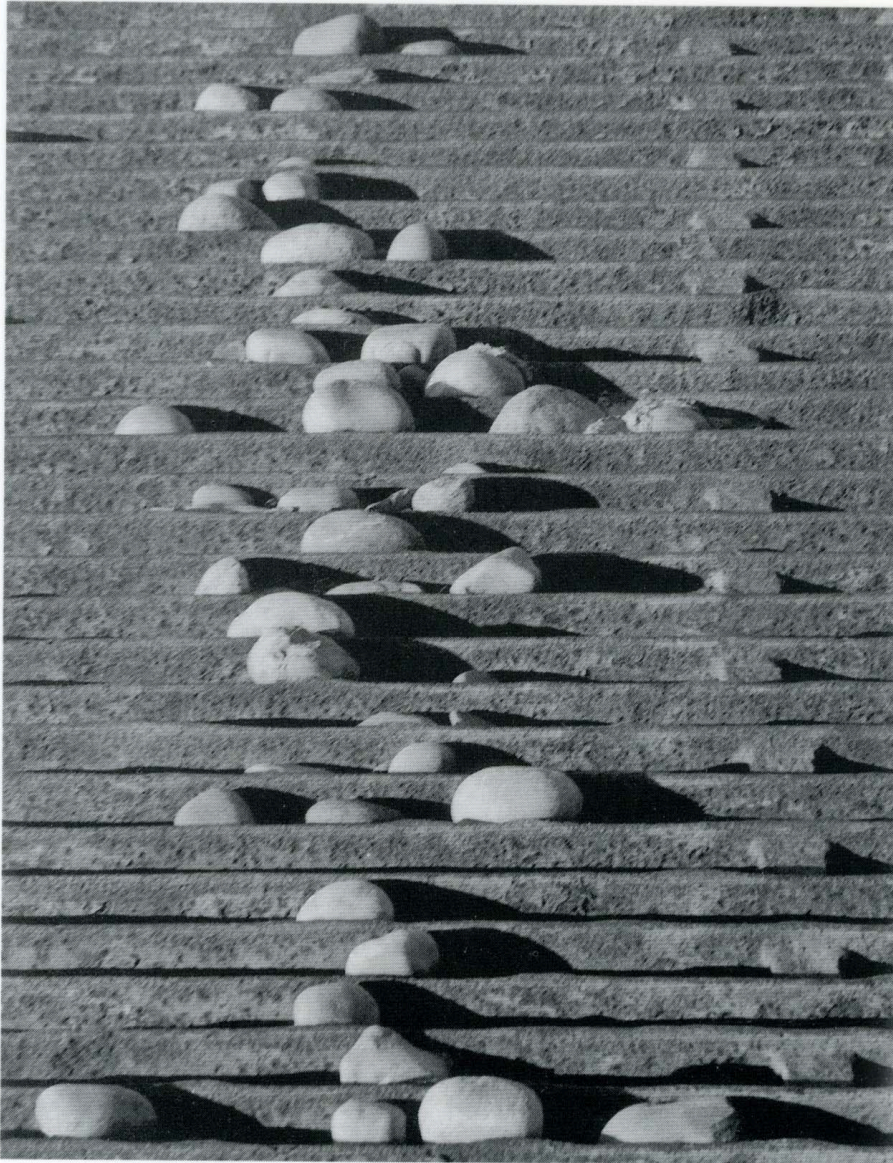


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THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW



#60

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The **Hiram Poetry Review** is published annually by the English Department, Hiram College. After this issue, HPR will be published only as a CD-ROM multimedia publication for Windows and Macintosh multimedia computers. (See the editorial on page 3 for more details.) Prices will be \$15 per year or \$35 for three years (individuals only). Reviews and special features are considered by invitation only. Unsolicited poetry mss. are welcome but must bear sufficient postage and must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Editorial response time is three to six months. **No simultaneous submissions, please.** Address all correspondence to HPR, P.O. Box 162, Hiram, OH 44234-0162.

THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

Issue No. 60

1997

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Editorial

Beginning with our next issue, number 61, HPR will be a multimedia CD-ROM, for Windows and Macintosh multimedia computers. HPR will honor all current subscriptions, of course; those subscribers whose pre-paid subscriptions extend beyond this issue will receive the new CD-ROM publication.

The price for the new CD-ROM series (both for subscriptions and for individual copies) will be \$15, or \$35 for three years (individuals only).

As we said in the editorial in our last issue, “The new CD-ROM HPR will be packaged in a 6 X 9 inch folder almost exactly like the covers of HPR issues over the past thirty years. It will stand on your shelf or fit your binders fully compatibly with the issues you’ve been collecting there. The difference is simply this: in place of HPR’s printed pages there will be a CD-ROM.”

The package will contain printed copies of all of the poetry texts, as album notes—but the chief presentation of the poetry will be in computer multimedia form.

We’re excited about this new venture, and we look forward to sharing our new HPR with you.

Hale Chatfield

Alive

The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge
is always the city seen for the first time,
in its first wild promise of all the mystery and beauty
in the world. —F. Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*)

From space our lives are a glitter of windows
in a skyline that makes us look beautiful.
But on eighth avenue
moving slowly as an arctic river
beauty becomes more complicated:
the blue deletion of the triple X pulsing
in the hood of the black Corvette;
the lady on the marquee raising a neon leg,
peddling a kind of fast food
for the heart.

Follow this silt of shops
and marginal life uptown,
its several hundred tributaries of cross streets
that empty into smaller rivulets, which
pool in bars and parking lots, hotels
and lofts, to the sliver
that holds up the door to the room
where you sit reading
in a cone of light—
a kind of beauty to be alive?

My dear, we leave
like homing pigeons in the morning,
return at dusk with a few scraggly words
that are hard to understand.
But certain nights this place is byzantine
with possibility, the imagination rides its

exquisite elevators past our lives,
so many blips on an electrocardiogram
the satellites interpret
and keep to themselves.
From a distance
we are so beautiful and alive.

Ian Brand

The Salvation of Diners

If life brings you down
like a ball in some pachinko game—
funnelling down between the streetlights poking up
like nails, drops you in this booth
on the edge of town,
then it's useless to argue with gravity.
The donuts under plastic
wait for your grasp—
little life preservers, floating
across your field of vision, frosted
in every shade of hunger.
I used to come to the diner
to be alone. Now that I've found
someone, I come to eavesdrop
on other people's solitude.
We take whatever we're thrown
bobbing out of the darkness
the waitress taps again to save us.

Ian Brand

June

The cat yawns
and pads the length of you
(Polite, as always,
he avoids your face)
to lie, aloof, in the open window.
Most mornings,
the dove sits just below the sill,
its soft grey notes calling back
young summers.
My small son slides,
half-naked,
into the space between us;
he smiles.
The day stretches
like the waking cat,
warm and yellow and purring.

Peggy Brunyansky

Miss Hiroshima

Miss Hiroshima tapes her breasts together
they are all-weather breasts
meant to go the distance
and in the cleft between them

shadows pool
deep enough for fancy carp to swim
with their gold backs
and blue fins.

Miss Hiroshima is young and smart
she has a western body
and a western heart
that could have belonged to Marshall Matt Dillon

if there had been good enough surgeons
back then to take it out
while the simple sun beat down through the gunsmoke.
Miss Hiroshima has a cigarette in the rain.

Inside there is a panel of judges
who haven't heard a word she's said
because her voice is as high and tiny as a bird
up in the sky where the oxygen

peters out and you have to be in a speeding airplane
to breathe
you have to fly beyond
the speed of sound to escape judgment.

Bonnie J. Buhrow

A Marvelous Velocity

The child runs headlong to ride. The red
Tricycle; three wheels; spokes
Of glitters; rings of shine; silver, red;
Curve of arms, white chrome; grips of rubber
At the handle-ends. Its stillness hums.

It waits; it is not restless; its patience
Is ancient. Its pedals provoke.
Eyes glisten in its shine, its cycles,
Its red circles of rims. Who
Can stay the foot, who hold her

Back from the wind? Who can tear
Arms from their sockets? Who can hold
This little girl, who back her down?
Who break, who stop her headlong hurl?
Children shout to see

The red tricycle. Their ecstasy
Shrieks with the plumage of birds,
White leopards springing to kill, or curling
Asleep. Whales sunder seas with shoulders.
The little girl is golden. Her small face

Flies! Her hair is free. She flings
Her legs about the leather—shouting,
Turning her bright head back. The red rims
Spin, shadows flash, the wheels
Moving with a marvelous velocity.

Jack Crawford, Jr.

Tornadoes in Missouri

Mucus-drab muscular stalactites,
tornadoes flit across the plains,
their tall appetites throbbing.
A farmhouse explodes into scrap,
and steel implements clench and split,
welded seams unzipped like flesh.
From the highway I feel the power
flex and leap, and for a moment
I'm looking up into a funnel
a mile deep, ribbed like a culvert.
If I could fall forever up
to its source I'd implode like
a star, every atom split.
That happens, sometimes. These storms
raking the plains will kill fifty
or a hundred people, some of them
launched into vacuums too subtle
for memory, too absolute
for the body to contain itself.
These are the missing. If I spun
up into that funnel and climbed
into total erasure no one
would list me among the victims—
no one knows I'm driving alone
across Missouri, the slim
highways and relentless cornfields
too slack to remember me,
and the occasional farmhouse
sullen and vacant, windows open
to defy the drops in pressure.
The tornadoes march or hop or lurch
across the boilerplate landscape,

clawing for a grip on the world.
I drive faster, not to escape
but to create a counterforce,
however feeble, and scribe a line
so firmly across the state
that even writ in dust it
will resist with history
the feckless rhetoric of storms.

William Doreski

After the Surgery

1.

I've been rolling the dice with the darker muse
and trying to come out with the long white scar
that proves love, the tenderings of the heart.

There are rings inside me. They date fires
and worn etchings on my old outer bark.
I adore the Oak outside my window, grown too old,

too valuable to tear down. We love the wood
as ivory; the clean bone we cut through
in order to gamble and pray and have faith.

2.

Crows mourn on solitary branches. Their ambiguous
caw reaches through everything. I plagiarize
their song for my wife—for all love and sorrow.

These black veiled angels stay in my tree all day.
I do not know where they live. I imagine them
as messengers, bringing news from someplace only they

can reach. We have promised to stay alive
for each other. The easiest promise becomes the hardest
to keep. I caw. I caw I caw I caw.

3.

There is still this ring on my finger, a token
of earlier times. I am swinging on a tire hanging
from the tree. I am being pushed upward and I'm listening

to the sound of wind rush past my ear.
There is a woman in a summer dress, white and light blue
flowers. There is a field. It smells like the flowers

and the wheat. I am flying and I am laughing
and I'm thinking of the future where we will be.
Air is pushing water out of my eyes.

Scott Gallaway

Aubergine

What needs to be said
about eggplant,
beyond its sheen and deep
longing,
bright skin
like lycra
stretched over
young hips,
elegant,
yet when sliced,
unpromising
save for
the pale tracery
of seeds,

is that after
the fruit has wept
under salt,
drained,
obeyed heat,
a design
is raised
on its flesh
like tribal
scarring
or gold thread
embroidery
on silk,
chain-stitched
with the utmost skill.

Becky Gould Gibson

Drifter

Chemotherapy,
bone-marrow transplant
for a six month remission.
She grinned when the pain stopped
though she knew it would return.
Gets so disease recognizes you
as the stop along the way,
the house with the light on,
the convenience store open
twenty-four hours.
The worst that can happen
is like the drifter
out there,
camping under the stars
until December when
it gets too cold to breathe,
until he remembers
how warm it was inside you,
how important
eight weeks to live
can make him feel.

John Grey

Moon Viewing

The moon's rising full over immense
stelae, memorials to industrial gods.
Inside the towers, equipment works well,
blinking messages down light screens:
grass-green and without mercy.

I'm immobilized by this view of the old rock
raising her white sail over the Internet,
and linger so long a police cruiser
stops warily at my heels.

I say I'm admiring the moon over the city.
Moon? Ms., better you should go home.
I want to tell them I live on the moon.
Or, I roll past places of worship
and pull with me the whole city
shrieking on its iron wheels.

They drive on, I sail back.
Our planet tilts dangerously
toward the sun. In another few
hours ornamental light will flash,
gilt paint curdling on the towers.

Sonya Hess

Sanctuary

From the church across town
seven songs announce the morning,
seven leaves for Rilke's
tree in my ear, green music
to blanket the day's body.

A piece of light shaped
like a window lies on the floor
shining within itself as if
it had been lit all night
even while I slept.

The dictionary rests heavily
on its side. If opened,
it whispers: thin leafmold
where insects have left many
tracks for me to ponder.

A real beetle is just crossing
the floor to his haven
under the couch. When he moves
into the window-patch he lifts
up and carries a blue shawl
on his chestnut shell
and I'm beyond happiness
at this little occasion of light.

Sonya Hess

Inuit Images From Childhood

quilt of flying
owls, smiling

a white polar bear

a boy rides a
blue sheet dotted
with orange raindrops

thru jade, gold
ruby and salmon
thread in the

walrus and seal wind

toward the bottom of
the comforter

dogs the color of
the landscape
pull the dreamer
home

Lyn Lifshin

Air Poems

The kid at the train
stop before
downtown is breaking
my heart, he's so heavy
on his powerchords, so light
with his slowhand fingers yet
so violent. My heart
I say, my heart
is on the beat, something
skips like an old record
the train blows by and everything
here is very moving, like
nobody will touch him, like
nobody wants to know, like
to be dealt a bad hand
bad ear, bad heart, bad you
name it, isn't everything, isn't
even anything, like any big
nothing just a rush
in an empty tunnel

Jerry McGuire

Levee

I sit on the bank—
six catfish on a stringer,
a snapping turtle lying on its back—
in the hot sun.

I watch my line and wait under a straw sombrero.
The day rests inside me like a murdered king.

The river sweeps past.
A barge pushes upstream, close to the other shore.
The tug boat pilot looks ahead, across the squared bow
for a channel marker.

I see myself at the wheel of his boat,
an average man with obvious purpose,
a vast and different life all around me.
The vision fades and I open a can of beer.

This morning, in the mail, a magazine arrived
with two of my poems in it. Such exhilaration
always fades quickly, once I step out my front door.
I know it is gone when I find myself
wanting to be someone else.

I sip my beer.
The tug boat and barge navigate the channel,
round the far bend and continue on
into the real world.

I turned thirty-six, today.

An old man sits some ways down the bank.
A cane pole arches out over the water, its end wedged in rocks.
The old man watches and waits, too.

I suddenly want to go down the bank
and show him the magazine with my poems in it.
I suddenly want very much to do this.
I don't go.

Last summer, on this same bank, I found an arrowhead,
an image seen once in a piece of flint
by a mind—where is it now?—
that worked its thoughts into rock
-hard useful things, used and lost
and found again. (Still *here*.)

I think about going down the bank to the old man
and telling him about the arrowhead. (I don't have it with me.)
I feel that he would appreciate such a story, the story itself.
I feel that he could tell me stories,
things I just now really need to find out.
I don't go.

Later, after the old man leaves,
I put my gear in the car, lay the fish in the cooler,
and go back for the turtle. For no reason I flip him over
and watch him crawl into the water. He sinks out of sight
as if nothing had ever happened, almost as if he
had never spent that time on the bank,
his world upside down in the hot sun, waiting,
feeling useless to himself and any greater purpose,
waiting, perhaps, only to die.

Bryan E. Merck

A middle school teacher, unlucky at love, considers a reverse world

The children in that other universe behind my chalkboard
who, after my children on this side are done with it,
get all the stuff that pushes through to their side, backwards—
I think about them now as I erase the board and send
the last of this day's lesson over.

In their collapsing universe, they unlearn history,
science, math, language arts, social studies. And so on.
They sit as my lessons push through to that side. Vanish, here,
and reappear, there, converse curriculum they are forgetting
since it is already in their notebooks as their pens roll it up
off the pages and their minds empty of what was held
I only remind them to forget.

Old age and the death that preceded it are not even a memory, now,
for these children. In a few years they will feel the milk teeth
sink back under the gums and, having been emptied of every learned thing,
will move back towards the attaching umbilicus, the tug away from birth
into conception, the lust that startles lovers after they uncouple,
the love that recedes into attraction and then indifference
after the lovers meet for the first time and then disappear
back toward their own, lonely beginnings.

Bryan E. Merck

Foot Falling

Often you woke up to them
so that daylight could betray a child
as many times as the dark.
Remember the first stinging
of your throat when you swallowed.
How like the dreamer resisting
you tried with every swallow
to wash the stings away.

One morning in my new, big girl bed,
I awoke while my right foot
watched, doll still, doll deaf.
In fact, I couldn't feel myself
at all within my foot as if
it had now become my shoe
pulled off. I panicked. Why had my foot
died? And my thinking this was so
was my locking eyes again
with the rabid German shepherd
of my first nightmare.

I lunged at my foot. This father
cannot leave me. My fingers needed
for the tingling and pricks
that frightened me even more
than no feeling, Oh what
was to happen now but
a slow return, the tedious reeling in
of the wandering soul
to its greedy vehicle, my will
working the pink pedal until
the party of toes started up again.

So a foot can nap on its own!
My scalp burst into the sweat

of a fever relieved.
I was ready now
for toast smashed flat
with butter and cinnamon,
for the hands of the only woman,
for the opening kitchen door
to the backyard with its
bright, wide canopy,
the world watching over me.

Maria Pavone

Melon in Memory

In the market with my eyes
I am eating the memory of melon.
A honeydew halved and wrapped
asks me to inspect its tissues,
the teeth of its seeds.
Even its name soothes
like a mild tonic. Here is
the essence of what I've been
trying to bring back
into myself, freshness,
a child's love of summer
with its fruit,
with its aimless freedom.

I am drawn and wish
to be feverish, to feel
the same heat, the sweat
as when inspired
or actively engaged, feverish
so I might soon
expect a recovery. But I
will settle for freshness.
The half melon gapes
like a singer stuck
on the highest note
in a song of longing,
so I buy it.
It has the color
of what I need, the bare
green of beginning.

At home I scoop and scrape
its bowl with a spoon
and then slice the skin
into ribs to suck and gnaw
every bit of fruit flesh.
In my memory of eating melon
I forgot the slight
soreness that rises
at the back of the throat.
Perhaps this is how
this medication works,
the melon with
the memory's omissions,
a double dose for the healing.

Maria Pavone

La pioggia che sferza il parco
suggerisce immagini rubate

il campo è spighe curvate dal vento
teste d'uomini schiacciati in guerra

il solco oscuro della ferrovia
divide l'aria in due parti eguali
e la ricerca del tocco all'altra metà
neppur oggi serve . . .

Perciò è giustizia nel piangere
gridare
quando la strada si fa sabbia
ed incoccia nel'inatteso dei binari

Il sole asciuga le ossa
di una felce dimenticata
i miei occhi
brillano di ricordi non capiti
altre immagini rubate
come la vecchia che gioca numeri per disperazione
e tale solitudine smuove grido e maledizione
nella preghiera di pensare ad altro

(Quella è la tua stanza, presto, non è lontana!)

ma le gambe si fanno piombo
e l'urlo muore fra le braccia della disperazione

Affannosa è questa ricerca
di amore da ritrovare

Alberto Rizzi

The rain that lashes the park
suggests stolen images

the field is grain bent by the wind
 heads of men crushed in war

the dark furrow of the railroad
divides the air into two equal parts
and the search for contact with the other half
today doesn't even help . . .

That's why justice resides in weeping
 in shouting
when the road gives way to sand
and thwarts any expectation of rails

The sun dries the bones
of a forgotten fern
 my eyes
gleam with memories not understood
 other stolen images
like the old woman jackpotting her despair
and such loneliness as provokes shrieks and curses
in a prayer to think about something else

(That's your room, hurry up, it's not far!)

but legs turn to lead
and howls die in the arms of despair

It is wearisome this searching
for love that is returned.

**Translated by Alberto Rizzi and
Hale Chatfield**

Aria glabra
nello stringermi al petto
tracce altrui
 suggerzioni variate
suoni ovattati

Persistenza di colori sovra mattoni vecchi

colà
 questa vita s'aggrappa d'umido
speculare al gabbiano che non comprende
il nostro fissare le sue ali
nel cullio della boa

Un raggio di sole canta sui cristalli di uno yacht

Cristo guarda giù dalla croce
e scorge una ragazza bionda

Puoi immaginare persone
oltre l'occhitraversato canale

Alberto Rizzi

Smooth air
while you clutch to your breast
someone's outline
 various suggestions
muffled sounds

The persistence of colors upon old bricks

down there
 this life hangs on wetness
observed by the seagull that doesn't understand
our gazing at its wings
in the rocking of a buoy

A ray of sunlight sings its crystals on a yacht

Christ looks down from his cross
and notices a blonde girl

You can imagine people
beyond the eyecrossed channel

**Translated by Alberto Rizzi and
Hale Chatfield**

Two Poems About Dusk

One

The sweet faint light of dreams,
those blurry images that conceal
the sharpened bones of time's passage,
drifts, mistlike, through this dusty room,
while the sinking sun, in its web of blue sky,
shrinks into a brilliant knob of gold.

Two

Our flesh was articulated out of so much nothing
by the luminescent grace of amino acids.
Empty spaces in our hoaxes of appearance
fill up most of our brief-lived forms.
Threads of nerves bind nothingness together,
the same way DNA organizes chaos.
Yet how can so much void make up
the hard slant of this oak table?
I knock my knuckles against its edge
and the pulse of noise overcomes all science,
like light in the one way mirror of dusk.

Lee Slonimsky

Waking to an Everyday World (for Cece)

*. . . for those people there was probably no sharp distinction between
a magic world and an everyday world.*

—Paleolithic art specialist Jean Clottes

Those people are still
deep in the caves
of our minds. I wake
to an everyday world
and conjure an owl
with the words of a poem.
When it calls from the tree
nearest its thought, I wake
to an everyday world
where the owl sounds magic,
is real. So I wake
to an everyday world
while in the cave of my mind
an owl appears to a man,
who paints, sees a feather,
and paints, sees a turtle,
a leaf, and paints. It is
a cave larger than any
in France. And I wake
to an everyday world
where the call of the cricket
is a name. I have heard it
before through all time,
but not heard it as now
that I wake to an everyday world.

Matthew J. Spireng

Belonging: A Concept

I would like to think my mother wanted it,
that she pulled my father down
to the mud of the vineyard
and they swam through black stars

toward the ovum sun
which quivered like a bead
of orange aspic
on the pulpy sofa
of my mother's uterus,

and the undulating sperm
with benign balloon faces
did not head-butt
or force a frenzied entry,
but circled around
fuzzing into a ring

until the ovum foamed into DNA—
bubbling out and out—
finally gelling into an orchid
with ruffled haunches
and an umbilical stem.

I would like to think
that pressed into the bud of my skull
was a desire—not only for each other
but for me—
the tie that bound me there,
poking my navel

pushing up the red parachute of my being,
as I stared out the cervical portal
at the eye of my father's penis

and wave after soupy wave
surely obscured my view.

Luisa Villani

Substitutes

It's never too late to learn
the truth about ourselves,
in this season when the low morning sun
shoots the shadows of the olives far out
across the sidewalk in a negative projection
of himself, and so maddened
by what his own power does,
the concrete ripples,
and for that moment the hours
make the sound, sheets of tinsel
snapping in the air.

If we can survive this,
we are our own best fortune,
doubled because now it's Fire Prevention Month,
and we're not that substitute teacher
in her first day in a ghetto school,
an explorer become part of the jungle,
and at home, stunned as if she's
just survived the best or worst or sex,
lighting a cigarette to remember if that's possible,
touches it to her hair
that flames into an orange shock,
the new her.

Peter Wild

Excerpt: Index of First Lines

Sanitize my memoirs? I think not, 392
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"Savant!" they hailed me. "Savior!" they yelled, 116
"A scam and a fraud," the orderly laughed, 205
Scathing my speech to pretenders, 147

Mary Winters

A Selection of Poetry by the HPR Editors

About once every two years HPR features poetry written by members of its editorial board. The following are a group of poems gathered and selected by contributing editor David Fratus.

The Emissaries

Four deer on the lawn in mid-afternoon—
and our way of thinking about the world changes.
They seem to be strolling in the April sun.
They will leave hoofprints like double arrows
pointing the way towards those mysterious places
in the woods and thickets where no one ever finds them.

How shall I live my life
to wander in the afternoons,
untie the knots and put
in disarray the straight lines,
disappear in the woods till moonrise,
graze the blue meadows
or favor the golden fields at noon,
the sun dropping its heat
straight down like rain?

The squares and rectangles,
the perfect circles of our lives—
doors and windows and clocks—
keep us in place, keep us on time.
We've lost everything that matters.

The wind brings us no messages;
we run from the rain.
Dawn and darkness have no meaning.

The deer, strange in the afternoon calm,
have come to tell us something.
Oh where is someone to translate?
Where has everyone gone?

Grace Butcher

Sunset

Often enough we are open
yet it is soon over

and love's left to luff
on a slight breeze

a type for
openness; over the edge

of languid day an orange sun
like a hot biscuit falls

into the open mouth of darkness;
you can feel it on your own tongue.

Hale Chatfield

The Speck

around which each globule
of the mist today
has formed itself

was a word
left adrift in the air
by the lonely
the unloved

there are droplets
of sad eloquence
suspended
from the tips of the ferns

in the down
along your forearm
glitter fragments
of heartbroken poetry

Hale Chatfield

Warranty

This is a poem for the ones
I cannot write, cannot
remember from that soft
moment between sleep and
slumber and the ones that
melted while I was
waiting at the non-existent
bus-stop. This is a poem
for all the ones I didn't
think while staring out
the window; it replaces the
sad ones simply unheard,
the ones drowned out by
dishwasher or anger, and,
of course, the ones simply
lost or delinquent. Please
discard those obsolete
fragments and recall that,
while this one may say
nothing, at least it is
complete, linear, and literary,
and even small virtues should
dispel the bogeyman.
so read on, savor the fresh
tone of this all-encompassing
replacement and be glad for
those blanket warranties
which restore us to words
and possessions, which rebuild
us as the material people we
always wanted to have ignored.

Marnie Ellis

What She Knew

Self-portraiture obsessed her, the problem being
to find someone she could trust to photograph
just her from sudden angles that would reveal
knowledge, like water, that she hoped to paint.

Later in the darkroom, wrongness floated up,
the photo snapped too fast, out of focus,
herself mis-caught, mis-taken, and nothing for it
but to try to paint what she knew existed, felt

in the sway and toss of heavy-headed flowers
outside her window, trumpeting their name.

Peter Filkins

Two Horses

for Charles McKinley

Tight as a rent day paycheck, we lit for campus,
our three beer Friday lunch at Emma Lee's
nearly posting us AWOL from the syllabus.

Me knotting a tie, you "airing out" the Olds,
we watched as fields broke through a bank of trees
and giddy May swept down the valley's folds.

And then two horses—wild and white, rambling
across the paddocked grass, so obviously at play
and free to trample wind, sun, tail and mane

that they were beautiful: an ecstasy so plain
so white, so disinterested and meaningless—
I blinked at thirty, a stranger to my class.

Peter Filkins

The Sadness of the Prairie

for Warren Finch

Far northeast of Denver
All man-made structures fall away,
And the sky is god on the short-grass prairie.
Two big-vested, binocularized bipeds
Birding the National Grasslands,
Where cloud shadows, moving clots of black,
Sweep silently over the green and grey;
Where once the bearded bison grazed;
And where pioneers in sod-built huts,
Hunkered down against loneliness
And fear of the gigantic sky.

Here the spring-crazed larks and longspurs
Still ascend the scales of song and sky,
Morphing themselves from ordinary birds
To daredevil bungee divers,
Exulting high, high over meadowsweet
And bluestem grass, then plummeting to earth,
Saved by flicks of feathered parasails,
While brownish females, unimpressed,
Keep their eyes cocked for Dr. Death,
Suave, blonde falcon of the prairies,
Sideburned fast traveler of the draws,
Who hums through air like a steel guitar
And doles out doom in blur of fists and wings.

A sudden tympanum of thunder—
High plains wind rudely shoves our shoulders.
Storms are coming from three directions,

One of them ready to run us down.
The western sky turns black and sickly green,
Lightning sutures cloud to cloud, cloud to ground.
We reach our car as the first drops fall
And point toward the city, familiar forms.
Thunderclouds, thunderheads, thunderclaps.
We're just bit players on this huge stage.
Sun lightning, heat lightning, storm lightning,
We're safe for now, if our windshield holds,
Extras in some ancient drama or farce:
The sadness of the prairie, the theatre of the sky.

David Fratus

The Last Days of the Fairy Tern

Three white birds above a salt meadow,
a tidal creek below.
Three white birds: slender, sweptback wings,
translucent as bone china.
Three female fairy terns in chilly spring
and breeding plumage,
A single, jaunty feather—exclamation points
upon their heads,
Long, forked tails cutting the rising mist,
scissors made of feathers.

These sister terns are searching,
but they're the last of their like;
No eggs of theirs will quicken to life,
nor hatch a gawky chick.
Like celibate, missionary nuns, they'll travel
the long coasts of the earth,
White and fragile against the cold, black cliffs,
the last three graces of the sky.

The terns' soft call, two notes descending:
"Take me, Take me, Take me."
But no last, lost males, potential mates,
arrive to answer.
No saving gods of sky emerge from clouds
in this, the final act.
Only their ancient enemy, the stone-grey sea,
patiently waits beneath,
To grasp them roughly to his muscled chest,
feathers lost in foam.
Their species' sacred work, millennia long,
their last flight, done.

David Fratus

On the Night that Marks the Twenty Third Year of My Mother's Death

Sweet equinoctial moon beyond her full, gliding and snagging,
breaking free from the dark fingers of the hills—
I am thinking of you on the night that marks the passage
from one world to the next, for when the day
comes you will have been gone from my life
as long as you were in it.
Yesterday my having was greater than my loss.
Tomorrow begins the long road down that never turns.
Tonight all things are equal.

No one's left to ask what I really want to know.
Did you hold me as these women passing
on the streets, their babies tight to them, smiling
that smile, beaming that bliss that welcomes them,
who whether they are fiends or angels are home,
by that smile, forever? I would be a different man
if I remembered. If I could say, *yes, it was
as it is for all. By her love I am among you.
As I leave it someone shall await.*

It is a good night for thinking of this, with
dark and silence like precious stuffs ladled from
equal jars, with stars behind mists
like memories that come and go
but arrive one night a year when bidden.
The scent is rose. The color, between rose and lavender.
The sound is almost silence, flesh on plush,
my name called at morning when it might have been
the whistle of subtler bird, in deepest cover.

When I put away my writing and lie down
I will feel sleep's secret senses
trained on the clock that counts the hours
from the last full moon, the last embarrassing *I love you*

on the telephone, from the last rustle in the room
of someone, passing, who had watched over me.
I'll think of last time I was sure the monsters were abed
and the madmen in the closet clutched my toys
to their stone hearts, smiling, all asleep.

My sleep's senses, finally, fixed on the event
still twelve hours off, when I will
have been without you half my life.
I, who gave up the life you handed me to sing,
sit on the bed's edge groaning, *0... 0...*
as if that were the sum of what I've meant.
Drowsy souls whisk homeward over rags of snow.
That I have endured it is the thing
I thought you'd want to know.

David Brendan Hopes

To the Girl in the Second Row

To the girl in the second row, erasing frantically,
it is well.

Thales floating like a white column
on the still waters tells you it is well.
Heraclitus from the wheel of flame,
the gold of his garments phoenix-like,
scorched each instant, and restored,
he tells you it is well.
Euripides from the dark forest,
bloody-mouthed among the wild women,
sings *it is well* to you.

They want you to let it be.
They come as friends, bewildered
that the door should be closed
with many locks, the way strewn with shards.
Ask them. Nothing done is done wrong.
The blot is the foundation.
The error is the rock that shifts the river.
Most beautiful and most well.
Straw-haired girl in the second row,
scribbling out, erasing.
It is you examining them. Look up.
Take a new sheet, start again.
Your teacher is here. Look
through me to the green field
and the clear light and the
white stones where they are walking
with their hands open, their eternal eyes
searching for you.

David Brendan Hopes

On a velvet evening

in the West of England
our black Labrador
hurtles ahead of us
through the near dark.
On the bank of the canal
a man cries out,
reaches down
to a splashing in the water,
grabs, slips,
struggles to lift out
his frenzied spaniel. It panics
in wet circles and bolts away.

The man stares into the night,
stands apart,
cannot speak to us—
strangers and our chunky dog
and our terror.

W. D. Hoskin

Tide Rising, Maine

Watch it—take some time—be still.
Gulls call, and swing through sky,
waves lap the ledge you sit on,
 granite slanting to the sea.
Each wave repeats the last
 but that cool darker line
 moves up the rock.

Look away at a gull eyeing your lunch.
The line is changing, is rising—
 when you look back, you notice.
You tuck in your feet—the sea keeps pushing.
 Behind you there are three gulls now.

James McGowan

**J. O. W.
To ~~One Dead~~**

I'm glad no shadowed church
Hides you from the sun;
That no cold stones
Shroud you from the rain.
But daisies on your green quilt
Wave above, and drop
Their oracular petals on your breast.

No slab marks your last bed,
But Earth warmed that tree's roots
From your brain—
Sent the sap into its limbs.
The color from your cheeks
The blossoms take
And your voice whispers
In the leaves.

I'm glad no shadowed church
Hides you from my sight;
That no cold stone
Has hushed your song.

Charles McKinley, Jr.,

About this poem, the author writes to HPR :

“ . . . I wrote it one evening near the end of my last semester at Kenyon College. I passed it across the seminar to my best friend, John Whitaker. I had written on the back ‘I wrote a pome.’ John wrote back ‘Isn’t that cute.’

“I had titled it TO ONE DEAD. John drew two lines through it and put his initials above it: J. O. W.—John Oesterling Whitaker. That was May, 1940. In April, 1943, he was shot down in the raids over Schweinfurt and buried on European soil.”

California: Karen Carpenter

“The money is in the basement”

I burn myself down
to the essential note
Nothing wasted
Nothing extra
Lighter than skin and bone
Lighter than an empty plate
I burn myself down
to necessity
Like water
the weight flows through me
Washing out the earth
But not the flame
My bones are empty
like a bird
I sing
Low
To make myself
High
I fly
And leave my body behind
Nothing but
Perfection.

Gael Sweeney

Seasons

1
back door geraniums
break the winter grip of spring
with bold red fists

2
August sunset
flames the rippling bay
liquid pinks and gold

3
wind-riffled hemlocks
graceful peacock feathers
green in autumn's fan

4
skin pressed warm on skin
then fetch the morning paper
barefoot in snow

Patti Tana

Apples

Green & gnarled as a fist
they make the house shudder
when they thud to the earth.

Fall knocks.

Patti Tana

CONTRIBUTORS

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The **Hiram Poetry Review** seeks to **DISCOVER** America's poets. Except for the special section (pp. 37-54) devoted to poetry by our editors, all poems in this issue were selected from manuscripts submitted without specific invitation.