Sand River Journal

Sand River Journal is a collection of poems gathered from the newsgroup rec.arts.poems; it is posted monthly in ascii and TeX formats to r.a.p. and related newsgroups. Current and archive issues may be retrieved by anonymous ftp at the site etext.archive.umich.edu in the directory /pub/Poetry. This archive includes PostScript versions of the formatted journal, which is publication quality and can be printed on most laser printers.

Erik Asphaug, Editor

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Beltane

☉ ♎ ☾

Raft of the Medusa

Gericault never painted the obverse
yellow and purple wind-shells
with legs open and
occasionally inter-twined
drunk in the brazen serendipity
of too much sun

Kate Armstrong
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untitled

child
i am old
pluck me from the earth
with your chubby potato-chip drenched fists
rip out my aged white hair to the roots
hold it up to the wind let it scatter
toss my stem broken body over your left shoulder
make a wish

child
i am young
crayola yellow hair
i don't mind if you break my body
stuff me in a pink plastic bunny cup
on your kitchen table
more things to see than all this grass
bring my friends, will you please?

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Lions

You have seen lions yes?
males
females
slowly
and how they approach one another
when it is time
with open mouths and recognizant mumbles
and she rolls over for him
and he paws her slowly
with such care as goes for gentleness among their kind
and when he bites her neck
it is not hostility
but the irresistible generosity
of her loose hide.

Ralph Cherubini
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innocence

little bird
nodding in sleep
do you know
you are inside

a temple bell?

zita marie evensen
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Remembering Kitty

screams
slice through
heavy city air
echo off
faceless buildings
metropolis
of millions
you are
alone
anguished
cries will not
be answered
not today

thirty-eight hear
feet shuffle
open windows
slam shut
hands reach
for phones
stop short

thirty-eight see
heads turn
away from
savage scene
eyes close
in ultimate
urban denial

succorless
suffering
unabated
by kindness
of strangers
you die

Michael Kushner
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Men Seeking Women

By grace of candle light
and Chopin's Nocturnes

Blythe scans the
men seeking women

for possible stories,
but only

men seeking women
over five foot seven,

just in case.
In under fifty words,

men seeking women
lay their lives and longing

paper thin
in stranger's hands.

By grace of candle light
and Chopin's Nocturne

Blythe cuts out a few
men seeking women

who are all
over five foot seven.

Blythe says
"listen to this one"

A nocturne ends,
peeling away from her laughter.

The candle has dripped
blood-red wax

on a few
men seeking women.

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No Moon

I woke and saw
where my fingertips
spread the dust
on the windowsill
the night before
when I was
startled
by
no moon.

Zazu Pitts
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Kiss #7

A black pebble
in your palm:

a summer night.

Place it
in your mouth

and I taste it.

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te faruru

frozen in tahitian woodcut
braided in passionate embrace
silhouettes against the warm
firelight and tropic moon

lovers sinuous as the undulating flame
her arm supple in sensual abandon
contours of their spirits shimmer
forever in a gauguin umber-rust

here they love

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wait a moment

night changed to day
with the turning of an eye.
opening a shutter
new light finds us caged,
solemn or silly.

hearts on our sleeves,
we stir fingers through hair
palm fire across arched bodies.
we make a new night
behind shutters, sealed and caged.

a sudden burst of laughter
speaks another's silence.
your face and shoulders
smile and shake.
spare the joke and we'll move on.

so somebody weeps
and another's tears ebb;
liquid in a limited system.
shed a tear, one crocodile drop,
and rid me of these oceanic eyes.

empty breath flows from another's body,
dragging life from a dying man.
suck fast gasps past puckered tongues
as newborns test lungs.
in a moment they shall change.

yesterday glued to the day before it.
we scream to separate the sheets
and spin, thoughts wild,
casting for a glimpse of any when.
an orange sun urges us to turn another page.

wait a moment

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untitled

I wear it like a death mask
Stolen from an ancient king's barrow
Pallid
No color
Jaw clenched in the mockery of a smile
A frozen scream
A hideous laugh

I use it as a weapon
An axe to cleave what was joined
A spear to pierce the unwounded
I am not whole, why should you be?
It is deadly poison, sprinkled liberally
Would you like a glass of wine?

I cherish it as a companion
Always there when I am in need
To be called on at a moments notice
Faithful
Of whom else can that be said?

Ralph Haefner
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Shifts, Invitations

How we studied it,
    the sea,

bucking, banal.

Its outbawlings, crooked finger
        of the seawall,

its outpourings, its invitations.

And how it hammered flat
        our moonlight,

its metals,

        roadlike.

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Savannah

Melancholy swims in your hot breath breezes
Palm trees swoon and sway
Houses with belle porches clutch the ground
So storms may not tear away
Tropical intoxication makes me dizzy
And I fall on Georgia red clay
Something old and rich here
Despair hangs like Spanish moss
Trembling twinkling in moonlight
Make love to me the gardens say

Jennifer Williams
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untitled

it occurred to me, lately
that in between your spontaneous
corruption of my perfect world
with your honest tugging eyes,
you might have kissed me!

or turned me on my back and rubbed me
with your big, beautiful hands,
or held me
in an embrace of sorrow
that told me that love was allright.

but I forgive you,
honestly - there is nothing but honesty
with you, oh that part that reaches
right in between my ribs and tugs
and says, "you know me...

in you,
I am."

Sean M. Colletta
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how does she eat a mango

moths fluttering around a candle
wing shadows trembling
in the ritual
of loving and dying
upon a marble floor
bits of colored paper
of what may be
a photograph of my day

street brat slinks at dusk
throwing diamonds at passersby
it is from me it is free
oh come on take the gift
and take time to the read poems
on burger wrappers and old newspapers
laundry-clipped by the wind
to sidewalks broken by dandelions
and chain-links fencing empty
parking lots of words

i know i know you'd like to see
what is the color of the nail-polish
on the keyboard what is that book
hugged too closely to the breast
how does she eat a mango
do her eyes change hues
when she kisses

in the rainforest of blue screens
i lose a lot of friends this way

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on lake monroe today

on lake monroe today the blues fuse with grays.
the browns refused. brown county indiana –
a morning mess of twig and twine. the spirit,
eyelining the hills, fills the hollows, fills
the woods – delicate, leafless and so. eyelashed.
last night – no wind, no sky, no coyote, just owl.

Marek Lugowski
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Like This Water

I told him while the water was washing over us
never to stop experience
like this water
just to be there while it washes over him
and I held him to me
as close as myself
let it make you clean I said
and he was crying
because it hurts as if the skin is peeled back
it could only be that kind of crying
and I took his face in my hands and made him look at me
as I told him against the stream
that the other way is death.

Ralph Cherubini
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Up, ant, at my Touch

Covet this, she drives along tooling
her sheath–it fits well
and erotically lyricizes my lobes,
Laves what skin of mine is bare,

Nude–and covet I do. She's
defined Want her insidious disastrous
Way. I wish she would hold the
wheel Tighter. Some shame in me

is afraid of know-not-what;
She pretends not-knowing, only
her Nerve endings are touched,
not her Spikes. She says I'm too

Serious–goddam! Those fucking
potholes make my jaws click together
Hard, two lovers' sudden sparked
Orgasms; hurtful, she Laughs.

Other cars frown at us, coveting.
She fucks them all well; they
veer away, seeking shelter.
I had an accident in my pants,

Please downshift! I yelled but the
Wind grabbed my words as her mouth
opened to swallow me, and still she
Laughed, 'til the Wind was gone.

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Catechism for a Witch's Child

When they ask to see your gods
your book of prayers
show them lines
drawn delicately with veins
on the underside of a bird's wing
tell them you believe
in giant sycamores mottled
and stark against a winter sky
and in nights so frozen
stars crack open spilling
streams of molten ice to earth
and tell them how you drank
the holy wine of honeysuckle
on a warm spring day
and of the softness
of your mother
who never taught you
death was life's reward
but who believed in the earth
and the sun
and a million, million light years
of being

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Boddhisatva

find brothers who went under,
teach them breathing:

Boddhisatva is the truth of healing.

Never damage
what you dare pursue,

no-one stares
into the glowing orb

but you

Erik Asphaug
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Haiku #437

ten thousand things
          left done and undone
the tea steams

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grotowski and his lovely poland

Jerzy Grotowsky, Polish director, founder of The Lab Theatre, pioneer of theatrical psychotherapy.

grotowski, roaring through "Akropolis,"
hinted
at the source of his angst:
"Poland, you see, is the largest graveyard in the world."

aushwitz is now a headstone,
and citizens can view names and dates,
realizing their soil sings with millions of
earth-choked
throats.

no historical dialogue can erase the thunder of
blitzkreig or luftwaffe.
goebbel's tap-dancing can still be
heard
over the roar of smelting plants.

so.
do we stop the world in our fair poland?
eh?
do we cease daily life and build more tombstones?

no.
we go on doing what we always have done before,
it served our grandfathers through all kinds of facisim.
even the modern kind,
that seeks to bring all filth to the light
of politically correct truth.

but what of dear grotowski?
he is in california now,
holding encountergrouptheatretherapy in the mountains.

far away from the singing
boneyard
that is his poland.

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Scorch and Burn

Work is done, then forgotten.
Therefore it lasts forever.
- Lao Tsu

Past five o'clock, the time for reconciliation settles upon him
as hard wings brush past. Wings meant for another,
still near enough to startle into reflection.

The countryside drapes over his life.
He has spent hours picking through the folds,
searching for everything that sank away.

Topsoil has winnowed past, leaving a hard clay,
red under nails and gray underfoot,
for him to tunnel to himself.

Spent tobacco overflows ashtrays,
too much effort trying to internalize the land
until it lay ravaged in him.

A cough was the first sign of pregnancy, but the smoke warns
of twins and triplets, spiraling up in fading wingbeats,
hinting of hidden fires.

As quarter to six approaches,
the exfoliated plain is too barren
for anything but rebirth.

Time turns up a new soil.
New seed eager to rise, crops waiting to climb.
To reap.

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silence

just as
an echo
in an
empty room
is no response

silence after
a shout
in the dark
is still no
proof
that no one
hears

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Elegy for an Older Sister

after the day you died
I went to a mountain lake
all warm and piney
and as I floated in the gentle water
transfixed between earth and sky
I thought of you dying
just the plain sorrow of it
and of how it would never end

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Año Nuevo at Mating Time

If only the selky's stolen cries,
(broken on the water and strained upon the dunes),
could fire the mind with an imaged flame remembered
in caves of savage mankind.
Then more completely would I find identity in the
wauling song that sets to rhythm these gale-beat thrummings
which chaff my ears.

Thus exhumed, the light of fires long gone
would mark with hi-light tabs this roiling view
which unlocks its own visceral thrill.

Indeed.

How simple are the frothing calls which cater to nothing
but that which stays wildest even when standing
the cross-town queue.

This ghosting companion who holds himself aloof and Free.
Free to wither a parting glance at cool sensibilities
mouthing their hysteric complaints.

Nurture proves to be heartlessly efficient.

Here in this farthest reach of sand/sea/sky;
we dangle an exploring finger toward the pooled chaos
and watch as a terribly real fight transpires down the beach.

Stuart Tanner
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Someday

Highland pipes, mountain mist, and ancient
    legends reborn;
Will the great heroes walk the earth again,
Will great Cormac again be king?
Ask if the desert will be blessed with rain.

    The only answer is someday.

Irish harps, emerald moors and old tales
    remembered;
Shall we ever see the old glories made new,
Will the Pirate Queen ride the waves again:
Ask if a stormy sky will ever be blue.

    The only answer is someday.

Gaelic chants, ancient songs, dance once more
    on the tongue;
Will they dance and repeat in future history,
Shall Taliesin and Merlin make magic once more?
Ask if a villian is ever remorsful.

    The answer is the same, someday.

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In the Shape of Snakes, Our Bodies

And as we were anonymous on a summer's hill
You would think that we laid seige on one another-
Lying as we did, in some immortal embrace
With long dark hair curled over your milk face

You brushed your hair away to mouth a phrase
And told me that the stars
Were rushing from each other
I felt three times your age!
Just the simplest of statements, and the stars exploded...

It seemed like we were on the skin of a bubble
bursting into nothingness
while, up above, the shapes of men had named the stars.
But, down below, the fields. And in this,
dusk and perfection;
In the shape of snakes our bodies carved.

Niall Richard Murphy
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Some Days To Remember

As when the great Lady herself
Fell victim to the placid sea
In what was otherwise a night
Of silent starlit serenity

And floundering in the cold waters
Where no fish would dare to stray
Were the faceless souls and voices
Of that ever tragic day

And near the lifeboats, all around
Side by side, but all alone
Were hands that had no raft to hold
They were on their own

Some slapping, splashing, *screaming!*
For a paddle or a board
And the louder they cried out
The more they were ignored

And soon they slipped beneath the shine-
Their last eternal dive
While not a single hand would reach
To keep these men alive.

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after he touches me

after he touches me
just his fingertips barely
on just my hips
it rains.
there is a nighttime orange sky
and there is lighting.
lighting strikes i read
make the air around them five times hotter
than the outer edge of the sun.
the air then must be very hot
after he touches me
but my hair is cold and wet and clings to my face
and on my arms each hair stands on end.

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In the Midnight Chill of a Winter Solstice

I remember two eager faces in the match-light
sublimed in the trouble and rage of high school
dances just let out...pretty girls, perfume and cologne
intermingling. We had a confidence, you might say a way
with manners. We kept aloof and found our solitude
in Blake and in Yeats. Breathing the crackling fragrance
of clove cigarettes, our bodies shivered in the cold air.
The thin sandy smoke was like silver in a street-light.
The dull illumination of the rock-ridden mountainside,
The faint blue stars, the cherries of two cigarettes,
and the gold glittering of the midnight traffic below
blasted our thoughts like a symphony and spoke
to our minds a religion — an enchantment of the beautiful...
The cluttered clouds against the bare, black night
glimmered with the brightness of the moon. We felt
the dizzy hope of spirit enkindling our dreams.
And from night to night we felt a constant surfacing
and resurfacing of something larger than us, threatening
to smash to bits the entire order of all
that held us still. As if we were the only two
in a long time that ever dared to think these things,
in those days we walked well dressed and in vain
triumph. We quested after magnanimity–believing
all our troubles and our fears could be dissolved
with an subtle gesture or a sign. I remember occasionally
a tear after gulping down that rusty smoke,
would soak a ring around a cigarette,
turn it yellow-brown, and then sizzle
and vanish. Again and again against madness
we tried to shake from ourselves — to erase — the cold —
to banish the unfeeling and the sleeping from our lives.
What love did we imagine could master such vizardness?
We sought out emblems from ancient Ireland
and longed for ghosts within the landscape to come,
to rise up and to teach us their secrets, songs
and wisdom. Staring at the darkness surrounding so
many lights, we heard thousand thousand questions
asked in the midnight chill of a winter solstice.

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Among Stones

They have sculpted your back with cruelty
those surgeons of shallow imagination
did their best, in ancient time
would have sent you to the temple
with votive bones of clay, with
prayers like futile narcotics prescribed or
exposed you on the plain of Argos
where the red earth is eager
to reclaim what came from it.

Today I will follow you to the water
and every day
sit among stones with paper
working my only magick and seeing
you change fishlike abandoning
the vague gravity of earth
to water you are
my most precious fish of salt and
lapis the touch of water again
makes you supple.

I wait for waves of linen,
a tidal bed, the moons rhythm
secure beneath the planet's wing.
No sky, no stones.

James Reiff
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heroes and fools

beloved
here i am in the embrace of night
confused by perfume of orange blossoms
i am laughing with a sadness
i do not know from where

beloved, you are
the madness i cannot hide
the poem i cannot write
love makes us such heroes
and such fools

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Thumb Enclosed

A thumb enclosed in a fist denotes a suppressed will.

Concrete's bitter sting:
hewn stone and pavement sprout from seeded clay.
Steel mountains bloom and hundred-armed poles
climb through the ground, caught in flurries of emerald moths.
Their wings flutter as countless hands
wring their neighbor nervously.

The weaker will always look away first.

Animals lurk in the shadows,
a chorus imposing deathly silence on otherwise empty sound.
Organic automatons following an instinctive program,
pausing to rewind when gears cease whirring and clicking.
Then restart.

We'll always turn from the eyes of a stranger.

Restraining itself, the car urges forth on spinning legs,
yellow cat-eyes scanning the darkness.
Pinholes in the sky's shroud let through tastes of glory.
The headlights illuminate only those patches of space
directly before them as tunnel vision weaves down the road.

And I'll refuse to match your gaze, preferring
the ambiguity of our relationship.
Looking past each other's shoulders, eyes halved apart
and tongues filling in the graves of fresh-spent words.

An enclosed thumb smiles against a moist palm,
its nervous grin reflecting lines
carved into the hand's tender belly.

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Secret Door

Where is the door, secret and hidden,
    that leads to the halls and chambers of your heart?
Picking the lock, I softly pad
    down the corridors of your mind.
Stopping to read the inscriptions of your love,
    fragile thoughts, like bone white china,
    carved on tablets of stone,
    scattered around like errant rose petals.
More beautiful than angel's wings.
More precious than the treasure of kings.

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