

# perceptions

unbending time  
*rochelle hope mehr*  
last night  
I saw what the future was like  
if time bent  
and let me slink  
into its folds

I saw a man  
intransigent  
glacial  
glowering at me  
his iciness seeped

into my bones  
this indifference to my pain  
he had taken me  
to bandage a wound  
to provide comfort

but my sacrifice  
lacked sincerity  
and I heaved u  
words of perdition  
as my soul

slumped into submission  
I woke up  
smeared with the present  
drenched with sweat  
and grateful for the linearity

and irreversibility  
of time



aural

*rochelle hope mehr*

How do you know you exist?

How do you trust the fire from your hand?

When it emanates does it blind you?

When it manifests does it bind you?

What is your connection with reality?

What is it you see that you fear?

Do you see what is missing?

Do you see what you hear?

what it feels like

*shannon truax*

head into desire

burning then adjourning

silence holds the fire

be wary

*temi rose*

be wary when they tell you not to

be afraid

what they really mean is

they have such a punishing torture in mind

for you

there isn't any point in trying to protect yourself

what they don't know

you've been drowning for so long

you've learned how to swim

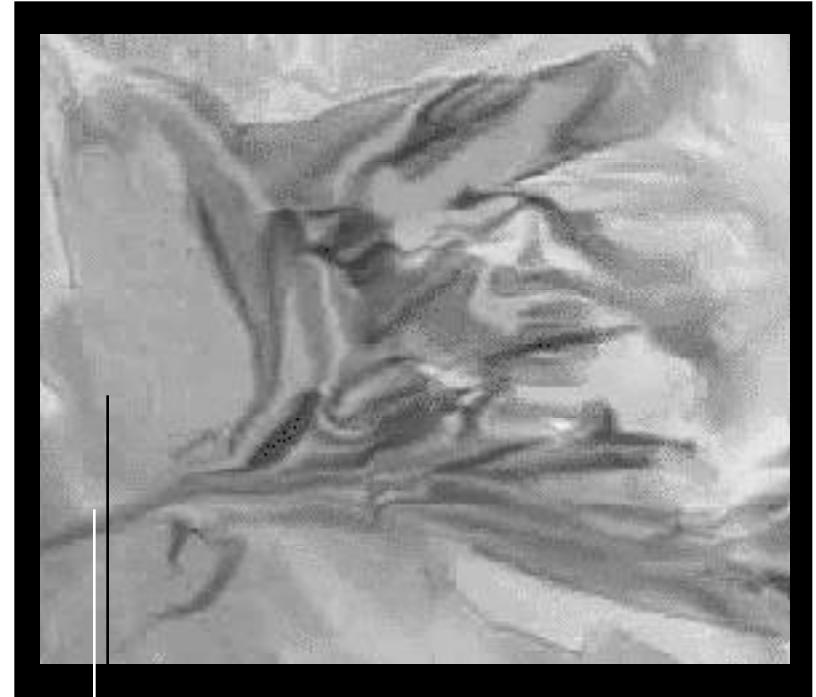
wriggle right out of any binding

into soulful experiments

meaningful relationships

stripped of futility

full of love, forgiveness and charity



*eleanor koldofsky*

I am never going to be run over by a truck: get up

ask if I can wash the truck

and apologize

for getting my blood on it

*eleanor koldofsky*  
women of Iysistrata  
where are you now?  
we need your courage  
to stand in the face  
of male dominance  
establishing our rights

susannah

*sally bushell*

wending her way among trees, susannah  
slips like a vixen toward the river  
fine fur stirred by the chill of the evening  
nostrils wide for the scent of a warning  
she is not free  
she is not able to be free  
supple and slim as a wand, Susannah  
matchless descending the silver mirror  
marinous depths of the garden-water  
tearing above her.  
beyond, the old en press upon  
the fine clipped hedge  
hands smoothing it down  
like an unruly page  
that will fly up in the wind  
not willing to be written on

premonition of the mental hospital

*rochelle hope mehr*

the pain is so deep  
you can't even touch it  
"the numbness, the numbness, Rochelle."  
From her tomb of a bed

I could not see it  
her outstretched leg  
looked unremarkable  
"the numbness, the numbness," she said  
"look -"

I saw nothing of the rigor mortis  
I couldn't imagine feeling nothing  
it made no sense  
if her leg were truly numb  
why did it trouble her so?

Why did she tremble  
with the trepidation  
of a lost lamb  
glimpsing the shadow of the wolf  
up ahead?

tea leaves

*richard sloniker*

in a swirl of tea leaves  
and a burnt tongue  
I try to smile  
and follow the words  
that seep from your lips  
across place settings  
and ceramic cups  
that scatter our conversation  
like the scent of ginger and honey  
in thin mists  
from silent metallic pots

erasing this

*janet i. buck*

impossible

his voice on bristling tapes

a pitchfork from the garden shed

a few white shirts

bearing the soil of thirty years

photographs with corners

springing up like snakes

*this was what was left*

a stack of snow tires

bags of beer cans

dented by his ornery fist

on the floor of a dusty garage

his pipe in a bowl

on a stand by his chair

still smelling of smoke

and cherry cough drops

rivers of a little brandy mixing in

*this was what was left*

his aftershave beside the sink

littered with old mustache hairs

that made you somewhat furious

once upon a better time

better goes bitter in death

even a fight tastes sweeter

than silence and holes

*this was what was left*

that and moons of useless rock

*sally bushell*

here, between old and new

a book is closed

a book is about-to

there are better places, true

to find oneself in

but this will do.

*eleanor koldofsky*

the slammed door

was the signature

of his arrival

june 13<sup>th</sup> 2002

*johanna ogdon*

each leaf grabbing its own piece of sun

fighting, stretching over

the top, they tumble towards the sky

like a big hand the willow reaches over the fence

molly's cat cries to come out, but she'll

run away through the sun

speckled happy leaves swish swoosh

and us three childwomen sit

inside a moment of peace

of sunlight and shadows

*najwa salam brax*

bitter memories streaked with nebulous sparks  
resonate amidst mournful meadow larks  
will phoenix rise again before my eyes?  
alas, no miracle will be reserved  
change is the rule of life

spring's verdant gates still open ajar  
dancing blossoms waft through, I smell attar  
try to forget you, to no avail  
wondrous halos and iridescent wings  
take my soul's ray to our twittering cagelings  
the afterglow of poetic flashes

dying embers return to ashes  
life has metamorphosis and twists; I  
take back the fleeting wing of yesterday  
you soulfully fly and fight your own way

I look into question-riddled lakes  
teeming with a myriad of wide-awake  
water lilies, shading in solitude  
rising, golden nightingales inside  
flutter, twitter gladly by your side

A distant scent wafts through subtle air  
nudging the shivering petals of despair  
flirting; forget-me-yes, forget-me-not  
yet your memory is locked in my sighs  
whose unspoken words ease sad goodbyes

Life is too short to complain and to fear  
hold tight our friendship memories so dear  
I take exquisite poetic trips through  
sailing pages among luminous thoughts  
creative poems give breath to lifeboats

No longer will the melody of birds  
thrill our shattered hearts, bless our artful worlds  
is there still sunshine beyond the gray clouds?  
how can one fly safely on broken wings  
how can one play gladly on ruptured strings?

light kisses the snow azalea meadows  
I pluck dry petals mixed with your shadows  
can you inhale again the sweet fragrance?  
my god! you arise from my pen and sheet  
my fingers can feel your warmth - and heartbeat

absolutely free

*eleanor koldofsky*

absolutely free

lie down

or up against a wall

spread your legs

he'll penetrate, and

*absolutely free*

presently

you'll have a baby

congratulations on

ejaculation

and as a Mon-to-be

exultation!

*absolutely free*

for forty weeks

headaches, backaches

vomiting, toxemia, diarrhoea

or migraines

for an absolutely free

pregnancy

a variety of ills

sleeplessness

slipped disc, haemorrhoids

plus a sumptuous assortment

of pills

breasts weigh like udders

leak and spurt like a cow

as she offers her chaste breast

to her dear little child

where is the sire now?

*absolutely free*

elementary

*temi rose*

elementary my dear  
squares and circles disappear  
when from the fourth dimension come schemes  
golums of feverish devotion  
blurring the edges, making a commotion  
parlay softly and you will find  
seasons change, nothing left behind  
deftly time responds to adolescent dreams  
inconsequent seeming and yet not so very  
nothing else matters than these desires  
her wish to make our world a better place

hey girl

*deon dempsey*

hey girl  
how you doing?  
I'm feeling out of sorts  
kind of blue  
unsure  
a bit worthless  
and boring  
not good enough  
blah blah.....  
been thinking bad thoughts  
again

sand at the ocean

*shannon truax*

lying on my towel, I run my hand through the sand  
I would like to hold it in my palm  
but the loose, tiny grains slip through my fingers

it's paradoxical

together, they support me on my towel  
yet I can't claim a handful  
the scarce number in my hand  
makes the strength of those around the ocean seem impossible  
but it is more than possible

closer to the water

dampness imposes itself over and over again  
yet their bond becomes stronger  
solidification during this cyclical storm  
allows me to take that handful and look at it closely  
I know I can learn a lot from these tiny grains

in our bed...

*richard sloniker*

I cannot  
sleep  
when she  
sleeps  
she must leave  
consciousness first  
before I can  
lay down  
and rest  
so that our dreams  
never  
coincide

*eleanor koldofsky*  
he went through life entertaining  
his penis

this time  
*temi rose*  
we are tired of being insignificant in your eyes  
we are tired of being uncomplaining by your side  
we are tired and we retire now to fulfill our own dreams  
nurture our children  
watch our gardens grow  
silently, softly, we leave you now  
leave you to your despair  
leave you to your anger, rage  
your irritable bowel syndrome, your bad knees  
leave you to your terror with your peculiar scorn  
I'll keep my sanity, clarity, kindness and beware  
temptations to renew our acquaintance because  
your acquistiveness exhausts me  
your selfishness gives me heartburn  
and this time I have a map, a direction  
a path of my own to follow

orchid legs  
*johanna ogdon*  
my legs are beautiful. I stare at them  
I take snatch-catch-Polaroids when I can  
like a dirty husband looking at other women  
guilty, satisfying  
I own a beautiful thing

my favorite part is between knee and thigh  
I pull my skirt up at dinner  
and touch my orchid legs  
they grow white and long in the summer  
long lasting blossoms in the sun

drying paint  
*janet i. buck*  
in that time swatch  
between sunset, moonrise  
starfish glitter on black  
the earth sits like a hangnail  
I wait for a key  
to turn in the door

hours alone work up  
to the *us* in a half-assed way  
for love is a mission  
that counts its dead  
then regrets the oversight

did I finish the painting  
I wanted to hang  
on our very last wall  
when my kiss saluted your lips?

the easel won't stay on three legs  
the palette won't be eternally moist

unrequited anger

*eleanor koldofsky*

unrequited anger

is more terrible than unrequited love

I look back in my history

come immediately to a chasm

no father, no grand parents

no beginning

a pit

that I cannot fill

or want to

with what would I fill it

*fantasy?*

were my grandparents really

burned to death in a barricaded synagogue?

where are my beginnings

am I better shaped without them?

in whose image am I crafted?

I look into the faces of my children

I wonder who they are

my grandson is known to me

for I knew his father and grandfather

and great grandfather!

he is all of them. a heritage

whose child am I?

no one's.

I am the strong female chain

going back to the first woman

epiphytic, I grow without roots

requiem

*rochelle hope mehr*

I can't write a poem just to fill up space

our vanquish time

I'd be too lost in rhyme

and forget reason

how long did you think we'd have

the luxury of time

to dabble in dalliance

before the game

bespattered and bestial in my prime

I forgot what I wanted to say

wanted to do

and in the forgetting

I was born anew

and pronged to the core

with the pain

of the deeply stained

I knew so well

the groan in my bone

I could not forget

even as I awoke

and found some bread, a bed

a shred of peace

a starling sang to me

some Mozart

and with my last breath

I flew to you



the waiting room

*janet i. buck*

*“there was no room in that tiny space  
for anything but two chairs and the truth”*

maria housden

in the act of just sitting  
silence gained a magnanimous weight  
“she has a 50/50 chance”  
this was the record’s rut  
the rest of the music rendered me deaf  
the sun was out in blue slate skies  
but I saw black, a firm eclipse  
in permanent ink  
coffee tasted like mud  
all the cream from any pitcher  
all the smiles from nurses  
padding down the halls  
did nothing to dilute this fear

no matter how ready you were  
I was running backwards fast  
running backwards to the bath  
when I was six and you were  
sudsing thick blonde curls  
telling me to shut my eyes  
in my mind, the tumor grew  
from the size of a plum to an orange  
to melons to elephant dunes

every step that might be doctors  
coming through the swinging doors  
increased my pulse like  
water in a red balloon  
prayers adhered to conscious sighs  
then pulled away like virgins  
from a messy kiss  
and yes, the soap was stinging fire  
as a diary closed on my thumbs  
four pink roses in my hands  
grew bald from constant trembling

too young

*helen lyon*

not too young  
to know  
that she wanted and desired me  
all for herself alone  
body, mind and soul

but much too young  
to negotiate  
the terms  
too young  
even to differentiate  
between real love  
offered unconditionally  
and false love  
nothing less than  
subjugation  
complete control over me

not too young  
to realize  
that I must try to be free  
but at four years old  
what hope is there for me?

much too young  
to protect myself  
and in the end  
will she finally have me  
body, mind and soul?

sex  
*eleanor koldofsky*  
am I the bridge  
that spans sanity from  
despair  
am I the bridge  
that separates  
freedom from care  
am I the body  
that consumes the pill  
destroys the race  
lies very still  
while I am pumped to  
the fill  
with body spit  
til I am nearly split  
and wonder  
is this love?  
sex? - not mine!  
passion? no  
this is looting  
shooting one's pain out  
of them  
to anything debase  
to anywhere, no face  
a hole, a role one  
minute - ten?  
zip up, wonder again,  
when?



your love

*najwa salam brax*

let lovers have the dreaming moon and stars  
with their shining attires and sweet guitars  
let them possess the weird, mighty quasars  
but for me, *it's enough to have your love*

let people dive with dolphins in the deep  
and new worlds spring up into light and leap  
into mysterious seashells where pearls sleep  
but for me, *it's enough to have your love*

let the suns unfold their uplifting wings  
and lovers transform into fiery rings  
that dance round and round at satanic strings  
but for me, *it's enough to have your love*

let the subtle breeze gather all the queens  
wrapping their loving hearts in vivid scenes  
of waltzing choirs of gods with their olympian queens  
but for me, *it's enough to have your love*

let light rivers flow through the universe  
and all poets in their ripples immerse  
to compose universal prose and verse  
but for me, *it's enough to have your love*

let cupid and psyche come down to earth  
to teach earthlings lessons of love and mirth  
promising them rebirth after rebirth  
but for me, *it's enough to have your love*

let the nine muses perform miracles  
atop parnassus' eerie pinnacles  
set artists free from their earthly shackles  
but for me, *it's enough to have your love*