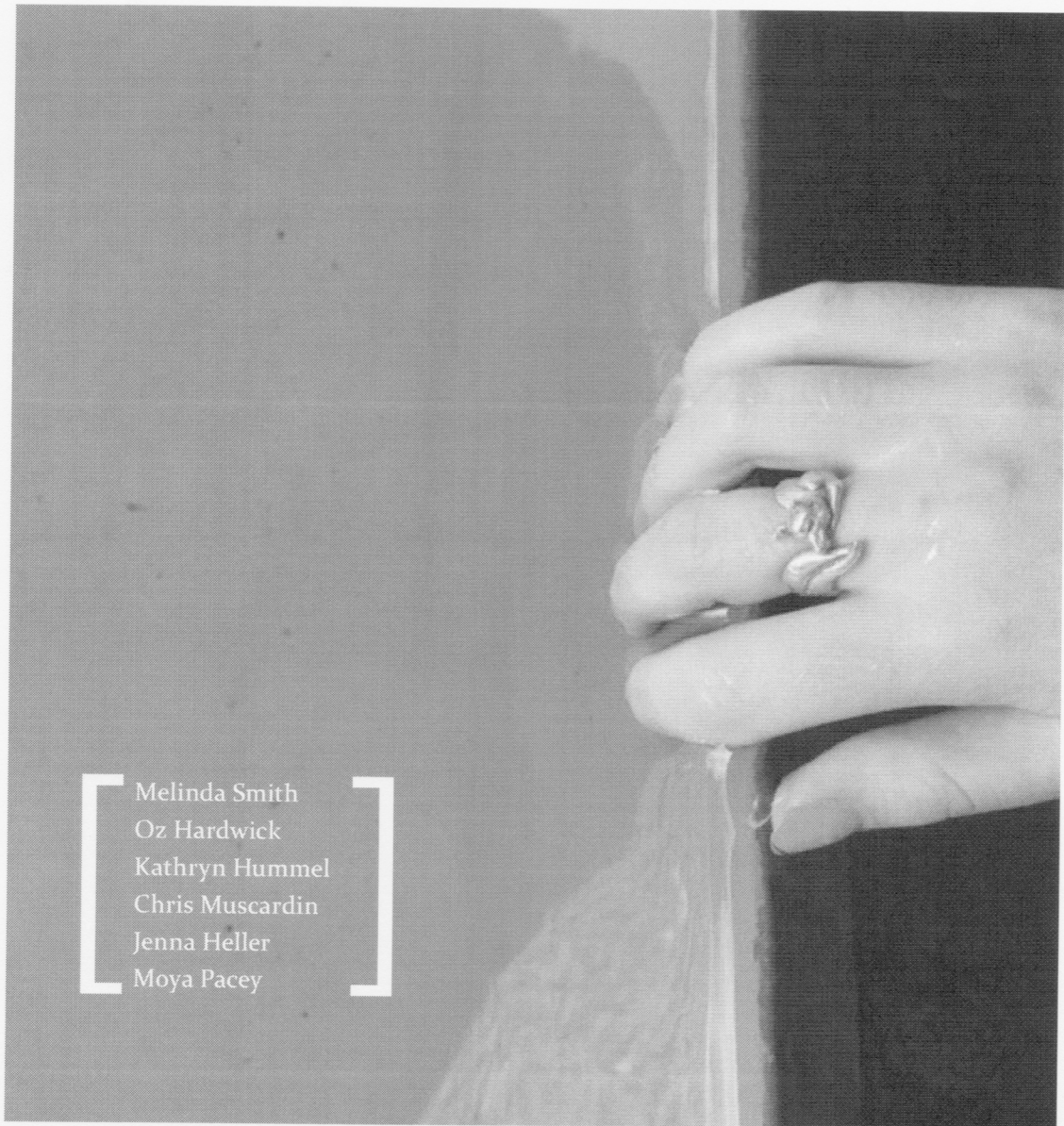




MENISCUS

L I T E R A R Y J O U R N A L

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GERARD SARNAT

Francine's Memorial

(from *DISSOLUTE COOT HOOTS*)

Her slow growing plant bloomed an adult. That's cause to celebrate even when wilted.
During early moltings regathering of old community, our children and theirs show up demonstrating you can't put fetters on love. Second time in 2 weeks, what once served as a post birthday suit, at first I wore to brisses, bat mitzvahs then to weddings, has become what one uses for funerals. From this moment on, my change of plans is to leave dress shirt with its tie tied plus belt already looped—till homebound thusly no longer able to attend such events. Both women had made earth much better extending themselves to whomever needs. I admit overlooking those impacts compared to less transcendent men's curriculum vitae ... She laughed just like bells which now toll.

ANTHONY MACRIS

Four-Poem Suite for My Son, Who Has Autism

I.

From the top of your white wardrobe,
through the deadness
of a winter night
a stuffed panther
with an oversized head
stares down at your bare-chested
infant's body,
indifferent to your hours of suffering.

Wreathed in the dull glow
of damp twisted sheets
you make your final whimpers,
each small cry
each flutter of your eyelids
diminishing your pain
diminishing my pain
until you fall asleep.

Your bed becomes a leaf-shaped boat.
I watch it glide down a black glass river
that reflects a sky of frozen stars.

From the muddy riverbanks
woodland creatures
help me keep watch over you
— a rabbit, a frog, an owl,
a spider on its trembling web —
as you drift silently away.

Once upon a time
 there was a pretty fly
 but one night he flew away
 flew away
 into the sky
 into the moon.

I want to fill the darkness
 of your empty room
 with a different song
 that will bring you back to me.

II.

When you finally returned
 you were changed.
 Did you understand what had been taken from you?
 Did you know you could no longer speak?
 Did you know you could no longer
 see what others saw
 hear what other heard
 feel what others felt?

Did you know you lived at our whim?
 That if we chose not to feed you,
 you would die of starvation?
 That if we chose not to love you
 we, too, would die,
 die of a sickness
 no senses could grasp
 no words could name?

III.

Before we see ourselves reflected
 we are coextensive with the world.
 But now the wooden ruler

[64]

bends in the pure clear water,
 the voices stagger
 in the patchwork fog,
 the thorn that stabs
 evokes only mild surprise,
 the drop of blood it draws
 a beading jewel on your arm,
 a lady bird that catches your eye,
 that swells, bursts, then trickles.

Je n'est pas un autre.
 Maybe there was never an I
 to become another.
 Maybe there was never a reflection.
 Maybe there was never a coextensivity.
 Maybe there was only undifferentiation
 pierced by
 the creaking bed, the fevered sheet,
 the freezing air in the burning throat that tickles,
 that sets you giggling so hard
 I want to slap you.

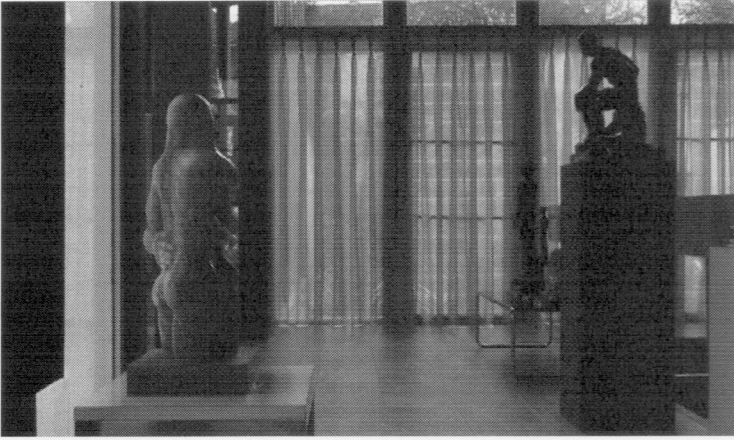
IV.

Late summer afternoon.
 It hasn't rained for months.
 In our back yard
 sheltered by the frangipani tree,
 you stand ankle-deep in the water
 that fills the blue plastic shell
 I'd hauled up from K-Mart.
 You pour precise measures
 from your lidless sippy cup.
 You watch the spangles of water
 lit by fading sun
 plummet through the drought dry air.
 Splash, splash, splash.

[65]

Your mother and I
peg clothes
to the washing line.
You pause, smile,
look in our direction.
You pucker your
mute lips in pleasure.
Your eyes are glassy,
one-way mirrors
that you can see out
but that we can't see in.

Transfiguration



Transfiguration

An indifferent god
raised his fist
and before my eyes
crushed my son.

I stood frozen in the yellow light
of the tiny spare bedroom
I'd made into a study,
breathless at the cruelty.

I'd failed the first test.
I felt sorry for myself,
stunned by rage
at the corruption
of my new father's pride.
Why me, I sobbed. Why me?

Rise above it, I told myself.
Be a man, I told myself.
I turned from flesh to stone.
I turned from stone to steel.
Then I turned to rust.

The indifferent god
lifted his fist.
My son sprang up,
a shattered cherub made whole again,
his smile empty,
his gaze vacant,
his entire being turned in on itself,
trapped in a loop of exhilaration.

Alone in the darkness
of our bedroom

my son's mother
felt no self pity.

She died only to be
dragged back to life,
a transfiguration in reverse.

When she emerged,
her skin scorched,
her soul in tatters,
she still moved with her dancer's grace,
holding him close,
close but not too tight,
petrified he would break.

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The Manchester Review

About us

Issue 1 of the Manchester Review appeared in October 2008: it aspired to bring together online, without a paper edition, the best of international writing, publishing both well-known, established writers and new, relatively unknown poets and prose-writers.

Since then the Review has, we think, made good on that ambition, having published new work by Martin Amis, John Banville, Jennifer Egan, Bill Manhire, Paul Muldoon, Ali Smith, Colm Toibin and CK Williams as well as exciting younger writers including Jenn Ashworth, Kevin Barry, Paul Batchelor, Lucy Durneen, Andrew Jamison, Caleb Klaces, Rebecca Perry and many others.

With the move to our new site in January 2016, we will continue our tradition of publishing exemplary new writing. Though we only publish two issues per year in Spring and Autumn, the site is regularly updated with reviews of books, art, film, and music in the hopes of documenting the constantly evolving cultural landscape of our beloved Manchester.

The Manchester Review is published from the University of Manchester's Centre for New Writing and will continue to host podcasts of its readings and discussion events at the Martin Harris Centre, hosted now by our new Professor of Creative Writing Jeanette Winterson. We hope you'll bookmark and continue to return to this site.

The Editors

John McAuliffe and Lucy Burns

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