

The New Criterion

Poems

September 2006

City album: a wet afternoon

by [Brad Leithauser](#)

I. Dorm Room

Theirs is that special condition of plenty
available only to those with nothing
on or between them. It's as if they'd been
out in the downpour, bodies wet as
that—but they've stayed in all day. Again
he studies her nape, fingertip-tests her hip.
He thinks her *very young*. Eighteen. He's twenty.

II. Basement Lab

The entomologist drops into a pool of light to peer
at the magnified maxillae of a rare beetle
while something lackluster raps the dusty pane
above her head, a passing fluster of drops
hardly worth speaking of as rain;
she bagged this firebrand, *Pyrophorus ignitus*,
on a slope that catches two hundred inches a year.

III. Rect ...

Brad Leithauser's most recent book is *The Art Student's War*.

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