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ROB GRIFFITH

Going Out

A slow leviathan, the house next door surfaces
and sheds the night's dark waters. They drip
from eaves and shingles as a bloodless dawn
unfurls above the trees. Soon, the door,
so small and red against the pallid light,
will open, and out he'll step, my neighbor.

A suitcase in his hand again, he'll lock
the house and start across the yard. He'll leave
his wife and girls, the only things he loves,
and tell himself he'll be home soon, that life
is full of parting. Birdsong stipples morning,
and shadows stretch behind him. He fears, one day,
he'll walk too far, and they, like ropes grown thin,
will snap and fade in all that rising light.

CLAUDIA GARY

Aunt Rose

Young ladies in their rubber bathing caps
swim measured strokes across the basement pool
of the Barbizon Hotel. Not an ear, not a curl
is visible. Their strong-legged kicks resound
as Aunt Rose shows me geometric wall tiles
and ropes of floaters bobbling between lanes.
We stroll next door where blue-clad Peter Rabbit
looks up at me from glossy-coated paper
pressed, bound, and cut. His mouse friends sort bright beads.
A kitten nearly gets baked in a dumpling.
With this month's new book in a crinkly package,
Aunt Rose takes my small hand and walks me back
to her own lobby shop, joining my mother
amid the shelves of thin-boxed shiny nylons.
The dried-off swimmers march in on high heels,
then out again. How straight their stocking seams!
Rose isn't my real aunt but one whose nephew
died in the Navy during World War II,
leaving a girl who would have been his bride.
The young girl pulled together, studied art,
got a job, went to a dance, and found a husband.
They had two baby girls whose ties to Rose
are echoed splashes, chlorine-rubber air,
mosaic tiles, beige silk, synthetic mesh,
and stubby books whose sweet aroma floats
through and around me as I fan the pages.

OWEN LUCAS

455

We are not easy people to be,

My mother and I.

No matter how the one or the

Other might try,

We are constructed too much

In kind. We plunder,

And put on our best thatch,

And only grow older,

Disputing the proprieties of our

Personalities.

She would weep like a flower,

All too readily,

As I would have it—then, she

Has me cruel, has me the one

Of our fraternal three

That sent the others thereon.

Well, I am not a flower,

But I know what an account
To give of the power
She and father both amount.
I am the child alone,
And hold it not a crime that I
Went off for love from home ;
No less to have let things lie.
I cannot reason with a flood,
And do not see why I should.

MARCUS BALES

The Tweets

Hear the twitters at their tweets,
Tiny tweets!
Oh what a world of followers ignore their blah blah bleats!
How they twitter, twitter, twitter,
Out in cyberspace tonight
While the stars that twitter glitter
And the wannabes are bitter
As they spit their snarky spite
With their thumbs thumbs thumbs
As they chatter to their chums
Through a twitterate tweetosity that deafens and defeats
Through their tweets, tweets, tweets, tweets,
tweets, tweets, tweets,
Through their hundred forty characterized bleats!

Hear the tweeting of each twit
Lonely twit
What a world of loneliness could ever give a shit?
In the silence of the night
Bent to dim LED light
With a small sad expectation
That some follower might care –
It's a lot like masturbation,
But without the sexy flair,
With their thumbs thumbs thumbs
As they chatter to their chums
Through a twitterate tweetosity that lacks both grace and wit,
Oh the twit, twit, twit, twit,
Twit, twit, twit,
Oh the bleating indiscreting that they ought not to transmit!

Dark Fails

A sure surge of self seems
to stop – hover
in strong, strange, occult gleams –
and glow above her;

I feel force like a huge old
magic treasure
suffused in gathered gold
take my small measure.

It's here – here where dark fails
and light thickens
with this woman that life sails
and love quickens.

The Seagull

for Liam Guilar

Eating lunch beside Lake Erie, reading literary theory,
Continental jokers who'd innumerately misconstrued
Philosophy, I heard a flapping, riffled book or sandwich wrapping?
And suddenly a whoosh like clapping snatched my sandwich as I chewed;
Not relatively, absolutely, snatched it! – if you'd been there you'd
Have seen the gull that stole my food.

There, the first day of September, a day I always will remember,
There went dark the last faint ember dying warmth had disembued
Of any hint of heat or fire: Fish, de Man, the whole entire
Continental crew, their pyre dead and cold. Which, I conclude,
Resulted from empiric action, that is what I must conclude,
By the gull that stole my food.

There is no silken, sad, uncertain rustle of some final curtain
Sweeping by across the stage to close a bad play unreviewed;
Instead there is a seagull standing, out of reach as others, landing,
All demand, are each demanding, something for each seagull brood –
Eyeing me and each demanding something for its seagull brood,
Behind the one that stole my food.

I took my strength from their sheer number: let the Continentals slumber,
Slumber as we unencumber Western culture to exclude
The willfulness of the obtuse that hides behind confused abstruse
Enjargoned terms that introduce no clarity to theory skewed
By incomplete misapprehension of the pseudo-math they spewed,
Refuted by my stolen food.

Then that seagull still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Smiling as I, now reviling all postmodern thought, pursued
Whole schools of relativistic thought through briary fields of is and ought;
Who fled as if by whips pursued, postmoderns realizing who'd
Become the newly naked nude, the newly-naked sometime-nude,
Exposed by gulls who stole my food.

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the gulls whose greedy eyes no Derrida could so delude
As he'd deluded half a culture; that pseudo-philosophic vulture
Stood revealed: a culture vulture soon to hear his thinking booed –
Or would except the sneaky bastard died before he could be booed –
Booed because of stolen food!

Then, it seemed, the air grew denser, acting as a gull-dispenser:
Flocking gulls flew flapping flying fleetly through the murk accrued.
“You!” I shouted, “don't deprive me of the proof I need to drive me.
Do not say you're here to jive me, jive me so that I'd conclude
Conclusions that I might conclude, conclusions that I must conclude!”
Said the gull “Whatever, dude.”

“What's the point of such a sortie to the real in flocks of forty?
Are you representing Rorty, conversation's foulest mood?
How I hate that speling spielist – yet, you stole my lunch, the realest
Thing that's happened to intrude into my consciousness, a rude
But rousing rudeness that renewed empiricism stealing food!”
Said the gull, “Whatever, dude.”

“Sophist! I would like to punch you in the beak! You ate my lunch,
You stand there like there's still a bunch you'd say if you were interviewed
About the philosophic fictions fighting the unjust depictions
Possible amid the flows philosophers have always spewed,
Amid the turgid purging prose philosophers have always spewed!”
Said the gull, “Whatever, dude.”

“Sophist!” said I, “On the level tell me whether you still revel
In postmodernism's devil-spawned and -raised non-pulchritude!
Tell me what it's all about: can empiricism flout
Postmodernists' pernicious doubt with realism's stolen food?
Will beauty, justice, good, proportion, finally be again pursued?”
Said the gull, “Whatever, dude.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shouted, starting –
“Back you go into that tempest warlock, witch, or devil brewed!
Leave no white plume as a token of that lie your soul has spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! – all my loneliness accrued!

Take your beak from out my heart, depose my form from off your rood!"
Said the gull, "Whatever, dude."

Now the seagull, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,
Out of reach but within spitting distance, posed with attitude.
And his eyes have all the beady dead indifference of the greedy
Since I shot and stuffed him as a symbol of that interlude
Of doubt between attractive options, a doubt that ought to be pursued –
Unless you say "Whatever, dude."

Not Enough

Impassioned as a pop machine, he lets
The bright precision of his smile enjoy
Its normal interval, then shakes my hand.
I smile, but not enough, it seems; he sets
His suitcase down, and tries another ploy:
My shoulders captured, I take his – we stand
All but embraced, and meet each others' eyes.
And then we laugh like no one else is there,
And talk about the times and friends we share
And breathe the casual air old friendship buys.
But I say this, or he says that, and smiles alive
With laughs become the practiced smiles we'd give
To anyone who'd let us shuck and jive
Back into lives we never thought we'd live.

Reading Poet Bios

Some are longer than the poem; some are sly
or arch, but most are dry
recitations
of lists of publications
or hobbies or pets.
Frequently a wife or husband gets
a mention, or the occasional contest win,
or a selection in
a “Best Of” collection,
a Mensa or Phi Beta Kappa connection,
or maybe a prize
or two, or nominations or other such tries,
and sometimes fellowships or kids,
but some common concordance forbids
any sort of real
revelation. Yet, there’s an awkward feel
from almost every one
that quite a bit more work was done
on the bio than on the poem.
By their bios shall you know ‘em.

Disturbing Dream

I was deep in Daryl Hannah
On the baby grand piano
With a not-yet-ripe banana
As a butt-plug when I woke.
I was out of breath and sweating
But the factor most upsetting
Was the penis I was petting
Which looked up at me and spoke:

"Daryl Hannah? Are you crazy?
Your imagination's lazy
Since you could have had Miss Daisy
On the hood of General Lee!"
And I thought "A talking penis!"
And then Daryl-Daisy-Venus
Moaned, "Don't let it come between us,
You are not yet done with me!"

Then she grabbed at me though armless
With an urgency alarmless
And a grunt that would be charmless
In another circumstance.
Then the oriental gonger –
Where'd he come from? – pounded stronger,
Slower strokes that lasted longer
In that ur-orgasmic trance.

Then she finished with a pleasing
Top-fuel dragster engine-seizing
Noise that sounded like me sneezing
And I sat upright in bed
With no Daisy/Venus/Darryl,
Just a hard-on, no apparel,
And the bottom-of-the-barrel
In my stinking mouth instead.

Can a moral be extracted
From a dream that's unredacted
Through a prism so refracted
As this poem? You may scoff.
But a dream that has no ending
Never has to stop offending.
It's like predatory lending
Since it never does pay off.

BRIAN STANLEY

Parallel

To my brother

A skier like a poet fears and yearns
and onto white expanses casts his lot.
A poet like a skier carves his turns
and punctuates his progress dot by dot.
Like me you think the classic form is best
for sinuous resistance to decline.
Like you I leave behind a palimpsest
as each new version seeks the perfect line.
But while your runs bring you to level snow
with certainty that you will rise anew,
mine sometimes take me into depths below
where whiteness has a dread and lifeless hue
unless you catch me, stop my headlong fall,
and make me heed again the mountain's call.

CONTRIBUTORS

Rob Griffith's latest book, *The Moon from Every Window* (David Robert Books, 2011), was nominated for the 2013 Poets' Prize; and his previous book, *A Matinee in Plato's Cave*, was the winner of the 2009 Best Book of Indiana Award. His work has appeared in *PN Review*, *Poetry*, *The North American Review*, *Poems & Plays*, *The Oxford American*, and many others. He is the editor of the journal *Measure* and teaches in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Evansville, Indiana.

A 2014 finalist for the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award and 2013 semifinalist for the Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize, **Claudia Gary** writes, edits, sings, and composes tonal chamber music and art songs. She is author of *Humor Me* (David Robert Books 2006) and several chapbooks. Her poems appear in anthologies such as *Forgetting Home* (Barefoot Muse Press 2013) and *Villanelles* (Everyman Press 2012), as well as in journals internationally. Her articles on health appear in *The VVA Veteran* and other magazines. For more information, see http://www.pw.org/content/claudia_gary.

Jan D. Hodge is happily retired, writing in response to various poetic challenges, especially double-dactyl narratives and carmina figurata. His work has appeared in many journals, including *North American Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *Iambus & Trochees*, *American Arts Quarterly*, *Off the Coast*, and *Lavender Review*, and in *Western Wind* and *The Book of Forms*.

Owen Lucas is a British writer living in Norwalk, Connecticut. His poetry, fiction and translations have been published in more than thirty journals in the U.S., Britain, and Canada. Past credits include *Off the Coast*, *Lost in Thought*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, and *Qwerty*, with new work out soon in *Tirage Monthly*, *Ohio Edit*, *Tribe* and *Free State Review*.

Not much is known about **Marcus Bales** except he lives in Cleveland, Ohio, and his poems have not appeared in *Poetry* or *The New Yorker*.

Brian Stanley was born in Madrid and educated in French until high school. His poems have been longlisted for The Montreal International Poetry Prize

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