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#53/54

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# THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

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Fall, 1992- Summer, 1993

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# CO- rrespondence

## A Few Notes Toward New Image Poetry

by William D. Hoskin

Poetry has been self-discovery for me, which is to say it leads always to what is new and ongoing about my life. The rhythm of rhyme and meter, the music of alliteration and assonance, sounds that simulate or recreate meaning, these are ingredients we can speak of conceptually. And it is the discovery of language, of unique and fresh words and meanings and images that brings new light to familiar experience. These kinds of arrival are characterized by Anthony Piccione as “at once the substance as well as the process” (9) of traditional and contemporary poetic forms: i.e., what we may finally mean by “poetry.”

Our most usual communication, including traditional and narrative poetry, is at the level of the conscious mind, of ego, more or less, proceeding within sequential and linear thought. But, as Piccione points out in his dissertation, Jerome Rothenberg reminds us that poetry is certainly also the voice of one’s unconscious speaking to that of another, poet to reader (5,28). It is evident that if the unconscious perceives things more directly, more subjectively, then the objective, descriptive vocabulary of poetics continues to be unsuitable and insufficient to express or convey the reality of that experience (4,8). Jung’s identification of functional psychological types as *thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition*, (1,99-100) and of such attitudinal modes as *introversion* and *extroversion*, (1,91) provides a vocabulary to help express the intertwining of conscious and unconscious experience. His descriptions of persona and shadow, anima and animus, especially, lead us to understand the nature and relationship of our conscious and unconscious selves. Within this approach the assumptions about the universal unconscious and its archetypal elements offer further understanding of that vast and mysterious area of the psyche (1,66). Significant to such knowledge is Robert Bly’s clear awareness that poetry, now and always, arises as the most appropriate language of the merging of upper and lower minds (5,166).

Shinkichi Takahashi's poem "Words" speaks to this, perhaps indirectly but certainly clearly.

I don't take your words  
Merely as words,  
Far from it.

I listen  
To what makes you talk—  
Whatever that is—  
And me listen. (10,61)

Jim De Camp, a Henrietta, N.Y. English teacher, tells of the Native American who reflected on his attendance at a Quaker Meeting: "I like the silence where the words come from."

Correspondingly, and particular to contemporary image poetry, there are perceptions that reveal our subjective concerns in non-objective ways. Its witness is so calmly stated:

we will wear  
new bones again  
we will leave these  
rainy days...

[from "new bones" by Lucille Clifton];

The moon drops one or two feathers into the field.  
The dark wheat listens.  
Be still.  
Now.

[from "Beginning" by James Wright];

...and the sky rose up and held true all summer.

[from "July 3, 1949" by Anthony Piccione].

In reading and writing contemporary poetry, we try to make sense of that which is not immediately apparent in our conscious minds but which may be found in expressions of the unconscious through dreams, feelings, projections and fantasies—where the words come from, the province of the deep Self. And the function of the poet is to find the images, the language of the unconscious (8). The exploration of Self is a matter of

great consequence in the adventure of self-knowledge, individuation and self-fulfillment. Accordingly, the language of contemporary poetry—image and metaphor—must be as precise as possible while still reflecting the non-linear nature of the unconscious.

Contemporary American poetry represents a distinct shift from the English tradition we spring from. For centuries, prosodies had become more or less formulaic and prescriptive. Although language was often elevated and romantic it was brought to a historic level of brilliance and insight by such masters as William Shakespeare, William Wordsworth, William Blake, et al.

Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson represent the greatest American poetry of the nineteenth century. Although they differed greatly in style, they each explored a new subjectivity and inwardness. Whitman responded to the cosmos around him, Dickinson to the universe within; Whitman openly and expansively celebrating life, Dickinson enigmatic and constrained, querying immortality.

There was a child went forth every day,  
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became...  
[from "There was a child went forth"  
by Walt Whitman];

The Brain—is wider than the Sky—  
For—put them side by side—  
The one the other will contain  
With ease—and You—beside—...  
[from "The Brain is wider than the Sky—"  
by Emily Dickinson].

The Modern poets, in the first half of the twentieth century, often found themselves insulated as spectators and reporters of the world around them. As part of their poetic, they sought to make subtle or conceal their own personal responses. This was the period of T.S. Eliot's "objective correlative," the assumption that objects of perception could and should evoke particular feelings in the reader (5,17). Classical allusions as conceptual content were common features of this poetry. Consider:

According to Brueghel  
when Icarus fell  
it was spring....

....a splash quite unnoticed  
this was Icarus drowning  
[from "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus"  
by W.C. Williams];

One must have a mind of winter  
To regard the frost and boughs  
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;....  
[from "The Snowman" by Wallace Stevens];

The winter evening settles down  
With smells of steak in passageways....

I am moved by fancies that are curled  
around these images, and cling;...  
[from "Preludes" by T.S. Eliot].

Contemporary "new" or "deep" image poetry differs from preceding traditions in many fundamental ways. The structure is free verse: particularly, it is free from poetic device. Fussell points out that "...free verse... [has] perceptible interesting movement from one given to another..." in contrast to the dullness of unrelieved metric poetry (3,88). In the new image poetry, line and stanza breaks are determined more by image and image-statement movement than by rhetorical or syntactic considerations.

Brush in hand, blinking  
under  
a sombrero of whitewash,  
he's shoved feetfirst  
into  
the cannon's mouth.  
[from "Clown" by Lucien Stryk];

The hollow eyes of shock remain  
Electric sockets burnt out in the  
skull....  
[from "Two Years Later" by John Wieners];

....The dead deer lying in the clearing,  
its head and antlers transparent.



The black seed in its brain  
parachuting toward earth.  
[from "Silence" by Greg Orr].

We hear the voice of the poet observing the nature of his or her own unconscious and its interplay with the ego. Much of the content is found in the dynamic of the image-statement, its expression being primarily perceptual and conversational (6).

The "deep image" of this poetry is achieved by image sequences and transformations that spring from as well as reach deeply into the unconscious (5,25). We find the language surreal, not constrained or generated by rational or sequential logic. Images change continually and rapidly, appearing and disappearing instantaneously and simultaneously (5,30).

This poetry is dialectic, and lives in the polarity of opposites: "thisness" and "otherness," "there" and "not-there," widely leaping associations and sudden transformations. These qualities contain the energy, immediacy and the simultaneity of images from the unconscious. Consistently, the greater the dialectic distance, the deeper is our experience of the unconscious, and the wider our sense of universality (8). James Wright's "The Jewel," is a poem of "deep image":

There is this cave  
In the air behind my body  
That nobody is going to touch:  
A cloister, a silence  
Closing around a blossom of fire.  
When I stand upright in the wind,  
My bones turn to dark emeralds. (11, 17)

"The Jewel" embodies a deep, mystical, non-rational psychic journey which leads to a moment in the state of new seeing, the poet's experience of the unconscious. The opening line, "There is this cave," is a simple, nearly 'conscious' image of a particular thing. Immediately, the physical, familiar nature of "this cave" is questioned by the phrase "in the air." It reveals that the "cave" is something other than the very concrete image of an enclosed space in the rocky side of a hill that the first line evokes. "Behind my body" transforms "cave" into a kind of "there, not-there-ness." The statement, "That nobody is going to touch," settles the thrust of the poem: the "cave" and the context of the poem are neither material, rational, nor in the outward world.

In the fourth line, “cloister” connotes withdrawal and retreat, echoing the darkness and privacy of “...cave/...behind my body/...nobody...[will] touch,” leading us deeper into the inner world. “A silence” includes sound by its absence and at the same time becomes a part of the surrealistic image of “silence closing around.” It suggests ordering, concentrating the light and energy and warmth of “...a blossom of fire.” At this point the poem has taken us down in a dark, mysterious, lonely descent to the irrational, deep unconsciousness. The experience of distance and separation is also the enlightenment of the “deep image” state.

The poem returns in the sixth line to the familiar, material realm of conscious reality. “When I stand upright in the wind” implies that this is now some new challenge to be attempted. Further inference suggests that the preceding spiritual, mystical journey provides the preparation for this: *when I stand upright* awakened! In this light, the subject is not only capable of “stand[ing] upright in the wind,” the transformational last line “...bones to ...emeralds” signals the spiritual illumination that continues to resonate, after and beyond the poem.

This, then, is a poem about the quest for and achievement of fresh seeing and new awareness. We are taken from darkness and retreat ultimately to discovery and enlightenment. This psychological and spiritual progression is recreated by the process of the poem: by image language, image movement and transformations of the previously “known.” The reader is also participant in the poem. From line to line, the movement and sequence of these images recreate the conditions of the quest. The poem closes with a celebratory and epiphanal statement of the realization of newness—be it of strength, understanding, acceptance, vision or other province of self-integration.

Both Donald Hall and Piccione point out that an important characteristic of new image poetry is the colloquial vocabulary from which evocative images are formed (4,24), (4,60). Bly’s little prose poem “A Hollow Tree” is quiet and simple but recreates the psychic place, the mood and the feelings that come from the exploration of this ordinary, unremarkable object. The first lines of the poem follow:

I bend over an old hollow cottonwood stump,  
still standing, waist high, and look inside. Early  
spring. Its Siamese temple walls are all brown and  
ancient. The walls have been worked on by the  
intricate ones....(1,11)

Most of the words in these lines have their own varied connotations, especially when considered out of context. The word "I" places the poet in the poem and brings us into his intimate experience, like observers in a dream. But "bend" can mean turn, free and possible, and "over" contains the sense of above, hiding, or controlling. "Hollow" is perhaps empty, initially, but suggests resonance as well: emptiness is spiritual receptivity. Significantly, the rest of these words have similar multiplicities of meaning.

Context sharpens the meaning of words and focuses the response of the reader (5,8-9). Just the addition of modifiers evokes new feelings and implications. I feel cautious "bend[ing] over" the jagged edge of the "waist high stump." The archetypal image, "old hollow...stump, still standing" contains melancholy. I'm wary about "look[ing] inside." "Siamese temple walls...brown and ancient" is mysterious enough but "worked on by the intricate ones" leaves a sense of awe. It is through direct experience in the deep Self that this poetry is generated, in the poet and in the receptive reader.

In the place where I am sitting now, trying to tease this out, there is an old family photo. It's a snapshot of me and my young siblings, our spouses and all our kids. And the good mother, not long bereft of that steadfast man, our father. We shared gene pools, beds, hard times and a few secrets.

The facts of our outward lives were hard to conceal. On the other hand, except for the usual laughs, griefs, hugs, occasional pouts and ambiguous moods, the truths of our inner experiences were singular and private. And of course we had little realization of the nature or even the existence of the conscious-unconscious parts of ourselves. Whatever hunches we might have had, we've liked and cared about each other.

Jung's model of the deep Self allows any of us to better understand ourselves, alone and in relationship. Happily, the subjective perceptions of contemporary image poetry afford us the image as language to express and communicate these insights. Importantly, too, it assists us in our pursuit of the Jungian possibilities of psychic wholeness and individuation. But the poetry is no mere turning from the world. Robert Bly and William Heyen have written many of their important poems about tragic political and moral dilemmas: Bly about the Vietnam War, and Heyen about the Holocaust.

Contemporary image poetry reflects the human psyche more subjectively than much of our long tradition. It is our time to do so and I want to be a part of such writing. Especially though I love the colloquial language, the energy, the perceptive imagery and the emerging psychic

reality. What I mean is I love to make these poems. And I want to say it more clearly, more truly. I want the poems themselves to show us.

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## Worship

It's hard for me to believe  
but there's no denying

the churches in this town  
just keep expanding. First Baptist

has moved across the street  
to a new worship hall

and half a block  
of Sunday school rooms.

The Lutherans' new building  
holds at least four hundred.

Scaffolding has risen high  
behind the Presbyterians.

When they move somewhere spacious,  
the Episcopalians

plan to sell their acre  
to the Methodists next door.

I guess more and more  
are finding comfort

in fellowship and faith.  
And I confess

I was once confirmed  
and nearly every Sunday

walk my wife and daughter

down the alley to their church.

But since I was five  
I've had this worship of my own—

these intermittent, unwanted pangs  
of fear

at the certainty I'll die,  
the pangs less keen,

less frequent now with age  
and, anyway, as vain

as offerings made  
with swelling praise.

**William Aarnes**

## Chickens

With the decision made, it meant  
the building of a coop out in the shed.  
In it, two nesting crates and roosts.  
And then an outdoor wired-in run.  
A water pan and feeding trough.  
In just a few days everything was set.  
So off we drove and home we brought  
six fully grown Rhode Island Reds.

We stood admiring them. All ours.  
They did what chickens do.  
They peered about. They scratched the dirt.  
And on the day we found  
the first brown egg  
half hidden in one nest of straw!  
That day our home we called a farm because  
it had been one became a farm again.

A year passed by. One more. Another one.  
The care and feeding of the hens  
by now was a mere joyless chore.  
They stained the roosts, the floor, the nests.  
Their squawking panics were absurd.  
Yet still we looked on them  
as an adopted part of our own lives,  
so on we went, day in, day out.

Till in mid-winter one got sick.  
She nestled on the floor,  
eyes glazed, head nodding slowly up and down.  
No sense to call a vet for one old hen.  
At dusk I left her, feeling sure  
when I came out next morning  
I would find her dead.

And so I did, for so she was.

What I did not expect  
was finding her completely covered by  
her own two wings which she  
had stretched out fully forward,  
tips just overlapped.  
Their length and shape made it appear  
she lay in death beneath  
a shroud of angel wings.

In the first gentle light  
each auburn feather all but shone.  
I thought as well of the last posture of  
the dying swan in *Swan Lake*.  
And wondered at being moved  
to that same sense of the ineffable  
by this, the least of creatures born on earth,  
cold at my feet on the shed floor.

**Richard Aldridge**



## String Up Your Idiot Kings

All I knew then was I wanted to kick in everyone's windows  
barefoot, my blood  
left in smudged toeprints on the concrete. I hadn't yet outrun acne, or  
thought to shave the 58 hairs yearning from my chin, I hadn't yet  
grown into my  
feet or shoulders, and I knew so much less than I thought,  
I've since become terrified by what I can convince myself of.  
To give you  
some idea: I'd slept with only one girl by then, my first wicked taste of  
strange sweat, and though I was far from her first, she could not  
tell me where  
her clitoris was. I had to go to the library, opening a huge anatomy text  
on a wooden table, to find out. I hadn't yet written any poems I  
would even show a dog,  
and didn't know how to pay a restaurant check. Look behind me  
to the girls sailing Frisbees through May surrounding me, my first touch  
of mind-altering on the lawn, the 2 hits of acid bought for \$3  
each, swallowed  
with beer, and every blue and orange brightened to the anger of  
gas flame,  
enough to make me gasp, but not squint — who could blame me for  
not wanting to know  
much more, "Cowgirls in the Sand" falling from a third story speaker,  
Patty Alexander's skin taking in sunlight as if it were its  
one love in life, like the bee's pollen-cluttered legs  
stepping through  
the iris stamens. I remember what she wore: an Indian skirt  
and T-shirt, behind which her breasts reposed, cats on a windowsill,  
eyes closed to the sun. Trying to rub the air off my hands, I came  
to her with  
sunglasses, grinning, and she took them off. "There," she said,  
and I have no idea what she meant. I never asked. I suppose  
I loved her,  
her eyelight like corn suddenly husked, but it came to nothing—  
she had someone named Charlie, who doubtlessly knew where her

clitoris was  
without asking. I nearly said *even her hair falling past itself onto  
her shoulder was graceful*, but who's surprised at that, the most  
graceful thing  
she had. I wish there was a second word for grace. This  
was even before I knew who Neil Young was, before I'd earned a  
dollar in my life  
doing anything more than ripping tree stumps from my mother's yard  
for \$3 each,  
severing the roots with the swings of a pick-axe and lifting  
them onto the grass, clotted with soil, like big goddamn teeth.  
When I thought all Freud meant was the dream sequence in  
*Spellbound*, and I thought  
my body was strong enough to be torn apart and put back together  
in time for dinner, which  
it could be said to have been, the Mercury tangoing into oncoming  
traffic on 25A with me in its pocket, both sacrificed to the road.  
That was a few years later, and I wanted to break every intangible thing  
I could find, every part of me, be it left on the road shoulder  
or still staring  
helplessly at its hands inside me, but I couldn't, I never broke  
much after that,  
and I know some might call it healing. People I'd previously  
irritated began  
to like me. Where would we be without the lost young men who wear  
fatigues and ripped denim and  
laugh at the sky when anyone tells them anything that, at its  
core, means *obey*.  
I wasn't proud then, but if it's possible to be proud of a fool  
with shivering fists,  
I'll take it, I'll be proud today. All I knew back then was  
the night song  
of metal on the highway, and the sunniest, albeit hallucinated,  
day of my whole fucking  
life, and that I had the crazy sense to thank my dear Christ  
one thing followed another.

**Michael Atkinson**

## Selma

Papa waddled through the house dressed in nothing but hope that Selma would leave the next morning. Belly bobbing, penis flopping, he'd parade past her and *The Edge of Night*, swing open the refrigerator and yell to Mama, "Who ate all the cottage cheese?" A bag of bones with decades old dresses, Selma camped with relatives, drove her fabricated Bible quotes and bird words beneath their skins till, swollen as chickens on spits, they exploded.

Two weeks before she died she sent us a card and a photo from her birthday party at the home. The flash fired her eyes into two red dots, burning brighter than the eyes of the old women surrounding her, wagging party favors. But her face was pasty, sad beneath the pointed hat that reminded me of the steeple I'd seen in an old book illustration, a man impaled on it for witchcraft. The more he wiggled the deeper it went.

At 16 I inherited my first car and the task, whenever Mama pleaded with Papa, "One more chance," of fetching Selma after a relative had thrown her out. We're family, and we never turn away our own. For me, it was a chance to dig under a layer or two of her skin. I ran red lights, hung too close to the road's edge, cried the tires down Town Mountain. She sucked in her last breath, breath that hissed through her teeth like a snake's warning and out crying, "Oooooooh, my little red bird, slow down, pleeeeeeze."

At home she told Mama "Your adopted son and his car were sired by satan himself." And Papa threw her out again, a record short visit.

The final ousting came when Papa overheard her say,

“You’re his grandmother. He shouldn’t call you Mama.”  
At my birth the doctor filled the lines labelled  
“mother” and “father” with my grandparents’ names.  
What kind of people would let strangers have their  
baby? Family takes care of family. It’s our way, it’s  
mountain.

I drove slow up cousin Elmer’s driveway so Selma could  
have time to tell me how the robin got its red breast,  
impaired trying to swipe blood off Jesus’ thorny brow,  
how her husband left her in St. Louis and threatened to  
kill her if she told he was a Chicago gangster. At  
five or six I was spellbound by her stories — all the  
big cities she’d seen — and as I sat her suitcases on  
Elmer’s porch I thought about Tennessee Williams having  
women talk about women as little bird-like creatures,  
looking for nests.

I laughed when I met her son, her only child, at the  
funeral, not because his name was Robin, but because  
she had told us all he died in Korea while she was  
working in New Orleans, nursing a cousin we could never  
quite place. I wanted to grab him by his big stupid  
ears and tell him that his mother had been nothing but  
a worthless troublemaker. I wanted to rummage through  
his room till he caught me laughing at one of his diary  
entries. I wanted to read it aloud to him out the side  
of my mouth, smirk as I pelted him with glances that  
made him feel dirty. But I just shook his hand, said I  
was sorry about his mother — and walked away.

**Edmund August**

## **Well, son, we could always throw the pigskin around**

Time was,  
I would have introduced you to blood,  
taught you to slice open the throat  
and strip the skin from the carcass gracefully.  
Cooking didn't come naturally to anyone, you understand,  
so in those days we forced the women to burn the food,  
and this way we could press something hot against our lips.  
They never figured out the thrill,  
never saw what we were grinning about  
when the hot fat drooled down our faces.

Time was,  
I would have taught you to love blood,  
the relatives I mean,  
the tribe,  
and kill those your genes didn't recognize.

Not long ago,  
we could have gunned down indians together  
and told your mother how the bodies twitched  
while she served us hot turkey.  
Even these days we can raise the blood  
with chatter about the homeland  
or democracy  
and send the dumber ones off to the bloodfeast.

Maybe I shouldn't tell *you*,  
but sometimes I doubt we'll survive  
unless they perfect cloning soon,  
so the daughters,  
like soft amoebas,  
can inherit the earth.  
But it won't help,  
for they will trace bloodlines anyway,

and group into families,  
tight like fists.

Blood is thicker than water,  
but fishing has its thrills too:  
the betrayal of something by its instincts,  
the cold steel in the velvet flesh it must obey.  
You haul it in by a thread,  
the animal silent as if the hook  
has ripped its voice out.  
There's a lesson here I can't teach;  
you'll have to mutate your own way to it.

**Jody Azzouni**

## Long-Distance Poem

If too long has happened  
for us to call, or we  
haven't met each other  
well enough, I send this poem.  
I can see you there at the end  
of this line, waiting and smiling.

If you have family, may they hear  
what you say under what you say  
and may you listen also.

Since you work, may your task  
through the years have become  
a skillful and willing hand.

If you write, may your friends sit  
alone to read—those you know,  
and those earned through your words.

If later you walk by the river,  
may dusk come lightly  
to your shoulders, and the hills  
of the far shore transform  
that distance into poems.

**June Frankland Baker**

## IN MEMORY

*Clara Eppinger Morrill  
1889-1981*

After my move from your neighborhood  
I checked obituaries. The possibility  
rode the years like a gull offshore  
in wait for a fish boat  
heavy in its hold.

I will not forget those uncommon  
talks. Touching your forehead  
you said *Mother taught me God  
is here.*

After your mother's stroke  
God burned in her forehead  
like hearth fire.  
Friends came to warm  
their cold bones as she sat,  
beyond speech, cleaned and fed  
by your hand.

This evening—your name  
brushing its black-tipped wings  
across the page.

**June Frankland Baker**



## **Fool Thoughts**

Along the darkest arm of the lake,  
fallen trees—half-submerged, half-  
awry in air—languish over the heads  
of two boys drifting in their stolen skiff

slowly over the still, shallow water, bumping  
and pushing off now from the bank,  
now from a branch. Midships a dog  
rests its chin on the gunwale and sighs.

They should be in school and should not  
be puffing on Camels, or passing a bottle,  
though from all their eighth grade days

they'll remember this one best. The kid  
in the blue jacket will grow up to learn  
how to sell cameras and digital clocks at K-Mart,  
while the other delinquent, the one in green,

will end up a cop. The two of them (licensed)  
will fish together for years, but never  
float into this freedom again, never taste  
with so much courage the bitterness to come.

**Jim Bill**

## LETTERS

It's the kind of day when sadness  
Is everything's name.  
I arrange your letters on the table  
The way a child might arrange  
The letters of the alphabet—  
The swirling *s*, the acrobatic *a*.  
But I'm lying.  
I know each letter.  
This one smells like you.  
And this one was written  
Late at night when missing me  
Was imagining our bodies  
Wrapped in each other's warm whiteness  
And leaning toward the sky  
Of greedy, multiplying stars.

Even after a year  
I wake with the thought of you  
In a long line over my eyes.  
When we were first married  
We'd lie in our bed,  
Forgetting our rope to the world.  
You wanted to have a child  
That would run to our bed in the dark—  
That innocent, powdery need  
Climbing in, by instinct,  
To its halves.  
I wanted that too,  
Even when the years started fraying  
And my body, feeling wrong,  
Closed off its closeness.

Now I make coffee and toast  
And watch the pines wear the green  
They have to pay for in weight.

Every day is a new alphabet.

What should I do with these letters  
Written in another tongue?

Yesterday I had to stand  
On a square of concrete  
And hear from someone  
That you are fine,  
That she is beautiful,  
And that already your child  
is waking up in her body.

**Kim Bridgford**

## **Bachelor Party**

The universe is brutal because it is needy.  
The groom's pop, dead drunk, lurches.  
The dancer dances away,

displays her bared breasts  
under the raincoat  
which opens and shuts and is more than a prop

because it is so dirty.  
The dancer has worn it into diners  
and eaten standing up and always

in a hurry down  
small stupid roads  
and there is no moon at all.

Outside the American Legion Hall,  
the rain glitters, glitters and perseveres,  
and finally, the dancer arrives,

gaudy, delicate, greedy and so  
good at what she does  
in the undergrowth of dollar bills

that the groom's father  
mistakes her for someone he loves  
and she must dance away farther and farther and farther.

**Bonnie Buhrow**

## RUMMAGE SALE, EAST BALDWIN, MAINE

The couple, interrupted  
in contemplation  
of a broken set of Pyrex  
cookware, greet old friends  
seldom seen —perhaps

just, once a year  
on this village green—answering  
their casual query with  
a family litany that tells  
of Arnold, nineteen (he  
joined the Army), Bernice  
who's teaching  
(she's twenty-three) and  
the one we lost: he'll be  
twenty-nine next Friday.

**Robert M. Chute**

## Condolences

I envy people who know  
just what to write,  
who can lay a consoling arm  
over a trembling shoulder  
and for a miraculous minute  
or hour, absorb the grief  
into their own muscles and bones.

Now it's my turn  
to make the consoling call  
to a friend.  
I stall over the phone,  
afraid my fumbling words  
will rip his wound wider.

It's all ego, I know,  
fearful of being taken  
for anything less  
than priest or sage,  
when almost any word—  
softly spoken, kindly meant—  
will suffice.

**Robert Cooperman**

May 21-26

**“The Holy Innocents will not be little children in heaven; they will have only the indefinable charms of childhood. They are represented as ‘children’ because we need pictures to understand spiritual things. . . . Yes, I hope to join them! If they want, I’ll be their little page, holding up their trains.”**

The muffled silence. A procession,  
all the townspeople, gone under the hill.  
They will be great on our flanks, bobbing  
like trolls: the big hats, the almost-voices.

Their singing will be their own,  
and we will be with them.

What will we be able to make of it,  
those voices: the ones that were  
ours as we called beneath ourselves,  
muttering, Popeyes, in a kind of  
glossolalia, over the hard paths of our lives?

We saw the tree split in the forest.  
The fumes singed our nostril hair.  
We saw all the wet grass, mornings, but we  
were someplace else, listening  
to other voices. We were those voices, too,  
and we knew. It was as clear  
as the rings in our noses,  
as clear as the distance  
and cover provided.

We got in line.  
Started singing, rough axes  
over our shoulders.  
The trees belonged to us there.  
We had many short friends and were happy.

**David Craig**

**May 27 Ascension**

**“I always see the good side of things. There are some who set about giving themselves the most trouble. For me, it’s just the opposite. If I have nothing but pure suffering, if the heavens are so black that I see no break in the clouds, well, I make this my joy! I revel in it!”**

God’s goodness in His own.  
It’s a child delighting in rain.  
It’s the intellect working within a larger clock.

“If they see me as stupid, very well,  
there is much I do not know.”

But who else holds the lake  
in her palm, who else  
struts upon its plant-like stem?  
Wheat teacher, read us again,  
we want to run through the veils of your voice:  
the French hillside, slate sky, swirls of birds.

Children hear the bell, come in.  
The grasses begin to dim; shouts, gradually  
eaten by the darkening trees. The barn, too,  
dims, sighs, settles like the head  
of the family dog.

Aristotle, Terence, come in too.  
We are tired and have been waiting for you.

\* \* \* \*

Will the posing never end?  
Will the learned ever put away their begging cups?

What do you know worth keeping  
wise man? If it were worth anything,  
wouldn’t you give it away?

**David Craig**



## The Levitator

The old couple  
in the upstairs apartment  
are eating a supper  
of beets and potatoes  
and I am lying  
on my bed daydreaming  
when, without warning,  
the bed begins to rise.

Surprised,  
I try to explain,  
to apologize  
to the old couple,  
who continue eating,  
as I lift through  
their room,  
up through their  
ceiling, through the roof,  
and break out  
into the damp night air.

The stars are wads  
of white paper tossed  
all over the place.  
A black hole  
like a large wastebasket,  
tipped for long shots,  
leans on the air.

I hold to the bed post  
with one hand  
and try to put my pants

on with the other.  
I keep missing  
the leg, and after a while,  
I give it up,  
lean back,  
close my eyes,  
and float.

**William Virgil Davis**

## **He'll have to climb**

Every night since she was ten,  
she has brushed her hair one hundred  
strokes, just like grandma said.  
Her tresses are thick and healthy, true,  
but the real strength lies in her arm.

He kissed her hand today and her breath  
dipped into a far corner of her ribcage.  
She stood straight and still as a tower,  
though every bone wanted to bend  
to him, make it easier.

It is an exercise now, to brush her hair  
until it's smooth and flat. But a snarl  
makes her work, makes her yank  
so hard that she must tense  
her follicles to hold the hair in.

The hairs that do not want to obey,  
the ones that twist and knot and cling  
together of their own accord, finally hang  
down her back now with the others,  
in a dark glossy sheet. She touches all of them,  
absorbs the strength that can support  
one hundred times its own weight.

Her hair will grow, she knows. It will coil  
around her ankles in thick black waves.  
She will braid it, then, into a silken

rope, long enough to hang out the window  
and brush the ground. She will not perfume  
its scent away, or weave it with pearls  
and gold. She will tie  
the end with a tiny red ribbon  
and wait.

**Megan Dietz**

## Florida Pools

Kept forever tepid, heated even in August, to avoid a chill,  
they are not meant for swimming, but as a balm for the very old  
who drift around the edges of them, talking about dead presidents,  
torn up trolley routes, dismantled playgrounds in rubbled cities  
to the north many will never see again.

The women in shower caps, the men in broad-brimmed  
canvas hats protecting the splotched, thin parchment  
of their bare pates against the carcinogous sun.  
They drift together and apart and together again  
as if borne by some underwater current. Now and then  
they open their arms in a slow, wide arc,  
as though attempting to swim while standing up, or raise  
one leg at the knee and let it cautiously down again, and then  
the other, the water bearing the weight of their stiffened limbs—  
they are failing, their hearts, the vascular links to their organs  
and limbs, are failing. I am reminded of the Florida Manatee,  
slow and weary drifters too: a scarred race near to doom.

**Myron Ernst**

## **In the Green Drawing Room at Hollins College**

Inside the Green Drawing Room there are two mirrors. The one at the front is oval and slightly concave; the one at the rear, a rectangle. Both are several feet high and wide, their gilded frames ornately carved. Between these mirrors, at a polished wood lecturn facing rows of folding chairs, invited poets read.

Far from the Green Drawing Room, Virginia, or Hollins, I learned a love for poems. On the slate sidewalks of Brooklyn at eight or nine, a boy whose father taught him fear, I walked with my head down and my hands in my pockets, where once a high school kid pinned me against the concrete of a stoop, pried open my mouth and spit a greasy thick flem into the back of my throat, which I swallowed before he kicked me in the balls and left me scraping my forehead against the rough sidewalk as he went his way grinning and cocky, having taught me once again how some of this world is a dumb animal mean in heart and dim mind.

In the Green Drawing Room at Hollins, I watch readers speak suspended calmly between images echoing wall to wall, sound and sight warm as a comforting dream, as a place where the baseball bat opens no one's head and the woman who lives upstairs doesn't sell her daughter by the night. It's someplace better than that; and, in the moment dizzied by word and image, just as real.

**Edward Falco**

## Auto-da-Fé

Grand Inquisitor even out of widow's weeds,  
staff sergeant even without his stripes, this man  
stands at his desk and speaks chameleon to me.  
I expect to be fired. I riff through the proof,  
see Yuki's back, purple-black with weals, the welts  
my belt made. He told. I see Yuki's wrists, burned red  
with cords, cords I used to tie him to the bed.  
He told. He told and now I surely will be fired.  
Father Gropius twists out a smile. Some slick beast  
of the genus *Mustela* hisses at me  
through scalpel teeth questions I cannot read.

Do I know the American boy who has AIDS,  
he asks. Yes, I know him. The whole school knows him.  
Boys who shared showers with him, the pommel horse  
with him, tables at lunch with him, are dead men.  
No, do I know him *perssionally*? The fire  
draws tighter. Now I see Justin's face, stoneware  
against the pillow, eyes half-closed as I read  
to him, between waking and sleeping. It is  
nonsense, if course, Father Gropius concedes,  
but haven't I guessed why my sstudents cut class  
so much? When I leave, I hear a fat brown stoat  
jump from Father's chair and scrape across the floor.  
The next day I hang a cock, blood side down, on his door.

Roger Finch

## THE NEWMANS OF CONNECTICUT

It is said that on a stormy night  
when a traveler is most in need  
of a helping hand they are out there  
in their Ferrari, idling, extra gas  
and jumper cables at the ready.  
Few are the motorists who drive the length  
of the Connecticut Turnpike without  
receiving some kind of road assistance  
from Paul and Joanne. She waits in your car  
with you, chatting of the weather,  
blushing at your compliments,  
the coupons in your glove compartment  
for popcorn and salad oil,  
he is immediately under your hood,  
blue eyes blinking away the damp,  
righting the wrong connections.  
They have an air of sad obligation  
about them, the need to be simple  
and useful and sympathetic, that  
your problem with your distributor  
outweighs every glory, every golden  
delight they have known. Joanne has  
a basket of fresh-baked brownies,  
Paul has a dry wool sweater to lend you.  
And when the emergency subsides,  
you wave goodbye, they smile through  
clutched raincoats and return to their car,  
and wait for the next living soul.  
To be of use, that is the thing,  
that is the atonement they require,  
salvation in the rain and grease  
and gravel of lesser people's luck.

**Michael Finley**



## **Sway**

What sways in that tree?  
I'd like to be  
up there in the fat air  
in warm and rotten fall  
to sway, swell, stall  
close to the bark, lean in  
on secret spin  
of insects at that height, free cities,  
Tuscany, Venices  
breathing dusk  
in the white, wet breeze.

**John Hawk Fitch**

## **Haiku**

Cranes call in black mist.  
Whoops! Ice! Sylvia, kiss me!  
A headlight smashes.

**John Hawk Fitch**

## **Reds, purples, blues**

My skin smells  
like money,  
traded, handled, used,  
my heels are worn down  
I tilt backwards walking  
and I'm frightened  
most of the time,  
I'm smiling so hard  
my face aches  
and I wanted us  
to be more than voices  
talking at the same time  
on the telephone  
and I keep getting lost  
inside these colors,  
reds, purples,  
blues,  
and I wanted to change you;  
tear you from yourself  
watch you sprout  
feathers, flowers or pearls  
and I wanted to leave you  
crying,  
but these letters  
I keep writing are  
to you  
and your blue eyes  
grow colder  
and I'm frightened  
all of the time  
I keep losing you  
over and over again  
like poor reception,  
or the horizon in fog.

**Valentina Gnup-Kruip**

## If Wishes Were Horses

The horses are surprised  
knee deep in breeze blown grass—  
then suddenly not there.  
Their eyes first wild,  
legs braced and platter hooves  
cemented to the new land.

I am standing,  
gazing over crossed arms  
to where my husband has taken  
the car, the savings account,  
and the night shift girl  
from the video store.

At first I don't see the horses  
appearing behind me  
or know there are now more mouths to feed.  
But their breathing pushes into my neck.  
When I turn, they are all eyes and steam  
and the sweet smell of wet hair.

\* \* \*

My mother taught me to wish  
on first stars, on birthday candles,  
and eyelashes blown from the back of my hand.  
Now, I am never without transportation.  
My backyard is full as a round-up.  
Hundreds of legs and tails mulling through my garden.  
Dark eyes watching me over broken fences,  
and each night when the first star appears,  
new herds merge with old filling prairies and fields,  
and mountain passes.  
It has not been an easy life.

**J.L. Haddaway**

## When Fat Girls Dream

When fat girls dream  
it is not of pies filled with cream,  
and chocolate so sweet it would  
make their mothers cry.  
Nor do they dream in wishes  
for Marilyn Monroe's waist  
and Lana Turner's legs—  
hip bones, cheek bones, and short strapless dresses;  
these would be easy,  
the lottery wins of fat girls  
that everyone would understand.

At night when round cheeks push eyes closed  
and dimpled fingers tuck like prayer  
under extra chins  
their dreams are much smaller:  
a dance with a man not blind drunk,  
a folding chair that won't cringe,  
one pair of non-stretch pants  
and a mother/aunt/grandmother who doesn't say  
"You could be such a pretty girl..."

They awaken with possibilities  
that die in the bathroom mirror,  
in the closet, in the refrigerator.  
They wrap themselves up  
in smiles and dark skirts  
step out their door into the thin air of morning  
and maybe  
just maybe  
into the arms of a man with Rubens' eyes.

**J. L. Haddaway**

## **Sans Serif: Blue Ridge Parkway, March 1989**

Higher and higher into the mountains,  
each curve took us closer to something  
else. I asked her would she jot down  
a few thoughts for me. But it was she  
who said whispering “We want  
to fly away into the creeks—”  
our dialogue between flora  
and gravity, my hands upon  
the wheel, me taut-eyed guiding us around  
every smooth slick early-morning curve. Going

home again, a difficult season. No side-roads  
exit ramps few and far between. A landing  
(grounding, granding, sounding, stopping) was not  
an option. Too cold to pull over,  
go for a stroll in the woods,  
a roll in the hay. Too cold.  
We whispered some more, though  
words crumbled, crumpled in monotone dialogue  
soliloquy dialectical leftovers forgotten  
and unrefrigerated, unregenerate. Listened

for the sound of our own voices in the hush...  
the world is very quiet in such weather.  
Looked upon the great blunt knuckles  
of the mountains, mist-vagued  
and frost-rimed. She copied that, what I said,  
onto the piece of paper. And what rimed with  
ice? Very funny. Words fell and fell in cascades  
off the glittering branches  
onto the paved roadway, and our tires,  
passing over the sparkling fragments, crackled.

**Ron Henry**

## Perognathus fallax

When I went to the shed to check  
for water damage after the last rains,  
I found a tiny gray mouse  
dead among the stacks of old cartons,  
& lifting out the rags & jars,  
found his mate, backed in a corner,  
tiny and alive. Beside her,  
their ears barely visible, tails  
nothing but tendrils of gray thread,  
two new-borns, one huddled asleep by  
her snout, & the other awake at her  
nipple; the three together no larger,  
I'd guess, than the height of my thumb.  
I took the box into the yard,  
where there was more light, & where  
the cats weren't lurking,  
& lifted out the rest of  
the detritus—bolts of cotton  
& cans of varnish & spraypaint—  
beneath which I found a crude nest  
woven, I'd guess, from pieces  
of cotton, chewed cardboard, twigs,  
& spun into some sort of refuge.  
Now, with nowhere to hide, she scurried  
behind it, a pup still at her dugs,  
& looked up at me, into my eyes,  
the way one of my cats might  
who'd been cornered, or for that matter  
as might one of my own  
kind, pleading—her gaze wholly human,  
wholly intelligible. It's uncanny,  
isn't it, how much alike we all are?  
I was amazed the next morning,  
when I went to the pump house  
where I'd set the carton for safety,

to see the miraculous silver filigreed globe  
into which she had re-spun that nest,  
overnight. From a hole at its top,  
her tiny snout with those two bright  
eyes peered anxiously up into my face.  
I just stood there. It was hard  
to believe how exquisite that nest  
was, & how happy I was to see her.  
The crumbs of lettuce & seeds  
I had dropped in were gone.  
& I thought for a moment how nice  
it would be to keep them there,  
safe from the crows, feed them whatever  
they wished....But just for a moment.  
Then took out my pocket-knife  
& sliced a small hole near the bottom  
of the carton, & the next time  
I went back they were gone. How  
sorry I was to see the thing empty.  
Is that stupid of me? Perognathus  
fallax: San Diego pocket mice,  
I read in my Audobon Guide  
to North American Mammals.  
which was the last week  
of March, the whole yard  
given over to mountain lilac  
& sage & alyssum & out by the wood  
fence, that stand of iris, too tattered,  
I'd thought, to survive all those  
hard rains, but which had.  
And under my feet, alive,  
but so tiny one hardly noticed,  
a hundred species of wild flower:  
saffron & pink & white & mauve & blood red.

**Steve Kowit**

## DESCENT

Trying to keep cool in the underground summer,  
the train nowhere in sight  
I focus on

two Latino boys with beautiful teeth.  
Dirty white socks stuffed in fake leather flats  
beers in bags and Elvis hair,  
they are pointing at

the Hasid. Sweaty in thick glasses,  
he squints at his Torah, muttering.  
Stooped from a day of *dahvining*  
He looks at the boys, then for the train.  
At the boys, for the train.

A West Indian woman fans herself with a *Soap Opera Digest*.  
With the other hand, she grips her restless  
daughter who drops a bag full of plantaines.  
Annoyed, she swats the girl as if killing flies.

The heat is making me sick.  
I hope the train comes soon.  
I don't know these people  
Or what we are capable of.

**M. A. Lambert**



## **Creature of God**

What have you given, Dear One,  
this creature that wanders  
the dawn of the world  
with no boundaries,  
open to the spanning endless grief  
of the world,  
open endlessly to the family  
in need of love,  
the paradoxical creature that  
lives only in freedom to love  
yet suffers night beneath night  
the loneliness of that freedom,  
that creature, that heart  
that thrives in independence  
yet communion,  
that lives beneath the avalanche  
of All's suffering,  
yet thrives giving  
All to All.  
Ah, Golgothan condition  
of independent communion,  
Mysterious baffling creature, heart  
whose strength is its weakness,  
weakness, strength.  
I call, Beloved,  
for some peace  
in Thy endowed paradox,  
Thy small heart calls to Heart  
for Resolving, final blessing.

**James Magner, Jr.**

## Where It's At

...language is a differential network of meaning. There is no self-evident or one-to-one link between 'signifier' and 'signified' ... Thus, at the simplest phonetic level, bat and cat are distinguished (and meaning is generated) by the switching of initial consonants. ... Language is in this sense diacritical....

Christopher Norris,  
*Deconstruction Theory and Practice*

### Bat

The swing of this stout stick  
conjures haze of summer walking down  
to Riverside Park's diamonds for  
big league ball. Yankees vs. Dodgers.

Her membranous fingers grasp gulps of that night air  
through which she seeks the sights she hears  
to damage crops, consume insects, be a pest,  
pollinate flowers, transmit disease, disperse seeds.  
Bat guano is an excellent fertilizer  
and a strangelove.

Bela Lugosi Louisville Slugger  
laminated ash casket diamond  
home plate steak heart base  
fine clay in pursuit of saucerhood.

An old woman who flaps her eyelids  
may have bats in the belfry.  
Certainly a sharp blow, strike or hit.

## **Cat**

Ranked in order of carnivorous  
luminous iris.  
Abyssinian, angora, Manx.  
Eating men with gossip  
on the Serengeti Plain.  
Siamese, tabby, Persian.  
Flog the timid soul. White pounce, litter, pride,  
wildebeest, lion, leopard, jaguar, panther.  
Prowl to get laid.  
Bob, hep, cool.  
Yes, and burning in the forest of dreams.

## **Fat**

fat cats eat high  
on the hog in fat city;  
well fed, fleshy, flab obese,  
slick and oily slippery grease  
of the fat of the  
land paying a fat price.  
And me?  
I'll win the lotto pot.

## **Gat**

Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, George Raft,  
when all was gray and silver,  
blasted feds with slugs from gats in both hands.

Passages from shore inland  
between sandbanks or cliffs  
from one sparkling water  
to another where sanderlings chase  
the fringes of the tides.

## **Hat**

Pointed symbol of office; one of many.  
A practical covering for a man but  
a woman's decorative accessory:

bonnet, felt, cartwheel, derby,  
cloche, stetson, pillbox, top.  
Pass it, toss it in the ring,  
off to you in hand.

### **Mat**

Arty dull surface,  
border around or between picture and frame,  
oval on a horizontal as protection, support, decoration,  
woven straw, hemp, rope, rushes for sitting or lying on,  
or to clean your shoes before entering,  
flat, thin, usually pliant, rectangle for a wrestler  
or gymnast,  
webbing of rope to protect rigging from chafing at sea,  
reinforced concrete laid down to support a heavy building,  
thickly intertwined strands of hair or jungle vegetation,  
reminiscent of thinly disguised metaphors.

### **Pat**

This may come as a blow to you,  
a light blow with the flat of the hand,  
a light blow given to shape or smooth a surface,  
a light blow of affection or reassurance,  
a series of light blows on the back  
that is exactly suited, apt, opportune,  
perhaps too suitable and thus contrived, facile,  
even learned, mastered, memorized exactly  
so as to become firm, unyielding,  
but perhaps we're dealing with something molded  
or cut into small, usually square pieces  
or maybe a dropping of animal dung.

### **Rat**

brown black white  
larger than a mouse  
living among humans  
a vector of disease  
deserting his group  
informing

contemptible  
working for less than scale

### **Sat**

And so I have,  
waiting for a bus or doctor,  
waiting to talk to my psychiatrist, rehearsing,  
waiting for a job interview, rehearsing,  
waiting for a baby to be born,  
on the couch watching television,  
waiting to die.

### **Tat**

10 REM As in tit for  
20 Cooperate  
30 INPUT B\$  
40 If B\$ = cooperation then 20  
50 If B\$ = deceit goto 100  
60 REM Be swift, sure and right  
70 REM Don't be too clever  
80 REM cf Axelrod: The Evolution of Cooperation  
90 END  
100 Reciprocate: goto 30

### **Vat**

A felled oak rendered to staves,  
staves closely fit by master cooper's calloused hands  
and vessel placed in chill shadows,  
precocious fluids metamorphosed over time.  
We build these cool vats  
to house those very fluids  
while with symbionts  
they reconstruct.

**John Marvin**

## **Pressing Needs**

Steaming steel slides over broad  
cloth the shape of shoulders, sensible  
cotton smoothly suggesting skin.  
Despite recent suds, heat releases  
the scent of a man. Wrinkles tantalize  
hands pressing ahead of the iron  
down the plane of the back, missing  
muscles, feeling empty, finally,  
against the padded board. This shirt  
lacks angular scapulae, a little dip  
of clavicle at the open collar, the easy  
swing of arms. Then, as if by the magic  
that filled the fairytale pot with rice,  
the cloth clothes the man and again  
the long row of slow buttons  
frustrates the pressing need of fingers.

**Sandy McCord**

## Baking Pies

While I climbed the sprawling green  
pie apple tree, famous for its small  
wormy fruit, my never-to-be-married  
Great Aunt Estelle held forth in the kitchen  
with her fork, cutting Crisco into the flour  
and shouting over her own deafness at my mother.

Didn't my Great Aunt Estelle own the best  
Victorian house in Barnesville, Ohio?  
Why was my fearless mother so afraid of her,  
my father's favorite aunt, who could  
take her teeth out with the tip of her tongue?  
Her younger half-brother had a marvelous  
glass eye he said he could take out any time  
and shoot like a marble, called it his taw  
and said he'd take me on whenever,  
but he only played for keeps.

While the pies baked, my Great Aunt Estelle,  
a lousy cook, even the ubiquitous all-American  
apple pie defied her, would play dominoes,  
beating me incessantly, sending my tremulous  
fingers back to the boneyard to dance  
among the treacherous ivory rectangles.  
They were real ivory, she once said, made  
from the tusks of African elephants.  
"Don't be afraid," she would say, "just play.  
You can learn a lot from losing."

And that night my mother would cry  
all the short ride home, my father saying  
softly, it's all right, everything's okay,  
a warm apple pie on her lap.

**Ron McFarland**

## Pins and Combs

Grandmother says her neighbors are wops—  
a word from someplace way  
down deep, a place I've never seen.  
I watch her loose the pins and combs,  
surprised again that so much hair springs  
from her braid, tumbles  
the length of her back. She props the window  
with Grandfather's stick and we're down  
on our knees, praying  
the guardian angel prayer  
and one that says, *if I should die....*

The chain on the bedside lamp clicks,  
jounces there in the dark.  
A dog barks, a car rumbles by dragging  
slow lights down the wall.  
Wind is in the curtain and I wonder  
what would happen if  
I died before I woke. Water seeps  
under the door, tugs the legs  
of my bed. Somewhere at sea a wave splits  
in half; black and trembling  
it plows toward me.

**Michael B. McMahon**



## That Day at Arnaud's Mill, Risking Poetry

Standing at the millwheel, listening...  
standing at the millwheel: then...

  in the water  
splashing through the down-spilling turn of it,  
in the water he seems to hear an utterance  
drawn off the hardwood hills, a language  
much deeper than the easy tease of expression  
in the level choir of thrush and swallow  
bassed by a hoot owl and working  
outside his pre-dawn window each morning—

he can interpret birds.  
But would he speak for this voice of water, if he could?

In the bleat of deer,  
upwind and hidden in a cedar grove,  
he hears much more than just the calls of rut.  
Even the snorts and cracking racks of bucks  
are tongues that he has mastered.

And he can give a most precise rendering  
of a woodpecker drumming a dead willow,  
the jejune gutterals of a wild turkey,  
geese honking their threnodies across a lake,  
the savage wheeze of an angered boar.  
These he knows well. These  
he can easily translate.

But would he unravel the speech  
of day turning into night returning back to day,  
a light wind in open air,  
temperature changing,  
the soft somnolent settling of dew,  
time in all of this? Could he

sound this hoary news among the adolescent din and babble of his time?  
Could he seal all of it up in the meat of his aging heart and dream  
of a song,  
or of songs? Only

to voice a language he may never fully understand  
might be to lose himself in his weakness,  
in just his effort. Would he dare to risk the translation,  
plumb the utter depths of his dangerous gift? Would he  
forsake friend and family and library and cafe for this? Would he  
take on his ordered and well-formed madness like a vestment  
only to wait  
for the coming of mere poetry?

**Bryan E. Merck**

## Going

“But I’d advise you to sit pretty tight...”  
Kenneth Patchen

Here, in the last Southern sanctuary,  
little light remains. Cool water has been drawn,  
and Papa is dead. America sprawls out  
over a fraying Exxon map, the Royal Viking Line  
has no more room, there is no escape.

Now this is the mundane story: the look  
of the 90’s has us in its grasp, calling toll-free  
up to heaven, there is no answer. On the Jericho road,  
exotic motorcars slither away to New York City.  
A colony of red ants homesteads Tara.

In the soft underbelly of middle-age  
a man has scarcely a calm moment. Friends  
drop in to discuss Hemingway and Fitzgerald and Kerouac  
and Katherine Porter’s Ship of Fools. It is not  
for glory alone that literature is made.

Soon the alluvial waterways of Dixie  
shall become a magnificent maze from afar,  
the lights of Lake D’Arbonne silhouetted to the East,  
one amber light blinking on, then off again.  
In the frigid regions of afterlife limestone springs  
will rush sievelike through secret channels.  
The underground press will simply close up shop.

In the evening, in the twilight, in  
the incessant chattering of blackbirds and the barking  
of startled dogs, the Known World’s demise  
silently slopes in among molting shortleaf pines  
and deserted hickory hollows. Old dilapidated mates  
from Zion, they drain their magnificent flutes of music,

they shoulder heavy iron crosses from Fairfield's mill  
and carry them to the grave.

It is a short season, sachet-scented,  
from out of Des Moines on sleepless nights.  
Far, far away, in a pristine porcelain kitchen,  
another seasick sister is buttering her bread,  
listening to Mozart, starting strong chicory coffee.  
From her ornate window a succession  
of fine lives unfold, a dramatic classical profile  
of the cutover woods of Farmerville,  
of transformation, of Lake Paradise brimming  
with drowning swimmers.

Romance, left in limbo, like Cuba,  
like diamond-dust floating above the cosmos.  
Here, in the great myth of revolution,  
it is gorgeous and dark, lush with excitement,  
obviously misrepresented to the masses, not a pretty  
face at all, just a muttering makeshift history where  
grey professional hookers have nothing to sell  
and a deranged blues singer from Memphis  
sings Blessed Assurance.

**Errol Miller**

## TOO MUCH

Everything matters too much  
to a human being. We  
were made that way, prone  
to excess, there's nothing  
we can do about it. Think  
how your early disappointments  
sent a bullet through some totally  
exposed layer of nerves. Your  
later ones too. A Christmas  
that turned to argument, bitterness  
like acrid smoke falling  
over the tinsel on the still tree—  
the taste of the spoiled day.  
Perfection drills a hole in us, too,  
and it's all around. The sensation  
of love. Walking beside  
someone you love, down wet pavements,  
swatches of the great, October leaves  
burning, sticking in your throat,  
making it almost impossible to breathe.  
It's the same with everything,  
we exaggerate. That's why  
we run through the streets, crying,  
gesticulating, doing crazy  
things, making it clear  
we can't take it, this spectacle  
of life and death, the sun  
bobbing up and down on unimaginable  
waters. The child appearing  
for a moment in an attic window.  
Cars shuffling by below—braying,  
knocking each other. A cortege  
of baffled animals, blind, wallowing  
in some terrible lament.

It would be too much for us,  
the world, except that something  
else is going on. In the cave,  
the mine, wherever it is inside,  
we keep working without stopping.  
Cutting away at rock, cutting deeper  
through black salt. Opening  
up a vein, dull gold  
at first, then brighter—widening  
into a miniature landscape  
where we see the whole picture  
at once. A figure,  
something like yours, laughing,  
talking, wild with delight—  
bent out of shape as usual,  
with ridiculous emotions,  
coming toward you from  
the middle of the landscape.  
Mouth open, telling an incredible  
story, moving toward you  
under the extravagant tree.

**Barbara Moore**

## Down to the Creek

In the summer when I was nine  
and no blazing yellow sun was hot enough to keep me in,  
I used to walk three blocks to where my street ran out,  
to where the fresh asphalt gave way to two dirt trails,  
twin tracks of wayward cars that cut across wild oats  
to the narrow band of green that flanked the narrow creek.  
I walked along the weedy hump between the trails  
so my footprints wouldn't show so clear.  
I sometimes startled quail bathing in the wheel-rut dust  
and made them scatter, scolding softly as they went,  
"Get out o! Get out o! Get out o!"  
I stopped and listened as they rustled  
through the dried up weeds onto their nests again.  
Then I wandered on, up and down the gentle hills,  
watching brown grasshoppers jump before me in the dust  
and watching distant oak trees grow as I approached.  
From the crest of the last hill before the creek,  
I saw my next-door neighbor's old blue Chevy  
nosed in beneath the biggest oak.  
It was the neighbor's son,  
a red-haired high school kid  
who worked the pumps at Texaco on weekends,  
who drove that old car mostly,  
and I wondered what he would be doing  
parked beside the creek.  
I hurried myself on down the trail.

When I got closer to the creek and the shade that gathered there,  
close enough to see the elderberry bushes  
lift their creamy flower clusters toward the sky,  
I saw the car was almost in the creek,  
wet shoes and socks leaking trails of water  
across the sloping trunk. I heard the squeaking  
of its springs and slowed my feet. I wondered why  
anyone would sit inside a stuffy car on a summer afternoon

even in the shade. The passenger door stood open  
for air I suppose, so I came along the driver's side and saw

a new Ripple bottle resting on the miner's lettuce.  
Through the open window I saw the neighbor boy's behind,  
naked white and freckleless, working up and down,  
the thin white muscles clenching and releasing,  
regular as frogs' voices rising from the creek.  
It was the brightest thing in the car  
and I watched it for awhile before I noticed the brown legs  
that rose on either side of it and reached  
the open window where dirty toes curled and gripped  
and winked pink polished nails at me.

I backed away  
quieter than I came,  
backing up the dirty trail  
until I reached the rising hill.  
Then I turned and ran back along the trail  
to where it reached the hot black street.  
From there, I walked home slow  
to let my breath catch up with me.

**Cecil Morris**



## VISION

She who looks in your eyes  
Sees more than her reflection  
Sees through the mirror  
To hear your inner words  
With the recurrent news  
Of your being here  
The mist and spray of forces  
That she senses as she goes along  
Finding herself through motion  
In the process of response  
Foam flowers upon wave crests  
A garden growing on wet sand  
Laving the skin  
Her skin opening to yours  
As you feel the ocean  
Within her welcome you

**Gary Pacernik**

## Forces of Nature

The force that moves the planets rips the mountains up,  
is large and slow, momentous. Quickened  
stone, molasses in a stirrup cup.  
If I were mountain ranges I would sink and swallow seas.  
Your touch:  
earth-shivering and over-much.

But humans are too small. They zip and quiver  
like the dance of sunlight on a mountain river.  
Light and frail, they bounce between  
the fingers of dark gravity.  
The core of light is in their eyes,  
their love metastasized,  
a cancerous growth of upward gradients, a force with wings;  
a DNA that masturbates and sings.

Susan Parman

## Sweets for the Dead

In New Mexico on the Day of All Saints  
the villagers packed their baskets and drove to the graves,  
spreading their cloths on the desert sand  
drifting between the tombstones, or beneath  
the sparse shade of the piñon tree;  
and took out red clay bowls of meat and beans,  
and aluminum pots with stew, and passed  
food to each other and the dead.  
And the children gathered nuts and threw  
them at the young men,  
who threw them at the women,  
who pretended not to notice. But when  
the shadows grew long and the wind blew  
cool through the aspen trees on higher ground,  
and the dust devils drifted around  
on the plains below,  
they packed their baskets and prepared to go.

It is the dead crying as their children leave  
(the wind in the high mountains sighing),  
and the long shadows flow  
over the gravestones like dark tears  
as the night comes down.  
The women's eyes linger on the men,  
remembering the touch of piñon—  
they step lightly through the shifting sand  
and their hearts sing.  
And the old women give a final brisk sweep  
to the stones, like housekeeping for  
a house of bones.  
Only the children linger,  
putting out stars with their fingers,  
reluctant to return to the thick walls  
of the known. Of all among the living  
they know the grief and longing

for things once tasted, now forbidden.

So they beg for time to feed the dead,  
these small ones just formed and not yet grown,  
full of spurts and vast hunger, just thrust from the womb  
into this booming candy store of a world—  
they know, who have just begun to feast,  
what loss the dead face who have tasted most,  
and learn that who tastes less loves least,  
and dies forever, absolute.

Into the vacuum of the quiet dead  
all love dies and memory is no more.  
The children fear not ghosts or hunger but their loss.  
So they share the candied skulls  
with the grey beetles gathering  
and drape white sticky skeletons  
across the dusty stones, and wonder why  
they feel a singing in their bones.

**Susan Parman**

## Sinfonia for Strings

After goodbye, tuning is everything: these strings home  
beneath my fingers—old friends, their sound, their feel.  
Touch them; they are music waiting to be played. Press fingers  
here, and here: it is this Sinfonia—Telemann—

that knits me together this morning, these crisp rhythms,  
these weaving notes I have followed so much of my life,  
my fingers gathering up edges without effort—crossing,  
pressing, climbing strings, changing pitch with motion.

*Kiss me a yes*, I hear in the space between sustained notes in the  
opening line, the line that erases itself and never repeats,  
and suddenly all is melody. Hands forget what they've known,  
move only in these notes, this asking of instrument,

this resonance drowning all others. Music lives in the body  
and this is what the heart knows: even in the deep,  
water hums, desire the siren's song like a thread, pulling.  
I would trade my soul for a braided rope, lash my back to the mast.

But no—here I am, no twine but the twining of melody,  
long and graceful as limbs singing through water:  
Telemann, prelude and postlude, holding my left hand  
on the strings, my right arm bowing for life, whole body

leaning, bobbing, knowing Telemann as never before,  
Telemann pressed into service, crisscrossed into safety:  
scaffold, net, raft, buoy. *Sinfonia. Sinfonia.* Play on:  
upbow, downbow, fingers on string—forever—getting it right.

**Laura Paul**

## EVENING NEWS

The beeping microwave prepares the meal.  
The agitated molecules of meat  
are tossed to a paper plate on a wicker tray.  
The paper towel beneath the stainless ware  
is folded *so*. It's time for the evening news.

In front of the big TV you stare and chew.  
The Africans, as usual, starve about.  
Then indigo-eyed, olive-skinned mothers  
mourn the babies wrapped in flour sacks,  
and husbands fire their weapons in the air  
to celebrate you're not exactly sure—  
what's America to do?

Commercial Break.

An amber spout of slow motion beer  
splashes into and up to the crystal lip  
of a frosty mug just like yours.  
You contemplate your sale brand,  
then beautiful cars, and sex, and life insurance,  
all in 60 seconds.

“Closer to home...”  
the violence hasn't waned as, black on black,  
a generation's suicide is met  
with wagons, gurnies, cams and speechless cops

(you cut your meat into smaller, manageable chunks).

And on a brighter note a little girl  
was rescued by the family's blind, three legged pooch

from the elemental dark and stormy night,  
and perhaps a life of drugs and prostitution—  
who knows? who knows?

The pixels dance and flicker.

“Coming up: tornadoes in the west ....”  
But it’s going to be a lovely day tomorrow  
and tomorrow and tomorrow, around here.

**Patric Pepper**

## THE BATSTO RIVER AT NIGHT

*After B. J. Ward*

On the bank of the Batsto River,  
close to the source, not far  
from where it riddled into streams,  
I dangled a line in dark cedar

to pull out perch as small as fists.  
They were too small,  
and they greased and pricked my palms  
as I unhooked them, dropping them

back to the river  
to shatter a bruise of moonlight.  
I crawled into my tent. One pole  
held its fabric to a tightened red dome,

and the moon diffused across its canvas.  
All night, I lay in the belly  
of that tent, full of the woods' insomnia  
and the memoried odor

of its insides: mildew, smoke,  
and the last three days  
spent living beside the Batsto.  
There was the cracking of leaves

and rivertalk, the popping logs  
in a fire gone down. The night  
would not be still for me,  
and I thought of the perch and the life

I left fifteen miles down river—  
how my wife slept with the air on,  
ready to wake without me  
to a world of appointments and money.

**Charles Rafferty**



## GREAT EGG HARBOR CREEK

At the edge of Great Egg Harbor Creek—  
deep in the pitch pines  
and pillary cedars where pricklers swirl  
the trunks of fallen trees—  
the ground is dangerous. At every step  
the methane boils through the umber mud,  
and the duckweed piled  
against every stump and rotten log  
in the sluggish current  
conceals the deep and shallow parts  
of a river that makes no noise.  
I was eight when I first walked there  
and the ground gave way,  
leaving me waist-deep  
in the mud of the mire  
and clutching a lucky bank.  
I pulled myself out—panting and amazed,  
my scrotum tight with the sudden chill—  
and took a stick twice my height  
and pushed it past all reach  
into the gassy muck. And there were stories  
that everyone knew  
of horses and their riders  
startled still in the breathless mud  
and the warnings of fathers  
to keep clear of riverbanks after a rain  
when the ground is as soft as a girl.  
With my thighs goosepimpled,  
trembling, and weak  
and half my body brown with the proof  
of unconsidered steps,  
I picked my way through the blueberry shrubs

toward a solid path of sand  
that led to my town,  
that led to my street,  
that led to my house  
that stood like a piece of bedrock—  
the roof alive in the dinnertime light  
with a murder of squawking crows.

**Charles Rafferty**

## Colleagues

Right after you thank me  
for being so good,  
the wind pulls my dress  
up. This is how  
we inveterates laugh.  
I've learned how to knot  
the lines of your arms,  
and hold you for a second.  
But when you break my grip,  
you keep me with that look.  
It's always the same:  
I smile as you safely  
zip up your standards,  
you smile at your loot.

**Elizabeth Rees**

## **“Something Borrowed, Something Blue”**

No more sentimentality  
about the ridges of his ribs  
or his t-shirts with moons  
of sweat. Once she wished  
they'd be filmed as they slept  
in the questions of their bed.  
Now she doesn't forget  
to breathe and eat.  
She gets the shape his body makes.  
They don't discuss dogs  
or what names they love.  
They seem to barely notice  
the noose of umbilical rope  
hanging from their hands.

**Elizabeth Rees**

## SUN ON THE BOTTOM

In kindergarten he barked like a dog.  
He's disturbed, the teacher said.  
Oh, there's worse, my neighbor said,  
I've got one who thinks he's a snake  
and he crawls up my dress.

In first grade he brought home paintings  
black paintings  
with the sun on the bottom  
and the tree upside down at the top.  
He's disturbed, the teacher said.  
Oh, my neighbor said, maybe  
there wasn't any yellow paint left  
and maybe it's upside down.

At college, he flunked everything.  
He's disturbed, a professor said.  
Oh, my neighbor said, he's  
just like the rest of us—

he's going to flounder around  
and then he'll find a job  
and then he'll work  
for the rest of his life  
and then he'll die.

You'll see, my neighbor said,  
he'll be just fine.

**Sharon Rigg**

## A MAN ON THE ROAD

A simple man walked along a road—  
No, it wasn't The Road of Life.  
It was just a road.  
And along the way, he passed another man,  
a grey man—

No, it wasn't The Dark Side  
of Himself.  
It was just a grey man  
who said, "What took you so long?"

The simple man answered,  
"Art kept me back."  
No, he didn't mean Truth-Beauty-Art.  
He meant his brother Art.

The grey man said,  
"What did Art want?"

The simple man looked puzzled.  
"I don't know," he said.  
"I can never understand Art."  
He meant his brother Art.  
"He's always hiding something.  
Today he said, *I'll be whatever you want me to be.*"

The grey man took ahold of  
the simple man's arm  
and said,  
"Ain't that the beauty of it?  
Ain't that the truth?"  
He didn't mean anything Profound.

The simple man pried loose the  
grey man's grey fingers  
and looked in the grey man's grey eyes.  
He was so close he could see his own reflection.

“You know what you are?”

the simple man said

to the grey man.

“You’re a tree in my path.

You’re a rock in my stream.”

It may be safe to say that now  
he was speaking metaphorically.

The grey man smiled.

“No, I’m not. I’m a light on your road.”

And he, too, was speaking  
metaphorically.

And just then, the grey man glowed.

He was surrounded by a blue-white light.

It was probably the sun  
streaking through the trees.

The simple man looked up ahead.

He looked back the way he had come.

“I’m going to get Art,” he said.

He meant his brother Art.

“You’re lost without him?” said the grey man.

The simple man did not answer.

Instead, he turned around

and went home, where he found Art—

his brother Art—

sitting on the roof looking at the sky.

The simple man felt as if

he had been on an important journey—

but of course he hadn’t.

He’d just been down the road

and he hadn’t been gone long,

but nothing was ever going

to be the same

because of the road  
and the grey man  
and his own brother  
Art.

**Sharon Rigg**



## **The Ugliest Flower In The World**

I slept on my arm,  
leaving the red imprint  
of my own ear on the bicep,  
as if an arm could hear things,  
or listen, a flower so ugly  
it hurt. My arm was crippled  
with the news surging inside it,  
or was it only rumor? I wanted  
to kiss that ear,  
to whisper some sweet nothing.

**Timothy Russell**

## **A Song of the Colony**

We dance by the light of home, blue home,  
while moon trout leap in a fish-farm stream.  
Nothing to fear here under the dome.

Our hydroponics need no loam,  
moon rabbits in their hutches gleam.  
We dance by the light of home, blue home,

moon roosters shake their silver combs,  
moon piglets line up, pink and clean.  
Nothing to fear here under the dome,

except an ooze of air and foam.  
Repairmen float in silver teams.  
We dance by the light of home, blue home,

while wakened priests intone their oms  
and leaks are sealed with laser beams.  
Nothing to fear here under the dome.

Sleep in your cylinders till you're grown,  
Little Ones, coin of silver dreams.  
You'll dance by the light of home, blue home.  
Nothing to fear here under the dome.

**Dolores Stewart**

## **SISYPHUS ROLLS HIS BALL UP MOBIUS HILL**

Sisyphus rolls his ball up Mobius hill,  
the Physics doctors chuckle up their sleeves;  
he thinks the incline flatter than his will,  
the doctors do care what he believes.

The ball itself is dense as Hawking's star;  
it curves all space around it as it rolls  
and leaves no distance between "near" and "far"  
yet leaves him no whit closer to his goal.

The up-rolled ball rolls with a backward spin,  
around the rim of the horizon ring  
and funnels down to where the star caves in  
to form the Hole that centers everything.

The Physics doctors laugh to see him strain,  
against the downward pull he cannot beat,  
they do not factor in his pain  
they cannot see that even in defeat

his act of faith within the black hole's night  
reverses Physics by an act of will,  
and at the black hole's center burning bright  
insists there is a white hole burning still.

**William John Watkins**

## NOW IS THE TIME TO LOVE QUIRKS

Now is the time to love quirks,  
when they have settled out  
of the infatuation of fresh love  
that made them cute,  
or middle love,  
that made them grounds for homicide,  
and I will love your throwing things out  
as if we must turn refugee at midnight  
with only what we can carry,  
if you will love my accumulating  
ten year old magazines  
for when I get a chance to read them,  
and I will love  
your reshaping the house room by room  
like a Pharaoh working on his tomb,  
if you will love  
my playing badminton and videogames  
when there is work to be done,  
I will even love  
your long range plans  
for my adulthood,  
if you will love  
my strategems to avoid it.  
I will love your secret savings accounts,  
your balanced checkbook,  
your coupons and bargains,  
if you will love  
my avoidance of errands,  
my annoyance with chores,  
my sulks and my silences.  
I will even love that you eat things  
that are not part of the food chain,  
if you will love  
that cookies follow me home from the store  
even when you are *not* dieting,

and since now is the time to love quirks  
now in the balance of time  
when they have worn  
comfortable as old shoes,  
I will love your being right  
even when you're not,  
if you will love my being wrong  
even when I am.  
and I will love your sanity,  
if you will love my madness.

**William John Watkins**

## UNRAVELLING

I want to unravel my life like a sweater  
that doesn't fit, unravelling the extra arm  
in the middle of the back, the giraffe-  
neck, the pinched ant-abdomen.

What was I thinking of? Nothing, actually.  
I was "going with the flow," as gurus say,  
knitting where the spirit moved me, clicking  
in the dark. I want to unravel it all and make

something fit for a king, not this monstrosity  
lumping in my chair. I'll start at the sleeve,  
waving myself goodbye as I follow the yarn  
back past a thousand "No"'s, jobs I didn't

get, women who had other plans, past the day  
my rock band, Dead Guppies, broke up,  
past Mrs. Russell's sixth grade class election,  
and losing my first bass when my first

fishing rod snapped at Lake Houston, past  
*Uncle Wiggly* games with Joyce next door,  
who went to the hospital with a "heart  
condition," and never came home. I'll follow

the yarn past my birth, past drifting in the womb's  
warm sea, back to the time when half of me  
was sliding down my mother's dark fallopian  
tube, the other half thrashing like a tired

salmon upstream, matter and anti-matter  
rushing to collide in the Big Bang which created  
the wooly strands biologists call "genes,"  
which I pulled on as I began to knit my life.

Charles Webb

## FOG

bends to earth this morning gently as a mother  
who can't bear to wake her newborn,  
or to let him sleep without a kiss.

Droplets of mist dance in the air like droplets  
of my mother's bath cologne, that flowery  
scent that followed her the way the Yorkshire

terrier follows old Mrs. Pospisil (Miz Popsicle,  
kids call her) as, each morning, she wobbles  
on puffed ankles past my door. Her husband's

been dead twenty years. When we speak,  
I feel her drift—drifting, each day, closer to him,  
the way fog drifts across L.A., memories rising

in her the way mist rises from this land  
where at the instant an 18-wheeler plunges  
off a bridge, a seagull leaps into the air,

a stabbed man screams, lovers cry out,  
the last giraffe sinks to its knees, a crab  
miscalculates and lets a baby turtle flick

into a wave, a quake flattens Armenia,  
a girl dances in the shower, singing  
"Jim-mee likes me," a boy riding his bike

to school for the first time, doesn't see  
his mother on the porch, love, pride, and terror  
misting her face as she watches, wanting

to follow like a terrier, but only waving,  
gently kissing the air as he pumps off  
into memories rising in her the way the sun

rises, peeling off the tissue-paper fog  
as Ella Boulevard unrolls in front of him:  
just what he wanted (though he won't know it

for years), the concrete shiny as his bike,  
new yesterday, the road wide open, gleaming  
like the greatest birthday present in the world.

**Charles Webb**



## THESE MINUTES

These minutes  
it never dawns on us  
that while something was happening here  
or not happening here  
and we were asleep  
something momentous was happening there  
and the two were not related —  
two realities (billions, in fact)  
and we're convinced that there  
was only one —  
which in fact there is  
but it was nevertheless happening —  
the duck was swimming in the cold waters  
and turning his bottom up  
like an apple bobbing  
and the little sparkles of water  
were flying off like stars —  
all this on your time  
and very much more,  
in every block, in every house  
empty or not  
there was this emptiness happening,  
emptiness without a heart.  
That is the nature of reality,  
a shape and a shove,  
all of it happening at once,  
and no one to say which was reality,  
when none of it was.  
This is just to hint that it  
never happened — and, of course,  
it never did. And what is to happen  
comes closer every day — so very long —  
and fate will have it  
that it will happen  
when it ceases to matter.

Everything is the culmination  
of everything. Finality cannot  
be a finality and a cause too,  
so everything will come to a halt  
tomorrow or the next day —  
the culmination of everything  
that can't go on.

**Robert Lewis Weeks**

## Calligraphy

I wanted nothing more  
than to make the clouds stop,  
then move  
by wiggling my ears,  
to turn ugly people's lives  
into something permanent and beautiful,  
with my pointed finger  
drawing them anew,  
but the stern girl who gave me the test for aptitude  
said I should be  
a minister or a coach,  
and not wanting to be either  
I became both,  
all week practicing,  
and then emerging from the little house of my pulpit  
happier than my congregation could ever know,  
as once more they sat scowling  
and I tumbled down the aisle  
doing cart wheels, trailing loops  
of fire, smoke, telling jokes,  
and out the door, my brief sermon,  
a Roman candle of myself.

**Peter Wild**

## **As If It Were**

It is difficult to believe in  
disaster or sadness  
when I sit on the back stairs  
drinking in golden light  
while you prune the plum trees.  
Everything is blue and green with  
traces of white like lazy foam  
near the top of the firs.  
A hummingbird makes a  
quick, zig-zag path  
across the pasture as if to  
confirm the sound we've been hearing.  
Across the road the horses graze slow,  
made lazy by the heat.  
Even my pen is warm to the touch,  
as if it were a living thing—  
I half-expect it to  
squirm out of my hand  
and head for coolness.  
Everything is surface physical,  
the light too dazzling  
for somber thoughts.  
Too much sunlight melts me  
down to my animal level.  
Like a sun drunk mouse  
I seek the shade of  
any towering object.

**Frieda K. Wiram**

## A\* Wonderland Party

I was the white rabbit,  
And she was Alice, I'd say.

We took our two mad hatters  
To a restaurant dinner,  
Valentine's Day.

Fragments, phrases . . . her husband  
Made no more sense than mine.  
I listened to him—  
A new nonsense,  
In no way taxing.

And she listened to mine.  
How curiously relaxing!  
Let's have some wine!

We made up their minds and ordered.  
My husband showed the waiter his tie  
With tennis racket print three times.

We spread their bread,  
And cut their meat,  
And sugared their tea,  
Then paused to eat.  
Camaraderie!

She and I,  
With one great thing in common,  
Talked of everything else.

We learned about one another,

And each other's  
Husbands . . . then, and when.

Needs diminished . . .  
We nearly finished  
A carafe!  
How good to laugh!

We'll do it again!

**Jean Wood**

\*Alzheimer's

## 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**

*N.B. This poem was first published in HPR 51/52. Because of a typographical error, we reprint it here. Eds.*

## ADVICE FOR TENDING THE EGO

In large crowds  
carry it on your sleeve,  
and sometimes on your shoulder.  
Let it be an ornament  
to disguise  
the walls inside you.

In smaller groups  
let it crawl up in your lap,  
scratch its ears  
from time to time;  
tell everyone it's just a puppy.

The thing gets neon  
at meals,  
and sometimes during sex.  
Make it eat with just one hand,  
insist it only speak  
of Keats and Shelley.

When most surely alone,  
keep the thing zipped up tight  
until it learns to worry  
on its own.  
Insist it be polite.  
Tell it to watch your dreams  
carefully. They know the way.

**Fredrick Zydek**



**A SELECTION  
OF RECENT POETRY  
BY HPR EDITORS**

About every four years we include a selection of recent poems by our *HPR* editors—to keep our readership abreast of what we ourselves are doing.



## **ANYTHING YOU DECIDE CHANGES YOUR LIFE**

The man with the blue eyes  
and the white dog  
walks through the green woods.  
Bird song is everywhere.  
He has a certain power;  
all the singers  
having given him their names.

If you walk with him quietly  
and stop to listen when he does,  
you will surely understand more  
than before you entered the woods:  
the high wild cry of the red-shouldered hawk,  
the ornate trill of the tiny wren  
have something to do with you.

In his blue eyes,  
the heron sees itself as it is.  
Pay attention to such similarities;  
all oneness is important.

The white dog walks sedately ahead of him;  
the woods are more green because of its presence.  
The sky is less blue than the eyes of the man.  
He walks with a staff cut for him by beavers;  
he does not stumble.

Ask yourself what is to be gained

by going into the woods with such a man—  
whether you can use the song of birds  
in your life just now;  
whether you have silences that such music can fill;  
whether you think the universe itself can sing  
in such fragile voices.

**Grace Butcher**

## COMPOSITION: *vox*

a human voice—  
distance flutters,  
columns of warm air  
the clouds thudding against each other

here the valley is acute, a cut into perfect rock

a human voice hangs like a wisp of spider web  
from the apex of blue sky

where there is no longing  
where there is only foliage or unbroken terrain  
where there is mere vista  
nothing happens

the days gather in a whorl  
above the miraculous drain  
they circle like glittering buzzards

drawn by a strange sound:  
a human voice  
arranges its faint aroma

seductive as a dark pool among  
severe grasses in an arid park

where there is no wishing  
where there is only age piled upon age  
like fragments of slate flags in the stonemason's  
yard the future stumbles upon a voluptuous cache  
of nothingness

and is perfectly dismayed

a human voice

disarranges chaos: moves like a hayrake  
through scattering stars

its tines jingle and screech  
across brittle faces of light or dark

else the flow of days were simple concatenations  
of random tiles, else history  
were a shower of dead sparks

spattering  
a page of snow

**Hale Chatfield**

## **THE FILM**

Late in autumn it first occurs to him:  
sunlight pouring off the lake and past  
tassled curtains that drape the study windows  
creates now a continuous film, a single frame  
of light wavering across the wall and up  
onto the ceiling, like a projector running empty

after a double matinee, a few lost souls  
with nothing better to do than see a movie  
hanging on for just a minute longer,  
until, embarrassed by the screen's white blaze,  
they decide to leave, exiting one by one  
into the city, its traffic, its ghostly light.

**Peter Filkins**

## **The Girl Dressed in Blue Feathers**

The young girl stands alone on the island.  
The island is shaped like an altar  
In the middle of the still, blue lake.  
A thin dust rises through the yellow light.  
Tears run down her delicate face.  
She awaits the rains and the rising waters.

“I will go away forever  
To the Place of Dark Mysteries.  
No more will I see my mother;  
No more will I see my father.  
I will have no husband or children.  
My only lover is Sadness:  
My only offspring, ears of corn.  
Think of me when you harvest the grain.”

Her cape of blue feathers stirs in the breeze:  
The long spring rain begins at last.

**David Fratus**



## The Newcomers

Coming south, walking slowly,  
raising a thin plume of reddish dust,  
they brought their animals,  
a few sharp tools,  
seeds of squash and maize,  
singing birds in bamboo cages,  
green parrots and pet monkeys,  
smooth anaconda skins around their necks,  
quartz crystals in their pouches,  
fans of fringed owl feathers  
that moved the humid air  
without any sound or scent.

They also brought ink, red and black,  
made from bark and crushed ants,  
scraped goat skins for paper,  
thick manuscripts, reeking of  
formic acid and raw hides,  
books of hymns,  
books of maps,  
books as houses of pictures,  
and of course they brought their wooden flutes,  
their little drums, and their masks of cochineal.

They also brought their language,  
both guttural and soft,  
their way of looking at the sun and moon,  
their method of counting the stars.  
They also brought their cries  
of anguish, anger, and love—  
these, only these, were the same as ours.

**David Fratus**

## **Nighthawks, Blasted from Their Customary Air**

I have known them since my tiger days  
fluttering between the rooftops and the gods.  
Always their dusk voices cheering me toward  
the hunt and victory, always their dawn voices  
lullaying some momentary wisdom home,  
indistinguishable at last from the buzz of hormones,  
soaring, unfulfilled.

Blessed spirits, I have thought, sailing patient  
above helter-skelter streets, ever by their  
airy witness making those who'd die  
of love or fury seem like children led too far.  
Keats' nightingale sang to sad Ruth.  
These to the whores and cops and vagrants  
with such wounding beauty come to warble  
*It is night. Go hungry and alone.*

Nighthawks, blasted from their customary air  
by Independence Day fireworks,  
circle Pack Square—crying, I suppose,  
though unheard  
amid the ooo's and aah's of the beholding throng.  
Friends notice how my gaze is not always where the burst is.  
Out of old fellowship I watch  
some dozen fly before the fire.  
I promise them I will not hurry home.  
I promise to put sanctity aside.  
I promise them afterward such a night  
as we have known together, silent but for themselves,  
my tigerish paw upon the street  
in such wild delight  
no word can pass between us  
but that "sleep well" before the sighing light.

**David Hopes**

## Lobster

I jam it into rolling water,  
hold the lid until the scratching stops,

then  
lift it out,  
coral red, steamy  
iodine smell of ocean,  
stiff held breath,  
and the stalk eyes watching.

I run across wide sand, dive  
deep in the cold and dark  
where the gray flounder shivers  
herself under mud  
and a moon jelly jets away,  
trailing lace.

My lungs inhale green silence,  
fill with watery light.  
And far below,  
the burning sun.

**William D. Hoskin**

## **At East Sandwich Beach in September**

With sudden roar-surround  
a sleek jet fighter carves vectored sky  
sweeps,  
lances to the horizon.

At our salt-wet feet  
a periwinkle  
slowly sculpts its trail in sand.

**William D. Hoskin**

## **“Little Venice,” Mykonos**

He flips his bait into the whitecapped sea:  
Long pole, line, bobber and a tiny hook—  
The old man casts for fishes in the waves,  
The sea that splashes restaurants and shops.

Long pole, line, bobber and a tiny hook,  
He nabs a fish with every other cast,  
As waves splash on the restaurants and shops.  
At the taverna we are having lunch.

He nabs a fish with every other cast;  
The fish are small, they must be for a soup.  
Out in the sunshine, we are having lunch.  
Our waiter’s bored; he’s looking out to sea.

The fish must be for soup, we tell ourselves:  
We’re fascinated by this ritual.  
Our waiter’s bored; he’s looking out to sea.  
Off shore, a cruise ship hoots and belches smoke.

We’re fascinated by this ritual.  
We hood our eyes in bright October sun.  
Off shore, a cruise ship belches smoke, and hoots.  
Meltemi whips the ocean to a froth.

We hood our eyes in bright October sun.  
The old man casts for fishes in the waves.  
Meltemi whips the ocean to a froth—  
He flips his bait into the swarming sea.

**James D. McGowan**

## **In Maine**

You sauté the onion for curry—  
behind the cabin a scarlet sunset  
floods the hushed bustle of traffic;  
To the east, the light is gone  
from granite, black rockweed  
past the aspens  
where the cover of nightshade  
slopes to the sea.

Surf has been slashing all day  
but the storm is over.

And now in the evening's loveliness  
you are making our meal—  
the rasp of the grater on orange-rind  
sweet sticky chutney  
pungent powder of ochre—  
here among spruces, hemlock and pine.

**James D. McGowan**

## **Introduction: How to Get your Wings**

It was the time that I fell in the pond  
    when my head got all damp  
    and my shorts too waterlogged.  
My memories floated to the center  
    by the log and sank into the sludge.  
I was found clinging to a rock  
    and rescued by the oid minister.  
He was a rather interesting man  
    who preached to a water pump  
    and tried to get confessions from his cat.  
After he nursed me back to health,  
    with all of his soup and tea,  
    we became friends.  
He tried to get me out of my bastard ways.  
We would talk for hours about  
    the resurrection.  
He would become quite frustrated with me  
    as i told him that jesus didn't die for my sins  
    he died for his own.  
He would get quite upset.  
I smirked to myself as he grimaced  
    when i said things like that.  
Anyway he must have seen the good in me—  
    the pure archaic rhythms of my smile.  
He knew that i was a good person—  
    worth being saved from his concept of damnation.  
I found it rather amusing  
    that he had taken the cross of my soul upon himself.

**Jamie O. Morehead**

**My father flew**  
Beyond our view  
On home-made wings,  
And dreamed of things  
Projectors think of,  
Never home-love,  
Nothing tame.

Yet all the same, I'm told,  
He was a gentle soul,  
Empty of envy and inward rage  
At the ugly world  
He sailed above.  
Father, each evening serene, hovered past us and  
Docked himself safe in his study.

He emerged to try his wings.  
O Icarus, how your unborn children wept when you fell.  
Snow melts like wax on summer slopes;  
The Tetons are treacherous, we told him  
we told him.

We never saw him come home,  
but I still see me  
Trying my fledgling wings  
That July, my four-year old legs,  
Flying past everyone toward my father pulling out of  
the driveway:  
"Tell me! Tell me!"

But he did not stop  
Until from the sunlit mountain he fell  
Without stopping  
to tell us goodbye.

**Ellen Summers**



## **Storm Front: February 1991**

The war in my living room  
is nothing like  
the war outside my door.  
One is charts and fireworks  
and video games played  
by young men made handsome  
and clean and white-toothed  
by the finest vitamins, red meat,  
fluoride, and mythology  
America can provide.  
But the other is a secluded war  
fought inside the hearts  
that stand on sidewalks  
and pause in doorways  
and clutch their children's hands  
and wonder, always wonder,  
under the flapping flags  
and yellow strips of ribbon,  
Why we love this game.

**Gael Sweeney**

## **The Night I Decided**

not to dream about you anymore  
I didn't.  
But the next night you entered  
as a wolf quietly walking  
through the walls of my childhood  
home, steadily making your way  
up the stairs  
passing through other places  
I have lived.

In my attic you assumed  
your human form  
holding a guitar and looking  
at the distant sea.

I heard the song begin.  
No use to bar the door.

**Patti Tana**

## Reviews and so Forth

Jerry Bradley, *Simple Versions of Disaster*. University of North Texas Press, 1991. 134 pp. No price given.

The disaster on the one-dimensional page always seems simpler than it really was. Jerry Bradley makes us give that kind of half-laugh, half-snort of recognition at those lurches and losses in our daily lives that leave us at once devastated and amazed, almost amused at what we have wrought.

His tone is often ominous: the sex-obsessed high school kids dragged into the “charged auditorium” for a lecture on (ironically!) fire prevention “Where they sit like overloaded circuits ready to spark” (“Fire Prevention Week”); always intense: “Too bright in school, we misread the glare / in the slow, glacial sadness of love” (“Lost in Divorce”). But there are gentle surprises, “. . . and from the east / a single hand / broadcasts light” (dawn on the prairie from “Ne Plus Ultra”), and really off-the-wall humor: “A single leaf falls, / then a married one” (“Tree History”); “Save Blue Whales— / Win Valuable Prizes!” (“Graffitists”); “‘Having a wonderful time,’ / he wrote. / ‘Wish you were her.’” (No, that’s not a typo in “first Marriage.”)

An added reward for reading, and especially re-reading, is the gradual awareness of Bradley’s mastery of craft in addition to the endless surprises of content. He is adept with rhyme of perhaps the best sort: so unobtrusive that it doesn’t jangle the consciousness. Sonnets “Under the Double Helix” and “A Love Sonnet for the Impressionists” and the heavily rhymed “The Penultimate Mohican” and “First Shot” slide smoothly into our mind’s ear, first pulling us in through their subject matter, then delighting us with the sound patterns that the eye didn’t notice.

Very little is OK in Bradley’s disaster-permeated world. Even the family photo album in “Cursing the Photos” is not the usual source of pleasure and nostalgia. Instead it opens “like a wound / nasty and spineless . . . . Our pasts are full of imposters.” Disaster is inherent in relationships where “sex can mislead like an easy river . . . but ahead even the unseaworthy / can hear the falls” (“Without a Paddle”).

His focus can take us from the whole continent, especially the southwestern United States, to its tiniest parts, from “The Mass Grave of the Allosaurs,” to “A Personal History of Atoms” in a world where love

rarely works or always has something wrong with it and “Life is the lie we tell ourselves” (“Bon Voyage”).

But in viewing a painting by Cezanne, he says of the women bathing (and by implication to the woman in his thoughts), “So I think of you as a boatman would / . . . I would wrap myself in water before you, bright body, / that its luster might fill this gentle craft with light” (“The Bathers”).

Along with the irony and sorrow in Bradley’s view of the universe, we find beauty and humor, but they are ephemeral, always darkened by his awareness that we are a split second, a fraction of an inch away from disaster at any moment. We can only hope to be blessed with “simple versions” of life’s calamities or with Bradley’s skill in turning them into something “unexplainable, mysterious / inscrutable as chocolate” (“Chocolate”).

### Grace Butcher

Michael J. Gill, *The Atheist at Prayer*. Greensboro, NC: March Street Press, 1991. 24 pp. \$6.00.

Owen Hernan, *A View from the Weeds*. Hiram, OH: North Star Press, 1993. 36 pp. \$6.00.

Nature’s vitality and endurance are in part effects of overproduction: so many millions of spermatozoa for one baby; so many millions of little milkweed parachutes—or tent caterpillars, or minnows, or honey bees. These days it feels as if we see almost as many little chapbooks as we saw poems (and we felt buried in them) in 1966, when we were starting out with HPR. Most are competent, and most are soon forgotten. Yet every once in a while one of these little booklets seems very powerful and very special, and we can imagine some of its poems somehow finding their way into the handfuls of poetry which posterity will cherish and marvel at. Gill’s and Hernan’s little books affect me that way.

Indeed, each of these books derives its power partly from an articulation of a faith that human tenderness and love can survive their own shakiness. Each presents itself as a lamentation, a darkness—which however is frequently dispelled by the sparks of hope and joy it strikes from its own words and images. Stories, we are told, derive their power from conflict. Good poems also derive power from conflict, and in these books the

conflict is primordial: the narrow human terrain between ecstasy and despair. The poems hurt us, and this makes us happy and well.

Michael Gill, of course, has captured this idea in his title itself: the “atheist” is nonetheless “at prayer,” a prayer in which he expresses to God what is obviously a refusal to disbelieve. It is a definitively human perversity, which we instantly recognize and assent to. In “The Lovers’ Calendar,” we encounter a metaphor which is perhaps directly responsible for the kinds of thoughts with which this review has begun:

Seven hundred-thousand monarchs  
cover a butterfly tree in March.  
All fan their wings, and then  
Spring hits hard for five seconds  
so every god-damned blossom on earth  
bursts into leaf and flourishes.

The atheist, it seems, is given to hymns of celebration. Some of them are carnal, as in “Morning at My Desk”:

When I was twelve, my  
father taught me to shave. He said,  
“Oil and steam whet skin for the blade.  
Draw it clean across your face, see,  
get rid of that peach fuzz. The girls  
will go crazy.”

. . . .

Shaving was sexy as  
a zipper pulled slowly up a woman’s spine.  
I watched my father, his left hand  
holding my mother’s dress to the small of her  
back, his right hand slowly tracing her curve.  
Tonight my left hand will pull skin tight  
around my jaw and lay whiskers out straight,  
easy for the blade. My right hand will  
slide your zipper up and down . . . .

Others sing directly our human vitality, even of the human voice itself:

You know you could shout  
and not be heard.

Your voice would go out  
like an arrow in the dark,  
shot with no target  
and nothing in its path.

“Going to Sleep Alone in an Empty Little Town”

Or in the title poem:

Though earth made man  
and man made word  
and word made God,  
our children sing.

Well, the flesh and the song *do* matter, and that’s the point; they also seem to matter *enough*, as the poet announces so clearly in “Credo”—or in “Sisyphus, Startled,” an especially fine poem about Sisyphus day-dreaming at his stupid task:

He flips through want  
ads and finds a mail-order shop selling  
plans for instruments any fool with a few  
tools can build at home—cellos, violins,  
guitars, violas—and he decides to build  
a cello.

How ridiculous, Sisyphus reading  
classified ads while pushing his rock,  
grunting and deciding he might have time,  
it might be fun, and he might be able to  
build and play a cello.

How can we be successfully doomed or damned when we have ideas like that? “We can’t,” you say. Michael Gill says, “I’m afraid you’re right.”

Owen Hernan’s book is more relentlessly painful, for the “view from the weeds” is clearly the perspective of pain and loss. The ageless, sad, interminable myth of alcoholism and combativeness and being Irish is told again in these pages, into which Hernan’s finely honed little epigrammatic poems seem to have been etched with acid or engraved with razor blades:

At O'Connor's  
where the words  
were slow and impossible  
we found our faith  
and drank our melodies.

    We had followed our father's there  
and we wore their griefs  
like carnations  
and never knew  
we were grieving.

    "O'Connor's"

But Hernan's alcoholic narrator is nonetheless a man of faith, and in "The Monk" that idea is explicit:

I chop wood  
and drink from a well.  
Perhaps  
I chose silence  
because I lisp  
or perhaps  
under this hood  
I am like a turtle  
who hides his head  
to dream  
of butterflies.

Though he uses some images that are like Gill's, Hernan's speaker is wearier; his recognition of carnal joy and carnal health is more retrospective, a memory more than a present reality, certainly:

I listen to my nerves tick:  
all the night  
my thoughts bite my heart  
and I write of love  
and death  
and pray incredible prayers  
of innocence.

    At dawn  
the cat comes in

from a good fuck  
or a quick murder  
and celebrates with sleep.  
“The Animals”

Still, it would be a mistake to miss the point that the central figure does indeed “pray incredible prayers / of innocence.” Is there hope in these pages, is there a “faith”? I think so, though the point of this review is not to find a bright side. But see, for example, “To the Man I Call ‘Bear’”:

But our laughter  
was more razor than melody.  
“For Christ’s sake,” we said,  
“somewhere there are gentle things.”

An essential difference between the two books may be that for Gill the “gentle things” are nearer-by than they are for Hernan. One could attribute such a difference to the poets’ respective ages—which were thirty years apart as the poems were written. But that seems simplistic. And it avoids an essential similarity between two fine chapbooks which derive humble greatness from the tension between sorrow over life’s apparent meaninglessness and the unconquerable joy of building and playing cellos.

### Hale Chatfield

*Life on the Line: Selections on Words and Healing*, edited by Sue B. Walker and Rosaly D. Roffman, Mobile, AL: Negative Capability Press, 1992. 647 pages. No price given.

As Karl Shapiro writes in his forward to this huge anthology, “poetry has restorative or healing properties. . . . Poetry is not only therapy; it is a vehicle of prayer” and brings about a change in the conditions. The poems and prose pieces assembled in *Life on the Line* draw on the relationships between words and healing—the words enabling both the writer and the tuned in reader to face that line which separates the known from the unknown, life from death. When this effort succeeds, the poet transforms that confrontation “on the line” into a work of art, which, in its own



integrity and unity, makes a beautiful wholeness out of the broken and the wrong.

Or, sometimes, as contributor Jeanne Atkins says in “These Notes,” the poet writes “as a way of looking for an answer” to such unsettling questions as “How do we keep living . . . when things happen that make our hearts retreat?” This anthology is full of such searches as well as some answers found in healing words. The selections do weigh heavily on the heart and are hard to take in big doses. Still, the overall impact is one of truth telling—the recognition of the validity and appropriateness of what is said and the appreciation of the artistry of how it is said. The editors deserve much credit in not including the easily found verse of sentimentality and complaint. What they have included in this collection, whether it be the work of well-known poets or of newer voices, all has artistic merit.

The anthology is divided into eight chapters, each with its guiding theme, such as “Abuse,” “Death and Dying,” and “Relationships.” Jack Coulehan has several wonderful poems in different chapters. His “Deep Images,” written in memory of a young man with AIDS, conveys the empathy the physician-friend feels for his patient:

Your eyes the deep images of tulips  
at the end of the season  
their yellow tongues droop, their tasty organs  
bend in the sun.

Coulehan’s poem “Anesthesia,” given in the voice of the anesthetized patient, is an extraordinary plea coming from the semi-conscious dream state:

Nothing can replace the emptiness that’s left  
after they open my body up  
and dry my soul, and replace it with gravel.  
Now nothing but love can fill me . . .  
Tell them to stop.  
Tell them to stop the anesthesia.  
Doctor, tell them, tell them to love me.

One of my favorite poems from this work opens the “Rituals and Remedies” chapter. Native American author Joseph Bruchac, in “The Remedies,” expresses an overarching theme of the whole collection.

Half on earth, half in the heart,  
the remedies for all the things  
which grieve us wait for those who know  
the words to use to find them.

Penobscot people used to make  
a medicine for cancer from Mayapple  
and South American people knew  
the quinine cure for malaria  
a thousand years ago.

But it is not just in the roots,  
the stems, the leaves,  
the thousand flowers  
that healing lies.  
Half of it lives within the words

the healer speaks.

And when the final time has come  
for one to leave this Earth  
there are no cures,  
for Death is only  
part of Life, not a disease.  
Half on Earth, half in the heart,  
the remedies for all our pains  
wait for the songs of healing.

That represents the quality and the value of most works in this collection. Everyone acquainted with illness and loss will find healing words in this anthology. Give it to your doctor for the benefit of those in the waiting room; give it to your ailing or grieving friends; give it to yourself.

**Carol Donley**

## CONTRIBUTORS

With a 1991 book, *Learning to Dance*, **WILLIAM AARNES** has poems forthcoming in *POET & CRITIC*, *PHASE AND CYCLE*, and the *KANSAS QUARTERLY*.

**RICHARD ALDRIDGE** has recently had poems in *BELLOWING ARK*, *BLUE UNICORN*, *CAPE ROCK*, *THE FORMALIST*, *POETS ON*, and *SLANT*. This past spring North Country Press published his anthology *Speaking of New England*—a collection of over fifty New England poets, past and present.

**MICHAEL ATKINSON** has a recent fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts. He works as a film critic in New York—for *NEW YORK PRESS*, *MOVIELINE*, *FILM COMMENT*, and *CITY PAPER*. His poetry appears widely in the journals.

**EDMUND AUGUST** teaches creative writing at Kentucky State Reformatory and is seeking a publisher for his first poetry book, *On the New Road to Hazard*. His poetry has appeared in *BIRMINGHAM POETRY REVIEW*, *THE CREAM CITY REVIEW*, *WIND*, and elsewhere.

A philosophy professor at Tufts, **JODY AZZOUNI** was editor-in-chief of *THE VOYEUR* from 1974-77, has had stories and poems in *CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY*, *ALASKA QUARTERLY REVIEW*, *AMELIA*, and *THE HOLLINS CRITIC*—and has forthcoming a Cambridge University Press book on the philosophy of mathematics.

**JUNE FRANKLAND BAKER**, originally from upstate New York, lives in Richland, Washington. Her poems have appeared in *POETRY NORTHWEST*, *SOUTHERN POETRY REVIEW*, *OXFORD MAGAZINE*, *BLUELINE*, and elsewhere.

A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, **JIM BILL** lives and works in Olympia, Washington, where he also teaches evening poetry workshops. His poems have appeared in *CINCINNATI POETRY REVIEW*,

FINE MADNESS, BAD HENRY REVIEW, SUN DOG, and many other literary journals.

**KIM BRIDGFORD** received an M.F.A. in creative writing from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Illinois. Her work has appeared in the GEORGIA REVIEW, THE QUARTERLY, CAROLINA QUARTERLY, NORTH DAKOTA QUARTERLY, and elsewhere. In 1983 she won the National Society of Arts and Letters National Career Awards in poetry. She directs the writing program at Fairfield University in Connecticut.

**BONNIE BUHROW** is a law student at Marquette University in Milwaukee, where she lives with her daughter, Roxanne. Her first book, *House Fire*, was published in 1992 by New Rivers Press.

A Biology professor at Bates College, **ROBERT M. CHUTE** lives in Poland Spring, Maine and appears widely in poetry journals.

**ROBERT COOPERMAN**'s collection *In the Household of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, was recently published by the University of Central Florida Contemporary Poetry Series. Cooperman is currently finishing a sequence on the fourth, ill-fated voyage of Henry Hudson.

An Assistant Professor of English at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, **DAVID CRAIG** is working with Janet McCann of Texas A & M on an anthology of contemporary Christian poetry. (These poems in the current HPR are based on John Clarke, O.C.D., tr. *Saint Therese of Lisieux, Her Last Conversations*. Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1977.)

**WILLIAM VIRGIL DAVIS** has published three books of poetry, *One Way to Reconstruct the Scene* (Yale, 1980—winner of the Yale Younger Poets' Award for 1979); *The Dark Hours* (Calliope, 1984); and *Winter Light* (North Texas, 1990)—as well as several scholarly books. He is Professor of English and Writer-in-Residence at Baylor University.

**MEGAN DIETZ** lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

A frequent contributor to HPR, **MYRON ERNST** has new poems in POETRY EAST and the KANSAS QUARTERLY.

**EDWARD FALCO**'s most recent book is *Plato at Scratch Daniel's and Other Stories*, from the University of Arkansas Press. He lives in Blacksburg, Virginia, where he teaches creative writing at Virginia Tech. He has published widely in journals, including the IOWA REVIEW, the SOUTHERN REVIEW, and the WESTERN HUMANITIES REVIEW.

A frequent contributor to HPR, **ROGER FINCH** teaches at Surugadai University in Japan.

**MICHAEL FINLEY** makes a living ghost-writing business books. He lives with his family in St. Paul.

A sculptor and part-time teacher at Lorain County Community College in Ohio, **JOHN HAWK FITCH** has been writing poetry for several years and has published in BLACK RIVER REVIEW.

Born in California in 1957, **VALENTINA GNUP-KRUIP** teaches and writes in Santa Barbara, where she lives with her husband and two young daughters. She has published work in BELLOWING ARK, POET-POURRI, CAFE SOLO, and TWO TWENTY-FOUR POETRY QUARTERLY.

**J.L. HADDAWAY** lives with eighteen Collies, which she and her husband breed and show. She is working on her Ph.D. at Bowling Green State University and appears in recent issue of the HAWAII REVIEW, PUERTO DEL SOL, the CINCINNATI POETRY REVIEW, the SEATTLE REVIEW, and DOG RIVER REVIEW.

**RON HENRY** is a native of New York state, writes poetry and fiction, and has worked over the years in the fields of bookselling, library work, and environmental activism. He edited SALT HILL JOURNAL at Syracuse University while he was a graduate student there.

**WILLIAM D. HOSKIN** is a Hiram College graduate and a retired physician living in Rochester, New York. A widely published poet, he is increasingly active as an editor of HPR.

**STEVE KOWIT**, editor of *The Maverick Poets*, lives in the California back-country near the Mexican border.

This is a first publication for **MATTHEW A. LAMBERT**, who is a graduate of the Ohio State University and currently works as a bartender.

**JAMES MAGNER** is a Professor of English at John Carroll University in Cleveland.

**JOHN MARVIN** is a Social Studies teacher at Sweet Home High School near Buffalo. He is currently working on his first book manuscript and is a member of Just Buffalo, an organization promoting literature in western New York.

With recent poetry in HPR, WITHOUT HALOS, THE MACGUFFIN, and SHIP OF FOOLS, **SANDY McCORD** is working on a paralegal studies textbook with her husband and is trying to teach good manners to two basset hound puppies.

**RON McFARLAND** is Director of Creative Writing at the University of Idaho. His third collection of poetry, *The Haunting Familiarity of Things*, was published this spring by Singular Speech Press in Connecticut.

**MICHAEL B. McMAHON** is teaching at Fresno Pacific College and reports that he is “still marching in the Army of Unknown Poets.”

**BRIAN E. MERCK** lives in Birmingham, Alabama.

With many poems in the journals and a recent chapbook (*Blue Atlantis*) from Cosmic Trend Press, **ERROL MILLER** has poetry forthcoming in CALIBAN, SLOWDANCER, PITTSBURGH QUARTERLY, PEARL, BELLINGHAM REVIEW, ON THE BUS, AURA, and THE NEW RENAISSANCE.

A graduate of Bennington College and of the writing program at Syracuse University, **BARBARA MOORE** has published poetry in many journals, including APR, POETRY, SALMAGUNDI, and GEORGIA REVIEW. Her second book, *Farewell to the Body*, won the Washington Prize in 1990 and was published in 1991. She teaches creative writing at Le Moyne College in Syracuse.

**JAMIE MOREHEAD** is an Art Major at Hiram College and is a student work-study assistant with HPR.

**CECIL MORRIS** teaches English at Roseville High School in Roseville, California. His poems have appeared in SEATTLE REVIEW, NEGATIVE CAPABILITY, BLACK RIVER REVIEW, AMELIA, and ENGLISH JOURNAL.

The University of Alabama Press has just published **GARY PACERNIK**'s edition of David Ignatow's letters. His most recent poetry collection is *Something is Happening*, from the Edwin Mellen Press. A widely published poet, Pacernik is Professor of English at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

**SUSAN PARMAN** was born in Connecticut, raised in the Midwest and New Mexico, went to graduate school in Texas, and currently teaches anthropology at California State University in Fullerton. Her published work includes two books, *Scottish Crofters* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990) and *Dreams and Culture* (Praeger, 1991).

A graduate student writing her dissertation in English/children's literature at the University of Iowa, **LAURA PAUL** has published poetry and short fiction in a number of magazines, including BLUE UNICORN, WHOLE NOTES, THE BANNER, ENGLISH JOURNAL, WELCOME HOME, INSIGHT, and LYRICAL IOWA.

**PATRIC PEPPER** is a manufacturing engineer at an electronics assembly plant near Washington, DC. He has recent publications in ECLECTIC LITERARY FORUM (ELF), BOGG, THE PEGASUS REVIEW, PINCHPENNY, and WIND.

**CHARLES RAFFERTY** has published in numerous literary magazines, including OUTERBRIDGE, COLD MOUNTAIN REVIEW, WEST BRANCH, SLANT, PIEDMONT LITERARY REVIEW, and others. He has an M.F.A. in creative writing from the University of Arkansas.

Poems by **ELIZABETH REES** have appeared in such magazines as the KENYON REVIEW, IRONWOOD, PARTISAN REVIEW, NORTHWEST REVIEW, the BERKELEY REVIEW, and PEQUOD. In 1990 she

received a poetry grant from the Washington, DC Commission for the Arts. She is on the writing faculty at Howard University.

**SHARON CREECH RIGG** is a Hiram College graduate living in England. Her fourth book (working title: "Walk Two Moons") will be simultaneously published in England and in the U.S.A. within the coming year.

A recent contributor to *KESTREL*, *WEST BRANCH*, and *ZUZU'S PETALS*, **TIMOTHY RUSSELL** won the 1993 Terrence Des Pres Prize from *TRIQUARTERLY* for his collection, *Adversaries*, published this year by Northwestern University Press.

With poetry in *THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR*, *BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL*, *CARLETON MISCELLANY*, *CHELSEA*, *CHICAGO REVIEW*, *CHOICE*, *COUNTER/MEASURES*, *DENVER QUARTERLY*, *GALLEY SAIL REVIEW*, and elsewhere, **DOLORES STEWART** has written several non-fiction books (under her married name, Dolores Riccio)—most recent of which is *Superfoods*, published in 1993 by Time-Life and Warner.

**WILLIAM JOHN WATKINS** has published fourteen books, over two hundred poems, and more than fifty short stories and articles. He is a professor of Humanities at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, New Jersey.

**CHARLES WEBB** is Professor of English at California State University, Long Beach and a licensed psychotherapist. His poetry collection *Everyday Outrages* and a book of poetry and psychology, *Poetry That Heals*, were published by Red Wind Books. He has won the Dewars Young Artists Recognition Award and the *SOUTH COAST POETRY JOURNAL* Prize for his poetry.

Recent publications by **ROBERT LEWIS WEEKS** involve poetry in *AMERICAN POETRY REVIEW*, *GEORGIA REVIEW*, *THE QUARTERLY*, and *HAMPDEN-SYDNEY POETRY REVIEW*.



**PETER WILD**, a frequent contributor to HPR, is working on a book entitled *The Lost Tribes*, a study of the concept of “lost” peoples, such as the Tasaday or the Welsh Indians.

**FRIEDA K. WIRAM** lives in Tenino, Washington.

**JEAN WOOD** lives on Sanibel Island, Florida.

The current poem by **MICHAEL T. YOUNG** was published in the previous issue (51/52) of HPR. Due to a typographical error in the first stanza we reprint it here.

With work in such periodicals as CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY, the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW, POETRY NORTHWEST, POETRY NOW, PRAIRIE SCHOONER, SOUTHWEST REVIEW, and YANKEE, **FREDERICK ZYDEK** has three published collections of poetry. He teaches at the College of Saint Mary in Omaha.

**Errata:**

The editors wish to correct two errors in HPR 51/52:

- (1) The editor of THE SMALL POND is *not* Robert M. Chute (who was its founder), but Napoleon St. Cyr;
- (2) in the first stanza of Michael T. Young’s “The Curious Little Girl” (p. 86), the word “when” should be moved from the end of line two to the beginning of line three (the poem is reprinted correctly in this issue).



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

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

**New Poems by 61 poets!**

**(including a special section of work by  
the HPR editors)**

**PLUS**

**William D. Hoskin**

**on New Image Poetry**

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