

Microfest 2010 New Paltz, New York

John Gredler

Take that path down to the place where the rock splits, the river there frozen into crinkled sheets fitted over the uneven stone, water flowing underneath in ever changing yet constant patterns thin and elusive, making strange music all the while. Stand there watching and listening until fingers and toes grow cold, thinking only of the water ever moving, always flowing down and away, never the same and soon gone.

Take that same path back again, perhaps renewed, perhaps just numb from the cold inability to fathom it all.



Now I am Ra ...(89)

Once I was the phoenix, and rose from ash,
newborn wings shivering off their dew.

Now I am Geb, Nut, and Shu.
Out of the dwat, I am coming.

Ba flutters around me, flies out ahead and leads the way,
its shadow eaten away by the all day sun.

The ka forever wears the head-dress of Maat.
Her empress beautiful, a peacock in my hand.

Now I am Ra, fire in the sky.
Once I was the phoenix, and rose from ash.
But now I am Ra.
Watch out.



Neil Selinger

You're not finished packing yet? We're leaving for the airport in 45 minutes.

If you'd stop pacing around and looking at your watch, maybe I could finish. Remind me again about the place we're going.

It's the tropics. You'll be in a bathing suit all day and something casual at night.

I don't know which of these sandals to take.

There are four pairs and they are all virtually identical. You're not helping.

We have plenty of room. Just put them all in the fucking bag.

Stop enabling me.



Julie Evans

Growing up we'd go to the Country Club every Friday night and I'd always order Walleyed Pike. I got to bring friends with me so I'd have someone to sit with as my parents sat in the bar and had cocktails. While we waited for the food, we'd play this game where we'd take one thing off the table while the other kids had their eyes closed. Our dinner would come and I'd take that beer batter off the Walleyed Pike and just eat that and the baked beans.



I am doing everything I know to do
I've done very little of it as well as I ought
I take this and I take that
and I'm not sure what does what
but now it has become superstition
to take it every day, thinking,
one day, it will deliver the goods
I eat vegan, drink water and pray constantly
I see an acupuncturist, a Jin Shin Master,
I get massages pretty often and I work out
at least five days a week and, still,
my health remains elusive.



He'd underestimated her reflexes. In an instant, fist met nose. Fist hers, nose his. By the time the blood began to flow, she was in her seat as if nothing had happened. Her rigid back with its perfect braid staring him down said she'd slam him again if he provoked her.

The teacher had seen nothing. He fished in his backback for something to clean the blood. Nothing but his gym shorts. He slumped down and wiped his nose as he eyed the telltale paper wads littering the floor.



Eduardo de McCann

He scratched the crumbling log in search of termites, but what he really wanted was another fix of margarine, mayonnaise and maple syrup. His radio collar signaled the station as he approached employee housing. The ranger looked at the screen, sighed, and reached for her keys. A repeat offender. She arrived in time to see the bear slash the screen door and poke his nose inside. She closed one eye, lined up the furry cinnamon rump in the cross hairs of her tranquilizer rifle and squeezed, whispering, "Take that!"



Tom Nolan

“Get your dog off my property!” the woman hollered from her cabin window. Harry looked across the small creek at Sam, burrowing energetically into her flowerbeds. Sam’s dirt-caked snout snapped up at Harry’s whistle then he resumed digging. Pissed, Harry vaulted the stream. As he approached, Sam’s head rose, a bone clamped in his jaws.

“A million acre wilderness Sam, why here?” Harry grumbled. “I’ll take that. Drop it.” He gasped. “Jesus! It’s human.”

“A former neighbor,” she said. Raising the shotgun she fired twice then grabbed her shovel.



The right word can take that idea and make it sing or dance or burrow or fly, all the while pulling the reader along.

The right word transforms the most mundane thought into the brushstroke that completes a masterpiece.

The right word grabs us by the imagination transporting us to other times or other universes.

The right word makes the story flow and the reader eager for more.

Every good writer knows this.

Your job, good writer, is to reach into your lexicon blindfolded and extract the right word.



El Jefe de la Playa

She said that he said
that he – you know
who he is – expected it all along –
“No do-overs,” he grumbled, “and don’t think
you get what you deserve
around here, even you, Mr. Nakedly Innocent,
standing your entitled ground,”

which then started rumbling, both of them,
he and she, swept up
in some roiling whitewater sluice
With the flowers and trees and snakes,
landing in a garden apartment in Flushing,
two snot nosed boys on her hips, she
pointing to a lunch pail on the formica table,
“Take that.”



Larry Winters

Her fingers trembled, as she reached for the hanger. Shock-tee-orange vibrated in the afternoon sun coming in the stores windows. She envisioned being seen miles away. Remembering being able to see her father's hunting vest as he came out of the woods on the other side of the farms largest field; she touched the hanger and imagined the mid thigh radiance and how it would poke at the half closed eyes of the women in her office. Raising her face to the saleswomen she pointed, "I'll take that."



"Take that, and that, and that!"

"Ugh!" I groaned, nauseous.

"You'll need that." She paused. "Yes, take that."

"No that. Never!"

"Then take that instead. You must."

"Can't." Turning green at the soupy liquid, I moaned.

"Take it now. It brings the fever down."

"I won't take that." I was hateful.

"It's this or that." She was firm

Surrendering, I took three gulps. My stomach rebelled and out flew all that.

"I can't take it. Let me die. Please?"

The cold compress brought me back for another round.



Ann C

He took it away – a little each day – the lifeblood of our marriage
with every sip of alcohol

He took it away – to the Montrose VA
Fourteen aching months of separation for the newlyweds

Counselor said “He must walk the path alone now –
too upsetting when you’re here.”

But ... what about the piece of me
that’s left behind the locked ward door?

And ... who should keep our unopened wedding album
still sitting in the clean white sturdy box?

In a weary whisper my blue-eyed Patrick said, “You take that.”



Jerry Brody

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

And, hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Cally!

He chortled in his joy.

Through all my dreams I've wished that it were so. Confronted by the Jabberwock, I would have my trusty sword in hand. I would turn and face him calmly. And with a quick one two of the wrist he would be dispatched. And then I would chortle.



Richard Gaynor

Years ago, helping my father
move his business, George gets
into a huge row with a future neighbor,
a semi-connected Brooklyn tough guy.

My father, 55, still the kid from 2nd Street,
him and Brooklyn get into it.
No punches, but mighty close. Lots of
words, angry words.

George concludes by telling Brooklyn to
“Go shit in your hat.” I almost fell down.
When men wore hats, about the worst
thing you could say.

Fuck you? That could have
Possibilities, but shit in your hat?
Just imagine.















