Alembic

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Cover — Christopher Donohue

Photographs — Ana M. Cabrera

Henry Golembeski
"... and each one as before will chase
His favorite phantom..."

William C. Bryant
"Thanatopsis"
The Skyscraper

The skyscraper uses a scapel
to get blue flakes and a few
ice crystals from fanned clouds,
quickly — 'cause time is money —
places them in a mayonnaise
jar on his windowsill,
and having paid his tithe
to his soul, wonders
why the broken stars
and strips of sunset remind
him of an aborted child.

He goes to lunch,
selects a glass of milk and today's
garden fresh salad from a greenhouse
in New Jersey.
He steps out of line, smiling,
and thanks Grumio, that all is well.

April Selley

Stanford Station

Silver animals worming
their way to another place.
The sound of metal rushing
and the great monster heaving
and sighing.

I watch it empty
a cargo of ants

It frightens me this dragon
spewing clouds of putrid soot.
And now I get inside
and watch from filthy glass
riding in a spring seat
watching as fields and farm pass
and I am still afraid.

Michael Mancusi
"Please . . . the grass"

Print of a sole. Tall blades
bend
like Moslems turning east.
Do not look back.
You’d need eternity to watch

that print
disappear.
Those blades rise slow —
motion, bewitched, while we sleep. Only the

broken

will mark the act
tomorrow.

Caryn Fuoroli

coffee love

the caffeine in my blood
streams bitter
like this growth of night
that pulsates neon

my heartbeat is rapid and hollow
friend

i am your own true
religion wrapped in black satin
and rouged red
a holy statue
enshrined in your garden of bottles
and foreign cigarettes patron

saint of chaos
left to sweep up the glass of broken
windows in the morning
while you sleep

Kathleen Mele
Truck Songs

1.
I've been waking at the vulnerable hours, I said to him
over tea, when the sky is misty tinged
with white and the roads and the parks are still lit for the night.
Trucks pound far off on the highway. Their songs pulsate:
Cannibal drums through my open window.

At night I've seen the trucks in red and yellow lights form
a caravan on the roads.
I do not follow behind.
I pass them fast on the left
and hope I don't get sucked under those huge whirring wheels.

Once I saw the truck men gather in a murky red tavern. They clinked
their glasses and stumbled from a round table while drifting off into blackness on white foam.

"Drink up, babe," one man said handing me his magic soup
his night's blood. Come play.

2.
The amusement park is a dark space at the edge of the ocean spotted with carnival lights orange
bright green yellow blue where the truck men pull knobs and push flippers. Hear the bells ting when the silver balls make points.

Hey, come play pinball at my machine, baby.

Playing the games is like being inside one of those large trucks tires. Ah, the thrill of coasting fast.
Don't brake, don't brake.

But those whirring wheels sing in the early morning and make me think I've been sucked under once or twice.

Kathleen Mele
Wabbits

Deyah is sumfin nabbout wabbits. Maybee it's a noze, de way it Skriggles, up allah time When they're sittin around.

Or munchin lettuce Never in a hurry to get A tummy ake, Eatin too fast.

And hops, They never hop reewie, the two front foots Go to thee left, And the two back one's go to the other left. You just couldn't walk like it.

Litt'l bunnies are bestest Cawse there cute and only make Little messez, not like when they grow up And sit in the pen in the back yard And git fat.

And there furry and don't bite. So all together I like wabbits. Not a bunch, But two bunchiz.

Craig Watt

Photomagic

Only Magic can crystallize light onto paper with its horrifying chemicals resurrecting sunlight from time-worn shadows.

And when the demons vanish there are expressions of people — that in a flash! show what Magic can be.

William Benson
HIGH

GO
We
DO'n't
Why
Turn
To
Continues
It
Pass
WIND
THE
Let
Stops
Whisper
THE
Going
It's
whERE
knOW
wE
Will
Always
It
Pass
WIND
THE
Let
Falls
Wall
THE
While
Turning
Are
Wheels
THE
Whispering

Robert E. Burns
The instant the stewardess with the frozen smile introduced the occupant of the seat next to his as Mrs. Klugman, Edmond King erected an invisible barrier. Assuming an indifferent mien, he coolly began to observe the very old woman. She barely filled the seat with her brittle-boned frame. The flesh hung from her arms like the sheets of an overburdened clothesline. The blue-black ulcerations and the vericose veins bulging like snakes whose meals has not yet been digested, showed through her thick support stockings. Her breasts hung shapelessly beneath the faded cotton dress, rising and falling with the labored breath of an eighty year old. Like an unfolded ball of aluminum foil, the old woman’s face was infinitely wrinkled. Her piercing brown eyes contrasted sharply with her pasty complexion and thin white hair. When she smiled at him, her lips stretched tightly against tea-stained dentures.

He acknowledged her presence with a curt, civil nod.

A few moments passed. The overhead signs: NO SMOKING and FASTEN SEAT BELTS came on. The intercom crackled as the stewardess explained the use of the oxygen masks located directly above each row and the life preservers, under each seat. The plane had begun to taxi to its appropriate runway for the take-off.

The old woman tried hard but was unable to comprehend the swift flow of information. She turned to Edmond.

“Meestuh Keeng, vood you shoe me how dis belt vorks?*

“Of course Mrs. Klugman,” he responded in a flat nasal voice, articulating each word. He had adopted a patronizing attitude toward the woman.

“T’ank you,” she said, as his nimble fingers finished adjusting the belt. Edmond was amused by her transfixed silence as the jet lifted slowly up from the ground and soared towards the endless sky above. “How childlike she is, how blissfully ignorant of technology are the aged,” he thought. When the plane leveled off, he loosened their seat belts.

“Such a gudt boy! Such a nice boy!” She patted his forearm with her gnarled spotted hand.

He politely smiled, although her words and action had repulsed him. Edmond was a responsible man in his thirties, “no boy” — he commented to himself.

“You’re go-e-eng to New York, no?”

“Yes,” he answered with correct politeness. Edmond inwardly laughed, “Of course I’m going to New York. This is a non-stop flight to Kennedy Airport.”

“Nu, I’m such a noodge — pardon me — I’m such a bother,” she corrected herself. “Where’s your home?”

“It is quite all right, Mrs. Klugman, I am familiar with the Yiddish dialect. I am from New York. I live on Long Island.”

“Ah-h!” she seemed to say aloud. “I t’ought mebbe you vere from Bustun.” She paused a moment. “If you’ll pardun mine expexpression, are you a Yid? A lantsman?”

“I am, that is, I-I was born a Jew.” He could not understand his own hesitation.

“Ah-h-h!”

Edmond grew defensive at her sigh. It seemed to possess some deep hidden insight, knowledge, that he was ignorant of.

“So-o! Vhat kind of a name is Keeng for such a gudt Jewish boy?” she persisted.

“I Americanized it for professional reasons.” The emphasis on the word ‘professional’ seemed strained to his ears. “My name was Esau-Esau Cohen.”

“Ah-h-h!” she breathed.

An undefinable sensation began to grow within him. “She is patronizing me now” he thought.
“So-o! Vhat’s your profession?”
“I am an assistant District Attorney for Queens County,” he answered with an important air.
“A lawyuh? Mine son Chaym, he’s a lawyuh, too!”
Edmond smirked, unnoticed by the old woman.
He calculated his next question. “From what law school did your son graduate, Mrs. Klugman?”
“My chaym graduated from City College, and you, Meestuh Keeng?”
Anticipating her question-response with delight, he answered smugly, “Har-r-var-r-d!”
“A mother can be proud!” she beamed at Edmond. “A gudt boy, a nice boy, and a smart boy, too!”
Before their conversation could go on further, the stewardess with the frozen smile interrupted them with two dinner trays.
“Mrs. Klugman, you ordered a kosher meal, right?” asked the stewardess.
“Yes t’ank you.” The tray was set upon the table top before her that Edmond had released.
“Enjoy your meal, sir” the stewardess addressed Edmond as she placed his tray before him.
“Thany you, miss” he answered.
“Meestuh Keeng, vould you mind helping me like a gudt boy?” Her tone was apologetic.
“Of course, Mrs. Klugman.” He ripped open the sealed plastic pouch and removed the tray. Edmond then rolled back the foil to reveal “a typical Jewish meal like Bubby, I mean Grandma, would make,” he thought. There was broth, horseradish with gefilte fish, broiled chicken and kynedelach dumplings, and a cinnamon kugel pudding; each item was in disposable pans. In contrast, before Edmond was an Hawaiian steak topped with a pineapple slice; salad, mashed potatoes, roll, and apple crisp.
“That looks very nice, so vhat it is, tell me?”
Edmond measured his words, “Hawaiian steak.”
“Hawaiian steak? Fancy, shmancy. Vhat cut of beef is it, I’m not so familiuh?”
Swallowing hard to make a cube of meat go down, he answered, “it is not beef, Mrs. Klugman, it is ham.”
“Ah-h-h!” She nodded and began to eat in hungry silence. Usually Edmond enjoyed this dish, tonight however, he had no appetite.
After their trays had been removed, Mrs. Klugman settled back comfortably. She begged Edmond’s pardon if he minded her taking a nap. Edmond didn’t mind, he was grateful.
She snored lightly, hardly interfering with the silence that had fallen between them. As he watched her sleep, his attitude toward the old woman softened slightly. Yet that unexplained, confused feeling within him grew strong and diffused. Thinking about it, he dozed off.
They were awakened by the voice of the stewardess over the intercom, instructing the passengers to fasten their seat belts as the jet would be landing momentarily. Edmond tightened their belts. Mrs. Klugman smiled “t’ank you” through her transfixed gaze. She was watching the ground below slowly reaching up to them.
Because the old woman had been sitting for such a long time, it was difficult for her to walk. Turning to Edmond, she meekly asked, “Meestuh Keeng, oy mine logs are steef, vould you mind helping an old noodge out to da turminul?”
He replied nasally, “of course.”
Emerging from the gate, together, Mrs. Klugman excitedly began to point to a family group near the security check post.
“Meestuh Keeng, there’s my Chaym and his family. Come — come, I vant you should meet them.” Reluctantly he obeyed.
"Chaym, dis nice boy, dis gudt boy vas with me on ta plane and he took such gudt care of your Mama!" Looking from her son, tall and gray-haired, to the young man and back, she said, "Edmond Keeng, dis is my son Chaym, Harold Klugman." The two men shook hands. The older man thanked Edmond for taking care of his mother.

"It was nothing, no trouble at all . . . your . . . uh . . . your Honor," an embarrassed Edmond replied.

After several minutes of idle chatter with the Klugman family, Edmond excused himself and left.

They walked slowly through the terminal, the matriarch and her family; the mass of people parted for them like the ocean's tide breaking on the rocks.

Edmond walked alone quickly, with his solitary thoughts, through the terminal. "Mine son Chaym's a lawyuh, too" he mimicked the old woman's voice. Edmond at last identified his undefinable, confused feeling. It was anger, futile anger. Not at Mrs. Klugman and not at her son, but an overwhelming sense of undirected anger. Over and over he repeated, "Chaym, Chaym Klugman, Harold, Harold Klugman." He thought, "her son is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New York."

"Mine son da lawyuh, SOME LAWYUH!" he said aloud. But his remark went unheard, as he was swept up and absorbed by the tide of people.

Ann M. Frank

Wings

If birds mate in the wind
And man soars to heights of dispassionate union,
We may love differently —
Mimic the figures of Etruscan tombs
and relate stonily
Touch with a touch less than true.
Calculate tenderness.

But we know only one love and it is not statuesque.
Birds mate branch-bound
For love transcendant of man becomes inhuman,
Mindful,
Heartless.

And if I one day spread dreamy wings
And chase long forgot shadows of younger mountains,
Remember that I am a beakless bird
That feeds only on the porridge of love.
I will return.
When life has bloodied my jaws and gums
I will return.
Softly feed me,
Breathe warmth into the rock
That I may teach you to fly branch-bound.

Michael Woody
Blind Love

Others
like
Big Balloons
Beholding Bottoms
Baby Blue Blinds
Bathing suits Bare

Not me, pard’ner

I
like
You.

Denis Kelly

Brooklyn, 1974

Like City Lights
Like pigeons around a Cathedral
Like New York’s breathtaking skyline
Reflected in the rivers
Like all them pretty Italian families
  Eating tons of supper
  Around a table
  in Brooklyn
Like as high as the World Trade Center
Like a perfect Melting Pot
Like the ‘4’ Train that speeds like an artery through the city’s skin
  to its heart
  in You
Like I love you
I’m com’in!

Denis Kelly
Words
leaving your lips
tiny spheres
float on wind
on sunlight
only to burst
fall
tombstones

leaving bubbles
broken on air
rise and fall
to signal a thousand
birds filling your hair
red, burn
but are dead and mark
nothing
or
the sea

William B. Godin

Record: Joni Mitchell
you travel light
bags filled with rain/under your eyes
you keep the sun in
straw falling on shoulders
that carry too much pain
and you show us
once a year
wrapping blood and sea
in cellophane
you smile
a horse breathing
wisps of the popular gloom
spinning out webs
that clutch timid hearts
or those too strong
under that white light
the moonshine
or is it you crying
to get out of the vinyl
to be more than the
grooves that catch dust
a diamond piercing your voice
brings you alive for a turn
and then exiled back to a
cover that keeps you clean
protected till I call you
out again

William B. Godin
Abuelo

I
All Latin men have moustaches
sometime in their lives —
fine, pencil-thin lines of black
outlining the upper lip.
They tan well
and their teeth shine
like moons against a summer sky.
I think of you on hot,
misty-wet days
when I see old men wearing loose,
white shirts and Panama hats
or when my mother
brews a cup of black expresso.

It smells like that little store
with the bags of rice at one corner
and the yuccas and bananas on display.
Your friends were there — tall,
swarthy men wielding cigars
like baseball bats; they called you "chico"
and asked if I was your granddaughter.
I remember your smile

and how your hands shook
when you lifted a glass to your lips
or patted the brown heads of your grandchildren,
two boys, two girls
each noisier than the others,
wanting to sit near you
and listen to the stories of the trains. . .

One time we bought you a rocking chair —
shiny mahogany with a cane seat;
you always fell asleep there
mouth open,
and a Spanish newspaper on your lap.
I didn't go to your funeral
and I lived too far for it to seem real.
Months passed, We took a vacation
and went to see your daughters;
one afternoon they took my mother shopping
and left me in the house.
I went into the living room
and touched the mahogany —
the arms were worn —
and the seat, a little dusty.
I wiped it off gently
and sat down; I'd never done that before.
The stool I often sat on was in the corner and
I could see the paper on the table.

The walls were white and bare.
I held my head in my hands
and stared at my feet,
watching teardrops making patterns on the floor.

Ana Margarita Cabrera

After the Parlor

Black zero:

and the expectancy of a life beyond,
beginning with a corpse contoured, hand carved
home of red velvet interior.

Mourning patrons kneeling before his "Mona Lisa"
smile in colors of the dark.
If the closed (cemented) mouth could request,
maybe the lights would be brightened.

Through the window the leaveless trees in temporary
suspended animation are encased in ice.

(Not a fault but an event.)
Anticipating the spring.

Thomas Kennedy
by the canal funeral, tuesday noon

black and gold gondola
slow drift, swift shadow
water dragon wood bearer
flower suffused

six charcoal figures turn
right, left, sweep bent back
with eel-grained poles
slow drift, swift shadow

you and i, nell, grass
rooted, peel oranges
shell peanuts; bells
echo from moss-matted walls
slow drift, swift shadow

Gene Gousie

I wish . . .
That those merry-go seances death
Orgies red
Bloodbaths and cadavers
Would simply drop dead.

Calm soothing forces . . .
Dreams of mountain brooks, or
A monk's niche,
An afternoon chat with a
Silverfish.

These are the things that would comfort me
To make up children's verse, or
In a garden play
With a potter's wheel and a mound of clay.

Robert J. Squires
The Lecture

The crowd waits to be bitten
The old man sings paceless songs
his crowd stunned clay pigeons
waiting to be fired upon.

Speaking as a roman emperor
the crowd is held as if leaves on a tree.

The winds blow hard around his le sweetheart
and the rats play at his feet.
His crowd laughs while his toes are gnawed like blubber
anxiously they wait to be bit.

The door opens to this rat infested collesium.
Outside automobiles and airplanes,
the cries of the newborn.

Entering wearing blue jeans, soft shoes
and a sweatshirt a young man.
He sits in the heavenly row of the collesium.

"Ah, a new disciple welcome, I’ll teach you
an untaught."

Sitting placid he listened and observed
the archaic man proceed.

The prophet passed a cup,
the crowd drank like camels,
the cactuslike disciple passed.

The old man bent and grabbed the throat of a rat.
His hand reached for his new disciple.

"Don’t touch me with your plague."

Thomas Moses
Sail

Fish

I am the shoulders of blackness shivering green. My sail is seaweed that glimmers more than the burnished humps of giant tortoises lifting toward the moon. My sword and spear I carry just under the sail as the sail flies, it stabs. I can cut your arms off with one stroke, ram your hull drowning you, my rage.

Those who hunt me, when they see my onyx angel hair drip and shimmer in the folds of sea let out my feed: tuna belley, whole mullet, ballyhoo I go for it I know no other way. My great teeth gnash and the line rips

open my ruby blood

cracks my run electric
to turn me back into blue light just as I heave my last freezing breath, the fishermen see a flash, ultra violet shudders skids down my spine, blue

xylaphone playing out the last gasps I go all neon and my sword stabs blind I am lighting up the hallway of coral and ash that hurdles down and
down beyond sound and dust
This is the only time
the fishermen are quiet. The sting
and code of my exquisite race sizzles
them into their own exhaustion.
Soon they will be rowdy again, talk of stuffing
and mounting me, the trophy, thrashing
monster caught and hauled into
manly studies, panneled recreation rooms blistered
on the wall. But I haunt them, all of you
the dorsal fin, my blade and sword poised
down at you suspended in the molasses of death

I never stop staring at you, who burn to fly
through water, to die in a ritual of fractured
diamonds, and bloom, iridescent
star, as I have.

Jane Lunin Perel

**Learning. Consuming.**

for McDonald

Scribbling the lists
of rocks, trees,
oceans, rising & falling,
and names of the flesh,
creature in bosum,
nests of leaves,
lime filled caves,
bwads of drink,
imagination,
and blue fantasy,

All these for us,
Mike, these are
the mouthful,
bill of goods
of our cache
the O void
in wood, rock, life.

This is wilderness,
the clam dig we
pass through,
the different bodies.

I make mention of this
before we pay the bill.

Michael Paul
March Morning

Come, look at me —
a muslin sheet flapping
in the wind arms
stretched and pinned
whipped clean of winter's
stains.

Come.
Take me down off
this taut line.

I will billow
into your arms.

Patricia Slonina

This poem is a trembling hand

Reached out in tentative embrace —
to be embraced
enfolded

into the secret,
sure-stepped dancing
that flows without
anticipation or memory;

a trembling
merely waiting
to be held fast

to that most tender part
of you
that rejoices with desire.

This poem is not afraid of darkness.

It is my darkness soft

trembling
simply because

I exist,
take my being,
my beginnings
from you.

Patricia Slonina