Gary Kuhlmann

Gary Kuhlmann, an editor at The University of Iowa, believes we're defined at least in part by what we read. These past few months, he returned to *Lolita* and *Speak, Memory* by Vladimir Nabokov; *Armies of the Night* and *Why Are We in Vietnam?* by Norman Mailer; and *Getting Even* and *Side Effects* by Woody Allen. He recently had a poem published in *The Cream City Review.*

A Gift to the Viewer

Oh, quivery river, you so smeared
Upon a cold canvas of poorly painted sun
In first blush of summer, then a duller time,
Then the bottoms of peaches, of a pear, of cream—

Or are you merely shadows in bold dissolve—
A monstrous color falls
Alongside her where she was
In expensive glasses so dark and posing

Questions: Have you written impressionistically of a river?
Have you figured a while on the truth?
Have you thought of investing in a pair of glasses?
The sun’s so hard on one’s expressionistic tendencies!

How the afternoon light descends upon the stampede of strokes
And through the transparency of the plastic bag
How the jar of mineral spirits contains a faint intimation of the sun—
To make like philosophical delay or a deeper understanding, a turn

Of promise dependent, vermillion nudes
In a primitive paradise. Doubt, the numbing
And unresponsive formlessness, redoubtable realism
Run amok becoming the form and the dark

Pigment of summer, pink-boned femme fatale
Peering into her face asleep: like
A frog’s brain in a jar, some thing
Marvelous yet potentially explosive, e.g., “What have you

Been dreaming (of), my love?” I don’t know
When or where or how this might happen, but this was
My independent film, my love, my love,
I, I, I, who have not caught your essence all afternoon.
**Repeat Echo**

My weakness:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>affliction</th>
<th>weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>specificity</td>
<td>place</td>
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<td>identify</td>
<td>name</td>
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<td>help</td>
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<td>undertake</td>
<td>resilient</td>
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though I’m not sure which one I’m asking for

another friction

anti-fiction

Our different skins become seamless.

don’t right //

not right for one another

somehow I got lost

this is where

we were last time

this mess

happened

and how could you let this happen again

whose idea was this anyway?

I forget too many things

like, I’m not supposed

to be here, stay here,

love x, break x,

make x stay, leave

without x again

find your way here

now look where we are

where are we?

Seems like a silly idea anyway.

“Our different skins become seamless.”

I wish I could forget this whole thing

A. but it took too long

to get here,

When:  B. and I’d like to be able to remember, how

will I remember it, I’d like to know

how will I find it?
X told me I had a fear of

Failure
being left
willing to leave

Chrome Waves

In silence I read the newspaper from cover to cover, including ads
For the mindless days, the mixed years
that weep in wind, laughter, and intolerable sadness.
A column breaks into an elegy

of the wind scampering around our ankles,
A cutting, a boundlessness. We lay upon our unsteady,
sandy skin. So you think

Expect lightning, Corpus Christi, and Puerto Nuevo to deliver
Need and desire, silent and relentless and undeniable, and save
Us the beach the barrier. So what, the storm arrives tomorrow

In the way sometimes we so mindlessly let our bodies return?
The storm delivers us our nervousness, neuroses, little nerve
Endings scurrying inside and forced to see themselves reversed
In mirrors that hold a solemn light that avoids the overly sentimental

And the morose. We have set a bad example. We have turned
Turned our selves inside out and let our bare shoulders in Corpus
turn the color of a strawberry. You are peeling like a tree now

but I find I am at ease with this strange peace in your arms, yes,
listen, the world with its wears and its surprises, and of all the works
in our possible realms, a mix of the world, in silence, here.
Once at the shore we saw seagulls

Poking at the surf, the yellow foam,
Car tire, bits of pier, a lady's shoe, a green candle. One
Of the seagulls lanced several washed-up jellyfish

Then cut past us back toward the hotel. I knew
The wind back home in Iowa swept our sandy street
And a plastic bag danced with recreant abandon
For a while in the street beneath the trees.

I would like to finish this: to step in puddles with shoes on, deliberately.