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Pictures

Steven Pietros

Joe Plummer
My heart of silk
is filled with lights,
with lost bells,
with lillies and bees.
I will go very far,
farther than those hills,
farther than the seas,
close to the stars,
to beg Christ the Lord
to give back the soul I had
of old, when I was a child . . .

Federico Garcia Lorca
from
Ballad of the Little Square
Poem: on being the only Cuban woman
among you

I.
a soft, hushed air breathes;
one thousand suns
light that island which awaits
the arrival of the sea.
the smell of rum
and her sugar
lures boats into the harbor;
everywhere, people
drunk with her virtues—
men, dark eyed
with mustaches
and her women.

I cannot recall such things,
yet the sight of molasses jars
on a grocery shelf
brings back the man at the sugar mill
tanned skin glowing from the heat
dipping a glass slide
into a huge vat of dark brown,
and dripping "melao"
into and around my mouth.

II.
I once dreamed of an old grey woman
wearing a red bandana,
sitting near a fire in the jungle.
she frightened me.
drawing from her vestment
a silver pin,
she stabbed a little figure in her palm.
her laughter is heard by the moon.

I could not stop the woman
one quick snap
the figure flew into the fire.
helpless,
it burns.
and still the moon watched.
III.
sometimes when I am alone
I rummage through a fireproof box in the den
and pull out the plane ticket
with my name and age on it
if only I had used it
I could walk to the sugar mill again
or to the beach,
where we swam for six hours every Sunday
and ate mamonsillos,
trying not to spill the little drop of juice
that remained inside the shell.

I carefully place the ticket
inside the box again,
and lock with it my citizenship papers,
my reward for the day when I swore allegiance
in a court full of woolen immigrants
with my fingers crossed in my coat pocket
and the lace of my left shoe untied.

then I look out the window
at the snow which makes this land so white
and how it all falls so gently
that even the cat on my lap sleeps undisturbed.

IV.
in my father’s drawer chest
there is a Garcia Y Vega cigar,
hermetically sealed.
I was only seven
when we took it with us,
and left La Habana
to live on the moon.

Ana Margarita Cabrera
The Moon and the Steeple

I have made my rounds, and the evening is drawing to a close. It is that season again, and I have done my appointed duty. I have visited friends. I have visited friends of friends. None of them have left me feeling as warm as has their wine.

I have been standing beneath the tree for some time, though I am too late to catch even its dead leaves on their way. The snow is recent, powdery. The street lights are dim and occasional, little moons with powdery halos. The moon itself seems far away and silver; awake, however, to every possibility. Nothing will come from the houses lining the streets. Their fires are now low, the houses sleep in each others' shadows.

Someone approaches me from the far end of the street. It is Georges, I can tell immediately by his walk. His head is down, his body thrown forward from the waist up. His strides are too long for his legs, and his head bobs with each step. He will pass by in a moment, quite oblivious of my presence.

He approaches, head still down, and stops five feet away. With deliberation he scans the rooftops of the houses across the street, and the shrouded hills and trees behind them. He then turns to me, beckoning with his head, as though to say "Come with me. I must tell you."

We head back in the direction from which he has just come. I catch a glimpse of his face as we pass a streetlight. He has made a discovery, but discreetly wishes to wait until we have a warm seat in the tavern before telling it. It of course makes no difference to either of us where we talk, but such reactions are a second nature.

We reach the tavern soon, though the walk is a long one and we have not hurried. But the tavern too has long ago closed. No matter. He begins:

"Much earlier this evening before the snow, the moon, then gold, was on the rise. As I met her, the moon was perched precariously, yes, delicately, atop the old church steeple. I turned to her, asking if she saw the moon on the steeple. She said 'No', then turned to go. But I grabbed her arm tightly above the wrist. 'Really, you must see it.' 'Look for yourself,' was her reply. I looked up again and, surely enough, the moon had risen ever so slightly and was now also a little off to one side of the steeple. 'But,' I addressed her, 'it was that way, was it not?' 'No,' she replied sadly, slowly shaking her head. She threw a pitying look toward me, a thin sweater to help keep a pauper warm, and bid me good evening. I was, being the impulsive man I am, outraged. I cursed the heavens for drawing the moon away from me. And now look at the moon: cold, silver, and distant."
He stops here. Am I to say anything, about the moon, about the
girl, whom I know quite well, about anything? I decide yes, but
say nothing, for I really have nothing to say, knowing as I do that
the moon will be back atop the steeple tomorrow and forever,
and the girl too will be back as often, sometimes as a girl, some­
times a moon or a steeple.

I decide that it is late, much too late, though it is really just
very early. Georges decides the same. Arm in arm, we turn home­
ward, for he knows all I know, I feel as he feels, and the girl is at
least our sister.

Gene Gousie

Goose Rocks

One night, I swung
my friend up over my
shoulder and
    (prodigious cast)
tossed him into a folding
wave—(a game).
    And I followed
into the opening
black water—
    slap slap
    glowing
of phosphorescent
plankton
    easy over easy
of waves, I
listened, lying
in black Maine water
and slept
deeply
    in the North
Country that night
under constellations of tiny
glowing creatures.

Terrence O’Neill
To The Man Who Called At Midnight

When I was once trying to contact
the dead, I washed
my mind with a wave
and let them scrawl their messages
as on sand
the tracks of gulls.

They told me of a trellis with a small
grapevine and sunlight
gleaming on the edge
of a butcher's knife washed slick
with red blood.

And words—they had words—
alchemizing slick-
red-
knife-
(it all makes sense)
So now you see,
don't you,
    Slick;
don't you,
    Red;
    Knife.

The voice approaches me on the street
selling tooth-
picks, pencils
and I LAUGH!

Terrence O'Neill
A Song

A song
for the soldier
    who sprawls
in the rain
aware
    of the pain
in his side.

A song
for the soldier
who misunderstood
    but listened
to lies
then died.

A song
for the soldiers
who tramp
through the mud
searching
for pieces
of friends.

A song
for those
soothing widows
    and wives, for
parents dead, sick
    inside, collecting
smashed lives
    to go on.

A song,
a sad song
for those shattered
    by war.

A song
for all
    who survive.

Donald Langlois
Emily

Did you sit near a window
Watching the flakes slide down the pane,
Building up into Spanish lace,
Communion lace,
At the bottom?

As a woman did you smile
When you talked
With the men you loved,
For whom you never
Wore a wedding gown?

And as an old woman,
Knowing that because you could not stop for death,
He would stop for you,
Did you look back
And tuck scraps of poetry
Between your nightgowns,
Watching the dominie in gray
Put gently up the evening bars
As summer afternoon became winter evening
And the Spanish lace became a shroud?

April Selley

Rain

She has many coats
And when she wears her grey, her autumn coat
she makes ships crash on rocks
she makes mailboxes and toys float away.
And when she wears her violet, her springtime coat
she makes brown ground sprout green, growing things
she makes rainbows and puddles for sailboats
she begins, she ends, she begins and ends again
the circle.

Suzanne Kealey
Breakwater

The beam from the deserted guard house streaks into the ovarian dusk around us, hurting our eyes, as we, my spectro-sister and I, stumble over rocks—the sound licking our feet. We make way to the jetty where there is no light but beams from the pluperfect moon.

We sit crosslegged on a blanket of dry seaweed. Facing each other, our eyes meet. We transcend water and rocks; we become only eyes searching beyond eyes. I seek your soul as you find mine we achieve union—two souls urged by love, pivoted around brown eyes. Such peace, we breathe quick delicious hopes, fugitive desires realized in vain—my spirit breaks away from yours, exorcised by a fog horn.

I let your gaze fall shattering to the breakwater. Crevices are filled with glass splinters, I see you no longer, darkness; I feel your pulse retreat from my grasp. I must leave you now, breaking your life on these rocks, metallic in the moonlight. My blindness is confirmed at daybreak by the sun reflecting in my eyes, drying them like pockets of mist and dew, delivering me to dawn and the sounds of bells and plovers on an approaching oyster boat.

Gary Bortolot
**A Picture**

Colors surrounding colors.
A golden striped skeleton man
Hurls a molten red comet
Into the heart of my eyes;
And I see those things
A blind man sees.
Clouds ride on elephants’ backs
Disguising grieving women.
A spineless snake chokes
A winged white Stallion,
Whose rider spurs
A colossal dream.
Faces hide faces, whose souls hide
In the metamorphic mushroom
Of an aquatic explosion.
A spiral staircase of liquid lightning
Paints my mind on a canvas
Of peacock feathers.
And I walk on a cloud
Of strawberry marshmallows,
Through a world inhabited
By Japanese beetles.
And the mirror on my wall
Reflects the ruins of Rome.
I see the world I imagine;
And Imagine the world I see.

Steven Ruzzo

**The Old Heater**

In the eye of an old, black heater
there is dust and hell.
A magnificent marble floor surrounds a candle confessional
Where Satan burns in infinite retribution.
Colossal iron gates, dipped in gold;
Carved in a parade of dying swans
Open to the heart of a molten volcano;
Dead people dancing with lava lizards.
And I feel fire and the face of a monstrous black cat.

Steven Ruzzo
Grandfather

It’s been ten years
since you rocked in your oak rocker
or smoked your pipe;
your pocket watch is still on the dresser.
I remember sitting on your lap
picking at crusted egg yolk on my playsuit
while we checked the time.

The corner store is boarded.
I remember the old floor creaked.
You bought me chocolate bars,
and when I got it on my face
you wet the edge of your handkerchief
and washed it off.

After school we’d sit in your kitchen
you had tea in your plain white cup,
and me with Oreo’s and milk.
We talked about baseball,
arguing between Pete Reynolds and Frank Malzone.
Mother would call at five, and I had to leave you
to eat supper with them.

It’s been ten years, Papa,
mother cried, and father stared at his hands.
The undertaker said, “He was a good man Joe—”
no consolation as I sat in our parlor
staring at the endless empty spirals
on the grey floral wallpaper.

Joseph Osborne
Fathers
for Chuck, Paul, Tom, and Herbert

I chewed pencil stubs for love;
(My name next to Lowell's!)
The drive of sleepless nights
sweating out my Great American Poem.

But you showed me a dirt road winding through wheat fields
swept back by August.
You showed me the old man pitching hay bales,
smiling, not worrying about the holes in his blue jeans.

This peace of a July breeze fanning the Douglas firs,
or a brook flowing over the back of a rainbow trout
poised upstream;
sunbeams that ripple the sea,
diamonds sparkling, waiting to be picked.

Your eyes held me,
your hand guided me
like a kindergarten child
fingerpainting.

Joseph Osborne
Games

It is like the children’s game
of making boats
from ice cream sticks and paper,
setting them afloat
on long gutter puddles
and then afire
with secret, stolen matches;

becoming flaming death pyres
for fallen Viking heroes,
or wild explosions creating
disasters at sea;

this way we make our plans
for future arks of tended love,
setting them to drift between us
before the fire falters
and the last piece of paper
curls and dies into black ash.

You have never let one boat
reach dry land without
that careful toss of the match
that takes a moment to catch,
then bursts and dances on your smile.

I have often wanted just one time
to sail the sticks
and not have charred bones
left sinking into rain water;

but you insist, insist on burning
and I continue to steal the matches.

Patricia Slonina
Choir Boy

This last stop before home,
safe from the darkness
locked in the heated car—
at the gas station
waiting to be filled.

A small boy,
his black and white choir robe
flung over his shoulders
stopped for a moment
in the blue light
to stare at me.

We traded long looks—
breathless with cold,
his bright eyes
and red, burning cheeks
made me wonder
why I couldn’t be like him
unafraid of the blackness.

Running lightly,
robes flying, caught
in the night wind,
he crossed in front of the car
and raced home.

I wanted to follow him
to his warm house
with bright windows
and a mother
scolding him for losing his gloves
while rubbing his little red hands
briskly between her own.

Patricia Slonina