

HIKA Literary Magazine

Winter 1998

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HIKA

Winter 1998

but we have found out forever
that blood smells only of blood.

— Anna Akhmatova

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Sara Shea

Eve

Here, the year is a bruised fruit.

Overripe, it is soft in places;

it drags at boughs,

and branches.

Here in my hand

is the last drink of the old year, that is bitter,

and unavenged.

And here is a highway,

a long black bucket of it,

dumped out on the hills.

Here

is the luminescent moon that

looks like Iceland.

It lingers on the last high tide of tonight.

Here the town is hushed and civilized

in a muzzle of sleep.

Here I am driving

deliberate and violent

toward dawn.

I watch the road

just to be awake tonight.

I will tell the truth in this poem.

Here, on the last night

of year-old poetry,

truth is durable.

Here in the wet linen mist,

in the thinnest hours of calendars,

is a lit Christmas tree:

a spruce, blue shadowed pillar

in a church yard.

Here, untidy strings of frosted bulbs

go blinking in the black air,

winking out resolutions
while the blind-eyed town sleeps.
And here is a hazel angel
at the top of the Christmas tree.
She was stationed here
before the new year,
before I went driving by
with a poem in my head.
Here, in the chapped blue statue
of the residual angel,
the year ends.
I shake off the last seeds of tonight.

Lonnie Manns

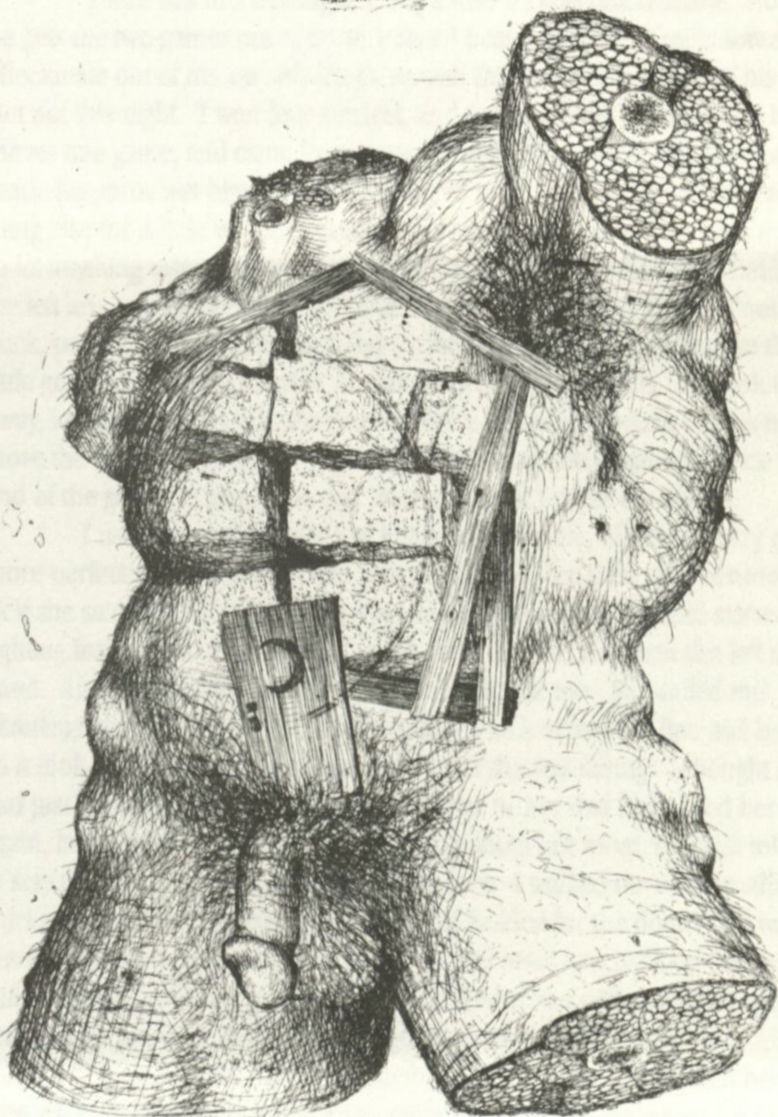
Cross

down south
somewhere under the hell-
ish sheets of sunfire
orange gold yellow whips
of rays simmering cottoned finger tips. Black
hands stolen/sold/shipped/sold/swollen once
Afrikans. Picking the white man's rose. "Yessum
master" picking the cracker cotton. Men once, men,
now animals—listen while their sister sweats in the small
cabin; sometimes property screams,
like Jesus
crucified. In the tree
dangling like an opal chandelier over the mighty
fire. Burn smelling everywhere like Sunday
morning bacon. Somewhere down south
in the white hooded devils night
hell's children made trophies
of little gods. Penises, ears, toes, fingers, eyes
pieces of the prize. Limbs and necks
like wish bones or knuckles
snap
popping like young wood in boy scout fires. Somewhere
down south in the black
black there was a quiet cream called night.
Someone saw the brightness of death, someone
became the killer of king. Someone murdered
their half children the half people. Somewhere down
south I saw the shadow sleeping in clay footprints, peach
juice dripped like blood from the sky I ate watermelon surrounded
by haunted shade that whispered slave souls. Closing
my eyes I swallowed the liquid like blood
eating the placenta and the soul
of someone who looked like me
under that tree I made love to the ancestors.

Moshe Quinn
Junkyard #8



Keith Wilde
Brick Shithouse



Keith Scott

My Side of the Diamond

There was this one night at Ray's where I was untouchable. Normally he gets me two games out of three, either I beat myself or he pulls some checkmate out of his ass and sits there with this smug little smile on his face. But not this night. I won four straight, and not by a little. I mated him in ten moves one game, and came from down a knight in another. I would have made Kasparov wet himself I was playing so well. And I forgot about everything else for a little while, because it was speed chess, and there was no time to let anything else creep up on the mind, I had to attack the whole field with my left arm—pick up the piece, pound it down, and hit my clock. Pound, click, pound, click. Then watch Ray sit there with his hand pulling on that little goatee he's trying to grow, me knowing that he's hearing his clock tick away, knowing his ass is in the fire and every second he sweats out his next move the closer he gets to seeing his red flag drop down and announce the end of the game, to announce that its all over and I came out on top.

I used to get that feeling of being untouchable, of having every move more perfect than the last, in bed with my old girl, but then after her mom got sick she said sex made her feel guilty. So we stopped fucking and started fighting instead and then she told me to grow a spine, and then she left me for good. And here I thought it was going to work out, too. She called me Thanksgiving night in tears. She was sobbing so bad and the line was buzzing, so it took me like a minute to figure out what she was saying. I thought she had just gotten in another fight with her sister or her dad had called her fat again, but I figured out what she was saying about her mom, so I just told her to stay there at her house and I'd be right over. I walked downstairs still in my shirt and tie from Thanksgiving dinner, and headed for the door. Dad was reading the newspaper and didn't look up, but Mom was lying on the couch with a glass of red wine and looked up from whatever network trash she was watching to say, "And where are you going at ten oclock?"

"Ann's," I said. "It's . . . something bad." I was going to tell her right then what was happening, that Ann's mom was sick, but my throat got that tight feeling in it and I had to start blinking hard to keep the tears from coming. So I had to leave it at that.

But Mom couldn't handle that. She arched her left eyebrow like she always does when she gets bitchy and asked "What, is she pregnant?"

I was mad enough so that I knew I wouldn't cry if I said that Ann's mom was sick, but I wanted to let my mom feel bad about it later when she found out, so I just walked out the door, not slamming it, but shutting it just hard enough to make the glass rattle a little and let that bitch know how I felt. It was a thirty mile drive to Ann's, so by the time I got there Ann was a little better. Her eyes were bloodshot and nose was red, but she was good enough for us to go to a restaurant. I sat with her and ordered for her and held her hand on top of the table and told her that I'd be as good to her as I could, told her I'd be her rock.

I tried, but like I said, things fell apart. The very next weekend me and her were at a party at some girl's house whose parents were out of town, and Ann was getting bored and I was already good and buzzed, so we start walking to the door but this guy Larry is sitting there next to the door mousing off about some girl Ann was friends with, so as we're stepping out the door Ann says a couple things at this guy under her breath. But then, when we're halfway out to the car, he drawls out, *fuckin' bitch*. I just ran right back inside the house, put my face about half an inch from his and started screaming, *what did you say? what did you say?* over and over again. And I knew with sure, drunken conviction that I wanted to murder him, that I wanted to make him admit my girl was beautiful and he was not.

But a few weeks later Ann had to get a job after school since her mom had to stop work, and she never wanted to go out and drink on the weekends anymore. She was always tired from waiting tables, she said. And when I tried to wrap her in my arms and tell her how much easier it would be once we were living together at college, she patted my cheek, told me she had to live day to day now, and turned up her mouth. And then she kept saying how all she wanted was a friend. And then she didn't go to college with me like she said she was going to. And I wasn't so sure my girl was beautiful anymore either.

* * *

Buying the rifle was horrible. Whenever I drove back to college after breaks with my folks, I always noticed this gun store on the state highway, a little white building called the Shootin' Shack. I just hoped they'd have what I needed. My dad was a real asshole about me not having a car this semester.

He said he didn't want me to get distracted from studying, but I knew it was just so he could save a few hundred dollars by telling the insurance agent I didn't have the car for a few months. So I had to borrow some other guy's car. I made up some story about getting an important prescription filled, so he gave me the keys and a list of rules about the car. The car was this little Honda with a license plate that said *2Groovy*. Yeah, that's really what I needed to fit in at a gun store in the middle of Texas, a foreign car with a license plate that said *2Groovy*.

So when I get there I try to park it at the end of the parking lot, even though there's just one pickup truck in the lot. I tried to make up for the car by wearing some jeans I hadn't washed yet this semester and the only shirt I had at college with a collar on it. I walk in and a bell clangs on the door and this wiry little guy behind the counter is reading a newspaper and says "afternoon" without taking his cigarette from out of his mouth. I look around for a while, pretending like I know what the hell I'm doing. I see this long narrow rifle behind the glass display that actually has a tripod next to it and it looks all right. I clear my throat and look at the guy behind the counter but he just keeps reading his paper. So I say "uh, sir?" and my voice cracks but he looks up at me anyway.

"I think I'll take this one."

He kind of grins at me and makes this little laugh that shakes his whole wiry body for a second, then slides off his stool and walks over to me. He walks over to where I'm standing in front of the display case and puts his hands on his hips and looks at the gun for a second, then looks at me.

"Now what in the world you need that for?"

"Oh, you know, personal protection. You just can't be too careful these days, can you?"

I guess that explanation is good enough for him. I mean, if he wanted to own a business where everyone had a good reason, he should have opened a laundrymat, not a Shootin' Shack.

But when we get up to the counter and he starts wrapping up the rifle, he asks for my permit, and I just kind of stand there, not knowing what to say. He looks up from the wrapping and asks for it again.

"I uh . . . I dont have one."

He just looks at me the way my third-grade teacher looked at kids who forgot their homework, just letting the whole room sit in silence for a

horrible moment after the confession came out, letting the little kids stomach sink lower and make the tears well up in his eyes. But this guy, he lets me off the hook.

"Well then, you're going to have to fill out this application and come back in two weeks before I can let you have this."

The application won't be a problem. I'm nineteen and the only thing on my record is a pair of speeding tickets, but the two weeks is going to be a problem. I was planning on paying for the gun with my Citibank Visa and using the gun in four days, long before the end of the month when my Dad gets the credit card bill. Since I don't feel like trying to explain a four-hundred dollar charge at the Shootin' Shack to my dad, I write a check for it. It'll bounce and then some, but by that time it will all be over, and it's not like I'm going to need a checkbook in jail or in the ground or wherever.

* * *

You know how hard it is to carry a rifle across campus? It's pretty fucking hard. My roommate plays bass and he was off at religion this morning, so I pulled his bass out of its case and layed it out on his unmade bed. But the case wouldn't close with the gun in it, so I had to kind of stomp on the inside of the case and mash down the black felt far enough so that it'd close. But doing that kind of fucked up the rest of the case and put these dents in it, so I got some funny looks as I walked across campus with this deformed bass case. But I finally got to the tower.

I won't bullshit you; I'm not very good at this. I've never even held a gun before this week, and when I fire it the first time it kicks back and hits me in the shoulder so hard that I see stars and have to stop and take a few deep breaths. That shit stings. I have the tripod and the sights and the whole bit, but I'm not very fast, so I just get some ugly fat girl in the arm and some guy who was taking a nap on the quad right in the stomach. But I'm pretty slow at it, so after that I have to shoot at people hiding in the bushes and behind cars. One dumb-ass tries to hide behind a bike rack, so I shoot at him until I hit him. I mean, anyone who hides behind a bike rack doesn't deserve that much sympathy.

Even though I've never fired a gun before today, I know the sound it makes when it goes off. It's the sound of a well-thrown baseball hitting the sweet spot of the glove. And the rhythm—it's that game again where I couldn't be beat—pound, click, pound, click. But the sound, that's what really hits

me. It's a perfect, short sound, just a crack and an echo. I missed that sound when I quit playing ball, but I had to quit because of the tryout for the high school JV. Being left-handed, I always played first base. But during tryouts, we all ran out to the position we wanted to play, and first base was pretty crowded. There were like two guys at second, one guy at shortstop and just a handful in the whole outfield, but it was like a fucking check-out line at first base. The reason there was just the one guy at short was because everyone knew that Carney was going to play short. He was two years older than most of us, he had a mustache, and he could have made the varsity team no problem, but since he was trying for the second time to make it out of the tenth grade, he had to play JV. For that tryout the coach started by hitting ground balls to the infielders and having them throw it over to first. I was fourth in line at first base, and I figured out that I was going to have to take Carney's throw. Some of the first basemen got to take the little flip from second, or the long lob from some weak-armed third basemen, but I was going to have to take it from Carney. The coach hit a bouncer deep in the hole so Carney never even had to bend over, he just ran to his right, caught it chest-high and started winding up all in one perfect motion. I could hear the ball coming before it was half-way there, the seams spinning and making a horrible hissing sound. The ball was curving down, and I lost my shit. I could just feel the ball nailing my shin and saw myself lying on the ground in pain and limping around the next few days with this big purple bruise on my leg and everyone knowing that I was limping around cause I couldn't play ball worth shit. So I moved my body to the left and waved at the ball with my glove and the ball went hissing by me. The guy behind me caught it; I guess he figured I looked like I couldn't catch and was ready for me to miss it. The coach put the bat on his shoulder and his hand on his hip and yelled at me that I looked like a pussy on that play, and told me to go to left field. Long run out to left from first you know, especially when you know that everyone's watching you run, glad as hell that they ain't you. And I had to run past Carney too. As I ran by he just chuckled a little to himself and spit in his glove. But now I'm Carney, man, now I'm on the other end of that hard throw from the hole. And now I know why Carney was laughing to himself as I ran by.

Todd Juengling
Generations



Jennifer Clarvoe
Private, Offhand Sestina

In the beginning, there was long division
of the literate body from the musical soul;
in the beginning, there was this and that;
in the long beginning, there were too
many things to count on the fingers of one hand
so there were two hands, oh translucent fingers,

proof of nectar, traced by light, and fingers
tracing boundaries of no more division,
but coming together. This scar on the back of my hand:
a compass puncture. What circles the soul
now anchors, love. This is a circle, too,
one more ring around the olive tree that

Ulysses built his bed from, the bed that
Penelope chose as his test. How many fingers
am I holding up? Of course, she made that bed, too,
and lay down in it, lay down in division
from herself, unravelling the sail
she wove for cover and might have kept, one hand

steady on the loom, but the other unsteady hand
like a flag part-freed by the wind, rip-fluttering; that
hand works to undo the work done by her soul.
Then both hands in her lap, still. Useless fingers.
I am not wife, not widow, live division
of loss from expectation of loss. Then, too,

I have my son; I have my son. Then, too,
the weave might someday hold, work of this hand
take sheen, complete, of infinite division
become dimension. Like the spider's silk that
looses its balloons. (Two calloused fingers
hold his pen. I miss you, oh my soul.)

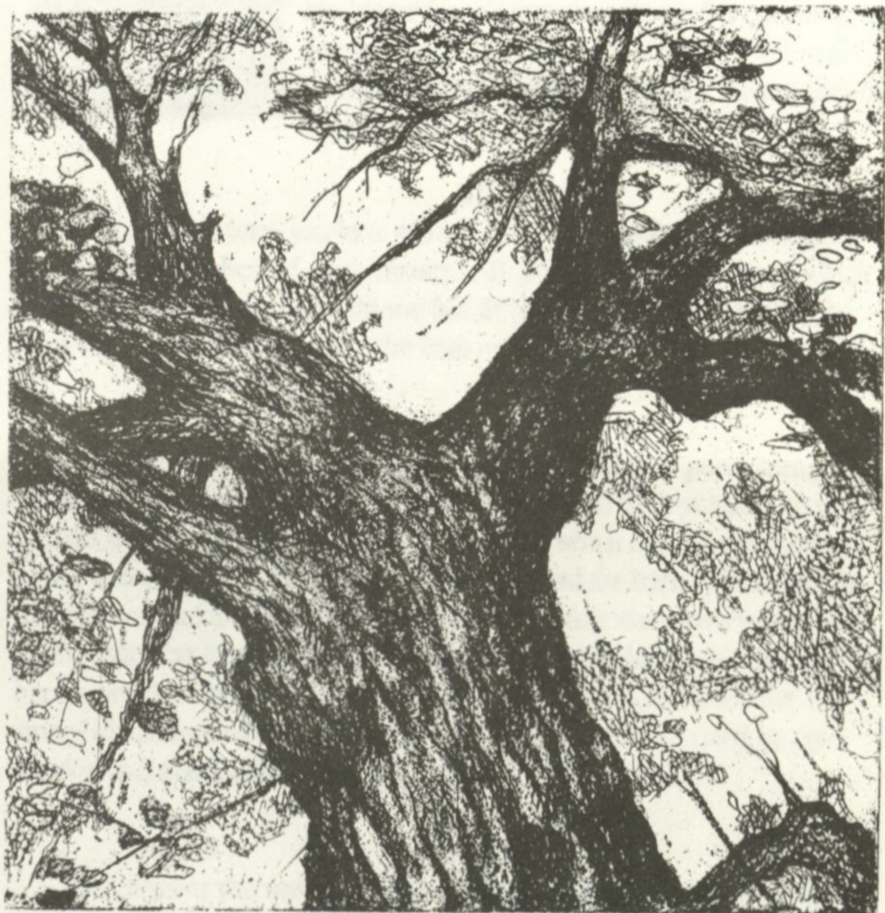
What am I talking about? Never my "soul,"
but you gave me my body, and I miss that too.
Sam points O's on the globe with baby fingers,
O for Ocean. Atlantic, Pacific. His hand
spanks and spins the pale blue world with a THAT
and a THAT, new O O O. And then, division—

"High reach Moon!" (hands high)—what is division?
"High reach Clouds!" I told him high as my soul
dares risk. He counts: "O, Clouds! O, one and my two!"

Liz Lonky
Sam



Keith Wilde
Love in the Back Yard





Eavan Boland, author of several books including *In a Time of Violence*, *Outside History*, and *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time*, visited Kenyon on November 11, 1997. She sat with Elaine Bleakney and Elizabeth Armbuster for this interview. Boland is currently poet-in-residence at Stanford University, where she chairs the Stegner Fellowship. She is the recipient of the 1994 Lannan Literary Award.

HIKA

In past interviews, you have spoken of “the Irish poem” by distinguishing between the inherited, exclusionary Irish poem and an Irish poem which is not a closed-off unit. What do you feel the role of your poetry is and has been in complicating the term, “the Irish poem”?

BOLAND

I suppose—to answer your question directly—the Irish poem seemed to me when I was young an unusually fixed entity. It had distinguishing characteristics in terms of its actual formal inheritance which made it difficult for a young woman poet, as I was, to work with it. It had the Irish musical lyric in it, it had some of the British Movement. I also think it was a poem with a sort of imagistic scar tissue. It had been shaped by a male, hierarchic, somewhat bardic world. Its images of women often seemed lifeless and icon-like. I struggled and argued with all of that. And I think I probably ended up co-existing with that tradition rather than being influenced by it.

HIKA

I remember you saying in a past interview that a poem should never be fixed, that the poet should be free to work from a broad definition of the poem. Is a fixed definition of poetry something you have been frustrated with in the past?

BOLAND

Poetry doesn't have the traffic it should have between its different sides in the way, for instance, that music does. You can see in Ireland how all kinds

of easy traffic happens between traditional, rock and classical music. Poetry is more jealous of its definitions. Far too often, poets grow up learning to be intolerant of difference. It's a pity because poetry is always unfinished business. Something exciting is always going on in one of its villages. It's a pity because hindsight is not a workable aesthetic. You can't judge the new energies in poetry by looking backwards. If you'd been in the States in the 1950's, you'd have thought that the defining poem was located somewhere in a triangle between Frost and Eliot and Stevens. No one could have predicted that Allen Ginsberg would stand up in a San Francisco bookstore and read "Howl" and restore the whole Whitmanite idiom to public poetry. No one could have known in 1890 that Irish poetry would subvert English literature. If you believe that poetry is unfinished business—and I do—the only sensible attitude is a sort of open-ness to change.

HIKA

A sense of powerlessness, a sense of exclusion infuses your poems in *In a Time of Violence*. Yet, your voice is wonderfully powerful in this work. Could you discuss this powerful sense of powerlessness in *In a Time of Violence*?

BOLAND

Well, the opening poem in the book is about an actual, historic sort of powerlessness. In 1847, when the Famine was at its worst in Ireland, the Relief committees who came over from Ireland gave the people work to do. But they had no strength to do it. They gave them roads to build and where those roads give out in the woods is where the people died building them. That's certainly powerlessness. So the poem "That The Science of Catography is Limited" is about that. The idea of powerlessness, when it's set out, is too artificial to talk about clearly. But I was always aware, when I was a younger poet, that certain subject matters were devalued, were not considered appropriate for poetry. There's a submerged struggle in poetry—there always has been—between what is a powerful subject, or a "poetic" subject, and what is not. I think I've been drawn to my subject matter not because it was devalued, but because it was my own. And then, when I found it wasn't valued or recognized as a "poetic" subject, I began to reflect on that, and to think about issues of power in the poem and the poet's life.

HIKA

Do you feel, as a woman poet, you are still searching for a poem and a language "where you can grow old and die in?" Does a distrust of language and a sense of exile continue to fuel your current work?

BOLAND

My idea of the poem you could "grow old and die in" was very specific. Poetry is full of women. And not just women, but women fixed in airless, breathless poses. Poetry is full of shepherdesses, nymphs, young and beautiful and very silent objects of odes and elegies and addresses.

Naturally, as a woman poet it feels strange, eerie to walk into poetry and find it like a museum of your kind. That isn't to say I don't value many of those poems. I do. But I also wanted a poetry that would reflect the untidy, flawed and mortal existence that men and women live. It certainly makes it very hard to live into the poem as a human being if you have inhabited the poem historically as an object. So, yes, I think certainly that as a woman poet I've been concerned to make the poem tell the story of my world rather than let my world be affected by the poem's view.

HIKA

Are there poems where you recover a woman's voice, or enter another woman's voice?

BOLAND

I write in my own voice, or as near to it as I can come. Occasionally—it's true of a poem of mine called "Mise Eire"—I might echo the idea of a woman's voice. But taking the voice of someone else means entering their complex, suffering world. And if you can't enter their suffering—and I can't—I don't think you should try out their selves as a sort of costume. There's a risk of appropriation if you aren't very discriminating in that particular area.

HIKA

What do you think of Muriel Rukeyser's cry of "No more mythologies!?" Do you feel that mythology has become a vehicle for feminism in poetry, such as Louise Gluck's revisions of myth?

BOLAND

I respect Muriel Ruykeyser. But no, I don't exactly feel that. This is a complicated, difficult subject matter—the whole connection of feminism with poetry—but since your question implies it I'll try to answer it. I think of myself as a feminist but not a feminist poet and that's an important distinction.

Poetry begins where certainties end. It's too ambiguous and imaginative to be instructed by pure ideas. To answer more of your question, I don't think mythology is a vehicle for feminism, but it can certainly be a vehicle for argument and image. I admire a poem of Louise Gluck's called "The Triumph of Achilles" which I think does that. Myth and feminism are both explanations of the world. And I think of poetry as more an investigation of it.

HIKA

Could you talk about your current work?

BOLAND

I have a book coming out next September called *The Lost Land*. It has a sequence at the start called "Colony" which is part of the way I've been thinking recently. I'm interested in the ideas around that subject. I grew up as a child outside of Ireland and I went to school in England, painfully conscious of different sounds, different vowels, not quite knowing where I was.

I certainly felt the layering of identity, the unwelcome complicating of who you are which comes with different places and languages and likenesses. We have all that in Ireland anyway. There is no pure identity. As a nation we have to find that our differences can become our strengths, or we'll perish by them. In Ireland we're always tempted to deny our differences, our complications. We long for the pure people we think we almost were.

But I think what we are is something more interesting: I think we exist because of, not despite, our fragmentations. And this is about that.

HIKA

How do you think colonization plays a role in the history of Irish women?

BOLAND

Colonization isn't just national either. It can also be social. Colonization

for Irish women is a more complex area again. When you think about that, I think you come to see the great difference between the past and history which has come to trouble me more and more. History is the official version. The past is often a much more untidy, painful place. This book will be about that distance also.

HIKA

Do you think that the domestic interior has become a more discussed space in Ireland?

BOLAND

Probably. There's a wider subject matter than there used to be, and women's poetry is part of that. It should never have been in doubt. The domestic space is so much the radar for the larger one that its beauty, intricacy and power should have been acknowledged from the start. Instead the term "domestic poetry" became a sort of shorthand for the small, the unworthy, the niche poem. But that doesn't make sense. There are indoor nature poems, as well as outdoor ones. And I certainly think of myself as the former. I can close my eyes and see my front room when the children were tiny, and the visionary quality colours had for me, and light and distance. The domestic was important in my poems. And still is.

HIKA

Would you call yourself a poet-critic?

That term is fairly recent, and I'm never exactly sure I know what it means. I'm not so much interested in criticism as in critique-making. All my prose has come directly out of my need to make my case as a poet. To put up arguments, to make points. I think women's poetry pre-existed the critique for it. So it's been exciting and helpful for me to try to be part of making that critique. Of setting out some of the terms in which that poetry can be considered fairly. And *Object Lessons* was also about the Irish poem, about the categories which needed to be shifted over there. Things change. And it isn't exactly critiques which cause change. All critiques are just made by good poems, or recent poems. So the poems make the critique and the critique makes the case for the poems. And to go back to the beginning, if that's the definition, then I am a poet-critic!

Lee Fuoco

A Love Poem to Myself

I.

Things get complicated, and
people are taken for granted.

I know this.

I am not a child.

I know how lives collide and split and bead
together like water on a window pane.

But I will not lie to you.

There are things that have been
missing lately, and I will no longer be afraid
to ask for them.

II.

Touch me again.

Not my tongue, my breast, my clit.

But my soul.

Remind me of what was lost
somewhere in the debris.

Say my name.

Fold my body into a paper
crane, creased and worn,
bending over and back against myself.
Let me meet myself at every fold.

III.

Say my name, because I have forgotten.

My tongue will not turn that way,
fumbling over the letters like
ice cubes.

Say my name.

Because this cannot continue.
This chance, this just-missing,

this always-on-the-cusp-of

Say my name.

Do you remember?

Remember this.

Remember me, because I have
forgotten how.

Peel back the layers,
the delicate slivers of onion skin,
and count the rings at the heart
of things.

Unfold me, secrets held in the
belly of the flower.

Remember me.

Remind me that my voice
is the moon in a bottle,
and the sound of my name shakes the world.

Maureen Foley

Mermaid's Wish

Janie is a failed mermaid. She can't stay under the water. As a baby, they tied her to rocks, and dead creatures that sank, and once the bloated corpse of an ex-Navy man who sang show tunes to cure insomnia and got pushed over.

Then again, there was the time she let go. She watched her mother's face grow smaller, reflected in her saucepan. She watched her dad's head become as small as the kelp bubbles in the fields he was working. Bubbles shifted, fluttered around her tail, and crept underneath her armpits. As her body rose higher, she didn't even fight, couldn't fight the buoyancy of a body. She flipped her tail, and when the surface became clear she watched her face grow closer, ripple, rippled like the sifting of sand that always clipped the floor.

The surface disrupted, and she felt a cold, cold, cold around her. Nose, ears, her lips, her chin, emerged and she inhaled. She smiled, and her mouth filled with bright air, not harsh sinking water. She stretched her neck, laid her head back, and water swallowed the space around her. She unfolded her arms, and floated, a lone body on top of the swells.

In one jerk, her body was seized from below. A lasso of sea weed, her father's knots, tugged at her tail fins.

Janie heard her lover's voice gurgle up in bellows. Fish ducked and darted till her body was pulled to the bottom, thrown onto the spring cushion floor, covered with sea urchins, star fish, hold fasts.

That evening, Janie's family made her a rock necklace, laced with the rib bones of lazy fish. Her mother lashed it to her with sponge thread and cement. Nothing was said about the incident.

This July, with jade light shafting through to the bottom, Janie breaks the bones of kelp bass with her prune hands. She catches the fish, covered by green spots, and crimps their backs quickly. She watches the blood ooze from their eyes and spread, cloud the water. The bodies sink when she lets go.

Alexa Goldstein
Space Capsule



Alexa Goldstein

Vines



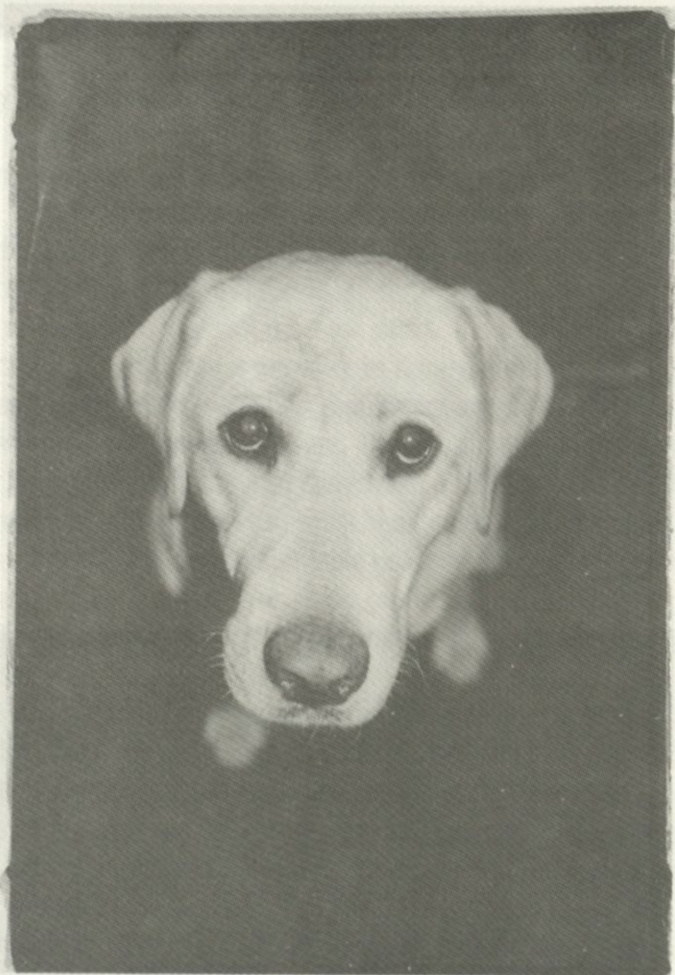
Amanda Wagoner

Untitled

She unscrewed the last lightbulb
from the dry and empty apartment
and watched the dustballs look
for couches that aren't there any more.
He ought to be waiting on his layover in Dallas by now
and she ought to be filling up the car.
Yet, she knows they have forgotten something,
because they have forgotten something every time
they move,
that sea-water blue glass vase from Cozumel
the poster her sophomore year roommate bought her
the cups his mother thought would look cute in the first kitchen
but all that appears on the shade-covered floor are those active dustballs.
So she picks up her keys and shuts the door behind her
worried a little that something is lost
in forgetting to forget something.

Sarah Reder

Chloe



Emily Huigens

Rear View

He pulls his finger from my belly up to the slender, breakable bones of my neck, taking ownership of my guts, my stomach. I've barely eaten since the first time this happened. We were discussing basketball after work when suddenly I kissed him. "I want to," I thought. "That's all." He had caught my eye and I weighed the consequences. Nothing held me back. My marriage has been so inconsequential for such a long time, and my children distant animals. So I let Nate think he had stolen me with his love of books and films, such a child. I regretted going to him all the way up the stairs to his apartment, but shed that pretense at the door.

I am not selfish. I cannot be. I am smart. I'm organized. My kitchen floor is clean. But marriage is too waxy, its shine has dulled. Even after Mike tried to notice me, I didn't want him, didn't want our marriage. Not that I want Nate either. Not that he wants me. I'm only a naked, married woman in his bed. He thinks this is fun, a bit dangerous. I slide my head up into the crevice under his arm where I can smell him, traces of sweat and his cologne. If I open my eyes I can just see his nipple rising on my right; my left eye is blinded against the wrinkled sheet. I am overheated and sleepy. He pulls out a cigarette and I roll my eyes. We're not that good in bed, after all. He likes to think so.

He asks me what I'm thinking about. I'll take door #2. "You," I reply.

"I like that." He smiles and falls asleep. In a way, I am seduced by his youth. He is too conceited to really deserve that except when he's asleep. I decide to leave and go to the grocery store like I told Mike. I leave Nate a different letter of explanation, and drink the dregs of wine I left on the kitchen counter. He still thinks he has to warm me up to get me to sleep with him.

ShopRite is a flight control tower flagging me in. Orange lights slice through the night. Aisle 1 is cleaning supplies, and I remember I've needed a new mop forever. With a sponge on a stick towering out of my cart, and with Lionel Ritchie over the sound system, I continue onto Aisle 4, "Ethnic" food. I decide the family needs to be exposed to the mellowed red spices of my Nana's cooking. I pick plenty of Pinto beans and a doubtful looking mix for "Mexican" rice. I wear my preoccupied and purposeful face as I put three

bottles each of white and red wine in my cart. Then I go for the practical, the girls' lunches, cookies for Mike, and plenty of milk for me and the girls, because we can't let them have weak bones. Dr Sears has lectured me specifically about this and I obey. I have always tried to make them strong. Of course Mike has won them over despite all of my hopes for them. Now they are "Daddy's girls." They are soft and submissive out of pity, I think, for him. For me they reserve all disdain, all disrespect. Some days I love them and want to slap them at the same time.

I wanted boys because of my sisters, but of course instead I created my mother's house again. I heard an analogy about an alcoholic's home once, about an elephant in the living room. No one will acknowledge it, but it shoves everything else out of the way. I am that elephant. Instead of recognizing the beast, we all watch television. Someone is always watching, it must be at full volume at all times because of Mike's bad ear. They shout during Thursday night TV. Mike shoves popcorn by the handful into his big wet mouth, opening as wide as he can but missing a few that fall to the floor and are eaten by Bowie, our beagle. We speak only to suggest changing channels. I fall asleep after my first three or four drinks. David the cat has stopped sleeping on the couch with me, because the TV hurts his ears. I should pick up more popcorn; we need cat food. I maneuver between aisles. A good marriage: Aisle 4. A house in a good neighborhood with white neighbors: Aisle 6.

I drive up to the side of the house, to the stairs to the kitchen. My headlights illuminate the trees behind our house. Mike is asleep in front of David Brinkley when I check to see if he can help me unload. I go back down the stairs to the minivan. I've left the trunk open to push the darkness back into the trees, and my paper bags sit in the back waiting for me.

I am small, I think. Smaller than two bags of groceries, I've stayed thin. Mike has grown big and porous and waxy and has thin hair. Nate is thin as an adolescent, but only from never cooking. The grocery bags will hold me up. I have two bags, one in each arm, like the twin girls at each breast. The stairs to the kitchen are not lit. I've forgotten. I put them down to see more clearly as I go to flip the switch. As I lean down, my blouse falls forward and I see my chest, one breast with a hickey on its inside slope. They are older than I remember. I stand and hold my shirt out, burrowing there like a turtle, 36 years old. 36 means 10 years ago I started this silence. Nothing is different.

I've proceeded with the formula for a happy life, shaken and let the foggy solution rest. These stairs are the last ingredient. I turn and leave the two bags, and grab the other 3 from the trunk, barely able to balance them. It doesn't matter. They all stay at the foot of the stairs.

I slam the trunk, and walk through the darkness to the driver's side. Once inside, I switch the headlights back on. I ease into the garage, sliding into place next to "the little car," a remnant of our childless life. I think of the days when my hand rested on Mike's knee as he drove during our "road trips." How ridiculously deluded we were. The car's style embarrasses me. My wad of keys still hold the key to its ignition; how funny. I get out of our aerodynamic egg, and look at our sporty red past. How funny; I could take it for a drive. I climb in, sliding into the chilly vinyl seat. Through the windshield I can make out Mike's tools propped against the garage wall; my gardening things lie rusting beside them.

The glove compartment has what I'm looking for. I unfold the map and let it rest on my lap, and remember with a flood of invisible tears. I long for the roads far away from here, the wavy lines that lead away. I've missed the signs that read "Welcome To Kansas," or Wisconsin, or even Chicago. Any of them would be far enough for a new start. My purse sits in the passenger seat; inside is a treasure of credit cards. I blink in the rearview mirror and consult the unfamiliar eyes in the rectangle. She wants to. She waits for me to turn the key. She promises to stay with me. We turn the ignition, and the engine turns, quieter than I remember.

I expect tin cans tied to the back announcing my departure, but the engine is still a low rumble. I slowly pass the groceries, waiting to be retrieved. The girls will get them in the morning. Or perhaps he'll know when he awakes and realizes I haven't moved him from his chair. His neck will be stiff and he'll turn on the bedroom light, stumbling. He'll call for me perhaps once, and scratch his belly in thought. The girls will know before he does that I've gone, and they'll help him. Things will ultimately be the same for all of them.

I move down the driveway, and now in the rearview mirror, the black midnight lawn stretches uphill behind me, leading towards the lighted window to the house. Just as quickly as it appears, it slips up above my view, a white heaven.

Addie Palin

The Physiology of Plants

In April: Roots seize soil.
Vascular tissues toughen,
stoma wide, stoma tight—
inhale, exhale. Xylem, phloem,
sunlit circuit,
greening bloodstream.

In June: A thickening of the thalamus,
perigynous blossom, sepal, petal,
stamen/ A stem
thinning in the wind, bending
under the sun, under
the heavy fist of
a husband.
(The epidermis shreds.
The blue of wounds.
The angry chloroplasts
slam about their cells.
Quick filaments of sap seep
into the heated air and harden there).

In August: The daughter walks into the kitchen lookin for her mother.
In a vase by the window a synthesis of woman and water.

Moshe Quinn

Santa Fe #23



Laura Weber

Filth

*The wbal wendes at bis wylle and a wartbe fyndes,
And there be brakes up the buyrne as bede hym our Lorde.
Thenne he swepe to the sonde in sluchched clothes;
Hit may wel be that mester were bis mantyle to wasch.*

Patience

Write as that woman,
for the woman taking the garbage,
as if making
a toast, drunk, vomited
up by a whale,
standing fresh on the beach—
proclaim your love for the
world to the world,
to the woman who takes the garbage
out to the curb
late night with the stench
of last night's carcass
provided for her family, in
the average kitchen, on
the average plastic-covered
table. Think as she thinks,
she thinks of clean poetry
when she saunters, thinking
of the old meal on the table and
filth on the floor.
She knows only what it means
to say no one else
will have you anyway.

This alone is washing:
your poems are not yours,
your filth is the world's filth.

Laura Weber

To Catullus

*"Moecha putida, redde codicillos,
redde, putida moecha, codicillos!"*

—*Carmina XLII*

"rotten whore, give back the writing tablets,
give back, rotten whore, the writing tablets!"

I. concerning hecuba

Hecuba, queen, when Troy was a mess with flames
you ran to throw yourself into it.
Living so long in the golden
edifices built by men,
you wanted to burn in them.

The moment the Greek men restrained you
you understood your freedom
and gave to the wailing women
this word: accept.
(you meant, accept the freedom that is ours
now that we are separate.)
This word saved the Trojan women.
They gathered their tattered limbs onto the Greek ships.

It is not right
on that voyage
you threw yourself into the sea.

II. concerning charles, john, et al.

For Hecuba, I stole your poetry.
Golden manuscripts and realms of paper

I grabbed from your desk
from under your coffee-mugged hand
and ran.

You came screaming after me,
"give me back my poetry, you whore!"

I took it to my home
and gathered my own tattered drafts onto the sheets
writing in all the spaces where your words were not.

and

I did not throw them into the sea.

James Murray
Marktplatz, Heidelberg



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