

## 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, vermilion 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:

<u>affliction</u>	/mark	/weight
affected action	/specificity	/place
affection shunned	/identify	/name
after action	/produce	/help
though I'm not sure which one I'm asking for	/undertake	/resilient
another friction		/distortion /line
anti-fiction	/snake	

Our different skins become seamless.

	not right //
confront	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.