

ISSBN 0888-9058

regret

rochelle hope mehr

don't fall away from me now
we are so close
and yet I feel you turning into
yourself
not in a good way
this is not self-actualization
but the schism of a soul
the sect of Feeling
the sect of Reason
you are so torn in two
that your face turns blue
as you try to swallow the air
the hot air you used to spew

dear poet

rochelle hope mehr

congratulations!
your work is worthless
your rant is not worth a grant
why do you care?
starving artists exhibit the most flair
they cater to no constituency
save the solitary soul
unfettered by the skeins of expediency
they rise
to universality

for sylvia

eamer o'keeffe

she speak to me from her poems, her death.
Both of us feel a hollowness.
shaking the bars of a locked cage.
but coolness is all we can trade with.
Losing all labels, can't pay the price
of a broken will or sacrifice
recycled crumbs. Cut back. Recoiling.
Kick from a gun. Creative thrust.
or a giving up. We need more than this.
The singer wants blood, but offers nothing
not even a name. It doesn't add up.
Every year. She says. I Keep coming back.

Winter 2003

old

by abby golloway

I've been standing in this storm for a long time
my edges once too sharp to touch
are now smooth and polished
I used to be a mountain
but now I am only a small rock in a pile by the road
I've been picked up by many hands
carried inside pockets
thrown into rivers and oceans
I just keep getting smaller and smaller
I will soon be a grain of sand
and no one will notice me
I don't know if that will be good or bad
but it will be

perceptions

lesser

by eamer o'keeffe

lesser-known poets are welcome here
lesser-known poets may find a slot
though lesser-known poets may not compete
with the real thing. We always allot

some space for them in our democratic
organisation, to fill up the gaps
in anthologies, so the major poets
may shine all the brighter. We like to invite

a few minor poets to read their attempts
on the platform before the main event
to fill the classes taught by the real
poets, and help them win greater success

\$5.00/£ 3.50

Issue #57

quiet

abby golloway

ShSh ... it's quiet in my head
silence at last
you can whisper but don't wake me up
I want to feel the numbness
my thoughts are worn out
Sh! it's quiet in my head
let me sleep through the war

leaving the cinder trail

mabry smith

my feet smell like smoke
sunburned skin
peels and uncovers
layers
my growing heart
now turned away
from cinder trail
charred and burned
with the dusty years
lived alone
without you
and facing forward
now believing
fresh rain falling
drenching my hair
quenching brittle bones
bare feet squishing
mud between my toes
like a tree in the breeze
the learning love
living and holding
forever feeling
what it is
to be alone
with you

velvet in the final act

janet i. buck

I should have expected as much
genuine grace in the last act of a play
arms lay crossed
over the bumps of your ribs
two ladyfingers, loaves of bread
on edges of the cutting board
I came with roses
drooping as I fondled stems
ran cold water in the sink
I left mid-grief like weak men faint
when birth involves the sight of blood
there were lessons for me there
in schools I wanted to torch
I could have been flat stepping stones
if not for blindness on the trail

I rebelled in stupid ways
against the constant of your death
by heading home, by
fixing meals you wouldn't eat
as if red beets could bring back streams
a sun cooked down to only dirt
I fiddled with the trivia
tucking in the little tags
when flesh was mostly made of holes
I wasted velvety of my hands
on grating cheese ready
for the mold and pitch
I should have sat like mulch
in silence soothing razors of the frost
I was too young to face the unfixable pipe

Perceptions

1304 Third street

Catasauqua, Pennsylvania 18032

USA

nightmare zone

helen lyon

the house itself
is large and old
the rooms themselves
are dark and cold
bereft of love
and warmth and light
no shafts of golden sunlight
here, to break
the stranglehold of night

and I, myself
must open all the doors
to every room
and I, myself
must walk the floors
in every room
bar one

each door, in turn
to every room
I open wide
no welcome comes
to overwhelm me
for there's nobody inside
only an emptiness
of love to break my heart
only that unspoken fear
to tear my soul apart

that dream was for yesterday
but the dream will come tomorrow
the next day and year upon year
til I can find the courage
to face that unspeakable fear
in the house itself
which is large and cold
for I must open the very last door
I must walk the floor
of the very last room
all bereft of love
and warmth and light
no shafts of golden sunlight
here - to break
the stranglehold of night

ache

temi rose

I ache to write something
that no one will utilize
that will rush through my fingers
and pour onto the page
and be like the ocean, each
wave unique, the whole thing
a loud, pushy mess that goes
spectacular as it reaches further
towards the sun

ireland - island in the global sea

margaret boles

trapped
on this raft of an island
floating in the global sea!
Longingly
I look all around me
everywhere
more interesting than here

India fascinates, Bali beckons
I long to take off
to a foreign shore
to see more, oh, so much more
of this great globe of ours
I long to see
foreign flowers, things exotic

but summer comes and
everyone knows
but me
where they want to be
for summer sun, to escape our rain
there's no flights and
I'm trapped on this island
again

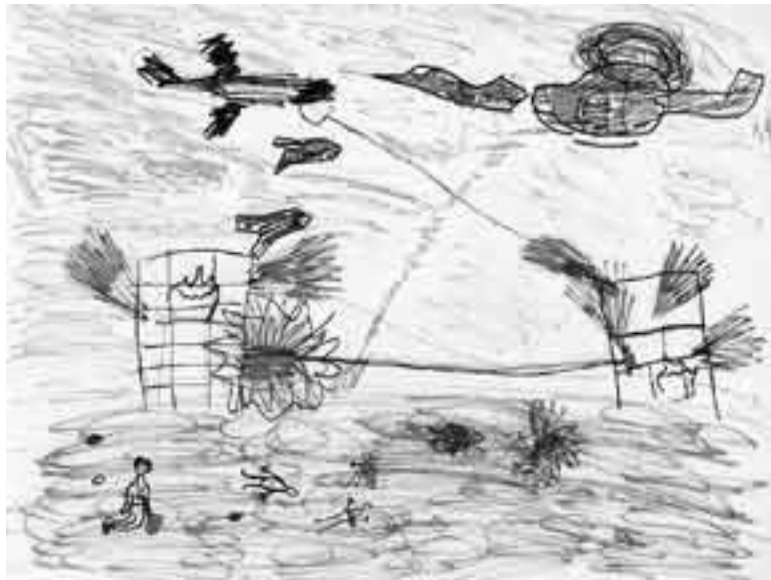
some thoughts on what to do with the WTC site

rochelle hope mehr

I don't think there should be tall buildings
there is something here that can never be replaced
at pearl harbor we have the arizona
a morgue in which bodies will never be claimed
there were few intact bodies here
mostly scattered remnants of pulsing lives
each one a rung in an echelon of commerce
which was shattered so brutally one crisp september morn

how do we convey the vigorousness
the wrenching away of life
the grotesque mask of death
what is to be reborn here?
A parody of the original form?

I don't think there should be tall buildings
we should memorialize what was torn from us
squat to the ground
far enough down
so we can touch the earth on which they crumpled
and gauge the height from which they fell



the illustrations in this issue were made by chechnyan children in a refugee camp in poland. perceptions participated in an art project with the children to elicit their creative response to tragedies they had recently experienced.

madness

rochelle hope mehr

I've never had such a vicious adversary
who knocks me off my guard
throttles me in mid -
when I come to my feet
when I come to my senses
after the heady feel
I wonder what visceral force
or ischemia
what grand scheme of the maker
swirls me into this hell
where sense is nonsense
and nonsense is an artesian well

impatience

temi rose

Impatience despairs of release
incurs violence
irresponsible ethical teachers
stand behind authority
emanating from god

but everyone is directly in touch with god
you don't even need an 800 number
it's freer than free

cuz, hey, authority is not transferable
we author, we have authority
we co-create complexity

when in doubt
slow down and listen
to your heart beat
and your lungs speaking in song

blah blah blak

temi rose

Impressions of inventions
Invective misunderstood
Embarrassments undetected
Keeping everything under the hood

Silent eyes staring wide at losses incomprehensible
Fairly known, hardly blown, fairytale grown
Inevitables.

Blah blah blak sheep
Have you any wool?
Yes sir
Yes sire
Feel bags full
Deer old horse
Tall old steed have faith in me as I ride you to death
Blah blah blak sheep have you any wool?
Yes sire, yes fire, three days full
Dead old man
Dead old guy have faith in me as I work you to death
Blah blah blak sheep
Have you any wool?
Uh, no.



the clothesline out back

janet i. buck

grampa called it a lightning string
grammy named it the spine of the house
where birds danced once
before their little feet got burned
whatever it was, a pulley
stretched between two trees
suitable for puffy ghosts
and wrinkled lies
rumors paused to chat
then tease a leaning fence
I listened as she told
my mother how to explain
a woman's first drop of blood
to a child unstained
by men and bruises
ahead in the map of the fruit

I listened like eager crickets
under the lid of the porch
for my next unchosen song
as they played with collars they wore
buzzing in harems of dutiful bees
learning how to double knot
what secrets needed coveting
we gathered there
around a basket of wadded cloth
her fingers would handle a shirt
like the page of an interesting book
palms bursting with wooden pins
the wind respected its fray
as we cheated the needle's head
drew it through worried eyes
readied our scalps for the gray
as gravel that's plain
welcomes a flake of white snow

did I write this verse?

margaret boles

did I write these words
or did the spirit of the muse
travel through me
to burn these words
upon the page?
I could not more stop it
than I could stop
the full grown child from
bursting forth unthinking of
the violence of the birth
nor could I unbirth
these poems, nor
unbirth the child
returning it to the womb
the darkness of
my verse's heart
and as the growing child
daily echoes
the mystery of its beginning
the written verse takes form
and staggers off
to independence



today

helen lyon

yesterday
I had an insurmountable
burden to carry
so heavy
too heavy
it weighed too heavily
on the whole
of my aching body

every day
I suppose
each one of us
has a burden
to bear
each in his own particular way
unknown to others
but existing on the inside
fermenting and waiting
to explode
into the world on the outside

today
I've found the courage
to find the nightmare house
but no longer now I'm searching
in the stranglehold of night
but whilst awake, instead
in the cold reality of light
no more asleep
no longer dumbly
following
the footsteps
of my semi-conscious mind
but wide awake
and trembling
so terrified
of what eventually I'll find

in that very last room



"Speak low when you speak love"

temi rose

because shouting at me
when what you really want to do is
fuck me is
self-defeating

"Our summer days wither away too soon"

for me
to have had enough swimming
lying watching the trees dance in the wind
leaves twisting
underside
overside
in delight

"Too soon"

we all die
always too soon

hawthorn

eamer o'keeffe

I carved our initials deep in the bark
of a hawthorn sapling on Hamstead Heath
though you left me forever, you kept coming back
to check that the letters were still engraved
on the flesh of my heart. When I heard of your new
relationship, I scored our names
out of that tree, leaving the raw
bleeding flesh beneath. It took forever
to strip myself of your memory
and grow a new skin that you couldn't melt

persona

temi rose

i see myself as an action transformer doll - twist me up
hard enough and i'll change shape, become another kind
of monster



the rock

najwa salam brax

the rock is still there, majestically crouching
like a sphinx overlooking my childhood memories
I used to climb it in summer, sit on top of it
early every morning, watching shepherds tending
their flocks of sheep across vast meadows
my village is blessed with greenery and paved
with streamlets.

I toss pebbles of luck and dream of
skyscrapers and towering buildings marked with
the veins of my rock. I lift my head, in my heart
a tiny star twinkles, feathers of love caress
the howling wind.

Beneath me, the valley screams
I open my arms to the stretched horizon, I feel
my spiritual fluids flow from the past to the future
the deepening secret of the rock beckons:
*sentenced are the things to whatever the changes
see how life should never weather, be consumed
names and forms are exhausted, individuality
is worn out by life's cycles. You will find me here
witness chair, welcoming arms, a bed to dream, a hive
above stingers, a seed of memory always in bloom.*

I like lotty places where I can hear
celestial music, feel love in each dew-pearled petal
taste the ambrosia and touch the gilded arrows of love
what magic has this rock performed - life spins on
life goes on... waves of time do not erode the rock
free water pounds against my feelings, trickles through
my pen. In a single grain of sand, mountains speak
and in a drop of water, oceans resound with awe
and grandiosity. I Kiss the wrinkled seat and gain insight.



double negative

rochelle hope mehr

wonderful things happen
just when you expect them
just when the (K)not
has finally choked off
all resistance

today I lit a candle
the flame rimmed my pain
it soared and scoured me
I could not speak

I used to write of nothing
before I learned to speak

going back to the first grade all grown

up

janet i. buck

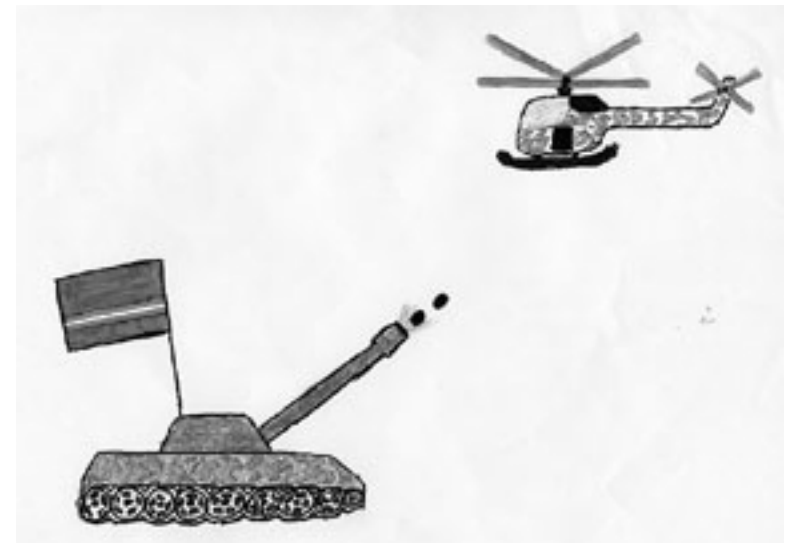
it's awkward going back
the schoolhouse looks small
like a pop can crushed by a foot
brick and gingerbread fade
the hill to the door
once Alpish with snow
the Knob as big as my hand
I considered that roof the hat of this world
Dickinson's bun a cinnamon role
all syrupy, poised, and pinned
on a strange gray theory of death
even the books, binding and tissue,
jaded by dust, are rounded
by answerless winds
I thought the lines would be straight
my nipples had never met silk or the twist
I was one piano Key awaiting
octaves and pages and sweat

teachers are squatty like boxes now
stewing on porches too close to the rain
I'm lecturing here, explaining a poem
when helium and bright balloons
will find the desert all alone
when scissors always find the kite
someone trips in each good waltz
feels the prickle, the thorn of the hair
if legs are braided and close
I'm busy recalling lips of the flowers
before hot summers fried the spring
airbrushed angels in the clouds
before a sunset's purple cloak
its Beatrice, its apple bruised
struck me from the leaning tree
"A carton of milk for the road?" you ask
I laugh that hoarse eternal scoff
up comes rust and old cocoons
an orange monarch flickers, halts
hushing creaks, the coffin's lid

to dvir and noy (killed in Kenya)

rochelle hope mehr

I cannot write with undue horror
of crush and grind and war anymore
the novelty has worn off
terror no longer inspires
a kneejerk shock of pity
now the outrage fulminates in me
and everything is a blur
full fury unchecked
by the gross distinction I used to make
between the fine sand, the ripened wine
the good life, paradise for a few precious days
and ground zero, your homeland
which now contains your burial plots a the plane lands
and your coffins retouch the earth
which your father floods with his tears





tired
temi rose
we are tired of being insignificant

