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**Howie Good
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J. J. Steinfeld
Brandon Roy
Akhil Katyal
Monica Mody**

9

nether / fortnight 9

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Howie Good / One Poem

Nightingale with a Toothache

Doomsday, a Thursday, dawns gray and wet. I meet a woman with a backside like a pear. The city wears a slouch hat. We move from one color into another. The words “mushroom” and “music” are contiguous in most English dictionaries. She brings an ancient wind-up phonograph with a horn loudspeaker. I give up trying to have the snow painted black. Everything we do is music. There’s something odd about seeing a piano burn.

*Howie Good, a journalism professor at SUNY New Paltz, is the author of the full-length poetry collections *Lovesick* (Press Americana, 2009), *Heart With a Dirty Windshield* (BeWrite Books, 2010), and *Everything Reminds Me of Me* (Desperanto, 2011).*

Monica Mody / One Poem

bootschrift

or, king to jester, “jester, give me a riddle to boot”

in/out

clue.i peered into a boot but it was dark inside.

clue.a myth lived inside a shoe.a boot in matted hair,licking a dried eye.

clue.myth tore off its shoe.braced its riding on a crown of dubious language.

clue.boots in parcels of democracy.

clue.peel off the boots like a dream inflamed.

clue.the boots are stuck on naxal glue.

clue.i am the best bootsman in history/i rub the boots backwards & they purr.

clue.bootmaster!i've come to be trained.your boot camp smells so good,this boot camp in a fairy tale bent house.

clue.all you bootapreneurs out there, it's a bootanical experiment!boot me in the head.they won't know if i'm coming or going.

clue.a boot fit on my tongue but wouldn't go in.it's sitting on my tongue sinking like raw plantain.

clue.the boot grows upright.the boot keeps me nailed.my fucking jaw hurts from holding the boot upright.a king stitched up my throat (thought it was sedition) & i gagged & sent smoke signals on oars & across seven seas they thought it was a glorious act.

clue.i boot myself straight every morning into my mourning shawl,mourning boots.they think it's black w/ dust, w/ disgust.but it's char,it's slag from my eyes the king burnt,my eyes shed,for light for raw biting newspaint.

clue.a moistened sickle tied to my nose ring,i melt the boots & they drip into my spittle.the boots swarm my tongue so hard & a bootless silence.

clue.i cheeked a reply to my lady love but she wanted me to strip so i stripped o king of boots o boots let me go please i'm small & i'm tired & i'm hurting all over.i'll leave & I won't look back & I won't look back.

or, girl in the red shoes to congregation, “you’d think having boots meant you could walk wherever you wanted”

in/out

Outside the shoe, or inside it? A rubble lives in between.

I’ve been hiding a pair of boots in a cupboard by the side of my bed. I put on a boot & the other ran away from me. I gritted my teeth & screamed, “BOOT!” but my scream grew tired of chasing after the boot. The boot vanished at a distance.

The boot will nip at you as it walks, teeth a-gleam. Tongue has swollen up teeth. Teeth ache like a sardine can.

Boots keep bringing me to this unknown shore. My head shorn of all appetite. Boots, I give you my word. I want to walk all over the world & under it, my fear split right down the middle. Boots wink at a passerby. How do they? A boot one day & a boat the next? I’m trembled, I’m humbled. I’m concrete encased in a rubber stamp. Mouth full of gutted teeth.

Boots draggle their way further. Boots, unconditionally lay me down. Lay me down. A limited human tries to fit into boots but boots walk further & further into a mannequin’s terrible belly. Gushing sentimental pleas.

Boots steer themselves into a thinning crowd but the white sun is panic. I serve then my bones of three & four, my platter of fat & rustle.

White boots lead me to a fairy so absolute her breasts jiggle into me & then I forget. You must be boots of forgetting. Boots worn on my head like a crown of thorns.

Boots’ unilateral dance. Boots living in the attic in my head & when they dance, the dance cracks into my head.

Stamp on my face. Stamp stamp on my face. I want a dance of destruction. I want a boot so finite I could slip right in & sleep. But my boots are cheap & break on me. Tearing & sobbing they run away from me & I have no recourse but to run after them.

Wretched boots. My chest caves in from their dance. But I must be a sucker or something because I clamp my jaws so they don’t escape. And their boom-boom can be heard far & wide & people run away from me.

Monica Mody's work has been published in the Boston Review (Poet's Sampler), West Wind Review, apocryphal text, horse less review, Cannot Exist, LIES/ISLE, Wasafiri, and Pratilipi, among other journals. She is the author of a chapbook, Travel & Risk, from Wheelchair Party, and has a book forthcoming in Fall 2012 from 1913 Press.

Jyona Vishveshwar / Three Pieces

Running blind

Panic hinges itself into her body swinging against her every time she moves the sky dances further away fever hot overcast she knows the men in the bar are staring she can't see them she wishes she was wearing a grey skirt she takes her glass to her lips spills some licks her lips feels like she's performing she wishes she had done it slower.

She senses a peculiar odour of someone's body at the end of the day so close almost indistinguishable voices all around converging senselessly at her forehead breaks screeching glass shattering a full morsel of silence before everything erupts again maybe someone's dead she considers erasing herself a little to accommodate someone else's dying lines but she can't stop now someone's hands are sliding past her waist they want to feel her tits appear unwitting touching her thigh while she slips off her chair onto her feet and panic strikes again everything translates into nothing better the swell of his ribs everything cascades into something possibly stillborn and there is no outside to this bar she ignores the frenzied knocking imagines he has a nice face slowly drops to her knees and raises her eyes just the way these men like it.

Camus says to will is to stir up paradoxes

He never participates with her in the slowness of her body, in its invented movement and when she leans back, tilting her neck against the seat, what he recognises in her face as love is but a succumbing to. Love too, in a way, only always as something being written off too quickly while in the wrong mood. Even then, she fears that nothing significant ever happened, that mere pleasure is never significant enough, that everything else is wayward, apparitional, lost in bed - she lunges for his hand. He neatly avoids it, changes gear - His misrecognition debates those questions incessantly. Someone has to be the first to give up so she lets her body fall back, her dress slip loosely off her shoulder allowing her breasts a little more. He knows these curves too well. He keeps his eyes on the road. Her face dips, again, that same succumbing.

She can't stop marvelling at the complexity of the sheet that covers their lives and how when he enters it, all she wants to do is fuck him, rough him up, drive her body into his, give him, let him come in her mouth, say things that limit air to shards, and not speak about it afterwards, or, or fight the next day morning, and the next, thrust themselves against each other in loud, furious strokes, abase themselves yelling, poison the air with crude, limited dialogue, and set themselves adrift in it. The struggle itself is enough to fill her heart. She must imagine she is happy because each time their bodies learn newer rhythms, newer ways of letting go, it doesn't matter that something isn't quite right. And like each previous time, they wake, clean up, and leave all at once. Nothing has happened.

Now in that unreasonable silence of the car she confronts the cruelty, overwhelming but so innocent, so full, the kind of death we all want so she calls it, holds it over her body and lets it consume her. She believes she wants it to destroy her, she silently accuses him of a certain levity in regard to her, all the while staring at him out of sleep and nightmare, schizophrenia taking shape in the stoned expanse of her eyes. Something grades the road. She can't stop and not remember how he moves too much and too fast, even his body unable to keep pace, and that she can only fall back and absorb his absences.

But he's got her, her silken haired, long boned, who likes shoes that make her legs look taut and she wonders if she's wasting her body on a man who never notices. She takes off a shoe and struggles to pick up her leg - his eyes on the road with an embattled intent, carved by the precarious angularities of the city screaming roads - and stretch it on the dashboard, while watching a long strand of her hair resting delicately on his shoulder.

The shift looms center-stage

The storm left behind all the things that wouldn't have mattered otherwise. These things became the minds of people and these minds became many many more deaths and the space that struck walls everywhere and the roads that caterpillared first and then cocooned and the butterflies that flew out of the city forever had no smell. Her small body trembled silently as she came and he held her tighter in a lie that was pure hell alone and waited waited till she moved blindly into one square and another and her body was all he had left. Her cheek was softer than the butterflies that didn't know where to go now that the roads were no longer roads and the minds didn't matter. She traced all the lies silently still silently into that single vein so erect in the dark of the storm and so real in its thoughtlessness. His body whispered philosophies of cruelty her legs lapsed into their sole truth and she looked away a final time. When she turned she found him looking at her breasts a new sleep rooted firmly in his eyes always at first half light when there was still no sound from the birds.

Jyona V lives and writes in Bangalore. She loves streetlamps that go off the very moment she walks under them.

Brandon Roy / Two Poems

There is something in the trees

On the hard branch high up
Impressions of black shadows sit
Organizing and reorganizing their shapes
I see a rare wonder in the motions
Or a little miracle

To see the blaze
In my eyes, not looking
Fire destroys the tree's designs
Broken leaves fall, one by one
No ritual, calamitous

I know, I think at least,
The lawn is a silent place
From my room, I can see the
Garden complain: Too much sun,
Too much water. Not enough
Burning love

She Wades

Far down river in New Orleans,
the river rises, high, in the summer.

Her hands finger the dirty water,
it's the lifeblood in her veins.

The grass is trimmed low near the
muddy beds where the water rushes by.

Her hands, wet, dry in the sunlight
as she stares at a little girl.

Brandon S. Roy is the editor of the Panulaan Review. He has been published extensively over the years. He doesn't really like talking about himself.

J.J. Steinfeld / One Poem

A Not So Absurd Survey

If given the choice between
a mystifying fugue state
or temporary amnesia

between being a released prisoner
or an escaped prisoner

between death by love
or life by lovelessness

between meeting Kafka
or a current literary celebrity

between a dream of life
or a life of dreaming

which boxes would you check
on the survey sheet
you were handed
by a slightly drunk artist
who could paint portraits
of long forgotten deities
as though they were human?

Canadian poet, fiction writer, and playwright J. J. Steinfeld lives on Prince Edward Island. He has published fourteen books — ten short story collections, two novels, two poetry collections — along with five chapbooks, the most recent ones being Misshapeness (Poetry, Ekstasis Editions, 2009), A Fanciful Geography (Poetry Chapbook, erbacce-press, 2010), and A Glass Shard and Memory (Stories, Recliner Books, 2010). His short stories and poems have appeared in numerous anthologies and periodicals internationally, and over forty of his one-act plays and a handful of full-length plays have been performed in North America.

Akhil Katyal / One Poem

Returning from the Piccadilly Cinema

Tim thought it slightly odd
that, after a movie, he would
think so much of him. To
overreact to a film might
seem a little sad to you,
and so it did to Tim, but
movies, they do that to you.
Walking back, he thought of
those days with him, 'what's
the point,' he asked, 'of looking
into the past, it only tells you
how long misunderstandings last,'
yet this twenty-five year old
kept on chewing the plot in his
head, the guy in the film, he
remembered, said 'I love you
still, there is no point lying,
in the end we're all dead, or
dying,' on his way back, Tim
did not think of anything as
far as tha', but wished he
knew, tonight, if not how to
set right what now was riven,
at least to know how much he
had to forgive and be forgiven.

(Thanks to Vikram Seth)

Akhil Katyal is a writer currently based in London and soon to return to Delhi. His dream is to write the biography of Agha Shahid Ali.