You stole
the PUSH BUTTON TO CROSS STREET button screws,
the shelves in the supermarket screws,
the toaster screws,
car door screws,
seatbelt screws, all the time knowing the danger
of people riding the highways
unsecured.
You began to
keep them in babyfood jars,
stacking them into pyramids
that brushed the top of your walk in closet.
You separated screws by origin:
screws from Walbash, Indiana;
screws from Wall-walla, Washington.
You sat on your fifth floor balcony,
shaking a jar of screws in hand
dumping them into the street,
loving their clatter and clash.
And you steal more, each note a
trail of confusion you leave behind.
Things happen, screws fall out.

You had a complete set of 23 screwdrivers
you carried everywhere.
As an adult, you know you are addicted.
At parties
you resisted no temptation
to steal off to the bathroom,
promise yourself you only want
the toilet paper dispenser screws.
You know you are lying,
You strip the bathroom,
you just don't care.
When you are caught and questioned
and they ask you why
why why do you do this?
Things happen,
screws fall out.

Alyse Ball

the red wheelbarrow

October 1989
SCREWS

You never really meant to start a collection. These things just happen. You started with the small ones the day you were wrongly accused of stealing Mary Jane's brand-new-China-doll, really-real-not-the-fake-kind she brought into school for show and tell one day. She knew you hadn't taken it, but she had never liked you; in forth grade there is never justice; all squealers are righteous, and the teary ones always win. You didn't cry, not even when the principal spanked you twenty times. You planned revenge: you brought in your Dad's screwdriver, hidden in your Charlie's Angels lunchbox. During recess, you faked having to pee, walked inside the empty room and sat, crouched beneath her desk, screwdriver madly rotating, visions of Mary Jane sitting down so delicately on this collapsable desk. Things happen. Screws fall out.

That was the beginning. Suddenly screws were everywhere, waiting to be unscrewed. The doorknob in the principal's office screws, the soap dispenser in the bathroom screws, the teacher's typewriter screws.
THE UNCHANGING SACK

Living once before comma and dot the gods
were one though many and they and we
washed together like so much chalk on a wet day and I
sang.

One certain day one of the many discovered an unchanging
sack and, though some suspect the sack at fault, this
god decided that, though life and sound were fine
thing, they should not be allowed to dash about
unchecked for fear of somebody losing an eye.

And so he moved from place to place in the world, inserting breaks
and pauses, caesuras and stops and other regulated modulations
from his unchanging sack. He asked the seasons to follow one
another in an orderly fashion so that (except for Michigan and
certain suburbs of Seattle) they would no longer slosh together
in confusion. He assigned roles to people, so one knew whom to
oppress and when to wear a tie. He introduced cemeteries and
dictionaries, beastiaries and Hail Marys to further order a world
which had once washed together like melting chalk.

But even after the god of the unchanging sack had
divided the wet-day chalk of the world into
primary colours, he could not stop the singing wind,
Death.

Eric Maywar
ON PRETENDING TO BE A WRITER

I can sit at the kitchen table
In a kitchen small enough
to be in an apartment
(all writers must have apartments you know)
With my glasses on
Drinking what looks to be coffee
But is molasses milk
Scribbling in a notebook
And pretend to be a writer
Of some renown.
Yes, even a Distinguished writer.
(I pause, sip my molasses milk,
then jot that action down as if it
were important. Writers, that is, Distinguished
writers are always writing things down
that are of no importance whatsoever but
sound very good.)
I can glance around the kitchen
done in lovely art-deco tan
Not looking at all like what
I believe a writer's kitchen to look like,
and I imagine it is no longer
tan and neat but
disheveled, writer-like.
I mull over the day's events,
think of what I will write next, think
of all the stupid thought writers must discard
(forlorn gym shoes and such)
Perhaps the glee I saw today, the little girl
splashing through puddles, feeling the water
seep through her patent leather shoes, actually
it was me.
Maybe the facts people forget, maybe the
Christmas trees nobody buys.
It is eleven fifty-nine.

Marya Hornbacher
Rick and I were playing frisbee. It was chilly but not so that it was uncomfortable to play without a jacket. A few came out and joined us crowding what was once a simple and relaxed game of catch.

There was some kind of alumni program that night because we noticed a lot of older people snooping around campus, poking their heads into classrooms and the dorms. A bunch were headed towards the main auditorium for a jazz concert. Groups of fifty or more would every once in a while interrupt our game. I leaned over to the person next to me and asked if we were going to look like that when we got old. Were we going to lose our hair, and wear blazers, and not even care we were disturbing some kids’ frisbee game. Certainly not.

After a while a woman, about 35-40, wearing a tight brown cotton dress and heels came by and as she passed called for the frisbee. A few chuckles and cheers came before, but the frisbee reached her and she made a natural looking one-hand grab. Her skills looked rusty but good. She told us it had been years.

Everyone made an effort to get her the frisbee. She moved well, almost boyishly and was only held back by her dress and shoes. Her throws were good, not quite as strong as ours, and she even tried skipping it off the pavement, to limited success.

She was already late for the concert but it didn’t seem to matter. Recapturing her youth in the form of a frisbee with other teenagers was more her style than chatting with middle-aged men and women about their business nowadays and their dreams thenadays.

I made a great catch, turned and fired, it went off to the left a bit. Shuffling along in her heels she made an effort for the catch. She just about had it when her left knee met with the wooden fence that was below eye-level. She hunched down for a second drawing only slightly concerned glances. She slowly stood up favoring the right leg.
We asked if she was okay. She had a bad leg. This wasn't that serious though. A year ago she tripped and it gave out. She had to spend two weeks in a wheel chair. No, she would be okay if she just got to sit down for a while. Rick and I helped her over and then continued our game, occasionally looking over to see how she was.

After ten minutes of watching us I noticed her get up quietly. Walking behind our game, so as not to interrupt, so as not to be noticed, she hobbled off to the auditorium for the concert. There she would be asked about her limp by her friends. There she would tell them of her bad knee, and the frisbee game, and the fence. And there she would be told of their bad body parts. Knees, elbows, ankles and wrists.

Danny Franklin

Then you came in
in the coffin they placed
by the altar.
I closed my ears to everything but
the sound of the spillway behind the church.

After the service,
they rolled you to the back door,
opened the lid to that blue-grey box,
and we all looked in.

You appeared so quiet and relaxed,
but I wanted you to smile at me.
That smile I haven't seen in months,
that smile that haunts me at night,
when all is quiet,
except the sound of the water
crashing over the spillway.

Maggie Critz
TO LOSE A FRIEND

For Chelli
in loving memory of Richard Mc Glothlin

The small church was
three miles from town.
I drove first in silence,
then turned on the radio,
unable to stand the echo of your voice
pounding in my ears.

The rain started when I got there
and I had to park in a ditch.
The church swam with unfamiliar faces;
I searched anxiously hoping that
yours would be among them.

I sat with a little girl,
you knew her well.
She looked so small and scared;
I held her close and she cried with me
as the preacher rose.

His black robe matched the dress
of the woman in front of me,
the one sobbing so hard,
I longed to reach out to her.

WHAT A CARPENTER SEES

SKY
The sky is unfinished, he thinks,
needs another coat of paint,
the blue is too obvious,
more subtle colors would be better;
auburn, black,
the color of a woman's hair.

CLIFFS
Hard, creased rocks rising above
the sea-foam outside his window.
He would like to rub them smooth with sandpaper.
He wonders if their hearts are hard as oak
or softer, mellower. They would shine,
if he polished them.

SHACK
He built it, of course,
wouldn't let anyone else
touch his logs. That would be rape.
When he finished, he rewarded himself
with glass windows, and a single fireplace.
He never makes fires, but he knows that
even if the house falls, the stone chimney
will still stand.

WORKBENCH
The workbench is older than he,
has more scars. Asleep, he dreams
of it, dreams that he is the splintered wood,
sees old men carving on his back,
feels the sawdust fill his lungs.

Jessica Sklar
Why I Want to Learn to Dance

By Mariana Chamberlain
Age 14

I want to learn to dance because I am tired of tight black shoes on linoleum floors.
I want to learn to dance because I am certain the shadows of rafters have secrets. I am certain that once I am bounding barefoot from dusty corner to dusty corner the pulsing in my thighs will push me until I am outside, grinning wildly, and swirls of black light will carry my flowing limbs high into the deep blue sky.

Why I Need to Learn to Dance

By Mark Valencia
Age 16

I am tired of being afraid when my brother puts his arm around me. I want to dance with a woman and lose myself to our motion.

My life is losing ground. The people who sleep close to me are trapped in cycles of lies, and as I lay awake watching them, I cannot stop these visions of dry graves.

I am afraid I will always sit in this dark corner, starving for pooling moonlight.

I laid in the darkness listening to the sound of my own breathing unsatisfied with its lack of rhythm I wanted to hold my heart in my hands and stroke its feathers long and smooth until it fell into the calm of sleep.
Why is it that so rarely a lover turns to me always it is I who is turning turning there is a girl lying next to me she is beautiful her dark hair glides over the pillow like night gliding over the sky across the pale white moon and the sprinkle of stars.

Her fingers curve themselves in her hand like the back of a new morning slowly stretching to embrace the world wrapping itself around soft green hills its fingers spread to the edges of oceans to the edges of a sleeping girl's face just before dawn.

Zap Ryter
POEM FOR KELLEY WHO IS FAST ASLEEP
AND I WOULD NOT DARE AWAKEN

The clock is on the shelf
next to a clutter of
books, old letters and
poems by chance
Its back is turned to me

It is best that way
my body knows the time
in the aching of its limbs
the hours gnaw away
at its center
the birds will
begin to sing soon
I think

How often am I left
alone to tend my own
wounds in the dark
solitude of night
comfort does not come in
graceful & barefooted
spreading kisses light and sweet
like hopeful new blossoms or
promises around this still room
it does not come in
the form of a mother
or a lover it does not
come in
at all

Why I What to Stop Dancing
Anonymous

I sit on the hot porch in summer
watching the dot of the circling hawk.
I start to stand and extend my leg,
but sit back down and smile.

This spiral of seasons never ends,
and as my body is tinged
with the lives before me
I am aware I will be laid
into the earth behind my barn
until I dissipate into starlight
beneath a newborn baby's closed eyes.

Mark Rosenberg
Anointed oil flinging sparklers off skin
Like fire, flinging lovers to lovers,
The hoops meet.
Then they join.
Things fall apart.
The center cannot hold.

Vespers Vespers Vespers
Aching, again, again!
Priests too young to know to be sore,
too old to think to be bored.

And, as the peripheral boring continues
ALL NIGHT LONG
Only the center fire can be seen,
and even it it burns.

D. Curtis Gregg
with grammarcies to
Shakespeare, Yeats
and Stravinsky

ASSETS OF A MADMAN

He collects the moon,
Desperate as he is.
"This hobby is almost complete,"
He whispers.
There is beauty in his yellow bones,
The circles of his face.
Down the antiseptic halls,
There are pictures of him on the windows.
Flashes of mercury,
He sees he is the transparent angel.
In his mirror he unscrews the lightbulb.
He says, "In the beginning there were locked doors."
Smashed fragments of a coffee cup,
He steps on the ceramic bits in late hours.
The nurses are stained red in the morning from
The blood on his feet.
Jealousy weeds out the fragile ones.
In his insomnia he thinks he has won,
But only in fractured pieces.
His walking sounds like hooves on his treks to the bathrooms.....
Looking for something clean.
When he gestures he shows,
The face of the moon is tattooed on his hands.

Desiree M. Hupy
THE RITE O'SPRING

I Sordid Sordid Sordid
Poems say sordid stuff:
Whose arm lies caught
'Neath whose estranged love.
("Coyote sex"—doncha know.
Chew the limb to escape unscathed.)

Reach for metaphor,
Taste dimly some sim'le.

II When the dreary truck of the everyday
and the nightly does so catch up to and
surpass the breathlessness of a well-penned
verse, That well-penned verse, having su-
poetic a soul, chooses falling-by over the
doomed struggle against mundanity; forgoes
suffering the slings and arrows of out-
rageous fortune, and, taking up arms against
a sea of troubles, by opposing, ends them.

III Turning and turning in the widening gyre,
The adolescents spin to their mates.
Circle's center, formerly full,
Centrispins young bodies to the waiting circumscription.

CHECKOUT GIRL, MARGIE MARIE

"Blessed are the meek, for they
shall inherit the Earth"
-Book of Psalms, 37:11

I have memorized the frozen foods, all but the fruits
and vegetables; those prices change with the weekly specials,
with the weather. My mother always said I would do good if
I tried. She says Jesus shines his light upon me and I know
it is true. See how perfectly my fingertips cover the keys
of the register? I think this job was my calling. I told
my mother that I really am like a nun, I wear a habit, too.
Mine is the store's uniform. Some of the girls do not like
the pink jackets, the big floppy bow ties, but I do. And
my name stitched in blue over my heart. Margie Marie.

Here at the store I am somebody.

I like even the Graveyard shift, drunks and perverts
coming in. They look at me and listen when I talk. Sometimes
I use the loudspeaker. I tell them about Christ Our Lord
and the specials on pretzels in aisle six. And I stand tall
in my shoes, answer their questions like where are the dry
cereals and how come the dog biscuits went up in price. I
pretend that I am St. Peter's Checkout Girl and all I have
to do is smile and say Halleluyah, no tax included, no coupons
please, and I forget that
I am only ringing up twinkies and Coors.

Emily Jeanne Richmond
THE KEY

My world is not just dirt and dry brush, mountains and clouds
Tumbleweeds and Joshua trees, coyotes and salamanders
My shadow worms over the pebbles and sand
Onto the road with lightless definition
The feet of the great stones ripple with the heat
While their peaks, no longer under the sky's white breath
Hang against it like the toeholds of an azure dream
I sing my rickety song to the passing of great steel gekos
With pupils glowing and roars droning
My eye fills with dust from
An anciently slow chaos of near misses
All these will not complete the bleak womb that surrounds me
To see the whole, one has to step back
And the hands that shaped, galvanized, painted, and planted me
Will leak their dust too.

Matt Reynolds

5. Light blinds, darkness enfolds; A philosopher's dream of illumination. Is there a difference, a trick of the mind that brought light to our favor? Close your eyes. Light is always there.

6. In the modern, fluorescent world, I walk down an alley lit by lamposts. I cannot see the moon. We blind ourselves to the absence of light, pretend that it will always be there when we call.

7. I have decided to color the world black. With light, there is always uncertainty. I want to be sure. I want to be safe. In the absence of light there are no more shadows.

Marc Olender
THE ABSENCE OF LIGHT

1. There is nothing purer than darkness. None can change it, with prayers or a single word. Those who fear the dark do not understand they need only give it a name.

2. Those who need the dark know there is no passive light. Each works to defeat the other.

3. In the absence of light, sound is everything. Each sound, each syllable becomes a world in itself. Some will never know the color blue, but can repeat the sparrow's song.

4. A friend once told me she sees best without light. Anyone who has looked into the sun too long will know what she means.

TONY'S PREDICAMENT

Tony lay on his bed, thinking about the horrible incident that had occurred earlier in the evening, at Allison's Restaurant on Diamond Park Road. His eyes were dry and itchy; sleep had totally eluded him. He took an extra strong dose of Valium capsules to enable him to sleep, but that was a wasted effort. It was already past mid-night, which made it quite impossible for him to turn on his stereo or television, as his father had warned him against that act.

Tony's mind kept wandering from one object to another, in his small room. With practically nothing for him to do, he decided to come to terms with his predicament. He got out of bed and knelt beside the small aquarium on his study table. He tapped his fingers on the aquarium, trying to play with the fish.

"Happy fish," he said. Happy was the name of the fish. For the first time in his life, he began wondering whether fishes do sleep at all.

"Happy fish," he said again. "You have no dreams nor fantasies. You are free from the troubles of the world. I wish I was created like you." For a moment, Tony thought he was insane. He furtively tried to forget all what had happened at the restaurant, but the incident kept recurring in his mind.

Earlier that evening, Tony had gone out dining with his girl friend. While they were eating, a guy came and started talking to his date, without any excuse. Tony tried to intervene but the guy, who was massively built hit Tony very hard in the face. The irony of the incident was that, the girl never cared. She went ahead, and following the guy out, they left Tony in shame and disgrace.

Still in his reverie, Tony went back to his bed and stretched himself. Looking at the ceiling for awhile he said, "The life of this world is nothing, but comfort of illusion." As if that saying relieved him of all his worries, he fell asleep immediately.
Incessantly banging my fingertips on the wood above me. Pain infested those fingers and I kept banging them, insisting on the pain. I saw that car and wanted to be baked in it; I wanted to be waiting for my mama anywhere.

I wanted to take it and drive those lonely country roads, my face numb. Tears reeling. I can not bear this cold.

I move slowly, bitter and wondering. I'm wondering how long. I'm wondering if I have any ambition. I'm wondering when I'll see that long, dead flatness of an endless backroad.

Mia Butzbaugh

And when the stone walls of the castle didn't let enough light in, or the saloon was too hot and loud, they could walk out into the night and sleep under the stars. Maybe in by the edge of a trickling stream, or a grove of quaking aspens, or even in an open grass field - just like the one we're lying in now.

His friend shifted lower into his sleeping bag, then looked over at the closed eyes of his yellow haired friend.

"Why did your dad go away?"

The boy stirred for a moment and opened his eyes wide.

"When he first left, I think a year and a half now, I didn't know why he left. And for a long time I blamed myself. I cry all the time at night, lookin' out at the diamond outside my bedroom window. He taught me how to pitch, you know. He pitched Pony League when he was young out in Williamsburg. My Mom tried to talk to me sometimes but she would always end up crying more than I did. I hated him a long time too and my Mom started to drink again. Then one evening I was out here in this field thinking about the knights and outlaws and what they would have done, and how they were always free to go as they pleased. And that's when he looked out in the sky at night, up at the stars. And I think he realized that it was time to move on, just like the outlaws and knights, and like the wind that blows the grass that way."

The boys sat and said nothing after that for near an hour just looking at the world around them, at the swaying grass and the chestnut, at a stump that sat at the edge of the woods cut a hundred years before at the time of the loggers, but mostly they looked at the sky wondering whether they would ever go anywhere. And in the moonlight the same shadows that were cast across the field hundreds of years ago by knights, and outlaws, and men who believed it was time to move on, were now made by two twelve year old boys, sleeping under the stars.

Zachary S. Dean
Under the arcing wings of star and sky two boys the age of twelve sat in sleeping bags gazing up at the lighted pinholes that make up the sky. A Spring wind blew from the east across the open field pushing flourishing waves in the tall grass. The black outline of a fingerling chestnut stood at the edge of the field. The wind lightly whistled as it filtered through the trees sinewy branches. Birds of prey stood perched around them in the surrounding woods, their green night eyes scanning the dark forest floor for movement. The boys talked with the light of the stars on their young faces.

"I could die here," the yellow haired boy said.

"What do you mean you could die here?" His friend looked at him with a puzzled look transformed to smile by the shadows.

"I don't want to live that long." His hair whipped into his face for a moment, then was pushed out of his eyes again.

"What about big time baseball pitching? Remember when Coach said your arm was heaven sent?" his friend said, trying to put together what he was saying.

"No, the wind that blows the grass that way, that is heaven sent. And the stars and the moon, those are heaven sent. The lake up in Manitoba my Dad used to take me fishing on before he went away, that was sent from heaven."

"Remember in class when we read about castles and knights, and silver mail and lances? Remember the day when we read about the pioneers that built canoes out of the paper from Birch trees to ride the rivers and tame the wilderness? And remember reading about the outlaws who carried their lives rolled in paper bills in the empty chamber of their revolver? That's when I wanted to live, with those who rode warhorses wearing sharp steel spurs always ready for charge or retreat? Back then everything was wild and there were no restrictions other than life and death.

---

**Horseshoe**

I want to be lucky
So I listen
To what the Old Woman and the Horseshoe say:
"Listen to me, little girl, I am wiser."
"I am a graceful arch
Who protects everything.
Crazy girls and horses alike."

The bitter Woman
Who has never hung the Horseshoe over the door
Explains to me
That the Horseshoe has no luck
That the Horseshoe is only for the horse.
She whispers that you could break a Thousand mirrors and never
Live long enough to feel
The pain of a thousand shards.

The Horseshoe Protects the horse by shielding him from broken Mirrors and sharp words
It is iron forged and shaped to the horse's shape.
Yet when the horse stumbles and falls
The Horseshoe is part of the mistake,
The error in judgement (how deep was that pothole?)
And they go down as one.

Jessica Scofield
BEFORE AND DURING FREEFALL ORBIT

If fish could fly from the ocean,
for just one second
he thought
he could sprout wings in the night,
and wake up without the
heavy marrow in his bones.

He admired birds and butterflies
for months, sat
on window sills
with binoculars, books, and nets;
Trying to attract them,
he whistled and cooed
but they did not come.

He stood one day
among blue delphiniums,
in the soil of the
seventh story window box
and jumped.
Arms out, sleeves puffed,
barefoot, and slowly
descending the sky.

He looked down
saw a snake in a robin's nest
feasting on speckled eggs,
and the blackened
brick neck of a chimney,
and touched a swallowtail butterfly,
stripping the rainbowed back
of all the essential dust.

Lora Kolodny
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BOYS

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Tears reeling.
I can not bear this cold.
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I'm wondering how long I'll let this game with sanity go.
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Zachary S. Dean
THE ABSENCE OF LIGHT

1. There is nothing purer than darkness. None can change it, with prayers or a single word. Those who fear the dark do not understand they need only give it a name.

2. Those who need the dark know there is no passive light. Each works to defeat the other.

3. In the absence of light, sound is everything. Each sound, each syllable becomes a world in itself. Some will never know the color blue, but can repeat the sparrow's song.

4. A friend once told me she sees best without light. Anyone who has looked into the sun too long will know what she means.

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TONY'S PREDICAMENT

Tony lay on his bed, thinking about the horrible incident that had occurred earlier in the evening, at Allison's Restaurant on Diamond Park Road. His eyes were dry and itchy; sleep had totally eluded him. He took an extra strong dose of Valium capsules to enable him to sleep, but that was a wasted effort. It was already past mid-night, which made it quite impossible for him to turn on his stereo or television, as his father had warned him against that act. Tony's mind kept wandering from one object to another, in his small room. With practically nothing for him to do, he decided to come to terms with his predicament. He got out of bed and knelt beside the small aquarium on his study table. He tapped his fingers on the aquarium, trying to play with the fish.

"Happy fish," he said. Happy was the name of the fish. For the first time in his life, he began wondering whether fishes do sleep at all. "Happy fish," he said again. "You have no dreams nor fantasies. You are free from the troubles of the world. I wish I was created like you." For a moment, Tony thought he was insane. He furtively tried to forget all what had happened at the restaurant, but the incident kept recurring in his mind.

Earlier that evening, Tony had gone out dining with his girl friend. While they were eating, a guy came and started talking to his date, without any excuse. Tony tried to intervene but the guy, who was massively built hit Tony very hard in the face. The irony of the incident was that, the girl never cared. She went ahead, and following the guy out, they left Tony in shame and disgrace.

Still in his reverie, Tony went back to his bed and stretched himself. Looking at the ceiling for awhile he said, "The life of this world is nothing, but comfort of illusion." As if that saying relieved him of all his worries, he fell asleep immediately.
THE KEY

My world is not just dirt and dry brush, mountains and clouds
Tumbleweeds and Joshua trees, coyotes and salamanders
My shadow worms over the pebbles and sand
Onto the road with lightless definition
The feet of the great stones ripple with the heat
While their peaks, no longer under the sky's white breath
Hang against it like the toeholds of an azure dream
I sing my rickety song to the passing of great steel gekos
With pupils glowing and roars droning
My eye fills with dust from
An anciently slow chaos of near misses
All these will not complete the bleak womb that surrounds me
To see the whole, one has to step back
And the hands that shaped, galvanized, painted, and planted me
Will leak their dust too.

Matt Reynolds

5. Light blinds, darkness
enfolds; A philosopher's
dream of illumination. Is
there a difference, a trick of
the mind that brought light
to our favor? Close your
eyes. Light is always there.

6. In the modern, fluorescent
world, I walk down an
alley lit by lampposts. I
cannot see the moon. We
blind ourselves to the
absence of light, pretend
that it will always be there
when we call.

7. I have decided to color
the world black. With light,
there is always uncertainty.
I want to be sure.
I want to be safe.
In the absence of light
there are no more shadows.

Marc Olender
Sordid Sordid Sordid

Poems say sordid stuff:
Whose arm lies caught
'Neath whose estranged love.
("Coyote sex"--doncha know.
Chew the limb to escape unscathed.)

Reach for metaphor,
Taste dimly some sim'le.

II When the dreary truck of the everyday
and the nightly does so catch up to and
surpass the breathlessness of a well-penned
verse, That well-penned verse, having so
poetic a soul, chooses falling-by over the
doomed struggle against mundanity; forgoes
suffering the slings and arrows of out-
rageous fortune, and, taking up arms against
a sea of troubles, by opposing, ends them.

III Turning and turning in the widening gyre,
The adolescents spin to their mates.
Circle's center, formerly full,
Centrispins young bodies to the waiting circumscription.

hoop within hoop,
dilation and contracts

CHECKOUT GIRL, MARGIE MARIE

"Blessed are the meek, for they
shall inherit the Earth"
-Book of Psalms, 37:11

I have memorized the frozen foods, all but the fruits
and vegetables; those prices change with the weekly specials,
with the weather. My mother always said I would do good if
I tried. She says Jesus shines his light upon me and I know
it is true. See how perfectly my fingertips cover the keys
of the register? I think this job was my calling. I told
my mother that I really am like a nun, I wear a habit, too.
Mine is the store's uniform. Some of the girls do not like
the pink jackets, the big floppy bow ties, but I do. And
my name stitched in blue over my heart. Margie Marie.

Here at the store I am somebody.

I like even the Graveyard shift, drunks and perverts
coming in. They look at me and listen when I talk. Sometimes
I use the loudspeaker. I tell them about Christ Our Lord
and the specials on pretzels in aisle six. And I stand tall
in my shoes, answer their questions like where are the dry
cereals and how come the dog biscuits went up in price. I
pretend that I am St. Peter's Checkout Girl and all I have
to do is smile and say Halleluyah, no tax included, no coupons
please, and I forget that
I am only ringing up twinkies and Coors.

Emily Jeanne Richmond
Anointed oil flinging sparklers off skin
Like fire, flinging lovers to lovers,
The hoops meet.
Then they join.
Things fall apart.
The center cannot hold.

Vespers Vespers Vespers
Aching, again, again!
Priests too young to know to be sore,
too old to think to be bored.

And, as the peripheral boring continues
ALL NIGHT LONG
Only the center fire can be seen,
and even it it burns.

D. Curtis Gregg
with grammairies to
Shakespeare, Yeats
and Stravinsky
POEM FOR KELLEY WHO IS FAST ASLEEP
AND I WOULD NOT DARE AWAKEN

The clock is on the shelf
next to a clutter of
books, old letters and
poems by chance
its back is turned to me

It is best that way
my body knows the time
in the aching of its limbs
the hours gnaw away
at its center
the birds will
begin to sing soon
I think

How often am I left
alone to tend my own
wounds in the dark
solitude of night
comfort does not come in
graceful & barefooted
spreading kisses light and sweet
like hopeful new blossoms or
promises around this still room
it does not come in
the form of a mother
or a lover it does not
come in
at all

Why I What to Stop Dancing
Anonymous

I sit on the hot porch in summer
watching the dot of the circling hawk.
I start to stand and extend my leg,
but sit back down and smile.

This spiral of seasons never ends,
and as my body is tinged
with the lives before me
I am aware I will be laid
into the earth behind my barn
until I dissipate into starlight
beneath a newborn baby's closed eyes.

Mark Rosenberg
POEMS FROM A DANCE CLASS

Why I Want to Learn to Dance
By Mariana Chamberlain
Age 14

I want to learn to dance because I am tired of tight black shoes on linoleum floors.
I want to learn to dance because I am certain the shadows of rafters have secrets. I am certain that once I am bounding barefoot from dusty corner to dusty corner the pulsing in my thighs will push me until I am outside, grinning wildly, and swirls of black light will carry my flowing limbs high into the deep blue sky.

Why I Need to Learn to Dance
By Mark Valencia
Age 16

I am tired of being afraid when my brother puts his arm around me.
I want to dance with a woman and lose myself to our motion.

My life is losing ground.
The people who sleep close to me are trapped in cycles of lies, and as I lay awake watching them, I cannot stop these visions of dry graves.
I am afraid I will always sit in this dark corner, starving for pooling moonlight.

I laid in the darkness listening to the sound of my own breathing unsatisfied with its lack of rhythm I wanted to hold my heart in my hands and stroke its feathers long and smooth until it fell into the calm of sleep.

Why is it that so rarely a lover turns to me always it is I who is turning turning there is a girl lying next to me she is beautiful her dark hair glides over the pillow like night gliding over the sky across the pale white moon and the sprinkle of stars.

Her fingers curve themselves in her hand like the back of a new morning slowly stretching to embrace the world wrapping itself around soft green hills its fingers spread to the edges of oceans to the edges of a sleeping girl's face just before dawn.

Zap Ryter
TO LOSE A FRIEND
For Chelli
in loving memory of Richard Mc Glothlin

The small church was three miles from town. I drove first in silence, then turned on the radio, unable to stand the echo of your voice pounding in my ears.

The rain started when I got there and I had to park in a ditch. The church swam with unfamiliar faces; I searched anxiously hoping that yours would be among them.

I sat with a little girl, you knew her well. She looked so small and scared; I held her close and she cried with me as the preacher rose.

His black robe matched the dress of the woman in front of me, the one sobbing so hard, I longed to reach out to her.

WHAT A CARPENTER SEES

SKY
The sky is unfinished, he thinks, needs another coat of paint, the blue is too obvious, more subtle colors would be better; auburn, black, the color of a woman's hair.

CLIFFS
Hard, creased rocks rising above the sea-foam outside his window. He would like to rub them smooth with sandpaper. He wonders if their hearts are hard as oak or softer, mellower. They would shine, if he polished them.

SHACK
He built it, of course, wouldn't let anyone else touch his logs. That would be rape. When he finished, he rewarded himself with glass windows, and a single fireplace. He never makes fires, but he knows that even if the house falls, the stone chimney will still stand.

WORKBENCH
The workbench is older than he, has more scars. Asleep, he dreams of it, dreams that he is the splintered wood, sees old men carving on his back, feels the sawdust fill his lungs.

Jessica Sklar
We asked if she was okay. She had a bad leg. This wasn't that serious though. A year ago she tripped and it gave out. She had to spend two weeks in a wheel chair. No, she would be okay if she just got to sit down for a while. Rick and I helped her over and then continued our game, occasionally looking over to see how she was.

After ten minutes of watching us I noticed her get up quietly. Walking behind our game, so as not to interrupt, so as not to be noticed, she hobbled off to the auditorium for the concert. There she would be asked about her limp by her friends. There she would tell them of her bad knee, and the frisbee game, and the fence. And there she would be told of their bad body parts. Knees, elbows, ankles and wrists.

Danny Franklin

Then you came in
in the coffin they placed
by the altar.
I closed my ears to everything but
the sound of the spillway behind the church.

After the service,
they rolled you to the back door,
opened the lid to that blue-grey box,
and we all looked in.

You appeared so quiet and relaxed,
but I wanted you to smile at me.
That smile I haven't seen in months,
that smile that haunts me at night,
when all is quiet,
except the sound of the water
crashing over the spillway.

Maggie Critz
Rick and I were playing frisbee. It was chilly but not so
that it was uncomfortable to play without a jacket. A few came
out and joined us crowding what was once a simple and relaxed
game of catch.

There was some kind of alumni program that night because
we noticed a lot of older people snooping around campus, poking
their heads into classrooms and the dorms. A bunch were headed
towards the main auditorium for a jazz concert. Groups of fifty
or more would every once in a while interrupt our game. I leaned
over to the person next to me and asked if we were going to look
like that when we got old. Were we going to lose our hair, and
wear blazers, and not even care we were disturbing some kids'
frisbee game. Certainly not.

After a while a woman, about 35-40, wearing a tight brown
cotton dress and heels came by and as she passed called for the
frisbee. A few chuckles and cheers came before, but the frisbee
reached her and she made a natural looking one-hand grab. Her
skills looked rusty but good. She told us it had been years.

Everyone made an effort to get her the frisbee. She moved
well, almost boyishly and was only held back by her dress and
shoes. Her throws were good, not quite as strong as ours, and
she even tried skipping it off the pavement, to limited success.

She was already late for the concert but it didn't seem to
matter. Recapturing her youth in the form of a frisbee with other
teenagers was more her style than chatting with middle-aged men
and women about their business nowadays and their dreams thenadays.

I made a great catch, turned and fired, it went off to the
left a bit. Shuffling along in her heels she made an effort for
the catch. She just about had it when her left knee met with
the wooden fence that was below eye-level. She hunched down for
a second drawing only slightly concerned glances. She slowly
stood up favoring the right leg.
ON PRETENDING TO BE A WRITER

I can sit at the kitchen table
In a kitchen small enough
to be in an apartment
(all writers must have apartments you know)
With my glasses on
Drinking what looks to be coffee
But is molasses milk
Scribbling in a notebook
And pretend to be a writer
Of some renown.
Yes, even a Distinguished writer.
(I pause, sip my molasses milk,
then jot that action down as if it
were important. Writers, that is, Distinguished
writers are always writing things down
that are of no importance whatsoever but
sound very good.)
I can glance around the kitchen
done in lovely art-deco tan
Not looking at all like what
I believe a writer’s kitchen to look like,
and I imagine it is no longer
tan and neat but
disheveled, writer-like.
I mull over the day’s events,
think of what I will write next, think
of all the stupid thought writers must discard
(forlorn gym shoes and such)
Perhaps the glee I saw today, the little girl
splashing through puddles, feeling the water
seep through her patent leather shoes, actually
it was me.
Maybe the facts people forget, maybe the
Christmas trees nobody buys.
It is eleven fifty-nine.

Marya Hornbacher
THE UNCHANGING SACK

Living once before comma and dot the gods were one though many and they and we washed together like so much chalk on a wet day and I sang.

One certain day one of the many discovered an unchanging sack and, though some suspect the sack at fault, this god decided that, though life and sound were fine thing, they should not be allowed to dash about unchecked for fear of somebody losing an eye.

And so he moved from place to place in the world, inserting breaks and pauses, caesuras and stops and other regulated modulations from his unchanging sack. He asked the seasons to follow one another in an orderly fashion so that (except for Michigan and certain suburbs of Seattle) they would no longer slosh together in confusion. He assigned roles to people, so one knew whom to oppress and when to wear a tie. He introduced cemeteries and dictionaries, beastiaries and Hail Marys to further order a world which had once washed together like melting chalk.

But even after the god of the unchanging sack had divided the wet-day chalk of the world into primary colours, he could not stop the singing wind, Death.

Eric Maywar
SCREWS

You never really meant to start a collection.
These things just happen.
You started with the small ones
the day you were wrongly accused of stealing
Mary Jane's brand-new-China-doll,
really-real-not-the-fake-kind she brought
into school for show and tell one day.
She knew you hadn't taken it, but she had never
liked you; in forth grade
there is never justice; all squealers are righteous,
and the teary ones always win.
You didn't cry, not even when the principal
spanked you twenty times.
You planned revenge:
you brought in your Dad's screwdriver,
hidden in your Charlie's Angels lunchbox.
During recess,
you faked having to pee,
walked inside
the empty room and
sat, crouched
beneath her desk,
screwdriver madly rotating,
visions of Mary Jane sitting down
so delicately
on this collapsable desk.
Things happen.
Screws fall out.

That was the beginning.
Suddenly screws were everywhere,
waiting to be unscrewed.
The doorknob in the principal's office screws,
the soap dispenser in the bathroom screws,
the teacher's typewriter screws.
You stole
the PUSH BUTTON TO CROSS STREET button screws,
the shelves in the supermarket screws,
the toaster screws,
car door screws,
seatbelt screws, all the time knowing the danger
of people riding the highways
unsecured.
You began to
keep them in babyfood jars,
stacking them into pyramids
that brushed the top of your walk in closet.
You separated screws by origin:
screws from Walbash, Indiana;
screws from Wall-walla, Washington.
You sat on your fifth floor balcony,
shaking a jar of screws in hand
dumping them into the street,
loving their clatter and clash.
And you steal more, each note a
trail of confusion you leave behind.
Things happen, screws fall out.

You had a complete set of 23 screwdrivers
you carried everywhere.
As an adult, you know you are addicted.
At parties
you resisted no temptation
to steal off to the bathroom,
promise yourself you only want
the toiliet paper dispenser screws.
You know you are lying.
You strip the bathroom,
you just don't care.
When you are caught and questioned
and they ask you why
why
why do you do this?
Things happen,
screws fall out.

Alyse Ball