

H

N

G

M

N # 2



H_NGM_N

a 'zine of poetry &c.

II

Daniel Becker	Three poems
Scott O'Connor	Souvenirs, a story
Jennifer Gravley	Three poems
Sean Karns	Two poems
Matthew Mulder	One poem
David Baratier	Four poems
Emma Ramey	Four poems

Editor: Nate Pritts
Contributing Editor: Matt Dube
Publisher: Lazy Frog Press
Interns: Lauren Frelich, Ronak Shah
Cover art: Dylan Gleason

Manuscripts for consideration should be sent to:

Nate Pritts, EIC
715 College Ave.
Natchitoches, LA 71457

H_NGM_N will print anything the Editor likes, & will appear when it is least expected or when it is most needed, whichever comes first.

Local weather

An arctic wedge is hard and fast
along the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge.
Our three weathermen—dawn, dusk, and midnight—
speak of black ice in sober tones,
conveying a sense of betrayal.
We can't trust the asphalt any longer.

We can't count on salt or chemicals.
A bridge or overpass is a short cut to oblivion.
Look out the window—
imagine life inside the mirror.
All non-vital employees
should stay home and dress in layers.

Give the birds their due.
Use the B-B gun not the .22
on squirrels upside down stealing seed.
Mercy, mercy—have some, have oatmeal for breakfast,
soup for lunch, stew or pot roast for dinner.
Expect a new system to fill the vacuum

as today's spins north and the wind builds.
The power flickers. The schools close.
The kids remain deadlocked.
They pronounce their boredom
as would the hanging judge instructing the jury.
Don't let your children sled on glass. Suggest fudge,

agree on cookies—chocolate chip—
but add more butter to the *Tollhouse* recipe,
going for gooey then storing them in tins in the freezer—
the cookies—
things taste better cold, even meat,
but who can resist warm blood with wine?

Take the dogs for a walk. It is not their fault.

Daniel Becker

My son the pyrotechnician

We're all pagans
who drive to the park for violence
performed on heavens otherwise unscheduled,
discounting moon and stars and city lights,
dissolute clouds, a red planet closer than ever.

From Independence to New Year's
his year pivots like a double play.
There's something new each time he checks the sky.
That sundial sense of original spin
I suppose he got from his mother.

To make ends meet some baseball gigs—
whistling bombs to help exclaim
an extra base or pirouette—
and from his booth past center field,
he knows where the ball will move the batter.

Long flies drift foul, sparks drift fair,
night drops off a cliff,
and when the dark is absolute,
his eye detects a photon more than chance allows.
Statistical significance,

like poverty or wealth, is relative.
He can't spell principal or mortgage.
He knows which blessing for which Festival of Lights.
He knows the words that stop the death ray
in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

His gods are the ellipse and the axis—
the orbit on a string like a yo-yo,
the gap between magnet and North.
His fingers tingle from explosions.
He demonstrates the chemistry of lava—

baking soda, vinegar, red dye.

Daniel Becker

Histology of night and day

Two types of bone in a long bone,
slow fat and fast fat and fat that will idle
like a car stopped at a light,
then muscles that wander, muscles that won't,
nerves that remember, nerves on remote,
organs all inside unless counting skin,
daydreams and pipe dreams, five stages of sleep,

and a gland for each situation.
Between the eye and the ear sits the seat of the soul,
according to Descartes,
the third point that makes a plane,
the pineal bypass off the optic tract
where light and time are introduced
into the 24 hour equation.

A problem there will clean your clock.
Thus the blind can't sleep,
teenagers can't or won't, and jet lag
is like sunset in *The Night of the Living Dead*.
The zombies wake up hungry,
hoping for take-out, for ethnic.
They wander off, using arms to lumber

as a hurdler uses shoulders for rhythm and pace,
to ignore or forget gravity.
The long night's journey into day,
is thought enough to make it real?
Is yawning really contagious? I think
ergo there's dawn. The wild blue yonder
is just another horizon—

tomorrow, and already stale,
clusters of *a priori* clouds, awnings on the verge,
customs where they confiscate cigars,
an ocean and five time zones from current body time.
A park bench has the warmest sun in town
but collapsing isn't permitted.
The prone don't pretend to *ne pas* comprehend—

blinking once if yes, twice if now.

Souvenirs

She moves through my bedroom like a visiting dignitary, graceful and poised and wholly out of place, scanning the titles of the books on the shelves and pictures of my family and friends on the walls.

The harsh morning light pushes around the blinds, making the room hot and stuffy, lashing the floor and ceiling with orange and gold stripes. The pulse of my hangover thumps dully in my ears. She has yet to notice me, dripping in the bathroom doorway, silently watching the slow progress of her tour. I'd half expected her to be gone when I got out of the shower, maybe leaving behind a brief, unsentimental note. *Thank you for your time.*

But here she is, back in the black cocktail dress she wore last night, her hair piled in a loose approximation of the intricate style from the party. She walks barefoot, the bright red nails on her toes flashing as she moves. One black high-heel is still in the hallway by the front door, the other lies on its side in the middle of the bedroom floor. Her pale wrists and throat are naked. Her watch and necklace sit in a neat pile on my bedside table. Her long, slender fingers leave crooked trails in the dust between the spare change and unpaid bills atop my dresser. With each careful step, the floor creaks quietly beneath her feet.

It's strange to have someone else making noise, however slight, in my home. I get a chill whenever she touches the things I own.

"Disappointed?" I ask.

She stops by my desk and turns, surprised by my voice in the room. We haven't spoken since we woke, and we haven't spoken in actual words, actual sentences, since last night's party.

"No," she says. She gestures at the room. "It just looks different in the light."

"You can put something on," I say. "A record."

She catches her reflection in a photo's glass frame and quickly looks away. "I have to go," she says. "I'm expected."

It doesn't even cross my mind to offer her a cup of coffee, to ask to take her for breakfast. She has to go. She's expected.

She turns back to the desk. A half-written letter I haven't had the courage to finish sits alone on top. It is an apology, and an indictment, and a plea. Last night was the first time I'd come through the door and not thought about it immediately, its crushing, insistent pressure and my own gutless indecision. It is not addressed to her, but she doesn't hesitate in reading it.

When she's done, she picks up the capsized heel from the floor and straps it around her ankle. I bring her the other and she bends to put it on, balancing on one foot, steadying herself with a hand on my shoulder. Her weight against me is unfamiliar, more than I'm used to. I have to set my legs to keep from being pushed over.

She straightens back up and smoothes the front of her dress. She walks over to the bed and puts on her watch and slips the necklace into her small beaded black purse. She checks the display on her silenced cell phone.

I take my camera down from the shelf and bring it to my eye. Her back is to me, and I wait for her to turn.

She hears me take a breath and hold it, to steady my hand. She turns. The light from the window behind her wreathes her face in white. The glow softens her features, warms the entire frame. She raises her eyebrows, her perfect composure forgotten for a fraction of a second, surprise and just the faintest flicker of amusement moving across her face. Her lips are pursed, a tiny *O. What are you doing?* is what I imagine she's about to say, but I snap the shutter before she can speak.

She crosses to me. She looks like she's either about to laugh out loud or slap me across the face. I put the camera back up on the shelf.

She shakes her head in disbelief and some of her hair comes loose. She pushes it back up into the pile. She leans in, slowly, and kisses me lightly on the mouth. We stay like that, lips just barely touching, for a long moment. Then she steps away and reaches over to the desk and picks up the letter. She folds it in half and slips it into her purse. She turns and crosses the bedroom and disappears into the hallway, closing the front door behind her as she leaves.

Aubade

Morning sucks. I hate birds,
beaked happiness reminding me
you won't sleep over, fuck.
If you were here, I'd push you
away. I know you'd want it
in the mornings if you wanted it.
I know you'd want it under
sad covers, after sad alarm
bleating and before sad eggs
and sad toast. I know, sad,
you'd want it the way I want it,
but I wouldn't give it to you,
not right away. I'd refuse you,
once or twice, if you'd stay.
Instead, home, selfish,
your chest, unused pillow,
warm under happy covers,
feathers wrapped and stitched,
fills over and over with air
like you can live without it.

Cars

aren't the best place, palaces of punchy indecision, the push-pull operation: multiple brakes. Neither are bookshelves. Window ledges won't do, will they, with their green-eyed pot-promised plants. Milk crates are no good, hard, plastic as tile-bright tinted tablecloths. Cartoons. Cigarettes. Cardboard boxes get wet, drawer pulls rust in your hand, and nobody likes sand. Nobody likes tree trunks either, their bitter brown bark. Swivel chairs make you dizzy, asphalt's hot in the sun, sun's always shining on asphalt, and you can't drive when you're dizzy.

Jennifer Gravley

In addition to the rent

my landlord suddenly requires a poem a week. I already write two, two poems a week. I tell him I can't do it, workshop and class and the rent. Rent poems stuffed in the landlord's money slot Sundays after the moon's already out, that giant mercurial blob of banana, squished and peeled. But he's hard hearted about poems, says three poems a week, that's part time, every other day, weekends off.

I go home to write the goddamn poem. All my faucets drip. I write drippy poems, drop them at city hall, water works, accidentally. Start over, start peeling paint from the walls. Paint turns to lead in my palm, pencil leads with tiny mouths crying poems, write poems. It's required. I write my landlord poems about knee-scruffing carpet, uncoordinated kitchen cabinets, paying the bills under low-hanging cheap chandeliers. I send out poems with all my bills so they won't cut off the power. Citibank likes it, increases my limit.

I rip poems into strips, collect and press, sign, their blanks like checks.

Retrospect 1

I am laying on crumpled up bed sheets,
coffee in one hand, cigarette in the other.
Her shoes rest next to the bed, car keys
within reach. She leaves. I think as she walks
out how, within intimacy, time takes
away the beauty. Lined palms of water-
ways remove confined margins.
All I have are coffee stained thoughts,
that state. Eventually there's a
crossroad that intersects this one-
way street. All my options are
scattered, pieces of glass with no glue
for reassembly. There's no time
for this abundance of intrusion.

Retrospect 5

For David Baratier

In the town I came from, there's one stop
light, four pizza shops, four bars and four gas
stations positioned on the four corners.
My friends and I cruised five miles of Main St.,
the park to the granary, chugging Budweiser, looking
for something out of reach. Now I'm in Columbus,
sitting at Dick's Den, blocked in by a window
like cubicle, sipping whiskey, watching
the aspiration of happy faces stagger by.
I'm "caught between deeds of the past and
actions of the future." In between lies pretty
things I want to strip down to the bare
root of their formation. I walk out, whisky
drunk, thumbing for a taxi that never arrives.

Reading "The American Zen Master" by Dick Allen

Walnut leaf
fell into the crease
between page seventy-eight and
seventy-nine.

Curious bookmark-
no larger than a business card.

Green flesh of the leaf
against the creamy paper
in afternoon sunlight
underlined the selection

"as for our question..."

I closed the book,
listened to the chatter:

chickadee chicks being fed,
a lawn mower roaring in a distant yard
the whispering of wind through spruce.

As the mower's engine
stops,

all is calm except the
cooing of the turtle dove,
the trill of the lark.

Learning the important stuff

There is a light on a vacuum cleaner
so it can be found in an emergency.
A power failure we each prepare for.
Destruct how many fields of wheat until
the cost of cereal is justified. At the end
of the 11th aisle, no need to get depressed
there are legs we can saran-wrap around,
add a particulate water to de-condense
a sponsor fed line into our pocket
then evaporate. Oh forget my solutions
don't you worry about a thing on the radio
architects draw tea to make us better
bricklayers of shithouses, let us figure out
what is built when the last square is laid.

Shortly after Ronald Baratier got emphysema

I am sweeping the floor again
which has always held me up
the thin rods moving a pile
of debris into scatter then
back as "angel fluff" moves
ahead down the hall. My uncle
Ronald's thin reward for doing this
at Con-Rail until it paid off
and he became a rail switcher,
a traffic controller and then
went beyond. There is a certain
reflection working among the
inmates at Reese Middle School.
I am serious as cancer.

Ketchup on a chicken pot pie

We think the flattened checkmark of a fly
proof of a good deed. That something has died for us
not much bigger than a mosquito's handshake.
The sparsest number of bodies on the windowsill
for all due respect. Money rents a room
a maintenance of counters etched in dirt
paying for this bad habit called surface.
Secrets move away to hide from. Economically,
decay depends upon a large measure of allowance
no further welfare expected. This is the groundwork
of a house which condemns itself, have you been there
or are you removing pride at a distance of hearsay?
A poverty of experience visiting televisions
to show a name in flies spelled out, a human letter.

A six-hundred dollar fistful of narcotics

Technique is neither identical with nor wholly
independent of expertise with code. What's paid for
a bad habit of disappointments. So long the party
can't remember when it started changing your life
this late in. An arms length away from a memorized
phone number for source. The clear sweat of a house
an inside call sorry all your life, a ride going down.
Or leave, play pool at Motors, drink coffee on excuses,
rub a cue into resiliency, a resin left for others
to see. Got to get some air every so often, bow-out
before the vanishing point. Only so much one can do
ahead of tomorrow. Watch the TV, pull wash from a machine,
a curtain removed upwards, push a worn out pair of knees
down again. I am the Count, I always Count. Count with me.

The Hand, The Dilemma

You've gone and lost all hope, focused
on that sweat-print against the wall,

print too steady, confident:
the leftover of what was.

Strange what time decides to keep.
The impression on the sheets, the lesson:

never slip into bed again and time stops.
The preservation, the shrine,

the proof there was someone.
Doesn't matter who: probably just you, not that you remember.

All that's left: the effect,
wrinkled slip cover, hole in screen,

worn floor from living room to bedroom.
Is this verblessness the same as hopelessness?

The question that brings you back to the beginning,
before anything happened, before there was a hand.

What's the difference now? From the opposite side,
in a different light, all to see is a blank wall,

and so if you want any reminder at all,
you're stuck, standing where you are.

Zoo

Mind your step.
Please stand away from the railing.
Do not feed the animals.
Keep your hands to yourself.
Don't touch
the animals with your mind.
Step your mind away from your hands.
Keep the animals away from the railing
and your hands to yourself,
please.
Keep away from your touch.
Mind the animals, touch yourself,
keep to yourself.
Please stand,
but do not feed yourself to the animals.
Step away from yourself,
touch with your mind.
Don't step away with the animals,
please.
Please don't touch
yourself,
please,
the animals keep to themselves.
Feed your mind,
feed your mind, please, but not with animals.
Your mind touches the animals.
The railing keeps them away.

Pythagoras Right Or Wrong

The question: how much of an eye
is one number, and what does it see.

On bus #3, four quarters to the driver,
ten steps down the aisle, I stop to take a seat,

my eyes on four posters on an outside wall.
I bend my knees to sit, seven seconds,

a woman grabs my shoulder with all five fingers,
looks down: a puddle.

Thirty-three, and I know I loved her.
But it was fleeting, and what is the number

for the withered bouquet? The dog that died last year?
Or an orange I lifted from the ground?

And what is the number, Pythagoras,
for the sinful beans you refused to eat?

*

There is loss and there is loneliness and sometimes
neither one produced by a clear equation.

A predicament, so I assign a number for feeling lonely:
September 2nd, one o'clock, a six-year-old,

two hours at the fair, on 112th street,
five hands from her mother,

sees a man holding twenty balloons.
Thirty seconds later, her balloon decides to fly away:

one hundred and eighty-six. Was she me, the impression
of string still on the finger, looking up

at red against gray, and what if the man held only nineteen
or they were on Virginia street?

The difference, perhaps, between a hand
letting go and a string slipping through.

The Novel I've Written Myself Into

Flutterless. The moth barely moves. At rest on his hand.
Next door, a character I've stolen or just borrowed:
Frankenstein in a wheelchair. No creator in sight,
only a nurse to wheel him in at night. And back
out at daybreak. To sit. *His forehead commands*
half his face. Skin the color of bone, in shadow the color of ash.
Lip that hangs, tongue too thick to escape. "Baby. Baby." My name.
The same every day. His words as I pass. Eyes following.
The same. A collector of dust. Every day.
But there are changes. Embellishments. *It has died, this moth. Dead.*
He covers it with his other hand. A smirk in my direction. A puff of air.
And then it is alive. Circles around me. He smiles. A miracle?
He laughs and laughs. Reaches out to me. Night has arrived. He's back
inside, but my story continues. And soon, I'm sure, he'll stand.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

DAVID BARATIER is the publisher & editor of PAVEMENT SAW & BLOODY TWIN PRESS. An epistolary & prose novel IN IT WHAT'S IN IT is out from SPUYTEN DUYVIL. His ESTRELLA'S PROPHECIES books (three so far) are all available from SMALL PRESS DISTRIBUTION (spdbooks.org).

DANIEL BECKER practices & teaches internal medicine & hospice/palliative care at the University of Virginia. He has an MFA from Warren Wilson College &, in his spare time, builds wooden boats.

JENNIFER GRAVLEY makes her way in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where she formerly served as fiction editor for the BLACK WARRIOR REVIEW. She was a winner in the 2003-2004 AWP INTRO JOURNALS PROJECT for short fiction.

SEAN KARNIS is the associate editor for PAVEMENT SAW PRESS and is the editor of the LARRY'S POETRY FORUM CHAPBOOK SERIES. His poetry has appeared in NEAR SOUTH and is forthcoming in LOST & FOUND TIMES as well as POETRY MOTEL.

MATTHEW MULDER is a graphic designer & poet whose work is regularly featured in THE INDIE. His website can be found at (freewebs.com/drawingblacklines/).

SCOTT O'CONNOR's novella AMONG WOLVES is out from The Swannigan & Wright Literary Matter (thematter.net) & is generating all kinds of heat.

EMMA RAMEY received an MFA from the University of Alabama. Her poems have appeared in DUCKY MAGAZINE & are forthcoming in BORN MAGAZINE & POST ROAD. Her chapbook A NUMERICAL DEVOTIONAL was published by NEW MICHIGAN PRESS. She lives in the Seattle area.