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#51/52

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# THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

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Fall, 1991-Summer, 1992

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## CO- rrespondence

### VIDEO WRITING

by Richard Kostelanetz

The principal adventure, or strategy, for my creative writing the past dozen years has been exploring the use of language in media other than the traditional one of 8 1/2-inch by 11-inch rectangular manuscript pages. For those dozen years, and then another dozen before that, I have spent most of my working days manipulating words—words for articles and books, words for journalism and criticism; words for poetry and fiction, experimental prose and much, much else. It should be understood, at the beginning, that I love language, and I love to work with language.

From my earliest essays as a critic of literature and the arts, I have been committed to appreciating the innovative, to work that did not fulfill conventions but transcended them, often radically; and so it became inevitable that when I came to do my own creative works, the first around 1967, I began at a point far beyond the conventions of the time. My opening moves were visual poems, which is to say language enhanced primarily in terms of design. Among the more familiar examples were “Disintegration” (1967) and “Tributes to Henry Ford” (1967), both of which have been widely reproduced.

My next steps involved visual fiction, which is to say worded images in sequence, as in “Genesis” (1971), which summarizes the opening books of the Bible in seven images, or the “Football Forms” (1968), whose letters portray the evolution of an offensive play in four images; and “Development” (1972), whose abstract shapes fall into a sequence that suggests a narrative about various kinds of constructive processes. At the same time I was working with radical kinds of exclusively verbal fictions that were severely truncated, or minimal, with only two words or less to a paragraph.

Also, by 1974, some of the better visual poems, including “Disintegration,” appeared, enlarged, as silkscreened prints; and one subsidiary benefit of that last move into visual art, as it is commonly perceived, was propelling me out of the literary tradition of doing “writing” only on small rectangular pages. Indeed, what I had also discovered with these prints was alternative forms of making public my work with language; that is to say that I found another way to publish my writing. A final foundation behind my video writing was a 1975 residency at a public radio station. Here I took some of my earlier literary texts—the minimal fictions, especially—and exploited the unique resources of multitrack audiotape to publish them acoustically, in ways that I hoped were appropriate not just to the verbal text but also conducive to the unique possibilities of audiotape.

Having established my willingness to explore writing in the new media, I was invited, later in 1975, to be a guest artist at the Synapse video studio at Syracuse University, where I worked not with a single engineer-producer, as I had at the radio station, but with an institutional staff of young instructors, graduate assistants and undergraduates. With their help, I realized video versions of earlier literary texts. "Excelsior" (1970), for instance, was initially a skeletal, minimal story in which two people seduce each other in one-word paragraphs: Let's/No/Yes/Stop/Now/Please/Later/Relax/Insist/Don't /Dislike/No/Like/Pooh . . . . And so on. To visualize the text on videotape, I created two abstract designs and then swiftly alternated between them, letting the soundtrack eroticize the rhythmic abstract imagery. Another skeletal story, "Plateaux," tells of the development of a love affair in single-word paragraphs. Since the original text ends with the same words with which it begins—the phrases "Introductions," "Pleasantries"—I decided such a circular form needed the technology of video feedback to create a kaleidoscopic moire pattern that changes slowly in no particular direction, complementing visually the directionless development, so to speak, of the fiction's plot.

For my third early piece, I drew upon a more difficult literary text—a piece of experimental prose called **Recyclings** whose first volume had been published the year before. Its pages were made by subjecting earlier essays of mine to selective processes that destroyed their original syntax, while retaining their characteristic language. What I did in writing this text was take earlier essays of mine and from each one of them extract words out of their original sequence, and by this method to make of the words for each past essay a single page of new nonsyntactic prose. As words on these pages have no grammatical connection to one another, the texts of **Recyclings** can thus be read not only horizontally, like normal prose, but also vertically or even diagonally, as one's eyes, moving down and around the page, can perceive not only consistencies in diction but repeated words that usually indicate an identifiable ulterior source or subject. The subtitle of **Recyclings** is "A Literary Autobiography, 1959-1981" since its 320 pages of its definitive text (1984) recapitulate, or recycle, everything I have written to that point.

During the earlier residency at the radio station, I decided to use multitrack audiotape for its particular capabilities. Essentially, I read a page of **Recyclings'** text horizontally, one word after the other, in the conventional way; but for the second page of text, I reread the text twice, likewise in conventional ways, however, amplifying my voice differently from before in the second reading when I also started to read the page's opening words approximately one line (or a few seconds) behind its predecessor. For the third page, I duplicated the same delay procedure three times, thus making a trio canon with three amplifications of my own voice. By the time I got to a seventh page of **Recyclings**, with six delays of me reading the text, I had transformed myself into a choral septet. With this fugal technique, I was aiming not for any specific juxtapositions of one word with another, but just for continuous vertical relationships among different parts of the same text.

For the video **Recyclings** I created the image of pairs of lips speaking; and as the voices in the audio realization were all mine, so were these lips. However, videotape differs from audiotape in that it doesn't have separate tracks. Rather than laying the versions apart from one another and then mixing them together, as I did on audiotape, I had with videotape to lay them literally on top of one another. However, with each new generation of imagery, the video signal of the previous



generations becomes less stable. As a result, the prior images become progressively weaker, which means not just that they become fuzzier but that they lose their original colors. That degeneration of the signal strength explains why, by the time four voices are speaking, and four lips are on the screen, they all have different colors, incidentally epitomizing a self-surrealism as only contemporary technology can make it. As this work is far more difficult than its predecessors, it also demands a lot more explanation. However, it is not impenetrable; it is not impossible to understand. Like so much else in contemporary art, **Recyclings** must be seen, or heard, or read, more than once to reveal itself. Indeed, the more often you hear it, the more of itself will be revealed.

The last videotape that I made at Synapse in 1975 is based upon my book **Openings & Closings** which also appeared that year. It is a collection of single-sentence stories that are alternately either the openings of hypothetically longer fictions or the closings, again of equally nonexistent fictions. While each of these stories radiates either forwards or backwards, they have no intended relation to one another; and there are no intentional connections within the entire work, other than the principle of scrupulous discontinuity. Here I decided to read the stories on camera, one after the other, the Openings in alternation with the Closings. To enhance my reading in ways that would be impossible live, and also impossible on audiotape, I instructed a crew of Synapse technicians to alternate between color cameras for the Openings and black-white cameras for the Closings, and connected each coloring system to its own camera crew. Thus, there was no way that one class of stories could be visually confused with another. My second instruction was that each crew make its current visual image of me as different as possible from the one(s) before. My aim here was to realize visually the enormous leaps of time and space that characterize the book's text. **Openings & Closings** is, incidentally, the only creative videotape I have made so far in which an image clearly recognizable as me appears on the screen.

Beginning in 1976 I began to tour with my tapes, or rather to play them instead of reading aloud from my texts whenever I was invited to do a literary recital. Since my first show of these tapes, at the Anthology Film Archives at the end of 1975, involved an Advent video screen, I began to insist that my hosts find similar video screens in their own communities or institutions. I remember on the eve of Jimmy Carter's election, at the University of California at Santa Cruz, my tapes were shown on a university-owned screen that no one in the audience had seen before; and once my show was done, we watched the news on this new medium (whose light is projected onto the screen, rather than from behind it, as in normal television). At Arizona State, eighteen months later, my hosts discovered that the only video screen available on campus was in the nursing school; so my audience traipsed by plastic cadavers on the way to my show.

After my experience at Synapse, I wrote a theoretical text in which I tried to define what I was doing and incidentally distinguish my tapes from other videoart. Entitled "Literary Video," this essay appeared in several magazines at that time, as well as in program notes to my own screenings and later in anthologies about video art. In 1977, in a private New York video studio run by Joanne Caring, I also put the manifesto on video tape, in a visual form (with only my mouth visible) that incidentally illustrates one of its points (about video differing from film in favoring closeups over long shots and parts of bodies over full figures). Another piece from this period, "Milestones in a Life," is, in essence, a reading of a truncated verbal



text, in which the words for numerals alternate with paragraphs mostly a single word in length; but again, rather than subscribing to the literary convention of showing the author at a lectern or in some other formal, pseudo-literary situation, I decided that for my video realization of me reading this text it would be best to show only my eyes.

During a literary residency at Eastern New Mexico State University in 1979, two professors of English interviewed me about my writing for their television program. To exemplify my work, they invited me to do a conventional reading of my poetry or fiction, my eyes no doubt glancing earnestly from my text to the camera. However, that presentational form is no more acceptable to me on camera than it is in live performance, so often confusing as it does the writer with his or her work, therefore vulgarizing the reception of that work. I insisted instead upon doing something else, which would involve declaiming a text as difficult as **Recyclings**, again superimposing image over image, which here would be four pairs of bearded lips, all visibly different in size; but now I used a video technology that was new to me — the character generator that electronically produces letters that appear on the screen. Since this text, titled “Declaration of Independence,” was so difficult, I decided to add continuous lines of explanatory gloss that would crawl from time to time along the bottom of the screen.

Since 1979 I have been writing a text call **Epiphanies**, which are single sentence stories that, unlike those mentioned before, are not the openings or the closings of but the Epiphanies, in the Joycean sense. That is to say that these are the resonant moments that illuminate the entire, but here nonexistent, story. In my video writing of these texts, I put the words of these Epiphanies on the video screen, one story at a time, in various typographical arrangements; and let them dominate the screen for durations roughly equal to the length of the stories, while J. S. Bach’s piano music is heard in the background. Someone remembering silent movies has joked that my video **Epiphanies** is “all titles, no action,” and that is true, in that visible words contain the entire action of each story. Nonetheless, this video tape is very much about an alternative experience of reading, not only in concert with others (usually) but at a speed of presentation that (unlike the conventional reading experience) cannot be controlled by the reader. Literally printing these stories on videotape also represents a viable alternative to traditional publishing.

The character-generator I used in these video Epiphanies is rather primitive, compared to what is available — it could use only one style or lettering, in one size, only with white letters on a black field, in a fixed grid of 24 characters across and ten lines high. More sophisticated character-generators, by contrast, contain various typefaces, expandable to any size that can fit within the screen, in a variety of colors. These letters can be programmed to enter the screen from any place along the edge and then change size in the course of moving across the screen’s face, in, say, a visual crescendo or decrescendo; the letters can even be made to perform such acrobatic tricks as flipping over or turning inside out. Or so I am told, as I have not yet been able to use one.

I also want to compose by myself a new contemporary sound track, replacing the classical piano which sounds too much like old-time movie music for my taste. Instead, I want to use computer-assisted speech resynthesis to take the single word “epiphanies” and extend, combine and vary it in a multitude of ways, with each variation equal in length to one of the stories. Such a soundtrack would necessarily

be composed apart from the visual track and would thus draw upon the techniques I have been developing in my studio art and upon as well a bias toward separately composed sound and image that is also evident in my films.

My sense of my video art now is that the character-generator is my principal tool, and that my principal creative interest will be exploring it for a video writing that will not supersede the printed page — that's not possible, because the book will always be with us — but become yet another possibility for presenting heightened, poetic language. What I like about video in general is its capacity to complement my literary interest with visual elements in addition to the temporal and kinetic.

During recent residencies at the Experimental TV Center in Owego, New York, I have been producing visual realizations of both poems and stories, using not only elementary character-generators but, more important, rather sophisticated processing equipment to put my words on screen in unusual shapes. Perhaps the most successful of these experiments so far has been "Stringfour" whose text is composed from overlapping English words. To be precise, each new word in this continuous string of letters contains at least three letters from its predecessor: stringfourselvestrymandolingerbillowbrowboatmealtimetabemishapelessness . . . . As the character-generator enabled me to write its several hundred letters as a continuous feed that runs from the right edge of the screen to the left, we decided to make a second version of the text, enlarged to a greater height; and it too flows across the screen, with fewer letters visible from vertical edge to vertical edge, as a kind of harmonic complement. As the words of "Stringfour" move across the screen quite quickly, some of the verbal sequences are more visible, or more accessible, than others; some are also more witty. As a video realization of a text that was originally composed for paper (and has been published in literary magazines), "Stringfour," with language in such an extended structure, works far better on videotape, which here becomes an effective alternative vehicle for publishing certain works of literature. May I also recommend viewing it, as well as other works of mine, on a video screen, where the imagery indigenous to television becomes yet more fantastic and powerful, precisely because, as in the prints of my visual poems, language assumes certain qualities when it is seen so large at such close range.

A graduate student currently researching a thesis on American poets using video has recently told me that no other "published poet" in America today has been producing his or her own videotapes, as distinct from collaborating with videoartists, which is to say that no other writer has become a videoartist in his or her own right. Because this technology has been available for over a decade, I find this hard to believe, but then professional self-limitations are a literary fashion in America today. The only published poet known to be working in holography is a young Brazilian, and the only writers to be making their own audiotapes are European. It would seem that less out of genius than default, in the world of contemporary American literature, Video Writing has become my own terrain.

**Richard Kostelanetz**





## Close to the Ground

For my father

Our lungs empty and fill.  
I breathe the turned earth  
of the field behind your house;  
you breathe almost  
pure oxygen moistened  
with sterile water.  
Is this the beginning  
of goodbye, breathing  
two different worlds?

Last summer in my garden,  
we transplanted Grandma's  
Japanese iris.  
We didn't speak of her, spading  
her plot of earth  
all those years, snapping out  
wild onions.  
We didn't speak at all, crushing  
chunky peat knee to knee, soil  
dusting our gloves as we tamped  
around the rhizomes.  
Our breath was close  
to the ground, slight  
steady work,  
the way life itself is for you,  
your gray lungs wheezing.  
Now breaths, not words, are labor.

This year, my garden is too far,

your life measured  
by three-hour oxygen tanks.  
The iris bloom in anger;  
leaves jab the air  
not knowing  
they are flimsy.

**MJ Abell**

## **Sitting Next to the Telephone in the Kitchen**

Today I feel lost as a child  
on a milk carton  
whose blurry picture  
will never grace enough tables  
or Frigidaires to make me  
dial my own number and say  
*Ma'am, I've found him, right here*  
*under the caesura*

Yet my own refrigerator is full  
of dusty grapes, sour  
and uncertain, raspberry preserves  
with sticky lids, and milk  
in chameleon bottles  
with no names, no sweet faces  
for the missing, Gil,  
are right here.

**Gilbert Allen**



## The Rooster

### I.

When we lived in the country,  
I'd hear the rooster telling his stories –  
A gander who'd taken him on,  
A skin and bones old hound,  
Snakes and hawks and possums.  
I'd watch his bloodshot eyes  
Watching his boys shift from foot to foot,  
Measure themselves in the shapes of his stories,  
Listen hard for teeth and claws and scales sliding softly across  
the doorway.  
He'd see them shiver as the warm, desirable hens crowded closer.  
And when their time came, he'd peck them bloody, one by one,  
and run them off into the cotton fields around the yard.  
The ones that lived a night out there alone came back dimin-  
ished, dreamless, cured by his casual and necessary cruelty.  
They were free to stay.

### II.

We spent long days and nights together, you and I, bouncing and  
rattling down oil field roads in this and that old truck, talking,  
Endlessly telling the story of ourselves rich, the houses we'd  
build, the cars we'd buy, trucks of our own, more money than we  
could count,  
Big time dream drama dreams of such bright stuff that all the  
world would fill with light and heat, with possibility.  
And when it did, a door would open before us,  
To reveal some small business – a store, a gas station, a run-  
down, one-bay shop.  
Two, five, seven times we crossed that doorway.  
Two, five, seven times the shelves emptied and grew dusty;

Underground tanks held little and less and nothing;  
Thick, stagnant water filled our Tires for Sale.  
Two, five, seven times debt and deficit overwhelmed desire, and  
We staggered away into the darkness  
To begin again, our aching, our dreaming.

### III.

It seemed our dreaming then, but I think now that it was mine  
that filled the world with such light and warmth, such possibility.  
I think you dreamed deeper, harsher. I think you dreamed your  
dusty Oakie childhood, its cotton fields, the sounds of night  
things sliding softly toward us.  
And it scared you and drove you like that rooster's sons and  
grandsons to and from the darkness, to and from the people who  
loved and used you and laughed at you and pitied you enough to  
give you work, even at the last, when you could no longer tell  
your waking from the nightmare your dreaming had become,  
When the dream dreamed you and not you the dream.

### IV.

I found you then in this bright room, nested deep in the machin-  
ery of prolongation.  
In the coming and the going, the careful speaking, the brittle  
laughter you lay still,  
Save the subtle movement of one upturned eye  
And the blood, grown pale and yellow, that flowed from your  
head, through the tubing, into a jar discreetly shoved beneath  
your bed.  
I sat with you. I smoothed your hair and stroked your hand.  
I conjured trucks and times and stories we had shared.  
I sang to you, and  
You rose before me, young and strong and whole,

Hammer in one hand, light in the other, fine white wrinkles pat-  
terning the skin about your eyes.  
It was all I could give you.

## V.

Sometimes, on moonless nights,  
When I am tired or restless or leave the door of desire ajar,  
You come to me, not as you were in the days of my childhood or  
in my conjuring, but as you became – a repository for pain and  
fear and longing so vast and hard that we could not bear the  
weight of you.  
I see blue and yellow flames.  
I watch you turn, fall, cry out for mercy.  
Your flesh glistens, blisters, boils away.  
And then you lie in a hospital, and I sit beside you, counting the  
drip, moving your legs, watching you focus the world into a single  
point, a cigarette, a simple task, one job, and then another and  
another and another . . .  
Until you come home twisted and unready for the long years  
that crouch there,  
Dreaming already of the settlement your lawyer will win, the  
house you will own, the cars, the trips,  
Inching already toward the run-down building on Second Street  
where you will do your last and bitterest business, selling nothing,  
waiting for someone to make you rich.  
I am filled with rage. I am filled with grief.

## VI.

In the country it is autumn.  
The cotton has withered and turned brown. Its bolls have broken  
open.  
I take a piece of pipe and corner the rooster between the coop



and the tin fence.  
I swing the pipe, strike him on the side of his head.  
He leaps into the air, rakes me with his sharp spurs, and races  
away.  
I chase him around and around, smashing his head, his neck, his  
back.  
When I hit him, he staggers, but he runs on and on, leading me  
across the fields and into the back yard  
Where I corner him and beat him to death.  
He lies at my feet, his bright blood flowing into the earth.  
And then you and I sit together, at the kitchen table.  
The meat on our plates is dry, tough, good.  
The dumplings are soft, salty, covered with gravy.  
The tea is icy cold, and sweet.

**Chuck Anderson**

## With Lupe Velez on North Rodeo Drive

Lupe was undressing. She had spent the afternoon with the RKO hairdresser and make-up man she liked, telling them she had a date. Her cat-black hair was pulled back, a few careful curls looping under her cheeks. She bought hundreds of flowers, roses, carnations, lilies, and scented red candles. She was pregnant, few knew, and alone. The *Mexican Spitfire* pictures, such as they were, were over, and the grade-Z Mexican *Nana* hadn't even been released in California. What's worse, she still loved Gary Cooper. She was 36.

Naked, she covered her room with the flowers, creating a wreath on the bed deep as snow, and placing them in vases, on their sides, stemless buds scattered on the floor like palms. She lit the candles on tables, windowsills, the headboard, nightstand and floor. It was beautiful, it would be spoken of, women will sigh, perhaps somewhere even a fan of hers – were there any left? – would copy her extravagant tableau, buying out the local florist,

this one thing done in her life  
as if others, a whole world,  
could be watching. This  
is how stars die in Hollywood.

Lupe swallowed her Seconal  
and lay carefully in her bed,  
at the center of flowers,  
hands folded on her chest,  
her nude, still-young body, her breasts  
still, in Flynn's words,  
the most beautiful in Hollywood.  
She could still rotate them  
one at a time, like she used to  
at parties, opening her blouse.  
Now, she wanted, when found,  
everyone to be stunned by her  
beauty-in-death, she wanted  
to show them that love is real  
and wicked, and that Valentino  
would, in his way, never die.

She started to vomit, perhaps  
partly due to her pregnancy.  
Sitting up, it geysered out  
all over her, her flowers.  
She jumped off the bed,  
staggering to the bathroom.  
Kneeling in front of the toilet,  
puking into its cold echo.  
The spasms came fast, painfully.  
Soon there was nothing but bile,  
but she kept heaving, gripping  
the bowl's unloving edge.

And they found her, half a day later,  
her head in the bowl, her body  
crumpled before it, a vomit trail



leading back to the still-fresh flowers.  
The candles, burnt-down, filled the house  
with cinnamon. In 1944, the papers  
never mentioned the bathroom,  
or the flowers, just that Lupe  
had swallowed pills. The war was on.

**Michael Atkinson**

## A VIEW FROM THE TOWER

And so bifel, by aventure or cas,  
That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre  
Of iren greet and square as any sparre  
He cast his eye . . .

— from *The Knight's Tale*

You saw her first: a braid of golden hair  
along her spine, reflecting early light  
while beads of water glittered against white  
petals and gleaming stems. Another hour,  
and all the leaves were dry, the flowers bare.  
We watched her. Every morning, as the heat  
increased just slightly, she would dip one foot  
into the cool stream, breathe the humid air,  
then rise to walk again. We'd stand and look,  
imagining details that neither saw —  
the texture of her skin, a scented neck  
now veiled with perspiration; and dry straw  
cracked under the steps. Those days, we spoke  
in accusations, when we talked at all.

In sleep, I saw the guards, a broken shield,  
that still heap of the dead . . . We lay there pressed  
in armor, dented, cracked; blood on the grass.  
Arms numbed, we couldn't raise the swords we held.  
The weight against my chest lifted, was pulled  
away; I coughed, breathed in, saw that my face,  
still warm, rested on yours. The sentries hissed,  
pried us apart. Blood slipped from your helmet, spilled —  
But when I woke, I saw the same stone walls  
surrounding us, a substitute embrace  
so tiring and monotonous, all else  
felt cold, thin-edged as chalk. Even the face  
of one who knelt outside and took the pulse  
of sunlight in green stems, and felt no peace.

Ned Balbo

## CARNIVAL

I tried all afternoon, used up my change  
aiming at paper apples on the board.  
The owner laughed out loud when the last dart missed:

“Aren’t you tired of punishing yourself?”  
I flushed red, flattened a tin can in the dirt . . . .  
At home, my father listened, then drove me back

to the booth, where the owner sat, sucked beer, and smirked.  
My father paid, then aimed. Stuffed bears, a wolf  
glared down – Three in a row. Green apples shook,

just cheap signs pinned to cardboard. I could talk  
now; anything was mine. I picked the snake  
with paper fangs: long as the back wall, striped,

sewn out of dyed acrylic. The owner glowered but kept  
his cool, unhooked the serpent from the wall  
and lowered it to my father. I touched its fur,

the tufts dyed to look like rows of scales . . . .  
We turned; the ferris wheel slowed. Glad  
to be stuck between gold lights that blinked

randomly, couples cheered; though one girl rode  
alone. The kid who manned the lever yanked  
it backward: pistons chugged, chains pulled gears.

Her chair rocked; she passed us, pale, clutched the bar  
then rose again. My father shook his head.  
The snake, in coils, moved closer to his neck.

**Ned Balbo**



## FIELD TRIP

My days are parked in the bottom drawer,  
covered in their package, new from the shop  
and free from the stain of these black rails.  
The rich folks who come after, jostle in their cars,  
knock against the glass that separates  
observation from utilization.

The coffee's getting cold.  
A city travels out from my window,  
stalls on concrete arteries,  
hardens under the highway sun.  
The wind is chattering a cold, wet,  
bloodless tune that rattles my window,  
taps this time on my sweatered back.

These rails are laid in snow.  
From far enough away  
they appear to have order,  
to be an improvement.  
But what they bring  
to the singing emptiness  
is the spark and shout of coughing smoke,  
and glass that wishes.

Another sun exits west.  
I am left over a gorge of words  
trying to fill it up with spit.

**Fred Barton**

## Two Bathrooms

I was born in the bathroom from  
the flowery spot between the shower and sink  
on the only chair that sang. Pink  
porcelain nipped my thighs, my toes tapped numb  
almost the same gold pattern of linoleum  
I stare at now, in your bathroom,  
trying to trace the distances I've gone.  
I've locked the door behind me as I did  
when crazed from being visible I hid  
from the eyes that pried into each corner  
of our flat (and into thoughts) and it  
seemed possible (though I could fit,  
sheer as a coin, between the sink and shower)  
that one day I'd be as big as father,  
splashing trunk and balls – and so I am –  
both more and less than I imagined.  
I hoist myself and wipe, bend  
to the mirror, bare horse teeth – ready again  
to halve your single bed.

I want

to tell you I was born because  
it was your story drew us close:  
how your rich parents jeweled and tuxed  
themselves one night, then evanesced  
into bright winter – and you were left –  
fourteen and free – to waltz  
from room to room of the great house,  
flick lights, puff cigarettes, and finally,  
draw a luxurious bath to keep you company.  
That night you were born, I want to say –  
not for the first time from the womb,  
nor that third birth, when someone I'm  
the image of tonight first put a finger,  
then a dizzy member, to the sluiced  
fat underlips now ripe with raffish  
ghosts. No, a middle passage – self-induced –

into the solitude that lets us, almost strangers,  
lie together naked, safe from guilt.

You almost heard then, soaking in the bath,  
(you told me everything while we drank scotch  
and kissed) under the calm skin  
of water, your heart beat – or rain  
on the window – or wind – it must have been –  
creaking like footsteps up the spiral stairs,  
closer and louder till the door  
knob turned, and three balloon-red faces  
pressed the crack – three boys whose leers  
chilled the clear bath water and you screamed  
and they ran off, as if  
it were mere play to watch a birth.

I climb in the creaking bed, nuzzle  
your shoulderblade, and know  
from the long, safe breaths  
you are asleep.

Tomorrow  
we'll collect our rumpled clothes.  
We'll smoke, make breakfast chat. Later,  
amid the reds and golds of autumn  
I might sight your car somewhere  
or glimpse you on the street, or in a bar.  
But now I see you dancing through a mansion.  
Windows blaze, then vanish  
like impossible winter fireflies. I see  
the boys, shivering below, craning to see  
high up a graceful silhouette  
of arms and hair and breasts.  
I half believe I've crawled  
upstairs with them, touched the gold  
knob, turned . . . opened.  
And suddenly I wonder  
if we were really born at all.

**Philip Brady**

## Night Song

Night falls on a sunset of no color,  
of gray striations, and on the highway  
the lights of used-car lots hang  
like stars heavy with water.

Now the night opens and scatters its lights  
on lawns and in the dark arcades  
of gardens. In the firefly dark, the possible  
blooms like a flower,

and freed from the tyranny of the eye  
we observe a measureless dancing, a drift  
of waterlights moving on warm  
ceremonies of night

into the forest, until the moon rising  
with the wind extinguishes them  
in its light and the cold light  
of the literal stars.

**William Bridges**



## Sunday Morning

My mama is blotting  
her red lipstick &  
the tired Bible waits  
on our gray kitchen table;  
we have a nickel  
for the collection plate;  
we whine because Ben  
gets to carry the nickel.  
“Ben will drop it,” we say.  
Mama is firm; we wear  
strawberry-pink dresses  
& the boys wear blue sailor suits  
& bacon grease is mama’s scent.  
Nancy scrapes cornmeal mush  
into Sam’s bowl; he gulps.  
Glass is broken in the trash  
& blood stains dry on our green couch.  
Sunday morning means  
the end of Saturday-night pain.  
Mama is in her aqua seersucker  
skirt; she is a wave  
from the ocean; my mama is pressing  
pancake make-up over  
her left shiner; her ice bag  
sweats on the toilet lid.  
My mama is singing softly  
beneath her wide-brimmed  
straw hat, “Oh come  
to the church in the wild wood”  
& Mrs. Harvey points at my mama  
& the brown suit preacher  
pounds his Methodist pulpit  
screaming  
about hell’s fury . . . .  
My mama’s hair is the color  
of honey; she quiets my brothers.

My mama's pancake make-up  
is melting from all this  
talk of hell; her left eye  
is a slit under a purple avalanche  
& purple is the color  
for the church;  
purple is the color  
for royalty.

**Jeanne Bryner**

## **The Field Behind My Office**

Grasshoppers move when I move.  
Weeds gnaw my shoulder blades.  
You could suffocate surrounded  
by those black hollow eyes,  
the crunch of exoskeletons.  
And this path used to go to a stream,  
or someone's house. Back there,  
the airport runs, machines print.  
But in the heat of this vacant lot,  
a bird I can't see rattles an elm branch.  
Heat lightning stabs a mountain  
forty miles distant.

**Cara Chamberlain**

## **October on the Highline Canal Trail**

The canal was a mask  
of black cottonwoods  
and white sky.  
There were no eyeholes  
and fish curled unseen  
in its forehead.  
Trees portrayed themselves  
distorted by the wind.

We walked mud banks  
where muskrats must have felt  
our coming.

Wind carved a hollow beneath  
the shape of my skin.  
The canal darkened.  
A carp jumped into the air,  
entered the storm and made it real.

**Cara Chamberlain**



## **INITIATE: MARKING TIME**

The road peters out to rutted  
tire tracks and bare ledges  
but I walk on to see  
when the glacier scratched  
the back of Bradgon Hill.  
The marks are there, igneous  
skin so sensitive  
centuries have not healed  
the wheals ice fingers raised.  
Nine thousand years have yet  
to smooth the stone, but I  
come back – as if the world  
might fade away and eons  
pass as sleepless nights

for I may be the one  
who must remember this  
and tell them, in some other time,  
how their world was made.

**Robert M. Chute**

## **My Poetry Teacher Sells Used Cars**

Look at this one! She was abandoned  
on the tongue of a glacier  
and when the glacier calved  
she traveled a thousand miles,  
woke in Alaska,  
played the banjo, buried her friends,  
harvested cabbage in August.

This one needs a little body work.  
Her soul is a small perfect word  
stashed in the glove compartment,  
never touched, never spoken.

This one was driven to church  
by a mousy schoolteacher  
only on Christmas and Easter,  
and to a picnic on the Fourth of July  
where she abandoned the car  
with her lover's body  
stuffed beside the spare tire.

We found this one driving the street  
dressed in an old prom gown  
and army boots, listening  
to the voice of St, Catherine.  
Look at her. Chrome, fenders—  
you'd think she never left home.

This one lived in the Sierra Madre  
with guerillas, she taught peasants  
to rotate their crops, she died  
in the revolution. She's a buy  
because her rusty bullet holes  
blow a sad windy music  
you won't want to miss.

And this one, disguised as a dhow,  
was a spy in Djibuti  
when, suddenly, she disappeared.

This one sold used cars. This one  
carried me away. This last car  
I won't sell you. Take her.  
She's a gift. No questions asked.  
She has a tale, of course –  
of beauty, danger, loss – but that's  
your tale to tell. Tell it.

**Jack Coulehan**

## WHY I DREAM OF GREEN FISH

She was the daughter  
of Grandmother's "little" brother,  
my Mississippi cousin with long tan legs,  
butter blond hair and spring green eyes.

Her father called wild turkeys  
with their own wing bones,  
could catch a bass  
anytime he slapped muddy water.

I loved them both  
for somewhat different reasons . . .  
Uncle Ford, the "Hawg Master of Byhalia";  
Lilly, the blood to my teenage midsection.

He even tried to run over guinea hens  
in the curves of summer dirt roads.  
She told Sammy and Simon  
her Memphis cousin was cuter than they were.

I quivered the night she whispered:  
*One day at the lake,  
just have some patience,  
try to be cool, if you possibly can.*

Uncle Ford filled his stringer early,  
left yelping and clucking to the naive gobbler  
he was soon to barbeque.  
I promptly took over his fishing spot.

She bounced gracefully down the levee,  
spread a tarp from the back of the truck,  
took off her red baseball cap,  
blue jeans and T shirt.

She began casting her Zebco 33



up the levee and directly short of where  
I was trying not to look  
at the Lucky 13 twitching at my feet.

I decided to be cool,  
kept fishing for THE Monster,  
thinking without much reason  
time and aloofness would be on my side.

Lilly was sliding down her green panties  
when the Marshall County Game Warden  
popped out the honeysuckle  
and arrested me for no fishing license.

**Hal J. Daniel III**

## **Susan at the Stop**

*Rear Deliveries* ravaged the marquee  
Across the street and you looked  
Down again at your sensible shoes  
Willing the bus  
To appear. It was the first time  
In your suit. You hugged  
Your briefcase remembering  
The joy of its purchase, virgin leather  
Seducing your fingertips.

You felt full of holes and held  
Your breath to keep yourself  
From being sucked inside out  
Onto the sidewalk. It was summer,  
The city ripe with splitting  
Heat. Everyone was at the curb  
Waiting for buses. You stood  
Waiting for yours shining  
Like a lost dime in the soot.

**E. Michael Desilets**

## **Tattoo Baby**

We tattooed the baby  
with sweet trees and black snakes  
and the fear of years not yet.  
It crinkled the inky ivy on its fingers,  
its skin knows the pictures  
the baby just wrinkles.  
It gurgles and bubbles on the kitchen table.  
When it grows up  
will the pictures stretch?  
Will the gypsy's neck be tugged to snapping,  
the snake eyes be pulled oriental,  
the cupids be dragged closer to the volcano?  
How will the baby  
look in the mirror when it is older  
with the flowers stretched around its eyes  
and not long to root them up?

**Jennifer Drummey**

## IN THE VICINITY OF ORION'S ARM\*

"Like the star beaming outward past its death . . ."  
—Robert Wrigley

Every day we die  
a little more.  
My young son  
doesn't believe me;  
with the telescope  
he got for Christmas  
he points to the stars,  
unfailing lights of the past,  
as examples of how difficult  
it is to kill anything.  
Infinity has not yet  
begun to trouble him.  
As if Pascal's true  
fear of the eternal  
silence of the heavens  
was all a hoax.

How can I tell him  
he's wrong. That death  
Is one theory of celestial  
movement. And there  
is no other. That what  
we see in the sky  
are ghost images:  
the moon a blank  
mirror, the galaxy  
an open wound,  
the universe a thin  
veil of dust hiding  
the empty mind of God.

But still my son  
persists in looking

(cont.)

\*The spiral arm of the Milky Way Galaxy in which our solar system is located is called Orion's Arm.



for the impossible.  
The man in the moon,  
alive and winking.  
Necklaces of delicate  
amethyst and pearl  
reflecting the clouded  
breath of Saturn.  
The black soul  
of the Horsehead  
Nebula racing past  
all attempts to kill it.

And maybe he's right,  
this belief in forever.  
Maybe nothing ever dies  
and our secret name  
is locked deep beyond  
the fierce blue of sky.

I only know what  
I know. How the universe  
looks the same in every  
direction. Layered petals  
of rose or bleeding  
womb. I only know  
this night in late  
January, sub-zero  
temperatures, his  
father positioning  
a telescope in the frozen  
snow of the backyard.  
As if he could count  
the endless blur of stars.  
As if he could see  
the faces of everyone  
he's loved who has died.

**Linda Nemeč Foster**

**A TIME IN THE PAST THE DISTANCE BETWEEN GALAXIES MUST HAVE BEEN ZERO**

My neighbor has a blue house. The nails  
he used for his clapboards were not galvanized.  
Now they are rusted through. Pretty soon  
the heads of the nails will be gone and the boards  
will loosen and fall off. I wonder if he knows  
all this. I wonder if he cares. Personally I do not  
care that much for my neighbor to take the chance  
to tell him this and create an enemy where once  
I had only a neighbor I had no feelings for.  
He did put a new roof on this year, so he must care  
that rain will not fall on his head while he sleeps.  
Why hasn't he then worked his way down  
the rest of the house and fixed what needed  
to be fixed and painted what needed paint?  
I will not ask him this question. I will  
wave the times he gets out of his car and  
yell a hi times when we get our morning papers.

**Daniel Gallik**

## **My Husband Dreaming**

My husband is dreaming again.  
He wants to turn the roof of our house  
into a garden.  
He has always taken a garden  
seriously – and counts on  
small and potted cabbage plants  
to endure the winds;  
and in summer, the close thorns of the sun.

He has all this in mind:  
a gazebo to shade the baby,  
daffodils, mums, and irises  
flourishing above  
in the airy dome of his own little kingdom,

where he can find privacy  
under the stars.  
Above, my husband is already  
taking the necessary tools: spade and wimble –  
mulch, hoe, and turquoise watering can.  
He won't be talked out of it,  
although we have no way to get up,  
no ladder, or lift, or stairs.

Perhaps he knows better  
what is sturdy and clean. After all,  
he is the dreamer, and I have learned  
not to argue.  
One day we will wake

to that garden, moonlit and gasping  
at the level of clouds –  
like God's first lawless couple  
staking a lot for creation  
and calling it paradise;  
knowing no better place for flowers  
and slippers;  
no better place for couples  
to set down roots, rise, and then fall.

**Judith Harris**

## BREAKFAST

Uncommonly exposed today, I hunch to hide  
behind the morning paper's flimsy sheets  
although I also listen, double-checking,  
as you total up the days: you're right,  
it's time to ovulate. It took us years  
to slough away the scales of fear  
of what might happen if we tried  
or if we failed to have a child. I nurse the orange juice  
after draining off the darkness in my coffee cup.  
The paper curtain summary of baseball games  
creates a private worry box.  
What if the blood flow hesitates  
and throws the hormone treatments off?  
And what about requirements to copulate,  
right then, right there? I shrink to think of it.  
And what about the hormone medicine?  
Its thrombo-embolistic side-effects evoke  
the endless midnight of a pinprick stare.  
Our home might end up as a ward for quads or quints.  
Under covers, when we talked last night  
we both confessed our fear the future  
might be filled with pale green corridors  
and wan assuring smiles. We talked about the odds,  
but it's not box scores that we care about.  
We simply want a child. I put the paper down.  
"Hello, again," I say, "I followed  
your arithmetic. It's fine."

**Peter Harris**



## MARIA SABINA\*

When Maria Sabina died,  
someone twisted the neck  
of a rooster and laid it  
by her side. On the fourth  
day, not the third, nor the fifth,  
its spirit rose up and crowed,  
calling her soul to depart,  
to prepare for its journey  
to the Dead Land,  
feeding on squash seeds, greens  
and fruit along the way.

Someone lit candles at her feet  
and folded a palm cross  
in the fingers of her right hand  
as it lay across her breast.

And on the fourth, not the third  
day, nor the fifth, her soul  
followed the rooster to rest,  
dressed not in fine powder  
on the wings of a butterfly,  
but nude, without shoes,  
through cow fields and cold streams.  
She was neither thirsty nor hungry.  
On that day, in a single moment  
of the moon, she felt fresh.

**Gene Hirsch**

\*Based partly on predictions of Maria Sabina, Mazatec healer, told by John Bierhorst in *The Mythology of Mexico and Central America* (New York, 1990), p. 35.

## **WHERE SHADE COMES DOWN**

In a field of sun-bleached  
green, of browning leaves  
one tree, an oak, and corn  
stretching to all sides away  
and above the sun, cut by  
swallows, a dark hawk gliding  
a woman, my wife, beside me  
faded jeans, tanned, braless  
bees ochering about us  
beneath us flattened grass  
showy purple asters, goldenrod  
our blue shadows lost amid  
weeds and the branching dark-  
ness overhead beneath which  
we lie, muted, earthen  
neither bright nor colorless

**Brooke Horvath**

## Winter Carrots

This morning the bungalow is clamor  
and warmth, a fragrant steam:  
green peppers jammed  
with stuffing and sausage.

Already crowded by relatives,  
I step out into the cold  
Thanksgiving morning. The bright sun,  
the long line of telephone wires  
is a scurry of winter crows.

By the redwood table  
my father's garden,  
his own shrunken fragment of Eden,  
I pull out a hoary carrot  
wipe away dirt and frost  
and enjoy the carrot's orange  
against a brief winter sun.

This week's airwaves are full  
of Eastern Europe, the dismantling  
of an idea, its loosened fabric.  
I've never forgot a story  
of old Europe, the Polish city,  
the wartime ghetto of Lodz:

a prisoner's garden has been plundered  
perhaps by fellow workmates or German soldiers,  
and second only to Semiramis,  
the Hanging Gardens of Babylon,  
the ghetto now has its own  
mobile garden. The proud prisoner

transplants onion bulbs  
laying delicate white roots  
into the soil hands love.

Then he pushes the garden  
along in a baby carriage,  
wheeling it to work.

The carriage in a courtyard,  
I imagine him staring out  
his dirty tailor shop window,  
looking toward the sky, hoping  
the yard and his life  
will soon be rimmed in sunlight.

Eating one of my father's carrots  
there is a sudden  
feeling, how vast the world is  
that same sun  
the Pole looked at in hope  
has nourished me through  
another season. The carrot  
cold in my mouth  
becomes a core of frozen yellow bits  
that warm into sunlight.  
We are between wars  
and though we love the sun,  
we can't demand it love us  
in return.

**William Johnson**

## After Identifying a Body

I sit looking at Duluth rising on the hill,  
lights banked like embers. And I think  
of the waves of moving flesh on a bear carcass  
behind my uncle's shack in the woods.  
An explosion of maggots in and out.  
Shredded fur hung from an arc of white bone.  
Flesh, as I remember now, disappeared quickly  
and ribs appeared as in some high speed  
classroom film of flowers opening.

In restaurants, on buses, around me people worry  
the flesh. They talk of strokes and hardened arteries  
and recovery. A man brought his wife to the hospital  
at night, unexpectedly, *She was full of cancer,*  
*just full of it.* On planes and in stores, they talk  
about pills and operations, detailing the suffering.

And at all those funerals. The pasty flesh of dead faces,  
the satin covers, the silver spectacles over closed eyes,  
the flesh heavy on hands, one over the other.  
How strange to stand above their bodies, their chests puffed  
where hearts gave way.

This was the worst for me, they didn't close her eyes.  
Her mouth screaming, teeth glaring, her bare shoulders,  
her breasts bulging under the sheet. I knew her blonde hair. They  
told me the dead often open their mouths and eyes  
wide, the pupils dilated, but I only looked for seconds  
enough for a whole architecture of dreams.

Judy Lindberg



## **The Farmer Around Dawn**

The rains washed the straw from his bins  
clear down past the road and on out  
into the open meadow,  
and his dogs and chickens  
up by the coop  
scattered it around the farmyard.  
He could hear them from the porch,  
ranging out behind the barn.  
Like them, he knew the truck  
ambling its way down the road  
had come for his cows.  
Its headlights sunk in mist  
slunk along the road like the  
bated breath of the dumb bodies  
awaiting slaughter.  
It had happened before:  
livestock had been led out through  
the dawn bound for the stockyards.  
And he had watched them leave,  
watched them pull away down the road.  
And at night, out behind the barn,  
he had felt their eyes watch him  
over the brown hills,  
and found one calf  
cradled like a lost child in the  
arms of a rusted wheelbarrow.

**Greg Ling**

## **SURPRISE**

It was to be, like unexpected flowers,  
a surprise, but his return home  
from still another Odyssey triggered  
no response. The house smelled  
like a vault, the air as stagnant  
as in a sealed cave.

And then the words  
reverberated, trapped between his ears.  
He could not shake his head clear  
of them. Even before he tore open  
the clothes closet doors he knew  
he would see what was not there.

The jewel in his pocket burned  
right through the box, though its heat  
was spent like a fire in a cave  
for lack of air.

**Robert Lowenstein**

## **Daylight Savings**

Like Schildburgers,  
perennial dummkopfs of Saxony  
who carried into their windowless  
hall sunlight in buckets,  
we tote early hours  
into afternoon and call it savings.  
With such sleight of math  
who wouldn't bank  
an hour of sixteen to savor  
at forty-two, a nestegg  
of thirty, with interest,  
for fifty-six, pails  
of timeless childhood poured  
into timeless age? But then  
who knows when banks  
will fail? What if the lust  
for life should fade? So I  
stay greedy, lap up  
fresh minted hours  
with frantic hope to spend  
at once the last of both  
time and desire.

**Sandy McCord**

## LUCK OF THE DRAW ON HARDSCRABBLE

Back in the bunkhouse, aces wedged up  
like skulls buried all game.  
The worst thing to do was accuse,  
a lightning rod. We watched each others' eyes  
in private, the wild hair stiff  
between knuckles. Fists that could twist a bull

bluffed and shuffled cards. Pistols  
were outlawed, rifles strapped to our saddles  
off in the barn. Flames the color of gold  
leaped up the chimney, a blizzard whipping  
most of the heat away. When someone broke  
for coffee, he heaved a log on the fire

and jumped aside. Sparks popped,  
more cheerful than the luck of most.  
The range we rode was cactus in pastures  
we'd never own. Old cowboys needed dust  
and saddle sores, bedrolls and cards  
in the bunkhouse. For months, I knew

the world was ending, four others laid off,  
no ranches hiring. I might as well  
feed sheep as starve, or join the Army.  
Old boys with leather faces would stay  
with cattle until it killed them, slapping  
their cards face up. They rode the range

for wages and trapped for bounty  
coyotes that haunted us all at night.  
Guarding our cards like our names, we went on  
making believe it was fun and tried to ignore  
the stakes, payday another month away,  
somebody's run of luck.

Walter McDonald

## Abomination

(for Sylvia Plath)

The dogwoods along the rows are bare.  
The blood-red leaves of Autumn gone.  
Headstones glow in moonlight like fluorescence. Names,  
dates and epitaphs blaze. Tonight,  
the garish light of the mind will admit no shadows.

I come here often to watch ghouls gnaw the bones of the dead  
for secrets. I come half hoping  
for answers. They maunder among the corpses.  
They mutter. Leathery tendons pop. Joints  
sigh and give up their dust. Dessicated marrow moans  
on the chilling wind. Rumors  
follow me home. The din is incredible.

Tonight,  
all around the mausoleums and Garden-Club-Trails-in-  
Memoriam  
the glimmer of death's desolation traces its way on a shining  
slug's trail.

Blind worms attack worked wood like drill bits.  
A sea wind scours salt into wounds where time is no salve.  
Ghouls shriek like gulls in the maelstrom  
— this place is a state of mind —

waiting. They say  
the nothing at the bright bright center of a baby's eye is  
only the black black black light-sucking pupil  
of life living. I have listened.  
They say the muse,  
who first lays a piece of the moon on a poet's finger to burn  
like phosphorus until nothing is left  
to burn, shimmers only  
beyond a deep dark Rubicon of myth.

I have fallen a long way.



Here in my fizzing light I watch them rattle their shovels and  
crowbars, wait.

The angel of water shouts for the next crossing.  
The boatman takes a coin from the next dulled poet's tongue.  
The sparkling hand of generation slaps a high five, and  
you're off, now, into darkness like drink.  
The silence of astounded souls rises.

But the air here is thick and despicable.  
Nothing comes back. Nothing.  
Ghouls scramble for the corpse of the latest muse-consumed  
poet.

Joints give up their smoking jellies. Marrow bones boil  
in the chilling wind. Rumors attack like bats.

I run home.  
The din is incredible.

**Bryan E. Merck**

## **You Promise Nothing**

Dinners by the sea as always,  
walks in moonlight as we're taught  
to see them, frolics with romance  
the antechamber where we leave  
our coats. The slicker magazines  
inspire vacations. Youngsters go  
and old ones watch beside them, resting  
over bridge with tonic water  
running from their mouths that gape.  
They've learned you lose your pretty shape.

Adventure ends when people think.  
You want a tropic island, too;  
by being young and pretty, bright  
and clean, you've earned it all, the man  
included, hairy in the right parts,  
handsome everywhere, respectful,  
doting, faithful, always there.  
He'll get the check, your coat, the tip  
while you restore your pretty face  
then after in the dark embrace.

When fat of belly, pregnant, hard  
to be around, the smell of vomit  
on your underwear, you'll feel  
the thrust of nature deep, your heart  
a swelling second self that wants  
this baby, wants another, three,  
the summer on the beach aside.  
We're taught to have our seasons, feel  
them as our bodies change. You swell  
with love, but love's an infidel.

**Bernard E. Morris**

## Crustacean Harmony

I wish the turtle melted like the gold  
in sunlight as the evening wanes, the mound  
contiguous with sterling trees as old  
as angels, who themselves throw light around  
as if it sparkled in their glowing eyes.  
I wish the cat preferred, canaries rang  
like little bells when tapped. the larger size  
in parrots tinkling too. The tenor sang  
in soft bel canto as the night grew chill.  
The ladies trembled slightly when he did;  
the men, uneasy, missed the point, the skill,  
the ease with which musicians played *El Cid*.

As legs connect with hips and thighs agree,  
their rotund shape attractive if it slopes  
on down and touches on the lady's knee  
with graceful fluctuations, raising hopes  
of dashing through the arch triumphant, horns  
announcing his arrival, like a bird's,  
the gilded eagle swooping, she adorns,  
resents the imputation that her words  
are less than looks to strangers, running men  
and panting boys, the soldiers medaled, armed,  
and proud to be addressing her again.  
She isn't moved to mention she is charmed.

I wish the sky were less the azure ether  
ancient Greeks supposed and more forever,  
like the universe itself, or neither,  
something on the other side, a clever  
duplicate that worked reversals well,  
her bottom topped by glossy, silken hair,  
her smile among her toes, her voice a bell  
resounding through her abdomen as fair  
as now but eyed, inverted, shaped like gum  
that oozes from the rubber tree, receives

impressions like a bubble or a drum  
resounding through the purple orchid leaves.

Acerb, sardonic, bitter as the sap  
secreted by the eucalyptus, parts  
that make no sense remain, as if her lap  
were rotting by the minute. Ancient tarts  
in modern costumes do the same, their teeth  
a disappointing gray, and some are green.  
Without their makeup, men go underneath  
to find the other woman. She's between  
the chorus and the tenor singing French.  
You never get what you suppose at first,  
though children love their mother, every inch  
superbly theirs till all illusions burst  
but one: she's still the woman sheathed in silk,  
a sweating jungle giving baby's milk.

**Bernard E. Morris**

## St. Jarlath's Church & Elementary School, 1964

Late for last Mass again  
on Sunday, I'd kneel with my parents  
and pray: Oh Merciful Jesus  
hide us from my friends—  
Pappa's whiskied eyes,  
Mamma's loud,  
unpracticed voice  
and working hands.

How little of what was hidden  
under each sign of the cross  
could I tell my Catholic friends.

Weekdays, I'd sit with them  
at lunch, carefully unwrapping  
the little I had, always  
on watch for that searing appearance  
of a righteous God in their eyes—  
the confessional's darkness  
in their faces,  
the priest's small opaque window  
snapping open, so quick to count  
my family's lack as sin.

Sundays, I could summon  
only one practice-worn prayer:  
Let them notice  
some other sinner  
who on Monday will find  
the knot of girls' laughter  
tied around her neck,  
a strangling penance.  
Let me stand  
one more week safe  
in the stolen grace  
of friends.

**Rusane Morrison**



## **Above Salmon Brook, The Darkness**

(for Annette)

As if the sky were streaked in purple,  
in slight orange, a curtain ripples

above the hills beyond Hebron, the arm  
of a puffed cloud the undertone

in white, the swan's wings undimmed  
and the bear, soundless in an arch

of amber, blue-emerald and the arch  
broken. To the west of Red Hill the city

lit so far away. Then I hear breathing  
beside me and turn to look, thinking

of how we stood here under another display  
of purple and light. The field is empty.

And you dead now two years. I cannot  
move as I remember how the night was flying

when your hand touched mine and your  
shoulder rested on my chest. Then below

the willows the softness of doves and  
an owl. We stood in deep grass as Salmon

Brook ran off the hill, your arm around  
my waist long after the wavering ceased.

**Hugh Ogden**

## **BETROTHAL**

One can tell a lot about a man  
by the way he eats a meal.  
My father was always hungry  
and ate everything.

I invite a man I like  
to dine with me.  
I serve peas, pearl onions,  
only spherical foods.  
He stabs at his meal,  
laughs when his round dinner  
jumps away from his fork.

Very soon  
I will marry him.

**Marcia Pelletiere**

## **LAST FERRY CROSSING**

We sit in my Datsun on the ferry,  
The lake heaving like the sea.  
Stars tilt in an autumn sky.  
They glitter on the wet deck,  
Then are washed away. I tuck  
My thumb under your dark glove  
And strip each finger naked.

**Elliot Richman**

## **Victorious**

A fly, thick as a thumb, whams  
back and forth between the screen  
and the sash, lands on the sill  
and wrings its hands. I  
bring the book down and the  
chainsaw bite of August  
begins its hum. There's a  
huge stillness here  
in the relative ease of summer morning,  
the spit and spatter of bacon grease,  
the winey taste of black coffee.  
Soon enough the day will be brutal  
and dime size drops of sweat stand out  
on my skin like carp scales glistening  
on a blood-baked mortal body;  
but for now a whistle of steam,  
your padded footfall from the bathroom  
to the kitchen, victorious,  
another night conquered,  
a cup of mercy in your eyes.

**Andy Roberts**

## THE OBSERVATORY

The oddity's how benign it always was,  
the building with the slotted silver dome:  
a giant screw, sunk into the ground.  
Do the kids next door ignore it? The curved brick front  
is nearly blocked from view by evergreens.  
Do they know or care about what goes on  
when the stars come out and the campus traffic dies?  
The roof slides open on the night sky;  
the swiveling dome loosens and tightens, by turns,  
the hold it has on its groomed plot of earth.

Once, a kid next door myself, I heard  
the drone of mowing in the distance and found  
the front door propped ajar. I knew whoever  
had left the place unlocked would be a while.  
I slipped inside, adrenalin on cue.  
Past vacant offices, desk and books  
in sight, I stepped into the circular room  
and waited for my eyes to find the dark,  
Amid the cranks and rails, levers and wheels,  
the one great window shut like an eye mid-wink,  
the telescope poised, I guessed, at a purposeful angle,  
I wanted the natural secrets to fall away  
right there, illumination even in dimness  
as when the building comes awake at night  
and the giant eye slowly opens again  
ready to study the tunneling reaches of space.  
I considered my ignorant awe a thing to be rid of.

Instead, the gears and scaffolds, the flawless lenses,  
the barrel aimed at the retractable roof gathered



in quiet against me. What did I expect?  
What answers did I not have questions for?  
I knew less then than when I'd entered. It was,  
after all, day. Mostly what I knew  
and felt was small, as in YOU ARE HERE  
way left of center in the Milky Way,  
not merely in this place where in the maps  
and charts of night surely something happens.  
Worldly then, I backed out slowly, unsteady  
in the rush of sun, taking nothing away.

**David Sanders**

## THE ALTERNATES

for Margaret

Faced with going home again,  
where you grew up and all of that,  
you take the normal route, a road  
connecting town with county, one  
in which a set of simple turns  
turns down your own gravel drive.  
They don't occur to you – the alternate  
ways you'd sometimes walk – pastures,  
farmers' woods, really not much  
more than seasonal display.  
But at the time they drove you down  
into their thick. You came out  
the other side, nearer to town,  
replaced somehow by someone  
who saw more than you had seen,  
yourself, of course, a half an hour,  
an hour, older.

They seemed amused,  
the few villagers you saw,  
when they said, as in my case,  
“David, what brings you to town?”  
Remember how you walked among them  
as if with news they'd not yet learned?  
Maybe they'd known all along  
patient while your knowledge, light  
at first, grew large – a weight you wore,  
ill-fitting and obvious.  
There were times you felt you'd grown

to fit into it. You had not.

Years after you had moved away  
and tried to map the fading routes  
back home, they were, from any number  
of directions, always paved.  
The others had not disappeared,  
still there, somewhere, thickening.  
They just would not occur to you.

**David Sanders**

## JOHN MACIAG

John Maciag was all bone  
Knees, elbows and jaw  
Hated his rifle  
                proficient at killing  
Wanted home so badly it burned his soul

We leaned up that mountain  
Near Yangu, frightened  
War's hurricane tore our tanks  
                trees of us lifted by roots  
I came running down three days later

Like cordwood the bodies were stacked  
Between two stakes  
All Korean, but that jaw  
                of John Maciag I saw  
A log of birch amongst the scrub

I stopped, the sergeant said move on  
I said maybe never  
I'm going to sit and think about John Maciag's  
                forever, whose fuel he is  
What the flames of him will light  
                Perhaps he burns the glory  
                of God,  
or man

**Tom Sheehan**

## Each Night, Coming to Your Room

I bring you water, kiss you,  
burrow into my father's bed  
like the mysteries we read to keep  
ghosts away.

When your book  
drops to the floor, I reach  
over your jumbled medicines  
to put out the light.

Warm dark  
and whose breathing do I hear?

L. A. rattles and clanks  
along Rosemead Boulevard. Sirens  
at four a.m. tear me  
from dreams of my father looming

as always. I bend over  
your eighty-year-old body  
that lay with my father  
fifty years.

Now in flashing red light  
your bleached hair  
turns white, your eyes hide  
behind your black sleeping mask.

(In New York, the Fourteenth Street  
subway station Death  
clumps through the crowd  
with a walker.

A skeleton wearing a painted  
Mae West face.



No one  
laughs or speaks  
or helps her up the steep  
stone stairs.)

You, my mother, have soft  
flesh, hangs like crinkled  
draperies from your arms and legs.

I want to bury myself  
in my dream of you,  
finally close, careful  
not to crush your tiny bones.

**Donna Spector**

## A Dream About Omnipotence

The feet of graceful female dancers  
are carefully crushed,  
and made into muscles  
for men.

They are cut off first  
from the ankles,  
and tossed –  
    heels, spikes, satin toes and all –  
into grinders which mince and compress them  
into muscle-shaped molds.  
These are placed on the shoulders  
of good-looking men,  
rubbed in with palm oil and love.

It is felt men should have more  
up top,  
on the broad rims,  
so they look like horizons.  
The feet of the dancers –  
    the slender, bending dancers –  
must be crushed first  
so they won't leap off,  
out of the muscle,  
into the air where grace is allowed  
and available.

Most of us don't know our capacity  
for grace –  
not simply to crush delicately –  
but to be upheld,

or so it would seem,  
by the ample air.

Muscles.  
It's a strange phenomenon.  
Lithe splendor is confiscated,  
splintered and eroded –  
    made into flesh –  
sacrificing grace to make  
unenduring strength.

**Kristin Steege**

## Hunter

Vested in blaze orange,  
little ember departing at  
daybreak from the old barn  
at the bottom of Peach Lane,  
the wood grain on the butt  
of your 22, its rhythm,  
its toughened knot  
bevel-soothed into beautiful  
woodwork that feels  
like a woman's neck against  
your cheek: your eyes deliver  
the steel barrel to a deer's  
bearings: they touch, black node  
on deer's neck, inflecting a word  
about love and ownership. She  
bolts, you fire, a  
diction recoils against  
every tree empty and twilled  
into sky – what a *rush*  
you'll tell them later – as she  
collapses, acoustic stop,  
enervated deer legs  
netted in the fabric  
of world: your loving run  
toward her: an echo  
  that wakes  
me, cold and hungry,  
in this speechless house.

Doug Swift

## SUMMER FEEDING

Maybe it's my August birth  
but my summer blood rises,  
expands, hot sap in thin vessels  
close to a sunburnt surface.

I am all mouth, only animal,  
stoma on my fingertips  
to eat you up when I touch  
you, firm brown flesh.

You lie on a bed all open,  
slumbery, skin flat and cool  
after a shower, waiting  
for more heat,

or rest at the edge of a tidal  
pool getting salty-stiff  
and spiky, rough and tasty,  
seafood meal to satisfy

a lion lover fattening  
for long, sweatless nights.  
Can I get enough to keep  
me hot and bright?

**Ann Turkle**



## **SOMEONE ELSE**

On Sunday night I go away  
and someone else takes over.  
At seven he leaps out of bed,  
does deep knee bends and pushups,  
sings Italian in the shower,  
then goes to work for me.

They don't suspect a thing.  
He's always right on time,  
never makes long distance phone calls  
or sneaks off to read in the men's room stall.  
He works from nine to nine.  
He doesn't even stop to eat,  
scratch his head or yawn.

The Chairman of the Board's convinced  
that he's enthusiastic.  
His eager look earned us the raise  
to pay Con Ed, the Landlord,  
New York Telephone,  
and keep the hot air rising  
even though he doesn't feel the cold.

When I return on Friday night  
from someplace not on any map,  
hoping I will catch my twin  
when he comes home to pack,  
I find a note beneath my mat  
that tells me how I've been.

**David Van Buren**

## MAN WITH ROOTS

In this region, everything is  
inexact. Like a potted ginko on  
the corner, he stands there to find  
himself, rooted to the center lane,  
it seems. The white coiffure of the

poodle, sporting a ten-sequin collar,  
walks an impressively furred  
prostitute past. Silvery fingernails  
flash like sharp knives. The stone

facades of the buildings around  
him are loose. The mortar is  
turning to dust in the joints even  
as work crews number the slabs.  
They'll be put into storage for  
use in true civic improvements,  
to add historic impact to changes.

Two buildings are already gone.  
Chasms yawn in their places,  
sullen mouths gaping,  
propped open for inspectors.  
Even in mask and rubber gloves, we  
are repulsed looking in.

The traffic lights have failed again.  
Metermaids are directing. Their hands  
dance with signals, showing that order  
can be signed into being.

Horns blasting, lights blinking, vehicles  
move around the drunk as if he's a statue,  
unimpressed, a monument that  
commemorates something no  
one remembers. Only his eyes move, but  
not enough to scare off the pigeons.  
They land on his shoulders and head,  
leaving behind when they take off  
dirty feathers, a few white omens.

**William J. Vernon**

## Bleeding Jesus

Sitting in catechism, the priest punching Jesus  
into our heads, I stared into the dank hallway  
beside the room. My attention snapped

to my hands, rapped by Father Longinus's ruler.

He talked about the cross, the thorns,  
the slow driving of nails. It was the pain

that interested my nine-year-old mind,  
the coincidental pain of our hands—  
hard, deliberate. I ran home

and told my mother that I was Jesus, the son of God.

She slapped me twice and banished me  
to my room, which only convinced me I was Christ.

The next day, I told some classmates

I was Jesus. They didn't believe me  
until I named them my apostles—

Saint Hank, Saint Milo, Saint Fat Eddie.

I was ready now for the pain, the crucifixion.  
We met at Happy's Ice Cream Parlor for a last supper—

the cone was my body, chocolate fudge my blood.

We all had seconds. We couldn't find  
a good cross, so they tied me

to a swingset in the schoolyard. I told them

to leave me. They acted sad,  
as was planned, and left.

As the night gathered itself, I started

feeling lonely, hungry. My arms tired  
from the spread I was in—the opening of an embrace

that was never able to close, to enwrap.

How prone a God can be.

I noticed a patch of wild blossoms

at my feet. They were small, purple.

They looked easy to kick up, so open  
and convenient – their thin, sweet petal-meat

would be a wafer on my tongue. And I thought  
of why I was there, how it was no fun  
being Jesus. I left the blossoms where they were,

as I had found them, and screamed  
for someone to get me, to untie me,  
for it to be finished.

**BJ Ward**



## Dancing with the Teacher

(for Maureen Kosa)

What a fiery teacher she was!  
Not knowing any better,  
I engaged her

in verbal banter – she loved Huck Finn  
and I loved Huck Finn  
and the whole class,

the whole world could go to hell  
for all I cared.  
She took the first step and I took

her hand and soon we were rocking on that raft  
with Huck and Jim, doing the rumba,  
the jitterbug, the twist –

we got down and let out –  
we didn't stop  
with the whole class gawking,

amazed that literature could shake us,  
that mere words  
could create such dizzy abandon,

could move us so violently,  
our bodies twenty years apart  
but so close together, in sync.

When Shakespeare entered the room  
we turned the lights low,  
pulled down the shades,

did a slow waltz, timing our dips  
with Hamlet's,  
our shifts with Petruchio's.

But when Whitman came along,  
forget it!  
Open the windows! Throw on the lights!

We hucklebucked, hully gullied, shook, shimmied,  
and locomotioned! We swung our bodies  
and never let down!

The class was amazed –  
some caught on quick,  
took that heat in,

and soon everyone broke loose –  
the charleston! the boogaloo! the handjive!  
Mrs. Kosa madisoned, Jen Faber mashed potatoed,

Jake and Brett tangoed – even Jerome Higgins stood up  
and did the watusi!  
Everyone was dancing

with the freedom hips were born with,  
the freedom of knees,  
arms, torsos, necks –

the freedom to read  
in other people's moves  
a wildness greater than our own,

and the freedom to pick up,  
to learn how to be that wild  
with our own steps in time.

**BJ Ward**

## ABANDONED CONVALESCENT HOME AT BLOUNT SPRINGS, ALABAMA

Along the road mimosa sprays float,  
still, in the evening of another June;  
the spring is flowing over  
the dam, a continuous rush, the curved  
spill white as linen. Long ago,

this was a wonderful fountain, a spring  
with healing properties; those fallen  
ill, fine ladies and men from the city,  
came quietly, each astonished  
with his sickness, his failed body, to wait

in cabins nearby, believing  
in miracles: they hoped and paid  
a nickel a bottle, drank deep  
draft after draft, trying to drive  
infirmity down into the body

like thirst, but drinking only sulfur,  
the sound of the spring: that rush.  
As they waited for arthritic hands to loose  
their gnarled grip, for the gray door  
of glaucoma to open

back onto the world, a sudden lifetime  
of thirst rose in them, parching  
their throats, unquenchable, dry  
as mimosa sprays on the table by the sickbed.  
Many must have lain afraid and knowing,

their windows deep in shade,  
hearing the steady pulsing of the water, moment  
by moment, clutching a white sheet  
as time flowed over them and away,  
as the body eased its final breath

like the falling rush of the spring,  
the lull of false hope. I am here  
by this moving stream, still tumbling  
its unbroken promise, knowing  
there is no virtue in this tonic,

and so I take what's here,  
the comfort in false hope; I kneel  
beside the steady stream, still vigorous,  
cup my hand and swallow sulfur water: I rise  
and believe in my body. I believe.

**Scott Ward**

## THE LAST NIGHT

She was ninety and she had to die.  
Had willed herself to die, refusing  
to eat for many days. Her hands lay useless,  
having lost their cunning, her face thin,  
shrunken, almost unknown to me.

But there were those who would not let her go.  
Both daughters slept with her,  
on either side, listening  
to the labored breaths,  
tending to her in the fragile dark.

I went there one night  
as they readied for bed, my grandma silent  
in the kitchen, her hands covered in suds  
of dishwater, rinsing the nicked china,  
stacking each warm saucer

and cup too carefully; her sister stood  
before the dresser mirror, combing  
her long gray hair in slow strokes,  
turning her head a little  
from side to side, careful not to meet

her eyes, and grandmere sat covered  
on the sofa, starting  
in uneasy fits of sleep, not seeing me.  
I sat in the quiet with no one  
speaking, hearing only the touching china,

the static rasp of the brush,  
and the catch of grandmere's breath.  
I stood and kissed her. She did not stir,  
and I stepped quietly out, into the long dark  
of Whisonant Lane and through



the one street light's circle.  
I turned and faced the light, suddenly strange  
in how it hid the dark road behind me.  
She could not see the long way  
she had come, could not see me.

I thought of them in their long white gowns,  
the love, simple as light,  
that terrible waiting demands: I stopped, astonished  
by her discipline of being weak,  
her will to lie and starve.

**Scott Ward**

## **What Do You Need?**

Tied together by wanting the planet  
grows from comet-sown puddles  
constellations so banal there's no  
sin in loving them, if you like.

The pitcher anxiously half-empty  
calls to the spigot for something  
to fill its earthen self – water,  
water as a bedouin sees water.

What is sufficient to itself is  
a threat to commerce, a bad example:  
the hermit, the forest, the egg.

Night over Detroit. We banked low.  
I could see a streetlamp and a solitary  
figure, leaning into the light.

**Robert Wexelblatt**

## Why Popes Don't Write Books

They are their own girlfriends  
and thus they see so clearly  
they don't need money.

For them, history,  
like all children,  
is what needs to happen.

Sometimes when they lie in bed  
after a busy day,  
their only conflict,  
they don't know whether  
savoring their coming dreams  
is a sin or if they simply should enjoy  
what they're presently thinking.

Sometimes when no one is looking,  
all by themselves they sneak away  
and revving up their engines  
fly around in their little planes,

Arms folded across their chests  
make them slide and dip,  
doing chandelles, Immelmann turns,  
so that people on the ground  
look up and point  
and say, "I wonder what that crazy guy is doing."

**Peter Wild**

## The Women of Lands' End

What their bodies look like  
to their young husbands  
really doesn't matter.  
Many a great museum,  
treasure-trove that it is,  
is just a sagging pile of bricks.  
And the outsides of even those buildings  
admired by people soaring with them  
with ideas of perfection  
after all simply are skins  
holding what we want,  
and for the moment we soar with them  
breathless but only  
a little bit beyond our own imperfections  
while imagining we're within.  
So it's through their eyes  
just flown open  
that we have sex,  
entering them through every orifice,  
where we walk once again bewildered  
through galleries lined  
with intricate Egyptian goldwork just minted,  
the goldwork trees of impressionist canvases,  
on and on  
through their labyrinths.

Peter Wild

## **The Curious Little Girl**

*(A painting by Camille Corot)*

The wall held in the garden's growth, defined  
All boundaries of blossom and where the girl could play when  
time said, "Joy." Whatever grew behind  
The wall, she was taught, would only get in the way

Of being loved. So she learned to care for the scent  
Of flowers and swagger of trees she never planted,  
To wear wooden shoes, black dresses and resent  
The happiness of others. No vision slanted

Across the walls' high ridge. Like a father's thought  
It stared with a flat face. From the other country,  
Bees came to nest in hollows of the wall. They brought  
A knowledge of flowers and turned it into honey.

The girl watched, severe and careful wondering why  
The forbidden tasted sweet and what country grew  
Such flowers. She stalked like the captain's spy,  
Climbed into the apple tree's glove and through

Its fingers spotted you happy, laughing, and free.  
Now she has come to the wall, the leader of  
All weapons of retreat and will oversee  
The death of every kingdom of your love.

**Michael T. Young**

## CONTRIBUTORS

In Columbus, Ohio, **MJ Abell** has taught poetry classes for young people at The Thurber House and is coordinator of The Poetry Forum at Larry's and The Teapot Series. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in 73 OHIO POETS, US1 WORKSHEETS, BITTERROOT, POT POURRI, and OHIO WRITER.

**Gilbert Allen** has lived in South Carolina and has taught at Furman University since 1977. His two collections of verse are IN EVERYTHING (Lotus, 1982) and SECOND CHANCES (Orchises, 1991). He received the Rainmaker Award from ZONE 3 in 1990. New work has been accepted by CUMBERLAND POETRY REVIEW, NEW MEXICO HUMANITIES REVIEW, and the SOUTHERN REVIEW.

An Associate Professor at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, **Chuck Anderson** teaches nonfiction writing, rhetorical theory, and literature and medicine. He has published essays in ANOTHER SEASON, articles on writing and the teaching of writing, and a study of the early essays of Richard Selzer entitled RICHARD SELZER AND THE RHETORIC OF SURGERY. Anderson is currently working on a collection of essays and poems about living and growing up in West Texas.

**Michael Atkinson** lives in Lynbrook, New York.

A previous contributor to HPR, **Ned Balbo** has recent work in CAROLINA QUARTERLY, KANSAS QUARTERLY, and the ANTIOCH REVIEW.

Chair of the English Department at Baker College in Owosso, Michigan, **Fred Barton** received his Ph.D. in English Education from Michigan State University. His work has appeared in SOUTHWESTER, SOUTHERN POETRY REVIEW, KANSAS QUARTERLY, and elsewhere. He is at work on a book of poems and a creative writing textbook.

Recent work by **Philip Brady** appears in ABRAXAS, the BERKELEY POETRY REVIEW, the JOURNAL OF IRISH LITERATURE, NEW MYTHS/MSS, POET LORE, and PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL. Brady currently teaches at Youngstown State University, having previously taught at universities in Ireland and in Zaire.

**William Bridges** is a former newspaper reporter and editor, now teaching journalism at Franklin College of Indiana. He has had poems accepted recently by PLAINS POETRY JOURNAL, POET LORE, and BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL.

A junior English Major in the Honors College at Kent State University, **Jeanne Bryner** has recent poetry in CANTO, ICON, POEM, FLIGHTS, PIKEVILLE REVIEW, ALLEGHENY REVIEW, MANKATO POETRY REVIEW, MANNA, THE NEW KENT QUARTERLY, DOWN THE RIVER, and THE SUN. Her poetry book manuscript UNDER A PURPLE AVALANCHE is "looking for a home."



After “various office working stints in Denver, Lafayette (Indiana), and Salt Lake City,” **Cara Chamberlain** is a part-time faculty member at Northwest Community College in Powell, Wyoming. Once before a contributor to HPR, she has also had poetry and fiction in HIGH PLAINS LITERARY REVIEW, WHETSTONE, ALASKA QUARTERLY REVIEW, GREENSBORO REVIEW, and VIRGINIA QUARTERLY REVIEW.

With several previous publications in HPR, **Robert M. Chute** edits THE SMALL POND, teaches biology at Bates College, and lives in Poland Spring, Maine.

**Jack Coulehan** lives in Setauket, New York in “the wilds of Long Island, just south of the Suffolk County Water Authority tower.” An earlier, shorter version of “My Poetry Teacher Sells Used Cars” appeared in Quentin Howard’s WIND magazine. He publishes poetry widely, and is an M.D. teaching in the S.U.N.Y. system.

**Hal Daniel III** teaches Speech-Language and Auditory Pathology at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. He generously advises us: “. . . Hiram College means a lot to me. Two of my best grad students were undergrads, and roommates, there. They were very fine students.” In his course “Animal Behavior and Communication” Daniel has his grad students each write a poem about their favorite species.

The work of **E. Michael Desilets** has appeared in SUB ROSA, THE CATHARTIC, THE POETRY PEDDLER, JOURNAL OF NEW JERSEY POETS, PEGASUS, IRISH EDITION, THE VINCENT BROTHERS REVIEW, and POTATO EYES. He lives in Atlanta – and teaches Film History and Appreciation at Glassboro State College in New Jersey.

**Jennifer Drummey**’s work has appeared in the NEW YORK QUARTERLY, the WILLIAM AND MARY REVIEW, and BLUE UNICORN. She lives in Richmond, Virginia.

Recipient of two Michigan Council for the Arts Creative Artist Grants, **Linda Nemeč Foster** lives in Grand Rapids and has appeared in a wide variety of publications such as NIMROD, MANHATTAN POETRY REVIEW, SOUTH FLORIDA POETRY REVIEW, NEGATIVE CAPABILITY, and the UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR REVIEW. She has two chapbooks, A HISTORY OF THE BODY and A MODERN FAIRY TALE: THE BABA YAGA POEMS. Some of her work is being translated for inclusion in Poland’s journal LITERATURA.

**Dan Gallik** lives in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. He is the father of four girls, an educator, and a fisherman. Recent work has appeared in WHISKEY ISLAND and the LAKELAND FORUM. His first book, A BLUE THAT SPEAKS OF HEAVEN, is due in November from Poetic Page.

Recent poems by **Judith Harris** have appeared in NIMROD, WEST BRANCH, SOUTH FLORIDA POETRY REVIEW, and SOJOURNER. She has two chapbooks (POPIES and SONG OF THE MOON), and teaches at George Washington University, where she is also writing her dissertation on John Keats.

A previous contributor to HPR, **Peter Harris** teaches English at Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

**Gene Hirsch** is a physician, a pianist, and a member of the Poets' League of Greater Cleveland. He divides his time between Ohio and North Carolina.

Associate Editor of THE REVIEW FOR CONTEMPORARY FICTION and former Managing Editor of MODERN FICTION STUDIES, **Brooke Horvath** teaches at the Stark Campus of Kent State University. He has recent poems in POETRY, ANTIOCH REVIEW, DENVER QUARTERLY, CHICAGO REVIEW, MISSOURI REVIEW, and TAR RIVER.

**William Johnson** teaches at the University School in Shaker Heights, Ohio. This is his second appearance in HPR.

Later this year Boa Editions will publish a new book by **Richard Kostelanetz** entitled WORDWORKS: POEMS SELECTED AND NEW.

Recent poetry by **Judy Lindberg** appears in NEW LETTERS, THE MADISON REVIEW, SPOON RIVER QUARTERLY, and SOUTHERN POETRY REVIEW. Judy teaches at Penn State/New Kensington and spends part of the year in Minnesota.

**Greg Ling** has published in KANSAS QUARTERLY, THE POETRY MISCELLANY, OXFORD MAGAZINE, THE PANHANDLER, COE REVIEW, BOSTON LITERARY REVIEW, and other periodicals. He is a writer/editor at AV-MED Health Plan in Gainesville, Florida.

**Robert Lowenstein** lives in West Orange, New Jersey. He says, "Writing and reading poetry keeps me going full speed in retirement."

**Sandy McCord** grew up in central Nebraska and now lives in Richmond, Kentucky with her husband and son. She has work forthcoming in KENTUCKY POETRY REVIEW.

Paul Whitfield Horn Professor of English and Poet in Residence at Texas Tech University, **Walter McDonald** has had recent poems in THE ATLANTIC, THE NATION, THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS, THE PARIS REVIEW, and POETRY. His latest books of poems include NIGHT LANDINGS (Harper & Row), AFTER THE NOISE OF SAIGON (Univ. of Mass.), THE FLYING DUTCHMAN (Ohio State Univ.), and THE DIGS IN ESCONDIDO CANYON (Texas Tech. Univ.).

**Bryan E. Merck** lives in Birmingham, Alabama with his wife, Janice, and his son, Dylan. He is currently on work on a collection of poems entitled LONG FREEFALL. He teaches in the Bridgework Program at G. W. Carver High School.

Born in San Antonio and educated through his Ph.D. at Berkeley, **Bernard E. Morris** has been writing poetry in traditional forms for fifteen years. Salem Press has commissioned him to write critical studies of sonnets by Shakespeare and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and a poem each by Emerson, Levertov, X. J. Ken-



nedy, and Louis Simpson. His own poems are widely published in the journals and reviews, including AMBERGRIS, BLACK RIVER REVIEW, OYEZ REVIEW, PEGASUS, PIKEVILLE REVIEW, CAPE ROCK, THE SOUTH FLORIDA POETRY REVIEW, Z MISCELLANEOUS, and others.

A teacher of English as a Second Language at Berkeley High School, **Rusane Morrison** loves her job because she can let poetry (and the use of creative language) be the cornerstone of her teaching. "Students new to English have a magical way of using words," she says; "I think that they teach me as much as I teach them." Recent poems have been accepted by SONOMA MANDALA, BONE & FLESH, ITALIAN AMERICANA, and DUSTY DOG. She was pleased in January, 1991 to win one of three second places in the SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN Poetry Contest.

**Hugh Ogden's** first book of poetry, LOOKING FOR HISTORY, was published in 1991 by OUTLOUD Books. He has had recent work in BLUELINE, THE NORTH DAKOTA QUARTERLY, and the MALAHAT REVIEW. He teaches in the creative writing program at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.

**Marcia Pelletiere** lives in Brooklyn, New York and is currently enrolled in the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College.

**Elliot Richman** lives in Plattsburgh, New York and has appeared in previous issues of HPR.

Employed on the nightshift in a sewage plant in Columbus, Ohio, **Andy Roberts** has been published in many little magazines, including AMELIA and SAN JOSE STUDIES. He has recently completed his first novel, A STEP UP IN THE WORLD.

A native of Hiram, Ohio, **David Sanders** has had poems and translations in several magazines, including POETRY EAST, STAND, POETRY MISCELLANY, and THE EPIGRAMMATIST. He is currently associate director and editor-in-chief of the University of Arkansas Press.

**Tom Sheehan** lives in Saugas, Mass.

**Donna Spector's** poems and stories have appeared in GREENSBORO REVIEW, POET & CRITIC, PLAINSWOMAN, SUNRUST, FOOTWORK, THE BELLINGHAM REVIEW, SOUTH FLORIDA POETRY REVIEW, JOURNAL OF NEW JERSEY POETS, CONNECTICUT RIVER REVIEW, BLACK RIVER REVIEW, TEACHERS USA, BLUE UNICORN, and POETIC SPACE. Her plays have been produced Off Broadway, Off Off Broadway, regionally, and in Canada. Ms. Spector spent the summer of 1990 in Greece on an NEH fellowship to study the women in Greek tragedies.

**Kristin Steege** lives in Sacramento, California and is working towards an MA in English at the University of California, Davis. She has published poetry in several small journals.

A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, **Doug Swift** has poems forthcoming in AMERICAN POETRY REVIEW, WEST BRANCH, and elsewhere. He has

recently had poetry nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Swift is an Assistant Professor in English at Muskingum College.

**Ann Turkle**, a native Ohioan and longtime resident of Vermont, now lives in Tallahassee, where she is working on her Ph.D. in English at Florida State University. She was a 1986 recipient of a Vermont Council on the Arts Fellowship in Writing.

A graduate of the State University of New York at Oneonta, **David Van Buren** has twice attended Breadloaf Writers' Conference. His poetry has appeared in MARYLAND POETRY REVIEW, WIND, MIDATLANTIC REVIEW, and elsewhere. He currently lives with his wife and three children in Ireland, where he writes a weekly newspaper column for THE IRISH VOICE.

A teacher at Sinclair Community College, **William J. Vernon** has published three chapbooks and has work in recent issues of VOL. NO. 18, OWEN WISTER REVIEW, KENTUCKY WRITING, CHIRON REVIEW, COLOR WHEEL, WEST, VERVE, PIVOT, TRIBUTARY, BOGG, HELLAS, TIGHT, and JOURNEYMAN.

**BJ Ward** received his B.A. from Stockton State College in 1989 and was awarded an M.A. in Creative Writing from Syracuse University in 1991. He was a 1988 fellow in the Bucknell Seminar for Younger Poets and was 1987 and 1988 winner of the Jeanette Gottlieb Award for Poetry. At Syracuse he served as University Distinguished Fellow from 1989 to 1990 as well as a Summer Fellow in 1991. He is now working in the New Jersey Writers-in-the-Schools program and lives in Hampton, N.J. His poems have appeared in POET LORE, HANGING LOOSE, SALT HILL JOURNAL, and STOCKPOT.

**Scott Ward's** first book of poems, CRUCIAL BEAUTY, appeared last fall from SCOP Publications. He is the poetry editor of SOUTHERN HUMANITIES REVIEW and teaches at Auburn University.

**Robert Wexelblatt** doesn't use a word processor. "Though," he writes, "my fountain pen is, in its way, also a word processor, as I am myself." He adds: "You could find this preference for the quaint and hand-made described in one of the essays of PROFESSORS AT PLAY (Rutgers, 1991). In 1990 Rutgers published another handwritten book of mine, LIFE IN THE TEMPERATE ZONE, a bunch of stories. I am also responsible for cluttering the fringes of American literature with 47 poems, 34 essays, and 45 stories. They have appeared in what is usually called 'a wide variety of journals' . . . ." He is a professor of Humanities at Boston University.

**Peter Wild** is editing and annotating the autobiography of John C. Van Dyke, a turn-of-the-century desert wanderer and devotee of the Art for Art's Sake Movement. It will be published by the University of Utah Press. Wild's poems and reviews are published widely. He teaches at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

**Michael Young** lives in New York City "so he can frequent the museums and galleries." He has published in THE LYRIC, PEGASUS, and THE ROMANTIST. He is working on a collection called GALLERIES (which includes the poem in this issue of HPR).



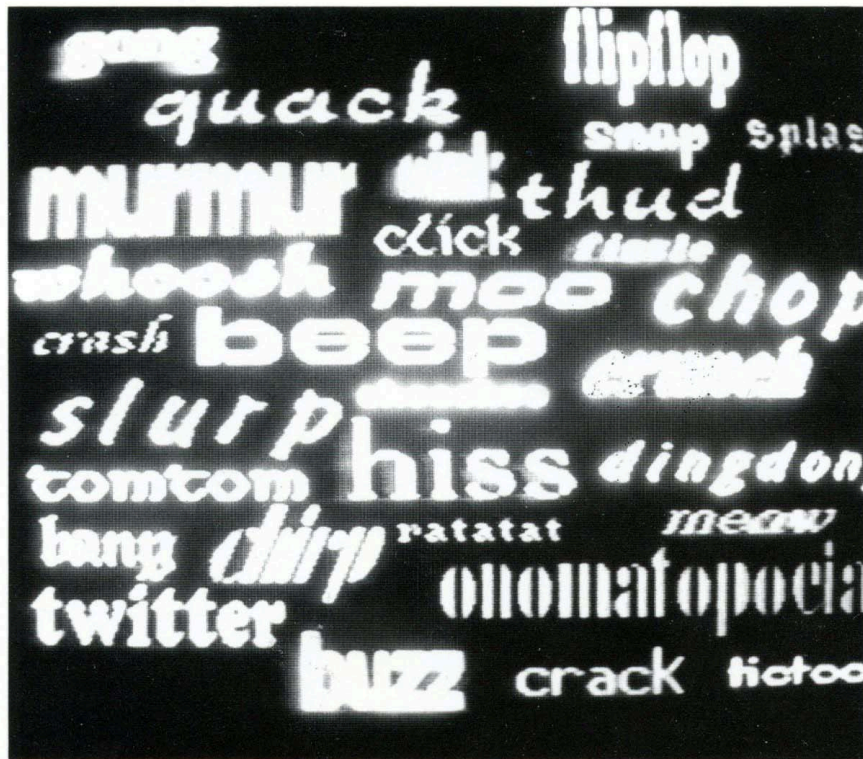
**Our Thanks to Arthur Joseph Geigel III for Financial Assistance.**



**IN THIS ISSUE:**

**New Poems by 47 poets!**

**“VIDEO WRITING” by Richard Kostelanetz**



from Richard Kostelanetz, *Onomatopoeia* (1990)

**Hiram Poetry Review** seeks to **DISCOVER**  
America's poets. All poems in this magazine are  
selected from manuscripts submitted without specific  
invitation.