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DEAD FLOWERS

A Poetry Rag

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PRESENTS

Dead Flowers
A Poetry Rag

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VOLUME 1 NUMBER 5

GUEST EDITOR

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**Suzanne Cody, an MFA candidate at the University
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to have a life outside of academia.**

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Indifference to Poetry Statement

If poetry were a homeless guy, incontinent, drunk, leaning low-headed against a building with legs sprawled wide across my path, across the sidewalk, I would step carefully over it, still talking to my best friend on my cell phone about our latest romantic drama. Still, if poetry approached me at a party while wearing a nice sweater vest and bringing me, without my having to ask, a vodka-and-grapefruit juice with a well-salted rim, I might be convinced to have a brief chat, though I wouldn't give it my number.

~ *Suzanne Cody*

Ben Gazzara Says It All

You wanted to be an actor because of
Ben Gazzara,
a man with the best name in the world.
This is a man whose voice sounds
like nothing else but man.
You wanted that voice that name.
When Ben Gazzara said anything,
it was true even if it wasn't.
Ben Gazzara would stand there,
black hair, and tell you some things.
Sometimes you spend all day outside
listening to birds and thinking about
Ben Gazzara.
It's like he knows something you don't know
and even though you do, he knows it better.
Ben Gazzara knows it better than you.
"What are you doing out there in the sunshine?"
"Listening to birds,
watching the cat,
and thinking about
Ben Gazzara
—famous, not too famous, famous enough.
Any movie where Ben Gazzara
looks into your eyes
and tells you a few things.
"You've got to think like a cat."
It's better to write about Ben Gazzara than
what will get you in trouble with authorities.
And when you write a play you think of
Ben Gazzara.
How would Ben Gazzara play it,
what would Ben Gazzara do?
You have a cat named Ben Gazzara
and one named John Cassavetes.
You would like to get drunk with
Ben Gazzara
and you know he wouldn't kill you.

He couldn't kill anyone.
Ben Gazzara is an actor and a pussycat.
He wears that white suit white shoes
and red shirt untucked in The Big Lebowski
and looks straight into the camera,
bonfire beach party night,
"Hello, Dude. Thanks for coming.
I'm Jackie Treehorn."

~ *Dan Sklar*

Dan Sklar's recent publications include *Harvard Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Ibbetson Street Press*, and *The Art of the One Act*. His play, "Lycanthropy" was performed at the Boston Theater Marathon in May 2012.

The Legend of Bill

the prisoner turning his head to one shoulder
exhales a cardinal still wet
an egg yellow and half a shell
and watches silent

one wing at a time jitters
a leg flicks and a clenched food
hops beside the shell as beakgulps
drink regurgitation like single malt

strengthening pushes feathers
out like needles at first then as
toothbrushes flattened on railroad tracks
stained scarlet by retracting gums

jitters evolve thought and slow flaps
spin air and lift dry-straw
bones in a tight swirl
whipping dust and rising

smoke from feathers too fastfluttering
together smells like the alter or
pall as ash cardinals descend to the
prisoner inhaling for rebirth

~ *Chauncy Perry*

Chauncy Perry is a 24-year-old business-type guy and sometimes poet who lives in a basement with his husband in a small town outside of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. In his free time he can be found critiquing other people's poetry online, shooting Polaroids, and wearing pajamas.

Make It Quick

I can see the stoplights
blinking down the street,
it means it's past
midnight, do the photons
know that?

I heard a rambling
about presidents, and
I dreamt about
playing basketball
in the Olympics.
the pavement is stained
orange
from the streetlamps,
if you're going
to make a point,
make it quick.

people say
to make your own
voice, why not
use the one
you have,
I was given a voice
that sounds like
a cartoon character.

~Joshua Anthony

A Mountains No Cabin

I've still got ice in my shoes from last September,
I'm not saying my memories have been frozen
they've long melted and refrozen in my brain cracks,
you're like a river between my ears
and every time the mountain froze, I put my snow shoes on.

I saw you up there a while ago, you thought about building a cabin.
I heard you cutting down trees and the static of a radio; sawdust floated on sound
waves and landed on my shirt.

For a while, I watched your struggle, looked at your supplies,
well, hell if I know, but you forgot the nails, and I brought some know how;
How can I help, I asked, and you looked at your lumber while mist built up in your lake view
eyes.

You said your dog just died and you're trying to find solace in a mountain.
Look here, I said, there's never solace in a mountain, the only solace you'll find is in the
grave with your dog.

And darling, it's selfish, but I don't want that.

Well, at least you could try to help me, she said, you didn't even bring nails.

We don't need any nails, I said, I brought some know how, and I know how to fix a peg. You
brought the saws, the idea, and the heavy. I thought you could use some light.

Because you run like a river through these ears, and the mountain's no solace, you're
the only solace I find, so don't try looking in the ground for some solitary
confinement, because I'll go crazy over your crazy.

You're a river running between my ears.

You're a mountain freezing and melting all at once.

~Joshua Anthony

**We Smoked From Your Pipe, Talking About Electron Entanglement. It's Late July,
School's Coming; Fall is Burning to Break the Heat**

I've been counting on
the stars and bonsais,
stretching to both,
reaping rain
through my pores;

the moon has been setting
early. there's never a slip
of lunacy, just a miscount
of clock-span, a hand twitching
on the dial; Freud said,
cosmic errors – the lonely
asteroids – have meaning.

on the pong
in the back of your house
a thin white stone
floats.

~Joshua Anthony

Josh Anthony is a current an undergraduate student living in Burlington, VT.

language lessons

there is a covert language in the smiles and tones of women.
the sister's tongue is competitive and cutthroat,
each jab is to the jugular
with a blade wrapped in lace,
how ladylike

bitter,
we bite off letters that spell I hate you
and crumple all the she-s that are not me
under the meanings of men
and dialectics of herstory.

All collateral damage
in a war waged on us
using us as weapons of Miss Destruction.

Victims, bullies, all of us
hater and hated alike
here in this no-mans-land of subterfuge
cloak-and-dagger, with painted faces and stripped down hair
hiding our true selves in word and deed.

I am fluent in bitch,
the secret language of women,
whose phonemes convey a dictionary of hate
without defining the why of it.

~Allie Marini Batts

Allie Marini Batts is an alumna of New College of Florida, meaning she can explain deconstructionism, but cannot perform simple math. Allie lives in Tallahassee with her husband, where she feeds and befriends opossums and treefrogs. She's finishing her MFA degree in Creative Writing at Antioch University Los Angeles but hopes you won't hold that against her. Her publications can be found on her [blog](#), or visit [Bookshelf Bombshells](#) and she'll boss you around about the books you should be reading.

Last night I saw a film
 where a woman has a
 tumor that turns out
 to be a Native American
 shaman reincarnated.
 The production designer
 shared your last name.
 I thought of you.

~Jacob Shelton

In The Space of Two Weeks I Will Have Travelled 1,196 Miles

Lying on a fold out bench seat, gliding down
 the highway and across the country the thought
 that at some point this van is going to end up
 on it's right side, scraping away all of the blue
 paint and grinding the glass to dust refuses to
 stop spinning through my head.

If I don't make it out of this alive I want to come
 back as a dead cat.

While I'm lying on this faux bed, this ounce of
 comfort, half asleep, half praying that all of the
 jostling, jumps, and sudden stops won't be our
 last, I can achieve an almost zen state of
 weightlessness. A fleeting feeling of
 non-existence.

~Jacob Shelton

Jacob Shelton is a writer, audio engineer, and performance poet. He lives in Austin, TX and takes part in the informal sketch group It's Made of People.

Pillow Fetish, and a Strip Mall Out on Highway 9

Tye says he's swearing off women,
and is either going gay, or
turning toward barnyard animals.

I said man, that chick must
have really put the voodoo
down on you.

He said "she was gold plated
and tasted like warm
vanilla ice cream,

and had a weird
fetish with pillows
where she liked to hump them.

I could watch her hump pillows
for hours, and I even started
a video collection

that I was going to sell online
and make a million bucks
so we could live on a beach."

Damn, so what happened?

"She ran off with some Persian guy
who owns the bedding store
in the strip mall out on Highway 9."

Well, that makes sense I guess.

~

"Maybe, but it doesn't make me
feel any better about it.
I'll never bag another girl like that."

It's a bitter pillow to swallow,
but you can do it skipper. I said.

"Fuck you," he said.

~*Jay Levon*

Jay was born in the Ozark Mountains to a family of dirt farmers, musicians, preachers, and other such miscreants. He now lives in Mountain Home, Arkansas with a latex she-bot named Lola, and the occasional dead hooker.

All The Apartment Is An Okay Rap Song

In my fridge is a spot for individual eggs. I want to go to the abortion clinic
to offer my services and space.

A portion of my skin is a mirror but the majority remains a mesa.

Everyone told me it's time to give up,
what I referred to as, my interim chair,
for, what they refer to as, a real chair.

I got the real chair
and the real chair is crap.

Not dissimilar from heavy bondage,
only fun for me in the head.

~*Joseph Goosey*

Joseph Goosey dropped or failed out of an MFA program in Virginia. He is now stuck in Florida where he reads court records to make money.

Dumpster Dive

Do you want to go dumpster dive the corner store?

In my mind's eye

I see ripe produce riddled with tiny spiral trails of radioactive isotopes

I say

I admire your urban survival skills

but you've been freaking out about plutonium all day

and now you want to rescue food

that's been overexposed

Well, I guess that's true

you say

At least we won't have to worry

about botulism or salmonella

~E.K. Keith

E.K. Keith has published poetry in *phati'tude*, *Nerve Cowboy*, and *Sparring with Beatnik Ghosts Anthology*. She is a basement dweller at the edge of the world.

We are pirates of the later age, we are
establishing limits, we are taking phases
from the moon and claiming space,
urinating out our territory for the wolves.

~*Jeremy Benson*

Jeremy Benson tells lies, writes stories, and invents objects that already exist. He edits *Fortunates* and *AEROGRAM*, and curates Crazy Pineapple Press. His work can be seen in *Short, Fast, and Deadly*, *the Scissors and Spackle*, and *Inner Art Journal*.

Behind the Choices

Given that the primary criteria for this job, this gig, this assignment-should-I-choose-to-accept-it, is an indifference to poetry, ideally I should have simply created a computer algorithm that would have sorted my pile of poems by, perhaps, the number of semi-colons present, or for a maximum line length, or for the frequency of the letter *k*, and made my “choices” based on each poem’s fulfillment of the specified criteria. Or else I should have leaned out an open third story window of a building with an empty parking lot on a not-so-windy day and selected only those twelve poems that more-or-less landed in a largish circle drawn by my daughter with a thick piece of sidewalk chalk on the asphalt. But I am not that technically inclined to create a computer algorithm and make it work, nor are there many (or any) not-so-windy days here in the flatlands of North America.

Therefore, I made an algorithm in my head, and read the damned poetry.

The easiest way to approach selection was to first subtract all poems containing references to coffee, cigarettes, whiskey, bars, neon, drunkenness, prostitutes, or any of the general staples of “beat” poetry. This is not to say that beat poetry, or emulating beat poets, is in any way wrong or bad or even generally undesirable—it is just not where “my head is at” lately, to rip off a phrase from the following decade. I recently wrote a memoiristic essay that referenced a point in my life when I worked as an early morning waitress in a diner where the clientele (often drunk) slurped coffee and smoked cigarettes, and God help me, I felt terribly squicky, if not a bit soiled, when I finished. So there’s that—a bit of a momentary aversion to the seamy, Tom Waitsian side.

Beyond that, I chose the poems that used simple language and didn’t require tricks or conceits to get their point across—oblique is fine, playing with language is lovely, but being opaque for the sake of being opaque is not. I chose one poem that made me laugh, because every collection of poems should have one that makes the reader laugh. Many I chose for a single striking image: spiraling radioactive isotopes, the exhalation of a cardinal (which balanced out, for me, the mention of single malt), sawdust floating on sound waves, a dead cat—I am particularly fond of dead cats which, as Buddha said, are the most valuable thing in the world since no one can put a price on them. Or else a turn of phrase which caught my eye and stuck in my head: “Eat your fucking oatmeal,” for one; “I’m righteous/like swiss cheese,” for another. Whack me in the head with one crisp, original image—it is all I ask.

Subjective, yes, both the selection of poems, and, I suppose, everything else—but this is all good stuff. You are going to have to trust me on this. So eat your fucking oatmeal.

~*Suzanne Cody*