ALEMBIC
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THE OLD GUITARIST

His eyes were yellow with age. They were coated with a milky film which had hardened like cracked enamel on a teacup.

Hunched over the guitar He presses his glasslike fingers to the cords straining to find a melody.

The guitarist’s frail neck does not support his shadowy grey head.

The wind rhythmically beats Against the thin rags which Sparsely cover his bones.

Breathing thru an open mouth

Saliva drools onto his parched lips.

The attempt of his next breath is carried away by the smooth whisper of death.

Michele
Brown and Black

Brown and black baggage on my quilt,
Cowhide gloves balanced.
Raccoon carcus and foolish man's guilt;
Some rainwashed mudprints.

Brown and black city from a fourth floor,
Factory smoke frozen.
Weathered elm and sulking sycamore;
A dead branch chosen.

Brown and black telephone poles holding hands,
Birch tree guided.
Young sparrow inspects rooftop and lands;
Man and nature undivided.

Paul Ryberg
To R L, a childhood friend, deceased

Flowers in full gloom
Leave with summer
a name —
  his name —
a life
  his life —
a puff
passed on
fullblooded wrinkled lips.

Memories float in swirls
of dried, flat leaves —
time stretched blank —
the shape of no life.

Flowers have no names
but colors
scattered in bursts
across the field:
  a sacrilege of astonishment
  at the denial of youth.

Paul Trainor
Time

Time seems
to be passing
much too quickly.
Each moment
rapidly fades away
leaving a puff of
smoke where time
once stood. The
future becomes but
a memory of dreams
once cherished in
a younger day.
And as the
clock ticks onward,
the poem ends ..... 

Jim Panaggio
... and never found

Child move,
And catch the river, ride.
   For saintly seasons bide
   An aging change.
And mercy dried as skin,
   Calls forth no lesser sin
   to rearrange
The pleasantries of hate.

Child move,
And ride the river, wide.
   All homilies aside, except;
   ... and eye within eye, a silent terror
   will seek to hide.
A virtual image that will not die.
   That lies inside,
   waiting ...

Child move,
The river's soon to end.
   No ocean beyond the bend.
   Only walls that echo
      When?

Ben Marcoccio
Delilah Devillan

Delilah's dream exploded within her mind and would continue to shatter until her death. Four white walls encompassed her figure, marred by a big, black door. Her trembling countenance was curled and compacted in the far, left corner of the strange eery room.

Mental institutions depress and devastate normal human beings yet difficulty arises in defining normality. Delilah Devillan considered her mind to be perfectly organized and acceptable to herself as well as society. Self comprehension of her present situation became virtually impossible.

Her dream was dying. Delilah Devillan could never really transform into a non-deviant member of the world, neither as a teenager, student or average every day girl. She belonged in her own world, a world big enough for one. People were beginning to discover her uniqueness. Coping with such discovery challenged her secret.
Suddenly the black, steel door creaked open as a nurse with dry, wrinkly white hands and a perforated eyelid grasped the door and peered disgustedly at Delilah. “What an impish creature!” exclaimed old Tilly. “Just one more to add to our zoo.”

Depression set in upon Delilah as the door creaked shut again. After all, Delilah had never really intended to set her mother on fire. When the thought entered her mind, Delilah decided to let her actions coincide.

The lighter fluid blended lovely with the thick brown strands of hair. Her mother slept so peacefully that the excitement of disturbing her with flame overcame Delilah. At the instant the match struck the flint Delilah’s eyes sparkled. Swish! The fire and the screeching delighted her entire being as the flames danced across her mother’s body. Her merriment in observing such a spectacle tingled until the body crumbled withered and black as tranquility filled her mother’s chambers.

Delilah remembered being carried away by the hairy-armed man only to recover her sanity in the unfamiliar white-walled room. Delilah would not allow Nurse Tilly and the rest to manipulate her life. The playful antics were not over yet. Tilly would feel regret for her remark. Within Delilah’s sock existed a book of matches and the remainder of the lighter fluid.

Squirt! Squirt! “Revenge!,” screeched Delilah. “Silly old Tilly.” Old nurse Tilly strutted in terrified to perceive Delilah Devillan engulfed in flames never to become a member of that crazy zoo.

Judy McNamara
Voices in my heart
  bring messages of the butterfly
Of times when rainbows
  existed and dreams grew
But the times have long past
  only remaining as faded echoes
And the sky is gray --
  solitude becomes a prison
Pains of loneliness increase
  as icy tears fall in despair
Reaching out but never touching
  dreams kept in glass spheres
Futile attempts of breaking them
  bring only pains as they are broken
Jagged fantasies die away
  and reality shows its brutal face
Where are the friends
  where is the love of flowers
Lost among the crowds
  but remaining empty and alone
Life is such a cold existence
  steel bars locking away my dreams
And the only visions
  that remain
Are the butterflies with tattered wings
  battered by their own survival

Pat Landry
‘Tonight would be a good night to run wild Pierre’
we could kill something harmless we
could get drunk and sick
and eat and eat and eat.

I hate myself tonight Pierre; there is no love on the
street so come, and let's
paint our faces thick with masks cause we
have no real ones strong enough and
make believe
that we are something no one else is.

Pierre Pierre Pierre this world is too cold for me
so is it Brandy or Scotch
is it your head or your wrist tell me
what poem is worth to write?

Audrey Fontes Berry
'Kitchen Morning'

Here is whole grain bread and fresh  
And Yes! You can have some too.  
Fill your bonnie belly with the bread,  
Remember there's a little for your head,  
Soon your starving soul is happy fed.  
Eat the twilight toasted fire bread,  
Take the midnight toasted bread to bed.  
Now the bonnie breaded belly —  
Now the finely breaded head —  
Now the soul most lonely starving happy fed  
Should all contented lie and sleep;  
The midnight bread and morning bread are wed.

Mother bends over the wide eyed child  
"Mon mangiare!" of the better bread she said.

Jim Guglielmino
The city streets are lined with rundown houses and rat infested empty lots. The two figures cut the darkness like knives. They come upon a drunk passed out in an alley and give each other a knowing look. They roll the drunk for a net gain of forty-three cents. Not much of a hit but they intend to make others.

Alone their appearances are ominous but together they generate hostile waves, like amps and volts, felt by all those within distance of the currents. A dog and a boy never looked so menacing. The Doberman has the body of a thoroughbred, skin stretches to its tearing point covering rock hard muscle. His white teeth glisten like rare gemstones. The boy, although only fourteen, is tall and rugged resembling a bull in his slow thoughtful gait.

They slice through the darkness in a never ending search for potential victims. The beast rips the purse from somebody’s mother leaving her sprawling and bruised on the pavement. They add another two dollars to their cache.

They stalk a high-rise parking garage for another mark. A businessman walks briskly through level four. The two leap out from behind a pole. The businessman freezes. He knows what is coming; it has happened before. No words are exchanged. The boy’s blade reflects the moonlight. The man reaches inside his coat pocket, the dog growls as if instinctively aware of what is about to happen. The man draws a gun. Shots fire, the blade flashes, the glistening teeth rip soft flesh. Wounded or dead the man and boy lie bleeding in the moonlight. The dog moves off in search of another victim.

Bill Holt
Scrubbing

She is scrubbing the bathtub ring.
She is not humming or remembering
her husband's jawbone
or his slim ankles. She is not
cheerful looking forward to the toilet,
the bathroom floor. She is

pondering filth, the miracle
that life sustains itself on this planet
where body wastes like hatred invade
all we do. She is understanding
politics on her hands and knees, that it has
nothing to do with justice or love.
It has to do with waste.
The power of men to dictate who will clean whose
waste, who can afford the most of it (and
the most people to clean it up.)
You could say she is having a revelation scrubbing. It is only the years, the habit of seeing scum lift off the tub’s sides like vernix swabbed off the throbbing newborn, that keeps her spellbound at her task; the water glistening over the white porcelain proclaiming the goodness of her hands, the zero in her bank account. Her whole life flashing before her, a succession of sparkling tubs turning filth bone white again. She knows the truth. But still she does not stop.

Jane Lunin Perel
Dreaming

She hangs in the night, red neon hair flaming against the nothingness of her suspension. I turn and ask her, “Please let me ride the ferris wheel one more time.” She nods her head NO.

She holds out her hand and touches mine.
I am now in a hall of mirrors, yellow blinding lights. I turn and see myself everywhere, though my features are not clear.
First I see a powdered pink toddler licking cotton candy while tap dancing. She blushes her disappearance.
Replacing her, comes the second reflection. A flower child of the tie-dyed generation sings to me the best of Arlo Guthrie. Flipping me a peace sign, the image mellows out.
I look into a mirror and see myself as a praying mantis. I kneel before the reflection to view more closely. I discover what beady eyes I have and scream.
The faceless woman transports me to the top car of the ferris wheel. I am relieved, freed from the horrible images which were imprisoned in the mirrors.
The spirits stir and the wind begins to rock me hard and fast against the passive sky.
A blue smoke rises and captures the frame of the ferris wheel. Proliferating sparks of heat embrace the wooden cars until they explode, scattering silver rust flames throughout the unstarred night.
Crashing down towards the iron mattress of death, I cover my face. The car picks up faster speed. The rushing winds aid to whirl me to the ground. I am falling. Faster. FASTER.
I see the faceless woman laughing. I see her mouth. It is a black cavern of toothless decay exhaling stale smoke.
I try to grab her.
Morning’s grey chill thrusts me into consciousness. Fetus-like, curled beneath the sweat dampened sheets, I anticipate warmth. Outside the rain is falling like slivering glass pellets.
Again she was here, I think as the lightning slices the barren dawn. I don’t know what she wants or who she is.
A sudden shadow dances across the ceiling as the copper hinged shutters bang rhythmically against the windows.
If only I could escape it.
The Zeus wind roars as I bury my face in the smooth down comforter.

Michele
Circa ...

Old man, never have we met.
Yet each day, the time
we spend together
Grows shorter,
Grows longer.
Is it really one?
Where old man ... and when
But not why.
An enemy is dying.
I shall miss him.

Ben Marcoccio
Darkness covers me as I crouch to contemplate
Changes that occur, must occur, so they say.
The heart it knows no reason, it sways and it buckles
It forgets and it bleeds when old love meets new.

Paper and pen to console the lonely, they provide, no!
They cannot provide the comfort that lacks
The cracks in one's eyes they allow light to enter
To seep in one's mind and to swallow one's self.

s.j.j. mcguire
red shirt
between corn stalks;
a boy ties his sneakers.

Audrey Fontes Berry
CONTRIBUTIONS

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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