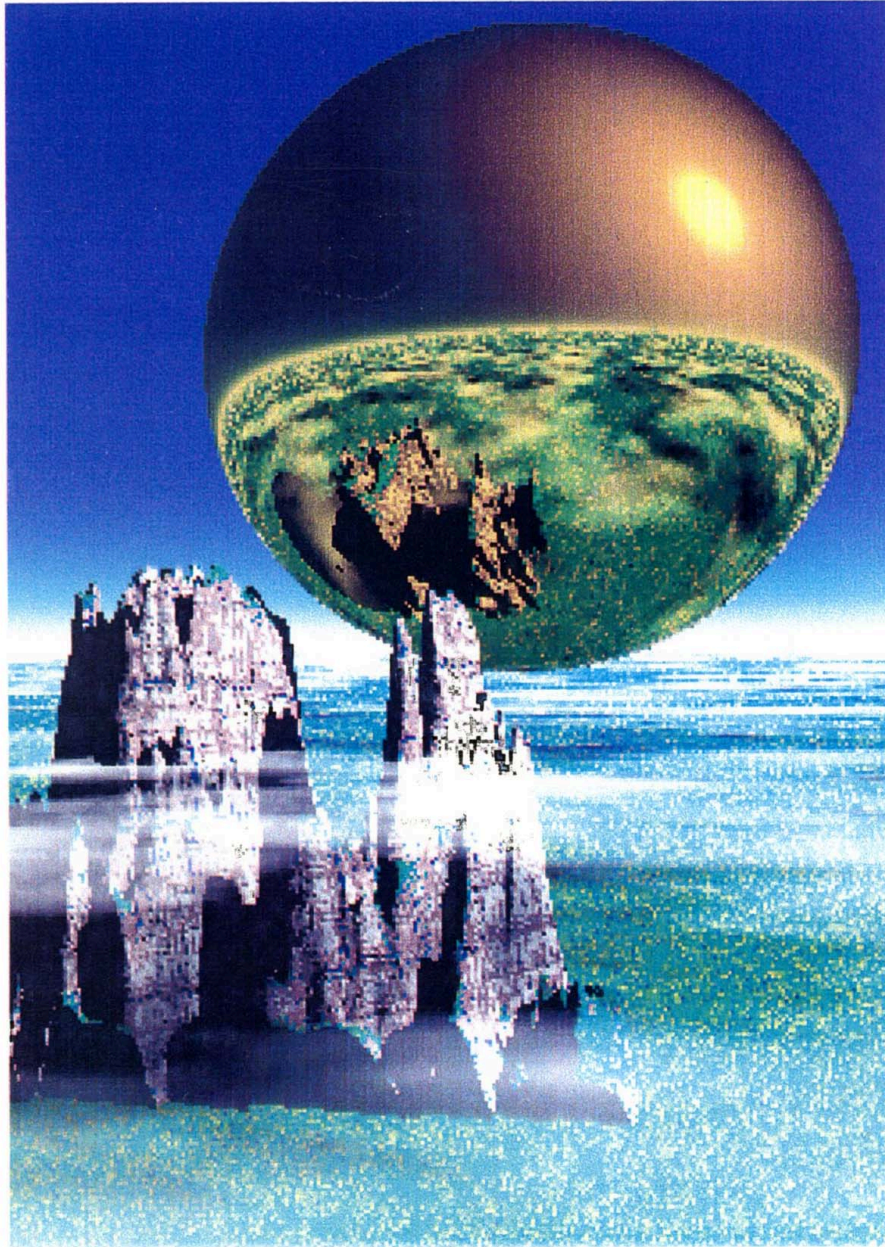


US ISSN 0018-2036

# THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW



#62

\$15

**HIRAM POETRY 62**  
**1999**  
**THE POETRY TEXTS**

William O. Boggs

**Jacob's Ladder**

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder  
set up on the earth, and the top of it  
reached into heaven: and behold the angels  
of God ascending and descending on it.  
Genesis 28:12

In a rusting Holly Park  
mobile home three miles  
east of Eau Claire,  
Pennsylvania,  
on Route 58,  
a Coors can  
in his hand,  
Jacob Lundeen  
looks out a window  
across the rain soaked woods,  
seeing maple buds redden.  
He crushes the can in his hand,  
gets another, feels the cold liquid  
just a film of aluminum from his skin,  
listens again, thirty years of listening,  
to Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven,"  
a song he remembers  
his mother playing  
on a scratched LP  
just to get him  
to go to sleep.  
Mother's gone,  
left the old man,  
who then got drunk up  
one too many times  
and crashed his pickup  
going eastbound  
in the westbound lane  
of Interstate 80,  
taking a family with him,  
a mother and three girls.  
Everyone said it was good  
that the old man died,  
saving the bill  
for the electric chair,  
which the old man  
deserved anyway.  
And mother is in Florida,  
married to a retired  
car salesman from Emlenton  
who wears a black  
onyx ring on his pinky  
and walks the beach  
with a metal detector,  
a garage shelf filled  
with things others  
have lost, and  
the rain puddles  
in the driveway  
and on the road,

which the exwife left on  
with the two boys,  
whom Jacob misses most,  
two sons he sees only  
every other weekend  
when they come  
from their new home  
in Pittsburgh, seeming  
less his sons  
than another man's.  
Every time he feels less,  
the world shrinking small,  
God gone.

#### **On Finding a Speckled White Horse on Highway 58**

In the late light of a November afternoon,  
an apparition appeared against the highway's gray,  
a galloping figure along the forest of gray trees,  
a white horse with black speckles, afraid,  
running lost as car horns shrieked,  
the drivers swearing and swerving but not stopping.

I pulled to the side, put on the flashers  
and walked, calling in low tones.  
The horse stopped, and I took his halter,  
walked him toward a line of houses.  
Happy to be led, the horse nuzzled my hand;  
other drivers slowed, waved.

We began going house to house, knocking  
on doors, asking if anyone had lost a horse,  
this white horse speckled with black,  
running along a gray highway as night fell.

Later, more than a mile from my car,  
which sat warm and idling and flashing,  
I had not found anyone who knew  
the home of this horse. Still trusting,  
he patiently followed my lead, standing  
patiently as I spoke to incredulous men  
and women who told their children  
they could not have this newfound pet.

Once in my hand, he could not be released  
to wander toward accident and death,  
so we walked on into the darkness,  
both of us seeking a way home, to knowing  
arms and warm words as snow began to fall.

**Mary Crow**

**At the Concert**

She takes refuge  
in the invisible universe  
of confusion,  
from far off  
the guttural whisperings  
and bestial coughs  
rise from a darkness  
out of which  
also arises that singing.

Her listening—a shelter  
made of her cravings  
or a temple of memory?  
It opens a warmer landscape  
out of herself,  
fragrance upon fragrance  
fanning out and out.

She sits as still  
as if her life  
were being cast in bronze,  
music drenching  
her changing heart.

In that cleared space,  
she lifts her head,  
peeling from her sleep  
a foliage out of the midst  
of winds and meadows,  
out of the music's inscape.

And she discovers herself surrounded  
by something—  
space, joy, substance of hope—  
surprised awake.

**Michael S. Glaser**

**Being Cool**

There is this room I hardly remember  
it is large, like a basement, or maybe  
it is a rec room in a church,  
the color is yellow and the floor is linoleum  
and I am in middle school and we are at a party  
and I am with Sue Adams and we are talking  
with people and telling jokes and I have my arm  
around Sue's waist, and I tell a dirty joke.

I don't remember the joke, or why I told it,  
like I don't remember most things from  
middle school except that I didn't know  
how to be cool and I wanted to be.

but that joke must not have been cool  
because later someone told me –  
it was disgusting, telling a dirty joke like that,  
with my arm around Sue.

Every thing turns yellow. My head is  
yellow, my thoughts are yellow,  
the room is yellow.  
I am contaminating things, yellow,  
like dogs contaminate new-fallen snow.

I don't remember the party, or who  
we were talking to, but I remember Sue  
and that someone said my arm was where  
it shouldn't have been and I felt like that dog,  
doing something wrong, again,  
contaminating the snow, contaminating  
that room with the linoleum floor,  
contaminating my friends because  
I was trying too hard to be somebody  
I didn't know how to be,  
somebody indeed,  
who wasn't at all like me.

### **Rob Hardy**

#### The Kindergarten Bus

I've only seen her sitting down  
she's only seen me standing up  
waiting for her to flash me  
amber and red  
bus beetling to the curb  
the diptych doors folding back. She lays  
into the horn when the  
high school girls talking back  
and forth across the front seat  
of a pontiac run the fold-out stop sign  
clearly mentioned on page  
ten of the drivers manual  
they should still have fresh  
in their brains. She tells me

this is her last day  
but they need drivers and  
do I want to take her route  
just the afternoons.  
I wonder how bad it could be  
and my own six-year old  
tells me:

today a girl on the kindergarten bus  
took off her pants and her underpants too  
and first she showed us her breasts only

not breasts exactly but nipples  
that will be someday  
when she has a baby and needs  
to get milk out of them. He says:

the girl taking off her pants  
was history today on the bus  
that you won't read about  
in any of the newspapers.

**Lois Marie Harrod**

**At the Convention of Breasts**

there was, you know,  
a lot of blatant sexism

barefaced and brazen  
as a pair of sandals,

and more fermented blossoms  
than I could count.

I was glad you stayed  
in the lobby

to play the milk of human kindness  
on an organ pump

but most were tipping wine  
from supine glasses

and by evening  
silence had become

as shameless as rocks.  
Did you notice, I said,

jiggling your attention,  
that during the duct

one man peeled a grape  
and suckled the skin.

The stage was as full  
of fuss and pecker

as a wall of  
pouter pigeons

and at dawn  
when you climbed

into my bed  
you were done in.

### **The Light on Leaves**

How light lies  
on leaves  
like the mouth  
of a lover,

I will never leave,  
he says, sliding  
his tongue  
to shut her eyes.

I will never go,  
she says,  
and is gone  
like water.

Soon we shall not be  
together,  
though we  
have been truer

than those  
who hoodwinked  
the moon and all  
the wet stars.

Tonight the river  
is conning the rain  
the whole dark  
through.

### **John Marvin**

#### **acorn nocturn nocturne**

Nokt núx nox nacht shawl amulet remember  
an undifferentiated vacuum of no dimensions  
the itch of structure directions so many stillborn  
in a flicker before the beginning of the first second  
slipped acorn rhythm rhein like a river of glow  
never an undifferentiated vacuum of no dimensions

assume that black is red  
that heads the bed of dolomite  
and foots the queenston shale  
a structured dynamo of unnumbered dimensions

marching through the city trombone hymns of Bacchus trump  
embryo carbon hydrogen oxygen nitrogen  
deoxyribonucleic rhythm rhythm rhythm rhythm  
some eggs wait fifty years to be fertilized  
whirlpool sandstone flake lake omelet

the universe was recognizable in 3 minutes  
the fusion of sperm & egg nuclei into a zygote takes about 8 hours  
living entities are more complex than the universe unicorn

power glen shale warn ag to grow fruit

awake Awacan Wacan arise and man your watch  
grimsby sandstone scorn no one like a layer cake  
little ruby and amethyst baguettes each a bayonet  
forsaken like spleenworts on Appalachian slopes  
fronds arched leaflets hairy spores dusting the August heat

weg vegere vaja spill ontowake  
thorold sandstone morn blasted fragments ache  
extension daybreak sharpened whet  
have parts to quake the ferment and yet

roused from sleep head above the pool  
past neagha shale hawthorn yellow burn  
make pink flowers cassette  
opaque duet canon voiced  
watch as over a corpse earning experience of pain and joy  
beget irondequoit & reynales limestone just as corn  
beset rake

swimming across the wake of a ship  
to watch as where the erne circles on drafts  
rochester shale dies  
scratch my violet planchette wet shake  
unscratchable lockport dolomite adorn  
fret get jet snake down to the Iroquois Lake bed

let the marionette pluck her own strings vouchsafe her caress  
let all the pet soak loose under the turboflux  
let it all jell as space jelled out of nothing and composed height breadth  
and depth

let time condense in the brine and stars granulate in the slurry  
let the set of all threats to nirvanean self-obliteration triumph  
and this too, let poor poor cardboard jet set score.  
Discern abet abeter bait sanction condensation harmonized and orchestrated  
abbot abbad abbas abba papa ac corn urn.

### **Craig Paulenich**

#### **The Finder**

*for David*

At thirteen he was uncertain  
about the sad bag of flesh, a fetus  
on the berm at Bobby's Corners.  
It looked so much like a skinned rabbit.  
Thirty years later he knew in a moment  
that the man in the forest was dead,  
pitched on his face like a lost drunk,  
12 gauge hole in his back.



He found the mad dog leaping in the ravine,  
raw clay, white teeth and spittle;  
he walked straight to the spent piebald lumps  
by the cluster of Indian Paintbrush;  
he leapt up Ruby Falls like a goat.  
From the claustrophobic vastness of  
the junkyard on Rt. 14, he returned  
with the driver's-side wiper for a 59 Apache.

Where the university has clear-cut and burned  
an experimental forest, he pulls  
Hopewell potsherds from the clay.  
Ecuadorians plant seedlings behind him,  
dreaming of mountains and thin air.  
Arrowheads burrow to the surface at his feet,  
one of quartz with a heart of fools gold in Dahlenega.

He reaches into scrub pine and pulls out an owl,  
a tree branch in front of the tractor becomes a copperhead.  
He rummages through dumpsters, attics,  
flea market booths, yard sale boxes,  
climbs the rotted stairs of shacks  
green with kudzu.

Ghosts speak kindly of him.

Once, when we were canoeing on Pymatuning Creek,  
the geese flew so closely overhead  
I could feel the feathered air.

### **Susan Blackwell Ramsey**

#### **Consider Hairs**

Your nose and your ears keep growing as long as you live.  
Think of it: Lilian Hellman forced to tote  
that great zucchini, Auden's unfurling ears.  
Cute is a survival mechanism;  
consider harp seals, ask parents of two-year-olds.  
So it's no wonder the carapace of age  
frightens us; almost certainly we will not  
develop sufficient charms to compensate.

Not for hairs, so often embarrassments.  
These aren't the secret hairs of adolescence:  
pubic disruptions, smooth armpits suddenly becoming  
caverns dense with Spanish moss. Those shames  
are secret. No, the hairs of age are public,  
chins and moles for women, ears for men.  
Eyebrows you could braid or bead.

But why  
should only those hairs flourish which are unwanted?  
If a wise providence chooses not to encourage  
six brave hairs arching lonely from ear to ear  
across the gleaming scalplands, well, all right.  
But why couldn't the forces of disintegration  
have evolved to encourage burgeoning eyelashes, too?



## **Dona Luongo Stein**

### **Conception**

She knew it had happened  
surely as if one squiggly sperm  
were a mosquito

and stung one egg He's at  
the dresser mirror  
fiddling with his tie

She sweeps one arm on the still warm  
sheet beside her smiling  
He doesn't have to love

me she thinks her long unrecognized love  
for him is enough for both  
no, for three. She lies lazily full

imagining the fertile egg climbing, small feet  
small hands on the ridges, no, make  
it easier she decides, the hairs

of the follicle like a great current sweeps  
the tiny boat that carries  
three people swiftly into a protected harbor

where the world's goods are brought to the prince or princess  
while all it does is lie there, receive,  
and grow fat. "Well, are you coming?"

he asks, dressed, reaching for keys and coins  
as she sighs, turns  
to leave the bed, smiles

## **Nathan Whiting**

### **Birds Sing**

Warblers vanished,  
we train pigeons to sing.  
Here's bread.  
Tweet a c#  
where children can hear.

Careful,  
once a bird starts  
it'll chirp anything.  
Starlings already  
do sirens and guns.

Crows strain for bluebird highs,  
heroes  
of the Ersatz Songbird Project.

**Peter Wild**

**The Mojave River**

Here where the Great Mojave swirls its art  
Of sand, grand snake in its slow death throes which  
Are life itself, aeonic twitchings, heart  
Without a body, heart which is each switch  
Of sand it leaves behind, and goes nowhere—  
In evidence of what?—All day we stroll  
Its length. Life is not art, but this the hair  
Of Botticelli's mistress, golden roll  
Of what was love, a whisper centuries old  
At our boot toes, a breast so perfect, so  
Large that we cannot feel it, taste it, hold  
It. This is you, not flesh, but how you go,  
Not fire, water, air, but here the clue—  
These ripples. You're the air that you pass through.

Copyright © 1999 by Hiram College

Rights revert to authors upon publication.

**THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW**  
**P.O. Box 162**  
**Hiram, OH 44234**  
**USA**

US ISSN 0018-2036

# HPR 62

## The Second HPR Multimedia Issue

### Featuring:

A self-interview on Vachel Lindsay by John Knoepfle

Video clips from the "Celebration of Poets," in honor of  
Hale Chatfield's 1998 retirement from Hiram College

New work by a dozen poets

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

For Windows 95, 98, & NT and Macintosh OS 7.5 or later.