**Poetry Packet #2 – English 1B**

**Beer. Milk. The Dog. My Old Man.**

By Kim Addonizio (from *Jimmy & Rita*)

My old man used to take the dog

out to the garage

where the poker game was

and set down a bowl

of beer, that’s the kind of thing

He thought was funny. He used to

give me some too and laugh when I

threw up or fell over

a chair. He taught me to fight

by smacking the side of my head

with his open hand, calling me

a pussy. Don’t let them give you

any shit he said. When he smacked

my mother she didn’t hit back,

just yelled at him. Once she threw

a glass of milk at his head.

It hit the wall and broke

to pieces on the floor.

I was ten when he died.

Too young to figure it out.

What I thought about was the milk

on the kitchen floor that time,

how they’d both

left it there and gone to bed.

The got to it and swallowed glass.

My mother said the dog

just got sick. The milk

*evaporated* she said.

Meaning it just

went into the air.

I thought, how could something

be there and then not? Milk.

The dog. My old man. He loved

a cold beer. Sometimes I’d sit up

at night in the garage and watch

how he drank it, tipping his head

way back, and I’d try to drink mine

exactly the same,

but quietly, so he wouldn’t notice

and send me away.

**What Happened** By Kim Addonizio (from *Jimmy & Rita*)

She’s waiting at the Greyhound station

when he gets off the bus. The place smells

of piss, like the hospital room

(those volunteers in blue uniforms

and teddy-bear pins

saying *We’ve seen miracles here).*

Rita standing there, her hair damp

from washing it. *Welcome home.* He thinks

of the empty apartment, his aunt

trying on his mother’s clothes to see

what she’d keep. That last

afternoon he sat beside her body

staring at the bed rails. Then out

to the cold air of the parking lot.

Driving his cousin’s car

to Quinn’s and waking up

in the back seat late that night,

one eye puffed up, his palms gravel-scraped

and bleeding. *What happened?*

Rita asks, touching his face.

*Nothing. I don’t know.*

He starts crying. Hurries her outside

and walks fast ahead of her.

**Blonde Bombshell** byLynn Emanuel (from *The Dig and Hotel Fiesta*)

Love is boring and passé, all the old baggage,

the bloody bric-a-brac, the bad, the gothic,

retrograde, oscurantist hum and drum of it

needs to be swept away. So, night after night,

we sit in the dark of the Roxy beside grandmothers

with their shanks tied up in the tourniquets

of rolled stockings and open ourselves, like earth

to rain, to the blue fire of the movie screen

where love surrenders suddenly to gangsters

and their cuties. There in the narrow,

mote-filled finger of light, is a blonde

so blonde, so blinding, she is a blizzard, a huge

spook, and lights up like the sun the audience

in its galoshes. She bulges like a deuce coupe.

When we see her we say good-bye to Kansas.

She is everything spare, cool, and clean,

like a gas station on a dark night or the cold

dependable light of rage coming in on schedule like a bus.

**Stone Soup**

By Lynn Emanuel (from *The Dig and Hotel Fiesta*)

She wants to get born, so she invents a mother

to hold the long wooden wand of a cooking

spoon fast in her fist, the big black zero

of the iron pot, the stone of the pig’s knuckle,

the buzz of the fridge, the tap scalding the soap

into suds, the tureen dunked, again, again;

she invents the tintinnabulation of the milkman’s

bottles in their wire basket and the sigh

of the clutch as he disappears and the match

that touches the gas burner – the blue root,

the little tiara of yellow fire. Beyond the window

it is nearly dark, a sudsy ocean is coughing up

a beach as gray and hard as poured concrete.

She has set herself a task, like a train lugging

its hard body toward Portland, so she now makes

a father’s coat come home from the day shift,

its pockets drooping like the jowls of a hound,

and his long black shoes with their dew of glitter

under the fluorescent light of the breakfast nook,

his mustache like a school janitor’s brooms;

she begins with talk of labor and wages,

his big hand turning over the leaves of the light

and water bills like a boring book;

it will not be long now until she will make them

make her from nothing, a stone, a pot.

**One Summer Hurricane Lynn Spawns Tornados as Far West as Ely**

Lynn Emanuel (from *The Dig and Hotel Fiesta*)

The storm with my name dragged one

heavy foot over the roads of the country.

It was a bulge in a black raincoat, pointed

and hard as the spike in a railroad tie;

it dipped like a dowser’s rod and screamed

like the express at the bend at Elko.

It made the night feverish and the sky

burn with the cold blue fire of a motel sign.

Oh that small hell of mine nipped at the town,

turned the roads to mud, lingered at the horizon,

a long clog, a sump. All sigh and lamentation,

the whole city of grief rose up to face that black

boot that waited to kick us open like a clay pot.

**Archetypes**

C.K. Williams (from *Repair*)

Often before have our fingers touched in sleep or half-sleep and enlaced,

often I’ve been comforted through a dream by that gently sensitive pressure,

but this morning, when I woke your hand lay across mine in an awkward,

unfamiliar position so that it seemed strangely external to me, removed,

an object whose precise weight, volume and form I’d never remarked:

its taut, resistant skin, dense muscle-pads, the subtle, complex structure,

with delicately elegant chords of bone aligned like columns in a temple.

Your fingers begin to move then, in brief, irregular tensions and releasings;

it felt like your hand was trying to hold some feathery, fleeting creature,

then you suddenly, fiercely, jerked it away, rose to your hands and knees,

and stayed there, palms flat on the bed, hair tangled down over your face,

until with a coarse sigh almost like a snarl you abruptly let yourself fall

and lay still, your hands drawn tightly to your chest, your head turned away,

forbidden to me, I thought, by whatever had raised you to that defiant crouch.

I waited, hoping you’d wake, turn, embrace me, but you stayed in yourself,

And I felt again how separate we all are from one another, how even our passions,

Which seem to embody unities outside of time, heal only the most benign divisions,

That for our more abiding, ancient terrors we each have to find our own valor.

You breathed more softly now, though; I took heart, touched against you,

and, as though nothing had happened, you opened your eyes, smiled at me,

and murmured—how almost startling to hear you in your real voice—“Sleep, love.”

**“This is Just to Say”   
By William Carlos Williams**

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

**Grief Calls Us to the Things of This World**

Sherman Alexie

The morning air is all awash with angels . . .

- Richard Wilbur

The eyes open to a blue telephone

In the bathroom of this five-star hotel.

I wonder whom I should call? A plumber,

Proctologist, urologist, or priest?

Who is most among us and most deserves

The first call? I choose my father because

He’s astounded by bathroom telephones.

I dial home. My mother answers. “Hey, Ma,

I say, “Can I talk to Poppa?” She gasps,

And then I remember that my father

Has been dead for nearly a year. “Shit, Mom,"

I say. “I forgot he’s dead. I’m sorry—

How did I forget?” “It’s okay," she says.

“I made him a cup of instant coffee

This morning and left it on the table—

Like I have for, what, twenty-seven years—

And I didn’t realize my mistake

Until this afternoon.” My mother laughs

At the angels who wait for us to pause

During the most ordinary of days

And sing our praise to forgetfulness

Before they slap our souls with their cold wings.

Those angels burden and unbalance us.

Those fucking angels ride us piggyback.

Those angels, forever falling, snare us

And haul us, prey and praying, into dust.

**Annabel Lee** By Edgar Allan Poe

It was many and many a year ago,

In a kingdom by the sea,

That a maiden there lived whom you may know

By the name of Annabel Lee;

And this maiden she lived with no other thought

Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and she was a child,

In this kingdom by the sea,

But we loved with a love that was more than love—

I and my Annabel Lee—

With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven

Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,

In this kingdom by the sea,

A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling

My beautiful Annabel Lee;

So that her highborn kinsmen came

And bore her away from me,

To shut her up in a sepulchre

In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,

Went envying her and me—

Yes!—that was the reason (as all men know,

In this kingdom by the sea)

That the wind came out of the cloud by night,

Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love

Of those who were older than we—

Of many far wiser than we—

And neither the angels in Heaven above

Nor the demons down under the sea

Can ever dissever my soul from the soul

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side

Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,

In her sepulchre there by the sea—

In her tomb by the sounding sea.

# Art is an Act

By Jody Gladding

                                                                  not self  
   
**of**                                                                                     **violence**  
   
                                                       **against**                   will  not  be  gainsaid  
                                                                                         will  brook  no  argument  
                                                                                         won't  suffer  the  fools  
   
                                                                                                                                 gladly  
                   would   I   climb   a  
            mountain         of       salt       with       you  
   
before  dawn                                      lodestar             my  freight                    **the  violent**  
  
            **silence**                                            the  most  beautiful                       word  
  
                                                                                  is  
  
                                                                                 trespass

# Graffiti

By Rosanna Warren

Kitty Goes Kommando and the Goldman Rats — Phooey!

That blue scaffolding holds up the sky. Who did we think

we were padlocking in, or out? Give me that huge

looping black script no one can read, a secret glyph,

and just where someone has smashed the window, Jesus

the Way the Truth the Life and a dented aluminum frame.

He bent down, we know, and wrote something illegible on the ground.

A toothy black-and-white dinosaur gapes. I like the crack

in this wall of monsters where skylines topple and ogres

twiddle train tracks in their claws like pipe cleaners.

Down the long, semi-abandoned street in Queens

calligraphy gallops toward the shop displaying,

like guitar strings, seven different iron rods

for gates. Hole in the wall, rose sound-hole,

ribbed sounding board — always from fissures and gaps

melody strains as trains thunderclank across

the girdered overpass, a siren keens, and a solitary man

ambles past amputated acacias fisting out with leaves.

**Chemo Side Effects: Memory**

By Elise Partridge

Where is the word I want?

Groping

in the thicket,

about to pinch the

dangling

berry, my fingerpads

close on

air.

I can hear it

scrabbling like a squirrel

on the oak's far side.

Word, please send over this black stretch of ocean

your singular flare,

blaze

your topaz in the mind's blank.

I could always pull the gift

from the lucky-dip barrel,

scoop the right jewel

from my dragon's trove....

Now I flail,

the wrong item creaks up

on the mental dumbwaiter.

No use—

it's turning

out of sight,

a bicycle down a

Venetian alley—

I clatter after, only to find

gondolas bobbing in sunny silence,

a pigeon mumbling something

I just can't catch.

# All Their Stanzas Look Alike

Thomas Sayers Ellis

All their fences

     All their prisons

All their exercises

     All their agendas

All their stanzas look alike

     All their metaphors

All their bookstores

     All their plantations

All their assassinations

     All their stanzas look alike

All their rejection letters

     All their letters to the editor

All their arts and letters

     All their letters of recommendation

All their stanzas look alike

     All their sexy coverage

All their literary journals

     All their car commercials

All their bribe-spiked blurbs

     All their stanzas look alike

All their favorite writers

     All their writing programs

All their visiting writers

     All their writers-in-residence

All their stanzas look alike

     All their third worlds

All their world series

     All their serial killers

All their killing fields

     All their stanzas look alike

All their state grants

     All their tenure tracks

All their artist colonies

     All their core faculties

All their stanzas look alike

     All their Selected Collecteds

All their Oxford Nortons

     All their Academy Societies

All their Oprah Vendlers

     All their stanzas look alike

All their haloed holocausts

     All their coy hetero couplets

All their hollow haloed causes

      All their tone-deaf tercets

All their stanzas look alike

      All their tables of contents

All their Poet Laureates

      All their Ku Klux classics

All their Supreme Court justices

      Except one, except one

Exceptional one. Exceptional or not,

      One is not enough.

All their stanzas look alike.

      Even this, after publication,

Might look alike. Disproves

      My stereo types.

**Sticks**

By Thomas Sayers Ellis

My father was an enormous man

Who believed kindness and lack of size

Were nothing more than sissified

Signs of weakness. Narrow-minded,

His eyes were the worst kind

Of jury—deliberate, distant, hard.

No one could outshout him

Or make bigger fists. The few

Who tried got taken for bad,

Beat down, their bodies slammed.

I wanted to be just like him:

Big man, man of the house, king.

A plagiarist, hitting the things he hit,

I learned to use my hands watching him

Use his, pretending to slap mother

When he slapped mother.

He was sick. A diabetic slept

Like a silent vowel inside his well-built,

Muscular, dark body. Hard as all that

With similar weaknesses

—I discovered writing,

How words are parts of speech

With beats and breaths of their own.

Interjections like flams. Wham! Bam!

An heir to the rhythm

And tension beneath the beatings,

My first attempts were filled with noise,

Wild solos, violent uncontrollable blows.

The page tightened like a drum

Resisting the clockwise twisting

Of a handheld chrome key,

The noisy banging and tuning of growth.

# Howl I (of III)

By Allen Ginsberg

*For Carl Solomon*

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,

dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,

angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night,

who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz,

who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs illuminated,

who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war,

who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull,

who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall,

who got busted in their pubic beards returning through Laredo with a belt of marijuana for New York,

who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or purgatoried their torsos night after night

with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless balls,

incomparable blind streets of shuddering cloud and lightning in the mind leaping toward poles of Canada & Paterson, illuminating all the motionless world of Time between,

Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon blinking traffic light, sun and moon and tree vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn, ashcan rantings and kind king light of mind,

who chained themselves to subways for the endless ride from Battery to holy Bronx on benzedrine until the noise of wheels and children brought them down shuddering mouth-wracked and battered bleak of brain all drained of brilliance in the drear light of Zoo,

who sank all night in submarine light of Bickford’s floated out and sat through the stale beer afternoon in desolate Fugazzi’s, listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox,

who talked continuously seventy hours from park to pad to bar to Bellevue to museum to the Brooklyn Bridge,

a lost battalion of platonic conversationalists jumping down the stoops off fire escapes off windowsills off Empire State out of the moon,

yacketayakking screaming vomiting whispering facts and memories and anecdotes and eyeball kicks and shocks of hospitals and jails and wars,

whole intellects disgorged in total recall for seven days and nights with brilliant eyes, meat for the Synagogue cast on the pavement,

who vanished into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving a trail of ambiguous picture postcards of Atlantic City Hall,

suffering Eastern sweats and Tangerian bone-grindings and migraines of China under junk-withdrawal in Newark’s bleak furnished room,

who wandered around and around at midnight in the railroad yard wondering where to go, and went, leaving no broken hearts,

who lit cigarettes in boxcars boxcars boxcars racketing through snow toward lonesome farms in grandfather night,

who studied Plotinus Poe St. John of the Cross telepathy and bop kabbalah because the cosmos instinctively vibrated at their feet in Kansas,

who loned it through the streets of Idaho seeking visionary indian angels who were visionary indian angels,

who thought they were only mad when Baltimore gleamed in supernatural ecstasy,

who jumped in limousines with the Chinaman of Oklahoma on the impulse of winter midnight streetlight smalltown rain,

who lounged hungry and lonesome through Houston seeking jazz or sex or soup, and followed the brilliant Spaniard to converse about America and Eternity, a hopeless task, and so took ship to Africa,

who disappeared into the volcanoes of Mexico leaving behind nothing but the shadow of dungarees and the lava and ash of poetry scattered in fireplace Chicago,

who reappeared on the West Coast investigating the FBI in beards and shorts with big pacifist eyes sexy in their dark skin passing out incomprehensible leaflets,

who burned cigarette holes in their arms protesting the narcotic tobacco haze of Capitalism,

who distributed Supercommunist pamphlets in Union Square weeping and undressing while the sirens of Los Alamos wailed them down, and wailed down Wall, and the Staten Island ferry also wailed,

who broke down crying in white gymnasiums naked and trembling before the machinery of other skeletons,

who bit detectives in the neck and shrieked with delight in policecars for committing no crime but their own wild cooking pederasty and intoxication,

who howled on their knees in the subway and were dragged off the roof waving genitals and manuscripts,

who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy,

who blew and were blown by those human seraphim, the sailors, caresses of Atlantic and Caribbean love,

who balled in the morning in the evenings in rosegardens and the grass of public parks and cemeteries scattering their semen freely to whomever come who may,

who hiccuped endlessly trying to giggle but wound up with a sob behind a partition in a Turkish Bath when the blond & naked angel came to pierce them with a sword,

who lost their loveboys to the three old shrews of fate the one eyed shrew of the heterosexual dollar the one eyed shrew that winks out of the womb and the one eyed shrew that does nothing but sit on her ass and snip the intellectual golden threads of the craftsman’s loom,

who copulated ecstatic and insatiate with a bottle of beer a sweetheart a package of cigarettes a candle and fell off the bed, and continued along the floor and down the hall and ended fainting on the wall with a vision of ultimate cunt and come eluding the last gyzym of consciousness,

who sweetened the snatches of a million girls trembling in the sunset, and were red eyed in the morning but prepared to sweeten the snatch of the sunrise, flashing buttocks under barns and naked in the lake,

who went out whoring through Colorado in myriad stolen night-cars, N.C., secret hero of these poems, cocksman and Adonis of Denver—joy to the memory of his innumerable lays of girls in empty lots & diner backyards, moviehouses’ rickety rows, on mountaintops in caves or with gaunt waitresses in familiar roadside lonely petticoat upliftings & especially secret gas-station solipsisms of johns, & hometown alleys too,

who faded out in vast sordid movies, were shifted in dreams, woke on a sudden Manhattan, and picked themselves up out of basements hung-over with heartless Tokay and horrors of Third Avenue iron dreams & stumbled to unemployment offices,

who walked all night with their shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks waiting for a door in the East River to open to a room full of steam-heat and opium,

who created great suicidal dramas on the apartment cliff-banks of the Hudson under the wartime blur floodlight of the moon & their heads shall be crowned with laurel in oblivion,

who ate the lamb stew of the imagination or digested the crab at the muddy bottom of the rivers of Bowery,

who wept at the romance of the streets with their pushcarts full of onions and bad music,

who sat in boxes breathing in the darkness under the bridge, and rose up to build harpsichords in their lofts,

who coughed on the sixth floor of Harlem crowned with flame under the tubercular sky surrounded by orange crates of theology,

who scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in the yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish,

who cooked rotten animals lung heart feet tail borsht & tortillas dreaming of the pure vegetable kingdom,

who plunged themselves under meat trucks looking for an egg,

who threw their watches off the roof to cast their ballot for Eternity outside of Time, & alarm clocks fell on their heads every day for the next decade,

who cut their wrists three times successively unsuccessfully, gave up and were forced to open antique stores where they thought they were growing old and cried,

who were burned alive in their innocent flannel suits on Madison Avenue amid blasts of leaden verse & the tanked-up clatter of the iron regiments of fashion & the nitroglycerine shrieks of the fairies of advertising & the mustard gas of sinister intelligent editors, or were run down by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality,

who jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge this actually happened and walked away unknown and forgotten into the ghostly daze of Chinatown soup alleyways & firetrucks, not even one free beer,

who sang out of their windows in despair, fell out of the subway window, jumped in the filthy Passaic, leaped on negroes, cried all over the street, danced on broken wineglasses barefoot smashed phonograph records of nostalgic European 1930s German jazz finished the whiskey and threw up groaning into the bloody toilet, moans in their ears and the blast of colossal steamwhistles,

who barreled down the highways of the past journeying to each other’s hotrod-Golgotha jail-solitude watch or Birmingham jazz incarnation,

who drove crosscountry seventytwo hours to find out if I had a vision or you had a vision or he had a vision to find out Eternity,

who journeyed to Denver, who died in Denver, who came back to Denver & waited in vain, who watched over Denver & brooded & loned in Denver and finally went away to find out the Time, & now Denver is lonesome for her heroes,

who fell on their knees in hopeless cathedrals praying for each other’s salvation and light and breasts, until the soul illuminated its hair for a second,

who crashed through their minds in jail waiting for impossible criminals with golden heads and the charm of reality in their hearts who sang sweet blues to Alcatraz,

who retired to Mexico to cultivate a habit, or Rocky Mount to tender Buddha or Tangiers to boys or Southern Pacific to the black locomotive or Harvard to Narcissus to Woodlawn to the daisychain or grave,

who demanded sanity trials accusing the radio of hypnotism & were left with their insanity & their hands & a hung jury,

who threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadaism and subsequently presented themselves on the granite steps of the madhouse with shaven heads and harlequin speech of suicide, demanding instantaneous lobotomy,

and who were given instead the concrete void of insulin Metrazol electricity hydrotherapy psychotherapy occupational therapy pingpong & amnesia,

who in humorless protest overturned only one symbolic pingpong table, resting briefly in catatonia,

returning years later truly bald except for a wig of blood, and tears and fingers, to the visible madman doom of the wards of the madtowns of the East,

Pilgrim State’s Rockland’s and Greystone’s foetid halls, bickering with the echoes of the soul, rocking and rolling in the midnight solitude-bench dolmen-realms of love, dream of life a nightmare, bodies turned to stone as heavy as the moon,

with mother finally \*\*\*\*\*\*, and the last fantastic book flung out of the tenement window, and the last door closed at 4 A.M. and the last telephone slammed at the wall in reply and the last furnished room emptied down to the last piece of mental furniture, a yellow paper rose twisted on a wire hanger in the closet, and even that imaginary, nothing but a hopeful little bit of hallucination—

ah, Carl, while you are not safe I am not safe, and now you’re really in the total animal soup of time—

and who therefore ran through the icy streets obsessed with a sudden flash of the alchemy of the use of the ellipsis catalogue a variable measure and the vibrating plane,

who dreamt and made incarnate gaps in Time & Space through images juxtaposed, and trapped the archangel of the soul between 2 visual images and joined the elemental verbs and set the noun and dash of consciousness together jumping with sensation of Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus

to recreate the syntax and measure of poor human prose and stand before you speechless and intelligent and shaking with shame, rejected yet confessing out the soul to conform to the rhythm of thought in his naked and endless head,

the madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown, yet putting down here what might be left to say in time come after death,

and rose reincarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz in the goldhorn shadow of the band and blew the suffering of America’s naked mind for love into an eli eli lamma lamma sabacthani saxophone cry that shivered the cities down to the last radio

with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered out of their own bodies good to eat a thousand years.