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ANNIE FINCH

The Changing Bear

There is a bear who swallows up a cloud;
the bear's a cloud, an autumn bear, and all
the evening swallows follow her sky down
until it's a mere reflection of a bear
on the same ripples that their feast dives for.
And then the swallows follow back the bear
who fades at the muzzle, sinks around the jaw,
and, sated, lets the darker clouds alone.
Then the bear purples northern sky, and when
she's swallowed all the final pink and lies,
a waiting belly looming on the lake,
one swallow leaps an inch from where it flies
to make a silhouette as the bear dies.
And then the bear dies, if she ever dies.

CONRAD GELLER

Triolet 814

The time you smiled and touched my hand
became for me a summer day.

I thought, I hoped that you had planned
to smile at me and touch my hand.

Now, bitter now, I understand
your whimsy was to take away
your smiling face, your tender hand,
make winter of that summer day.

Cri de Corps

Give me a tickle, I'll give you a shove,
We don't need permission from Someone Above.
It may not be passion, it's surely not love,
what we feel in our hearts today.

I have never remarked that I'd love you forever,
or my heart would be reft if our union should sever,
for that would be falsehood, and not even clever
to deceive in that terrible way.

I'll lend you some comfort, you lend me some joy,
for you are a girl and I am a boy.
Let's gladden our friends and our parents annoy
with the scope of our scandalous play.

So let us make haste while our sun is still shining,
in a very short moment the worms will be dining
on my vigor, your beauty. Since we'll soon be declining,
Let's harvest our seasonal hay.

JENNIFER REESER

Co-Ed

The taste of you and your desirous tongue,
Still flavored with the tang of dinner wine,
Is like an evening lecture, guiding mine.
I am a schoolgirl and the bell has rung.
The empty classroom, cleansed with pungent pine,
Is sage with time – yet I am yet too young
To yawn and break away from the divine.
But should I lower lashes, to incline
My brow against your cheek, then fill a lung
With passive breath, it means no lack of passion,
Nor is it a cold shoulder, to the man of letters.
Were I to show my face, it would be ashen
With shame at such a show beside my betters –
Or crimson as the color of their sweaters.

MARCUS BALES

Evening Sun

for Benjamin Yarmolinsky

Set back the clocks: cut off the morning hour,
And paste it like the over-generous dower
Of not too beautiful a woman on
Each coming evening till the winter's gone.

Light lights beside your chair, and overhead;
Scribble your reminders baseball's fled
On blog and Facebook, and email all your friends
That this is how another season ends.

I hate to see that evening sun go down –
And shadows shade the stadium downtown
Without the brilliant glare of night-game lights
Making home-game days from empty nights.

The stars are not wanted now, until the spring
When once more pitchers throw and batters swing;
Put away the bats, and bag the balls
That next year will go soaring over walls.

Put by the coach's shout, the umpire's call;
Hang up your cleats, and carefully place a ball
Securely in the pocket of your glove,
And wait for spring, and summer, and fall, and love.

CHARLES HUGHES

October 1958

The Braves were in Milwaukee. Warren Spahn
Was a new name to me – I still can see
Him kick his right leg toward first base, then on
To home (“the prettiest delivery!”):

Left-handed; overhand; high kick but smooth;
Same motion every time; and finishing
(As if the hitters all outhit Babe Ruth)
Squared up, knees flexed, ready for anything.

Love – caught mumps-like in second grade. It was
Because of Spahn – because of Lew Burdette,
Hank Aaron, Eddie Mathews – and because
Miss Loomis idolized the Braves and let

Us listen to the first few innings of
Games one and two – that I willed a Braves win
That year. But no, they weren’t quite good enough:
Yankees in seven. Back to class discipline.

This was the Cold War era. The next day,
Science had aged: we learned the atom bomb
And fission (in an elementary way).
The end of World War II could not have come

As early otherwise, Miss Loomis stressed;
Plus deaths were therefore fewer in the war,
By millions. “Everything is for the best,”
She said (comfort I hadn’t heard before).

That day, we also had an air-raid drill,
Involving crouching underneath our desks.
Recess redux – which, with its real-world thrill,
Dropped discipline in favor of burlesques.

Desks tipped and shoved to giggles. A soft rain
Of paper bombs (each shrilly marked by, “Boom!”).
Miss Loomis trying gamely but in vain
To squeeze herself into too little room.

She obviously felt a deep sense of duty.
She is – I’d say today – one reason I
Appreciate a kind of baseball beauty
And recognize a kind of grownup lie.

JEAN L. KREILING

The Sportscaster

for Bill

His commentary lacks the resonance
that more mature sportscasters can project,
but he knows all the stats, and has a sense
of how timing and drama intersect.
His observations are precise and clear,
if sometimes less than true: he leaves out how
the runner steals third oak, or has to veer
around a sagging sugar maple bough.
A hit to “right field” really lands next door;
the pitcher waves off cats, not catchers’ signs;
and games are called because of lunch. The score
reports no siblings, so he redefines
team spirit: makes the plays, and calls them, too,
all by himself – and wins by making do.

STELLA NICKERSON

The High and Clear

The mountain held us up into the high
and clear, where dying yellow grasses shook
and aspens hooked their branches in the sky.
The six of us, connected by a look,

said "La-de-da" or might as well have done.
The sun as weak as water on our bare
unbroken necks, we let our laughter run
up to the thinnest reaches of the air.

I'm somewhat older now and far less wrong
about most things. And yet I'd give my dour
and my dearest expectations, my strong
and struggling hopes, and these few scraps of power
if I could rip the weave of time along
a seam and step into that yellow hour.

LEWIS TURCO

Unlovingness

an E. E. Cummings tailgater bluesanelle

Unlove's the heavenless hell and homeless home,
The unEdenic, undwellinghouse-type-home
Of seed in search of a bed of welcome loam.

The botanist of Eden could tell you that!
All botanists since Eden can tell you that
Unlove's the heavenless hell and homeless home

Where weeds will grow, not herbs, unless you sow
Herbs, not tares, unless broadcast you sow
Good seed to search for a bed of welcome loam.

Snakes love to slither among the vines of vetch
And stalks of weeds to find the apple, fetch
Us to the unEdenic type of home-

Away-from-home that has an ounce of marl,
A single, solitary ounce of marl.
Unlove's the heavenless hell and homeless home

From which we wish to be exiled, not enter,
To be in exile from and not to enter –
Unlove's the heavenless hell and homeless home
of seed in search of an ounce of welcome loam.

ROBIN HELWEG-LARSEN

Implants and Biotech

These are the scarecrow years
When frost tears glisten
On molded and painted cheeks, beside ears
That no longer listen
Being more deaf than dead
And hearing only
Through implants and inputs into the head
Bonily, stonily.

Fears come while certainties lapse:
Fears of the dark,
Of abandonment, monsters, uncertainty. Now (perhaps)
Some Schrödinger's shark
Divides cosmonaut, cryonaut, chrononaut
From those who can't trust
The unknown, are ill-taught, or die without thought.

Thrive on change, or be dust.

ANTON YAKOVLEV

All the Dry Eyes in the Forest

He told you something wrong, something he thought was of no consequence, just a routine error in judgment. Plus he had a cold.

You were upset, more than he could have known. When he apologized, you grabbed your bag, produced not one, not two, but sixty hammers

Thor had used on enemies, and brought them down at once upon his balding head. He turned the other cheek, then grew a face with extra cheeks to hit – and you obliged.

Your own face looked like it was made of wood. He thought it was just sadness – it was not. The tears he thought he saw were nothing but reflections of the billboards you walked by.

When you came to his home, you voiced disgust with every piece of furniture. His gift to you, which he'd been building with his hands for months, a model sailboat, was *okay*.

With polite thank you's you accepted it and went on hating him with all you had.

–

When later on you kissed him on the cheek that afternoon, and told him he was kind, that you were luckier than anyone and that he made you happy – just his sight –

he put aside that other stuff. And when
you made confessions you had never made
to anyone before, he grew two wings,

and for another day or two he walked
above the clouds, wherever he would go.

—

But when he came back home, he couldn't rest.
The things he had built around the house
smacked of cheap kitsch, and he could see the nails
that stuck out of his closets. Not a chair

was good to sit on. His computer stank
of gasoline, and even in his bed
he only thought of danger. Many weeks

he spent in hopes that this bad taste would pass,
but it did not. He tried to relocate,
to buy new furniture, to change his look,

but always something would remind of
some part of his old life – and all went wrong.

—

He never told you this. He never broke
all ties with you. You saw him every day.
You slept with him, while danger ate his mind.
Some days he tried to tell you – he could not.

You walked on clouds with him, and could not know
that he was rotting while you were away.
He never told you, and he never wept.

MATTHEW DOBSON

Bawcock

sneaping rain eroded black
the lantern of his jaw
by driving grit into the slack
and fast dissolving pores

his spine was crabbed illegible
skewed by its sideways hips,
that crimped his face into a puddle
slurried back his lips

to show the edges of a smile
that spreads on flockless sheep
when they get tangled in their wires
and struggle into sleep

CONTRIBUTORS

Annie Finch's latest books are *A Poet's Craft: A Comprehensive Guide to Making and Sharing Your Poetry* (University of Michigan Press) and *Spells: New and Selected Poems* (Wesleyan University Press). She is the coeditor, with Alexandra Oliver, of *Measure for Measure: An Anthology of Poetic Meters* (Random House) and the founder of the online formal poetry community PoetCraftCircles.com.

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Jennifer Reeser is the author of three full-length collections: *An Alabaster Flask*, winner of the Word Press First Book Prize, *Winterproof*, and *Sonnets from the Dark Lady and Other Poems*. Her poems and translations of French and Russian literature appear in periodicals such as *Poetry*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Formalist*, *Measure*, *Light Quarterly* and *Able Muse*. Her work has also been widely anthologized in books including *Longman's Introduction to Poetry*, edited by Dana Gioia and X.J. Kennedy, *Poets Translate Poets: A Hudson Review Anthology*, and *Phoenix Rising: The Next Generation of American Formal Poets*.

She has received awards from The World Order of Narrative and Formalist Poets, and from *The Lyric*. She is the former editor of *Iambs and Trochees*, and was a mentor on faculty with the West Chester Poetry Conference. She lives in southern Louisiana with her husband, fiction writer Jason Reeser, and their children. Her website is located at jenniferreeser.com.

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