

Rachel McKibbens
Minneapolisstick

1.

Santa Ana, California,

3 a.m. in my cousin's basement,

lights out, television volume spun low.

We are huddled around the screen,

a small congregation of forgotten children,

brown faces illuminated by

a five-foot-two Black man,

decked out in lace, eyeliner, Spandex

and the gutsiest high-heeled boots

big enough to fit only a mannequin.

This Minnesota royalty freaks and splits his body biblical.

Throat raw with screeching doves, he pirouettes

with his truest love: a pale pawn shop guitar

we daydream of buying some day

with our lunch money.

2.

1984. What planet is this?

A third-grade heartbreak apostle,

I got a butch haircut my father calls a “Dorothy Hamill.”

Naw, pops. Watch me pin the girls against the handball courts.

Bold. Answering their tongues with my tongue.

My forbidden schoolyard brides. My makeshift Apollonias.

Once they’re in love, I pull away, bite my lower lip,

wink, then walk away.

I am not yet a king, but I got moxie and I move

like I know I’ll die young.

3.

Boys will be boys, unless they aren't

4.

This is what it sounds like

to praise our heavenly bodies in spite of the hells

that singed us into current form. For the permission

you granted in sweat and swagger,

for the mascara’d tears you shed on-screen,

for the juicy curls that hung over your right eye

like dangerous fruit, for the studded

shoulder pad realness and how your

falsetto gospel rang our young,

queer souls awake,

we say amen.

Michael Montlack

Is Richard Simmons missing? Or is he just dearly missed?

“I’m the clown you take out of the box and wind up when you need a good laugh. And then, when you’re done with me, I go back in my box.” —Richard Simmons

Don’t blame us for the outlandish rumors.
Witchcraft. Weight gain. Your housekeeper
keeping you hostage. Going Garbo simply
wasn’t glamorous enough when you vanished:
You—our 80’s oracle, the perky prince
of running short-shorts and sequined tank.

My sister and I forswore morning cartoons,
bare feet anchored to the family room carpet,
arms helicoptering to synthesizer pop.
The only girl in gymnastics who couldn’t
do a split—how she balled, unable to get over
those uneven bars. No more manageable
than my misadventures in Karate, that swampy
wrestling room, windowless, full of boys
exaggerating my lack of boyishness.

Twins, tweens, we would rather watch you,
Richard, sitting like a chief before semi-circles
of middle-aged moms mourning slimmer selves,
waiting to be anointed by healthy recipes,
aerobics and sentimental rap sessions.

We traded our jar of Marshmallow Fluff
for tangerines and walnuts, our father
rolling his eyes when we suggested
he “spinach-salad, dressing on the side.”

Amid the species of strange celebrities—
Pee Wee Herman, Elvira, Boy George—
you were the clown with a campaign.
A prophet back from the land of Pudge,
burning calories, not bushes. An odd brand
of man, tenderly pushy, even convincing
my sister she was beautiful, making her
hungry for another chance at those bars.

Gerry Gomez Pearlberg

Think Back

Agnes Moorehead, Hedy Lamarr,
Edith Head, and a smirky beautician
named Madge are in a low-cut car
heading toward the headlands, the outback, the margins.

Heads in the clouds, gloved hands on the wheel,
they're heady with the thrill of an all-girl
American adventure circa 1950-something.
Why not? Life's short.

"Life's short," croons Agnes.
She should know, but that comes later.
Right now everything that matters is in that car.
The breeze is blowing through the front-seat hair
of Edith Head and Hedy Lamarr.
Four single girls on the road for a drive.
Madge's manicured hand riding Agnes' thigh.

Edith leans forward to adjust her tie
and imagines a film that hasn't been
made yet, a movie called *Thelma and Louise*.
Madge and Agnes laugh her off, and Hedy joins in,
roaring as she freshens her face in the rearview mirror.
One eye on the road, she guides the lipstick sprocket
along the pocket of her lips, doesn't miss
a beat driving that stop sign red
around the sarcastic octagon of her mouth,
fully aware of Madge eyeballing her
from the back seat, flooding
with desire, a full tank of gas
sidling up to an easy match.

A girl can't help noticing how
another girl applies her make up.
Vantage point is everything.

Years from now, Madge will take advantage
of *her* vantage point, sit everyone down around
a crystal bowl of blue water, and inform them that
they're "soaking in it."

They'll be appalled, might even shrink back
from imagining too vividly the infamous
Moorehead deathbed scene – two rival lovers (both
bombshell legends) in the hospital room
mopping her brow, pondering the will,
recalling the taut infusions of lipstick,
mascara, and eau de cologne on the sheets
and pillowcases of other, non-deathbed beds.
Yes, they, like everyone else, are "soaking in it."

But all that comes later.
Right now is its own cliff-hanging time and place,
its own quickly driven moment,
with a Continuity Lady called Today
and a Script Girl named Mañana.

Eloise Klein Healy

Louganis

If Praxiteles had been an animator, this form
is the one he would have set in motion —
a spinning diver hurtling down
toward the surface of a pool,
its smooth skin raised to ripples
by an automatic wind machine.

He'd sculpt Louganis like a beautiful machine
poised against the cloudless sky, then charge his form
with action — the rippling
muscles of the torso tensing with explosive motion
as the diver vaults, kicks out and plunges into the pool
where cameras follow him down,

a sheath of bubbles wrapping him, down
where applause is a watery blur, the machine
of celebrity waiting above him, the press pool
of reporters eager to surround, touch his form —
a boy-god, perfect in stasis or motion,
an athlete who could ignite any crowd, send ripples

of excitement through an arena, ripples
of awe around the globe, even after he stepped down
from competition. I saw him once, pure motion
in a dog show ring, his Great Dane puppy not yet machined
into perfection. Greg was the one all form,
perfectly balanced on his toes, emerging from a pool

of dog handlers as the star. Outside a swimming pool,
nobody recognized him at first, but ripples
of applause picked up, formed
a little cup of sound, then settle down
again as he was one of us, no machine
of glory, just a guy and his dog in motion.

That was before rumors of HIV set chaos in motion
and sports shows ran films of his infected blood coloring the pool.
Predictably, the story fed into the tabloid machine,
and the customary scornful ripple

of reaction to anybody gay threatened to drive his name down
from Olympus, but no bigotry could change the form

of his achievement, no machine of age or ripple
of fear for his life could alter the timeless motion into a pool
of a beautiful boy falling down from heaven into perfect form.

Aaron Smith

Brad Pitt

With cotton candy armpits and sugary
Crevices, sweat glazing your donut skin.
Have you ever been fat, Brad?
Have you ever wanted a Snickers
More than love and lain on your bed
While the phone rang and rolled one
On your tongue, afraid to eat it, afraid
It would make your jeans too tight? Have you
Barfed, Brad, because you ate it,
Ate all the take-out, licked
Brown sauce off the box while you sobbed?
Brad Pitt down in the pits chaining menthol
Ciggys in your thick-wallet life,
It's not so bad Brad, sad Brad, is it?

Maureen Seaton

Sally Field

If I could be any actor it would be Sally Field. If I could sleep with any actor it would be Queen Latifah. Field reminds me a little of me if I weren't so

phobic about flying. Latifah, you might say, has become a famous femme in recent years--if you judge by the makeup and the glossy magazine spreads.

Still, the way she rapped in the old days ... and that *Set It Off* scene. The thing I like about Field is her seamless approach to her life and work. Plus she's a

mom and she says censorable things. I like that she loved two men in *Norma Rae*. I've had trouble myself loving just one person over the years. I could

easily have three lovers at a time like a Mormon or a beach cat. Latifah reminds me of the night one of my lovers dressed up as a femme fatale and

sang me a torch song. Not all butches can do that. Some look like drag queens when they put on femme clothes. Even with a construction hat and

steel-toed boots I femme myself out. That's where Sally Field and I have something else in common. Cowboy boots just make us look cuter.