**“Meaningful Love” – John Ashbery**

What the bad news was

became apparent too late

for us to do anything good about it.

I was offered no urgent dreaming,

didn't need a name or anything.

Everything was taken care of.

In the medium-size city of my awareness

voles are building colossi.

The blue room is over there.

He put out no feelers.

The day was all as one to him.

Some days he never leaves his room

and those are the best days,

by far.

There were morose gardens farther down the slope,

anthills that looked like they belonged there.

The sausages were undercooked,

the wine too cold, the bread molten.

Who said to bring sweaters?

The climate's not that dependable.

The Atlantic crawled slowly to the left

pinning a message on the unbound golden hair of sleeping maidens,

a ruse for next time,

where fire and water are rampant in the streets,

the gate closed—no visitors today

or any evident heartbeat.

I got rid of the book of fairy tales,

pawned my old car, bought a ticket to the funhouse,

found myself back here at six o'clock,

pondering "possible side effects."

There was no harm in loving then,

no certain good either. But love was loving servants

or bosses. No straight road issuing from it.

Leaves around the door are penciled losses.

Twenty years to fix it.

Asters bloom one way or another.

**“Would You Like Me to Walk Your Baby?” – Karyna McGlynn**

I said to the couple on the airplane.  
Don't worry; I won't drop him. I'm a dancer;  
I never drop anything. Besides, I'm good with babies;   
                                   I have huge breasts & big eyes.   
He's just having a little altitude earache. I'll bounce him  
on my huge breasts and sing something under my breath.  
We'll just take a little stroll down the aisle;  
let you two get some shut-eye.   
Sure, it's narrow, but so am I.   
                                   I have no hips to speak of.  
Give me your baby, I said with my widening smile,  
my enormous breasts, and my pointy pointy shoes.

**“[they shared her on a chicken white sheet]” -- Karyna McGlynn**

and called her erin

winter                                        who once was a soprano II

but moved to Minneapolis instead                        in spite

                                                             of her ankle tattoo

made a sound like filigree in fresh

powder                                      when they ratcheted her up

to their level and one boy said                              you see this?

                                                             and the other said

can it dance?  what with her whorl

of black                                      egg hair she’s ductile as a shoat

no sleigh of hoarfrost on the swiss                        sloped roof

                                                             and the sweetest

thing was she wasn’t full

of parting shot                            and at least they still had her

pom socks to look forward to                             that’s one thing

                                                             about swing dancers

**“Meditation at Lagunitas” – Robert Hass**

All the new thinking is about loss.

In this it resembles all the old thinking.

The idea, for example, that each particular erases

the luminous clarity of a general idea. That the clown-

faced woodpecker probing the dead sculpted trunk

of that black birch is, by his presence,

some tragic falling off from a first world

of undivided light. Or the other notion that,

because there is in this world no one thing

to which the bramble of *blackberry* corresponds,

a word is elegy to what it signifies.

We talked about it late last night and in the voice

of my friend, there was a thin wire of grief, a tone

almost querulous. After a while I understood that,

talking this way, everything dissolves: *justice,*

*pine, hair, woman, you* and *I*. There was a woman

I made love to and I remembered how, holding

her small shoulders in my hands sometimes,

I felt a violent wonder at her presence

like a thirst for salt, for my childhood river

with its island willows, silly music from the pleasure boat,

muddy places where we caught the little orange-silver fish

called *pumpkinseed*. It hardly had to do with her.

Longing, we say, because desire is full

of endless distances. I must have been the same to her.

But I remember so much, the way her hands dismantled bread,

the thing her father said that hurt her, what

she dreamed. There are moments when the body is as numinous

as words, days that are the good flesh continuing.

Such tenderness, those afternoons and evenings,

saying *blackberry, blackberry, blackberry*.

**“A Brief Attachment” – Cate Marvin**

I regard your affection, find your teeth have

left me a bruise necklace. The lipstick marks

   leech a trail, ear to ear, facsimile your smile.

   Your 40 ounces of malt beverage, your shrink

hate, your eyes dialing 911. The hearts you

draw with ballpoint on my cigarette packs

   when I’ve left the room, penned in your girl’s

cursive, look demented, misshapen approximations

of what I refuse to hand over. It’s a nice touch,

   though: a little love to accompany the cancer.

   My thought follows you to where you spend

your days lying in bed, smoking and reading

the Beats. The accumulation of clothes and ashes

   circles you, rises like a moat after rainfall.

You are a study in detachment – the trigger eye

is your eye, still as a finger poised to press should

   one refuse to cooperate, and I wonder why you

   hate men so much when it seems you think like

one. Think of what I could be doing outside if

I could unlock the door of myself: think *bikini*,

   think *soda fountain*, think *tradition*, a day lacking

entirely your brand of ambivalence. If you were

a number, I’d subtract you; if you were a sentence,

   I’d rewrite you. Are you the one who left these

   wilted flowers, are you the one whose PIN spells

out H-O-L-E? Why are you wearing my clothes?

If you are weather, then I’m a town, closing down

   at word of your coming: you’re a glacier on fast

forward, you’re direct as a detour, when I say

good-bye you move in next door. You say you

   want to have my baby, you want to buy me a car,

   and you’re too young to enter a bar. I should tether

you to a tree in the dark park, allow the moon to stroke

your white neck. I should give you a diamond collar,

   walk you around the block, and show you off.

**“Anthropology” – James Galvin**

Remember the night you got drunk

and shot the roses?

You were a perfect stranger, Father,

even my bad sister cried.

Some other gravity,

not death or luck,

drew fish out of the sea

and started them panting.

The fish became a man.

The archer’s bow became a violin.

I remember the night you searched the sofa

for change

and wept on the telephone.

Some other gravity,

not time or entropy,

pulled the knife down for centuries.

The archers dropped their bows,

harmless as pine needles in the snow.

The knife became a plow

and entered the earth, Father.

Later it became a boat

and some other things —

It isn’t a dream but it takes a long time,

for the archer’s bow to become a violin.

**“The Crowds Cheered As Gloom Galloped Away” – Matthea Harvey**

Everyone was happier. But where did the sadness go? People wanted to know. They didn’t want it collecting in their elbows or knees then popping up later. The girl who thought of the ponies made a lot of money. Now a month’s supply of pills came in a hard blue case with a handle. You opened it & found the usual vial plus six tiny ponies of assorted shapes & sizes, softly breathing in the styrofoam. Often they had to be pried out & would wobble a little when first put on the ground. In the beginning the children tried to play with them, but the sharp hooves nicked their fingers & the ponies refused to jump over pencil hurdles. The children stopped feeding them sugarwater & the ponies were left to break their legs on the gardens’ gravel paths or drown in the gutters. On the first day of the month, rats gathered on doorsteps & spat out only the bitter manes. Many a pony’s last sight was a bounding squirrel with its tail hovering over its head like a halo. Behind the movie theatre the hardier ponies gathered in packs amongst the cigarette butts, getting their hooves stuck in wads of gum. They lined the hills at funerals, huddled under folding chairs at weddings. It became a matter of pride if one of your ponies proved unusually sturdy. People would smile & say, “this would have been an awful month for me,” pointing to the glossy palomino trotting energetically around their ankles. Eventually, the ponies were no longer needed. People had learned to imagine their sadness trotting away. & when they wanted something more tangible, they could always go to the racetrack & study the larger horses’ faces. Gloom, #341, with those big black eyes, was almost sure to win.

**“Thrown As If Fierce & Wild” – Dean Young**

You don’t have a clue, says the power drill

to the canoe hanging from the rafters.

Is life a contest everything plays

by different rules for different prizes?

You’re really worthless, aren’t you?

barks the cherry tree covered with eponymous

fruit to the wagon lying on its side.

Unfair! Wasn’t that wagon not two days ago

leading the parade, the puppy refusing

to wear her hat? Can’t you just leave me

alone? says the big picture of Marilyn

Monroe behind her nonreflective glass.

Is the universe infinity in ruckus

and wrack? The third grader loose

in dishwares, the geo-tech

weeping on the beach. Mine, mine,

says the squirrel to the transformer,

unclear on the capacities of electricity.

String of Christmas lights tangled with

extension cords, can’t you work things out?

The young couple takes a step toward the altar,

increasing the magnetic force that sends

ex-lovers whirling off into nether nebulae

but attracting mothers-in-law. In one wing,

the oxygen mask taken from the famous writer

of terza rema glee while in another

an infant arrives, loudly disappointed

to have to do everything now himself,

no longer able to breathe under water.

Will we never see our dead friends again?

A motorcycle roars on the terrible screw

of the parking structure, lava

heaves itself into the frigid strait.

**“Five Poems for America” – Heather Christle**

Can-can dancing just won’t stop   
hurting its women.  France   
is full of stories and women.   
Once in Calais three women   
lost their money and had   
lunch later.  Dancing the can-can   
shows resilience more clearly   
than ever because women have   
less money and less strength.   
This sounds ugly but my legs   
don’t want much except   
for clean pants and stuff.   
\*\*\*\*\*  
No way is that cowpoke   
bringing me home.  He wants   
someone to fix his religion.   
Believe me, I love religion   
but he’s too quiet when   
he’s praying.  Look, he left   
and the bar left and the jukebox   
fixed everything.  I love this   
music and I love this land,   
so empty of real trees and hymnals.   
\*\*\*\*  
Charge! I said, but nobody   
heard me, because they were all   
listening to their mother, the iPod.   
Their mother said a lot of stuff   
I didn’t hear.  Magnificence comes   
in a small car, but we all fit.   
\*\*\*\*\*  
Democracy stinks.  My classmates   
elected the hamster.  Teacher   
doesn’t vote and can’t change   
anything.  Hamsters die all the time   
for good reasons.  Once I was   
a hamster who loved waterparks   
but nobody ever knew.  Secrets   
are also for presidents.   
Teacher knows very little.   
\*\*\*\*\*

Northern states.  Eastern states.   
Where are the armies?   
One soldier means trouble.   
Five soldiers make a party.   
War never means much.   
Let’s bring the soldiers   
somewhere they might like.   
Let’s go to Pizzeria Uno   
and not eat anything.