Wheels

*Jim Daniels*

My brother kept

in a frame on the wall

pictures of every motorcycle, car, truck:

in his rusted out Impala convertible

wearing his cap and gown

waving

in his yellow Barracuda with a girl leaning into him

waving

on his Honda 350

waving

on his Honda 750 with the boys

holding a beer

waving

in his first rig

wearing a baseball hat backwards

waving

in his Mercury Montego

getting married

waving

in his black LTD

trying to sell real estate

waving

back to driving trucks

a shiny new rig

waving

on his Harley Sportster

with his wife on the back

waving

his son in a car seat

with his own steering wheel

my brother leaning over him

in an old Ford pickup

and they are

waving

holding a wrench a rag

a hose a shammy

waving.

My brother helmetless

rides off on his Harley

waving

my brother's feet rarely touch the ground-

waving waving

face pressed to the wind

no camera to save him.

The Meadow

*Kate Knapp Johnson*

Half the day lost, staring

at this window. I wanted to know

just one true thing

about the soul, but I left thinking

for thought, and now -

two inches of snow have fallen

over the meadow. Where did I go,

how long was I out looking

for you?, who would never leave me,

my withness, my here.

In the Well

*Andrew Hudgins*

My father cinched the rope,

a noose around my waist,

and lowered me into

the darkness. I could taste

my fear. It tasted first

of dark, then earth, then rot.

I swung and struck my head

and at that moment got

another then: then blood,

which spiked my mouth with iron.

Hand over hand, my father

dropped me from then to then:

then water. Then wet fur,

which I hugged to my chest.

I shouted. Daddy hauled

the wet rope. I gagged, and pressed

my neighbor's missing dog

against me. I held its death

and rose up to my father.

Then light. Then hands. Then breath.

Otherwise

*Jane Kenyon*

I got out of bed

on two strong legs.

It might have been

otherwise. I ate

cereal, sweet

milk, ripe, flawless

peach. It might

have been otherwise.

I took the dog uphill

to the birch wood.

All morning I did

the work I love.

At noon I lay down

with my mate. It might

have been otherwise.

We ate dinner together

at a table with silver

candlesticks. It might

have been otherwise.

I slept in a bed

in a room with paintings

on the walls, and

planned another day

just like this day.

But one day, I know,

it will be otherwise.

Mentor

*Timothy Murphy*

*For Robert Francis*

Had I known, only known

when I lived so near,

I'd have gone, gladly gone

foregoing my fear

of the wholly grown

and the nearly great.

But I learned alone,

so I learned too late.

Lesson

*Forrest Hamer*

It was 1963 or 4, summer,

and my father was driving our family

from Ft. Hood to North Carolina in our 56 Buick.

We'd been hearing about Klan attacks, and we knew

Mississippi to be more dangerous than usual.

Dark lay hanging from the trees the way moss did,

and when it moaned light against the windows

that night, my father pulled off the road to sleep.

                                                                  Noises

that usually woke me from rest afraid of monsters

kept my father awake that night, too,

and I lay in the quiet noticing him listen, learning

that he might not be able always to protect us

from everything and the creatures besides;

perhaps not even from the fury suddenly loud

through my body about his trip from Texas t

o settle us home before he would go away

to a place no place in the world

he named Viet Nam. A boy needs a father

with him, I kept thinking, fixed against noise

from the dark.

I’ve Been Known

*Denise Duhamel*

to spread it on thick to shoot off my mouth to get it off my chest

to tell him where

to get off

to stay put to face the music to cut a shine to go under to sell

myself short to play

myself down

to paint the town to fork over to shell out to shoot up to pull a

fast one to go haywire

to take a shine to

to be stuck on to glam it up to vamp it up to get her one better to

eat a little higher

on the hog

to win out to get away with to go to the spot to make a stake to

make a stand to

stand for something to stand up for

to snow under to slip up to go for it to take a stab at it to try out

to go places to play

up to get back at

to size up to stand off to slop over to be solid with to lose my

shirt to get myself off

to get myself off the hook

My Life

*after Henri Michaux*

*Joe Wenderoth*

Somehow it got into my room.

I found it, and it was, naturally, trapped.

It was nothing more than a frightened animal.

Since then I raised it up.

I kept it for myself, kept it in my room,

kept it for its own good.

I named the animal, My Life.

I found food for it and fed it with my bare hands.

I let it into my bed, let it breathe in my sleep.

And the animal, in my love, my constant care,

grew up to be strong, and capable of many clever tricks.

One day, quite recently,

I was running my hand over the animal's side

and I came to understand

that it could very easily kill me.

I realized, further, that it would kill me.

This is why it exists, why I raised it.

Since then I have not known what to do.

I stopped feeding it,

only to find that its growth

has nothing to do with food. I

stopped cleaning it

and found that it cleans itself.

I stopped singing it to sleep

and found that it falls asleep faster without my song.

I don't know what to do.

I no longer make My Life do tricks.

I leave the animal alone

and, for now, it leaves me alone, too.

I have nothing to say, nothing to do.

Between My Life and me,

a silence is coming.

Together, we will not get through this.