

RANCID IDOLS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS:

CLOTHES

24 HOUR CHAPBOOK CHALLENGE III

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Foreword

For a while now, I've been taking photos of lost clothing. A rain-soaked hoodie. A glove separated from its twin. A hat, perhaps blown off in the wind. Inexplicably misplaced shoes. All these things interest me – how they got there, who was their owner, what were they doing? There's an unknown poetry behind each lost object, that forced me to stop in the street for a closer look, to kneel on the pavement and inspect with my camera-phone lens.

I'm not sure what originally drew me to catalogue such images of loss, but it's seemed fitting that this would be the prompt for the third twenty-four-hour chapbook challenge. Participants receive a one-word prompt, 'clothes', and an image (the original photo of the cover image, a lost red hoodie hung up on a wire fence near a college). In the space of twenty-four hours, poems are written, emailed back, collated, edited, and presented as you find them now. Many thanks as always to all the participating poets, and happy reading.

Colin Dardis, Editor.

Memory Molecule

Who will want to smell my clothes
when I am gone
who will privately, painfully, pause
to inhale my folded sweaters
for that evocative memory molecule
of time together, laughing
as sunlight toasts our faces
and the water sparkles
Or when we drank too much Spanish
wine and stained our mouths
How you would stroke my hair until
we'd give up to sleep
and treat each morning as a consolation
I was, I am worthy of a love like that

Siobhan Atkins



My History with Clothes

Clothing history

My own, quite variable

Nappies, shorts, long socks

Platform shoes, wide flared trousers

Three buttons, side leg pockets

Then Punk had arrived

Skinny leg, zipped up leggings

Ripped up shirts, jackets

New Romantic Scene

Balloon Baggy Pleated Pants

A Mod Revival

Jackets with tiny lapels

Andrew Ward



Jump Suit

A little red jump suit
Bent over the top
Of a barbed wire fence —
There it was - dumped
As if some little boy
Tried to jump, jump, jump,

Got caught on the spikes
But wiggled about
And ended up in the dike
When he fell right out
Of his red jump suit.
Now slippery as a worm

He runs through a field of corn
In his birthday suit.

Anna Murphy



Clothes Heist

Hoisted me
A dedicated follower
Fashioned mock silk satin sateen polyester
Rationed by lack of funds
Saving for rainy days and 'Sunday Best'
Follower failure
Leather look shoes murdered my hallux
A lumpen reminder
My working-class Provident cheque-fate

Wendy Young



Red Shirt

Blown wild by an October wind
Striped off the assembly line
Trapped on steel rails
Buoyed up with a body of cold air
Arms outstretched helplessly
A cry for help unheard
That favourite red shirt.
You stood for style, the plate armour
Of a strength
That was never there.
The perfect
Red flag. Red herring. Redundant
Red Shirt.

Clare McKay



Odour of Abandonment

Dust layers
And the fingertips of time
Shreds we keep as precious heirloom
Clothes possess our existence
A forgotten youth that no longer fits
In a suit and a gown
Two high school sweethearts
Fighting over memories
Like arch enemies
Who will be brave enough
To leave first?

Vasiliki Petroudi



The Carmine Coat

It flashed red in the wind, hanging, bereft
And flapping with each gust
Scarecrow arms unpopulated
Ghostly limbs, boneless, unhinged
Shadowing a life not yet lived
A future undecided.
Cries drift from beyond the fence
Children shout, uniform in their play
Predictable and conforming
A future decided and guided,
dressed in predictability.
Live vicariously and channel the wind
Risk the carmine coat of individuality
And the garish garments of choice

Jillian McFrederick



Jumpers

and cardigans hang limp on little chairs;
primaries in plastic draped with knitted torsos,
slack arms ribbed at the ends where hands should be;
others lie where they fell in the grey playground, across the
dry field;
some, still warm, are balled as swaddled babies;
a few are stretched like twisted victims captured in a
newspaper photograph
or some mad unfiltered footage caught on someone's
phone;
one red as blood, no... redder, is caught on a wire fence,
lifts on an ill wind,
red rag like a dead flag half-masted above the too-green,
too-contrasting astroturf;
discarded shoes wait next to the sand-pit, wishing for feet
to make them run.

Martin Yates

For the victims of the massacre at a nursery in Nong Bua Lamphu province, Thailand, and those who grieve for them (6th October 2022)



After the Wedding

that white dress screams dishonesties
from the bedroom floor. It has seen me in my nakedness,
disrobed of him, of all pretence and promises.
Those layers of lace have chafed my skin:
proof of not belonging. I am paper thin.
This stained satin is delicately embroidered
with beautiful untruths, it's perfume
gagging me like the stale champagne that clings
to my throat.
After today, that dress will be cleaned and boxed and put
away
like my impossible love
for you.

Louise Machen



Exposed

Her headdress was a bowler hat,
A vest dropped to her knees,
When it came to feeling blue,
Her heart was on her sleeve.

Her bare legs covered by odd socks,
Some said she was naive,
With a Phd on passion,
And heartbreak on her sleeve.

A threadbare coat of loneliness,
A garment made to grieve,
She felt naked in her truth,
Cos her heart was on her sleeve,
She wore her heart upon her sleeve.

Stephen Knox



Red Dress Day

My mother had a red dress. She wore it only at Christmas. She was a happy woman, never more so than when the tree went up and our parents' giving ways could be further loosened and given free rein.

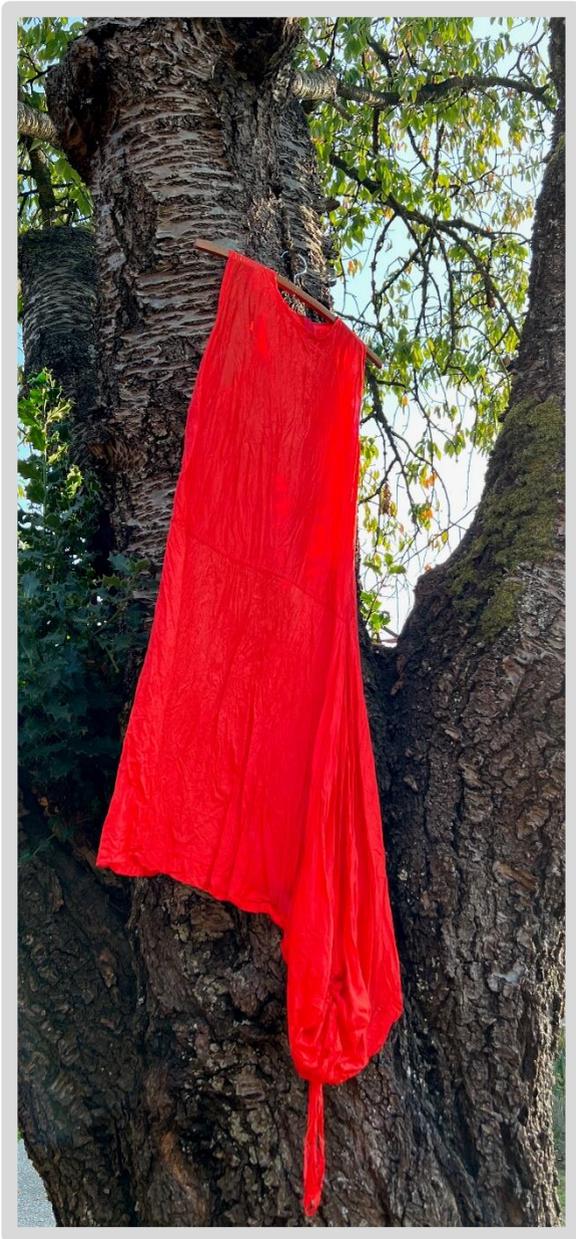
In our naïveté we believed our comforts in our tiny Ontario town were everyone's comforts, except maybe in Africa where some went hungry (as we were reminded when we didn't finish our plates).

Meanwhile, meagre dinners for Ojibwe girls on reserves nearby were sometimes left untouched on their plates to grow cold. Mothers paced and fretted. They peered nervously out their windows, while fathers probed the bushes with flashlights, softly calling out their daughters' names.

We knew about the missile crisis, that the Leafs could win the Cup, that I Love Lucy began at seven. Vanishing Indian girls weren't newsworthy. Word of them never reached us. We couldn't have known the hunter lived on our street, that he was the church basement Santa. The hunter had a red suit. He wore it only at Christmas. He asked us if we'd been good.

P.W. Bridgman

May 5th is Red Dress Day in Canada—a day that honours the memory of missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women. Red dresses are hung in trees and displayed in other public places to call attention to systemic failures in law enforcement and various government policies that, over the years, have contributed to the overrepresentation of Indigenous women and girls in Canadian society as victims of violent crimes, sexual exploitation and intractable poverty.



untitled

I pull the drawstring tighter
against the wind-blown rain
that stings and bites at my eyes
shattering the thought of tears.
The hood now drowns all sound
but the noise grows from within
as the outside reality fights to enter
to steal the safety from a shroud.

If you pass by this way tomorrow
and perhaps I may still be here
the rain and thickness of cardboard
are all that separates us, look closer.
Search the clothes, discard and design
there you see the person bound within.

John Caulfield



Discovery

no one to claim
a cherry

apple cardigan
pulled from

a twinset
escaping

the rails
at sunset

in the park
by the body

of a young man
naked in the dark

a scattering
of pearls

Patrick Chapman



Left Behind

She left her coat behind and took off, spinning in the
midnight streets
like a clothesline on a windy day. Her hair undone,
undulating gently behind her
like the silk scarves her mother used to wash and dry for
other people.

Her shoes went next, kicked off into the road
kicked off like fireworks, sent sputtering
across the grey expanse, tumbling over each other the way
lovers do,
she imagined.

The socks were the last to go - pigeon grey, they were
white once.

The gravel road hurt her toes,
she ecstasied the pain.

The rain beat against her bare arms dripping
down her elbows, drips cascading
down her forearms, falling off
the ends of her fingertips like tears.

Wendy Sinnamon



Hollow Hoodie on the High Street

as a ghost might be haunted by the wind,
these arms extended by updraft,
a vacant hug, a gesture of invitation

and as a ghost might laugh at passers-by
who stepped close enough to kill
their curiosity, we find there

is no one within, no arms
where flesh should be, no tunnel of torso,
the head decapitated by neglect.

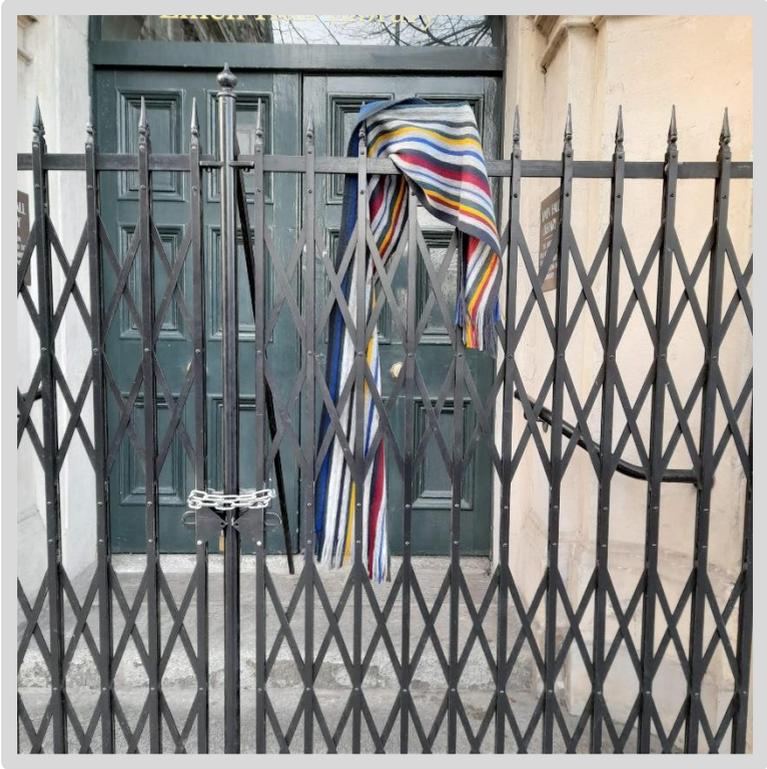
Colin Dardis



Weightlessness

Vanity has finally left me,
stomping down the path.
Under one arm, the mirrors
that adorned the walls.
Under the other, a case
full of designer clothes
I had bought to fit in. Clenched
fists drag my heavy shadow
through the gravel into a distant sunset.
I watch on from the doorstep, naked
except for a smile and an ankle tether
that stops me floating away.

Stuart Beveridge



Cotton Cocoon

Sprigs of crooked thread threaten to unravel
At the slightest tug of air
I tug it in 'til it feels like skin
Bunch sleeves around bitten fingers
And draw frayed collar over my nose
Inhale that soft musk of stuffy wardrobes and old
bedsheets
Warm powdered scales trapped between worn fibres
The hot chocolate stain that just won't come out
Hemline touched with tiny holes made from tinier mouths
Anxious insects that chew and chew and chew
While I curl up inside
Scratch at my skin and pull out my eyelashes
'Til it's safe to emerge from my cotton cocoon

Sandee Bree Breathnach



Summer Leaves

The trees wear their hats and coats with pride,
flaunting them in everyone's face,
in streets, forests, parks, country-sides,
wrapped up in the sun's warm embrace.

Most standing tall, rubbing shoulders,
slyly vying for light's caress.
Sowing envy, green as their dress,
they grow arrogant and bolder.

Here, bi-year, it's what's hot, what's in,
'til Summer leaves, not in season.
Red-faced, they abandon reason,
cast off clothes, commit self-treason.

Mark Russell



If Clothes Maketh The Woman

who is she when she takes them off?

A bag of bones delicately sealed in a skin wrapper,

A river of blood flowing like the goddess Boann,

A blue and red crisscrossing like a busy city gridlock,

or a living, breathing thing exposed, beautiful, bare?

Clothes don't maketh the woman.

The woman maketh the clothes.

BeRn

