



ISSUE 1, 2006



the fieldstone review

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Editors' Note

Holly Luhning and David Craig Hutton

Literary journals should be original and intellectually fulfilling. In this progressive online format, we hope that *TFR* adheres to this basic credo. As the journal evolves we will strive to include more multimedia aspects to each issue, such as audio and visual recordings, photography, and other visual art.

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TFR began, in part, to bring together emerging and established writers and thinkers. With this, our first issue, we think we have achieved our goal. In our first edition you will find work from artists such as Jeanette Lynes and Glen Sorestad alongside pieces by promising writers like Alison Frost and Dianne Miller. You'll also find reviews of books emerging from some of Canada's innovative small presses.

We anticipate that *TFR* will be a long-lasting place for development, a forum to expose writers from diverse backgrounds to a creative format to showcase their work, and a place for discussion, ideas, and growth.

Enjoy the first issue,

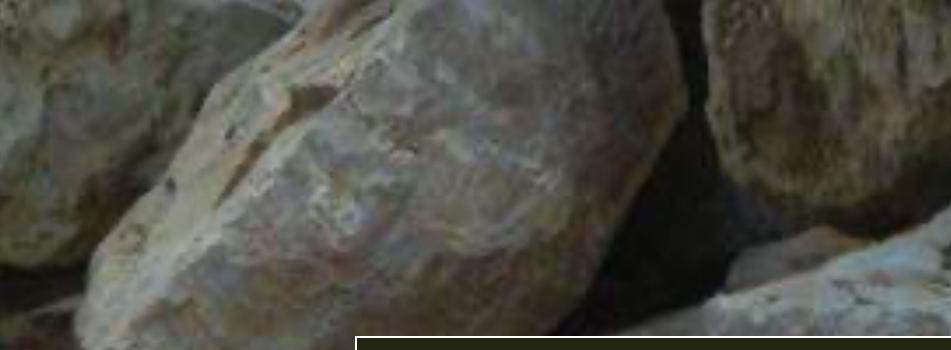
Holly Luhning (Editor-in-Chief)

David Hutton (Managing Editor)

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**POETRY
&
PROSE**



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Three Triolets For A Friend Trying Out Internet Dating

Jeanette Lynes

1. She Is Enamored

Beware the K-Mart of the heart --
The digital man reads you poems
over the phone? *Duh.* Please be smart,
beware the K-Mart of the heart;
he saw your post, he lyres his part --
he could be spawn of garden gnomes.
Beware! The K-Mart of the heart,
the digital man. Read this poem!

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2. She Is Less Enamored

Is he a serial killer?
You flew to his ranch for dinner,
quite the spread, the music "Thriller."
Is he a serial killer?
He'd pictured, this rich oil driller,
you thinner, more of a winner.
Is he a serial killer?
You flew to his ranch for dinner.

3. She Is Hungry, Not Enamored In The Least

It's too bloody complicated --
you're on a diet now, but still,
the rancher was over-rated.
It's too bloody complicated.
He deemed your flesh fat, ill-fated;
The thought of him now tastes like swill.
It's too bloody complicated!
You're on a diet now, but, *still...*

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Roller Boogie (Wheecles Roller Rink, 1982)

Kimmy Beach

I park *Fernando* my '67 Ford
Falcon Station Wagon (black
where it's not rusted)
in the lot next to *Susan's* burning Susan's '78 Nova
the parking lot is full of muscles and heater wagons
idling drivers cars full of teenagers
smoking drinking beer
I walk right past the door
skates passed over my shoulder
call *Hi Scott!* over everyone's heads
he buzzes me in through the lobby doors
I don't have to pay I work here

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(I used to work concession but not anymore
everybody starts back there up to your neck
in burnt butter and spilled pop syrup
or worse spaghetti
that old leather shirt into sweaty rental skates
I like to dry-mop after the skaters have left
and sometimes Scott will let me change the record
now that I'm eighteen my favourite job is
Skating at the rink with a waltz
I blow when someone cuts across the rink or speed
-skates on kid's skate you could get hurt or run into
a kid if you start going the wrong direction just to be an
asshole you get whistled and there's no food on the rink
if something spills you can trip on that)

I'm not working tonight
tonight I'm skating
my hair is curled in fragrance
with *White Shoulders*
my *Bealemania* T-shirt tight over my breasts
Susan's already out there she sees me
from the rink and waves
Keith and Ira are playing foosball
near the skate rental booth

I never wore rentals bought my own
skates before I ever set foot on the rink
taught myself to skate backwards
in our big unfinished basement
avocet legs concrete dipped
mano a mano sliding feet overhead crashing on boards
from living room to kitchen
technopop on my cheap cassette player
turned up scratchy and distorted

wearing rentals is like wearing
tape on your glasses
the fuzziest boot covers in the world can't hide
dirty orange rental wheels
the feel of other people's sweat
moving around socks

Scott spins *Celebration* by Kool and the Gang
Susan flirts with Chris
spins and skates backwards
constantly touching her
hair to keep it out of her eyes

I wave at Brian and Jackie sitting in the hard
orange booths along the edge of the rink
sipping Coke through straws
eating two-and-a-half popcorn
wrinkled whites
Scott glides out of the office
his whistle on a chain around his neck
he's nearly two feet taller than me
his skates on and me still in shoes

see you for slow skate he says
that's his supper break
Chris with his new spinning
the records so Scott can dance with me
I ask for *Cool Change* by Little River Band
and the Eagles *I Can't Tell You Why*
you got it he kisses the top of my head
skates to the DJ booth

Living on Video by Trans-X pumps
electric from speakers
and on the rink
a parade of bell-bottoms widened
extra denim pieces added head after head of waving
feathers hats home perms
Mötley Crüe tight bodysuits
sparkle eye shadow long chains on the boys
Nazareth T-shirts polyester and shoulder pads

I throw my denim jacket and Nikes into a locker
pin the key to the back pocket
of my brand-new Fancy Ass jeans
carry my skates to a red carpeted bench
breeze from my friends revolutions
strips my hair at the rinkside

my skates are white Sure-Grip high-tops
plate number 1982-1982-1982
with Precision Bearing wheels
they've got split leather linings, adjustable
trucks, and axles that won't lose it
when they're cranked wide open
I keep the axles oiled,
so the trucks don't drag my trucks
loose for better cornering
first thing I did was replace the factory Sure-Grip
wheels with ones of my own American Dreams
those were the best wheels for 1982
it was worth the extra bucks I spent
for the looks I got from the guys
envy gloves from girls
lots of them American Plus
they're an okay wheel but
a solid step down from the Dreams
give you smooth ride and speed

I don't wear my
boot covers I like the beat-up look
of my skates the laces
have many dark gashes in the leather
scratches and wrinkles show I'm serious
not afraid to enter the speed skate contest
or dance with Chris, the best waltzer at the rink

I'd like to be skating with Darren I want the rough
look of my skates to match his
I glide to the can
my jeans are too new but otherwise
I'm fine as good
my hair is perfect
straight at the back feathered sides
put on some Chocolate Lip Smackers
tuck the tube into my back pocket

I wait for Susan to come around
take two spins with her while I look for Darren
blue plastic floor worn under our wheels
red brick and dark orange walls
the blue ball goes under a bank
of speakers at the center

Katie is crying in the back corner again
Barb holding her shoulders
Darren's an asshole, Katie
you should break up with him
she's been having the same conversation
every night for three weeks
Katie and Darren fight a lot
but they always make up

as I round the next corner I see
Darren at the DJ booth talking to Scott
who's just put on *Rapture* by Blondie
Darren's been outside for a day Maurier
when I first met him he had a tan
he smelled of tobacco and cool rain

I spin backwards, catch his eye,

and tilt my head at him

he joins me and we dance to the hot sounds

chatting about nothing

his new jeans I don't watch behind me

put my hand behind my ears

he guides me occasionally

around slow skaters touching the hip

of my jeans to shift me over

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My family gives me prizes for my birthday

Heidi Greco

They know that I have everything
I could ever need, so instead
they give me flowers, in bunches, tied with ribbons.
Others by the bucketful, picked with love and scissors
scouted from the backyard in between the springtime rains.
Daffodils and lilacs, a vase of rainbowed tulips, softening
and floppy as cottontail ears.

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Some
are even store-bought. Colourful *gerberas*,
leggy babies swooped in plastic straws. A blooming
African violet I will surely kill by June.

I have roomfuls of bouquets: mums with green salal,
leaves for every year of joy, buds to mark the tears.
But mostly cheery blossoms -- yellow, lots of orange
sunny colours to brighten the house, souvenirs of all
the noise and mess when they were small, reminders
how they brought me love, even then, in droopy clumps
dandelions, spilling out
from tiny sweated fists.

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Sprawl

Mike Barnes

Is there time for a small poem just now,
amid the numb or frenzied packing, the voices sounding
last-call? If so, here's one. You and I
speeding down off the Barrie snow plains
back to Toronto, cresting one of those long familiar hills
you said, "The sprawl," and then I saw it:
a vast fretwork of lights shimmering
to the horizon, unfurling
an umbrella of glow in miles of milky haze.
A city. Our city. It spelled us
with its intricacy, blithe power and extent,
and to think, we gushed in our speeding
black capsule down again, not even the smallest of the gleams
not planned, manufactured, installed and kept lit
by someone. We drove under that aura,
blinking up at it like mice at the Milky Way,
but Russian-dolled inside our awe
was the fact that "the sprawl," the phrase itself,
came from a novel we'd both read and loved.

That, too,

invoked a galaxy behind the rock, a sprawl inside the sprawl.

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Orange Light

Mike Barnes

Propped up on high white pillows
in the bed, he said:

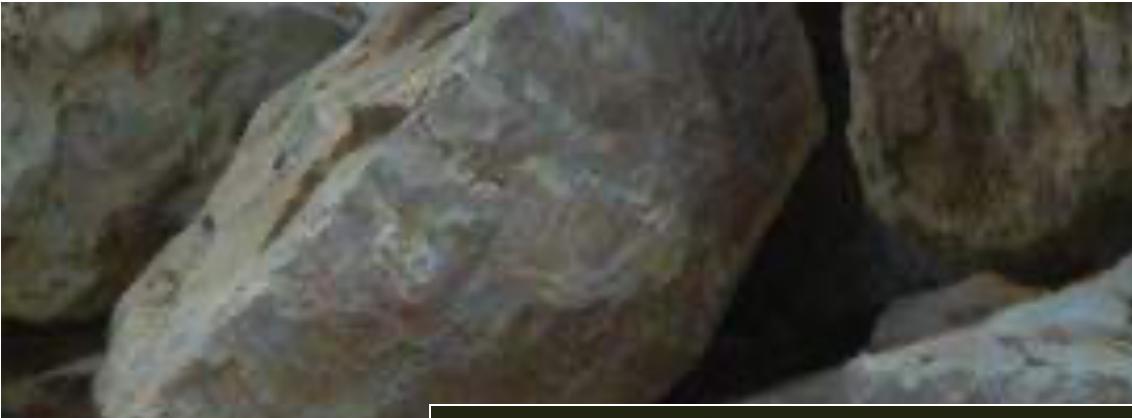
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I remember visiting her studio
that first time. Four floors up,
cold water down the hall.
I had to climb up the fire escape
because of another painter.
Dusty beams and ducts
criss-crossed the high brickwork,
and orange light seemed
always to be roaring
through the grimy, fretted windows.
Her fingers were always caked
with pigments-chrome yellows, whites-
and I remember thinking fleetingly,
I'll die of lead poisoning.

But you didn't, I remarked.
One of his daughters had come in
and asked if he needed anything
and when he said no
had kissed him on the forehead.

Well it wasn't for lack of trying,
he said smiling to himself.

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Presences/Absences

Glen Sorestad

What matters most
is the comfort
I know
because you
are here,

but even more
the knife
of fear I know
your absence
would bring.

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Morning Declaration

Glen Sorestad

This morning the northwester is a blustery
declarative sentence replete with clausal gusts
and punctuated with rainy exclamations.

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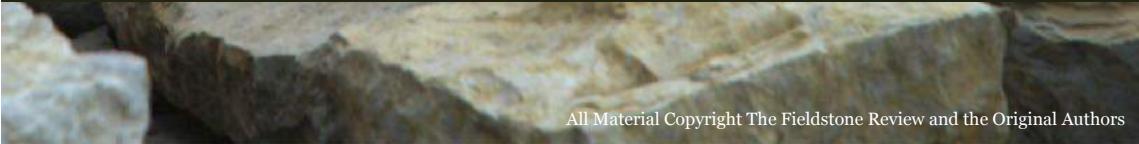
The golf course is a silent thought;
even omnipresent Canada geese have
opted not to declare their plaintive intent,

gone to shelter somewhere beyond
their utterance. Trees shake their leaves
like pompom quotation marks.

Those in subordinate servitude to dogs
have been taken out, thoroughly awakened
and returned safe to their warm homes.

Only my partner and I, who insist on our
fitness imperative, lean, two slashes into the rain
and follow our syntactical route home.

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Mrs. Parker Has Accidents

Jenny Ryan

Sometimes her soul
slides out
like the hem of a slip
hanging,
glimpsed.

Sloppy, but sexy
a bra strap
she doesn't tuck in
right away.

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Postures, 5

Lindsay Zier-Vogel

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Posture One:

He stands with a sleeping spine,
a small and careful curve
that rounds itself like empty fingers from an unused palm.

Posture Two:

Thighs cross at knees
and his shoulders angle - south-west, north-east,
a pointed compass
with confused vertebrae falling somewhere underneath.

Posture Three:

Straight as a street,
laid in naked instead of asphalt,
he divides the mattress in equal triangles
and sleeps the morning's earliest light in two.

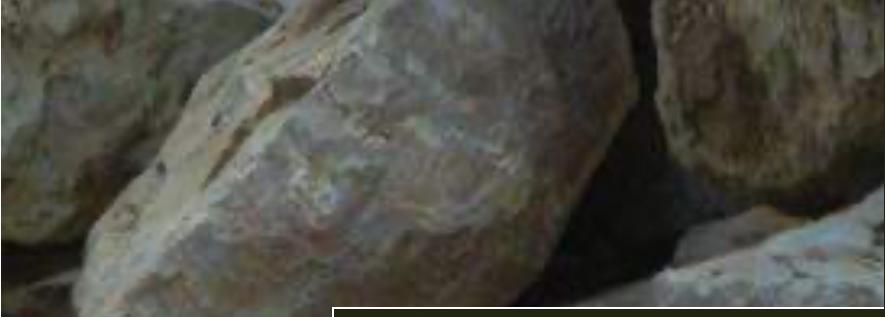
Posture Four:

Hands fit into pockets
as they fit into hands,
knees straight as elbows,
the only horizontal lines are his belt,
and his collarbone,
the rest track sky to ground,
north to south
and straight as untangled yarn.

Posture Five:

The back of the chair holds his head
and his feet (sanded)
angle in sharp creases from the table
that holds both of our drinks.

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The visit

Dianne Miller

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I come to the cemetery
ironically, metonymically
named Mount Hope.

I can't remember where she's buried
though my mother showed me once--
Not on the hilltop where one son sleeps
beside his first wife, his second wife
beside her first husband close by.

Farther on, I pass the tombstone of his lover
Such a cozy place, all these stories
leaching from bones, draining into silence.

I find her at the bottom--my grandmother--
at the bottom of Mount Hope,
beside him of whom little was spoken
(in the end they had to watch him every minute
for fear he'd shoot them all).

I've come to ask her advice--this woman whose doleful eyes
reach beyond a faded photograph, all I have of hers--
That, and the farm I've just inherited,
the one she inherited from her father, and he from his.
I'm guessing she knows a lot, having lived
there as a girl, nursed her dying brother,
taken her chances with a man who once
tore an owl out of the sky with his whip.

At home she birthed a daughter, two sons,
taught them
'the less you have
the less you have to do'.
Must have seemed odd,
a scarcity of everything but chores--
milking, haying, planting, weeding, milking...

Today is hot and muggy.
Crickets sing.
Beside her grave, pale pink roses
planted in love or out of duty,
sun not quite burning through a veil of clouds
 vale of tears, voila, voile, voy elle
I stand at the bottom of Mount Hope
at my grandmother Oradell's grave
and wait.

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It was really sad on the day of Danny's funeral. Every sky looked so mournful. I guess it was because there were so many people—gave the whole senior class, and Danny's teachers, the others players on the team—gave him a send-off. My mother came, too, and at least a hundred of Danny's relatives drove here from Phoenix and all over the state. Some of them even came from Mexico.

Danny's mother asked me to come back to her house after his funeral. She said she had been sitting in the whole time until the graveside service ended reading. Then Lenora stepped out of the crowd. She walked up to Danny's mother, and they kissed. She came over to me and kissed my cheek. Next she went up to Oscar. She was talking to him about something, but I didn't know what it was. I guess it was about the shooting. I guess something happened. Lenora started backing up, away from Oscar. After a few steps she stopped, all the time staring at Oscar's eyes like she was begging him for something. I guess she wanted him to say he was sorry. She turned around and walked through the crowd. It was a big crowd. Pretty soon I couldn't see her no more, and we all left.

"I told Danny," Oscar explained. "He told me all about who Danny shot himself. It was because of Lenora. She had a boyfriend back in Texas. A few months ago, this boyfriend moved here to be close to her. He took a job in town, and Lenora started seeing him again, but she was seeing Danny too. She told Danny that she was in love with him."

"I told Danny," Oscar said, "deal with the guy or get rid of the bitch. I put the gun in his hand. It's all in front," he said.

But I took the gun away, and then I gave it back to Danny. So who was really to blame? And if Danny had to die, what was the reason?

A couple of weeks passed, and my mother kept asking if I was all right. I didn't know what to tell her, and she didn't know what to do. Then one day she decided to call her sister in California. She talked about me like I wasn't even there, and after she hung up, she told me she'd decided. It was time for me to meet my Tia Teresa.

Up to then, I only knew about my life from the stories I heard, and a picture of her in my mind. I never saw her. I never met her. I never even thought about her. Everybody in the family says so, but if people don't know her, they think she's a widow.

To give an example, she was the first to know my grandpa died. She called my mom from California, and said to make the funeral arrangements. My mother got excited. She said, "What are you talking about? Apa, este bien. He's in the other room." Then she went into the den to take a look, and grandpa was already dead in his chair. She took off his shirt and my dad's tie and put it on him. She sat down inside his hands, and she stared into my eyes. When my mother was near, she inside. "Cecilia, you are blessed. You are doubly blessed." She didn't even want to let go of me. Later on, she explained that she's a little crazy, she's really good.

Well, anyway, a week later, we took a bus to see my tia in California. My cousin met us at the Greyhound Station and drove us to my tia's house. When she heard the car, she came up the front door. I was carrying a bag of clothes, but she stopped me, so I took it off. She took off my shirt and my tie and put it on me. She sat down inside my hands, and she stared into my eyes. When my mother was near, she inside. "Cecilia, you are blessed. You are doubly blessed." She didn't even want to let go of me. Later on, she explained that she's a little crazy, she's really good.

This was because of the gang. And my tia lives on a street with a gang, but we told us not to worry, the gang protects the barrio. We could walk anywhere we want and be safe, except don't go north, she said. Every place else was okay.

Anyway, I didn't care about going out for a walk. There was a room just for me, and I could go in there whenever I wanted. I could go in there and sit down and cook me in the kitchen, so I closed the door and hung out in bed. I had such terrible thoughts. All my life, God had been there for me. But now, I didn't think he was there. I thought he was gone. I thought if I closed my eyes, I would sleep him. And if I would do that, why wouldn't God—who's supposed to be so perfect—and see everything that happens, and love every single person?

I never had such thoughts or such a heavy, achy feeling in my chest. It must have been from loneliness.

Then one night I couldn't sleep at all. One, two, three in the morning. Finally I got out of bed. I was dressed already and tired of lying on my back, so I got up and went outside on the front porch. There was nothing going on. All the houses were dark and quiet. I could hear the dogs barking. I could hear the birds singing. I could hear the wind. I must have walked for maybe an hour, and then I wondered if I was heading north, where my tia told me not to go. Which way was north? I didn't know that

I came to a place where the streetlights didn't work and people lived in darkness. The houses looked older here, and a lot of them had mean dogs. They were barking up to the fence and showed their teeth. Doberman and a couple of pit bulls, acting like they were going to attack. I could hear them barking. I could hear them growling. I must have parked for maybe an hour, and then I wondered if I was heading north, where my tia told me not to go. Which way was north? I didn't know that

I walked so far that finally there was no more houses, just an empty street which led to a highway. That's where I stopped, like a hitchhiker, waiting to be picked up. I waited until I could find a car. I waited until I could see the lights that I could ever find my way back. So I sat down on the curb, and I decided just to wait there until I could figure out how to get out. This was very quiet night, and I could smell the air. It was pretty miserable to wind up in a place like that. The sky was black. The stars were out. The moon was full. I could hear the wind. I could hear the rain. I said out loud, "God, if You are real, come down here and show Yourself. You wouldn't leave me here if You were still my friend."

I waited a long time, a whole hour, and He didn't show up. Finally, I got so tired that I fell asleep. I was so tired, I fell asleep. I think maybe I feel sleepy. A car woke me up. At first it sounded far away, but it come closer really fast. I came roaring toward me like maybe the muffler had a big hole. Soon it sounds so loud, I could hear it. I could hear the engine. This was very quiet night, and I could smell the air. It was one of those antique cars from the Fifites at least, with a couple of tall fins. It must have been a Buick. It had a bunch of noise, but nobody turned on a house light, so I guess they were used to it.

I thought, "I thought you were real. You're still my friend."

When he got to the curb, he stopped and looked at me over. "What's wrong with you?" he said.

"Nothing," I said. "I just wanted him to leave."

"You sad or something?" he said. Then, before I could answer, he said, "I came to tell you. God is real, man. It's true."

I didn't believe what I was hearing.

Then he said it again. And he told me I was very special and God had a plan just for me.

"Did God send you here?" I said.

"That's right," he said. "He sent me to tell you."

I figured there was no way this guy could know about my prayer, so I asked, "Are you an angel?"

That set him off. He laughed so hard, his voice broke, and then he started coughing. He was laughing so hard, he was doubled over. Then he stopped. Then he laid down. And then he got real serious, and he said, "How did you know I'm an angel?"

So I told him. I said, "I asked God to come here and talk to me."

"No shit," he said. "That was you!" He wiped his nose on the back of his hand. "Well, He couldn't make it," the angel said, "so He sent me. He told me to tell you. He loves you, man. You got to believe me."

"Okay," I said because I thought it must be true.

Then he bent down to get closer, and stared at me with deep-set eyes and his brown leather face. He made me happy, "he said. "This job's a bitch. I know it's gonna be hard, but you can do it. You can do it. You're the first." Then he shrugged like to say, what can you do? And he walked back to the Chrysler. He drove so fast, he left a chunk of tire on the street. Then he swung the car around in a circle, screaming like a chicken, and shot down the street so fast that POOF! He just disappeared.

When the sun came out, I raised my head off my arms, so I must have been sleeping. But then I saw the tread from the angel's car, still printed on the street, and that proved he wasn't just a dream.

By now there were cars up and down the highway. Being by. It was time to go, so I decided to go to the station. I came to the station with I came to the Transo station. It was very big and took up a whole corner. There must have been a least a dozen pumps, and a big garage, and some toilets in a store that sold everything. But there were locks on the windows, so I guess they were closed. There was a wire cage over the outside windows, which didn't say too much for the neighborhood.

I wanted to ask the counter guy for directions, but I didn't know my address. I didn't even know her name. I didn't know if I was going to the right. I was lost. By then, the day was very very dark. There were shadows on the window. I could see a blue ocean of sky, and clouds like beaches of pink and white sand.

After the station, I seemed to know the way, and soon I came to a neighborhood I had never seen before. It had palm trees and fenced in yards and stucco houses. Across the street I saw a big polo verde, my favorite tree because it reminds me of one in the Bible, the Tree of Life. It doesn't have leaves, and it looks kind of like a palm tree.

While I was looking at this tree, I heard dogs and chickens. Then a cock crowed, and I felt like I was back in Tucson. Even the names on the mailboxes were the names of my neighbors, Chavez, Hernandez, and Rosales. But when I looked across the street, I saw a man sitting on a bench under a tree. He was sitting under a tree, waiting for me. So I crossed the street and climbed the porch stairs.

She asked me to sit with her awhile. My mother was still sleeping. "You had a good night, mi jefe," she said. "The last time I saw you was when you were getting married. She said the first time to her, all she saw around me was beauty. She just listened to it all, and then she said I'm still happy to be so special to her."

"What's wrong?" she said.

"He didn't come," I said. "I still don't know why He let Danny die. Do you know, tia?"

"No," she said. "I don't know that either."

I traced away from her toward the street.

"But if you want the answer," she said. "I can tell you what you have to do." She led me into the house. Then she found a notebook, like the ones I use in school, and a pen, which she must have gotten from her dental's office. Along the side of the pen, it said, ENJOY A PLEASANT DENTAL EXPERIENCE. She gave me the pad and the pen, and she told me to write. "I want you to write everything," she said.

And that's what I've been doing all day, writing down the story of my life, up until six o'clock this morning. My tia said that when I finish, I should read it over, so that's what I'm going to do. Then I'll go to bed. And in five days, I'll go to the dentist. And then she told me to go to all the dentists that had happened. She says to keep doing this every five years, and in time, it will start to happen. At the end of my life, she said I will find the answer that I want in the story that I am writing.

I will read it back, she promised, and then I will understand why everything had to happen in such a way. Why I had to meet Carla first, and promise to marry her, before Maria and I fell in love. And why God, though He loves us all, watched Danny Romeo put a bullet in his head.

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before Maria



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Just Another Story About Billy the Kid

Jan Conn

Through the ornate ceiling he shoots some bullets.
The sky is very yellow; sun indigo.
Puts his gun in his belt, whirls his peculiar hat
through the air.

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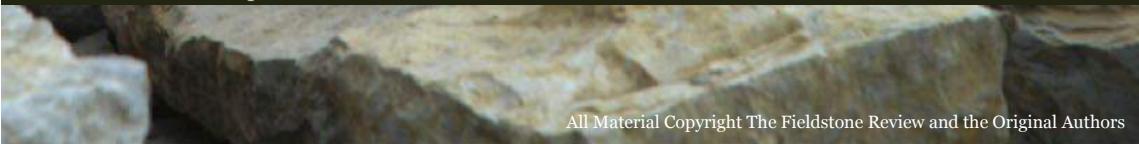
Uncoiling as they go, garter snakes shed their luminous skins
and one by one depart their communal den.

Night flies past. He puts his face
perpendicular to this century and weeps.

A small explosion occurs behind a black door, then another.
When he sleeps he dreams of his former wives naked
in the dark, leaping from wildflower to wildflower.

He keeps lightning in a bottle, is stoked before evening.
Like a magnet he gathers action
and beautiful red-haired girls, their fizzed hair.

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Self-Portrait

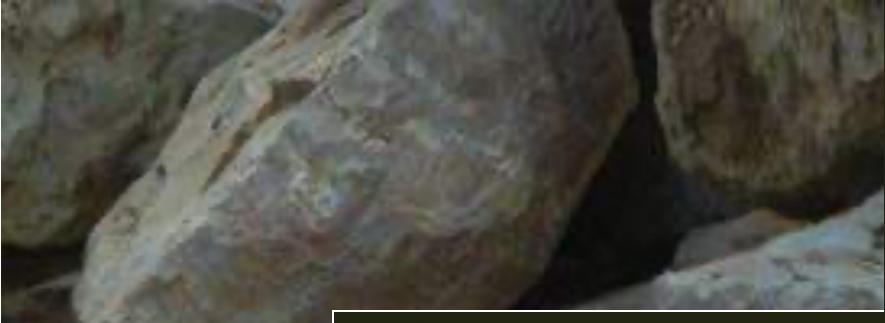
Francine Sterle

(Toulouse-Lautrec)

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I disappear into the streets with my wide behind
and a nose like a potato. Only in Montmartre's
dance halls and dens does no one notice
a dwarf with drooling lips and a lisp.
Walking these rat-infested streets all night,
night after night, I drag my friends from the cabarets
to the circus to the cafés, move from light to light,
port to brandy, gin to vermouth.
It's in the brothels that I feel at home.
8 Rue d'Amboise. 24 Rue des Moulins.
The *égout des spermes*. Outcasts like myself.
Black-stockinged legs. Mouths red as a drip of blood.
Ingres believed the only way to possess a woman
was to paint her, and I want to paint every woman I see.
Look at them: naked and stretched out like animals.
They admit me everywhere and at any moment.
I watch them dressing or touching or taking a bath.
I'm a coffee pot with a big spout.
I'm digging my grave with my cock.
Degas thinks my work stinks of the pox,
but I draw what I see: a woman making a bed
or brushing her hair, someone talking in the salon,
playing cards, humming a song.
When they lie down together, you've never seen
such tenderness. They're like two birds
burying themselves in each others' feathers.
No one will ever love me like that.

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Virgin Sturgeon

Vivian Hansen

In the time of Old Man who was then lean and tall as a lodgepole pine -- 1953 perhaps -- the Black Flies hatched along the South Saskatchewan River. They emerged from the river's lullaby, took on ferocity as they approached cattle, biting, drawing blood, killing. While they slept in the river's cocoon, we ate their pupae and larvae, river berries as sweet and succulent as Old Man's saskatoons.

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We came to know of the poison through our gill slits -- the resonance of voice lying at the base of our useless tongues. They were channels to the common vision of wet, an eye in the ancient superorder of fishes Chondrostei. We were the king of all fish, the last that scouted the veins of the glaciers. Finding the sharp scent of the mud banks in the river, we dived and stayed.

The Black Flies harassed men and the creatures they owned. We fish of the Old Order have no such offense. We are bottom-feeders, elusive, yielding our eggs in the oldest profession of sacrifice. Old Man heard our story after the DDT spilled, listened to the slow passion of our death as we spit into mud trying to get back to the vein of the glaciers-above-the-river.

The rubber hoses were calibrated for DDT, filled with kerosene for three weeks before the Day of Poisoning, eroding the firmament of round sand. The slim snakes held the poison aimed for Black Flies. *The surly snakes overdosed downstream of the 25th Street Bridge, said Old Man, we found whitefish, trout, jackfish, pickerel, sturgeon.*

*Here's three cheers for the Virgin Sturgeon
Virgin Sturgeon is a fish*

Old Man sings, crooning memory that is cleft between rum and Saskatchewan river-sun.

Superorder Chondrostei, almost reclaiming legs, bewiskered knowledge trying to escape the artery of an old glacier after the injection of DDT, the puncture of poison into the small downstream vein of a river.

*Virgin Sturgeon needs no urgin'
That's why caviar is my dish.*

Old Man sings this ceremonial song to remember the overdose that the scientists gave the river. He sings it, amazes himself with our presence, our twenty-foot length, our docility of no teeth.

There are so few of us left who float the dialect of gill, this third eye that saw the silt shift to kill the fly larvae. We drifted into a mud bath of DDT, the sharp scent of God gone.

Did I ever tell you what happened to the sturgeon along the Saskatchewan River when the DDT got into the river?

Old Man tells the story when he sings his ceremonial sturgeon song.

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Landlorn

Karen McElrea

Poor little mermaid,
wishing so hard
so long;
all she wanted
was to get out
of her wet things,
to get something
dry in her.

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Utterly sick of fish and greens
in dreams she sank
her teeth into meals
still dotted with
bits of land,
a gristly something
that bled
down her chin.

She floated under her
tiresome stars, resenting
the intimacy of tides;
she stared up at the sky
and wondered what grass
would feel like, what a man's
hand would feel like, how she
would feel were she warm and real.

She appealed to the networks,
but the camera couldn't catch her;
their instruments failed
to register her soundings
so the mermaid went back
and sank deep,
resurfacing to lie cold
on her rock awhile

with the gods--who were,
after all, just gods--
bobbing around her;
those slippery gods
who looked away
as she dragged a blade down her tail,
and winced
when she didn't bleed.

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NON-FICTION



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The Fine Art of Collage or; T.S. Eliot Hits the Mosh Pit: *Curio: Grotesques and Satires from the Electronic Age* by Elizabeth Bachinsky

Jeanette Lynes

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Curio: Grotesques and Satires from the Electronic Age. Elizabeth Bachinsky. Toronto: BookThug, 2005. ISBN 0 9737181 8 8. 111 pp. Pbk.

Published under Jay MillAr's very cool BookThug imprint, Elizabeth Bachinsky's *Curio* is an energized, endlessly inventive, often brilliant collection - a memorable collage of shifting poetic stances and rhetorical tropes. Bachinsky has distanced herself considerably from what has been the typical debut collection of lyric-narrative, often confessional poems. The eight sections (plus one single-section, introductory prose poem entitled "On the Convention of Narrative in Literature") of her book are all quite different in both form and mood; they range, for example, from the spare, minimalist sequence of "Undressed And So Many Places to Go," to the faux-journals and epistolary discourse of "From the Secret Diaries of Antonin Artaud," to the palindromes (structured as double sonnets that unzip themselves and reverse) of "Spy Cam: Surveillance Series," to the Dadaist riffs of "The Pose Same Ran Am Sage."

Given this diversity, Bachinsky's collection has, as mentioned, more the feel of collage than 'the well-wrought urn,' and it's no accident that her book's epigraph is taken from the great collage artist, sound poet, and renegade Dadaist, Kurt Schwitters. Bachinsky's poetry is self-reflexive; her language is continually foregrounded, reinforcing this resonance between her aesthetic and the art of collage. When we look at a collage, our attention is drawn to the materials themselves; when we read Bachinsky, her language casts a powerful spell. Her poems explore representation, spectacle, mirrors. The collection's five palindrome poems - one of which appeared in Sandy Shreve and Kate Braida's terrific anthology, *In Fine Form* (2005) - are halls of mirrors in which we can never quite trust what we see; we're always looking back to see what has changed since we last looked. And the surveillance of the electronic age is like that, isn't it? These poetic "cams" Bachinsky has created are extraordinary not only for their formal verve, but for their suggestion of how form effects its own surveillance. Her poetic "cams" also pose an interesting philosophical question: can any reflection of the present moment wrest itself free from an already-recorded past? What do sonnets see when they look at themselves in the mirror? Read Bachinsky to find out.

Curio seems strongly invested in a critique of language and literary tradition. The range of diction in these poems is wild, the diversity of influence deliciously idiosyncratic. How often have we seen John Milton and Lisa Robertson acknowledged between the same covers? Bachinsky's willingness to range fearlessly through history sets her writing apart - or, at least places it in the company of equally daring poets like Robertson, Maine's Jennifer Moxley, and Eliot himself. Bachinsky's poems also remind me, at times, of work by American writer Karen Volkman. Bachinsky forages through the past, defamiliarizing contemporary poetic language in poems like "She is Blond Sin." I love the linguistic cognitive dissonance and sly eroticism created here when words like "dandy kid" (evocative of the nineteen forties Jimmy Stewart movies) and "wanton hidden clit" (a morphing of archaic and contemporary diction) bump up against each other and share poetic proximity. *Curio* is an exciting linguistic mosh pit of language derived from the past five hundred years.

Bachinsky's "Lead the Wants" is a tour de force, a madcap 'translation' of Eliot's "The Wasteland," one of the great collage poems in western literature. Bachinsky's poem, with its inclusion of K-Mart and R.E.M. seems, in a way, the logical conclusion of "The Wasteland." To cite two examples from Bachinsky:

O O O O shat takes peh tang hi -

Or:

Witt witt witt
Guj guj guj guj guj
Record duos fly
Re: e, tu

I have to admit, it took me awhile to discover Eliot's "O O O O that Shakesperian Rag" from Bachinsky's "O O O O shat takes peh tang hi" (and even longer to track down Eliot's Shakesperian riff to Ziegfeld's *Follies* of 1912). But echoes emerge; we begin to hear the past. Same with Eliot's transplanted classical bird calls - "Twit twit twit/Jug jug jug jug jug," transplanted still further by Bachinsky as "Witt witt witt/Guj gujäc," etc. Language is historicized, contextual. T. S. Eliot's "Wasteland," which sounded so strange to most of us who first studied it as undergraduates, comes to appear normalized, in time. Is this - ending up in a kind of linguistic suburbs - the fate of all poetic language? Hopefully not since, as Pound said, the poet's job is to 'make it new'. As part of her procedure for making it new, Bachinsky's driving questions seem to be: what can the status of poetic language be in the age of K-Mart, R.E.M., and the electronic revolution? Can the poet create anything more than a collage? What happened to Keats' well-wrought urn (or was that only ever a dream?). Will the Tower of Babel tip once and for all in the electronic age? Is the poetic past destined to be relegated to the status of mere *Curio*? Will the electronic revolution democratize language, or destroy it? Bachinsky is, I think, more interested in the process of exploring these questions than answering them - and, since she's a poet, I think this is as it should be.

Bachinsky should be lauded for raising big questions. We should also applaud her sheer moxie - who among us would have the courage to translate "The Wasteland"? For poets of my (slightly older) generation, Eliot's poem remains too canonically enshrined to touch. I don't think Bachinsky's conversation with Eliot in *Curio* shows disrespect; if anything, it bodes well for the future, bespeaks a revitalized dialogue, suggesting as it does that Canada's new poets are willing to venture where some of us more tyrannized by canonicity (and a residual colonialism? We just assumed Eliot was British, he seemed British!) dared not go. Great to see our new wave of poets decolonize their imaginations. Elizabeth's Bachinsky's 'conversations' with literary tradition, an integral part of *Curio*, are lots of fun. Her willingness to engage in them carries forward the energy of some of Canada's most interesting poetry; George Bowering has had some pretty nifty conversations with Keats and Rilke, to cite only one example. Elizabeth Bachinsky is one of our new bright lights. Next year, I'm going to assign my college students "The Wasteland" by Eliot and "Lead the Wants" by Bachinsky. I can't wait already.

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'you have to name the silence': *Songs to Kill a Wihtikow* by Neal McLeod

Tyler McCreary and Richard Milligan

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Songs to Kill a Wihtikow Neal McLeod. Regina: Hagios Press, 2005
ISBN: 0973556765

In his debut book, *Songs to Kill a Wihtikow*, Neal McLeod speaks back to the darkness haunting us as individuals and collectivities. He courageously accomplishes a representation of this inhabitance of specters through a shifting sardonic, disdainful wit and deceptively simple humour in a volume that combines his poetry with plates of his visual art. The poems, like the images, elicit textured imaginings of the hurt and the degradation of collective dispossession and of personal losses that comprise a colonial legacy. But finally, *Songs to Kill a Wihtikow* speaks to the sheer resiliency of the spirit in struggle against these oppressions.

This oppressive darkness enters McLeod's poetry most prominently in the titular figure of the wihtikow. Wihtikow is a cannibal. Antisocial in the extreme, the wihtikow turns inward from society and consumes other beings for his own narrowly conceived benefit. Within his poetry and art, McLeod deploys the wihtikow as a powerful metaphor for the greed and individualism consuming our society, which he describes as "the attempt to swallow the light from the sky of the world." But McLeod also connects wihtikow directly with acts of colonialism and racism as in the concluding (and timely) juxtaposition of "Wihtikow Wandering":

>cops who drive brothers
to cold places
wihtikow wanders
in the grey, concrete forest

Among the Cree, wihtikow stories are common. These stories emphasize the importance of sharing for collective survival, and contribute to the creation (and maintenance) of an egalitarian culture that restrains greed in pursuit of the common good. Contrary to the binaries inveighed by missionaries upon Indigenous communities, McLeod evokes an understanding of both good and evil dwelling in all things, including Christianity. Wihtikow destroys social relations and upsets the order of things, but is also an important part of ourselves and of everyday relations. McLeod's poems challenge problematically strict binaries of good and evil, particularly interrupting the notion of evil as something eternal because it silences the reality that darkness "the wihtikow" is embedded within us all: "my body / has also known / the fire of wihtikow".

McLeod's poetry attempts to make sense of and transform this ever-present darkness through humour. He begins "Indian Love Poem" with a reversal reminiscent of the oft quoted Shakespearean sonnet: "her skin was golden brown / like KFC chicken." The invocation of branding as sardonic critique of (post)modern consumer culture is frequently deployed in the collection as it deals with contemporary modes of colonialism. The moment "when they opened KFC on the reserve" is treated humorously in a poem centered on the image of "Rez Dogz" eating "KFC bones." In "Suburban Castration", "suburban regularity" is mocked for its mundane rigidity as "Safeway savings cards" are aligned with "sex twice a week" in a landscape where "all the houses look the same / all the stories sound the same." Though these two poems maintain a light and witty tone, the intrusions of Safeway and KFC, like the more explicitly ominous "long steel lines [that] steal the sanctity of the earth," are registered as darkness, as "shadows / in a land polluted by a new presence." And, to be sure, the speaker in one poem declares, "I didn't want any fast food culture / shake and bake shamanism."

In his introduction, McLeod self-consciously fashions himself a wihtikohkan, or clown, following the storytelling tradition of his ancestors. McLeod translates "wihtikohkan" as an imitation of wihtikow, a figure who opens spaces for healing through mimicry and reversal. His work interweaves picture and sound, giving form and name to the Wihtikow that dwells within us all. After first identifying and exposing our poisons, McLeod dreams and sings of the potential to heal our wounds:

>to know the light
you have to pass
through the darkness
to know the words
you have to name the silence

It is through language and story that people come to know their place. However, in the distorted colonial landscape, knowing place has a different ontology. McLeod writes of the struggle for self-respect and awareness in this environment; and he writes of the fundamental disconnect that exists between our present society and the ground on which we stand. Through making light of the darkness, while holding the threads of memory from people of this land since time immemorial, McLeod presents new angles from which to understand his and our locations within the geography of our time.

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'Luck hassles the strung kite.' *Strung* by Brecken Rose Hancock

Holly Luhning

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Strung. Brecken Rose Hancock. Design Jessica Butler. Saskatoon: JackPine Press, 2005. ISBN: 097379951X 19pp.

Strung is one of the latest releases from Saskatoon's JackPine Press, a publisher dedicated solely to chapbook production. Hancock's verse and Butler's design make *Strung* and arresting book, inside and out.

Hancock's eleven poems address issues of memory, family, grief, and loss. The first poem, "String Art Craft" introduces the string and ropes images that recur throughout the collection. The poem's speaker tells us "I made a picture of a sailboat / by twisting red string around pegs you'd nailed to a board." Sailboats, water, and childhood memories of swimming are laced into a meditation that "really, we should expect change," and the speaker calmly notes that "[i]n only two seasons Mom's / garden has grown over so I can't find the bluebells / she planted for my birthday." Hancock manages to discuss the emotional without becoming sentimental. Her speaker is precise about the losses and pain she suffers, but discusses her grief with an intellectual clarity that turns adversity into a space for a reflection and illustration of emotional strength and personal renewal.

For example, in "Hollyhocks by Fall" the speaker says she "asked you to notice the spring bulbs // planted along the fence, the passing of things that bloom / and the brown heads of the once-white tulips // sleeping in the soil." She notes that "losing a friend can seem small when compared / with the untiring way nature repeats itself." In the wake of personal loss, the speaker retains her composure and compassion for the person she is leaving; she reminds the other, "not to worry, every change is brilliant."

"Lag," the final poem, is the most striking piece in the collection. Here, Hancock's control of language and visual representation are extremely strong. The opening lines proclaim: "Grief is a door, strange how feral. It locks / twice, tooth in tooth against the jam, and seals / this house, an awful mess where all the / music plays at once." The speaker explains the abstract concept of grief in concrete and corporeal terms; Hancock describes these visual and aural experiences with rich language that envelopes the reader's ear and threatens to disorientate while promising to deliver one safely through "this madness."

Jessica Butler's design takes it's cue from Hancock's description of the string sailboat in the opening poem; the book is fastened closed by wrapping "the string to the next peg, stilted constellation / wound by my hand." Small pegs are nailed to the front cover of the book, and the reader winds and unwinds a string around the series of pegs to open and close the book. The design is not only thematically appropriate for Hancock's work, it gives the reader the sense one is unwrapping some sort of textual treasure. As with all of JackPine's books, each of the 75 limited edition copies are hand-assembled, and the quality of *Strung*'s workmanship is high. This chapbook succeeds as a visual piece of art, as well as providing an intriguing sample of work from Hancock.

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CONTRIBUTORS



Alcohol	Alcohol is a depressant that slows down the central nervous system. It can cause drowsiness, impaired judgment, and coordination problems. Long-term use can lead to dependence and liver damage.
Amphetamines	Amphetamines are stimulants that increase heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. They can cause euphoria, increased energy, and reduced appetite. Long-term use can lead to addiction, heart problems, and psychosis.
Cannabis	Cannabis is a psychoactive substance that alters perception, mood, and behavior. It can cause relaxation, altered sensations, and impaired memory. Long-term use can lead to dependence, mental health issues, and respiratory problems.
Cocaine	Cocaine is a stimulant that increases heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. It can cause euphoria, increased energy, and reduced appetite. Long-term use can lead to addiction, heart problems, and psychosis.
Ecstasy	Ecstasy is a stimulant and hallucinogen that increases heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. It can cause euphoria, increased energy, and reduced appetite. Long-term use can lead to addiction, heart problems, and mental health issues.
GHB	GHB is a depressant that slows down the central nervous system. It can cause drowsiness, impaired judgment, and coordination problems. Long-term use can lead to dependence and liver damage.
LSD	LSD is a hallucinogen that alters perception, mood, and behavior. It can cause altered sensations, delusions, and hallucinations. Long-term use can lead to dependence, mental health issues, and respiratory problems.
Marijuana	Marijuana is a psychoactive substance that alters perception, mood, and behavior. It can cause relaxation, altered sensations, and impaired memory. Long-term use can lead to dependence, mental health issues, and respiratory problems.
Methamphetamine	Methamphetamine is a stimulant that increases heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. It can cause euphoria, increased energy, and reduced appetite. Long-term use can lead to addiction, heart problems, and psychosis.
Opioids	Opioids are painkillers that reduce pain and induce relaxation. They can cause euphoria, drowsiness, and respiratory depression. Long-term use can lead to dependence, respiratory problems, and overdose.
PCP	PCP is a dissociative that causes detachment from reality. It can cause altered sensations, delusions, and hallucinations. Long-term use can lead to dependence, mental health issues, and respiratory problems.
Tranquillizers	Tranquillizers are depressants that slow down the central nervous system. They can cause drowsiness, impaired judgment, and coordination problems. Long-term use can lead to dependence and liver damage.
Volatile Substances	Volatile substances are inhalants that are breathed in through the nose or mouth. They can cause euphoria, altered sensations, and impaired judgment. Long-term use can lead to dependence, respiratory problems, and brain damage.
Welding Fume	Welding fume is a mixture of metal oxides and other chemicals produced during welding. It can cause respiratory irritation, coughing, and shortness of breath. Long-term exposure can lead to lung damage and respiratory problems.
Whisky	Whisky is a distilled spirit made from grain. It can cause drowsiness, impaired judgment, and coordination problems. Long-term use can lead to dependence and liver damage.
Yohimbine	Yohimbine is a stimulant that increases heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. It can cause euphoria, increased energy, and reduced appetite. Long-term use can lead to addiction, heart problems, and psychosis.
Zolpidem	Zolpidem is a sedative-hypnotic that reduces anxiety and induces sleep. It can cause drowsiness, impaired judgment, and coordination problems. Long-term use can lead to dependence and liver damage.

