the red wheelbarrow
so much depends upon

a red wheel barrow

 glazed with rain water

beside the white chickens

by William Carlos Williams

the red wheelbarrow
winter 2002
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*After the reading there will be a screening of the short film “Who Was the Last Person You Kissed?” by Rozeigh Anica, Bri Cavallaro and Max Sindell.*

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**Untitled**

by Kea Wilson

I want to sit with you at breakfast in silence, doing nothing but admiring the contrast between your skin and the sunlit layers of a raw peach.

I want to taste the hot light of your eyes, the limitless disparity between gray and brown, stirring more fluent than the smear of darkness that makes up the world outside.

The adamant window. I want to navigate the folds of your palm, to find home within the creases of a hand and the forecasts of a lifetime.

I want to feel your weight stirring against me in the dark corner of the woods where we once were, still beneath the paper silhouette of the moon, entirely apart from struggle.

I want to return to you.

I want to touch again the immobile trunk of your waist, to curve my untrained fingers around your heart, to resound within your lungs.

I want you to know that I hunger, that I awake from sleep filled with dizzy illusions of the stars, spinning in want for you to understand that this is not poetry. This is the carnal urge to swallow your cheekbones like rose water, to bite the curve of your lip and awake singing that you and I are not two, but the assembled slices of peach, the fused cross section of the sun.
Miami Valentine
by Brenin Wertz-Roth

Beneath the February sun,
hungry eyed vendors at every intersection
from the beach to Coral Gables,
press soft petaled handfuls of sweet, red love
to the shut windows of cars.

Hear and there a transaction,
money for food, for flowers for a metaphor,
but not enough love or holiday spirit
to keep a man from calling to me
across a lamplit street,
when all the roses to be sold that day
had found their way into cool water,
“Fifty roses, five dollars!”

How could I resist?
I wanted the foolish sensation
of the stems bunched in my arms,
thorns carefully pared off,
and the reek of the blossoms making me dizzy
as I walked home to no one.

Driving Towards Freedom
by Whitney Backman

There are four girls I am deeply in love with—the first being the Porsche Boxster S. And then subsequently, the BMW Z3, the Audi TT, and the Mazda Miata, but the Porsche will always be on top of my list. There is absolutely no rhyme or reason to this; I know nothing about cars. But there’s something sensuous about their long smooth lines and sleek bodies, their graceful, and everything, everything screaming just how fast they want to go. I am quite extreme and I love going terrifically fast, feeling the wind pulling at my hair and my eyes and knowing that I could die at any moment but am not, so I suppose this brings out some distinct visceral lust in me.

But I mean, who wouldn’t want a Porsche? The first time I saw one I was coming out of a Barnes & Noble, and I almost passed out. There she was, just sitting in the parking lot, absolutely too real to be true, like seeing a supermodel in a remote town or something. She was so perfect and beautiful, so tangible. I actually considered if stealing cars was as easy as it looks in Gone In 60 Seconds, unconsciously reaching out a hesitant finger to run it along the paint. I stood there in a daze, taking in every detail, memorizing, until I managed to shake myself out of the trance and realized that I probably looked suspicious. So I bolted off for my little red Dodge Neon, which was trying so hard to look cute, but I wasn’t buying it.

Later in the summer, after many almost-accidents in which I should’ve been arrested on several counts for obsessively watching oncoming traffic and not keeping my eyes on the road, my best friend and I decide to set off for Boston in her ‘94 Ford Escort, which only a beat-up map of the entire Northeast and the knowledge that if you take I-90 far enough, you’ll end up in the Atlantic. We’re aiming to park in Newton and catch the T in from there, though I’ve only been to Newton once, and was deliriously sick at the time. But I know plenty about the Boston subways, and I figure if we just wing it, we’ll be fine.

So we crank up the radio and I take my shoes off and cross my legs, and we talk and talk until we fall silent, sand I amuse myself by watching for Boxsters and Z3s and everything else. We are so free it’s incredible; we have no responsibility and yet we have all the responsibility in the world. We are so free we can almost feel it, swim in it. We don’t need to talk because it’s all being said, in the freedom saturating the car and ourselves.

Around the Berkshires, just over the border into Massachusetts, the radio starts to crackle and fuzz, as if it is telling us we really have driven into a foreign
place, reminding us we have no idea what we’re doing. Nothing is comparable to
the loneliness of losing familiar radio stations, and nothing is as deliciously warm
and comforting as discovering them again.

Just before Springfield we decide we need lunch, and plus I’ve never been
to Chicopee. After missing the exit and getting off at West Springfield, we end up in
Chicopee anyway. We drive around the town twice trying to not only find a place to
eat, but drive the correct way on this strange series of interconnecting one-way roads
that make up the lonely town. Subway is as disturbingly empty as the rest of
Chicopee, but that could be because most people don’t eat subs at 10 AM. Still, I
want to get out of here, the sense of destitution and the dead quiet are really creepy.

We drive the wrong way, of course, get on Route 20, 91, 391, and 291 (the
amount of -91s in this region begins to alarm us—it’s like some bizarre dream of a
déjà vu gone horribly awry), and every other highway but the Mass Pike, heading in
any direction but east. There is no holding back when you’re in the car; Laura and I
are yelling at each other as loud as possible and arguing to no end over which way
we should go, which of the millions of one-way streets will take us back to I-90. We
end up on a local road, the speed limit no more than 40 mph, and seeing as we have
to be home by 7 PM and don’t know where the Mass Pike is at all, both of us keep
yelling juvenile, as we are wont to do. We’re fighting in the way that people who
have been best friends forever fight—yelling and arguing and not getting anywhere,
but not really meaning any of it. This is the safest way, as nothing could possibly
come of it. I know of no one who has ever ended a friendship over which road to
take to get back to the Mass Pike, and surely we’ll have a good story to tell in the
end.

Through the screaming and driving too fast and taking random turnoffs, we
somehow manage to get back on 90; though I cannot for the life of me figure out
how. It is sometimes better not to question your luck. Naturally, we decide not to get
off again until we reach Newton. The back roads are just too dangerous when you’re
17 and have a 7 PM curfew. And though Jim Harrison and William Least Heat
Moon find tremendous joy in driving through rural America, suburban Massachu-
setts is not anything the average person should be subjected to. It is sad and lonely
and disillusioning; at times the towns look haunted, with the abundance of dark
peeling paint and the seeming lack of people, the claustrophobia because the houses
are all so small and close together, the streets narrow and always one-way and often
in disrepair. What people there are seem bitter and unfriendly. With all this and the
darkening sky and drizzle, we’re quite glad to be back on the open road.

We drive past Worchester, which always excites me because for all intents
and purposes, it should not be pronounced that way at all, much like Gloucester.

On a Small Mountain Over the San Francisco
Bay On Sunday Morning
by Max Sindell

The moon fire that burnt all night has gone out—
smothered by the earth that rose to meet it
and the greyest of dawn smoke shifts between all things.
Is this where the clouds come to sleep?

My dog, she runs through brush, lost to herself.
The fog, tired and overladen, the cloud that sinks,
that rests everywhere but here,
sweetens the grass, thickens it.

It is so thick that I can hear myself muffled,
calling her name, telling her to check in with me,
as my father, who has shown me the brilliance of creatures
reated as if they are brilliant, has taught both of us to do.

She knows my voice.
Once, gone from home,
I called and on the speaker phone I heard her bark
until I told her that I missed her. My father said,
with something in his voice, that she does this for no one else.

She is now at my side, flopped onto the wet grass,
slick with wet, panting so hard
that sometimes we have sworn she is steam powered,
like some great nineteenth century machine.

She’s hungry—nine a.m. and she has not yet eaten.
She knows that I too, am hungry, and she trots back,
down the hill without word from me.
My father is waiting for us both,
to greet us with fresh orange juice, cold water,
as we had greeted the fog, sifting through it,
searching for the morning.
some, which I greedily accepted. We loitered in our basement smoking his mari-
juana before he remembered Mary Catherine and the lawn. We stashed the stash and
he put on his Birkenstocks while I roamed barefoot.

I sat on the low stone fence around Mom’s garden, pretending to watch
Ron when secretly I was spying on the almost naked woman across the street. It was
on this day that Mary Catherine decided she didn’t want tan lines on her back. She
unhooked her top and Ron and I did what teenage boys do—we ogled.

Being slightly out of it from the drugs in our systems, Ron forgot that he
was mowing the lawn. Even if he did remember, he forgot where I was because a
minute later a jagged pain shot up my leg. I screamed which got not only Ron’s at-
tention, but also Mary Catherine’s. My only consolation was she forgot her bikini
top when she ran over.

My toes might have been saved if Ron hadn’t insisted on waiting to go to
the hospital. The little bastards were barely clinging to my foot and he wanted to
wait. He was paranoid about being arrested for being under the influence of illegal
substances. The doctors had cut off the toes because they had gone so long without
blood. I never forgave him.

I crawl into my bed next to my warm wife. If I’m lucky, we have sex. If not
I sleep. And in the morning, I wake up and wiggle my toes.

Leominster, Yarmouth, and Peabody. No one can pronounce those names but the
people who live around there, and absolutely the only reason I know is because I
used to live in Salem. A girl I knew from North Carolina was in a scene for Acting
Showcase last May, and her character mentioned living in Peabody, but she said
Pee-body, which I thought was great. It wasn’t her fault, obviously, and I felt for her
because moving to Rensselaer, NY was quite tragic for me, but still, it’s the little
things that amuse me the most. Especially Laura stumbling over Worchester as we
pass the exit.

As I flip from radio station to station, I count cars. Three Miata, a Z3, and
a TT who is parked on the side of the road but might as well not be; she looks like
she’s moving when she’s standing still and vice versa because that car is so unbe-
lievably smooth and graceful. Plus countless of those old boxy Volvos that were
made in the 80s, the car with the average lifespan of 18.5 years, the car I want des-
perately but runs about the same price as a Miata. Then, 95.7, a clear channel radio-
station, your source for the greatest hits of the 70s, 80s, 90s, and today, thought
they’re actually only playing Madonna. Laura and I get into singing “Like A Vir-
gin,” and “Papa Don’t Preach,” and then I change the station, because it’s creepy
when stations do that because they are not CDs.

Then a Boxster, and I gasp and whip around in my seat so fast Laura
screams. What the Hell are you doing, you’re going to kill us, she yells, and I say
sarcastically, No actually, you are. Put your hands back on the wheel. She’s such a
cautious driver I want to kill her most times—she gets us in more danger being hesi-
tant and cautious than if she was a psycho driver. I make fun of her all the time for
this. She laughs and I promise not to gasp anymore, but I can’t help it—I mean, it’s
like seeing an Abercrombie model just jogging down the street. There is no choice;
you just have to do something, make an outburst of some kind. It’s completely a
subconscious reaction, a basic human instinct.

Another few Miatas, a TT, and of course Laura and I are talking this whole
time about everything. It’s on the road that true personalities make themselves
known, no matter how much you try to cover them up. Things get bitter and we dis-
agree a few times, but we’re smart enough to know that if we start arguing, we will
forever. It’s like being three again and fighting over whose PJ Sparkles doll it is—I
want to meet the kid who will actually say, Oh, that’s right, this doll is yours, I
must’ve left mine at home or something. And of course we are interrupted every so
often as I see a car, and Laura rolls her eyes. You are so psycho, she says.

Finally, after we discover there are about three exits for Newton and guess
blindly which one it is, we take the one for Newton/Boston on to Center Street,
which is unpaved at the moment. Laura drives 20 mph, of course. I see a Z3, which
surprises me, as Newton resembles Chicopee, though it's not quite so bad.

We stop only once to ask for directions—it seems I remember more than I think when deliriously sick. There's some disagreement as to which way the one-way streets go, and the fact that no matter what, we're only going one way, but we make it to the Newton Highlands T station without ending up in Canada, which is amazing.

Subways are my favorite thing in the entire world; if I had a choice I would ride the green line from Riverside all the way to Lechmere on the other end, then back out to Riverside again, then back inbound, and on and on forever. It's the anonymity and getting to be whoever you want to be because no one knows you, plus just watching people. But it's also the gentle rocking, being under the city in pitch black, and the dull roar that's like listening to techno—it gives me the same mellow, almost disembodied feel. There's something about that combination of things—being absolutely anonymous, being whoever you want, and floating—that is irresistible. I suppose it's like being high.

There's the guy today, he's sitting across from us, and he's talking to himself, gesticulating wildly, but making not a sound. A woman in an obviously real fur coat looks noticeably away from him at the ads above our heads and a college student watches us, amused, as Laura tries to calculate exactly how many minutes we get in Boston before we have to head back home. Three 12-ish-year-old girls get on and I wonder suddenly what it's like to live in a place where your parents let you ride the train into downtown Boston ad 12 years old. Then, before I've even gotten a taste, we're at Government Center, and we get off. Laura's looking incredibly bewildered because she has no idea what just happened. Two hours, she says, not even. We've got two hours before we've got to catch the train back to where we parked.

This hardly seems worth it, I say. But I suppose that's why it's a ROAD trip and it's about the memories and the experiences, blah blah blah. She says, Yeah, we're being spontaneous, so who cares? Because there's nothing else to do and whenever we're bored we eat, I ask, are you hungry? She nods, and we head through Quincy Market, dodging our way around the throngs of people milling over whether to get Chinese or Mexican or Thai, or perhaps the incredible clam chowder that this city is famous for. (We say "chowda" about 15 times, feeling on our lips what it's like to be from Boston.) Being fully junk-food-loving Americans, we opt for ice cream for our second lunch, this one around 2 PM. We try but do not get it free, though it's Laura's birthday and she had an ID to prove it. She begs, proudly holding up her New York driver's license. Yes, I am 17. Yes, we are from out of state. Yes, we're on a road trip. No, he says, so we buy some anyway, eat it while walking in the rain, in the stores, pretending to spill it on every item of clothing until they

**Toe Jam**

by Wren Roberts

Every morning I wake up and wiggle the toes which are not there. My wife knows I do this lying next to her and this unsettles her because she knows they are not there either. She knows my toes are not in our bed, and they are not in the sliver of light that peeks through the drapes, and that they certainly are not attached to my right foot. No, my toes are in a jar on my desk in our private library.

The four biggest toes, who used to call my right foot home, have decided that bobbing up and down in a jar of formaldehyde is much more interesting than helping to keep me upright. I use them as a paperweight for my tax forms so as not to lose their usefulness. They have done this for the past twenty years.

I once saw a documentary on a man who had a third foot. He lacked a leg for the excessive foot so it dangled helplessly from the back of his left foot, leeching off the blood supply. I could imagine his left foot saying something along the lines of "get the hell away from me; get off my ass, you gross, nasty foot!" to the abomination. It had no bones; it was a real moocher.

The program was on how some doctor managed to remove the foot. For the first time this Middle Eastern man could wear shoes so he could have them stolen a month later. It was a beautiful thing. I couldn't help but wonder if he now keeps that foot on his own tax forms as well, if he can still feel it as I can my toes. The notion still haunts me.

I get out of my bed every morning favoring my right foot. I read the paper and drink black coffee from 7:30 to 8:00. If it is during the week, I got to work at the firm. If it isn't, I stay home. On Sundays Tommy from down the street mows our lawn. We pay him $3.50. He usually comes at 10:00 and is gone by 11:00. I would cut the grass myself, but that would mean betraying my jar toes.

When I was twelve, my brother Ron was sixteen. It was his chore to cut the grass every Saturday afternoon while our parents were out. He liked this arrangement as it allowed him to smoke his joints and flirt with Mary Catherine across the street.

Mary Catherine liked to sunbathe on Saturdays in a yellow bikini. This pleased both Ron and me, though I never had a chance seeing as she'll forever be seventeen. My brother swore he'd get in her pants one of these days, but he was foiled when our family moved to Rhode Island at the end of the summer.

It was one of these Saturday afternoons that a horrible thing came about. Ron had pulled out his stash soon after Mom and Dad left at noon. He offered me
Maybe he is trying to see what happens when the day is supposed to close down, or maybe he is simply taking a walk at the right time. He remembers the bakery as he passes it, the set of dinner rolls he had bought out of haste. It is strange to see the wife and the husband missing from behind the counter. He presses up to the cold of the window and notices an open door. If he can just move a little bit more up and to the right he could see inside. He does. What he sees is this: the wife and husband with hands on the others' shoulders. They are sitting on a sack of flour, the wife's layers of skirts and aprons containing her excess body, the husband's extra large Grade A figure holding her up. Their softened eyes. The cloth, barely clean anymore, hangs between her plump fingers, behind his neck. The clock, in its silence, had told them ten past six.

We almost kick us out. We shop but don't buy anything and drink coffee, but soon we're bored because there's not much to do in Boston when it's raining and you have less than two hours.

We take the train back to Newton Highlands and the car's still there, which is rather surprising as we parked in a permit parking only area. Driving back on Center Street, hopefully towards the Mass Pike, there he is. Obviously an Abercrombie model, running in his shorts in the rain, and Laura and I both start screaming at the same time. We almost pull over, but we're driving in a lot of traffic in dirt with potholes a few feet deep, so we just keep driving and yelling. This is better than seeing two Boxsters at once, as far as I'm concerned. How often do you see an Abercrombie model running half naked in the rain? We're so distracted I'd be surprised if we get out of Newton.

We do, of course, but run into more trouble. If you go east for three hours, you tend to think anywhere you're headed is east. Unfortunately, I-90 East goes to Boston, not New York. We end up in Cambridge, which has quite a few votes for the worst city to drive in this country. There are left hand turn lanes that turn onto one-way bridges—one-way meaning the traffic's coming at us. We try to turn left and then almost kill people switching lanes. We get hopelessly lost and have to ask for directions at a full service gas station, yelling at the guy, No, we don't want any gas at all actually, but can you tell us how to get to the Mass Pike? We see a lot more of Cambridge than we ever wanted to see, and all through this surreal haze of worry that we'll get into an accident, kill someone, or even worse, be stuck driving around and around Cambridge all our lives. They really should build on-ramps so they're right next to the off-ramps; how many people miss their exit and get lost trying to turn around on these damned divided highways? Or even start going the wrong direction, like us? Things should be made simpler for those of us inclined to get lost, though Massachusetts is certainly not the state to drive in if you're directionally challenged.

Finally, back to I-90 and we're safe. The speedometer keeps creeping up to 80, but most of that is pure elation because we've done it; we made it to Boston and we aren't dead or lost in Canada, or lost anywhere at all, for that matter. It's such a great feeling that we're belting out any song that comes in on one of the few radio stations now, and Laura even points out a Z3 to me. I wish desperately for the thousandth time that I was in that car, feeling her cool leather against my skin, watching everyone fade behind me as I glide by. But then again there's something wonderfully familiar and comforting about Laura's Escort, now that we've been through it all.

By the time we get to the border of New York it's raining quite steadily and almost kick us out. We shop but don't buy anything and drink coffee, but soon we're bored because there's not much to do in Boston when it's raining and you have less than two hours.
I can't see the oncoming traffic as well, so I switch to the radio—103.1, 103.9, 102.7. Those stations we love to hate, but define what home is more than a house or a town or familiarity—they're finally coming in. I start to recognize the stretch of I-90 we're on—I must've been here a thousand times—and I can feel the same energy that was in the car when we started, only this time it's not so much about freedom; it's about having made it through alive. It's about having had the freedom and finally choosing a place to come back to. It's about feeling insanely alive. "Tiny Dancer" comes on the radio, and we crank it up, singing louder than Elton John all the way home.

The wife and the husband run a bakery
by Taya Kitaysky

The wife and the husband run a bakery. The wife's excess body has been spilled onto her like excess batter from a wooden spoon. The husband is solid and shy, with the silhouette of an extra-large Grade A egg. When the clock tells them ten to six the wife wipes down the counter, using the clean cloth for the spaces between shelves, and the husband kneads the dough in the room customers may not see. When the clock tells them six thirty they stand poised, fat fingers close for comfort, knuckles creased with flour and raspberry jam. They stand in a two-person line, softened eyes looking towards the door, waiting for customers. When a customer walks in, the clock usually telling them a quarter after seven, their eyes follow them like gears. The customer wishes the clock would not only tell time, but make sounds as well. This is when the customer finishes browsing and quickly orders something like four dinner rolls, the bag making whispery paper sounds inside of canvas before the door makes its dragged out close.

By the time the man in the black velvet hat has walked in, the wife and the husband have been running their bakery this way for years. This particular hat sits on this particular man as if it was some sort of groomed animal he had pinned on his head. On his wrist also sits a watch. Part of the reason this man is in such a good mood is because prior to his entrance he was able to consult his watch and tell the time to another pedestrian.

"Good afternoon," says the black velvet hat man, and takes note of the way the wife and husband seem to hold their abdomens with their folded hands. "This place smells like a bakery but it's a bit drab." He removes a decorated pastry from a large glass jar and waves it around. "I think...that if you stirred things up a little bit more, you know, put some modern paintings up on the walls, added, umm, more of a contrast of colors..." The wife and the husband look at each other and then follow the decorated pastry in flight. "You know, life should never be bland."

The black velvet hat man consults his watch and murmurs the time to himself. He then points to a loaf of bread, places several coins on the counter and contorts his face into a sort of wink. When the pinned animal and stolen pastry take the wind back out the clock tells them half past five in the evening. The wife slides the coins off the counter and they fall into her palm. The husband hands her the clean cloth.

A customer from earlier that day walks through the streets of little shops.
Space
by Amelia Klock

Everything here
is separated
by space.
The words on the page
of the book
I am not reading,
the difference between
the lampshade
and the light bulb
and the iridescent,
dimly lit
everything downstairs
where I am not.
I am here,
stuffed between the bookshelves
and bureau drawers
and you are there,
where I left you,
tapping your fingers
on the kitchen table,
pushing around
spilled salt
with your thumbs,
watching the bottom
burn out of the teakettle.

My head in her lap
by Mike Bushnell

My hands tossed
above my head like
I am praising a god;
your waist an alter, grasped.
Breath audible but
gentle.

Who is to say I am not
the alter myself,
shadows,
our shadows praising
for nothing in return,
just set on the floor, folded
up the wall. So simple,
yet so unique.
Unique
like so many before
like so many before.
Self-Portrait
by Bri Cavallaro

1. Past
I haven’t wondered lately about
the universe expanding or the little
bursts of color that explode behind my eyes
every time I hear someone speak. I’d like to tell you
that I spend my free time imagining my mother
planting daylilies in our front lawn
amid the holly bushes I will never see overloaded with berries,
berries that my cat steals,
bunching them in his cheeks like a slender chipmunk
and thinking himself clever until he swallows—
but I don’t. My thoughts have confused themselves
with novels, with the lies that spilled from my mouth
when I was younger and bunch behind my teeth right now.

About my cat: he has never slept on the foot of my bed
or under my covers or anywhere near the arching
ceilings or high windows of my room. When I was seven,
I shuffled through the blueprints with my grandpa,
not knowing that he wouldn’t sleep in the guest room
he designed. My shelves fell down the first night I slept
in that unfamiliar house and the cat bit my toes through the sheets.

2. Present
At this moment,
my father is shutting his history book
and putting it on the bedside table. None of his clocks
tell the same time, and so he adds and subtracts as he falls asleep.

The daylilies died when twilight fell.
Different buds on the same flower
will burst into the light tomorrow;
I thought daylilies lived through the season
until one spring day when my mother sent me outside with clippers.

daylilies that I find its love not hate
that will bring the world down
to its final
ash
on the bed.
Dear Min

by Caitlin Harrison

spent the night
pushing pens through the fan
instead of sex,
again.
ink splattering, staining skin and the white linen
bandages.

subtle epiphany

the darkness between the headlights
of two cars approaching
the black suddenly dissolving into light
and we wonder where our darkness has gone.

and in reference to him?:
what concerned me most
was his thinness of waist
and yellow-milk eyes
more than his sudden taste for vocal rhyme
and meter.

yellow daffodil, pink cotton dress
summer's belle epoch one hot night
with no stars to see by.
quick rejection of the child.
transitional earth's axis rotating.

an olive for overbite,
a lemon for the cut
beneath your chin,
two small bites
the size of my teeth.

and maybe more interesting even still,
Climbing Heaven
by Marc Dones

All the gods know is destinations.
—Sylvia Plath

You say the moon fascinates you.
You say that it is impossible for you to imagine
how she claws her way up the sky
with only the pale pinpricks of the stars
for handholds.

“What does it matter?” I say, “So long
as she still gets there.”

But on the nights when you are gone,
and your destination will not bring you anywhere
near me, I have often locked
eyes with her one large one,
bent on knowing.
But all I see is her fall
clumsily to the earth,
dragging the ocean behind her,
and not bothering to look back.

After the Triple Bypass
by Louisa Flynn-Goodlet

For my father

A coil of wire lays curled around your
breast bone like a Chinese finger trap, lodged
beneath the staple scars, and the long one
that runs almost to your belly button,
smooth as a burn and still red after three
years. It holds your ribs together, the key
to a music box, the breath between words
of a song; you, who have always wanted
to go in every direction, packed your
bags without thought of a destination,
drove with your knees as you played the penny
whistles, eyes never on the road, now you're
wired shut, an irony I'm sure you
haven't missed in your seeking, your constant
unraveling, your ambition to cut
open every apple, to find the star.
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haven’t missed in your seeking, your constant
unraveling, your ambition to cut
open every apple, to find the star.
Dear Min
by Caitlin Harrison

spent the night
pushing pens through the fan
instead of sex,
again.
ink splattering, staining skin and the white linen
bandages.

subtle epiphany

the darkness between the headlights
of two cars approaching
the black suddenly dissolving into light
and we wonder where our darkness has gone.

and in reference to him?:
what concerned me most
was his thinness of waist
and yellow-milk eyes
more than his sudden taste for vocal rhyme
and meter.

yellow daffodil, pink cotton dress
summer's belle epoch one hot night
with no stars to see by.
quick rejection of the child.

transitional earth's axis rotating.

an olive for overbite,
a lemon for the cut
beneath your chin,
two small bites
the size of my teeth.

and maybe more interesting even still,
Self-Portrait
by Bri Cavallaro

1. Past
I haven’t wondered lately about
the universe expanding or the little
bursts of color that explode behind my eyes
every time I hear someone speak. I’d like to tell you
that I spend my free time imagining my mother
planting daylilies in our front lawn
amid the holly bushes I will never see overloaded with berries,
berries that my cat steals,
bunching them in his cheeks like a slender chipmunk
and thinking himself clever until he swallows—
but I don’t. My thoughts have confused themselves
with novels, with the lies that spilled from my mouth
when I was younger and bunch behind my teeth right now.

About my cat: he has never slept on the foot of my bed
or under my covers or anywhere near the arching
ceilings or high windows of my room. When I was seven,
I shuffled through the blueprints with my grandpa,
not knowing that he wouldn’t sleep in the guest room
he designed. My shelves fell down the first night I slept
in that unfamiliar house and the cat bit my toes through the sheets.

2. Present
At this moment,
my father is shutting his history book
and putting it on the bedside table. None of his clocks
tell the same time, and so he adds and subtracts as he falls asleep.

The daylilies died when twilight fell.
Different buds on the same flower
will burst into the light tomorrow;
I thought daylilies lived through the season
until one spring day when my mother sent me outside with clippers.
Space
by Amelia Klock

Everything here
is separated
by space.
The words on the page
of the book
I am not reading,
the difference between
the lampshade
and the light bulb
and the iridescent,
dimly lit
everything downstairs
where I am not.

I am here,
stuffed between the bookshelves
and bureau drawers
and you are there,
where I left you,
tapping your fingers
on the kitchen table,
pushing around
spilled salt
with your thumbs,
watching the bottom
burn out of the teakettle.

My head in her lap
by Mike Bushnell

My hands tossed
above my head like
I am praising a god;
your waist an alter, grasped.
   Breath audible but
gentle.

Who is to say I am not
the alter myself,
shadows,
   our shadows praising
for nothing in return,
just set on the floor, folded
up the wall. So simple,
yet so unique.
Unique
like so many before
like so many before.
I can't see the oncoming traffic as well, so I switch to the radio—103.1, 103.9, 102.7, those stations we love to hate, but define what home is more than a house or a town or familiarity—they're finally coming in. I start to recognize the stretch of I-90 we're on—I must've been there a thousand times—and I can feel the same energy that was in the car when we started, only this time it's not so much about freedom; it's about having made it through alive. It's about having had the freedom and finally choosing a place to come back to. It's about hearing the jingle for the radio station you've had stuck in your head countless times and eventually just learned to tune out. It's about feeling insanely alive. "Tiny Dancer" comes on the radio, and we crank it up, singing louder than Elton John all the way home.

The wife and the husband run a bakery
by Taya Kitaysky

The wife and the husband run a bakery.
The wife's excess body has been spilled onto her like excess batter from a wooden spoon. The husband is solid and shy, with the silhouette of an extra large Grade A egg. When the clock tells them ten to six the wife wipes down the counter, using the clean cloth for the spaces between shelves, and the husband kneads the dough in the room customers may not see. When the clock tells them six thirty they stand poised, fat fingers close for comfort, knuckles creased with flour and raspberry jam. They stand in a two-person line, softened eyes looking towards the door, waiting for customers. When a customer walks in, the clock usually telling them a quarter after seven, their eyes follow them like gears. The customer wishes the clock would not only tell time, but make sounds as well. This is when the customer finishes browsing and quickly orders something like four dinner rolls, the bag making whispery paper sounds inside of canvas before the door makes its dragged out close.

By the time the man in the black velvet hat has walked in, the wife and the husband have been running their bakery this way for years. This particular hat sits on this particular man as if it was some sort of groomed animal he had pinned on his head. On his wrist also sits a watch. Part of the reason this man is in such a good mood is because prior to his entrance he was able to consult his watch and tell the time to another pedestrian.

"Good afternoon," says the black velvet hat man, and takes note of the way the wife and husband seem to hold their abdomens with their folded hands. "This place smells like a bakery but it's a bit drab." He removes a decorated pastry from a large glass jar and waves it around. "I think...that if you stirred things up a little bit more, you know, put some modern paintings up on the walls, added, umm, more of a contrast of colors..." The wife and the husband look at each other and then follow the decorated pastry in flight. "You know, life should never be bland."

The black velvet hat man consults his watch and murmurs the time to himself. He then points to a loaf of bread, places several coins on the counter and contorts his face into a sort of wink. When the pinned animal and stolen pastry take the wind back out the clock tells them half past five in the evening. The wife slides the coins off the counter and they fall into her palm. The husband hands her the clean cloth.

A customer from earlier that day walks through the streets of little shops.
Maybe he is trying to see what happens when the day is supposed to close down, or maybe he is simply taking a walk at the right time. He remembers the bakery as he passes it, the set of dinner rolls he had bought out of haste. It is strange to see the wife and the husband missing from behind the counter. He presses up to the cold of the window and notices an open door. If he can just move a little bit more up and to the right he could see inside. He does. What he sees is this: the wife and husband with hands on the others’ shoulders. They are sitting on a sack of flour, the wife’s layers of skirts and aprons containing her excess body, the husband’s extra large Grade A figure holding her up. Their softened eyes. The cloth, barely clean anymore, hangs between her plump fingers, behind his neck. The clock, in its silence, had told them ten past six.

almost kick us out. We shop but don’t buy anything and drink coffee, but soon we’re bored because there’s not much to do in Boston when it’s raining and you have less than two hours.

We take the train back to Newton Highlands and the car’s still there, which is rather surprising as we parked in a permit parking only area. Driving back on Center Street, hopefully towards the Mass Pike, there he is. Obviously an Abercrombie model, running in his shorts in the rain, and Laura and I both start screaming at the same time. We almost pull over, but we’re driving in a lot of traffic in dirt with potholes a few feet deep, so we just keep driving and yelling. This is better than seeing two Boxsters at once, as far as I’m concerned. How often do you see an Abercrombie model running half naked in the rain? We’re so distracted I’d be surprised if we get out of Newton.

We do, of course, but run into more trouble. If you go east for three hours, you tend to think anywhere you’re headed is east. Unfortunately, I-90 East goes to Boston, not New York. We end up in Cambridge, which has quite a few votes for the worst city to drive in this country. There are left had turn lanes that turn onto one-way bridges—one-way meaning the traffic’s coming at us. We try to turn left and then almost kill people switching lanes. We get hopelessly lost and have to ask for directions at a full service gas station, yelling at the guy, No, we don’t want any gas at all actually, but can you tell us how to get to the Mass Pike? We see a lot more of Cambridge than we ever wanted to see, and all through this surreal haze of worry that we’ll get into an accident, kill someone, or even worse, be stuck driving around and around Cambridge all our lives. They really should build on-ramps so they’re right next to the off-ramps; how many people miss their exit and get lost trying to turn around on these damned divided highways? Or even start going the wrong direction, like us? Things should be made simpler for those of us inclined to get lost, though Massachusetts is certainly not the state to drive in if you’re directionally challenged.

Finally, back to I-90 and we’re safe. The speedometer keeps creeping up to 80, but most of that is pure elation because we’ve done it; we made it to Boston and we aren’t dead or lost in Canada, or lost anywhere at all, for that matter. It’s such a great feeling that we’re belting out any song that comes in on one of the few radio stations now, and Laura even points out a Z3 to me. I wish desperately for the thousandth time that I was in that car, feeling her cool leather against my skin, watching everyone fade behind me as I glide by. But then again there’s something wonderfully familiar and comforting about Laura’s Escort, now that we’ve been through it all.

By the time we get to the border of New York it’s raining quite steadily and
surprises me, as Newton resembles Chicopee, though it’s not quite so bad. We step only once to ask for directions—it seems I remember more than I think when deliriously sick. There’s some disagreement as to which way the one-way streets go, and the fact that no matter what, we’re only going one way, but we make it to the Newton Highlands T station without ending up in Canada, which is amazing.

Subways are my favorite thing in the entire world; if I had a choice I would ride the green line from Riverside all the way to Lechmere on the other end, then back out to Riverside again, then back inbound, and on and on forever. It’s the anonymity and getting to be whoever you want to be because no one knows you, plus just watching people. But it’s also the gentle rocking, being under the city in pitch black, and the dull roar that’s like listening to techno—it gives me the same mellow almost disembodied feel. There’s something about that combination of things—being absolutely anonymous, being whoever you want, and floating—that is irresistible. I suppose it’s like being high.

There’s the guy today, he’s sitting across from us, and he’s talking to himself, gesticulating wildly, but making not a sound. A woman in an obviously real fur coat looks noticeably away from him at the ads above our heads and a college student watches us, amused, as Laura tries to calculate exactly how many minutes we get in Boston before we have to head back home. Three 12-ish-year-old girls get on and I wonder suddenly what it’s like to live in a place where your parents let you ride the train into downtown Boston ad 12 years old. Then, before I’ve even gotten a taste, we’re at Government Center, and we get off. Laura’s looking incredibly bewildered because she has no idea what just happened. Two hours, she says, not even. We’ve got two hours before we’ve got to catch the train back to where we parked. This hardly seems worth it, I say. But I suppose that’s why it’s a ROAD trip and it’s about the memories and the experiences, blah blah blah. She says, Yeah, we’re being spontaneous, so who cares? Because there’s nothing else to do and whenever we’re bored we eat, I ask, are you hungry? She nods, and we head through Quincy Market, dodging our way around the throngs of people milling over whether to get Chinese or Mexican or Thai, or perhaps the incredible clam chowder that this city is famous for. (We say “chowda” about 15 times, feeling on our lips what it’s like to be from Boston.) Being fully junk-food-loving Americans, we opt for ice cream for our second lunch, this one around 2 PM. We try but do not get it free, though it’s Laura’s birthday and she had an ID to prove it. She begs, proudly holding up her New York driver’s license. Yes, I am 17. Yes, we are from out of state. Yes, we’re on a road trip. No, he says, so we buy some anyway, eat it while walking in the rain, in the stores, pretending to spill it on every item of clothing until they

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Toe Jam

by Wren Roberts

Every morning I wake up and wiggle the toes which are not there. My wife knows I do this lying next to her and this unsettles her because she knows they are not there either. She knows my toes are not in our bed, and they are not in the sliver of light that peeks through the drapes, and that they certainly are not attached to my right foot. No, my toes are in a jar on my desk in our private library.

The four biggest toes, who used to call my right foot home, have decided that bobbing up and down in a jar of formaldehyde is much more interesting than helping to keep me upright. I use them as a paperweight for my tax forms so as not to lose their usefulness. They have done this for the past twenty years.

I once saw a documentary on a man who had a third foot. He lacked a leg for the excessive foot so it dangled helplessly from the back of his left foot, leeching off the blood supply. I could imagine his left foot saying something along the lines of “get the hell away from me; get off my ass you gross, nasty foot!” to the abomination. It had no bones, it was a real moocher.

The program was on how some doctor managed to remove the foot. For the first time this Middle Eastern man could wear shoes so he could have them stolen a month later. It was a beautiful thing. I couldn’t help but wonder if he now keeps that foot on his own tax forms as well, if he can still feel it as I can my toes. The notion still haunts me.

I get out of my bed every morning favoring my right foot. I read the paper and drink black coffee from 7:30 to 8:00. If it is during the week, I got to work at the firm. If it isn’t, I stay home. On Sundays Tommy from down the street mows our lawn. We pay him $3.50. He usually comes at 10:00 and is gone by 11:00. I would cut the grass myself, but that would mean betraying my jar toes.

When I was twelve, my brother Ron was sixteen. It was his chore to cut the grass every Saturday afternoon while our parents were out. He liked this arrangement as it allowed him to smoke his joints and flirt with Mary Catherine across the street.

Mary Catherine liked to sunbathe on Saturdays in a yellow bikini. This pleased both Ron and me, though I never had a chance seeing as she’ll forever be seventeen. My brother swore he’d get in her pants one of these days, but he was foiled when our family moved to Rhode Island at the end of the summer.

It was one of these Saturday afternoons that a horrible thing came about. Ron had pulled out his stash soon after Mom and Dad left at noon. He offered me
some, which I greedily accepted. We loitered in our basement smoking his mari-
juana before he remembered Mary Catherine and the lawn. We stashed the stash and
he put on his Birkenstocks while I roamed barefoot.

I sat on the low stone fence around Mom’s garden, pretending to watch
Ron when secretly I was spying on the almost naked woman across the street. It was
on this day that Mary Catherine decided she didn’t want tan lines on her back. She
unhooked her top and Ron and I did what teenage boys do—we ogled.

Being slightly out of it from the drugs in our systems, Ron forgot that he
was mowing the lawn. Even if he did remember, he forgot where I was because a
minute later a jagged pain shot up my leg. I screamed which got not only Ron’s at-
tention, but Mary Catherine’s. My only consolation was she forgot her bikini
top when she ran over.

My toes might have been saved if Ron hadn’t insisted on waiting to go to
the hospital. The little bastards were barely clinging to my foot and he wanted to
wait. He was paranoid about being arrested for being under the influence of illegal
substances. The doctors had cut off the toes because they had gone so long without
blood. I never forgave him.

I take a shower every night. They happen between 10:30 and 11:00. I care-
fully clean the little knobs at the end of my foot where my toes used to be. If I don’t,
my foot swells up like a balloon. I dry myself carefully, giving that right foot of
mine special attention.

I crawl into my bed next to my warm wife. If I’m lucky, we have sex. If not
I sleep. And in the morning, I wake up and wiggle my toes.

Leominster, Yarmouth, and Peabody. No one can pronounce those names but the
people who live around there, and absolutely the only reason I know is because I
used to live in Salem. A girl I knew from North Carolina was in a scene for Acting
Showcase last May, and her character mentioned living in Peabody, but she said
Pee-body, which I thought was great. It wasn’t her fault, obviously, and I felt for her
because moving to Rensselaer, NY was quite tragic for me, but still, it’s the little
things that amuse me the most. Especially Laura stumbling over Worchester as we
pass the exit.

A boxsta, Boxster, and a TT who is parked on the side of the road but might as well not be; she looks like
she’s moving when she’s standing still and vice versa because that car is so unbe-
lievably smooth and graceful. Plus countless of those old boxy Volvos that were
made in the 80s, the car with the average lifespan of 18.5 years, the car I want des-
erately but runs about the same price as a Miata. Then, 95.7, a clear channel radio
station, your source for the greatest hits of the 70s, 80s, 90s, and today, thought
they’re actually only playing Madonna. Laura and I get into singing “Like A Vir-
gin,” and “Papa Don’t Preach,” and then I change the station, because it’s creepy
when stations do that because they are not CDs.

Then a Boxster, and I gasp and whip around in my seat so fast Laura
screams. What the HELL are you doing, you’re going to kill us, she yells, and I say
sarcastically, No actually, you are. Put your hands back on the wheel. She’s such a
cautious driver I want to kill her most times—she gets us in more danger being hesi-
tant and cautious than if she was a psycho driver. I make fun of her all the time for
this. She laughs and I promise not to gasp anymore, but I can’t help it—I mean, it’s
like seeing an Abercrombie model just jogging down the street. There is no choice;
you just have to do something, make an outburst of some kind. It’s completely a
subconscious reaction, a basic human instinct.

Another few Miatas, a TT, and of course Laura and I are talking this whole
time about everything. It’s on the road that true personalities make themselves
known, no matter how much you try to cover them up. Things get bitter and we dis-
agree a few times, but we’re smart enough to know that if we start arguing, we will
forever. It’s like being three again and fighting over whose PJ Sparkles doll it is—I
want to meet the kid who will actually say, Oh, that’s right, this doll is yours, I
must’ve left mine at home or something. And of course we are interrupted every so
often as I see a car, and Laura rolls her eyes. You are so psycho, she says.

Finally, after we discover there are about three exits for Newton and guess
blindly which one it is, we take the one for Newton/Boston on to Center Street,
which is unpaved at the moment. Laura drives 20 mph, of course. I see a Z3, which
place, reminding us we have no idea what we’re doing. Nothing is comparable to
the loneliness of losing familiar radio stations, and nothing is as deliciously warm
and comforting as discovering them again.

Just before Springfield we decide we need lunch, and plus I’ve never been
to Chicopee. After missing the exit and getting off at West Springfield, we end up in
Chicopee anyway. We drive around the town twice trying to not only find a place to
eat, but drive the correct way on this strange series of interconnecting one-way roads
that make up the lonely town. Subway is as disturbingly empty as the rest of
Chicopee, but that could be because most people don’t eat subs at 10 AM. Still, I
want to get out of here; the sense of destitution and the dead quiet are really creepy.

We drive the wrong way, of course, get on Route 20, 91, 391, and 291 (the
amount of -91s in this region begins to alarm us—it’s like some bizarre dream of a
déjà vu gone horribly awry), and every other highway but the Mass Pike, heading in
any direction but east. There is no holding back when you’re in the car; Laura and I
are yelling at each other as loud as possible and arguing to no end over which way
we should go, which of the millions of one-way streets will take us back to I-90. We
end up on a local road; the speed limit no more than 40 mph, and seeing as we have
to be home by 7 PM and don’t know where the Mass Pike is at all, both of us keep
yelling juvenile, as we are wont to do. We’re fighting in the way that people who
have been best friends forever fight—yelling and arguing and not getting anywhere,
but not really meaning any of it. This is the safest way, as nothing could possibly
come of it. I know of no one who has ever ended a friendship over which road to
take to get back to the Mass Pike, and surely we’ll have a good story to tell in the
end.

Through the screaming and driving too fast and taking random turnoffs, we
somehow manage to get back on 90; though I cannot for the life of me figure out
how. It is sometimes better not to question your luck. Naturally, we decide not to get
off again until we reach Newton. The back roads are just too dangerous when you’re
17 and have a 7 PM curfew. And though Jim Harrison and William Least Heat
Moon find tremendous joy in driving through rural America, suburban Massachu-
setts is not anything the average person should be subjected to. It is sad and lonely
and disillusioning; at times the towns look haunted, with the abundance of dark
peeling paint and the seeming lack of people, the claustrophobia because the houses
are all so small and close together, the streets narrow and almost one-way and often
in disrepair. What people there are seem bitter and unfriendly. With all this and the
darkening sky and drizzle, we’re quite glad to be back on the open road.

We drive past Worchester, which always excites me because for all intents
and purposes, it should not be pronounced that way at all, much like Gloucester,
Miami Valentine
by Brenin Wertz-Roth

Beneath the February sun,
hungry eyed vendors at every intersection
from the beach to Coral Gables,
press soft petaled handfuls of sweet, red love
to the shut windows of cars.

Hear and there a transaction,
money for food, for flowers for a metaphor,
but not enough love or holiday spirit
to keep a man from calling to me
across a lamplit street,
when all the roses to be sold that day
had found their way into cool water,
"Fifty roses, five dollars!"

How could I resist?
I wanted the foolish sensation
of the stems bunched in my arms,
thorns carefully pared off,
and the reek of the blossoms making me dizzy
as I walked home to no one.

Driving Towards Freedom
by Whitney Backman

There are four girls I am deeply in love with—the first being the Porsche Boxster S. And then subsequently, the BMW Z3, the Audi TT, and the Mazda Miata, but the Porsche will always be on top of my list. There is absolutely no rhyme or reason to this; I know nothing about cars. But there's something sensuous about their long smooth lines and sleek bodies, their gracefulness, and everything, everything screaming just how fast they want to go. I am quite extreme and I love going terrifically fast, feeling the wind pulling at my hair and my eyes and knowing that I could die at any moment but am not, so I suppose this brings out some distinct visceral lust in me.

But I mean, who wouldn't want a Porsche? The first time I saw one I was coming out of a Barnes & Noble, and I almost passed out. There she was, just sitting in the parking lot, absolutely too real to be true, like seeing a supermodel in a remote town or something. She was so perfect and beautiful, so tangible. I actually considered if stealing cars was as easy as it looks in Gone In 60 Seconds, unconsciously reaching out a hesitant finger to run it along the paint. I stood there in a daze, taking in every detail, memorizing, until I managed to shake myself out of the trance and realized that I probably looked suspicious. So I bolted off for my little red Dodge Neon, which was trying so hard to look cute, but I wasn't buying it.

Later in the summer, after many almost-accidents in which I should've been arrested on several counts for obsessively watching oncoming traffic and not keeping my eyes on the road, my best friend and I decide to set off for Boston in her '94 Ford Escort, which only a beat-up map of the entire Northeast and the knowledge that if you take I-90 far enough, you'll end up in the Atlantic. We're aiming to park in Newton and catch the T in from there, though I've only been to Newton once, and was deliriously sick at the time. But I know plenty about the Boston subways, and I figure if we just wing it, we'll be fine.

So we crank up the radio and I take my shoes off and cross my legs, and we talk and talk until we fall silent, and I amuse myself by watching for Boxsters and Z3s and everything else. We are so free it's incredible; we have no responsibility and yet we have all the responsibility in the world. We are so free we can almost feel it, swim in it. We don't need to talk because it's all being said, in the freedom saturating the car and ourselves.

Around the Berkshires, just over the border into Massachusetts, the radio starts to crackle and fuzz, as if it is telling us we really have driven into a foreign
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After the reading there will be a screening of the short film "Who Was the Last Person You Kissed?" by Rozeigh Anica, Bri Cavallaro and Max Sindell.

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**Untitled**  
by Kea Wilson

I want to sit with you at breakfast in silence, doing nothing but admiring the contrast between your skin and the sunlit layers of a raw peach.

I want to taste the hot light of your eyes, the limitless disparity between gray and brown, stirring more fluent than the smear of darkness that makes up the world outside.

The adamant window. I want to navigate the folds of your palm, to find home within the creases of a hand and the forecasts of a lifetime. I want to feel your weight stirring against me in the dark corner of the woods where we once were. Still beneath the paper silhouette of the moon, entirely apart from struggle. I want to return to you. I want to touch again the immobile trunk of your waist, to curve my untrained fingers around your heart, to resound within your lungs. I want you to know that I hunger, that I awake from sleep filled with dizzy illusions of the stars, spinning in want for you to understand that this is not poetry. This is the carnal urge to swallow your cheekbones like rose water, to bite the curve of your lip and awake singing that you and I are not two, but the assembled slices of peach, the fused cross section of the sun.
the red wheelbarrow
winter 2002

edited by Ani Hambrick, Alice Iott, Liz John

Much thanks to Mr. Delp and Therese.
the red wheelbarrow
winter 2002

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Much thanks to Mr. Delp and Therese.
the red wheelbarrow
so much depends upon
a red wheel barrow
glazed with rain water
beside the white chickens

by William Carlos Williams

the red wheelbarrow
winter 2002