

TOMORROW MAGAZINE NO. 18

\$5



Poetry ... Fiction ... Drama

TOMORROW MAGAZINE

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TIM W. BROWN



Tomorrow is always seeking contributions. Send yours to:

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Work by **Ward Kelley** (Bartlett, IL) has appeared in *Potpourri*, *Mobius*, *Poetry Motel*, *Nugget*, *Skylark*, and elsewhere. **David Starkey** (Aurora, IL) teaches creative writing at North Central College. He is the author of *Teaching Writing Creatively* and co-editor of *Smokestacks and Skyscrapers: An Anthology of Chicago Literature*. His poetry has been published in *Mid-American Review*, *New Orleans Review*, and *Sycamore Review*, among other places. **Jeffrey Forrest-Grice** (Carson City, NV) has seen his poetry appear in *Parnassus Literary Journal*, *Urbanus Magazine*, and *African Voices*, and his chapbook *Black Bones Ruin* was published by Alpha Beat Press. **Terri Brown-Davidson** (Lincoln, NE) is the author of two collections, *Rag Men* (The Ledger Press) and *The Doll Artist's Daughter* (White Eagle Coffee Store Press). **Clayton Chou** (Jacksonville, FL) is a retired professor of Chinese literature who taught at the University of Iowa and Cornell University. **G. Tod Stone** (Lunenburg, MA) is a "blackballed" French professor who has authored two unpublished novels and a play about the subject of academic corruption. **Mary Crockett Hill** (Shawsville, VA) is the director of a small history museum in southwestern Virginia. Her most recent credits include the *Southern Poetry Review*, *Commonweal*, and *Potato Eyes*. **Pamela Miller** (Chicago, IL) is the author of the collection *Mysterious Coleslaw* and the performance poetry piece "How to Handle a No-Good Man." **Susan Thomas** (Marshfield, VT) is a graduate of the MFA program at Sarah Lawrence College, where she studied with Grace Paley. Her fiction has appeared recently in *Heresies* and *Brownstone Review*. Her poems are forthcoming in *Southern Humanities Review*, *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *Potpourri*, and elsewhere. **J.D. Smith** (Aurora, IL) has published his poetry in a host of publications, including *Chelsea*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Mudfish*, and *Spoon River Quarterly*. Poetry by **Rene F. Cardenas** (Manassas, VA) has appeared in *The Conservative Review*, *Sierra Nevada College Review*, *Minimus*, *Midwest Poetry Review*, and *Abbey*. **Gerald Locklin** (Long Beach, CA) teaches at California State University-Long Beach. Recent books include *Bukowski: A Sure Bet* and *The Last Round-Up*. **Thor Ringler** (Chicago, IL) teaches English at Columbia College and DePaul University. His poems have appeared in *Poetry East*, *The Pittsburgh Quarterly*, *Rhino*, and many other places. **Joan Payne Kincaid** (Sear Cliff, NY) is author of the recent collection *Understanding the Water* (Kings Estate Press). The latest chapbook by **Alan Catlin** (Schenectady, NY) is *Killer Drinks*. He is at work on a sequel, *The Hair of the Dog That Bit Me*. **Normal** (Saugerties, NY) has lived in forty-six ports of call. For the last fifteen years he has worked as a nurse for the dying, the insane, and the reborn. **Bob Cooperman** (Denver, CO) is the author of the collection *In the House of Percy Bysshe Shelley* and three chapbooks, the latest being *Caseworker Days*. **Mark McKindler** (Huntington Beach, CA) enjoys surfing, fishing, racquetball, teaching composition, and adding sentences to his novel in progress. Poetry by **Robert O'Neal** (Corydon, IN) has recently appeared in *The Iconoclast*, *The Plastic Tower*, *Muse of Fire*, and *Mind Purge*. **Jim Murphy** (Cincinnati, OH) is currently studying for his Ph.D. at the University of Cincinnati. His poems have appeared in *Puerto del Sol*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Brooklyn Review*, *The Devil's Millhopper*, and other places. Originally from Pittsburgh, **Thomas Kretz** (Rome, Italy) works as a historian and accountant. **Bob Perlongo** (Evanston, IL) has published poems in a variety of places, including *Bomb*, *Rolling Stone*, and *The New York Times*. His first collection, *All Hours of the Night*, is due out in spring 1998. **Jim Quinn** (Philadelphia, PA) is a journalist by trade. His poems have been published in *Poet Lore*, *Lost & Found Times*, *Left Curve*, and *Pemmican*, among other publications. Poetry by **John O'Toole** (Chicago, IL) has appeared in *Abbey*, *Ascent*, *Pegasus*, *Plainsongs*, and *Verse*. **Constance Vogel** (Glenview, IL) is the author of the collection *Caged Birds*, and her poems have appeared in *Blue Mesa Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Thema*, and *Willow Review*. **Ryan Van Cleave** (Tallahassee, FL) is a freelance photographer originally from Chicago. His poems have appeared in recent issues of *Rattle* and *Indefinite Space*. Poetry by **Charles Sydney Bernstein** has appeared in *Anti-Mensch*, *Apex Annual*, *Artisan Ink*, *Bad Newz*, *Laughing Boy Review*, *Oyez Review*, and *U-Direct*. **Megan Johnson** (DeKalb, IL) has published work in *Towers*. "He Learned Something" is the first published poem by **Dan Kaplan** (Chicago, IL). **Lyn Lifshin** (Vienna, VA) remains the reigning queen of the small press. **Terry Thomas** (Prescott, AZ) has a fondness for the woods, cutting firewood with a bow saw, dabbling in wood art, and listening to classic rock. **John Grey** (Providence, RI) has published his poetry recently in *Green Fuse* and *Imago*. **Philip Waterhouse** (Bakersfield, CA) has seen his poetry appear in *Impetus*, *Gypsy*, *Rag Mag*, and *XIB*. His outrageousness **Paul Weinman** (Albany, NY) has published his poems all over the underground press. **Janet Kuypers**

Cont'd→

Bob Perlongo

American News Item

He was frantic on a high ledge
armed and stupendous
his heart wedged between his wild
teeth

The citizens were indignant in the street
what does he mean?
they grabbed for the police
instinctively

The sun hung in the sky from a wire
the wire slipped
and the madman came tumbling
down

The reporters made the matter clear
his beautiful talented
american automobile had been
repossessed

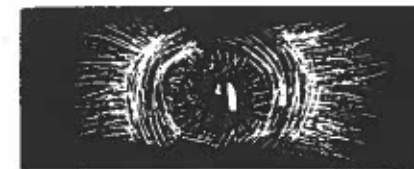
Susan Thomas

Lilac Madness

Last night was lilac madness.
Things had an eerie glow
in the full moon light;
the lilacs made us all crazy
with their loony perfume.

We spoke about loss, of course,
what else to fix on
when you come to the core of a story?
How to reconcile our dear wild selves
with how we're taught to be.

Muscle, blood and bone
lock in mortal combat,
demand release from
their need for each other,
long for what they cannot have
I'd forgotten how
imprisoned hearts bang against the ribcage.



(Chicago, IL) is the tireless editor of *Children, Churches and Daddies*. **Mike Puican** (Chicago, IL) can be seen performing his poetry in venues all over Chicagoland. **Ed Wier** (Dunwoody, GA) is a professional musician, teacher, and writer who publishes his work widely in trade journals and literary magazines. **Tom Hamilton** lives in Rockford, IL. **Mary Wren Small** (Wilmette, IL) is working on a modernization of Greek myths entitled *Godtalk*. She has published forty-five poems in little magazines and continues writing at age 82. **Mark Senkus** (Sault St. Marie, MI) is the author of the chapbook *Mis-fitted*. **Oberc** (Chicago, IL) is co-editor of *Clutch* and a regular contributor of interviews to *Chiron Review*. **Jay Marvin** (Denver, CO) is a widely published poet and radio talk show host at KHOW-AM in Denver. **Eric Lorberer** (Minneapolis, MN) is co-editor of the book review publication *Rain Taxi*. ■

Pamela Miller

Spring Hits Chicago Like A Sock In The Jaw

Suddenly, streets warm as neon; we scamper down them stiffly like Prince Charles. Birds *shreeep!*ing their heads off: the Battling Bickersons in every tree. Babies wiggling in windows. Jellybeans stuck to shoes. Men on sidewalks selling silly bumper stickers. Some aren't bad: *WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR PANTS*. Dogs become aristocrats, promenading the town. Mushrooms pop up on lawns with cute little *boing!* sounds. Newspapers revert to stream of consciousness. Poets lean out windows and take off their clothes. Some do not succeed. The mayor is constantly on television, his squash-shaped face, vaguely military, filling the screen. He smiles at us, waves, eats potato chips with his no-good son. But we ignore them, because it's spring. Time to go to the lakefront and eat things on sticks, to pluck up blades of grass and pickle them in jars! Time to sit in the baseball stadium and watch the sky revolve, watch the days grow long and layered like candy bars.

Normal

Remains of a Carnival

like the midway in a carnival
she opens her mouth to talk with me
& all the sideshows tumble out

i am flooded with barkers & freaks
tattooed ladies
sword swallows & fire eaters
runaway nymphets & bouncers
& bikers & geeks

every side alley gamble & gambit
known to marks & to men

all posing under the noble fool's gown
of sincerity

all offering something to me

like the midway in a carnival
she leads me through the din & honky tonk
of my own imagination
my own fantasy

the show moves on
to another town
another celebration

& i walk amongst the echoes
of a forgotten tune on a hurdy-gurdy
i stand amidst the abandoned domain
where the tent shadows fell

considering the empty beer cans
& stake holes in the field

John Grey

One Man

There was a man who was crazy as hell,
who dug ditches in his back yard for no reason,
who chained German shepherds
almost ripped their own heads off to bite.
There was a man who loved once,
a man who used the words
"empty of her presence,"
who could feel those vacuums reverberate
through his bones.
He told me he hand-painted his own signs
even though he couldn't spell for shit.
He said he cut his own hair,
liked it so short
he could run his palm across it
and feel it cut.

There was a man who used to teach,
who was seen with a woman more than once,
maybe ten years ago,
walking hand in hand along the river,
his grin as wide as its banks.
There was a man who lived
this kind of ordinary life,
who paced the museums like we all do
wondering what we'll leave.
There were other men too
and there were women of course
and there were even children
but there was this one man
who somehow emerged from all that,
whom I could know without knowing.
Lovers left him like lovers left
all of us or, even when they stayed,
the love left and it was the same.
This was just a man who reacted
differently that's all,
who couldn't bear to ask the river,
like some did, to devour him,
so he stayed behind devouring himself.
This was a man you just knew

that if that crazed dog ever did break free,
there'd be nothing left to gnaw on anyhow.
This was a man who loved
maybe that little more than the rest of us
then wandered the silence of his own madness,
clapping his hands like echoes of old kisses.
It was a man who obviously had something to bury
in that back yard of his,
even if, when the time came,
its identity escaped him.



Robert O'Neill

Raising Joe Lunchbucket's Retirement Age

Jesus and A.A.
didn't corner the market
on "one day at a
time." It's also the recourse
of skeptics with small change in

their pockets—not enough to
buy a future. Work/sleep/don't
worry/be angry/
one day at a time, until
the best years are gone.

Terry Thomas

Jesus in the Fast-Check Line

He was just ahead of me,
 queued patiently, coarse-spun top
 unraveling, baggy pants
 slanted over slinky hips.
 Kept wetting his lips, counting quietly:
 6 breads, 4 wines and a dime-store
 crossword puzzle book.
 He was fingering coins,
 joining/unjoining his hands,
 looking everywhere—no one could
 stand the direct stare, sad smile.
 Seemed like a mile in that line.
 His turn. The checker checked, checked
 again and began his litany about items.
 Said I had room and the right
 numbers—would take the cross-
 word book. He looked my way
 with eyes deep as the deli section,
 confectionery gaze. I paid for the book,
 held it out—a head shake. He said,
 “Keep it. Learn and share the words.”
 He turned away, ambled toward
 the bright exit, fingering a hangnail
 showing blood, trodding in front of impatient
 people in a rush to somewhere.



Lyn Lifshin

Jesus and Marilyn

It had to do with them both being stars, being
 hounded, adored, yet suspected of not being
 what they seemed. Both felt they had to take
 on new names when they started their mission
 but tho in the spot light, both cherished

a quiet simple life, privacy tho everything
 pushed them to mingle with strangers. When
 Marilyn called Jesus the night she first
 thought of taking pills and was crying, moaning,
 “Who shall deliver me from death,” Jesus

came right to her side and he held her
 close. Their blonde hair braiding together,
 his lips comforting her lips. “Let not your
 heart be troubled,” he begged her, “I judge
 not.” He promised more than all the senators

and baseball players could. Diamonds, he
 told her, won’t comfort like my love. He talked
 about stars, told her it doesn’t matter if
 you’ve gained 10 pounds or feel at 33 it’s over.
 Then he told her something that Marilyn might
 have misunderstood, something about dying to

live in the sky forever and since she wanted to
 follow him, being in her mid 30’s too, when he
 left in a blaze of triumph, left the earth with such
 fanfare and weeping of his fans and even
 his enemies so no one could forget him, Marilyn
 left too.

Lyn Lifshin

**Still Thinking of the Poem Someone Wrote
 Where Emily Is Prissyng On About What
 White to Wear and Where to Hide Her
 Poems**

How little this person knew Emily.
 Jesus. Prissy. In spite of that
 stupid photo. Well, Emily was
 nothing like that. A cat, yes,
 she had a cat, but really she was
 more like one: wild and sneaky,
 not easy to own or tame. She had
 her claws—she had a temper.
 You can tell she wasn’t just
 lounging against the glass by the
 way her poems move: darting
 and springing, colliding and coming
 up still breathing. I suppose you
 could say, as the poem did, she
 “hid everything.” There *are*
 adventures, scandal no one has
 any idea about but I was there. Under
 the white you’ve heard so much
 about was a wildness, more vivid
 than any Victoria’s Secret red velvet
 g-string, richer than a bra of
 emeralds, rubies and gold. When she
 let go and danced under a Hunger
 moon or a Wolf moon, snow became
 a river from her heat. A poem a day
 some years, that’s what they think but
 she was fire. A poem an hour is more
 like it. And, not rushing to publish
 as I did, she used real names of the
 lovers we shared. No wonder her
 sister Lavinia burned so much. Emily
 never could believe she wasn’t in the
 21st century. White dresses were a
 disguise. Like a robber who puts on a

shirt and tie so you’ll have your take
 on him tattooed under your skin while
 he sweet talks you out of millions or
 gets out a gun. Flowers were perfect
 to disguise the scent of gun powder, to
 wrap around a knife as she shaped words
 I’ve tried to make as diamond hard to
 plunge in and get the work done while
 you hold your breath, amazed

Charles Sydney Bernstein

mystery & intrigue

i’m not white
 i’m culture
 staring at you, straight in the eye
 studying your face
 we are all american
 together, blended
 in great furious melting pot
 screaming out answers,
 to degenerate generations
 watching vanna
 turn on the light

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 info, and samples from the latest mag.

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J.D. Smith

Credo

I believe, besides the volumes
I'll never know of you,
that your brow is a tablet
of new laws

and from your hands'
mirrored continents extend
the slender and fabled Florida of each thumb,

while your clavicle describes the one yoke
I would labor to take on.

In honor of your left calf alone
an ancient people would have raised altars.
I mourn the passing of their time.



Paul Weinman

Night Flight

Lavender ladies stretched their fingers
lightly stroked where pants pockets would be.
They smiled with words that made moths
—those night-time butterflies looking to lap.
Several landed on my lips
let their hairy tongues dabble at mine.
I licked, took them in with saliva's stick.
Sounds, very unphilosophical sounds
seeped, swelled, shouted from my mouth.
We want money . . . whispered the ladies.
We want you to lie down, roll around.
As those moth's wings dissolved
I did.

Philip A. Waterhouse

More About Eve

Fillies do the
serious two-stepping.
Isn't that what barn dances
are about, country mommas
pushing daughters, pretty and plain
janes alike, though the
latter more? In some cases into some
hay baler's bear hug
for early knocked-up family album
additions? Mommas and
aunties, whatever ones the girdle
fits, waiting for offspring
to thicken at the waist—
absolution for their own
succumbing to last-dance goodnight—
sweetheart fiddling
bent backward over a fender or a
hood or splayed in a bed
behind a pickup cab
before taking ritual showers
of rice. One of my grandma's
laid this on this young male sitting out
a set, with no other explanation
than nobody, of either
gender, should live long enough
and foolish enough
to try open, or close, a deal
by betting all options.
Never knew Granny
played the stock market.

Constance Vogel

How To Keep Love Down

Stamp on it each spring
like burgeoning pigweed.
Spray RAID.
Consider it a rain shower,
wait until it stops.
Don't scratch,
as with chickenpox
lest it leave a scar.
Send a letter of complaint.
Let someone else get rid of it.
Take it to obedience school,
teach it "Down" and "Stay."
Shelve it. Bag it.
Flog it. Throw it in the lake.
If you feed it
it will follow you.
Don't try an exorcism
in your rose-covered
journal, it will only grow.
Don't tell a therapist—
once out of Pandora's box
it becomes obsessive.
Curse it with a plague.
Damn it to hell.
Rise early,
eat a proper breakfast,
take the same route to work,
and church, of course,
watch only movies rated G.

Joan Payne Kincaid

At The Clam House

Scent of lobster, steamers, mussels
friends and family flounder
eyes beginning to wander
full of amorous activity
and fertility...
pirates and old prints
fops for art and life
few are left to care for saints
in fumes, rooms, family, friends
genealogists, gynecologists
with low-energy bitterness stumble
their dorsals diving for dictionaries
in nervous lost intervals
she's going elsewhere to find romance
in his arms a margarita
a sunset of salt air.

Gerald Locklin

The Cuisine Was Simply Divine

i am thinking, for some reason,
about jesus at the last supper,
his consecration and sharing
of the bread and wine,
the basis of the christian communion,

and i am certainly no one to compare
theologies, or, for that matter, gods themselves,
but christ does seem to have demonstrated
better table manners
than, say, chronos.

Janet Kuypers

And I'm Wondering

I'm wondering if there's something
chemical that brings people together,
something that brings people to their
knees, something that sucks them in

And I'm wondering if you're sensing what I'm
sensing, is it just me, am I making this up
in my head, or when I glance up and catch your
eyes, well, are you actually staring at me

And I'm wondering if it could work out this
time, if we'd have one of those relationships
that no one ever doubts, especially us,
because we know we'll always be in love

And I'm wondering if you'd find
my neurotic pet-peeves charming
like how I hate it when someone touches
my belly because I'm so self conscious

And I'm wondering why you had to tell me
when we happened to be sitting next to each
other that the fact that our legs were almost
touching was making your heart race

And I'm wondering why I felt the need
to take your cigarette and inhale, exhale
while the filter was still warm from
your lips, there just seconds before

And I'm wondering if a year or two from now,
after we've been going out and should have
gotten to the point where we are bored with
each other and sink into a comfortable rut

if you saw me making macaroni and cheese
in the kitchen using margarine and water
because I'm out of milk and I've got my hair
pulled back and strands are falling into my

eyes and I'm wearing an oversized button-down
denim shirt and nothing else, well, what
I'm wondering is if you would see me
like this and still think I was sexy

When I glance up and catch your eyes from
across the room, when I see your eyes dart
away, when I feel this chemical reaction, well,
it makes me wonder if you can feel it too



Mike Puican

Thin Air

"We don't fall in love with each other. we fall in love with the feelings we have when we are with each other."—Dr. Rae Turner, radio sex therapist at 3 a.m.

It's not you. It's the light reflecting off your skin I'm trying to reason with, the air vibrating from your lips that scares me. The dishes hitting the wall.

At the science lab, the hologram's almost real. A woman walks up to me, smiles, asks for my vote in the beauty contest. From the next room they watch me proposition thin air.

At 3 a.m. there are no references—no designer jeans, no critiques from the boss, no thank you's for using AT&T. It's just what was there at five years old: shadows on the wall, muffled voices in the next room. We always come back. The boss winks at his secretary, leans a little too far back in his chair and calls out.

Is anyone out there? The therapist speaks in an empty room. She looks out the window to Studio A.

What's the connection? A train spears the school bus and thousands creep through railroad crossings. One person gets a fever and everyone in the room heats up. We used to finish each other's sentences. Now words are bags on the wrong plane. This is why we write them down; but only the good parts. In the movie version you slowly hiked up your skirt. Then the coffee spilled and it was you again.

What I see reflecting off your pounding fist has me worried. I stand on the chair and shout at the smoke detector. We expect everything to work out, then get on the plane without checking the boarding pass.

We just want to be touched. Her lips press the microphone.

Ward Kelley

Barnum Marries an English Girl 40 Years His Junior

The rails and rods of this mechanism affixed itself like a roller coaster threading throughout my soul, spritzing in and out of my very fabric, swirling down the corridors of my prayers then arching over certain palliative fields of aspirations . . . the bucking beast never stops, but then how could it? The carts strain and complain, hollow, wooden sounds that fill my mind, but the train always loops back to begin once again.

I forever intended to step cautiously, to be meticulous in certain kindnesses; a good goal, I thought, would be to end up well-remembered . . . it had all seemed easy. Yet who would have thought this looping beast would de-cloud the herded smoke of my soul, not once, not often, but incessant. I started out thinking this was bad, but at last came to recognize the simple nature of my being. It is not the coaster that brought the grief . . . it was the rails and tracks I laid down years and years ago.

So I reach out to you, with the arms of a swirling man, with the hope you may fashion me—if not into someone else, at least slow me down—and maybe you can throw your body in front of the lead wheels: this will cause us to swirl in tandem, to cascade through the cosmos of our flesh, at last exhausting ourselves as the rhythms wind down. I hope to someday sleep in your arms, and deliver my soul over to your sedate pursuits, then perhaps exploit the quiet you deposit over and over into me.

Ed Weir

The Greasemonkey

Under the roof of a garage
The grease monkey stands
A cigarette hangs from his mouth
With wrenches in his hands
He knows the calendar girls
Sizes, parts, and brands

His hair is caked with sludge
His face is bored and tired
His clothes are stained with oil
And he'll probably get fired
But he's sick of worrying
So he goes home and gets wired

Week in week out, from morn till night
You can hear his radio
And his loud pneumatic gun
Which he holds at his torso
Like a deadly weapon
He'd like his boss to know

And children coming home from school
Look in the open door
They love to hear him laugh and cuss
As he does his chore
They love to watch him scoot across
The greasy garage floor

On Sunday he is not in church
But staying home instead
To watch football and drink beer
While his wife still sleeps in bed
He shouts about the lousy score
As his drunken face turns red

He hears the children's voices
But he would rather not
They ask him stupid questions

Perhaps he takes a shot
They remind him of his promise
But he says he forgot

Working-drinking-watching
Onward through life he goes
Living on his credit cards
Not paying what he owes
He cannot sleep at night
And the next day it shows

Thanks, thanks to you, the grease monkey
For the lesson you have taught
Where in the grimy garage of life
We all are sometimes caught
And laid out on the rack
When dreams come to naught



Mark MacKinder

My Uncle

Lives by the beach in California
Moans about tooth aches, scared of earthquakes
Chain-smokes like a mackerel breathes water
Drinks despair by the six-pack
Selfish as a baby, sweaty as a surfer
Collects checks and credit cards
Answers the phone with twenty names
Loves *Cops*, *AJ*, *Action News*, *Pacific Palisades*
Tattoos look like concrete driveway grease spots

Ryan G. Van Cleave

Fatal Rebellion

Pour me another tall one, Harry.
I'm at that age—twenty-two.
& since my life's a sack of shit,
square it & add six—that's how ancient
my knees & joints feel.

The temptation is to join
the ever-increasing tradition
of workless wonders & malcontents,
the apolitical party staging
a massive coup next century.
• Become a number, unidentify
& unindividualize myself
into anything—it's a lazy,

intoxicating thought as potent
as my frothy mug of Harp's.

Look at those two asshole suits
over there doing the Macarena.
My God—some people have no shame.
I wouldn't make an idiot of myself
just to snare a little hootchie.
I wouldn't fuck some cow up the ass
just because everyone else is, either.

Call me a crazy bastard,
but what I'm gonna do is leave my ass
right here on this barstool,
drink until I'm good and woozy,
so much so that I forget why I started,
then I'll make my way & sleep
& sleep & sleep.

**Praise for *Deconstruction Acres*
A Novel by Tim W. Brown:**

"What ripe material for an observant satirist: from the
downtrodden ranks of the townies in a small Midwestern
college community emerges a reluctant hero who
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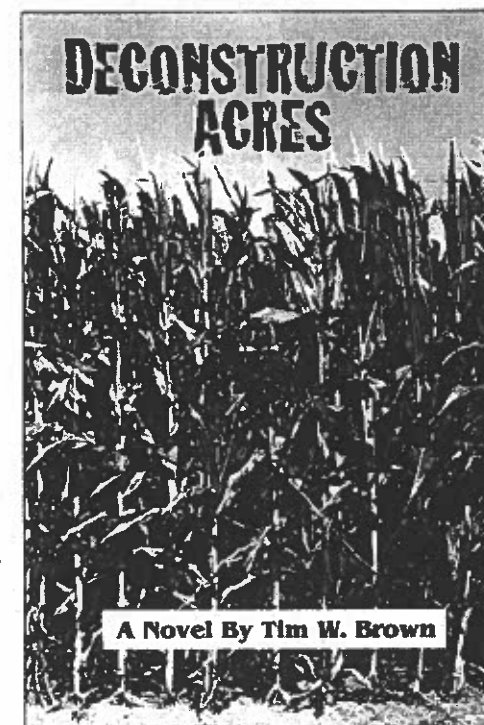
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G. Tod Slone

In The Name Of Civility

At the joe-average state college, perhaps if not probably below average, enrollments have tumbled steadily over the past two decades, finally becoming a serious concern, though not for the old president, just retired self-ordained *honoris causa*, forever immortalized in huge black letters embedded in the facade of the new dormitory complex upon decree (and public money!) of the new president, playwright of the unoriginal quote-stuffed "Abe Lincoln" so hailed by the faculty, captured audience lining up to shake the hand and stutter obsequious compliments and superlative inanities in the order of how wonderful indeed the performance of the college's own captured repertory theater

At the joe-average state college, perhaps if not probably below average, let us call it USA Today College, the number of faculty members apt to possess a critical sense of mind *and* courage has dwindled also to an all time low, thanks to decades of tenuring certified sycophantic team-players, thanks to the total absence of accountability, for academic leaders, who will eliminate any rebellious individuals managing to slip through the process by conducting arbitrary, capricious and in bad faith faculty evaluations, as well as validity determinations of harassment complaints filed against any of the leaders thanks especially to the tacit approval of the tenured why-ruin-a-good-thing-12-hour-work-week-six-month-vacation-part-time-at-full-time-pay docile ones, otherwise known as the "highly underpaid, hard-working faculty."

At the joe-average state college, perhaps if not probably below average, acclaimed by its administrators as the "uncommon" and "outstanding college," any leaking protest, as rare as that may be, *will* be crushed by the steamrollers of glorious tradition, driven at times by the so-eager-to-emulate-the-hard-working-ones student newspaper editors, who deem as unfit to print any news potentially damaging to the fragile self-esteem of future alma-mater patriots, in a majestically orchestrated effort to maintain intact this fairy-tale realm made possible by flowing rivers of inexhaustible taxpayer money and dazzling statements of new policy, new diplomas and new programs, pronounced inevitably during tight squeeze like so many efficacious heat-shield deflectors vaporizing the published criticism of the likes of Lionel Lewis and Charles J. Sykes into the thin air of new computer lab installations and passive Internet diversions, permitting the machine to regain its course of overproduction, devaluation and inflation, such that in the name of civility, collegiality or whatever else they might wish to call it, silence, banality and academe's why-ruin-a-good-thing will always be golden. . . .

Tom Hamilton

Lone Ivory Cross

Did the Priest address you on your vocation, Woman with the copper river flowing fine behind the shoulder tied in a similar ribbon of lived crimson.

You should think three times before you confide in those dance place, truck wash, drive-in girls, they pray for a place to spray skunk rumors, and say beyond any consequence to them. "She should be home with her poor grieving father."

Me and Sean stood under a stooping moss tree, you won't remember yet I saw you in the gripping raw of a savage morning you wore a gorgeous gifted gray with your scarlet mane retained by berets, framing your bare and impressive face, and your skin that matched a Lone Ivory Cross that was set apart as a hard tombstone, to mark your mother's cold and terrifying new home.

And Later on that longer Summer, on the days that me and Sean got left home from work along with the other medium boys, we'd loiter pretty careless outside your trailer, to sit with maybe a dose of sense to line the invisible fence that marked your yard and tried hard to time your nice exit for laundry or grill or garbage and sometimes crazy Bill Rafferty would throw rocks at your way but never at your feet, or on nights when your Da was down at tavern, Him and Sean would pull your lights or send Chunk up to your screen to say or do or scream something stupid, the object of this idiotic game was only to get you to come to the door, and the more that crazy Bill claimed to hate you, the more I knew that he abetted your every pose, whether you were wiping the plastics, washing the windows or simply walking barefoot across a spare cut of Houston Astroturf.

But I shied from those malicious missions, most times I just sat in the kiss of the wind grass, I guess because I understood about tragedy and about the nightmares that

death can impose on a family, how it forces them to trade their evacuated love for needs.

When you're a boy for a very brief time, you recognize that strain in another's eyes, you know about severing laughs into halves to store them up when you know they won't last, and at these times you try to embody those memories, or wish that you could have strolled out of those weeds in an effort to break someone's unspoken vocation.



Mary Wren Small

Stirring The Senses

"A journey back/Into the heartland of the ordinary"
From 'Seeing Things' by Seamus Heaney

Where are we on the ripeness scale? That's the all. I know the sweet, the bitter and every taste there is, like Tiresias.

In my kitchen I listen for the pressure cooker—the way I hear my own feelings. How can I speak of yogurt with my wild imaginings? About betrayal when air smells of spice and roses? I am locked in by my daily integrity; being the mother of invention means finding a new recipe for living a life—doing a pantry polka, for instance, or praying to the patron saint of refrigerators that the manna may last forever.

My thoughts are shaken by the tastelessness of salt that's lost its savor, of no-fat diets with their lessening of richness, compensated by the tang of fresh fruit or the burn of hottest salsa. I have enough to eat and my hearing is good. Sweet are the sounds of the blender whirring and the dishwasher whooshing. Then the light comes through, falling on copper and on me. It's magic, I tell you, like a whirlpool of diamonds, these liquid stirrings of the senses, making even trivia glint with sparks and shorthand of meaning. Get rid of the refuse—let it go down, let it go out, and stay with the significance that is left—this little universe of the commonplace looking at us in our wistful absurdity.

John O'Toole

Uptown

This loneliness leaves me wondering whether I'm in bed or on a bus.
Not a bad trade, their shapes roughly similar, the bad air,
the dirty windows. Whether the bus takes me home, or too far away,

to Uptown, where a concrete fountain, untended, fills with hundreds
of spent matches, like the bones of fishes used to swimming here.
Many creatures swam and flew and danced in this place, but now

the windows are colorful as bruises, the beds in the alleys dull
as calluses, and the women sit hunched on folding chairs
hard as punishments. I see them eating cole slaw

and popcorn-shrimp, showing what they have, not knowing any better.
There are patterns in the rugs to feel responsible for,
the contents of pantry and refrigerator, just like at home,

but here there is freedom of expression, any citizen's right.
I am at liberty to smell their feet and lick their inner thighs
and go exploring. I adore you, my little Ozark slut!

Your hair looks soft, but sinks my fingers to the skull.
I would love to be tender but your mama carved your face from wood and a
man tattooed you. The boniness of women,

the crossbow-strength, just when I think I've got the pillows arranged.
I could make your living and then some entering data.
Does that excite you? Am I your big bear man?

Take the bus to my bed as I took to you.

Dan Kaplan

He Learned Something

The lady took her cigarettes and stockings and left and
Jarvis was excited and he called Father Father from the
big city and told him
there's positions other than missionary and
Father Father said he didn't want to know his boy
was screwing and especially how his boy
was screwing and
you shouldn't've left home for the dirty city and
have you learned anything boy and Jarvis said
yeah.

Jim Murphy

The Undecorated

Pale Evangeline feels somewhat bitter towards her brother.
Tom and his veteran friend on the sofa have been hamming
for her little cousin—all evening cracking Pabsts and telling
lies about an Iraqi skull they saw fly apart like a Jack-o-Lantern.
The room is burning up. A fire dances for the party guests
while central heat pours down. She thinks the two are red
faced clowns in corduroys and Christmas sweaters. *Hell!*
I'm sorry. Somebody spilled. Everyone feels fat and wants
a dimmer switch, except the drunks, who are suddenly
becoming friends of the rich and famous. Grant Hill
stuffs home two and the asshole announcer calls him *baybeee*.
Eva wonders why their grandfather's ghost doesn't rise up
and smack them both, pop his glass eye out, and say *see what*
a trip wire cost me on Guadalcanal? At least Mr. Curtis
could have the decency to reappear in the church pew
with his neatly sewn-up sleeve and halting songs of praise.
But those days of infamy and fear are gone.
When raw hate has heated up her fingertips and the surprise
obscenity of *one good thing about Vietnam* darts into her head,
she steels herself and sucks down an entire glass of wine.



Jim Quinn

Too Early

OK I'm up why not? and walk out not late enough
for the work crowd, and no yesterday's
sun so bright all you see on everything is the color
of sun. It's wind, it's gray, it's back to winter
banging store signs, airplaning street shit,
inflated Fritos wrappers ride the sky, plastic bag
flowery trees, frontpage *Daily News* yesterday's
headline LOVER OR

RAPIST? scuts into my feet some joker or
luck tore to LOVER OR

PIST? I put my head down
into the wind it's like walking into the doomed
future of the twentieth murderous inhuman century and
here comes twenty-one? You know, all that old alas
boring shit. A few everybodies passing by me not looking.
My eyes wet with wind, teeth dry and cold stick
to my lips with December in March. Feet iced like the no
ice yet thank god street from the street, all the snow
f l a k e s !

That quick, the snowflakedancing air full of you,
I take mouthfuls of air like you, like tasting
your last night skin, cold and no-taste, under cold
salt sweat. So I'm going to call you up apologies in
advance and read this it's a love poem over the phone
no matter too early.

Jeffrey Forrest Grice

endangered species

Outa sight
outa mind
black men

boyz

walk thin lines

down on corners, cross railroad tracks,
stashed in alleyways smokin', sellin' crack, chasing
dem pale-bone chicks wit deys tight
asses, suntanned hips, cruising round
in lexuses, beemers, jeep Cherokees
& leased mercedes benzes

outa sight
outa mind

black men/
boyz

wear a
bulls eye
in america
dey ain't hard
to spot

doing time on the wild

five
to ten
some crowded
pen

robbery, homo-
cide

on their
minds

blame it on a sister they couldn't

hypnotize

where are all the brothers/

boyz

who ain't
yet
died

crouched at the edge
looking down
from that quiet place
far and beyond those colorful clouds

whiffing that country fried chicken

mama's sweet baked cinnamon-apple-dapple
fingerlickingmouthwaterythickcrusted-
whipped cream-covered sunday's pie

outa
sight/
outa

mind
the
population
of black men/

boyz

is
constantly
declining.

Jeffrey Forrest Grice

First of the Month

Rent man's paid
lights back on
insurance man is gone
refrigerator's full
no more hungry mouths
to feed,
and Auntie Mable
is over wid a fifth
of Orange Jubilee

lil bro got new Nike's on
sistah welfare clean, crown
freshly weaved
and mama's boogie-woogie
twisting her hips
daddy played his number
93-6

first of the month

neighbor got robbed
postman found shot
3 masked hoodlums
livin' on
de wild

two got caught
everybody whispering
another found dead
nobody listening

first of the month
like we give a damn.



"The realism of
real Chicago rings true."
—Hugh Fox

"The gift for finding just-right
endings, throughout the
collection, is very strong."
—Lucien Stryk

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Clayton Chou

This Side of the Trees

I am an earthly dweller
On the border of Heaven.
I can hear the heavenly music
And know their daily language.
A row of wavering willow trees
Separates the two lovely worlds,
But I choose to stay
On this side of the trees.

I'm not doing well here though,
But then that's why I love it.
I will not jump the border
To seek a different fate.
It is betrayal to announce
Myself a citizen of Heaven,
While receiving all my blessings
From this side of the trees.

Mary Crockett Hill

The Same Three Miles

You helped Mama make a doll out of puddled leaves and twine.
The orange summer hands of an old Baptist sinner

can mold anything from mud. All day she's been chanting
BabySueBabySue, but somehow the syllables won't quite fit her tongue.

We're each as nameless as the country where we live, strange birds
swooping down to pluck catfood straight off the front stoop.

Our mother speaks cokeweed and melon vine; the hard *th*,
the hard *f* and *j*. She combs her hair with wood.

When we walk along the river to her cabin, I see what we become
in the water—each ripple, distorted, the blurred outline of her star.

I could stay here with you, caretaker of this lost planet,
weird sister, strong swimmer, master of firewood.

I could stay here with you and grow into our own thread-soft childhood,
old people chewing together, no world but these three distant miles.

Alan Catlin

John O'Brien's *Leaving Las Vegas*

"There's a feeling I get, when I look to the west." —Led Zep

Drinking is by the pint bottle
leaning against an alley wall
carrying on a one-sided conversation
with a shipwrecked god.

Walking is falling face down on buckling
concrete, sudden pot holes unnoticed,
curbs for tripping up and over, lying
face down in sudden rain shower puddles
engenders dreams.

Eating is for the sick of mind, the impure
who have no idea of what it is that drives
the shriven, the sutured heart.

Crawling is the body's way of seeking
rest, examining the emptied flasks for
anything that might remain: a drop of blood,
a tear, a dream.

Breathing is the last reflexive act that
can no longer be denied, the body's convulsive
shift from this side to the other, the act
and the place where waking dreams beget reality.

Thomas Kretz

sated museums and textbooks
with the desecration of being

Sakkara

Among the eight thousand zombies
in Saqqara fifteen thousand tombs
southwest of Cairo in the Giza
Infamous for necropolis and step
pyramids and any arcane not alive

existed a man called Osiris
who married a less than Isis
got fed up with mummy wraps
packed his sarcophagus and moved
to Tennessee where he told me

a piece of desert to visit
formerly Memphis before grave
ghouls and archeologists

being god is great while alive
but once dead it is the pits
the Mississippi suited his moods
more than the Nile ever did
could he have change for a wash.

David Starkey

City of Lights

—For Nicholas Contreras, dead in my town at age six

Aurora, first city in Illinois
to string up streetlights, hardly
cause for swaggering, though we've got little else

to brag about. The casino. The murder rate—
highest in the state right now, edging out
East St. Louis, the "town without a dream."

fingering dawn finally arrives in Aurora,
Homer is nowhere around. *All* poets,
in fact, are slumbering, as a kind

neighbor nails a sheet of plywood
across the shattered windowglass
and lights a votive candle for the boy.



Down by the river, in the big gloomy houses
that nurture five families each, somebody came.
Early Sunday morning, nightlight glowing

by a bed, the space heater's hum. Nico
dreaming of his birthday, probably,
piñata and a cake, maybe a toy gun. Grandparents
asleep

Megan Johnson

Upstairs Weapons

in the next room, a cousin on the floor.
Then two white flashes from a pistol barrel.
The killer's car squeals off, red taillights

However many times she said *you don't understand*,
I'm sure the words meant
flying hair and breath and feet.
Yesterday on the stairs with the cold air
flowing through like blood, the carpet
was caked. The snow still remains there today.
And when he said *I'm not coming back*
it mattered as much as my arms are outstretched,
like a rippled crucifixion.

vanishing past red traffic lights, home.
Porch lights come on up and down the street.
Abuelita's wailing and the carpet's stained

The thrashing and snipping never cease
between them and I am tired of my stereo
turned to seven and the yellow flowers rocking
in their pots till the fresh water flows onto
the kitchen table.

with blood. Red and blue spinning
from patrol car flashbars, the strobe
of newsmen's cameras. The obvious

questions and replies. A mistake,
everyone agrees. Gangs make them
all the time. When rosy-

She looks smaller when we meet outside,
a paper doll strung out all over the place
with missing eyes and teeth. But
does it really matter, when he and she
are lonesome scissors and knives.



Jay Marvin

Death Penalty

I cry no one listens
I laugh no one cares
I eat no one notices
I pay taxes no one reacts
I kill youherthem
I talk everyone listens
I laugh everyone frowns
I eat everyone watches
I live tax-free everyone screams
I walk to my death
some care
some don't
I'm in the record books now
my name means something
thank you for the fame.

Thor Ringler

For Jerry

In a phone booth
in the town of Wamsutter, Wyoming
in the middle of the Great Basin
in a rupture in the Continental Divide
where everything flows inwards
where there are two bars and one diner
where men outnumber women ten to one
I find myself
talking to you.

It's Thanksgiving today.
Your surgery is in two days.
It's a new procedure—
your spine will be straightened and

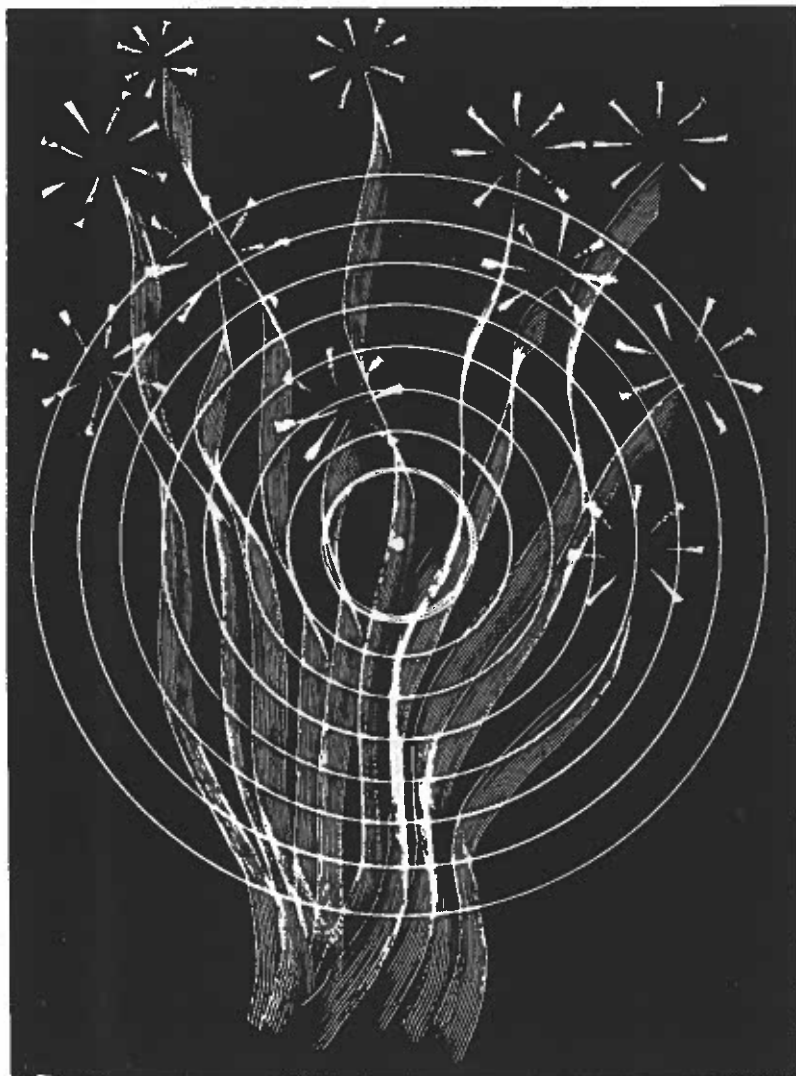
reinforced with steel rods.
The odds are not
good.

Just before I called you
I went out for a drink.
I choked down a Wild Turkey and Coke.
On some card tables, in the back by the jukebox,
there were aluminum trays full of turkey, potatoes,
and gravy.
A weedy man told me about his girlfriend;
how she liked to put whipped cream and cherries in
her pussy
and have him lick her out.
I looked at the cherry in my glass.
A sign over the bar said,
"Please leave your guns outside."

It's Thanksgiving, Jerry,
and I don't have the courage to say
how scared I am
with twelve cans of Coors
not enough to float me
how scared I am
in this parking lot
in this geographical depression
that you might die.

The phone booth buzzes with fluorescent nervous
light. Outside, cars slide by
on the interstate. It's a thousand miles
east to your hospital bed.
The mouthpiece
after saying goodbye
is barely warm.
I walk back to the hotel.
There are too many stars here friend.
I cannot lift a finger.
I cannot straighten a spine.
I am just your friend
and you are still mine.

I give thanks for that.



Robert Cooperman

The Woman in the Woods, Vilna, 1944

The Resistance had warned me
a Jew was wandering in the woods,
the one soul in his village
to escape a Nazi massacre,
the SS leaning on running boards
while peasants clubbed innocents
into pits the victims had dug.

After such murders,
how could my countrymen eat sausages,
drink beer, dandle their children,
fondle their wives, undress, dress
as if they were not damned?

But I speak with the flinty heart
of a woman whose husband is safely dead,
my little person harmless, so far,
to the SS, just a young widow
living in the woods, mad with grief.

Finally, I saw the Jew;
as if a wild horse
you must win with kind words
and a cube of sugar or an apple,
he came to me, looking left
and right and behind,
putting his pistol to my back
and forcing me to enter my hovel.

He soon pocketed it, apologized,
sobbing as he ate and drank tea.
I cradled his head when he raved
of a centuries-dead poet leading him
through the forest, like the dogs
that rescue skiers in the snow.

He hid in my root cellar
until I could smuggle him out.
The Nazis came not long after,
but found nothing; I saluted
when they took their leave.

Rene F. Cardenas

The Sure Dusk

There is no such thing as dusk: light
fails because the earth
rolls over, the

stars have always been.
The trails upon the
blue we see are

dead, there are no
fantasies, our dreams
are bits of spark and
minerals, our hopes
are ways to

keep from falling. The
aphid knows more
than we do, its
gods are more invincible, its world

is fixed and circumspect.
We daily dream
of recompense, of essence
and of right: the
rose fights on,

the stream endures,
the night is sure within its bounds.

Terri Brown-Davidson

The Antisculptor

"The serial killer's negative energy transcends his death."
—lines discarded from the poem

The red-gold marigolds, fluttering, flame.
Their faces—dead-center—are lit by the candle
she tilts and feeds into them.
Soft, crumpling petals, licked smoky
licked black, peel off their stalks, waft

in smoldering rags
until, hours later, she steps on them in the shack
with her callused pale feet, ash drifting
and cold like a remnant of the faces
she sculpts and sculpts and sculpts.

She uses then burns
the flowers. Shuns any human
memory, her marigolds
perfect face-models
and even—sometimes—the daisies,

even sometimes the lilacs
on their dilapidated, splintering floorboards
chinked with watery light as, squeezing
another clay ball,
she fashions a second head,

a gallery of featureless faces
shadowy in darkening corners where she caresses
then molds them larger.
When evening comes, she dismantles them,
tears off pieces of pungent clay,

seeing them differently, *fresh*,
not featureless but minute,
so beautiful, so particular,
she reads nuance
in clarification—

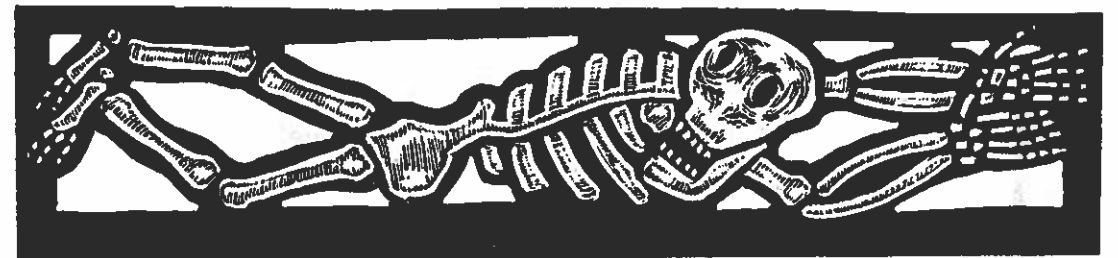
When she started
sculpting the faces, she wanted only
a family: her father,
her mother,
her brothers floating up.

Each morning now, lingeringly sleepy,
she crouches atop her work-bench.
On that table—over and over—something dark
inside the clay. She can't decipher
a thing, blind even with her glasses.

But shifts and tamps and molds
until a damp mouth blisters her skin,
quickly disappears, smoothed blank beneath her palms
because she's frightened it owns a face
when suddenly they start to cluster,

three women—ten—a dozen—:
utterly silent,
subtly warm
so she imagines touching their pulse
when they walk with him or they drive with him

to a gas station or a park or a house,
to a schoolyard or a playground
or a cave of collapsing snow
in the frozen, beautiful woods
where white erases their bones.



TOMORROW MAGAZINE NO. 18

Eric Lorberer

Fat Tuesday

In shade, a serious cold caresses
the newspaper, which is made of blown
bits of wind and decay. I wanted to and did
dispose of the wreck and rally, stale as the empty
theater after moviegoers have mesmerized themselves.
In Arabic, perhaps, reality is reduced to watery
moments of felt resistance, and one is left wondering
how people pronounce or chisel the words they wish to say.
Beginnings are costly, achieving spark in hindsight
anyway, amidst raw and broken
weather: the chorus of mice revolving
backwards, the tree breathing and sucking on death,
because poetry is also a matter of planned obsolescence.

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