

# the Unrorean

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Devin McGuire, Editor  
Cynthia Brackett-Vincent, Founding Editor

*\*Editor's Pick!*

*vacancy at 3am*

and it sets in hard again  
just as i leave it all  
that gnawing ribcage of  
midnight wakeness wrapped around  
my own blinking chest

i try to be galactic  
shoving at dirtbound insomnia  
stretching instead to kiss at slumbering stars and  
craning in dreams to learn from vastkept space

but again my tiny moon  
is eclipsed by my tiny beating  
earthen heart unable as always  
to understand that it's only celestial  
to the blood in my cells

i'm still trying to speak  
with the right tongue hoping  
that with the right language  
my tired stayawake muscles will finally understand  
they need only to rub against  
each other to stop  
from feeling alone

keeping a starry ear tipped up  
tonguesearching in constellations  
to give my body a sense of eternalness

hoping the body will listen and reply  
singing back to me so i can finally hear it too

hoping someday that my disbelief  
can take comfort in  
its insincere echo

—Tim Journey

*The Becker Street Irregulars*

They sit on the posted: No Smoking  
Oxygen In Use-sagging front porch on,  
legs-broken-off love seats and  
deck chairs, dead ringers for the front  
four of World Champion New England  
Patriots NFL football team, the female,  
heavyweight division, chain smoking  
cigarettes, Tall Boys in brown bags,  
cases chilling in iron tubs filled to  
brimming with water and blocks of ice,  
sit telling lies and swapping shit-out-of-luck  
wishful thinking tales of men-they-might-have  
known, in the Biblical sense, two hundred  
or so pounds and another lifetime ago.

—Alan Catlin

*Love at the Home*

So she told herself that he would not mind,  
that he was dying and would not begrudge  
her a little life should she find the chance.  
After all, in 'sickness and in health' is not  
infidelity but abandonment.  
That is what confession booths are for; the  
realities of living, the raw  
exigencies once things start breaking down  
and you want to do more than endure. I  
understand. If you see a flower,  
think twice before you pluck it so the petals  
will last as long as they can. Please, no gifts,  
acquisition at your age unseemly,  
considering his limited income.

—Sandra Kolankiewicz

*Reverse Judo*

with modern technology  
we need never be alone

in the way all other  
sentient beings are

and so we end up  
our selves

excluded

from all nature  
but human

and so very  
very

a  
lone

—Michael Meinhoff

*Why the Poems in the Bar*

The truth  
is in a soup  
of hormones and beatings  
most nights.

The sad part, I suppose,  
is that if you strain it out  
of that soup  
it's not worth much.

—Colin Dodds

*The Way the Marriage Ends*

He unscrews the light bulb  
from the overhead lamp  
in their bedroom  
and takes it with him.

He says he plans to live  
with a girl whose name  
he'd mentioned to her  
one time in passing.

He tells the children too, huddled  
together against the front door  
—claims *this is a good thing*.

—Sandra Rokoff-Lizut

*praise from my father*

when my dad found out i smoked  
he said it showed bad character  
i was thankful for that  
because i imagined him being a character  
in a book  
and thought about how no one  
would read that book  
so maybe someone would want  
to read about me  
and after considering that  
i had all the confidence in the world.

—Mark McHugh

*Angiosperm #2*

Eating fruit is just like  
protected sex.  
All about the flesh,  
sweetness, juices,  
and avoiding the seed.

—Josh Sterlin

*some winter nights*

are so dark and so long  
that when morning comes,  
some part of you

remains in the shadows  
and may never again  
choose to enter

the light

—Michael Meinhoff

*Daedalus as Dr. Kevorkian*

As he checked the attachment  
of needles and tubes now crossing  
the chest of the elderly man before him,  
he acknowledged that this was not his first death  
machine. Visions of wax dripped  
like morphine, blurred the lines of past  
and present. He swallowed the empathic  
feeling of falling, of failing, re-set his mind to  
following his intentions. *Help should be given  
by hands that are capable of creating*.  
He believed in everyone's right to decide  
when they were ready to embrace the warm light  
shining in the sky.

—A.J. Huffman

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la cicatrice	<i>the scar</i>
devenue lèvre	<i>has become lip</i>
le feu qui gît en moi	<i>the fire lying in me</i>
comme l'épave	<i>as a muscular</i>
musclée	<i>wreck</i>
le sexe attaché aux	<i>the sex attached to the</i>
chevilles gigognes	<i>nesting ankles</i>
s'assoupit en secret	<i>dozing off in secret</i>
cette tare que tu me donnes	<i>this flaw that you give me</i>
est celle de l'absurdité	<i>is the absurdity</i>
de toutes ces choses	<i>of all these things</i>
qui vivent	<i>that live</i>
à l'envers d'elles-mêmes	<i>on the other side of themselves</i>
ces animaux qui	<i>these animals which</i>
la journée	<i>in daytime</i>
se déguisent en humains	<i>are disguised as humans</i>

—*Ivan de Monbrison*

**Keep it Up**

A wind-rain squint of a day.  
 Uncounted unemployed divinities labour  
 in closed bedrooms, on neglected street  
 corners, going through their back catalogues.  
 Sharpening rusty judgements, cleaning and polishing  
 mercy, renaming truth,  
 revamping and restyling blessings.  
 Flexing their unrequested protection, for the day...

Meanwhile we sit in offices, bedrooms,  
 on same street corners passing judgement  
 on ourselves for not shining enough.

Our right hand softly murders the world  
 and us in it.

Our left slapslap moulds sticky wet guts  
 of clay into thick curving walls, brick by brick  
 thick curving walls going nowhere,  
 going nowhere seventy time seven

...in order to lose and keep that mewling baby.  
 That mewling baby with the bull's head,  
 we may yet turn out to be.

—*Dave Rock*

**What, We Wondered**

What, we wondered, was the point. We sit in  
 the front yard for hours, and no one talks to

us. How else is one supposed to build a  
 community, the public swimming pool

having raised its price nearly twenty per  
 cent, all the churches you'd want to go to

requiring classes before communion,  
 most of the action happening on a

screen you already know, your vision now  
 narrowed, options from a list you didn't

make. We know people die yet court pain, our  
 lives nothing but perfect. Is picking

what we know is wrong a choice at all. Or  
 something zoonotic making us ignore

cross walks and changing lights, keeping us from  
 remembering why we're so grateful.

—*Sandra Kolankiewicz*

**Sunny-Side Up**

Laying about, a red pajama sleeve  
 bunches about the crook of her elbow,  
 its folds mimicking petals and leaves  
 of, say, a rosebud or chrysanthemum  
 made of 60% polyester.

Momentarily gazing at her floral elbow,  
 Della straightens the sleeve and resumes  
 staring at the ceiling, one hand resting  
 on her inner thigh.

Her bed partner is immobile, turned away  
 as early morning school busses rumble by  
 and as she begins to move her hand.

Twenty minutes later in the kitchen,  
 she cracks eggs on the edge of the skillet  
 and fries sliced potatoes for her man,  
 slouching at the table.

"Working a split shift today, hon?" he asks.

"Yeah, breakfast for you and lunch at the diner."

"Just asking."

"Screw you."

"Don't break my egg yolks."

"Screw you."

Della reaches for the coffee can of tip money,  
 counting exact change for bus fare.

"I need beer money," he says.

She tilts the entire can of change into her purse.

"Screw you and screw your damn beer," she says,  
 slams the screen door, heads to the bus stop.

—*Gene McCormick*

**Taste for Bitter**

Our parents place honey on our tongues  
 at our first letter, teaching us to love  
 sugar as much as books. We are bribed  
 with lollipops, rewarded with cupcakes,  
 told we have a right to pursue sweetness.  
 But when the adults are not watching  
 we delight in sucking on secret lemons,  
 forage the edges for wood sorrel, sneak  
 into the neighbor's orchard for the sharp  
 bite of Rhode Island Greening—  
 using sour as a gateway flavour.

As adults, we desperately offer our children  
 the sweetness that is lost to us. Diminished  
 by the monotony of our desks, watching dully  
 as our partners recede, we develop a fondness  
 for broccoli raab. We welcome the herbs  
 on the seder plate, the alkaloid kiss of balsam  
 apple. Made curious by the burst of orange oil  
 we drag our lips across illicit skin, accidentally  
 taste our own perfume, and find it to our liking.

—*Sonja Johanson*

**Samurai Armor Exhibit**

Picture them inside, shifting fearful  
 in these little huts shingled in floating  
 orders of sky-blue, golden, red flowers,  
 protected by shields like gorse, displaying  
 long lances on garnished horses  
 only they are permitted to ride.

Intricate centuries of cabalistic brocade  
 devised this panoply of fierce puppetry  
 for partisan or independent *ronin*. The parade  
 became the shock, the battle, the aftermath:  
 gong and conch, the rivets shattered,  
 dragon helmet lopped. But, in this brittle glass,  
 poised in gorgeous death.  
 Honor them.

—*Francis Blessington*

**The Marbled Orbweaver**

The spider was bone white  
 and burning  
 orange.

I think.

I know what I was:  
 electrified  
 terrified  
 and  
 screaming.

"Get it off me,  
 oh my God!"

I know what he was:  
 flaming and  
 furious,  
 eyes white with  
 rage.

Then, with a trick of light  
 the spider  
 was gone.

We continued, trudging  
 through tangled forest  
 to a grassy gate  
 of the open field.

His teeth  
 clenched, my eyes  
 downcast.

Silence was a web between us.

We dug wombs  
 from the earth  
 for his willowy, fledgling  
 pot plants.

I shoveled fiercely, as if  
 the displaced soil was  
 making room in the  
 ground for his  
 grave.

Carving out that hole  
 I thought about the  
 spider. I thought  
 about my voice,  
 a chord of panic,  
 a rope of fear stretched  
 out to him as a  
 desperate lifeline.

I thought about his lips,  
 tight as seams,  
 and how he never asked  
 if I was  
 alright.

We left, slowly,  
 the bed of upturned  
 land clasping the  
 toes of his plants behind us.

I thought of their lives,  
 fragile faces tilted toward  
 the sky, and how,  
 as they began,

we would  
 have to  
 end.

—*Megan Holley*

**Pride**

With a banker's valise  
of debits and credits  
he lets nothing slide,  
another guy  
his city bureaucratic  
luggage made of leather  
looks down at everyone,  
with five degrees  
separating capital  
and labor  
this big shot fellow  
at his latest graduation  
for another Masters degree  
his breast swells  
as a tough man  
with his station master's  
inherited authority  
holds your ticket up,  
and with a dirty mop  
in hand  
he overpowers his brother  
out of work,  
minding his own business  
just trying  
to make a living wage.

—*B.Z. Niditch*

**No Funerals Allowed**

they told my brother and me  
that we didn't want to see the body, that  
the only reason the police were called  
was because of the smell coming from her apartment.  
all we needed to know was  
her lover had died of an overdose  
and our mother had shot herself.

when they gave us the urn after the funeral  
I said I wanted proof that we had  
only our mother's ashes, and not  
any part of the junkie  
that had sucked her life dry for the past three years.  
I asked, "Are you sure you burned the right body?"  
I asked, "How do I know this is my mother?"  
the urn was so small. copper, tastefully etched  
with her name, birth date, death date.

later, my brother and I got so drunk  
we got into a fight, took it out to the street  
"You always have to cause a fucking scene!"  
he said. I tried to hit him and missed  
fell down in the street instead.

—*Holly Day*

**Pill**

Of the women you'd made love to up till then,  
Giselle was, by far, the sexiest—  
had the softest hair, the smoothest skin,  
had luscious supple lips and perfect breasts.

And there *you* were in her apartment—  
in her dimly lit bedroom,  
picking up your clothing from the floor  
by the light coming in from the adjacent bathroom.

And there she lay sleeping,  
not quite covered by the bed sheet,  
the left side of her face against the pillow,  
her back, shoulder, and arm exposed.

*You little stinker!*  
*How had you managed to stumble into this?*

And now you were standing in the bathroom with the door shut,  
fishing in the pocket of your blue jeans  
for that pill you'd carefully wrapped in a bit of aluminum foil.

But when you peeled the foil back,  
the pill jumped from your fingers onto the tile floor.  
You heard it bounce and skitter but didn't see where it went.  
You looked and looked but couldn't find that pill.

Naked, you got down on hands and knees,  
running your fingers over the tile square by square  
but you couldn't find it.

*You little stinker!*

You searched for forty-five minutes.

*Giselle mustn't find that pill!*  
*What would she think if she did?*

Panic seized you.  
She could wake at any moment,  
wanting to sit on the john and pee away some of last night's wine.

She would glance down at the floor and immediately spy your pill.  
And your relationship would be over.

Defeated, you went back to the bed,  
tried to sleep but couldn't.  
So you got up again and renewed your search.

Could the pill have rolled under the door?  
You cracked it ever so slightly,  
ran your fingers along the seam between the carpet and the bathroom tile.  
Nothing.

Then you noticed the tiny oriental rug in front of the bathroom.  
*No way the pill could be under there.*  
But you threw it back and there it was—that little pellet—  
looking at you as if to say,  
"You see? I was here all along, you asshole."

Pinching the pill between your thumb and forefinger,  
you vowed to never let anything like this happen again  
and swallowed it without bothering with water.

You could hear Giselle breathing.  
Thank God she hadn't woken up!

But when you flopped back into bed your movement roused her.  
"Is everything OK, my sweetness?" she murmured.

You spooned your body against hers,  
felt her smooth nakedness against your chest, your pelvis, and your dick.  
And she was warm  
and you were safe for another day.

—*Herb Guggenheim*

**The Girl Doesn't Know Her  
Ozymandius From Her Kubla Khan**

She wakes up already manic, she's like  
a god whose daughter is a big headache.  
It's a migraine rattling around her skull,  
she's crazy to get it out, she knocks down  
two Sudafed and chugs a Red Bull, draws  
a broken statue and a bunch of sand.

He comes back from getting coffee, she's called  
in sick again. She's blasting Morrison  
at 10 a.m., turpentine all over.  
Numbers ripple up and down her biceps—  
racing stripes. He wants to wash them off. He's  
a god who's daughter is a big headache.

She tells him she remembers from her dream;  
she's in some pleasure-dome, there's a river  
of dark water where she spilled the coffee.  
He turns on ESPN until she  
hollers that he has to keep that noise down.  
It's a migraine rattling around her skull.

The room's a cavern. She's burning incense;  
smoke hangs over her palate, her garden.  
The cat sidles through the earth-tone flowers,  
jumps on the table, bats at the brushes.  
Jesus Christ, why would he let the cat in,  
she's crazy to get it out, she knocks down

the lamp. Lightbulb shrapnel is everywhere.  
He cleans it up. She's daubing taupe like mud,  
it's almost done, she's gonna sell this one  
maybe for a million bucks and they'll get  
a decent place to stay. She's wrong. He takes  
two Sudafed and chugs a Red Bull, draws

his breath in, wants to have a Marlboro.  
She lights one up; it's afterglow for her.  
He kicks the dropcloth hard against the wall.  
This one's the dumbest thing he's ever seen.  
He inhales raw paint and tells her "It's just  
a broken statue and a bunch of sand."

—*Sonja Johanson*

**Paint Chip Dream**

Marry me! Her college boyfriend begs  
on bended knee in recurring nightmare.  
He holds a rock candy ring in his sweaty palm,  
it glistens in the fantasy pink moonlight.  
Her thighs burn apache red,  
her feet stuck in terra cotta clay.  
She teeters on the barren edge of Badlands  
aching to sprint, but cannot get away  
from his cloying memory.  
What is the tart orange appeal  
of the bad boys?  
Why do the delicate peach fuzz boys  
never stand a chance?  
She squirms on top of Antelope Canyon,  
weighted like statuary in the ground.  
Where is the pick axe to bite off a chunk of cliff?  
Oh, to fall into the great abyss,  
rather than wake and find herself  
in bed with her old college boyfriend,  
wishing she had listened to her dream.

—*Lisa Shano*

**Open City**

Watching the Italian film  
the open "City Aperta"

a post war neo realist film  
even when it freezes  
in the thin cold air theater,  
from low voices  
about occupation  
humanity being stepped on  
near monuments,  
tourists gather

after the movie  
watching a punk guitarist  
with a foreign cadence,

wanting a cab

hearing Coltrane's riffs

near approaching taxis  
combating night.

—*B.Z. Niditch*

*Twin Peaks, Season 3, Episode 1*

The money falls like rain  
And we see Sheriff Truman walk out from the rubble  
Carrying Audrey like a child.  
My heart sinks.  
My young love is gone.

I am fifteen years old and trying to learn  
How to fuck.  
My girlfriend lays beneath me  
As I awkwardly flop atop her.  
I have no idea what I'm doing.  
These moments of intimacy  
Are the most terrifying moments of my juvenile life.  
I can't stop looking at the Star Wars t-shirt she's wearing.  
There has to be something more than just this.

That night, I take a tape from the box set  
And put it in the VCR in my bedroom.  
Quietly, I watch, yet again,  
And imagine myself in the town with them.  
Would Audrey Horne give me the time of day?  
I don't think I'm her type.  
I wish, though, we could learn together  
About how hard the real world is.  
I wish we could embrace nightly.  
I would run my thumb across that mole beside her left eye,  
And tell her how beautiful it was  
Before I kissed her.

But no.  
Harry places her on the sidewalk.  
Her face is charred,  
Eye missing,  
Beautiful auburn hair scorched away  
Leaving only a splotchy scalp,  
Skin sliding off all slipshod.  
She is no longer my angel.  
Never again will she dance like she danced that day  
At the Double R:  
Eyes closed,  
Arms out,  
Head tilted back,  
Just weaving back and forth,  
Gently rocking,  
Like a boat  
Or a bassinet,  
As the maestro snaps in the background.

A sheet falls over that once beautiful face.  
I lay back in my bed  
And let one fall on mine.

—Rowan Smith

*Ashamed*

You spend your nights surfing the Web,  
looking for traces of women you used to know.  
Sometimes you find them easily  
but sometimes their names have changed and  
it's like they've been erased from the universe or something.  
Tonight you're looking for Athena  
but she's impossible to find.

You remember that afternoon you and she went to the movies.  
The lights went down, the previews began.  
But there were two guys sitting behind you  
snickering just loud enough for you to hear.  
They kicked your seat—  
not hard enough for you to say for sure they were doing it on purpose  
but hard enough, at least, for you to notice.

“God, what a dog,” you thought you heard one of them whisper.  
“Look at him with his dog.”

When the movie was over,  
you waited for everyone else to exit before you would let Athena stand up.  
Even then, you were afraid those guys might still be outside when you left the theatre.

And, from that moment, you were ashamed to be seen with her—  
her with her pointy chin and mouth full of nickel colored braces.  
The kids at school would laugh if they saw you with her.

So you didn't bring her to parties, dances, or your graduation  
and you only let her meet your closest friends.

When you walked her down the street  
you were constantly on guard, lest someone should start making fun of you.

Two years later  
alone at college  
you called her long distance  
and said you wanted to see her at Christmas break.

But she told you she couldn't  
that she was spending a lot of time with a boy  
who'd just been accepted to West Point:  
a tennis player and a track star.  
A guy whose parents were just as rich as her own.

Now, you sign up for classmates-dot-com and try to find her high school yearbook  
but for some reason they don't have it—that year is missing.  
And you start to wonder if she ever really existed in the first place.

And you want to see her picture because you realize, for the first time in your life,  
she may not have been that ugly.

—Herb Guggenheim

*Missing*

1.  
He didn't drive  
and so  
he took the bus.
2.  
His need  
felt deep enough  
to drown me,  
and so  
I made  
of our interaction  
a shallow pool.  
When I felt  
that deepening,  
I stepped out,  
wrapped myself  
in the thick  
white towel  
of avoidance.
3.  
Several people  
got off the bus  
with him,  
and so  
they were questioned.
4.  
Weeks later,  
a single shoe  
washed up on the beach,  
and so  
drowning was assumed.
5.  
He is still missing.

—Martha Christina

*dandruff*

When I can't sleep it's because my bed is my skin, it's lying awake in my skin, drowning in my skin, slipping around in my skin. When I walk at night, headache in hand and bare feet like fists against the cool tar, when I dance like sadness in the park beside a blackened honeysuckle, it's because my skin is like a fire, like neoprene and cellophane and too much bright, much too noisy. My skin is a nightclub and I've never even been in a nightclub. My skin is a porn. I am so tired of porn.

When I think about my phone it's filled with couples, when I think about the contacts in my phone I see my own face in the unlit screen, I see tangled limbs on the other line. When I stay up all night it is because I keep fingering my phone like *they can fix it*. When I go to sleep it is because they cannot.

When I feel like this I don't write. When I feel like this I am synthetic. I eat synthetic food. I unplug my friends. I call a waitress over and ask for help. I ask for eggs and she gives me eggs and I have asked for help and she has heard only the words. I pay her.

When I feel like this I don't write. The words flake off my skin and I remember that I am surrounded by dust. I am writing and the words are like wires. They won't spark. When I say I am alone I mean in my own skin. Why is there not a word for that?

—Tim Jurney

*Godthab Nuuk*

wheat stalk bones  
speak to ziggurat sky  
praying words to Njord

patchwork dusts  
of diamond snow  
blown into crescents.

Crystal sun suspended  
motionless hanging  
by spider silk thread,

the throat of Arctic  
night closes with  
a single light flash

then white silence  
exhales the wind  
and the snow listener.

—Charles Lampert

*Theme*

Late night maybe morning  
heading home through  
wet dark streets  
under the glow of  
fleur de lis lanterns  
with their minaret globes  
she climbs the stairs  
the carpeted smell of years  
to enter a room overlooking  
the gray slate rooftops  
and redbrick chimneys  
and that one lone tower  
under the blood smear of clouds  
in a smoky predawn haze  
to fall fall back upon a bed  
neighbors crazy  
other voices  
the search that yielded  
nothing  
now this now  
and one sound like  
a trumpet call  
a wish for death  
and sweet release through  
the bottom of the well  
of elusive sleep  
with a ghost at the door  
and water traveling through  
the pipes in the wall

—Douglas Cole