

## POETRY

Rachel Anne Parsons

### Baba Yaga

*For Inga*

Your heritage is something  
of old magic, waiting in the wild,  
bone deep and with iron teeth,  
somewhere between fact and folklore.  
Let the princes and wizards  
play their games at your expense.  
You can smell a man's spirit.  
You are the clouds, moon, death, life.

Sweep away the traces of your  
dalliance with the world of mortals.  
Use the same silver birch broom  
to travel the wind. Your soul friends  
are at your command, fierce  
general of bright dawn, red sun, dark  
midnight. Never mind that there  
is earth mixed with your poppy seeds.

There is more to life than fake smiles  
and carefully chosen words;  
putting on illusions for the comfort  
of others while they mistake  
your generosity for a weakness.  
Who is it that foolish men  
turn to for help when they open  
the forbidden doors? Baba Yaga  
can aid them or devour them.  
Such is the energy that is within you –  
Balance they call ambiguity.

## Bat Shellackers

A big, cold room.  
They called it a gallery.  
Tiny, winged corpses  
displayed like angels,  
wings spread in flight,  
over bones and beetles  
and leaves and flowers  
preserved in resin  
and hung on the walls.

A long table laden  
with cookies and crackers.  
It was the grand opening  
for the gallery of those  
who shellac bats and arrange  
bodies like décor.  
The food was all free;  
the art was more expensive.  
I did not partake of the fare  
laid out before me.

There are some dimensions  
we can fall into,  
something like  
the underworld or outer space  
or the insides of our heads –  
most challenging of frontiers –  
where we must be careful with rules.  
Those who dine with the fairies  
can never leave.

# THREE POEMS

Karen Downs-Barton

## The Sofa Surfers\*

recent divorcees	explorers, rediscover	illuminated one night stands	a fear of solitude	novel freedoms
backpackers find	tumbleweed acquaintances	blown through cheap flophouses	thin walled sounds of rushed encounters	fading to wallpaper repetitions
borrowed sofas, a discarded quilt	shuffling predatory intentions	the unwanted hand dealt	games remain uncalled un named	a house of cards or bar free cages
balloon existences	with cut familial ties	for runaways	such hidden secrets	in halfway houses
rag doll cushions	each fabric 'home' scented	fading like memories in the wash	behind button eyes and stitched lips	our patchwork histories

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\*This grid poem reads left to right, right to left, top to bottom, and in a serpentine manner.

## Hythe Street Liminality

Sleeping under cardboard spires  
you nestle bottled oblivion cocooned  
in fustered down of Shamrock quilts. Lost  
in dreams  
peppered by scenes from gifted books or brittle  
coughs. Nightly, the Beggars Opera  
enacts voguish scripts before disaffected  
audiences rocked in top deck galleries;  
pared-down parts for pregnant  
pauses depicted on a ledge  
and lit by headlight spotlight.  
Across a tarmac aisle, the exit sign reads  
*A d So To Bed*  
in fluttering neon moths  
while the city orchestrates the score  
of day-night lullabies and fugues played  
to your back. Musically matching  
your determinedly upright gait  
another morning unfurls  
and the city wakes to  
you striding from the wings, word-haunted,  
swatting flying sentences and phrases stuck  
in your head. Their persistent buzzing insinuations,  
shaken loose from your ears while erratically  
waving, step-by-step, shake-by-shake, making  
your way over Castle Mill Stream,  
against the flow.  
At the Bodleian, a balm of hushed  
intervals backdrop your rehearsal of  
Professor Fallen-on-Hard-Times  
the flawed penumbra to a scholars moon; a stolen role  
you made your own. Oblivious  
to death by wintery receptions or understudies waiting,  
flask in hand, mouthing words you wrote long  
ago in quads where bells pealed hymns  
to youths' invincibility. You mark in silence  
their jangling false notes.

## The Dark Hand of Salvatore Rosa

*After 'Witches about their Incantations'  
by Salvatore Rosa*

More black than a coiled liquorice night  
are the necromantic paintings unwound  
from shrouds by Salvatore's sorcery.  
Stark and alarming are the midnight matters  
his dark art conjures and loosened, haunting  
baroque landscapes, paint-locked on his canvas.

No jet-jeweled glint lights his witches' hearts  
about their incantations, or sorcerers performing  
rituals under onyx clouds, licked with curling  
cauldron fumes, herb strewn, suppressing the  
creeping dawn. Rossi's black is all-pervasive,  
fine etches before consuming base elements

within consummate matt density. More demonic  
than deeds depicted—dank hair of a hanged man, wraithy  
re-animated skeletons, sweated seduction in a wanton's  
flesh all captured by his benighted hand. Grave alchemy  
fixed under dark glass *mullers* crushing mummified hands  
for viscous paints to create Salvatore's inky aesthetic

## TWO POEMS

Simon Tertychniy

### mortgage

the rest of the remaining documents had finally been signed last  
Wednesday.

after

and after all, the double dealings with banks, mortgages, rates, numbers in  
time far too long to fathom. the due-by dates, a clause, two clauses, the  
debt, the doubt. how does the future hold him? the myriad attachments he'd  
attached, copies of his ID (both sides), account statements, certificates &  
promissory notes, contracts & transfer stubs, checklists & pay-slips. a  
plethora of data, formed & reformatted to fit in little boxes.

trolling the streets & zooming fuzzy snapshots, emailing to arrange or to  
inquire

about the variables, whether the floor, whether the torn lace cuffs atop the  
mountaintop, whether the balcony and pets. whether all that.

the images intended to extol paradisiacal potential of the purchase were  
taken by what might easily seem to have been the same old master, a  
decrepit artist whose every vertical looked slightly arthritically askew,  
babes congealed still standing still in their cribs, an indifferent house cat  
extenuates the awful sofa. after examining these portraits in despair and  
disrepair, a wiser buyer would have well desisted, let his will flag. a kitchen  
he could smell, a sink

he'd have to dredge & drag, a threadbare table rag discrete & regal upon a  
stove that birthed

a thousand chickens, an indent on a dented tabletop, an ancient landscape  
feature,

a message to the stars, unread, the spot where firm *pater* had, for  
generations, set his goodly cup. the years wore on and the old man was  
gone. his chair, apt to become a harbor

of inaction wherein the newer one could let himself sink.

oh, and the visits, fizzled cheery real estate agents, key chains medieval  
with keys, quick sorties with their eyes, picking at phones, next to the

elevators waiting for him, they pressed the buttons and they prepped the talk, he stood, expecting disappointment, apartments drab over the wilted car park, the full scope of hope by the budget is oft defined. the rust stained bathtubs, chitchat of windowpanes/slash/frames. an alcove covered with a putrid shade  
 of romance. uneven cupboards that refuse to budge, whose swollen doors the prior resident pried before he'd finally met with some impertinent misfortune, precipitously vacating  
 the lot. reasonably priced. this room might fit his mattress, so the seeker thought, and this one would not be too small to enter with a book, the floor in this one slants and the pressed wood escritorio stutters, that's where he could lull in murky silence. all walls lean in a little.  
 the freshly painted ones are worse, they hide the favorite scars of trudging generations treading on each other's heels, pock-marking closets with their crayons and notching  
 their growing pains on doorposts. the painted ceilings of the bathrooms waiting to erupt  
 in boils, with drainage from the upstairs neighbor, recently arrived and grim like him  
 or some old bird flaneur too weak to reach the stairs. roughed up by rains, the guardrail,  
 and worn out by hands. his hand slips up the balcony sidewall. foot scales the railing, sets solidly its sole. he steers towards the mountains, rising, rising.

the cat finds none of it all that surprising.

## last names

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when i was younger,  
 i memorized of baudelaire  
 two lines.

for all the good it did me,  
 my level of declared sophistication  
 far outstrips my salary range.

arrogant from uncertainty,  
whittling a one-note duck call  
from a block of wood,

exerting influence over verbs  
that no longer flow  
nor flower.

once, very much upon a time,  
a fruitless and sublime youth  
in whose heart poetry billeted,  
signed all the poems 'regretfully yours',  
asserted that lips did not stain.

one settles for oneself.  
of that there man these then are  
the sun-beaten remains  
around which the house now settles.

a master at rest,  
interleaved fingers stationed at the lap,  
rare time i unfetter my glamour.

having learned nothing,  
i suspect the best.

embarking on a mission of recognizance,  
foray into the hall.  
no beauty in the eye. not in the mood.

not in a human mood at all.  
wading into the sunday noon  
finicky nosferatu style.

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like an injured shark  
lured by the mesh of blood in the wash,  
not sure whose pain reels you in.



single spaced spells  
the feeble scribbler casts  
upon that delectable corpus delicti  
pulsating from quite a bridgeable distance.

i am a landmine, primed.  
this feels so real, it has to be a symptom.

date-night welts of excitement.  
i trim my nails and brush my whiskers.

a tad too permeable,  
raveled by lust.

my thumb grazes your cheekbone.  
you lean in  
kind of in love  
with being kissed back.

south of the tartan hem,  
a set of round knees.

– the present that unwraps itself –  
watching the muse undress –

turns memory  
too dim to redeem.

never all in.  
thin walls,  
unmanned ear discerns  
neighbors' concerns.

a jasmine petal floats in my tea,  
  
or a butterfly wing.

a woman marooned in my arms  
might soon be depleted.

close proximity tends to dispel charms,  
turns lovers to ingrates  
grown ingrown.

oh, *ma petite chéri*,  
will reverie of our debaucheries  
run out?

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surprised,

finding a strand  
of dried tobacco  
between the pages of a book  
i didn't think i'd read.

irredeemably not so young anymore,  
a tracer of letters astray,  
by the minor key i am clothed and fed.

bespectacled and bemused,  
hope eminently receding,  
i tabulate the incidents, instances of chance  
interpreted to bare meaning.

it's much too easy to forgive oneself one's faults  
stringing together the first final draft  
of a text to be tossed from the raft,

what memory fails, fancy supplies.  
reciting epitaphs, i celebrate a craving  
that won't be satisfied.

and at the time  
and now and again  
i am  
what i might have been.

## THREE POEMS

Rich Glinnen

### The Towel Rack

Last week  
The towel rack  
Near the shower  
Collapsed  
Under the weight  
Of a hand towel

I looked down  
At the loose bar  
Wearing the red towel—  
Like a velvet robe  
Draping an  
Overdose

“Shit,” I thought,

And my toenails  
Were long

This brisk morning  
Ali and I  
Waltzed  
Into the shower  
Shimmying in and out  
Of the water—

Lathering  
Rinsing  
Boiling  
Freezing  
Until

A 500-pound  
Tortoise  
(Hiding under the  
Bathwater apparently)  
Throws my balance—

Eyes widened  
Pierced the Monday haze  
Ankles crisscrossed  
Balls crushed  
Against my thighs  
Going out like  
An old man

And down I go,  
Wet ass  
Walloping  
Porcelain

Ali's thin  
Unsuspecting legs  
Are no match  
For my clumsiness

She plops onto me  
Like wet laundry

But glimmering  
Above  
Like a midnight beacon—  
The towel rack handle  
Holding firm  
Under my  
White-nailed  
Grip.

## Stray Song

Its swampy song  
Clambers through my window,  
Rounding both of my cats  
From slumber,  
Inviting them  
To screw

"They're fixed," I inform the  
Stray, bare-bellied, barely buzzed,  
"There ain't nothin' in them"

All three are undeterred  
By this—what I deemed—  
Useful information. Still  
They stare—a standoff.

Perhaps the vagrant hopes  
A certain melody  
Will regenerate  
Ovaries and testes  
(Not sure how the  
Stray swings)

Either way, it's got  
A better shot  
At love  
Than most.

Rich Glinnen

## **Yard Gazing**

The rain's nails  
Against the window

Night has simplified  
All to two-tone

A squad of quadratic  
Maws glow  
From mammoth black

Lumpy creaks above  
Erupt,  
Then fade.