The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens
— William Carlos Williams
the red wheelbarrow

Puppet

a film by David Fetzer

“When you’re asleep, you don’t have to whore around, and sometimes you dream that you’re not attached to strings.”

featuring:
John Kuehne
Kevin Powers
Peter Rogers
Blackblast the G.I. Joe

music by:
Mozart
Pinback

editors: corrina collins and peter kuras

we would like to thank mike delp, anne-marie oomen, jesse elder, kevin powers, matt brewer, therese zielinski and meredith kate marder.
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Poem Found in Ashtray

I.

I burned the words as soon
as they left my mouth so
they would never find the paper
and threw the ashes to the wind.

Caught in an easterly breeze
they settled into the sun-bleached blond
hair of a fifth grader playing on
a swing set at recess.

Small pieces sifted into the iced tea
of a man reading a local newspaper
at a table outside,
he sipped contentedly.

A politician swallowed a swirling
cloud in the middle of a speech
began to spit out garbled sentences,
"Poetry can't that be just."
My floor must be swept
once a day and my neighbors complain,
their houses turning gray.

II.

As ash begins to blanket
the ground Greenpeace pickets
outside my house and Peta sends pictures
of gray cats and dogs to newspapers.

Poets stumble out of coffee shops
and colleges and drop to the ground,
killed by poems no one will ever read.

The President

---

salt shaker

after a night of blood and bones
we are hungry in spite of ourselves.
we break a stubborn fast and
the salt comes out
through holes
punched in the metal cap of
the shaker,
dissolving into flavor
for food we will ingest and distribute
into our blood and bones.

after a day of lying around
making up our faces and souls
we are restless.
we break into a nightclub and
the music comes out
through holes punched
in the speakers,
making our bodies move . . .

dancing and sweating
our souls out
through holes punched
in our skin
until our makeup is smeared and
the taste of salt
evaporates from our lips,
and our blood and bones are all that's left,
and that other part of us is dancing
somewhere high above our flesh
like recongregated salt,
and that is where love is.

— John Kuehne
So I wipe the ash off my lips and take out my pen and throw it away.

Poems and poets become suddenly, like a nuclear bomb, the bane of what is moral.

Poets wanting to preserve their image start political rallies to stop other poets from burning their poems, but I'm the only one.

So I wipe the ash off my lips and take out my pen and throw it away.

— Eric Buchner
As the moon patterns itself
to the silk of my mother’s hair
splayed across the cream pillow,
I run my fingers lightly
over the thin outlines of her ribs.

I trace the scar where they took
the metal plate from her leg,
letting her younger self
creep in through my fingers.

The delicate bone above her breasts
rises and falls slowly,
waves fingering sand.

Her eyes are closed,
the lids like the carapace of an insect.

I realize
there will never be enough time,
to memorize the contours of her body.

The night falls about us in drops like hard rain,
as she sleeps like a child in my arms.

I hold her
as though I have just given birth.

— Louisa Flynn-Goodlett

We will not etch numbers
into our shaking arms.

This is not the Holocaust,
though there are Nazis scattered
across Orange County
who would search for Jews,
beg a recount so as not to spare an impure soul.

There are grown men behind the White House
carrying cameras and microphones
like concealed weapons,
punching holes through their fingertips
and connecting themselves to one another
with thread from their unraveling jackets.

They have started to burn flags.

I use them as sheets for my bed,
they reek of sex and ill-repute.

This is not the word of God.
This is not the last letter
I will ever write
and I promise
this really is not
the apocalypse.

— Rachel Ryan
There are so many things I don’t understand:
How a French man could eat the wings
of a Boeing 757 with ketchup and hollandaise.

Why two boys in the weight room after school
do crunches side by side
one’s head at the other’s feet,
lip-kissing at every rise.

This is not the fall of the Roman Empire
or the apocalypse,
the world will not stop
for a girl with secret weapon lip-gloss
or an ardent boy in the backseat
of an empty car clutching a Victoria’s Secret catalog.

But maybe it will.

Maybe the French man will change evolution,
his children will drip Tabasco sauce
over wrenches, anvils,
and the smashed sheet rock
of the D.C. ruins.

The girl with the shiny lips
will find the petroleum evaporating
when she tries to smother their surface
and the two boys will wake up separately
in boats drifting off the coast of Florida.

We are not just horny teenagers.
Opposed to love but not to sex,
we spill into the backseats of cars,
our voices dip through telephone wires.
We are not addicts or killers,
corpulent dogs begging for a hand.

I heard coyotes that night.
Two packs that called to each other
and with the southern wind, I was told,
there was no way to tell how far away they were.
There was a sickness in my stomach
when I heard the dog join in.
How easy it was to tell that it was an animal
in captivity;
his refined entreatingso far from wild.
The wind was blowing
over the hill where I was lying that night.
It was above me,
squeezing me between the land
and the sky, with only enough room
to breathe.
I sucked in deep breaths of the cold,
and my head,
awake from the chill,
played over and over again
on the screen of stars
the robin unintentionally trapped,
earlier that evening.
His skull punctured by a barn owl,
his body then cut from the net by a Swiss Army knife
and his limbs pulled apart.
I leaned my head into the Earth
and cried
for the chipmunk killed by the cat last week,
the deaths that seems better—
more honest—
than my life.
I slept easier that night
knowing those coyotes were near.

— Meredith Marder
Your Cigarettes

-for Adam

All those girls have the same string bikini and a foreign accent.
The perfect girl, you always think.
She takes your cigarettes,
your food,
your money,
your kindness,
your love.

Then a plane takes her away;
you never hear from her.
She is off in some country kissing another boy.
And here you are again,
picking up another girl from the airport
and she will leave you like ashes from a cigarette.

— Annie Burgstede
The Hunter
excerpt

I spent the whole summer at her cottage on the lake. It was small and musty with a long yard spotted with goose droppings and sharp acorns. The lake that might have been fresh and clear at one time was now thick with vegetation, its dark waters uncomfortably tepid. From the dying elm in the middle of the yard hung a tire swing her father told us never to use. At night we could see it by the light of fireflies, swinging empty, caught by the slightest breeze.

We weren’t sure about swimming that summer, both of us fiercely aware of the first curves of our hips and the beginnings of our breasts that looked more like the chests of strong men. Instead we rode our bikes far over gentle hills and through the edges of forests. In the field across the road we watched swallows slip in and out of an abandoned barn, darting above our head at impossible angles.

From behind a log pile we secretly watched boys our age playing football in a clearing. We wondered at their faithful love of the game, their interpretations of the rules and the violence with which they hit each other. We were astounded by how different they seemed from us, laughing and swearing in a beautifully vulgar way. The quarterback was a tall, wispy boy with blond hair he constantly brushed from his eyes. The boys never hit him hard; he played for both sides. He was their leader, throwing the ball with a silent untouchability. The huskier boys were linemen, grunting as their bodies collided. The fast boys ran the ball, spinning past opponents and the tall ones, skinny with new growth, ran out and waved their arms, eager to catch the ball.

We spent nights sleeping together with the sheets turned down, speaking in hushed voices about things we didn’t understand, and felt that if we lay close enough together and thought about the same thing we might be able to comprehend some great mystery.

— Brenin Wertz-Roth

Fish Father

What can I tell you, my brother, my killer?
—Leonard Cohen

On her denim knees, my mother bleaches, scrubs the carport with a toothbrush.

The carport gleams, spit-like in my father’s eyes. It is a hook; it reels him in.

He scales the trout he caught as I sit on the brick steps. The scales fly—glitter, landing on my wet mouth. His knife severs the head of the trout.

He knows it will land between my semi-crossed legs.

He knows the blood will splatter in little red bullets on the brick, near my heels.

He knows Mother cleansed,
Mother cleansed, 
erased 
car grease 
and the remnants 
of last week’s fish.

But now the bleach is useless, 
polluted 
by fish blood 
and ashes from his cigarette; 
his mouth is elliptical, 
fish-like— smoke 
bubbles rising, 
laughing 
as 
he kills his own kind 
and rises 
with his stiff, outspread fins 
through the front door 
to watch 
the History channel 
and eat a box of 
microwaved potatoes 
as Mother stomps, 
in anger, 
on a box 
of puffed rice.

— Drew Krewer
Feeling your shoulder on my forehead, watching a small piece of cloud moving from east to west on the warm lavender sky in late October.

I imagine a baby plant growing between the two of us, unsure how tall it would get, unsure how long it would last. What can we promise? It has just come into bud. Let its energy flow free.

Tracing the small scar on your hand. Seeing our hands sinking into the wise blueness. It is twilight; our favorite time of day.

I smell the marshes made by wet autumn leaves. I used to cry alone at this time of day; seeing myself like a leaf falling to the ground made me think of a pearl-less shell in the deep ocean.

Looking up, I see the sky being embraced by darkness over your profile. Watching, quietly, for the Northern Lights to surprise us.

We hear the same song, repeating in our minds. I heard the melody through your arm and hummed at the same time.

This is the most pleasant place I can breathe; lying in warm comfort beside you.

— Ayaka Nishina
Between Coasts

I spent half the summer on Highway One, driving up and down the coast of California in the passenger seat of a small BMW with a sunroof we kept closed, even when the temperature climbed above one hundred, and our long hair clung to our necks like boa constrictors. Just the way we kept whatever it was that had ended closed, sealed so tight I could barely breathe the air between us.

I’ve been full of dreams my entire life, so weighted down by desire that sometimes sleep seems as far away as Michigan did from the West Coast. I was born believing nothing dies if you live it enough. I was born expecting the sky to open itself up to me if I asked nicely.

In San Francisco, I had stepped off the plane with a kid-sized sombrero around my neck and a beat up copy of On The Road in my hand. I had wanted for us to drive away like two girls finally let out into the world, young Jack Kerouacs hungry for the wind in our hair and the old west sun in our eye sockets, aching to recover a rhythm I b

Sara grows her hair long: It smells of air and salt and snakes through the ocean around her breasts, then dries in waves from the California heat.

Sara doesn’t wear leather, and her fingernails are black from packing the soil under the weak shade of a sapling.

Sara doesn’t believe in bras or shaving the rough curls under her arms. She protests the military and collects litter from the beach.

Sara tells her mother and her friends about morals, and vitamins, and the pleasures of soy products instead of cows raised in their own shit.

Sara walks to save fossil fuels and plays her guitar to support whales and stop global warming.

Sara recycles for her apartment complex and mentors a little Sara named Walter. She prepares him vegan cuisine and he helps her plant trees.

Sara then walks home and hides, crouching in her pantry. From a greasy paper bag she digs her soiled nails into fried flesh, tearing and chewing, swallowing the salty sweet juice of the pork; spitting out the dull fat until she reaches a bone.

— Eliza Fernand
Solsticing

"I love love, for example,
Its diminishments and renewals,
...I love how we go on."

-Stephen Dunn

The flesh knows how to heal itself, it simply waits patiently; new skins grow, but still we look for faster ways to chill burn, to feel safe inside our skin, to give the heart what it needs.

I've wondered ever since I started breathing about what it means to give this heart what it needs.

And through all of the living and letting-go I've learned this: the heart simply needs time to grow, time to solstice through the seasons because with every beat, it begs for love, and if we listen to it we'll teach ourselves healing, safety and how to live again.

— Jaamil Anderson Kosoko

I believed we had both been drumming into our pillows since birth. Instead we ate at a little vegetarian restaurant overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge, where they served small plates of steamed broccoli and little cups of tea without sugar. Afterwards, at the house, alone in the room I would sleep in, I drew twenty squares on a sheet of paper and started counting down the days.

Four years old, my first poem, asking, please, for the clouds to come down as my baby could walk on them. A poem now, please, to bring down these wordless walls that build themselves between coasts, between friends, these inevitable walls that begin at the ground and reach higher than any cloud, stretch longer than any cloud, stretch longer than any highway I've ever traveled.

— Jaime Delp
How to Keep an Alaskan Love Stone

I wake up with an Alaskan love stone in the palm of my hand; its gray surface saturated to a charcoal sheen from the sweat of sleeping, its two halves held together by a shimmery white band, ice bridging the two shores through the winter months, sustaining wildlife in search of nourishment. The stone should be tucked in the folds of my cupped fingers, guarded as if my life depended on it, as if the throbbing against my lifeline after a violent nightmare were the four chambers chanting, "Wake up, child. Wake up." It is in this way that the dream erodes and the embracing of the five senses begins.

Sometimes I lose my love stone between the starched cotton sheets of my bed. Immediately I find it, breathe on it vigorously, rub it between my hands. I notice how quickly the stone resuscitates heat from the warmth of my body. When this warmth seeps completely through I bring the stone to my lips and drop it in my mouth, cradling it under my tongue.

The taste of my love stone is mortal, like raspberry or rhubarb. I am tempted to swallow it. For now, I resist and instead imagine I have taken James Wright’s hand, that I am standing next to him just off the highway, and that together we have found the blossom’s breaking point.

The morning I wake up and the love stone no longer beats, the morning I wake up and swallow, I will think of the silence shared between two people when the senses are ratiﬁed. If there was a man in my life, now would be the time I would run to him, press my lips to his and let the heat sweep through him until we were ache-less, until we could lick the sheen from our limbs.

— Lauren Bornschein

Debutante

These nights we hang by the ropes, shifting into quills of wind. Monarchs resorting to slim antennae reproduce the breeze.

As we lie, complacent rocking back and forth to the boat’s consent, I feel you somewhere far away eating dinner with the captain on a journey to a bayside commune, wrapping the map like a paper bag, coughing up islands.

There is a steady stream of driftwood huddled neatly around my neck, which floats by like a tiny ship corroded by sections of stars.

Here I set my sterile slice of hope, caught in an endless ring of diseased shells as I rock inside an oyster bed tossed aside by a tablet of pearls.

There is a shallow port by stone mermaids pushing me into the sand. There is a blue siren that squeaks through your patchy hair torn off by centuries of blades.

— Marnie McCasland
like earth-colored parrot wings.

— Stine Sell

Entrapment
Inspired by Gaughin's painting, "Young Woman"

A restrained Tahitian woman comes to be by way of Gaughin. Her ebony hair is inhabited by an amoebae-shaped flower, with indistinct green and pink petals.

Her irises are desolate windows. Her top lip, a touch of mahogany, is the door to an unspeakable plea for a taste of the painter's world.

Copper-toned breasts contrast against her dark brown skin. Her arms were crafted to obediently maintain her position in the red earth that surrounds her frame.

A raisin purple sarong wraps this woman's hips, exploiting her voluptuous curves.

Within Gaughin's canvas, this woman wishes only to remove herself from the painting. Instead, she is like all of the artist's women, attesting to a different theme of beauty.

If only for a moment she longs to assume three dimensions to examine blood flowing through her veins.

— Zimbria Bibb
From PARIS, LITANIE DES CAFÉS

Non, vous n’y étiez pas, ou pas encore
ce matin-là, au Palais-Royal
et pourtant les tables étaient déjà mises
dès 9 heures 30, les nappes blanches,
le tapis vert pré, sous les arcades

Tout existait sans vous, en apparence,
ous aurions pu aussi vous avoir réservé une table,
vous étiez peut-être déjà en train
d’arriver, au café d’à côté, pour prendre
le petit déjeuner, café noir et croissants,

vous viendriez de plus en plus souvent
boire café noir sur café noir,
petite tasse sur grande tasse, égrener
ces moments qui ne formaient pas une histoire
mais plutôt comme un film

avec entre deux images, le noir dans la salle
ou un blanc . . .
Vous étiez une publicité pour une chaîne
de restaurant, dans Pariscope, vous étiez
un couple d’amants sur une affiche de porto

vous aviez changé de saison, elle avait
changé de travail, de logement, et il ferait
de plus en plus chaud, dans la chambre,
et frais dans les taxis, et tout irait
de plus en plus vite, même si

vous vous quittiez de plus en plus lentement
dans l’atmosphère affolée de la rue de Rivoli
de toute façon le temps était déormais suspendu
le mirage de la Vie était là, comme à portée
de la main, en apparence

Midnight at the Riverbank

Unfolding layers of purple water
the Yagua woman swathes herself in the Shinipo,
the creatures of the river,
piranhas, pearlfish, tadpoles
sliding down bare skin,
living up her limbs.
She veils her hair,
like flapping fins,
in the scent of scarlet orchids,
and Canopy berries,
sending out a voiceless spell.

Past banana plants
and dripping rubber trees;
across slash-burned fields
and swamp deer bones,
the river crawls inland
like a snake with its toxic bite.

Water turns into blood;
blood turns into flesh
embracing skulls,
shoulder blades,
skeletons of chieftains,
medicine men, dancers;
the moist clay on their limbs
drying to skin.

Unfolding layers of purple water
the Yagua woman pours open the gate
to the Shinipo riverbank
where she will dance with her tribe,
intoxicated like mayflies
lured by a bromeliad bloom;
their oscillating hands, arms, shoulders
cracking the black sky
No, you weren’t there, or not yet
that morning, at the Palais-Royal
and yet the tables were already set
by 9:30, the white tablecloths,
the green meadow carpet, under the arcades

All existed without you, or so it seemed,
we would have also been able to have reserved a table for you,
you were perhaps already in the process
of arriving, at the café next door, to have
breakfast, black coffee and croissants,
you would come more and more often
to drink black coffee after black coffee,
small cup after large cup, picking them off, one by one,
these moments that did not form a story
but rather like a film

with between two images, the black in the room
or maybe a white . . .
You were an advertisement for a chain
of restaurants, in Pariscope, you were
a couple of lovers on a poster for porto

you had changed seasons,
she had changed her job, lodging, and it would become
more and more warm, in the bedroom,
and chilly in the taxis, and all would go
more and more quickly, even if

you left each other more and more slowly
in the maddened atmosphere of the rue de Rivoli,
at any rate the time was hereafter suspended the mirage of Life was there, as if within
reach, or so it seemed

— Geneviève Huttin, translated by Sarah McKitrick
Morning with My Father

For a moment we thought we had it:
knee-deep in a field of strawberries,
we imagined every hissed word
and heavy sigh
could recede into the soil,
we imagined every moment after
and we breathed easy.

You told me about my grandmother’s prized
pies and jams and we planned
the feast we would prepare,
the preserves we would store
for the winter months;

And we worked together for hours
in the kind of silence
I’d only heard of; the kind
that doesn’t mean the door
has been slammed,
the key turned,
that we have both counted to ten,
found the number too low,
and kept counting.

But after we stood,
compared fingers stained deep-red,
we had to leave
to weigh our baskets,
and when the number appeared on the scale
you shook your head and said
it was less than you’d hoped,
and I said I preferred plums
anyway, and you rolled your eyes
and I closed mine
and the farm cat leapt onto the scales,
upsetting the balance.

And in the car on the way home
we said nothing,
whatever words we wished for
lost to the grumble of your favorite
right-wing radio host;
the ten and a half pounds of berries
weighing heavy on my lap,
the truth between us, pressing close
against my side:

I do my best
but disappoint;
you try to change
but don’t;
the dentist says we both
grind our teeth
in our sleep.

— Sarah Todd
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And we worked together for hours in the kind of silence I’d only heard of; the kind that doesn’t mean the door has been slammed, the key turned, that we have both counted to ten, found the number too low, and kept counting.

But after we stood, compared fingers stained deep-red, we had to leave to weigh our baskets, and when the number appeared on the scale you shook your head and said it was less than you’d hoped, and I said I preferred plums anyway, and you rolled your eyes and I closed mine and the farm cat leapt onto the scales, upsetting the balance.

And in the car on the way home we said nothing, whatever words we wished for lost to the grumble of your favorite right-wing radio host; the ten and a half pounds of berries weighing heavy on my lap, the truth between us, pressing close against my side:

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— Zimbria Bibb
How to Keep an Alaskan Love Stone

I wake up with an Alaskan love stone in the palm of my hand; its gray surface saturated to a charcoal sheen from the sweat of sleeping, its two halves held together by a shimmery white band, ice bridging the two shores through the winter months, sustaining wildlife in search of nourishment. The stone should be tucked in the folds of my cupped fingers, guarded as if my life depended on it, as if the throbbing against my lifeline after a violent nightmare were the four chambers chanting, “Wake up, child. Wake up.” It is in this way that the dream erodes and the embracing of the five senses begins.

Sometimes I lose my love stone between the starched cotton sheets of my bed. Immediately I find it, breathe on it vigorously, rub it between my hands. I notice how quickly the stone resuscitates heat from the warmth of my body. When this warmth seeps completely through I bring the stone to my lips and drop it in my mouth, cradling it under my tongue.

The taste of my love stone is mortal, like raspberry or rhubarb. I am tempted to swallow it. For now, I resist and instead imagine I have taken James Wright’s hand, that I am standing next to him just off the highway, and that together we have found the blossom’s breaking point.

The morning I wake up and the love stone no longer beats, the morning I wake up and swallow, I will think of the silence shared between two people when the senses are rati-fied. If there was a man in my life, now would be the time I would run to him, press my lips to his and let the heat sweep through him until we were ache-less, until we could lick the sheen from our limbs.

— Lauren Bornschein

Debutante

These nights we hang by the ropes, shifting into quills of wind.
Monarchs resorting to slim antennae reproduce the breeze.

As we lie, complacent rocking back and forth to the boat’s consent,
I feel you somewhere far away eating dinner with the captain on a journey to a bayside commune, wrapping the map like a paper bag, coughing up islands.

There is a steady stream of driftwood huddled neatly around my neck, which floats by like a tiny ship corroded by sections of stars.

Here I set my sterile slice of hope, caught in an endless ring of diseased shells as I rock inside an oyster bed tossed aside by a tablet of pearls.

There is a shallow port by stone mermaids pushing me into the sand.
There is a blue siren that squeaks through your patchy hair torn off by centuries of blades.

— Marnie McCasland
Solsticing

"I love love, for example,
Its diminishments and renewals,
...I love how we go on."
-Stephen Dunn

The flesh knows how to heal itself,
it simply waits patiently;
new skins grow,
but still we look for faster ways
to chill burn, to feel safe
inside our skin,
to give the heart
what it needs.

I've wondered ever since
I started breathing about
what it means to give this heart
what it needs.

And through all
of the living and letting-go
I've learned this:
the heart simply needs time
to grow,
time
to solstice through the seasons
because with every beat,
it begs for love,
and if we listen to it
we'll teach ourselves
healing,
safety
and how to live again.

- Jaamil Anderson Kosoko

I believed we had both been drumming
into our pillows since birth.
Instead we ate at a little vegetarian restaurant
overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge,
where they served small plates
of steamed broccoli
and little cups of tea without sugar.
Afterwards, at the house,
alone in the room I would sleep in,
I drew twenty squares on a sheet of paper
and started counting down the days.

Four years old, my first poem,
asking, please, for the clouds to come down
as my baby could walk on them.
A poem now, please,
to bring down these wordless walls that build
themselves between coasts, between friends,
these inevitable walls that
begin at the ground
and reach higher than any cloud,
stretch longer than any cloud,
stretch longer than any highway
I’ve ever traveled.

— Jaime Delp
Between Coasts

I spent half the summer
on Highway One,
driving up and down the coast of California
in the passenger seat
of a small BMW with a sunroof we kept closed,
even when the temperature climbed above one hundred,
and our long hair clung to our necks
like boa constrictors.
Just the way we kept whatever it was
that had ended closed,
sealed so tight I could
barely breathe the air
between us.

I’ve been full of dreams my
entire life,
so weighted down by desire
that sometimes sleep seems as far away
as Michigan did from the West Coast.
I was born believing
nothing dies
if you live it enough.
I was born expecting the sky
to open itself up to me
if I asked nicely.

In San Francisco, I had stepped off the plane
with a kid-sized sombrero around my neck
and a beat up copy of On The Road
in my hand.
I had wanted for us to drive away
like two girls finally let out into the world,
young Jack Kerouacs
hungry for the wind in our hair
and the old west sun in our eye sockets,
aching to recover a rhythm
I b
Feeling your shoulder on my forehead, watching a small piece of cloud moving from east to west on the warm lavender sky in late October.

I imagine a baby plant growing between the two of us, unsure how tall it would get, unsure how long it would last. What can we promise? It has just come into bud. Let its energy flow free.

Tracing the small scar on your hand. Seeing our hands sinking into the wise blueness. It is twilight; our favorite time of day.

I smell the marshes made by wet autumn leaves. I used to cry alone at this time of day: seeing myself like a leaf falling to the ground made me think of a pearl-less shell in the deep ocean.

Looking up, I see the sky being embraced by darkness over your profile. Watching, quietly, for the Northern Lights to surprise us.

We hear the same song, repeating in our minds. I heard the melody through your arm and hummed at the same time.

This is the most pleasant place I can breathe; lying in warm comfort beside you.

— Ayaka Nishina
Mother cleansed, 
erased 
car grease 
and the remnants 
of last week's fish.

But now the bleach is useless, 
polluted 
by fish blood 
and ashes from his cigarette; 
his mouth is elliptical, 
fish-like—smoke 
bubbles rising, 
laughing 
as he kills his own kind
and rises
with his stiff, outspread fins 
through the front door

to watch 
the History channel 
and eat a box of 
microwaved potatoes 
as Mother stomps, 
in anger, 
on a box 
of puffed rice.

—Drew Krewer
I spent the whole summer at her cottage on the lake. It was small and musty with a long yard spotted with goose droppings and sharp acorns. The lake that might have been fresh and clear at one time was now thick with vegetation, its dark waters uncomfortably tepid. From the dying elm in the middle of the yard hung a tire swing her father told us never to use. At night we could see it by the light of fireflies, swinging empty, caught by the slightest breeze.

We weren't sure about swimming that summer, both of us fiercely aware of the first curves of our hips and the beginnings of our breasts that looked more like the chests of strong men. Instead we rode our bikes far over gentle hills and through the edges of forests. In the field across the road we watched swallows slip in and out of an abandoned barn, darting above our head at impossible angles.

From behind a log pile we secretly watched boys our age playing football in a clearing. We wondered at their faithful love of the game, their interpretations of the rules and the violence with which they hit each other. We were astounded by how different they seemed from us, laughing and swearing in a beautifully vulgar way. The quarterback was a tall, wispy boy with blond hair he constantly brushed from his eyes. The boys never hit him hard; he played for both sides. He was their leader, throwing the ball with a silent untouchability. The huskier boys were linemen, grunting as their bodies collided. The fast boys ran the ball, spinning past opponents and the tall ones, skinny with new growth, ran out and waved their arms, eager to catch the ball.

We spent nights sleeping together with the sheets turned down, speaking in hushed voices about things we didn’t understand, and felt that if we lay close enough together and thought about the same thing we might be able to comprehend some great mystery.

— Brenin Wertz-Roth

Fish Father

What can I tell you, my brother, my killer?

-Leslie Cohen

On her denim knees, my mother bleaches, scrubs the carport with a toothbrush.

The carport gleams, spit-like in my father's eyes. It is a hook; it reels him in.

He scales the trout he caught as I sit on the brick steps. The scales fly—glitter, landing on my wet mouth. His knife severs the head of the trout.

He knows it will land between my semi-crossed legs.

He knows the blood will splatter in little red bullets on the brick, near my heels.

He knows Mother cleansed,
Your Cigarettes
  for Adam

All those girls have the same string bikini and a foreign accent.
The perfect girl, you always think.
She takes your cigarettes,
your food,
your money,
your kindness,
your love.

Then a plane takes her away;
you never hear from her.
She is off in some country kissing another boy.
And here you are again,
picking up another girl from the airport
and she will leave you like ashes from a cigarette.

— Annie Burgstede
D.C.

There are so many things I don’t understand:

How a French man could eat the wings
of a Boeing 757 with ketchup and hollandaise.

Why two boys in the weight room after school
do crunches side by side
one’s head at the other’s feet,
lip-kissing at every rise.

This is not the fall of the Roman Empire
or the apocalypse,
the world will not stop
for a girl with secret weapon lip-gloss
or an ardent boy in the backseat
of an empty car clutching a Victoria’s Secret catalog.

But maybe it will.

Maybe the French man will change evolution,
his children will drip Tabasco sauce
over wrenches, anvils,
and the smashed sheet rock
of the D.C. ruins.

The girl with the shiny lips
will find the petroleum evaporating
when she tries to smother their surface
and the two boys will wake up separately
in boats drifting off the coast of Florida.

We are not just horny teenagers.
Opposed to love but not to sex,
we spill into the backseats of cars,
our voices dip through telephone wires.
We are not addicts or killers,
corpulent dogs begging for a hand.

Closer to Wild, 10 Miles from Home

I heard coyotes that night.
Two packs that called to each other
and with the southern wind, I was told,
there was no way to tell how far away they were.

There was a sickness in my stomach
when I heard the dog join in.
How easy it was to tell that it was an animal
in captivity;
his refined entreating
so far from wild.
The wind was blowing
over the hill where I was lying that night.
It was above me,
squeezing me between the land
and the sky, with only enough room
to breathe.
I sucked in deep breaths of the cold,
and my head,
awake from the chill,
played over and over again
on the screen of stars
the robin unintentionally trapped,
earlier that evening.
His skull punctured by a bard owl,
his body then cut from the net by a Swiss Army knife
and his limbs pulled apart.
I leaned my head into the Earth
and cried
for the chipmunk killed by the cat last week,
the deaths that seems better—
more honest—
than my life.
I slept easier that night
knowing those coyotes were near.

— Meredith Marder
Mother Michele

As the moon patterns itself
to the silk of my mother's hair
splayed across the cream pillow,
I run my fingers lightly
over the thin outlines of her ribs.

I trace the scar where they took
the metal plate from her leg,
letting her younger self
creep in through my fingers.

The delicate bone above her breasts
rises and falls slowly,
waves fingering sand.

Her eyes are closed,
the lids like the carapace of an insect.

I realize
there will never be enough time,
to memorize the contours of her body.

The night falls about us in drops like hard rain,
as she sleeps like a child in my arms.

I hold her
as though I have just given birth.

— Louisa Flynn-Goodlett

We will not etch numbers
into our shaking arms.

This is not the Holocaust,
though there are Nazis scattered
across Orange County
who would search for Jews,
beg a recount so as not to spare an impure soul.

There are grown men behind the White House
carrying cameras and microphones
like concealed weapons,
punching holes through their fingertips
and connecting themselves to one another
with thread from their unraveling jackets.

They have started to burn flags.

I use them as sheets for my bed,
they reek of sex and ill-repute.

This is not the word of God.
This is not the last letter
I will ever write
and I promise
this really is not
the apocalypse.

— Rachel Ryan
So I wipe the ash off my lips and take out my pen and throw it away. Poems and poets become suddenly, like a nuclear bomb, the bane of what is moral. Poets wanting to preserve their image start political rallies to stop other poets from burning their poems, but I'm the only one.

The Presidential candidates debate about their issues on poems as much as they do on tax cuts.

Headlines appear, "Is Poetry Bad For Your Children?" "Poems, Are They Destroying the Ozone Layer?"

Poems and poets become suddenly, like a nuclear bomb, the bane of what is moral.

Poets wanting to preserve their image start political rallies to stop other poets from burning their poems, but I'm the only one.

So I wipe the ash off my lips and take out my pen and throw it away.

— Eric Buchner
Poem Found in Ashtray

I.

I burned the words as soon
as they left my mouth so
they would never find the paper
and threw the ashes to the wind.

Caught in an easterly breeze
they settled into the sun-bleached blond
hair of a fifth grader playing on
a swing set at recess.

Small pieces sifted into the iced tea
of a man reading a local newspaper
at a table outside,
he sipped contentedly.

A politician swallowed a swirling
cloud in the middle of a speech
began to spit out garbled sentences,
"Poetry can't that be just."
My floor must be swept
once a day and my neighbors complain,
their houses turning gray.

II.

As ash begins to blanket
the ground Greenpeace pickets
outside my house and Peta sends pictures
of gray cats and dogs to newspapers.

Poets stumble out of coffee shops
and colleges and drop to the ground,
killed by poems no one will ever read.

The President

salt shaker

after a night of blood and bones
we are hungry in spite of ourselves.
we break a stubborn fast and
the salt comes out
through holes
punched in the metal cap of
the shaker,
dissolving into flavor
for food we will ingest and distribute
into our blood and bones.

after a day of lying around
making up our faces and souls
we are restless.
we break into a nightclub and
the music comes out
through holes punched
in the speakers,
making our bodies move . . .

dancing and sweating
our souls out
through holes punched
in our skin
until our makeup is smeared and
the taste of salt
evaporates from our lips,
and our blood and bones are all that's left,
and that other part of us is dancing
somewhere high above our flesh
like recongregated salt,
and that is where love is.

— John Kuehne
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the red wheelbarrow

Puppet
a film by David Fetzer

"When you're asleep, you don't have to whore around, and sometimes you dream that you're not attached to strings."

featuring:
John Kuehn
Kevin Powers
Peter Rogers
Blackblast the G.I. Joe

music by:
Mozart
Pinback

editors: corrina collins and peter kuras

we would like to thank mike delp, anne-marie oomen, jesse elder, kevin powers, matt brewer, therese zielinski and meredith kate marder.
The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens
— William Carlos Williams