the day.

I will not do heroin even if it is free. Even if I am sad.

I will understand. I will understand because I do understand.
I do understand wanting to die.

I will understand what it is like to be in a sterile new
apartment alone in a city with a high suicide rate and have
your phone not ring for days. To give it a little shake to make
sure it is alive and working.

I will understand sending cryptic texts and having vacant sex.

I will remember your backpack and wear my own.

I will remember your preferred deodorant and vodka brands
that you carried in your backpack and carry my own.

I will remember to share my deodorant and vodka with
whomever I am drinking or sleeping with.

I will remember how you produced creatively constantly and
I will produce my own.

I will remember your hair dye and dye my own.

I will remember your apartment, how it was more like a
museum, colorful and messy and I will create my own.

I will listen to your songs and sing my own.

I will read your poems and write my own.

I will write.

I will sing.

I will not die on my birthday.

I will try to be the person you described me as in your poem:
"Small locks fall on shoulders full of faith."

I will stay small and full and locked and faithed.

I will write.

I will sing.

I will not hang myself on my birthday this spring.

—Chloe Caldwell