William Carlos Williams

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens
An Editors' Note

The Red Wheelbarrow is an opportunity for our department to showcase the very best of what we are producing. Thank you to all who have submitted. Thank you to Mr. Delp, Ms. Oomen and Ms. Wheeler, and also to all the lovely people that proofread, offered advice, and gave opinions, even when unsolicited. Thank you, of course, to those people whose names appear in this book.

XO,

[Signature]

Calgary Martin
Meredith Kate Marder

Mike Delp

Reading & Publication:

November 16, 1999

Cover Art by Ryan Moblo
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Siempre Ya Otra Ves

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"Music," he said.

"Music." Again. And he glanced past the porch, into the gorge of trees below, where the rocks looked particularly dangerous. He reached for the bottle and took it, poising his hand on the cap, lips beginning to separate.

"Don't drink my music," I shouted, smiling afterward to take the edge off the panic I heard in my voice.

He grinned, lips coming together, eyes sparkling a little bit, leaned over and kissed my cheek as if I were a small child who didn’t understand yet. He put the bottle on the railing of the porch and, leaning back in our chairs, hands tangled somewhere in between, we both watched the sun set through the glass.

Sunset in Middle Iowa, 1998

In the end what it amounted to was this: there was a woman. There are plenty of stories where all it amounts to is this.

We were somewhere in Iowa when she pulled the van over, kicking her door open like a dead dog’s skull. I followed her into a corn field where the sun burned wilted stalks like whiskey-soaked trailers her hands slapping along each of them, her body moving like the Martha Graham dancers before they got old. Already there was polystyrene stacking itself up inside of me. In two months I would be struck by a semi and wake up in Utah, unharmed. I didn’t tell her any of this. The moon was up, prize-fighting with the sun like a drunken de la Hoya.

When she stopped again the wind picked her hair up and wove it around her neck, taking its time to get the details right.

What can I say about that sky? The moon had won the bout and kept its arms raised high, its family cheering from the stands. She stood looking at the horizon, her whole body sitting perfectly still, her heart a window display.

My fingers found the end of her elbow.

I was many miles from myself.
Jaime Delp

The Surface

Standing at the edge of the lake while my father fished, when I was three years old, one night just before dark, I saw my reflection in water for the first time. I saw, leaning so close that the ends of my hair scraped the surface of the water, the face of a girl who looked like me, the same white skin, same blue eyes, blueberry-stained lips.

If you have ever placed the palm of your hand gently against water, then you may understand the way I pressed my palm to hers, carefully, just barely touching. When I heard my father reel in his line I lifted a finger to my lips and whispered to her, "Shhh..."

Sarah Mimnaugh

Letter to Stephen Dunn after Adam's Birthday

Dear Mr. Dunn: Would I be rude to call you Stephen? Am I crossing the line?

There is a sort of affection and pose by using someone's first name, and perhaps it is your words that I am more intimate with. Wanted to thank you for such "Tenderness" "Sweetness" and "Loneliness".

And to let you know I stayed up all night - Between Angels I guess I really wanted to thank you for helping me with Adam's birthday present, his mind, all business, strategies, and dress socks.

I like to think that I guard his soul; make sure he doesn't give way to the apathy of world domination. And so for his birthday I gave him your poems. The ones which break my heart and make me dizzy, the ones I know he needs.

He loses sight of his humanity too often, is too quick to overlook the fact that he is not a machine. Plath, Bly, Williams, Lourde, and, of course, you. I bound them up for him, so he could sleep with them, or read them to his girlfriend, or hide them for his children. Perhaps he will be able to love someone more now, having taken himself out of "Corners" and discovered that life is not a ceaseless election, that hands are meant for caressing and not shaking, that poetry is in his blood and thick as his ideals.
Cameron Martin

One

He turns on the record player
removes his hat with a grace
as if he had practiced for this moment
all his life.
Letting down her hair
"Deed I Do" fills the air and
the two come close together.
His left hand joins her shoulder
his right slides to her hip slowly
holds her as if she were the last glass
from a bottle of Dom Perignon.
Ella Fitzgerald's voice
crawls beneath their skin
heads straight for their soul
and for the first time
they understand what it's like to love.
They look deep into one another,
breathe each other in like ocean air,
then dance.
Forward, then back, turning as one,
stepping out of their skin
making love with the air.

I decided to leave her there that night when
I went back into the house,
to let her live there,
always young,
swimming under waves and moonlight.
Which might explain why now,
fourteen years later,
I often find myself by the lake,
with the urge to peel layers
of clothes
from my skin
and dive down,
reel myself through the cold water,
to submerge myself completely.
Because there is still a girl there,
floating just below the surface,
untouched,
so pure you could drink her
and never be thirsty again.
Marnie McCasland

For Sylvia

There is beauty here
but my eyes refuse to see it.
I am caught in your attitude
your wounds with Ted’s blood leaking.
Can we trade.
I want to see a cloud for a cloud,
a word for a threat,
a bruise for a suicide wound.

A man across the pristine lake is shooting birds
"I’ll do as I damn well please," he says.
I can hear you complaining
Ted has been cheating
the children need breast milk
I always knew, like me,
you’d be on low.

I can see myself
in the blisters of shoes
in those green graveyard dresses
in the tupperware mold
of a woman.

I wanted to believe
you wanted to believe
you were really solving a problem in that oven.
A problem, like you,
could never be solved.
You would have killed for two moments of yourself.

“Watch the birds as they fly through the trees
he loads and takes aim on one, two, and three.”

Her dogs would listen to her problems -
listen for hours about
heartache and suffering
secrets and feelings
and they would comfort her when she cried.

For weeks after they disappeared,
she would drive around
and shout their names out to the night
calling, pleading them to come home,
she would sit on the porch in the dark
listening to howls
that drifted in across the prairie,
and wait -
wait for the familiar triumphant bark
and the return of her closest friends -
but that was it.
Always either searching or waiting
for things to get better
but never really knowing that they won’t.

She has new dogs, now.
Dogs of loneliness,
dogs that follow her everywhere
she goes.
Diana Richey

Disappearing Dogs
for my mother

Her best friends
-- a black Lab,
a Great Pyrenees,
and a mutt --
disappeared.

"If only I had their bodies,
at least I would know what happened."

They caught up in their teeth
the golden fabric
of her happiness
and ran off into dark,
tearing it
between their jaws.

Gone.
Gone like all her ambitions,
who disappeared in the same way
on the day she was married.

She wanted to be a singer,
but her husband was like a sickness --
a disease that choked out
all her passion, all her dreams
and her voice.
After sixteen years of marriage,
she could no longer sing.

Rachel Ryan

February Commute

My mother drives the neck
of Highway 151 from Dubuque to Cascade
that smells like hawthorn berries
if your nose gets close enough to the blacktop.
She steers through the slender street lamps,
grieving for the light.

The blistered man who stands behind the desk
of the Okee-Dokee sells day-old donuts
for 70 cents each and winks at me.
I lower my eyes to the newspaper,
feigning an interest in presidential inaugurations.

He charges us too much for the gas.

Our used Escort with the rusted locks
and stingy heater
lurches onto the highway.
I want my cotton coat to be flannel, tweed,
mohair, serge...anything...just warm...

My mother runs chalky thumbs
along the edge of the steering wheel,
knowing she'll slip late into the teacher's lounge
with only enough time to drain the last hot water
from the metal canister to make her cinnamon tea.
She'll slide Mary Kay's Lavender Luxe across her
chapped lips
that get even stiffer with these half-hour trips.

I pressed my gloved fingers against the chipped window
and sketch her profile in the frost,
leaning closer to watch my tepid breath
erode her chin in trails.
Older than the Oldest Rock

Peter Kuras

You're right, Delp. I am older than the oldest rock.
I saw it born, sprouting from our mother's red and boiling bowels.
And when it came pouring down to earth I blew on it with an arctic breath and it cooled and became pumice, granite, limestone, shale, slate, sandstone.
I saw the first fish crawl, gasping and kelp-covered out of the Aegean and become man.
I saw the first owl come flying across the moon yelling his eternal question as he flew "Who? Who? Who?"
And I yelled back "Me, me, me!" and our voices were the first to break the eternal stillness of air.
I saw man paint the first picture on jagged cave walls and paint was the blood of the mammoth and the painting was the hunt.
I saw the first love, pure and alone and beautiful, two people alone, the world naked to their new discovery.
I saw the first rape, fear and surprise and loathing but masked mostly by misery.
I saw the first war, 100 blood-stained warriors fighting for the joy of the fight, the taste of Death alive in their mouths.
I saw Sanskrit spoken in the streets; skinny street vendors hawking snake skins. The sale has the same sound in all tongues, quick and dancing too fast.
I saw the first horse captured from the plains and beaten into service -- once throbbing free muscles beaten into submission.
I saw man invent religion, when the death became too much, and I saw gods come rising from the ashes of men's minds to try to take it all away.
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Sunset in Middle Iowa, 1998

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