

N O T R E D A M E
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SOFT MILLENNIUM

NUMBER 9
WINTER 2000
\$ 8 U . S .
\$9.50 CANADA



NOTRE DAME REVIEW



NOTRE DAME REVIEW

NUMBER 9

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The *Notre Dame Review* is published semi-annually. Subscriptions: \$15 (individuals) or \$20 (institutions) per year or \$250 (sustainers). Single Copy price: \$8. Distributed by Media Solutions, Huntsville, Alabama; Ingram Periodicals, LaVergne, Tennessee; and International Periodical Distributors, Solana Beach, California. We welcome manuscripts, which are accepted from September through April. Please include a SASE for return. Please send all subscription and editorial correspondence to: *Notre Dame Review*, The Creative Writing Program, Department of English, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556.

The *Notre Dame Review* is indexed in *The American Humanities Index*.

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ISSN: 1082-1864

Soft Millennium ISBN 1-892492-08-3

Claes Oldenburg's art is reproduced courtesy of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. Front Cover Art: Claes Oldenburg, *Museum à la Mode*, 1994, pencil and colored pencil on paper, 29 x 23 inches. Back Cover Art: Claes Oldenburg, *Floor Cone*, 1962, canvas filled with foam rubber and cardboard boxes, painted with synthetic polymer paint and latex. 53- 1/4 inches x 11 feet 4 inches x 56 inches. Collection: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, (Photograph of *Floor Cone* in Los Angeles by Dennis Hopper).

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SOFT MILLENNIUM



CLAES OLDENBURG

Robert E. Haywood

What follows are selected poems by artist Claes Oldenburg from 1956-1958 that have not previously been published. Although hundreds of books, articles, and exhibition catalogues on Oldenburg have been produced, scholars and curators have either neglected or remained unaware of the artist's poetry of the 1950s. This neglect, however, is in part due to a pervasive myth that many artists and critics have perpetuated: that language corrupts the purity of visual art. Yet the most brilliant artists of this century have been deeply committed to theorizing their own artistic position, including a revolutionary modern artist like Piet Mondrian, who purged art further of its sterile literary modes of depiction. While Oldenburg has often produced theoretical pronouncements to clarify or defend his artistic adventures, he has also employed and even invented linguistic operations that have opened up new ways of generating sculpture.

Scholars have largely emphasized the subject matter, themes, and iconography of Oldenburg's art which is based on commonplace, throw-away objects that reveal the obsessions of a consumer culture (a bar of soap, lipstick, an ice cream cone, a clothespin). Yet his art has proven most significant to art history when it has resulted from his relentless interrogation of form, including, and perhaps most inventively, collision of linguistic and visual structures, symbols, and signs.

The poems from the 1950s appearing below are significant because they prefigure Oldenburg's visionary list poem of 1961, which consists of over seventy sentences that repeat the opening assertion, "I am for an art...", followed by a flurry of scenes in which bodily organs and odors collide with objects and symbols from consumer, political and sacred culture. This poem, which is Oldenburg's variation on the modernist manifesto, illuminates his artistic ambitions most fully and marks his emergence, along with Andy Warhol, as a seminal artist of the 1960s. Although the 1961 manifesto has often been quoted and anthologized, it has never been considered as a poetic structure and operation, particularly in relation to his poems of the 1950s.

Oldenburg's obsession with lists is evident in the 1956 poem, "Observed Fragments." In each of the highly descriptive, imagistic fragments, Oldenburg isolates a human incident or detail, which he infuses with references to smells, shapes, colors, actions, and sounds of the physical

world. Perceptual, temporal fragments, such as “Woman walks fast with legs red and raw,” find parallels in his sketches from the period, as in the delicate drawing, *Woman Carrying Child* (1958). In “Fear of New York,” a sequence of poems from 1956-58 (seven of which are published here), Oldenburg arranges and collides words and syllables so that an isolated object, scene, or action generates alliterative reverberations, which in turn produce sculptural shapes. In these poems, the human form is often present in the scene or action, either as an *echo* of the body—“big bag of benny buttons”—or as an absent subject embodied by a sound—“Porp”.

In addition to Oldenburg’s study of gravity’s formal effects, as well as his play with reversals, opposites, and substitutions—a for o as in “lopa lapa”—his most subversive invention may be his leveling device, the “equivalent.” A simple but extremely poignant example of an equivalent’s visual possibilities is evident in the ink and watercolor sketch, *Man Begging* (1958). The artist has observed an action—a man begging—and then rendered the figure as a silhouette so that the man is equivalent to the flat piece of paper onto which he is drawn.

An equivalent often forces to the surface Oldenburg’s observation that mechanical, architectural, and consumer inventions, however grand or small, echo their human maker, including bodily organs and metaphysical, erotic, or sadistic desires. The equivalent’s leveling effect is evident in “I am for...” (1961) in which he declares, for example, “I am for the art of ice-cream cones dropped on concrete. I am for the majestic art of dog-turds, rising like cathedrals.” This clash of simultaneous falling and ascending forms, coupled with his diagrammatic drawing (1962), illuminates how an equivalent functions according to a principle of visual-verbal mathematics. By sidestepping content differences and instead highlighting unexpected formal, visual parallels, Oldenburg dismantles hierarchies of power: an ice-cream cone equals a turd equals a cathedral.

His pursuit of visual-verbal equivalents, particularly as gravity directs their operation, has resulted in many of his important artistic projects. This art ranges from the sewn, stuffed, and painted soft sculpture, *Floor Cone* (1962) [see back cover], in which he assaults and renders outmoded the tradition of vertical, welded sculpture planted upright on a base, to the extraordinary drawing, *Museum à la Mode* (1994) [see front cover], whereby he transforms Hans Hollein’s Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt into a crumbling pie that is topped with a scoop of ice cream. This drawing relates to one of his current sculptural-architectural commissions in Cologne, Germany, titled *Dropped Cone* (1998). The Cologne project, which Oldenburg developed with his collaborator Coosje van Bruggen, consists of

a giant, upside down, tilted ice cream cone (ten meters in height) dropped, as if “it had fallen out of the sky,” on top of a new mall building, Neumarkt Galerie, located in the inner city.

Because of its architectural scale, *Dropped Cone* inserts a dramatic angle into the Cologne skyline which is penetrated by an erect Cathedral spire and other church steeples. As if to persuade the project’s patrons of the cone’s significance to the city, particularly a cone that visually competes with the city’s steeped skyline, he and van Bruggen highlight the simple fact that the cone is already embodied in Cologne. Reconfigure the cases and spacing in the letters of the city’s name and, voila, Cologne equals “CO log NE.”

OBSERVED FRAGMENTS (1956)

Claes Oldenburg

Drops in gray water

Tinfoil trampled flat on a wet concrete sidewalk

An ice machine grinds ice

Metal gull on a metal sky

Ketchup on a wet sidewalk

Bright nuts

Constructions of chocolate

Red fur

Wet wood inside a barrel

A smoking cloth

A man polishes chrome. Chrome is polished. Nearby, from a chrome arm,
hangs a chicken with its throat opened.

A cripple is sunning his white stump

A man bent over in a shoemaker's pen puts on his leg-braces and boots

An old woman with a cane in the rain

The white bristled face of an old man reflects light under a black umbrella

A white pigeon flaps his wings on a thin man's linear knee (a cream-white

cap, a darkblue shirt, grey pants and tan suspenders

A woman leans out the window on arms like moons

A man behind a post

A little blond girl rides a bicycle with thick tires against a wall and hurts
herself

A tramp drinks from a wax milk container

A dirty gray cat's full heavy cheeks and apprehensive glance

Kids find a tramp sleeping in a cardboard box. The box speaks.

Hairpins and a black cloth at the back of the head

Please hide your trash inside

A woman with Potts' Disease

Fee Dawson's pale face

A woman shades her face with a newspaper

A man in blue gym shoes and a green hat carries a camera

A scragglyhaired dog selfconsciously shits squatting. A large silhouetted
column, so large for such a small dog, moving out and down

Metal touch of rain

Soft violet silhouettes to the West. Grayish yellow window lights.

The old world is yellow, the new cold blue

Silver light spots on the sidewalk. Snow flurries.

Red beard of a street brush

A hinged window wavers stiffly

A shiny piece of coal

Unrelated movement of pigeons. Crawling of many over a wide area.

Lambs hung in a yellow light

Song of electricity

A spot of blood turning black, then dry and loose as a fried penny near a

 brown pond in the bottom of a dirty tub

Light coats monoliths. Valleys.

Dusty, whitening orange light streaming

Long shadows in the winter light

Tits in a puddle

Blackshimmer of gutterwater

A door closes. All is magic.

Knees outing, forward, up - seeking

A bereted Negro leans on a black fence, looking down at pigeons feeding in

 the snow

A boy with a dog is trying to break something by stamping on it with his

 foot

An old woman with a black hat is asleep

A car in parking runs over a bottle
Laundry flaps in the wind
A woman's heels sunk in the hot tar
A white pigeon flies in front of dark empty buildings
A fat boy sleeps in the doorway
Lying on a hot roof makes a cold shiver
Someone knocks at my door but I am not there
Woman walks fast with legs red and raw
A waiting person shows a proud face
People under cool lights
Deep cuts of eyes
Oh those babushkad narroweyed chicks
Container of a bird. Tub of space.
Shells, radio, knife, cup with pencils, tools, guitar, light bulbs
The white hem of a slip falls several inches below the skirt of a
 squat woman wearing black woolen stockings
A thin horizontal red reflection on the side of a car
Black smoke makes its way in windless night
Waxy smell of a girl's ear. Kissing of hair on the arms.
Bare breasts under a soft sweater. Buttocks under silk.

Man getting into a box

Wreckage in the early morning. Wreckers' hot blaze on a hot day.

Blond lady alone on a pier

A little girl kisses a cold window

FROM FEAR OF NEW YORK (1956–57)

Claes Oldenburg

●

you camouflage of an old snicker

forgotten bone

louse among the toes of cannon

burping paw-loved old mole

bring a bouquet of sad eyes

●

big bag of benny buttons

candy sleeper

tent of good lumps

old boy of bone

picket fingers

rusty ear flaps

take care

●

mirrors

polish up your annihilations

instruct metal in ambiguity

there is an order standing

for revolvers panelled with invisibility

a mouth is loose

victims have seen themselves

the countryside is afloat with doubles

●

If one could but skill oneself conditionally in the deep

prune life lived by stripes at the radio center of a

month's numeral

eviscerate a cloudy tuba

let a wood ghost pass for iron in the ochre depths

slide by as a can full of wild scratches

mess up a tree by colliding it with tornadic tacksprinkled

glassraping belliedout storming biplanes

●

These ill numerals will never do
an alphabet in crutches
something new must be imagined to replace
hungry cylinders always firing
firing
firing

to everything silence is the best response
to the yawn of day which wishes to move
to the burp of noon and all the corpses
scattered like jacks on sunraped historical concrete

Time is the fatal owl the final sponge
clasping severing embrace
the laugh the limit
and us here with our dog noses
watching the gum move up and down



ON THE BUS

First snow

bacons down

begs metal threats

ARROWNEUMATIC EXHALATION

begin pull

bus beastwhistles

black slameyes

spreading silvertrimmed bulbhead

jowlschly pushnosy slobslolhippy

(tapertaner tamer)

lovewhanty graspsy

oldwatery

nice fellow bad drunksy

pitcherfan

leaning bread ghoz upembreaching sexsocks

bad brakesnake eyes refusal

outsnaring PLEXAPAISON

snorltwum sorpthrimst

aim anona

needlebust

green flow-out of roll-nipply

smokesaint nailknotty

gravel hush warm around

osofty knipknap softsucky roll

inunder

meet-eyes nailaching spearouting

build across aisle love-infection

blah bum Kleenex lopa lapa

lum ring smah smap smoku

round axually outlumleaping

pum! tat overlaying neonline

oblama borr

stzaprampma unga ga mox

telum lot

nox prax nitk stoo

bess rubber roll over full baby fell
knocks by leap eating utter
outracking sighsmell taste oh eyes
what (wh) pain say whwhat pain
dash slice
bonnet-fly paprip
wind pourtear mash stir up
full fish up leave leaning mungle
morten ripraise pulltake upover
raperoot oh wild animal wind!

love you look into light silver
slicystreet millionknived busclouds
elephantoganging
skyover
nip spizzle snap twatamine

PANODRAMRA

Friends, gull-benders

swat-beats....whimwhuffs...

calling your apprehension to vermillion snakes

issuing from the stage of the ear

what a spat whoosed from darndown fierying

outbusted performanc

Bap

Saturday flashternoon

hand up skirts red fields its sway

list little hundreduck

eatcher porritch green

Oh red casciddy!

Oh smashosmash

Porp

THE GRINCH DOES PENANCE, OR, A SURVEY OF WESTERN LITERATURE

Geoff Schmidt

It's true; I carved the roast beast. My heart did grow three sizes that day. I feel it even now, big as an ox head, thrumming in my chest. Cindy Lou Who sat beatific and insectile by my side; it was her gaze that gave me pause.

I was a mean one; then I was not.

I was a rotter; then I was whole.

I thought I stole Christmas; I had found the torment of kindness.

And they sat me at the head of a table three blocks long and gave me a knife and their eyes shone with goodness.

I knew I must make amends.

I set free the dog. It was after that tremendous meal (I have not eaten since; I still taste it all, every bite of Who Pudding and spiced cabbage and steamed onions and Who Hash). I left the Who's pop-eyed and bloated and leaning back from the table. Cindy Lou Who asleep in the empty gravy dish. I went out into the cold, still dressed in my reds, my breath billowing, and Max dragged himself after, and I untied the poor antler and undid his collar. And he sat by my feet in perfect forgiveness, and I knew my road would be hard and my penance great.

I left the next night under a white half-moon and this time not even the smallest of the Who's nor Max himself heard me. I crept out into the mountains and lay prostrate and shuddering in the deepest snow. And still my new heart poured strong blood through my veins.

I threw my red hat and red shirt off a precipice and entered a great cavern that would take me under the mountains. After a kilometer the last light dwindled and the dark lay heavy upon me. After two kilometers there was no light and the dark lay heavy upon me. After three kilometers there was no light and the dark lay heavy upon me. After four kilometers there was no light and the dark lay heavy upon me. After five kilometers there was no light and the dark lay heavy upon me. After six kilometers I heard someone cry out, despairing, just ahead of me, close enough, it seemed, to

touch. There was no light and the darkness lay heavy upon us. After seven kilometers I felt a breeze upon my face though there was no light and the dark lay heavy upon me. After eight kilometers there was light, and the dark was no longer upon me. I saw no sign of the one who had cried out. Perhaps I passed him in the darkness.

Out from the darkness, up into the light, I was in the desert on the other side of the mountains. And I saw elephants, and cats in striped top hats, and towers of turtles, and I wandered through these visions and still my bloated heart was hung heavy with shame, and still the wild unworthiness of my new life danced crazy in my eyes.

At an oasis, I met a creature I could not describe; I'd never seen its like. It crouched by a spring and snarled at me. "I do not like them," it said. "I do not like them. I do not like them."

I thought to ease its pain and approached, but it snarled again, then dove into the spring. The water rippled, and was still. I stood by its edge and looked in: bottomless it was, a dark abiding blue. I thought about diving after it, but the water was pure and cool and the desert around me vast and merciless. I left the oasis and I embraced the sand and was lost in a punishing storm for seven years.

For seventy years I was a beggar in a city under siege. Green boils oozed and exploded all over my body and receded, scarring me horribly, the scars vanishing under a new set of pustulants, again and again, until I was creased with scars. Along the city walls, dead men hung from hooks and dangled from ropes. Every hour of every day was filled with the wailing of women, the keening of old men. The reek of blood and pus and burnt flesh settled over me like a second, filmy skin. I saw a deranged woman dragging a burly, savaged corpse in a net. Huddled in the shadow of the wall, I slept beside a handsome man with empty, ragged eye sockets who kept his eyeballs in his mouth. Whole families lay, unburied, where they had slaughtered one another. One night I went to sleep with the corpses of two children as my pillow and blanket. The next morning I awoke in a clean bed in a strange room, my body healed, my eyes clear. I wept alone for a year in the empty hospital, then rose, and resumed my wandering.

I ripped out mine own eyes and for a year was blind. My vision returned.

In the middle of an endless, pleasant meadow, I found a ramshackle house, two stories, paint peeling, shutters clacking in the wind. I stood on

the splintering porch and listened to the crickets saw the silence. The wind blew the high grass in lazy, intricate patterns. I stepped inside.

In the brown still light I wandered through rooms stuffed full of broken furniture, mutilated dolls, shattered china, burnt quilts. Shit was smeared on the walls. Every mop-handle snapped in two, the oven stuffed full of leaves and dirt. Dead birds littered the floor, eyeless, ripped open.

On the second floor each bedroom was carnage, the beds stripped, the mattresses reeking, bloody sheets draped over chairs and mantles. Piles of silken bedclothes had been shredded and stank of kerosene, drenched but never lit.

I paused at the stairs to the attic. Above, I heard the voices of women, melodic, sweet, raised in song, low in speech. I wept on the stairs, listening to their poems. I did not want to go up. I did then go up the stairs.

They were there, all of them, all of the stilled voices, bound, many, chained, some, roped together, tethered by the ankles, dangling from the attic beams, pegged to the attic floor. Their voices ceased all at once. Dead silent, they stared at me, their eyes like wet paint in their faces.

“This is not allegory,” said a husky voice somewhere in the dark of the attic. “This is your fucking world.”

A chain rattled behind me. I turned.

A fist hit my temple as I did. Then they were upon me, those who could reach, their ropes and chains lashing me, their fingers ripping, their teeth sinking into my flesh.

They tore my flesh from my bones, ate my flesh, my heart, my organs, sucked the marrow from my bones. They shat me out and smeared me on the windows. They cracked my bones and shoved them under the floorboards. There I existed, aware, sensing their anguish, hearing their beauty, for a thousand years. My anguish was nothing next to theirs. Just before dawn one day a millennium later, I gathered myself together, coalesced in the darkness, and left, out the door and down the steps and into the forest that had grown up and burned and grown again around the house.

I dressed myself in finery and drenched myself in perfume. I carried with me always a pistol and a sword. I drank.

Deep in the heart of the dark thorny forest, there is a tiny clearing, and in that clearing I met three men once a year for seven hundred years. One of them carried a lantern. One of them bled from his forehead. One of them wore a seagull around his neck. At first we spoke of the wonders we had seen, the terrors we had lived. In the end we stared at each other, bitterly, and begged each other for death.

I came to live in a castellated skyscraper, lurking in the stairwells, crawling through air ducts, foraging in coffee rooms and pillaging vending machines. I pawed through trash cans in the middle of the night, finishing half-eaten apples, licking candy wrappers, sucking the last drops from cartons of milk and juice and cans of soda and the bottles of booze I found tucked into newspapers or folded into brown paper bags. I read from their trash cans, too, by moonlight, as I sat by the windows and looked out at the city. Memos and reports, of course, and magazines, and Jehovah's Witnesses pamphlets, but especially love letters. Those trash cans overflowed with declarations, palpitations, ruminations, seductions—the most artful and heartfelt and passionate letters I've ever read. And I grew aware of the unions, the couplings, the whispers, the touches. That building teemed with love. Alone, and lonely, and lonelier still, I stayed for seventy years, watched young lovers grow old and collapse into each other, watched new lovers take their place. I watched from the shadows, the vents, the ledges, the corners, from beneath copiers and behind couches and under desks. I pined for love until I could stand no more and threw myself down an empty elevator shaft. There I lay for two years, my shattered body slowly mending itself, and when I was whole I went out again into the wilderness.

I crucified myself and dangled for forty days and the carrion birds stripped the flesh from my bones and I was nothing and clattered to the ground, and then the tissue and muscles and veins and skin and fur returned and I tottered into the forest that had grown around me.

In an empty field I stepped into an empty picture frame. In that white world I lived for just three days. I wore red and blue spandex, and a cape. In the morning, I ate breakfast at a sketchy table. Then everything stopped. Then I would be standing on a city street, a car careening at me, out of control. Then everything would stop. Then I would be punching a huge misshapen jaw, from which an elongated body fluttered. Stop. A massive granite fist would be punching me, splintering my jaw. Stop. Start. Stop. Start.

Three days that felt like three centuries of stopping and starting, my life strobed, and still I heard that whisper, that Lou Who lilt: you are forgiven. Weeping, I knew I was not. Stop.

Start: in the woods I heard words, and they had no meaning.

Stop. Stop. Stop.

in the shade of the thickets in the heart of the woods in the shadow of the oaks i said stop stop stop i said in the shade and the shadow i said stop caddy stop i said quentin i said oh stop in the shade in the shadow in the oh please stop

That day, that hour, one hour that hung like a glass pane suspended from the branches of the oak, that day, the air seemed like water, it was so cool in the shade, it was so unforgivably cool in the woods where we lay in the bushes beneath the oak and I wept after.

oh stop i said stop i said stop i said

I quite lost my way from Whoville. I walked away on bloody stumps that healed in the night. I spoke with a flayed tongue that was whole by morning. I had given away every possession and still found that I did not want. I had taken every burden and found I still despaired.

Oh, those Who's! If they knew what they'd done!

I married a girl just like Cindy Lou. I was a doting husband. We lived in the suburbs. I worked eighty hours a week as a fund raiser for a private school, and cooked all of the meals, and cleaned the bathroom. I was creative—no, wildly inventive—in bed. I listened to her, before and after and always. We had children, three of them. Boy, girl, boy. I remember their names, but saying them makes me cry. I was a wonderful father. I was patient, and kind, and funny. I supported them in whatever they did. I gave them what I could, including rules. I watched them grow. I watched them grow old and die, first the wife, then the children, then the children's children. I buried them all, and then moved to another city and married another girl that looked just like Cindy Lou. I was a doting husband.

With my thrice-sized heart and my twelve-score strength, I roamed all of the lands. I had no home. I heard them everywhere; all the Who's down in Whoville, their voices lofting up through the mountain air, so cold it was, so pure their voices, the pure clear song in the still cold air that cracked wide the world, closed every door.

How long?

How long? How long did I wander the shadowy world? No flagellation was enough. There was no forgiveness. Each day I sent out a question of pain, and each day my question was answered with silence. I increased the frequency and intensity of the question. The silence trebled, folded over and over upon itself.

Increasingly, the query defied all phrasing. I felt the end approaching like a balloon, swelling in my chest. I tasted copper. The roads grew empty. Nothing was what it was.

At the end I came to a ramshackle house on a leafy street with a For Rent sign on it. A clamor of vehicles was parked on either side of the street: jalopies, busses, hearses, motorcycles, station wagons, sedans. From inside I heard music, live, raucous, the bass and drums thunking in my swollen green stomach. A man and a woman were singing, fast and angry and exultant: “We are the sons of no one...bastards of young...the daughters and the sons...” Wiped that mopey Who-tune right out of my head. How could I not go in? I went in.

It was a house the size of a city, unfolding again and again, each hallway a highway, each room unique, packed with men and women. In every room voices were raised in fast, sly, earnest, wistful, raucous, smart, profane conversation. In every room every possible kind of person danced with and laughed with and argued with any possible other person there was to laugh with or love or dislike. A dizzy-sweet swirl—so many bodies, so many skins, so many kinds of eyes, of lips, so infinite the shades and textures and shapes of us. So vast our experiences, so varied our voices. The house was a book, each room a chapter, the house unending, the clamor too much, too wonderful, harmonious in its inharmonies.

“There is no place for me here,” I said, and my voice blended in pure and equal with every other raucous voice, all of us speaking at once, clearly, all of us heard. All of us hearing. “There is no place for me here,” I said and saying it created a place for me, I felt the space around my body give, like settling into a soft cushion. I walked down the hall, pumping my fist in the air, proclaiming, again and again, “There is no place for me here.” My voice met with nods and frowns, acceptance and rejection, all of it weighted. My life, then, weighted, no more nor less than what it was.

Forgiven, I opened the next door I came to and stepped into Heaven.

NOTHING TO BRAG ABOUT

Martha Zweig

Easy come, who else are you? Easy
go, or I misremember: fellow whose first step forward led
my first step back, that dance.

Mother flowered my hair
florid, a mistake. I'd've rathered bats. Happier
stoic boy he'd've been too, who won me, prized

up my fingertip grip, we'd've flocked the buggy void
around the athletic field, twister between the eyes
where the blind gland glows inside.

Gymnasium spasm, alas! whispering drums, sneeze
that honked a catching disease over the Prom Queen—
she, too, ruptured, ill-disposed-of by a tiara,

& I myself never did marry once that mattered.
The children mate & wander, odd jobs take them in
for a duration, only the unthinkable interests them,

& I fix my sling in Pandora, the constellation that rises.
A knotty hammock song serves. Flying trapezes pick up
& drop off spectacular passengers, and the elegant

elephant who laid me end-to-end around the ring
year in & out still wonders what she was born to do.
Great gray ears, it's me, still speaking to you.

AFTER ELEVEN DAYS OF RAIN

Julianna Baggott

The woman stolen from her garden
mid-day has been found, alive.

She has survived in a crack addict's basement,
watching the window wells fill with rain,

the floor weep, the mattress sopping it up.
The sky has broken open.

I don't remember this color blue
although it's lingered, a mute replica,

in the curtain's poppies and dishes' dragonfly trim.
I have stopped hushing the children.

They now run barefoot through the slick grass
as I stumble onto the sun-lit stoop

like Eve, her body a tingling wet rib,
wandering into an orchard of apples.

DECISION

Laton Carter

I haven't known him a year. But
I know him: I'll say a word—then, whatever idea
it poses for him sends him spiralling. His voice
drops, rises. *Eager*,

I think. If he's charming, trying to be, he's good at
not showing intention. I've seen women star-eyed. But
I'm no authority—am bruised like
anyone else who follows an instinct for possessing

something vulnerable. I don't mean *something*,
I mean my life. And if he says it a second time—
to admit is to empower, I'll know
he's not empathetic but young.

Still, I can't lie.
When he said he smelled my hair on the pillowcase for
two days afterward, I believe him. Why
do I resent wanting?

Orion's belt, dagger at his hip;
someone practicing the clarinet; smiling, tasting
salt in the air: even then, I maintained
a voice free of trust or longing.

SCARCE

Just barely. And just
like her, never overdoing, never coming out with it,
always by implication: I smelled the letter's perfume.

What if Jeanne had gone for the mail?
She'd have known faster. I had to
check and recheck to believe myself.

What's never consummated
remains enacted—I mean,
at least for her, it's never died.

Having it *dead* wouldn't make it so.
Certain moments—one particular
touch, a word with a specific inflection—

they graft themselves onto memory: what I think of
but can't mention. I was never so frightened to hear my own
name, her fingertips tracing my jaw.

A LETTER FOR EMILY DICKINSON*Annie Finch*

You used to write lines down while baking bread,
 propping a sheet of paper by the bins
 of salt and flour, so if your kneading led
 to words, you'd tether them inside your thin
 black loops on paper, as they sang to be free.
 You captured those quick birds relentlessly,
 yet kept a slow, sure mercy in your deeds,
 leaving them room to peck and hunt their seeds
 in the white cages your vast iron art
 had made by moving books, and lives, and creeds.
 I take from you as you take me apart.

When I cut words you may never have said
 into fresh patterns, pierced in place with pins,
 ready to hold them down with my own thread,
 they change and twist sometimes, their color spins
 loose, and your spider generosity
 lends them from language that will never be
 free of you after all. My sampler reads,
 "called back." It says, "she scribbled out these screeds."
 It calls, "she left this trace, and now we start"—
 in stitched directions that follow the leads
 I take from you, as you take me apart.

A POULENC HOUR

Annie Finch

Now the land, the oboe, climbing
to its sky of opened music,
lifts the tremors in bold hills

sloped to focus in on two
faces that pose bones and gravely
give out what they've asked, or wanted:

attention, held as fixed as free
while the tip of searching music
charms the ache and haunts the paintings.

With this sound a human mouth
and hand, a line can make breath last,
so flowers and photographs steady

out of waiting's shudder, sway—
and the heavy, hunting oboe
focusses its simple face.

SCRIBE

Norman Finkelstein

You enter the city with harps and with flutes,
with drums and with baskets
of grapes and pomegranates.
You enter the city of blue ash and blue spruce,
that terraced city rumored of the spirit.

You come there as would a fire,
but neither you nor anything you touch is burned.
There is no sign upon you,
but there are signs upon the doorposts,
amulets of silver shaped like a hand
with letters upon the palm and fingers.

You wander into the little streets
unguarded by leopards or the statues of leopards,
where love is brought to you like an offering
stolen from the altar of a civic deity
who blesses the family with contentment.

You may say you have failed your calling,
that your riches and your debts have taken you this far
and will take you farther, you who have traded
upon yourself and upon the idols that you broke and
reassembled.

You have written a history of renunciation
and a genealogy of indulgence,
mistaking pleasure for experience
and experience for wisdom.
You have raised your voice against the sufficiency of silence,
and answered by silence you were silenced,
but never with sufficient severity
and never without sufficient hope.

You have heeded the word of the outside god
and you have heeded the word of no god at all,
like a prophet turned archaeologist,
a scribe turned into a scribe.

A CARTED WHORE

Gordon Weaver

From his carouses my Will Kempe, which the once I accompanied him I'll tell.

Such a *shikker* and also wencher my Will was, so bad we paid from our common purse I kept the fine, ten shillings to the players' company which all had to pay if a player was too fap drunk cup-shot to play his part, or if he was slow of study so didn't learn his words to speak in a play, also a fine to pay. When this happened I sat him in the tiring room from the theater so he'd get sober, I'd throw water on his face. I'd say to my Will, "Will, you got to not drink so much, you can't walk nor dance nor say your words from the play, ten shillings again the fine we got to pay today!"

To which, fap, he would always make a gleek against me, my Will, beslobbering himself where I sat him on a stool to throw water on his face to make him sober, "Tra la and fiddle-dee-dee, methinks this arrant Jew, he galleth me!"

I said to him, "You want I should buy you an amethyst amulet could possible charm away your drunkenness?" This English believed, an amethyst could make you sober if you held it close in your hand and rubbed it on your head, the same they believed a garnet could cure you from sorrows, which I knew from when I sold amulet charms and the Wonder Books to country bumpkins from before I even met my Will Kempe, which I'll maybe later tell.

To which he always only made a gleek, "Tra la and fiddle-dee-dee, this nagging Jew, he shrew-like scoldeth me!"

This he did lots, made himself fap drunk before three o'clock in the day when it was time was a play we had to do, which not only costs the ten shillings fine, it also made vexed everyone, W.S. and the others our partners in shares from The Globe, also the other company players and also everyone who came to see Will Kempe playacting and his comic jigs we did when the play was done and groundlings looked to be made merry. The *shikker!*

But this once I'm telling, from a carouse, he did probably drink some before three o'clock, but he wasn't cup-shot, he played his part. It was Dogberry he did, from *Much Ado About Nothing*, a play W.S. wrote which all the playgoers loved. My Will he played Dogberry so good, said his words and also did his usual asides and cavorted so, which always made W.S. enraged, but it was all merriment from everyone, the groundlings and gentles in boxes and also gallants who paid to sit close on the stage. They all

gave hands when it was done playing, and called out for Will's jig, which he did after I helped undress him from his Dogberry costume and put on his motley for his jig, which he did with the music from Jack Dowland wrote, which years after and probably still now this music they call Kempe's Jig, even with my Will years gone *starb*. This was I think 1599, this once on a carouse I accompanied Will Kempe and some gallants treated us.

Because it was custom for fashionable gallants wanted to make a name, the ones paid to sit close on the stage by the playacting, to treat players they loved to a carouse if they loved the play, which they did this *Much Ado About Nothing*, so they invited my Will to a carouse they'd pay all they said.

In the tiring room, where players dressed in costumes and we stored costumes, clothes mostly we bought from servants stole and sold us their masters' clothes when the master *starb*, after the playing and Will's jig we was, where I helped my Will undress from his motley and dress in his own, and it was several gallants there to make merry and be gay, and they invited him to a carouse.

"An' I'm your man for a bout of drink and a mouthful of meats!" said my Will. "And I'll love the man pays my reckoning as well as I love any, yet do I wake come morn suffering a blue eye ache o'er all my bones, why then I'll as like curse the patron knave paid the tapster for a devil if not a cruel Turk for all my hurts!" Which was a gleek the gallants laughed from, and they drank some from a wineskin and was eating some oranges the Orange Moll sold.

I said, "Will, don't go. You got to play again tomorrow, I don't want I should have to come bring you home blue-eyed from a stew!"

To which he said, "Why, Pinky pearl, an' if you fear I'll fail the day, then come ye with this night and you may watch me like a hen her chicks to see no fox snares them, thus insure no evil befalls William Kempe."

"No," I said.

He said, "Thou'rt too dour, Pinky sweet! What you lack in your sour nature we'll find beyond the Southwark end of London Bridge I warrant, and myself I vow I'll not tread a board nor dance nary a step on the morrow save you come with like a good fellow and share this good company's cheer, and there's my oath on it!" And "What say you all?" he said to these several gallants was in the tiring room with us after the play and jig, and they all said a hear! hear! and clapped me on my back and called me gentle Jew and sweet Jew and good Jew, I should accompany on this carouse, and if I wouldn't it was my fault and dishonor if Will Kempe didn't play the next day, and they'd cry me up in the city for the whoreson Jew caused Will Kempe to stay off the stage a day so there wasn't merriment for playgoers.

Which I think they would have if I didn't accompany, or maybe it was just they was already half-fap and said anything like *shickers* do.

But Will said, "And forget you the ten shillings you'd then needs must gift our Master Shakepen, as sure as I were too deep in my cup to speak his lines?" Which I think he truly would, not play the next day if I didn't accompany, and I didn't want to pay ten shillings again the fine to W.S.

So this is how this once, in 1599 I think, I went with my Will Kempe on a carouse with some several gallants to Southwark across the bridge of the Thames, which is the only time I did, but which my Will did so much, the *shikker* and also wench after *kurveh* whores!

These gallants what treated the cost of this carouse I went with once, so at least I didn't have to pay nothing from our common purse I kept, there was three or maybe four, I can't remember exact from then. What I remember is all was Essex men, which Earl Essex the most favorite of Queen Bess, he was in Ireland then, making a campaign against Irish was like always rebelling, but these gallants didn't go with to make this war because they was what English call carpet knights who Essex made knights from lots of his men after he won the big battle from Cadiz in Spain in 1596. What I didn't know then was Essex was probably already getting men to himself for his rebellion against Queen Bess, which he did in '01, for which he got his *kopf* chopped off also.

So these carpet knight gallants, they attired themselves in fashion to make a big show at Court and in theaters and inns and bawdy tipping houses where they did gaming and wenching and drinking. They all dyed their hairs and *barts* red, the same color Queen Bess did her hairs even when she was *alt* and hard-favored without much teeth left in her jaws, she didn't look in a mirror Court people said because she was so vain from her *punim* and also her fair bosoms since she was first so long before a young queen.

They dyed their hairs and *barts* red, and also cut their *barts* in the Cadiz style Earl Essex did after his victory in Spain in '96, to show they was Essex men. And they was all attired in costly doublets and capes made special by tailors from brocade and satin and velvet for them, with silk thread points to tie them closed, and fashion sleeves slashed to make puffs, with wrist-ruffs and collars stiff from Dutch starch and ironed with hot irons in pleats. And big codpieces all wore, with embroidery and jewels set. When we left from The Globe on this carouse, I saw they took handkerchiefs favors from Court ladies they wore off their sleeves and pinned on their codpieces for indecent show, to mean they had did filthy dalliance with their ladies from Court, which maybe they did or didn't, I don't know.

I remember from a gleek on this my Will said, which was, “Marry, an’if what you sport ‘neath yon codpiece were civil to sport unsheathed, ye roguish noble gallants would still pin your favors there, e’en if your pins pinked you to bleed, would ye?” To which these gallants laughed hearty and slapped Will Kempe’s back and mine also, and boasted vows how what they hid behind a codpiece was so big and also fat and hard no pin could prick it, to which my Will made a gleek pun from the word *prick* which was of course coarse indecent and made them laugh more merry, which is always what Will Kempe could do. And also he made a gleek from these gallants only wore such big codpieces to hide the mercury salves they had to smear on their *putz* from a pox they all had. Which made all merry, except me, which I knew it was all indecencies. Which I remember one from these gallants had a big rash on his *punim* cheeks was possibly only what English call Saint Anthony’s Fire if it wasn’t true pox chancres.

Also jewel earrings these carpet knight gallants wore in their ears, and jewel rings, pearl and ruby, on all their fingers, all this a show they made from themselves. So they hired a boy with a link taper to light us to London Bridge and Southwark because it was full dark night now, and the jewels they wore on their ears and fingers flashed in this light from the link taper burning to make us a light to go by.

Which is when I said, “Will, we should hire us maybe two of the watch with halberds, in the city night could be whoreson rogues assault us with cudgels and daggers for our purses, *nu?*” Because it was dark night, and by theaters was always rogues wanted to waylay playgoers when they left to walk home, which city burghers always wanted to close theaters because of this, and also because when it was plague people caught plague, which is why sometimes in plague theaters was closed by Queen Bess. Which was why I feared from our common purse, and these gallants had also purses big with monies, which, their monies, such gallant carpet knights got from gaming and mostly borrowed because they spent so much to make shows, pawned plate and borrowed against rents if they owned country land, not like our monies, mine and Will’s, which we brought from his performance and also by how I, his impresario, arranged all.

To which Will said, “Pinky, fear not! What needs the watch’s halberds when our escorts of this progress wield swords and daggers eke?” Which he meant these gallants wore swords, with jeweled hilts and also scabbards, and also daggers, which was the style for fighting then, a sword in one hand you had, with a short dagger in the other, so he meant we was safe from rogues who might come against us for our purses, we didn’t need the watch with halberds hired. Which these gallants laughed and drew their swords out

from the fashion scabbards and waved them in the air, the polished steel flashing in the light from the burning link taper the boy we hired to light us carried, like their jewels they flashed. And they patted the daggers they carried by their belly bands and swore they'd run through any whoreson rogues and knaves dared show us their faces or even looked at us with a mean eye this night as we walked to London Bridge and Southwark's stews.

Which is another gleek, that they could protect us by their swords and daggers, because these carpet knights, which the English called because they got made knights from kneeling to Earl Essex on his carpet, which is a way to say like the English do that they kissed his arse to get made knights, not from fighting in any war heroics. Which was proved when Essex did his rebellion against Queen Bess in 1601, his men didn't most of them fight any, just ran away to escape from drawing and quartering for treason. Which is why Essex got his *kopf* chopped off, three strokes from the axe it took to do it, after which they parboiled his head and dipped in tar and stuck up on London Bridge, where it still was years before it rotted, you could still see it was Essex if you know his *punim* like I did. Which is not a merry quip gleek, but a different kind, still a gleek.

So we walked in our link taper's burning light to London Bridge, where it was always some heads stuck up for people did treason or was Catholics or spies they said like Dr. Lopez the Sephardic Jew from Spain, but we didn't see in the dark. We walked in the middle from the streets because you could get a splash from a chamber pot English called jordan, householders and maidservants would try to pour jordan *dreck* on your head if you made a disturbance of noise in the street nights, and also if you made a disturbance could happen a beadle came to clap you in stocks maybe unless you gave him a big tip from your purse.

We only stopped the once before London Bridge, where Will Kempe said, "An' I nose Rose Alley nigh, an' will join my water with the torrents afore me!" Which he meant we stopped so he could make his piss water, a place in the streets like lots in the city where people did this so it stank from piss always, they called such a place a Rose Alley from the stink. Which my Will did, and also one from the gallants treating us I think I remember from, and they all made coarse gleek puns from rain and thunder and floods and rivers which I didn't listen so don't remember from. Plucking a rose English called this I remember, to do like this, like a dog in the street if it wasn't a common jakes close by to go to. Another gleek, also coarse.

And then we got to London Bridge, and walked through the big Nonesuch House on the bridge you walked through to the Southwark side where was all the stews and bawdy houses from London then.

Natural, because it was late full dark night now, all the shops on London Bridge was shut and locked up against thieves would break in a house if it was monies or plate they thought there to steal, all the city was quiet where we walked, because it wouldn't be people on the streets late except some watch and maybe beadles and possible some whoreson rogues brigands looking to waylay revelers for their purse and weapons and even attire and shoes they stole if they could, but we didn't meet any this once on a carouse with my Will and the several Essex men carpet knight gallants all talking merry and bawdy indecent. Such as one said to Will he should wait until after he did dalliance *shtupping* with a wench to make his piss water, because English believed to make a hard piss after doing *shtup* could get rid of a pox before it started inside you if the wench was poxed, the same as letting blood with leeches or a barber's knife let out bad humors.

So, shut up locked was households in the city, also inns and taverns, and on London Bridge the same, but not Southwark. In Southwark, Liberty of the Clink it was also called, from the big prison there, was public houses open with lights from candle lanterns and tapers and fireplaces shining out in the streets, because here came revelers all to make carouses all night, and the streets from Southwark noisy with boisterous revelers, shouting and wenches shrieking and laughing, and in the streets revelers, some gallants, mostly Hob and Dick mechanics and apprentice boys fap cup-shot, and some looked like rogues to me.

Here was inns and tippling houses which was really brothels, this you could see from the signs, a tobacco pipe was one, and the sign from the smock was another, and also you could tell from the whitewash, which was another sign from a brothel so you could know. I said to Will Kempe, "Will, we should go back, here's revelers are possible also knaves and rogues, cut-purses and brigands as bad as Abraham Men in the country!"

To which he said, "An' are we not knaves as arrant as any we'll meet here, Pinky? And mete it is, and not to fear, for wot ye not madcap Will Kempe's as renowned here for his merriment and saucy acts as 'pon any theater's stage or market fair? Nay, Pinky sweet, in sooth I'll show you a gaggle of wags and their wenches will welcome us like brothers, an' all as uncaring for the morrow as if we're fated to live forever! Now show me some likeness of a smile on your sour visage, Pinky, for this life's but a gleek, a short one I trow, but not the less merry for that!" Which I didn't, show him a smile, and we walked lighted by our boy's link in the Southwark streets crowded with revelers, noisy with disturbance, to a stew my Will and his Essex men gallants treating us knew from carouses before.

“Now here’s the door opens to pleasures not too nice for such as we, noble gallants mine!” Will said to the Essex men, which was a big white-washed public house with a sign said *The Cardinal’s Hat*, which was a tall red hat a Catholic divine should wear. Which I said to them, it was a puzzle to me from a sign for a stew, the hat from a Catholic divine, which caused them merriment, and Will said, “Pinky sweet, look ye close. See ye the cardinal’s hat? See ye not what else it likes?”

I said, “I see from a cardinal’s hat. What’s more is it?”

“Think you ’pon your nether parts, Pincus,” Will said, and they laughed all at me. And then I seen this sign of the cardinal’s hat could also be like a big red *putz*, gorged from blood for *shtupping!*

“Fie, Will Kempe!” I said, and they laughed the more from me.

“Aye,” Will said, laughing from this coarse gleek, “not a whit unlike a salt eel as any hat a Popish divine wore, an’ yet I’ll wager me odds on your divine, heretic or not, knows it so well as my gallants here know theirs!” Which was a gleek from Catholic divines or any, doing dalliance the same as any man, and also from salt eel, a coarse name English had for *putz* if they didn’t say just cods.

Which I blushed my *punim* rosy red in the taper’s light to think this, shamed I was, to which Will said, “An’ now your visage, sweet Jew mine, flares as red as any prelate’s gown, red as the rashes our gallants mayhap hide ’neath their codpieces, yea, red as your own cods when flared to arousal, what, Pinky?” To which I blushed even more rosy, like with choler, and then we went in this brothel stew which wasn’t a real inn, named by its sign *The Cardinal’s Hat*, there in Southwark, in 1599 I think it was.

So in this *Cardinal’s Hat* bawdy house brothel was a big common room all lighted with tapers and candles and a fireplace fire where the tapster and his serving wenches mulled drinks with a hot poker, but also where cup-shot revelers pissed in the coals so it stinked, because they was too fap to go outside behind to the jakes. And this big room stinked also from so many revelers already there when we went in, and the air was all smoke from tobacco pipes, which was such a fashion in London a archbishop I think it was made a law said no tobacco pipes couldn’t be smoked in churches because it stinked so bad, even if English said it was good, tobacco, against plague and also against pains if a surgeon or a barber cut on you.

And such a *tsimmes* boisterous noise it was, all loud talking and vile oaths and laughing and shouts and shrieking from wenches dallying and making drollery with revelers, which all or most I think from these wenches was *kurveh* whores, lace-mutton English called them. I could see they was *kurveh* because most just wore shifts, you could see bosoms and bare legs with nothing on top covering, such indecency!

And everyone almost from the Cardinal's Hat knew my Will Kempe. My Will, he jumped up on a stool and took off his plumed hat and did a bow like on a theater stage, and said loud, "Mark you all, madcap Will's come to play, an' if any deny me, then they're foresworn, and I'll name them knaves and bumpkins all not to know merry Will 'mongst you for a carouse 'til Tom Tapster calls him halt and bolts his door against good cheer!"

To which they called out, "Good morrow, Will Kempe, we did fear thee dead in a ditch an' you had not joined us ere this!" and "What ho, is it Will Kempe, bedlam-mad, dost show with money in his purse will buy us all drink?" and "An' is it dancing Will Kempe come to make all Southwark merry this night?" and "I 'trow 'tis Will Kempe or his dancing ghost come to haunt the weak and the wicked alike!" And other such they all said, these revelers, a crew from all kinds, rude mechanics and wild apprentice boys dressed in fustian, and some gallants like our carpet knight Essex men, attired fine for show, and some was certain I think rogues come to cadge drink and possibly rob, cut-purses and coney-catchers and hookmen from the look, so I kept my hand on our common purse and wished I had a cudgel or a dagger, something any the more than the small knife I carried to cut my dinner meats.

The tapster was a big man, fat with a round head and long *bart* and black teeth, he wore a foul apron and made us a table with benches to sit, and our gallants paid the link boy lighted us there and said he could go if he wanted, we wouldn't need him to go back across London Bridge because it would be morning light before we went, which I didn't like to hear. But this boy I remember from said he was afraid to go alone in the dark night all that way, so he stayed by us and our carpet knight gallants gave him money to buy a dinner and drink, which I was glad again it wasn't me and Will paying the reckoning for all this carouse.

And this Tom Tapster said, "And what's the pleasure of Master William Kempe and his noble friends this night? Strong drink and a maid's company if she be not too nice, I'll warrant!"

To which Will said, "Thou artless, beef-witted apple-squire, ere I dally, or if at all, I'll sup, for I'm famished near death, and needs must fash meat if I'll not perish aforehand. And mark you, mark your stick for these gallant nobles, whose guests I and my gloom-faced comrade be!" Which was a gleek against Tom Tapster, because apple-squire is a boy who bawds for *kurveh* whores. Which this tapster took a fresh stick to notch to count our reckoning, and our gallants patted their purses to show they'd pay all for us, which made me glad again, not so sorry I accompanied on a carouse this once.

Which we then eat and drink, our dinner. From the big kitchen cook-house from The Cardinal's Hat came all kinds meats for us, beef and hard cheese and strong beer we had, and a pie from larks and venison, and saltfish and chewits from chopped boar, and a mutton pottage and herrings, and part from a sturgeon fish the head and tail was cut off from, and oysters and whelks, and suger sops and a suet pudding, so much I never ate before or since I think for my dinner, all which the tapster's wenches wearing only shifts brought from the kitchen cook-house, all on trencher bread you could eat also or leave to give to any poor came to beg food, which I don't think in Southwark any did, but went across the Thames to beg such at cook-houses there.

So we eat, which it was good, and good strong beer we had, more than it was my usual to drink, me and my Will and our carpet knight gallants, and the link boy Will called whey-face, and told him he was so fair he could play a fine lady on the stage in a play if he could learn to say words written, and mime the speaking and walk of a quality woman, which the boy said he didn't know from inside theaters, he just lighted the way for playgoers, he never went in, and he didn't also know to read no writing. Which Will told him then he was no better than a urchin-snouted giglet, which our gallants laughed, but I didn't.

When this tapster asked me did I want to eat some eels, which I didn't, my Will made a big gleek from me which he did all the rest of the time of this night's carouse, with the *kurveh* whose name was Mutton Jane, which I'll tell later. Because this Tom Tapster said to me, "An' will you eat an eel fresh from the river only yesterday morn?" I said to him, "I don't eat no eel because a eel is too like a snake, which also I wouldn't eat." To which this tapster, who was a bawd, because his Cardinal's Hat was a brothel stew, not a true inn or tippling-house tavern, said to me, "An' you speak passing strange, friend. Wherefrom come ye to London? You're no Irish and no Scot, I think me, for I know both Irish and Scots, and none speak like ye." To which Will made his gleek sally.

He said to this tapster, "This be none other than Master Pincus Perlmutter, a merry enough rogue, but comes a far way from a land called Japan, or mayhap Cathay if not Japan, or mayhap Afrique's shores if not one or 'tother, I know not, for he'll not say, for he's a sly rogue if a merry one eke."

"Why then," says this tapster, "will ye say me something in your Japan or Cathay or Afrique tongue?" Which made all laugh except the link boy, who didn't know from what we was doing, possibly because the strong beer

he drank was already making him half-fap, so he couldn't laugh from this gleek Will was making from where I came from.

"No," I said, "I don't speak any my country's tongue here in England."

To which Will said, "Nay, Master Perlmutter, but speak him a few kind words, for he's a good fellow means us well, though he's but a fool-born hedge-pig like us all!"

"Please, good sir," said this tapster bawd, "but a few words will delight, for I've n'er heard the tongue of Japan or Cathay nor Afrique ere now!"

So I said to him, "*Grauber gonif*," which is my tongue for thieving indecent rogue. Which Will Kempe knew, these words from my tongue, but the gallants didn't, nor our link boy who looked at me fearful, like I said a witchcraft spell on him, but the gallants laughed because Will did.

"And what mean your tongue's strange words, Master?" this tapster bawd asked me. To which Will said I should tell him, he was a goodfellow for all he was a tickle-brained varlot like us all.

So I said, "Means God's mercy on you for a good fellow," which Will laughed loud, and our gallants because Will laughed, and the link boy, and even I did a smile for this, and our link boy clapped his hands like it was a playacting, which of a kind it was, this gleek I made. And this tapster thanked me for my blessing, and gave me his, and had us more beer poured in our cups he didn't this one notch on his reckoning stick, a treat because I gave him a blessing he thought in my tongue from Japan or Cathay or Afrique, he didn't ask which.

So now we was all merry, and began the drinking to get cup-shot fap, which I didn't want to do when this began, this carouse, but I drank enough strong beer already I didn't stop then, which I should.

Which this was the first and only once, this once on a carouse with my Will and the carpet knight Essex men gallants treating the cost, I ever got cup-shot fap. I didn't want this, but I already drunk too much the strong beer with my dinner meats when it started the carouse drinking. Such *shickers!*

Tom Tapster the bawd whoremonger said, "An' what drink will pleasure you and your noble friends this night, Master William Kempe?" To which my Will and these gallants and the link boy who stayed with us all talked, should they drink the sweetened wine English called bastard, or maybe aqua vitae, or perry or mead, which they decided to drink the sherry sack English called Bristol Milk because the link boy said he never drank any this before in his life, only mostly small beer and church ales didn't cost so much.

I said, "Will, I don't want no more from drink, already my *kopf* feels light like it could float off me in the air, and my feet and legs don't feel strong."

To which he said to me, "Sweet Pinky, I'll see thee a logger-headed, dizzy-eyed flap-dragon ere this night ends, or I'm not rakehell Will Kempe on this a carouse!" And the gallants and also the link boy said I got to drink with them cup for cup if I wasn't a fen-sucked death-token or a ill-nurtured coxcomb, none of which I was, so I did drink.

And sat mostly on our bench and listened and watched all revel in this Cardinal's Hat stew in Southwark. How other gallants went to gaming, playing the game tables, which is backgammon, and dicing and at cards, one game called gleek, the same as a merry sally, they played, and also one called echo, and one called primero, for much monies they gamed, I seen nobles and angels coins passing one to another in this gaming, and they played also at shovel-groat, sliding coins on the wood board laid down on the floor rushes and reeds for this, shouting vile oaths when they lost, and huzzahs when they won, coarse and wild it was, the gaming.

And when we got drinking, my Will made all merry with japes he said.

To one of our carpet knight gallants, the one had St. Anthony's Fire on his *punim* cheek I think it was, he said, "Devil take thee with me ere dawn, thou bawdy, pox-marked lewdster!" To another he said, "Plague take thee for a yeasty, swag-bellied horn-beast!" which is like saying cuckold wearing horns from somebody *shrupped* his wife, which I don't think he had one. And to another he said, "What's this in mine eyes if not a surly, tottering, folly-fallen foot-licker," and even to the link boy he said, "Art a puking, clay-brained, milk-livered, marsh-chick minnow wouldst lie by its mother did you ever know her, though rude-growing small wagtail, an' if you remember her from the ditch or hedge whereat she dropped ye!" To which they all laughed and gave hands, the clapping, like it was a jig performance in theater Will did, which it was except we wasn't paid for this performance.

Which I was thinking all the time I was drinking sherry sack, the Bristol Milk sweet on my tongue, warming me, drinking with everyone by our table cup for cup, getting myself fap drunk, such a waste it was for Will Kempe to be doing japes and mean sallies for no monies, except our Essex men gallants was to pay the reckoning the tapster bawd notched on his stick every time a wench in her shift only, showing bosoms and bare leg, took our cups to fill from a keg, so it was like paid for performance, and what I was drinking was my share as impresario, except I didn't make the arrangement this performance, it was just a carouse. Which, a carouse, is a waste, I still think.

I also watched all the *kurveh* wenches in their shifts only, doxies they was, do dalliance with men in this stew, rude mechanics and apprentice boys, sitting on laps and drinking from the same cups, and letting touch bosoms and ankles, and kisses they did, and hands stroking hairs, and tickling palms, and even touching codpieces and plackets some bold ones. And I seen how they got up from their stools and benches, a *kurveh* wench and a mechanic or apprentice boy, and went to a door in back the big room wasn't the door out to the jakes behind, but was a stairs went up to which they called cribs where *shutting* they did for monies paid these *kurveh* whore wenches. Such indecencies I saw and listened!

"Will," I said to Will Kempe, "here's filthy dalliance up the stairs in cribs, I seen that one with red hairs go now twice up with a different each time!"

To which he laughed and said to me, "An' will you think on the like journey upwards for yourself, Pinky pearl, or are you not up to go thus upwards? For if you'd go up, yet you must be up betimes aforehand, and thereafter you'll come down, sooner up yonder than ye'll descend those stairs, my pearl!" Which was a coarse gleek.

To which I said, "Fie, Will!" which he laughed at.

And then all called for Will Kempe to dance a jig, which first he said he couldn't because he needed a music with pipe and tabor drum to do his comic Morris, but all said do a dance, which he then did, up on a table like it was a stage, he did a comic jig, and the tapster banged a music on a pot with a big wood ladle, and my Will danced till he was sweated, and wiggled his bum and crossed his eyes and stuck out his tongue, and all was made merry from this except me. I was thinking this was more performance a waste, not bringing us any monies for it. And he sang them a round, the one Prithee Hold Thy Peace Thou Knave, and another the one called I Decree Love, all coarse gleeks, which he did lots in theater, and also juggled four empty cups until he dropped one which broke. Still everyone in this stew brothel gave hands, which everyone always did for my Will Kempe.

Which when he sat down by our bench again, all sweated and blowing hard his breaths, he said to me, "Prithee, sweet Pinky, call our maid for me a draught, for I'm feign to faint, and mad Will's like to sea-change to sad Will despite my will to carouse 'til dawn!" Which I did, and drank with him sherry sack cup for cup.

Until I said, "Will, I think I got to make a piss."

To which he said, "There's them as says a jakes, if no joint-stool nor jordan pot, lies outside, yet I've n'er seen it, so go ye dispell this myth if you needs must, or else hie thee but a short stroll 'cross this room where the

mulling fire burns hot enough you'll not douse it unless you piss longer and stronger than any Christian can, Pinky." Which he was saying I should make a piss in the fireplace like I was a rude lout, which I wasn't and ain't, so I stood up to go find if it was outside a jakes.

Except I'm shamed, and still am, to say I was now fap, so couldn't walk good enough to go outside in a dark night, so I walked only across the room, by all the revelers and gamesters, and went by the fireplace where I undressed my points to get out my *putz*, which I did, and pissed a hissing into the fireplace which it already stinked from piss, which is where they heated also the iron for mulling drinks.

Which I didn't know my Will was doing farcical, he came behind me, and when I had out my *schlong* and was pissing my water, ashamed I already felt, and fap, he yelled out to all, "Look ye all! A great snake's crawled in to warm at our fire, or is it a dragon as they tell of in Wonder Books? Aye, has any here seen an eel as long or as salt as this?"

To which coarse gleek all laughed, but I was the more shamed, and put away my *putz* and tied my points so fast I made myself wet, which I was even the more ashamed for, but so cup-shot was I, was my Will had to help me walk back across the big room to our table and benches where sat our link boy, only he was now asleep from drink with his head on our table like it was a pillow, and our carpet knight gallants who laughed at Will's gleek against me did japes against me about eels and snakes and a big neat's tongue, which they meant a ox's pizzle, and I was the most ashamed almost as I ever was in my life, there in this Cardinal's Hat stew brothel on this once a carouse I went.

And now I got to tell from the most shame of all I almost did on this once carouse with my Will Kempe, from what almost happened with this *kurveh* wench in this Southwark stew The Cardinal's Hat, this *kurveh* they called Mutton Jane, which it wasn't her true name, which I didn't know, but what they only called her.

What happened was I drank cup for cup with Will and our Essex men carpet knight gallants the sherry sack Bristol Milk, until it must be I fell to sleep, my head on the table just like our link boy already asleep there. Because I don't remember from when after Will did his performance up on a table like it was a stage until when he was shaking me hard awake to say I got to greet this *kurveh* jade wench was sitting by us on our bench. I must of been sleeping, and I waked, and was full cup-shot fap still, and Will Kempe was shouting in my ear at me to greet this *kurveh* named Mutton Jane.

He shaked me so I waked, and I seen him and this fattish *kurveh* whore sitting by us on our bench, and I seen our link boy still sleeping his head on our table, but our Essex men gallants treating the cost of this once carouse was gone I didn't know where then, but later knew it was up the stairs to cribs with *kurveh* they was gone to do filthy dalliances *shtupping*. And I seen most revelers was now gone from The Cardinal's Hat, and only a few gamesters still, and more quiet it was in the big room, not so much vile oaths and boisterous noise, the fire in the fireplace smaller, but Tom Tapster the bawd whoremonger was still there, and some from his *kurveh* wenches wearing only shifts was still filling cups from their kegs, but no more wasn't carrying meats from the kitchen cook-house.

My Will shaked me awake, and I seen all this, and he was saying to me, "Pinky, thou laggard, haggard, dismal-dreaming arrant hugger-mugger, ope' thine orbs and greet this smarmy lass would know you as well as any woman can a man!" And I looked close at this fattish *kurveh* jade, fat she was, and some old I think, she wore only a shift so I could see her big bosoms and almost into her placket if she wore one, which she didn't, only a shift, and she wasn't comely. Her hairs was dyed the yellow lots English *kurveh* did because English liked fair women best, but she wasn't true fair, her skin from her *punim* face was so swart as Will Kempe's, and dun her bosoms were which I could see, and she had by her lip a wen I don't think was a pox, except maybe.

She said to Will, "Aye, he lives, an' I did think him dead afore I heard him snore so. An' I'll make him lively if he's the price of it in that purse he holds so close it might be his child!" Which I was, holding our common purse with my hand, which I must of remembered to do when I fell to sleeping, even full fap, afraid from cut-purses and rogues in this Cardinal's Hat brothel stew.

To which Will Kempe said to her, "An' he'll prove himself goatish as any malmsey-nosed, right-rutting blind-worm, do ye apply your tender arts where they're best and most oft placed, Jane!" And to me he said, "Do ye wake, my pearl? Now here's a baggage doth know her way in full fell dark of night to any whoreson knave awaits if he'll but first tickle her palm with the proper coin, my sweet Pinky!"

To which, waked now and seeing and listening all this, I said to him, "Will, what's this wench doing by me on our bench? Where's gone our gallants paying the reckoning? Will, my head and also guts is pains, I think I could spew! Will, wake up our boy to light his link in the fireplace and show us home across the river, Will!" To which he only laughed like I was making gleeks.

To which this fattish *kurveh* Jane said, “What speech is this he speaks? That’s no London nor country speech eke! What strange man is this you pander me to, Will Kempe?”

To which my Will, the same gleek as he did with Tom Tapster, said, “Why, Jane, he’s an Ethiope come to us all the way ‘cross oceans from Afrique to know our ways, and I’d have him know a stout English whore as only a randy man may!”:

Which I said, full waked now, still fap, “Will, don’t say I’m a Ethiope, which I ain’t one!”

Which this *kurveh* Jane said, “He’s no Ethiope, for I knew me an Ethiope once, and he was a blackamoor, and this one’s not more swart than a good wash might clear, no, no Moor’s he!”

“An’ did ye diddle him, your Moor, Jane?” Will asked her.

To which she said, “And rightly so, for he paid me a shilling for not just the nonce, but the whole of a day and much of a night, an’ this were but two or three years gone now.”

“Why then, Jane,” Will said, “he’s no Ethiope, I was mistook, he’s but a German from the seacoast of Boheme I think, who like any German loves his drink, yet loves a maid enough as well to pay her due ‘pon demand for the passion paid him, Jane!”

“Who’s this *kurveh*, Will?” I said again, and I said to him, “Why’s she sitting close by me, Will?”

Which he didn’t answer, only said, “She’s called Mutton Jane, Pinky sweet, an’ you see she’s fatty mutton through to her core, yet not nice enough to sport a scrap of lace to make her seem the like of nice.” Which was a gleek *vitz* pun from lace-mutton, which English called whores, besides also jades. Which I didn’t laugh from with Will, and also didn’t this Mutton Jane, who I don’t think understood such gleeks, which she would if she went to theaters, where also whores were, but she did only in Southwark stews like this Cardinal’s Hat, and never crossed London Bridge.

She said, the same as Tom Tapster, “Say me, Master Pinky, if that be your true name as Will Kempe calls you, some small sweet talk in your tongue of Boheme, for I’ve n’er diddled a German, though I have a Spaniard, and two Italians came from Venice, a city there they told was builded on water, which must be a wonder, and that blackamoor I spoke afore, yet no German. An’ I make no mention of Irish or Scots or wild Welshmen, but those too I know.”

“So say her but a taste of your German’s tongue, Pinky,” Will said, “an’ she’ll give you a taste in return I warrant will stay sweet on you for a time if you’ve a taste for such meat as aged mutton!”

To which I said, to make a gleek, “*shiksa kurveh*,” and I said to Will, “We should maybe hire horses if they have in Southwark close by, Will, I don’t think my legs and feet can walk still.”

To which Mutton Jane said, “An’ what means that speech, which ain’t pretty to my ear, were it good English?”

Which I said, “Means you’re a nice maid,” which was my gleek for Will to laugh, which he did, because in my tongue from the lands of the Poles and Moscovies it means whore wasn’t even a Jewess, which my Will knew, and laughed loud and clapped hands, and I even smiled. This Mutton Jane laughed, but I think only because nobody ever called her maid, and maybe laughed also because my tongue sounded merry to her, because not pretty to hear like her English she said, which I still think it is pretty to hear, my tongue.

So to tell what I almost did, and why not, which it would of been my worst shame. I can say I was fap was why, which partly is why, but also it was Mutton Jane showing her bosoms and leg and almost into her placket if she had one, which she didn’t, and she was touching me where was my codpiece if I had one, which I didn’t, just points tied so not to be indecent, and Will Kempe said not to worry from monies, from our carpet knight gallants it was a treat, all this carouse, and when I said I was too fap to go up a stairs to a crib, this Mutton Jane *kurveh* said she would help me to do. So I did.

I was and still years gone am just a *mensch* like any, but which I’m still, years gone, so shamed.

So this Mutton Jane jade wench, only a shift she wore so I could see almost all, and touching me indecent by my *putz schlong* so I got aroused to a passion hot like choler, helped me walk, fap cup-shot I was, shamed, still now to tell, through this door to a stairs up to her crib. When I started to go the stairs up, my Will made a last gleek from this.

He said, “Sweet Pinky, do you trod lightly ‘til you attain the topmost, whereafter ye’ll have strength still to tread heavily and heaving hot, an’ you were like unto a barnyard cock!” And laughed, which we didn’t, me and this Mutton Jane, me because I was too fap and afraid to fall going the stairs, Mutton Jane maybe because she didn’t wot from this gleek *vitz* from barnyard cocks treading hens, I don’t know.

Then we got in her crib, which it was only a closet with a trundle bed, one big candle only lighted was, I could see dirty *schmutzig* linens it had, and I was again afraid I should spew from fap I was, and this *schmutz* and some stink. But I sat on this trundle bed and closed shut my eyes and deep breaths I breathed so not to spew, which I listened Mutton Jane take off her

shift, and I could also hear through the thin walls from *shtupping* dalliance and raucous coarse sallies and jibes from the other cribs near where was our carpet knight Essex men gallants also with *kurveh* sporting. Which also made me want to maybe spew.

And this Mutton Jane said to me, “An’ will ye do as ye will, an’ be there particulars ye fancy, stranger from the coast of Boheme?”

To which I said, still my eyes closed shut, still maybe I’d spew from all, “What’s meaning particular?”

To which she said, “Why, it’s the ordinary English beast of the two backs for most, yet some like a French way, an’ others yet the Spanish, an’ ‘hap there’s a way of your Boheme ye most like?”

Which I said, “I don’t know from ways, just *shtupping* we say in my tongue,” and opened up my eyes and seen her, the big candle the only light in the crib was, all of this fattish old *kurveh* without her shift now she hung on a peg, and she wasn’t comely. Which then I saw something more was a surprise made me both the more shamed and also almost to spew.

What I seen, Mutton Jane, she turned to take the only candle closer to the trundle bed where we sat, and I seen in this light her shoulders and backside, from all scars, from the whipping post.

This I seen, and knew she was what English called carted whore, because I seen sometimes by theaters and markets and assizes, beadles take a whore and put her in a cart, the which they go through the streets to the whipping post and stocks, and rude citizens from the city make from this a sport. From barbers and cooks their basins and pots they rent for a half-penny, and go all by the cart through the streets and make a noise hitting these pots and basins, a sport for them this is, which I seen before sometimes. And at the whipping post a carted whore is stripped and whipped, and sometimes also to stay in stocks, where citizens pelt with *dreck* and make coarse words sport also.

And when I seen Mutton Jane her scars from the whipping, I said, “*Weh!* You been carted to whipping!”

To which she only said, “More than the once, an’ it’s a foul day for Jane e’en if the sky’s fair, for the whip’s like teeth or knives or the sting of spiders, yet it’s a merry wild time for Hob and Dick, an’ never stops Jane from what she will for a shilling to buy her meats and garment and a shelter from rain and cold wind!” And then she said, “Zounds, do ye weep, man from far away Boheme? Wherefor weep ye?”

Because I weeped tears sudden from my eyes, from shame and *tsoris* grief from this Mutton Jane all uncovered by me on the trundle bed, and I was still also fap cup-shot in my head and guts, but no more aroused like a

hot choler humor I wasn't. And I wanted to say from my *tsoris* and *rachmones* pity for her I weeped, poor *kurveh* Mutton Jane, but couldn't, I was too shamed and fap.

Which she laughed at me and gave me a *zetz* push, I fell back on the *schmutzig* trundle bed, and she came close by me, and I turned sudden over so my points she couldn't untie, and then I think I went sudden asleep from all I drunk from strong beer and sherry sack Bristol Milk, cup for cup, and the last I heard from her, I couldn't see no more with my *punim* covered from *schmutz* linens, she said did I maybe suffer a falling sickness. I think I tried to say her not, I was just fap and shamed and filled from *tsoris* that they do such, carting whores and whipping to make a sport in the streets for Hob and Dick rude mechanics, but I couldn't, my lips covered also by *schmutzig* linens from the trundle bed.

I don't remember my sleep there, but I did remember from putting my hands under me on our common purse so nobody couldn't take, which is where they were still when I waked. And also when I waked I seen how asleep I did spew the bed linens which was already *schmutzig*, and also myself my *schmatta* attire some also I spewed when asleep. Which I was glad Mutton Jane was gone, not to see me spewed, so shamed, and sore from Blue Eye aches in my brain and guts.

At which I went the stairs down from the cribs, and it was morning light now, and waked my Will Kempe, who slepted with his head on our table, and our carpet knight gallants who slepted on a pallet they made from their fashion cloaks, and only Tom Tapster was still there, all the carouse revelers and *kurveh* gone, the door to this Cardinal's Hat brothel stew barred shut, Tom Tapster asleep by the stinking from piss fireplace where the fire was almost gone also.

So I waked all, and all also suffered Blue Eye ache and pains, and all was rude, insulting me with flouts against me for waking them, heathen paynim Jew they called me, and cruel as any Turk they said I was for waking them.

But Tom Tapster woke and got his notched stick, and our gallants paid the reckoning, lots monies it was for meats and drink and *kurveh* they dallied with, but not with soft words they didn't pay, also cursing him for a whoreson bawd and such, and we went from Southwark back across London Bridge home, our gallants to Essex House by the river. Get ye! Tom Tapster said, else he would summon a beadle and see us clapped in stocks. So we went.

Me and Will to our hired lodging by the Globe, and our gallants to their Essex House where they lived while Earl Essex was away to Ireland to make a war. And we was all surly and sore with Blue Eye on this walk, our

link boy gone before us when dawn came I think, I never seen him again, so maybe he fell foul from rogues, I don't know. And Will and our gallants cursed at the beggars out now on the streets, called them cur dogs, and for dismissed soldiers and masterless men and whore wenches the gallants walking with hands on their jeweled sword hilts so nobody didn't accost us. And our gallants said laments from so much monies they spent, the reckoning, and said me and Will was but kept knaves to spend so much our reckoning, but Will said them jesting sallies back, like when was they ever before entertained so merry in their mean, fawning lives, and such he jested.

Which, when we parted, they went to Essex House by the riverbank, I said to Will, "Such a waste, this carouse, Will Kempe!"

To which he said, "An' joy you not, Pinky, in thinking 'pon fat Mistress Jane her charms you 'joyed, for all the waste?"

Which I said, "I seen all her, but didn't *shtup*, Will, I was too fap and spewed. And I seen from her scars the whipping when she got carted, I was too shamed to do, now still I'm shamed when I think from this!"

Which he only laughed and said, "An' she's a worser knave than we, for she did take her price from Tom Tapster, this I saw, so if she's whipped, so is it meet should we all be, for we're but bawds and lewdsters all!" And laughed lots and did gleeks from Mutton Jane took her money our gallants paid when she didn't even *shtup* me, all the way home to our hired lodging he did.

And now, telling this, I think still this once a carouse to Southwark I went with Will Kempe was a waste and still a shame, for what we did and what I didn't but almost, and for Mutton Jane her scars, even if I'm glad I didn't do with her, which was to risk a pox, the wen by her lip she had could of been but maybe wasn't a chancre. Still, waste and shame, and still when I tell and remember from this, I weep from my eyes some tears.

And I remember the play *Much Ado About Nothing* was played again at three o'clock when they put out flags and blowed the trumpet tuckets to say was the play today, the day after this carouse. I worried my Will had too bad the Blue Eye aches to play his Dogberry, which he did so good, but I washed him clean and trimmed his hairs and *bart*, and bathed his head with vinegar, which is almost so good as a amethyst amulet, and I helped him say his words before he did on the Globe stage that day. So we didn't have to pay the ten shillings fine for not playing or being slow of study, and no monies came from out our common purse for this carouse, because a treat the reckoning paid by our carpet knight gallants.

Still, mostly waste. And shame.

But also I remember from Will Kempe playing this Dogberry in the play *Much Ado About Nothing*, how good he did, and his jig after the play was done playing, for the groundlings he did, and still years gone now I get made merry from remembering this, so *lacheln* laugh also with my tears weeping.

WELCOME

Geoffrey Gardner

Snow is the best we know
in our own season
the first the earliest
and that surely no spring at all

Do you see how
again at first
we nearly bow to it
the snow
as if going outside
we had found there
the moon
full and beckoning
How nearly we bow to it
almost as to a traveler
who would approach our house
we the light in his dark voyage
he on the journey out of what
he would not touch
going as far as
what he will be blind to
and then no farther

And this bow is almost
praise for him
as for ourselves
it is assent
and welcome

INLAND IN THIS WORLD

This last light
of day, what
does it want
to tell us?

How she lies
at rest, at
last, anchored
firmly back
where the sky
finds her coast
in mountains?

How her first
messenger
to this world
—her brightest
and her most
buoyant craft—
rises from
another
and quickly
crosses west
to follow
her to shore?

That we are
surrounded
inland from
her waters,
that she is
spent, that two
fields, a row
of trees, the
river and
a narrow

road away
there is the
sound of one
low cowbell
at my back
as I go?

CIVILITIES IN TIME OF CIVIL WAR

Kurt Heinzelman

And through it all you were transposing

in your head a difficult de Falla farruca
for cello, trying to recall where your brother sat
upright compiling his list for the Party

beneath the lamp's swinging buoy.
Your faces flushed by the same low light,
you remember how one of you brushed the other

accidentally on the shoulder, and, later on,
in the "impact studies," how the victors
would unfurl, now this way, now that,

the gainsayers from the vouchsafers,
how they preferred "taking umbrage" to "seeing red,"
and then lost sight—again perhaps forever—

of how close everyone came to embracing.

THE ORIGIN OF CIRCLES

Kurt Heinzelman

We live amid surfaces,
and the true art of life
is to skate well on them.
—Emerson

I think more of skates . . .
as annihilators of distance.
—Thoreau

When I was my daughter's age, I learned
to ice skate on the flooded oblong end
of our long gravel driveway, a cul-de-sac
spring scalloped with run-off and rain
and my father declined to relevel come fall.

Clouds filled the ice with the washed-out
look of plastic glasses and turned into roses
wavy from so much melting and freezing over.
If the dog snarled as our scarves flapped by,
in the end we chained him to save him

from running after cars and pucks and into
the drunken sights of hunters. Then, years.
And it becomes late May in central Texas.
I am entering an urban shopping mall
whose center is the only rink in 100 miles,

escorting my eight-year-old to a birthday.
She has not skated before, I only every
quarter century. How much she doesn't know
reminds me how essentials matter,
how they must be mastered, and how

I thought I once had. And today? I find
I still know how to slide, how to trust
the slippage the surface provides against
our fear of it. And here I am, at it again . . .
I let myself glide out on one foot—

then, counter to all good sense, push off
with, then onto, the other. Then, again.
Then, by turns. And then I am the one
being turned, going—by what mastery?—
backwards, crossfooting it for speed,

whether lifting my daughter out of a lurch
or laying into a hockey-stop that cascades
ice-glass over daughter, dog, and dad alike—
for one moment one almost myself
back before all the circling began.

DIRIGIBLE DAYS

James Finnegan

Its great shadow passed over us,
 over our houses and town,
 at times blocking out the very sun.
 Our necks ached at night
 from looking up at this
 gas-filled leviathan of the air.
 Sometimes you would shudder
 when it came up suddenly from behind,
 floating there, ominously, right overhead,
 as though looking down, watching.
 Some people claimed
 they could see faces peering
 out of the little round windows
 that dotted its belly. Children
 would run after it, trying to
 stay in its shadow. "Ovoid"
 was a word commonly used
 in those days, and mothers
 would hold up their infants
 when it came into view. The steeples
 of the town, needle-sharp, could never
 bring it down, though at night,
 being gray almost to black,
 it may well have come down to earth,
 at rest beyond the western hills.

Then one day it was not there,
 the sky immaculate, cloudless blue in all directions,
 no shadow moved through the backyards and avenues.
 There were many theories to explain
 its disappearance, and the advent
 of its return was often predicted.
 But it was gone, gone for good or for ill,
 and now the only ones who ever talk about it
 are the old people, and the young,
 hearing these stories, nod politely.

PURPLE

is not so much color as a place.
Where the low rounded hills
merge with sky. A kind of blue
but full of red, desire as much as loss.
It's where birds and small airplanes
go at daybreak, and return
only when the light fails toward dusk.
It's where we would build a house
if we could afford to. The view
would be magnificent. But purple
is always beyond us, the reach of
anyone's hand or eye. No one's allowed
to own what earth endows to all.
Maybe it doesn't matter that we'll
never get there, that we can't enter
the realm of purple. Patina is part
corrosion. The weight of the roses
bends down the bush. Last evening
I pointed to something out there
in the purple along the horizonline.
You nodded, but I knew what
you saw was something else.
Purple is like that. Forgiving,
giving in to each of our wishes.
Blue's red, red's blue, purple.

THREE PERFORMANCES

Janet Holmes

The lie is that he must be transparent
to let something through,

when what he must be is impenetrable
and still let it through.

Let x equal Bach, for example,
not what Bach is *like*.

What look to be obstacles
facilitate: the overcoat, the gloves,

all of Canada.

When the dancer is inviolable
the choreographer, rapt,

discovers she is his subject:
dangerously malleable,

opaque as the future.
As if her neck, bending,

her spun body, nearly toppling,
were milliseconds ahead of him

beckoning.

The blues recordings he learned from
were laced with scratches,

the singers aged and toothless.
To match them, he muffled his diction

taking a mouthful of potatoes
before he started his song,

forcing each note to wear itself out
bearing the heart home

on difficult breath.

BAROQUE DANCER

Teresa Iverson

(Margaret Daniels *in memoriam*, ?-1993)
for John Peck

“I do not think an ascent which
leaves the body behind can result in
true awakening.”

—Hayao Kawai

I

We could not name it, the death
that overtook you in autumn,
whether at home or in a hospice,
we did not know. Through cancelled
rehearsals, you were silent,
or to our questions, were “better”
always “better,” and “returning soon.”

II

Like many a young provincial she dreamed of Paris,
in dresses imitating court and pastoral,
gussied up with tucks and bows à la Watteau
—Marie Sallé’s, a *bergeresse*’s—
corset laces pulled too tight to really breathe,
last-minute backstage rips and stretches.

She studied court music and decorum,
she cultivated *insouciance* (to students:
“You should be able to sip tea all day
balanced on one half-toe...”); meanwhile
she labored at a nine-to-five desk,
seated facing a computer screen
at the Christian Science Press.

**

“Sitting,” she averred, “is bad; standing is worse.” So after hours she bespoke motion: sure-footed on a snow-crusty path in the Presidentials, or post-concert, legs turned out, duckwalking down stairs; in class, at rehearsals—Gavottes, Sarabandes, Chaconnes, Passepieds—her powerful child-sized body carved out patterns, intricate as a conch, in space, the axis of spine and book joined on the page, around which she, gliding, turned.

She practiced pliés, rises, torso vertical, “pinning” one Baroque half-foot after another to the floor, contremeps, tombées, balancées, half-catches. A voice enjoins: “Always follow the foot’s marked angle. Root yourself into the Earth with each step, and reach out through head, arms, fingertips.”

So the body, five-pointed star—muscles, sinews, tissue, joints—stretches, ferocious, beyond itself, a javeline thrust along its lines, every cell, enspirited and mattered.

III

You had the fervor of a convert
admiring equally, it’s true,
Marais, Pécour, Lully, but even
more Mary Baker Eddy.

Yours was one tyranny of mind,
and Manichaeon: so nothing of this

motion was flesh and bones' matter—
to understand body so would mistake
spirit, since by your belief
“matter was shown to be belief only”—,

but how could you deny flesh
as flesh, quelling the mystery Thomas
pointed to, his hand in the side
of your re-embodied God?

And so, those months, though we
never knew where you were,
we knew that daily
they were praying for you.

IV

“Feel the center of my back:
the arms float from there.”
Then my hand that has hardly heaved
anything weightier than a pen
brushed the deltoids' transom
cross-beamed along her upper reach.

**

Dancing Feuillet's “Folie d'Espagne,”
the three hundred muscles of the face
immobile, hidden behind a mask through which
eyes kohl-dark and smoldering flash,

emotion ripples the body, (shoulders'
fluid contraposto, an arm rounds
from elbow to a hand's unfurling gesture,
accentuated by that other stillness):
strikes slides torques through diminutive
form, variations quick, slow—
leap highlighted to the eye.

V

Because the pen will not write by spirit
 alone, but tendon, muscle, around bone
 through this arm and shell-cupped hand
 trained in the Baroque style,
 tauten-relax, relax-tauten,

this spirit-enfused and -fuelled flesh,

and now that the great ox
 of silence no longer sits
 on my tongue, I have the power
 to sing—:

Tiny dancer,
 I did not think to find you
 eyeless so soon.

Through long hours you practiced suspending,
 half-falling, till anonymous, masked
 Death tugged the other slender ankle's stalk
 off center, pulled you down below Earth,

the last name on your card blurred,
 obscure—: only in the end we saw,
 you danced with Death.

THE LAW OF GRAVITY

Susanne Davis

Ricky Borden hit Orlando early in the evening when the sky showed a ripple of colors. The city spread in front of him with Walt Disney World like the crown jewel. He wanted to feel a flicker of adventure, but he didn't. The bed of his truck was loaded with painting supplies: ladder, scaffolding, levies, brushes, scrappers, and blower—all covered by a tarp and inside the cab, on the floor, lay a suitcase full of clothes and on top of that a cooler with Michelob's—some full, but more empty.

Ricky hadn't seen Doug since the accident. He couldn't imagine his friend, who had loped along on a stocky six foot frame, now crumbled into a wheelchair. But when he reached Doug's apartment complex and Doug opened the door, he didn't look crumbled at all. He still wore the small gold dagger on a heavy chain around his neck and his baseball cap turned not backwards, but sideways. Rolled into the sleeve of his T-shirt was a package of chewing tobacco. He sat straight up and gave Ricky his hand.

"Hey man," Ricky said, but rather than enthusiasm, the inflection of his voice conveyed confusion and sympathy. He cast his eyes over the wheelchair. Doug wasn't wearing shoes, just thick, white athletic socks.

"Nice place," Ricky said, but it wasn't very nice. The pictures hung crooked; the linoleum curled up in the corners and a bag of newspapers waited to go outside to the recycle bin.

"It's a rat nest," Doug shrugged. "But it's on the ground floor..." His voice trailed off. He took the beer Ricky offered and gestured his friend toward the couch, where a gray tabby cat slept.

"That's Speed Demon," Doug said. "The guys in the barracks gave him to me after the accident."

Ricky nodded. They'd talked about it—the accident—on the phone. That distance made the accident seem hypothetical. Only now, seeing Doug in the wheelchair, did he think: his friend was a paraplegic. Doug waited for him to say something. "That was shit luck, man," Ricky finally said.

Doug held the bottle to his chest. "It was the mud. The lousy captain kept insisting I was speeding, but I wasn't doing more than forty, man. No way more than forty." He called Speed Demon and the cat jumped into his lap.

"I don't want to go home now," he said. "Everyone would treat me like a freak. They'd remember how I was and feel sorry for me. My parents

want to build a ramp on the porch, one in the can and put a buzzer in my bedroom. I couldn't stand that. Here, people just know me this way. I can live on the disability checks. It's better. Know what I'm sayin'?"

Ricky took a long pull of beer. He kept his attention focused over Doug's head, somewhere into the next room. He decided to tell Doug what he hadn't yet told anyone else. "Doug, I got the bad blood," he said. "I found out last month." He paused, thinking of those transfusions, how routine they'd become to him, to his survival and yet, how deadly. He shrugged. "Doctor said it had to have come from blood they had before they started screening." Ricky could see fear, like sand, shifting Doug's features. "Do you still want me here?" he asked. He knew it wasn't fair to have waited this long to tell.

"Hey, man, we stick together. It's not contagious, right?"

Ricky assured him it wasn't, at least not for the way they'd be living together.

"Well," Doug said, "sounds like we're made for each other." He took out a wad of chewing tobacco, a glistening mass of brown shreds, and dropped it into the ashtray.

They both stared at it.

Finally, they began to talk about their friends. All their old buddies had married and bought houses. Several had children. They were renovating homes, planting gardens, putting down roots.

"Well, it's you and me," Doug said.

"Yeah," Ricky sighed. "Quite a pair."

The next morning, Ricky put an ad in the paper for painting jobs. Within a week he had enough jobs lined up to keep him busy. He wouldn't take any job under thirty feet and he preferred a scaffold to groundwork. He refused to wear the standard safety belts. "They're too heavy," he complained. Finally after days of imagining Ricky falling, Doug said, "Man, under the circumstances, shouldn't you stick close to the ground?"

Ricky shrugged it off. "Free as a bird, that's me."

Doug didn't hide his half-wince of disapproval. The image of Ricky free-falling through the air like a wounded bird was too clear.

Ricky wasn't born into a family of chance takers. His father was an insurance executive and his mother a homemaker. He was the youngest of four—the older three all girls—so he received plenty of attention and not just that of his family. Ricky was a beautiful child, a soft light shone on his pale skin and his eyes were wide and innocent, framed by dark curly lashes. Those eyes and his smile, always slow and gentle, captivated strangers, who knelt to his level as if drawn to be as close as possible.

And yet more often than not, Ricky would look away, just over his admirer's shoulder, forcing that person to turn too, to see what it was that caught his interest. But whatever it was, was not visible. It wasn't an animal or another person or even a passing car. Ricky's family noticed this strange preoccupation with thin air, but they attributed his "distancing," as they termed it, to another source: hemophilia. By the time he was nine months old he had suffered his first "bleed." Ricky spent a good part of his second year in the hospital. Every exploratory jump from the sofa or the kitchen chair or coffee table or window ledge resulted in a trip to the emergency room and usually an overnight stay to replenish his blood supply and stabilize the bleeding, which occurred underneath the skin, stretching the normally soft and alabaster tissue to a purple swollen mass.

"Ricky! Stay away from those stairs—"

"Ricky, No. You can't jump into the pool."

"Ricky—How many times have we told you! That bike is for riding in the back yard only. ON THE GRASS."

By the time he was five, chance was no longer just a word to Ricky, it was a spirit that accompanied him, like his own footsteps. A spirit with a breath of its own, cold and forceful, tossing him one way, then another like a seed with wings. He felt pushed to do things, to try things out. As he got older, the bleeds decreased and his parents expected him to outgrow his rebellion, but without the bleeds, the risks just became more daring.

"Did you ever have the urge to just plunge, head first?" Ricky asked Doug one night. He'd had three beers and no dinner.

Doug leaned toward the stove, holding the spatula in mid-air. "You mean, just end it?"

Ricky turned away. "No...not like you'd really think about it that way. Just doing it so you could be totally, fuckin' free."

Doug wedged the spatula underneath the burgers, flipped them and pressed out the remaining bloody juice before he answered. "For three seconds maybe, or for however long it takes to hit the ground. Then what?"

Ricky shrugged. "I didn't say I'd ever do it. Relax man, alright?"

Doug let the conversation drop. But the next morning, after Ricky left for work, he got on the phone, with the yellow pages in front of him. The first tour guide said "Bungee? No sir, we don't arrange risk expeditions. We specialize in cruises." The second number he called the woman asked, "You want land-based or water?"

"Water," Doug said. He didn't tell her, but he was considering the odds of survival if the cords broke. "But it has to be high or my friend won't do it."

“Okay, water and high.”

Doug arranged for a private Sunday jump, when the business was usually closed. He paid an extra hundred for that and three hundred more for an unlimited number of jumps in an hour, in case Ricky wanted them.

The next day, Doug took the bus to Disney World’s Magic Kingdom. Since the accident, he hadn’t been out alone for more than a couple of hours at a time. The guy at the entrance gate took his money and then looked behind him.

“I don’t need an escort,” Doug said. “Can I have my change, please?”

The guy handed him his change and Doug passed through the gate and began making his way down Main Street, USA, stopping just once to admire the turrets and spires of Cinderella’s kingdom.

The first ride he tried was Space Mountain. From his position in the long circuitous line, he could see the giant Disney characters: Mickey, Pluto, Donald, stationed around the grounds, waving, shaking hands, posing for pictures with children. Snappy bands marched, playing tunes that were vaguely familiar. Doug remembered how much he’d wanted as a kid to go to Disney World with his family, but his parents couldn’t afford it. But then Ricky’s family went and they took him along. He was supposed to keep an eye on Ricky, make sure he didn’t do anything crazy. For five days he was Ricky’s guardian. When, at the end of the five days, they all got back on the plane without having visited an emergency room at all, Ricky’s father thanked him. “Douglas, you’re a good boy.” He pressed a small flat box into Doug’s hand. “Open it later.”

When Doug opened the package that night, he found a genuine Mickey Mouse watch, with a black leather band. He’d worn that watch for years and still kept it in his socks drawer. And he never told Ricky’s parents that the only way he’d been able to keep Ricky from getting hurt was to perform the daring acts himself. He stuck his arms out when he wasn’t supposed to. He stood up in the Monorail and let go of the bar. All at Ricky’s command.

His time to enter Space Mountain had come. The attendant was a big guy and with the help of the person behind Doug, he got him strapped in. “Hey,” Doug joked, “isn’t this better than lifting weights?” The music and lights blared and as the ride started, people screamed. Doug held on and closed his eyes. He listened to the other passengers screaming—voices rising in expectant panic and then crashing over the brink to wild delight. Suddenly he was laughing too. Every precipitous drop, each unexpected turn, he hung on.

When the ride was over, the attendant and the same fellow passenger lifted him out. He held them and slapped their backs.

“Thanks,” he said. “That was pretty awesome.” They were laughing too. They seemed to have forgotten their awkwardness with his paralyzed body. He went on to Big Thunder Mountain, the Jungle Cruise—there were so many rides—and he didn’t stop riding until the sun had disappeared and he heard a mother yelling to her child. “Will-yum. GET OVER HERE. Right NOW.”

The child started to cry. Snatches of music wafted on the air. Finally, he recognized the tune he’d been hearing all day. “When You Wish Upon a Star.” Doug decided it was time to go home.

Ricky met the girl that night. That morning, he had asked Doug to prepare Shake n’ Bake chicken and Rice a Roni for dinner, but he decided to stop for a quick beer at the Robinson Crusoe Cafe. She stood at the pool table, setting up shots for the guys. Ricky sat at the bar and watched her. Her straight blond hair was swept up into a high ponytail on the back of her head, in one of those bunchy cloth-covered elastics, and every time she bent over, the long fine tail brushed the felt-covered table. She kept flicking it back with her hand. Her jeans fit snug and she wore a long flannel shirt over them with the sleeves cut off. He could see by her biceps and thighs she was tight. He was just finishing his beer when she slid onto the stool next to him.

“Hey,” she smiled at him.

The bartender poured her a beer and put it on the counter. “This is Cindy,” he said. “At least let me introduce her.”

Cindy shrugged. “Get lost Patrick. Go home to your mother.”

Ricky laughed, a laugh that stayed wedged in his throat. It’d been a long time since he’d even thought about his mother and he couldn’t imagine running home to her and yet somehow he wished that he could and that she could make things better.

“You want something besides a beer?” he asked the girl.

She smiled, her jade green eyes half-closed and coy. “Strawberry Daiquiri. That sounds good.” So Ricky’s one beer turned into two, then three. He thought about Doug sitting at the kitchen table, the low hanging lamp showing the bald spot that had started far back on his head and he knew Doug would sit there a long time, just waiting for him. His big shoulders would slump over and finally it would dawn on him; Rick wasn’t coming home for dinner. Ricky thought about it and then he put his hand on the girl—Cindy’s—thigh. “You ever done it fifty feet in the air on a scaffold?”

Her eyes flipped open wide for a minute, then settled back at their half lids. “I like height,” she said. “But I’m not into slivers. You got a blanket?”

He paid for the drinks and drove Cindy to the building he'd been working on all week. It was late and this block of mainly commercial buildings was deserted.

Cindy leaned against the brick, her arms folded tightly under her chest so he could see the swell of her breasts tipped up and eager. She lit a cigarette while he set up the scaffolding. "I've done some wild things," she said, blowing the smoke away from him over her shoulder, "but this may be the best yet. Where are you from?"

"Maine," he lied. "Moosehead Lake."

"Is everybody in Maine like this?"

Ricky looked at her. "Like what?"

"No. I don't mean that in a bad way," she said. "I just wonder if they're all a little wild." He could see now that she was young. A peace sign was drawn in ink on her wrist. "This isn't your first time, is it?" he asked.

"No," she said, and the way her face became old suddenly, her eyes and mouth weighted like anchors, he believed her. Her shirt had slipped, exposing a creamy shoulder.

"In Maine, we like high places." Ricky stepped closer and took the cigarette from her hand and flipped it onto the tar. "That way we can see the stars better." He lifted her hand to his mouth and kissed the peace sign. He could smell the soap she used. Lilacs. He hadn't been with anyone since the diagnosis. He closed her arms around his neck.

"Wait," she said. "Aren't we going up?"

He paused. The pressure, like paint dust, had settled in his lungs. He should tell her. Then he thought of Doug again, sitting at the table, waiting. No. He wouldn't tell her. He hoisted the scaffold up.

Afterwards, he could have dropped her off at her apartment, but he wasn't ready. He wanted to feel something, some relief, but if anything, the only thing he felt was the hole, that aching pit of emptiness, growing bigger. He took her home with him. Doug was in his room—*asleep or awake*—Ricky didn't know. The note on the table read, "You could of called. Your plate's in the fridge." Ricky crumbled the paper and put it in his pocket and led the girl to his room. She kissed him more sweetly this time. He wanted to like her, he could see she was beginning to like him.

"How long are you in Florida for, Mr. Moosehead?"

Ricky plopped onto the bed and pulled her down next to him. "Don't make any plans for me, okay?"

She pulled her legs up and curled into a fetal position away from him. "Yep, that's me. Don't expect anything but a lay."

“Hey.” He reached his hand under her shirt and felt her ribs, like ridges he could scale. “We got three hours. Let’s sleep, okay?” They were quieter the second time. She was gone when he woke up and he couldn’t remember if she’d even told him her last name.

Doug was cooking sausages and eggs and Ricky knew he was pissed because he kept banging the frying pan on the stove to roll the sausages, instead of turning them with a fork.

“So, did you have a good night?” Doug took the sausages off the stove and dumped them on a paper towel to soak up the fat. He kept his back to Ricky.

“Not really,” Ricky said.

“Well, I hope she did,” Doug said. “She may pay a high price for it.”

“We all pay a price in this lousy life,” Ricky said.

Doug put the eggs and sausages on a plate and balanced the plate on his lap as he turned his chair toward Ricky. “You think it’s like that? Just one big punishment?”

Ricky wiped his fork with a paper napkin. “What do you think? Are you having fun in that chair?”

Doug let out a slow hiss, then he bit his lip and the hissing stopped. He threw the plate; a shower of egg and meat hit the floor. The plate hit the sink and shattered.

Ricky scrambled out of his chair to grab the cat who came running for the food. “No, Speedy,” he crooned. He held her under one arm. “I’ll go get the mop,” he said. He came back and got down on his hands and knees to clean up the mess. When he came close to Doug’s chair he looked up.

“I’m sorry, Doug,” he used the childhood name he’d always used for his friend. “I don’t know what to do.”

Ricky eased Doug from the truck into his wheelchair and then they moved toward the guy standing on the bungee platform. He was wearing a short-sleeved army jacket and his broad shoulders pushed at the seams of the fabric. His hair was white; his complexion clear and his face wrinkled around the eyes. A Chinese yin-yang symbol was tattooed on his forearm.

“You operating the jump?” Doug asked.

The man nodded. “It’s always me,” he said. “Ray Thon.”

Doug stuck out his hand. “Doug Marl, and this is my friend, Rick Borden. Thanks for opening up on a Sunday.”

Ray Thon took each of their hands firmly. Ricky could feel the man’s warmth radiating through his skin. He pulled his hand away, but Doug let

the man hold his hand longer. “You planning on jumping today?” Ray Thon asked Doug.

“We’re both going,” Ricky said.

Ray Thon kept his gaze on Doug. “You really want to jump?”

“Yeah.” Doug drew his hand back. “Is there something against cripples jumping?”

“No, you can jump,” Ray Thon assured him. “I’d be glad to have you. I just asked if you wanted to jump.”

“I didn’t drag him along, if that’s what you mean,” Ricky said. “He wants the same thing I want.”

“What’s that?” Ray Thon asked.

“Teach us how to stay out there,” Ricky pointed to the empty chasm of space beyond the bridge.

Ray Thon shook his head. “You boys are mixed up.” He looked at Ricky as he spoke. “What you want to control isn’t out there. It’s in here.” He tapped his head, then he beckoned them to look over the parapet of rock that began the bridge. “This whole city. The whole entertainment industry here is built on creating a world that doesn’t exist. It’s cheap and fake as shit.”

Ricky smirked. “So what are you doing here then?”

Ray Thon smiled. “I get to meet people like you.”

“What’s that mean?” Doug asked.

“You know,” the jump-master nodded to Ricky.

“I do?” Ricky lit a cigarette, flicked the burned match behind him. “All I want to do is get out there and fly like a bird.” He yanked the cigarette out of his mouth. “Can we do that or not?”

“Sure,” Ray Thon said. “We can get right to it.” He went over to the gear and began to straighten out the unwieldy cord.

“Can you believe this guy?” Ricky said to Doug.

Doug shrugged. He was looking at the flexible cable, thick like an umbilical cord, but still...just a cord between him and the water below. Beads of sweat glistened on his upper lip.

“Hey, you losing your nerve?” Ricky asked.

Doug shook his head.

“Just leave him be,” Ray Thon said. “Every one makes their own decisions up here.”

Doug started wheeling himself forward. “I’m ready,” he said. “I want to go first.”

Ray Thon crouched down in front of Doug. “When you get out there,” he said, “I want you to keep your eyes on the other side of the bridge. Keep your eyes there and throw your arms up. Can you do it?”

Doug turned his chair so he could see where Ray Thon was pointing. “Yeah,” he said. “Up. Everything up. I can do that.”

Ricky put his hand on Doug’s shoulder. “I’m right behind you, man,” he said. “Right behind you.”

“I’m ready,” Doug said to no one in particular. He kept his eye on the exact spot on the bridge where he’d jump and began pushing himself there. Ray Thon followed. He fastened the cord around Doug’s ankles, then helped him up onto the rail of the bridge. Doug grasped the man’s arms and looked back at Ricky, who gave him a thumbs up sign. “Okay,” he said. “I’m ready.”

Ray Thon nodded. “Count to three,” he said. “One—Two—Three!” He shoved him over the side.

From thirty feet back, Ricky could see his friend’s body stiffen in fear. He didn’t want to, but he lost some respect for Doug just the same. They hadn’t talked about it this way, but he saw himself, he saw them together kicking Death in the teeth. He wanted to say to Death what he wouldn’t be able to say later. I’m not going with you. But Doug was all clenched up, tight and afraid. He’d have to do it himself, do it the right way.

Ray Thon came back toward him. “You got a loyal friend,” he said.

Ricky shrugged. He could see Doug bouncing up and down, up and down, each bounce less vigorous than the one before.

“You know what he’s doing reminds me of the way bungee started. It was the South Seas Islanders. They tied vines to their ankles and leapt off cliffs, trying to prove their prowess to young maidens. That’s what your friend just did. Tried to prove himself to you.”

Doug was swaying gently from side to side.

Ray Thon turned toward the release lever.

Before Ray Thon could pull the lever, Ricky grabbed the cord and pulled it, sending Doug snapping up and down again.

“Hey,” Ray Thon protested. “Don’t do that. Get away from that railing. Let’s get your friend down and then we’ll set you up to jump.”

Ray Thon took his eyes off Ricky for just a moment. Ricky took the opportunity. He kicked off his shoes and climbed onto the rail.

“Hey, man. Come on!” Without having released the cord, Ray Thon came back to Ricky, holding his hands out like an offering. “We can’t just let your friend hang there. The poor guy was petrified to jump. He did it for you. Why would you do that to him?”

Ricky spread his hands to indicate he had no idea. Why was it he had no feeling in his heart? He hadn't felt anything for that girl, or even for Doug, who he knew was scared shitless by jumping, but did it anyway. Ricky unbuttoned his shirt.

"What are you doing?" Ray Thon asked.

"I have the HIV virus."

Ray Thon lowered his head. "I see."

Ricky stripped off the shirt and threw it over the bridge. It floated like a kite in the wind and then twisted in a downward spiral.

Just then, Doug began to shout Ricky's name.

"Listen to him," Ray Thon said. "He saw your shirt. He knows what you're doing."

"What's that?" Rick could barely hear his own voice. He closed his eyes. At first the breeze felt cold and he shivered, but then he could feel the sun on his skin. It was warm.

"Don't do it," Ray Thon said.

Ricky opened his eyes and squinted. The sun was directly before him, burning and powerful. He looked away, up the wide swatch of river where some sailboats flecked the water. But his gaze was drawn back to the bungee cord just below his feet. It had stopped its wild movement, but Ricky could still hear Doug calling out his name. He marveled at the way sound rose and spread, not like the weighted body, not like that at all. He listened carefully to the syllables—"Rhghi-KEE"—balanced so beautifully on the air.

ON THE BRIDGE

Gerard Malanga

the brothers Lukic, Milan and Milos, war criminals.

In Visegrad there is a graceful 400-year-old bridge,
hewn of large off-white stones, that spans the emerald-green
waters of the Drina River.

Witnesses and survivors say Milan Lukic, 29,
killed scores of Muslims in the Visegrad region
from 1992 to '95,
using the bridge as a prop
to extinguish a Muslim community.

On May 18, '92 Mr. Lukic burst into
Dzeno Zukic's home and shot his wife, Bakha,
in the back, according to neighbors who saw
the shooting.

He drove the terrified husband away in the family car,
a red Volkswagen Passat.
Mr. Zukic was never seen again.
But the car became a harbinger of death
whenever seen on the street.

What happened to Mr. Zukic?

What happened to the husband of Hajadra Karehodsie,
who was taken away by Mr. Lukic,
and who now lives in Gorazde?

On one occasion, witnesses said, Mr. Lukic used a rope
to tie a man to his car and dragged him through the streets
until he died.

What did this man do to you Lukic?

Who are these lookers-on, who are these neighbors?
 Witnesses stated that on at least two occasions,
 Mr. Lukic herded large groups of Muslims into houses
 and set the buildings on fire.

Zahra Turjacanin, her face and arms badly marred
 by the flames, escaped from one burning house
 on June 27 and raced screaming through the streets.
 Townspeople said she was the only survivor of 71 people
 inside. She now lives in France. Who are these townspeople?

Who is the mayor?

On August 5, 1994, a U.N. policeman, Sgt. T. Cameron,
 interviewed a captured Serbian soldier from Visegrad,
 and gathered the only known Serbian testimony
 of Mr. Lukic's actions.

The soldier, Milomir Obradovic,
 told how fleeing Muslims were hauled off in buses,
 lined up and shot by Mr. Lukic and his companions.
 He said Mr. Lukic and his followers
 raped young girls held captive at the Vilina Vlas spa
 outside Visegrad. And he said Jasna Ahmedspahic,
 a young woman, jumped to her death from a window
 of the spa after being gang-raped for four days.

In a prisoner exchange involving Mr. Obradovic,
 he has since disappeared.

Mr. Lukic and his men taunted their victims,
 who were made to stand on the walls of the bridge,
 before pushing them into the water and opening fire
 with automatic weapons.

On the afternoon of 19 July, '92, Milos Lukic
 kicked down the door where Hasena Muharmemovic lived
 with her sister, mother, invalid father and two small girls.
 Her husband had been abducted and had disappeared.
 She swept up Mermina 6, and her older girl and hid.

But her mother, Ramiza, and her sister, Asima,
were driven to the center of the bridge.

Milan Lukic and his brother shot them in the stomach.
When they fell in the water, the men leaned over and laughed.

The waters of the Drina are filled with bloated
and mangled bodies.

Mesud Cocalic lived about 12 miles down river from
Visegrad in the village of Slap. He and a group of neighbors
buried 180 bodies they had retrieved from the water. The
bodies were often slashed with knife marks and were black
and blue.

Young women were wrapped in blankets that were tied
at each end. These corpses were always naked. Several
children, including two boys, 18 months old. One man
crucified to the back of a door. A garbage bag filled
with 12 human heads.

So the Drina remembers.

Hasena Muharmemovic, who lives in a tiny Sarajevo
apartment with her daughters, is gaunt and nervous.

"I do not sleep much," she said,
"I am plagued by the same dream.
My room is filled with water.
I am fighting to get to the surface.
I see the bodies of my mother and my sister
swirling past me in the current.
I burst to the surface."

Her voice went low and hoarse.

"I can always see it above me. The bridge.

The bridge.

The bridge."

MINDING THE DARKNESS, III.IX

Peter Dale Scott

Ronna the Renaissance is different
with you beside me The frescoes
of Piero della Francesca in Arezzo

called *purely spiritual* by our guide and elsewhere
a masterpiece that has retained
a sense of tenderness

Cadogan 415

Michelin 55

celebrate St. Helena's miracle
The Torture of the Jew
a discomfort to me that matches

my reading in this week's Parashah
how Moses commanded the Jews
when fighting the cities of Canaan

weekly Torah portion

Thou shalt save alive
nothing that breatheth
but thou shalt utterly destroy them

Deut. 20:16-17

no longer for me
a foreign or historic command
now that some nights I say the *Shema*

Deut. 6:4

before the Lord's Prayer
pondering the unity that is God
I must deal with the nervous

rabbinical gloss: *the interests*
of man's moral progress
occasionally demand the employment

of stern and relentless methods
How did the sufferings on the cross
or in Egypt and the desert

Humash 833

- become so quickly
 a case for inflicting pain?
 Even St. Francis who received
- the instruction *Rebuild my church*
 and prayed *Lord make me*
an instrument of thy peace Joergensen 106
- who wrote that *courtesy*
quenbeth hate and keepeth love alive
 who journeyed into Egypt Bury 729
- and won the goodwill of the Sultan
 just as a few years later
 two Franciscan friars Lazaro 19; Robson 238
 1245, 1253 C.E.
- visited the Great Khan at Karakorum
 and their successor John of Monte Corvino
 became Archbishop of Beijing Lazaro 141-42
 d. 1328 C.E.
 Lazaro 142
- even St. Francis who refused
 to depart from *the way*
of humility and simplicity Bury 731
- lived to see compromises
 which led to his *moral suffering*
 while his order became more rich Lazaro 21-26
- organized and contentious
 after the general decree
 for his early Lives *to be destroyed* Lazaro 44; Bury 732-36; Robson 276
- and those Spirituals who appealed
 to *the writings and example of St. Francis*
 were imprisoned and burned alive Lazaro 56
 Lazaro 38, 56
- no sign now*
of that holy simplicity
everything dominated

by a mania for politics *Lazaro 376*
 in the general drift
 towards spiritual entropy

those like St. Francis
 who emerge as clear lights
 (*pondus amoris*) *the weight of love*

weighing us upwards
 against the weight of sin)
 must endure the fact

that their creativity
 goes beyond what was intended
 beyond even the serendipitous

like *the introduction*
of printing to Tibet *Lazaro 323*
 I think of our own experience

having seen the anti-war movement
 become itself a kind of war
 It was the same with Gandhi

whose message to expel the British
 created a new national army
 as with St. Francis and art

Giotto Piero della Francesca
 the poet Jacopone da Todi
 blaming contact with the universities

for *the harsh persecutions of the Spirituals* *Lazaro 150*
 who preached a Third Age of the Spirit
 from Joachim of Flora

The Father laid on Law
for that is fear
the Son discipline

*for that is wisdom
the Holy Spirit unfolds
the reign of liberty*

*for that is love
in advance of the gospels
the Brethren of the Free Spirit*

Joachim f 180v; Lazaro 52

teaching we should *be guided
solely by the inner light*
orthodoxy enthusiasm

Bury 710

Meister Eckhardt: in the eyes
of the deity
sin and virtue are alike

Bury 711

we see the same tensions in Islam
between *ulama* and Sufis
in their intoxication

Islamic law scholars

*Alas! This shari'ah is the religion of the blind
Our religion is unbelief and the religion of the Christians
Unbelief and belief are the same in our path*

Islamic law

Friedmann 23

Jakob Frank *not any law
because that is the side of death
we are going to life*

Scholem '74 294

in the poetry of William Blake
and the Adamic communes of Berkeley
that would erase the sins of the world

Godwin 131-35

in nakedness and acid
Tikkun ha-olam
the need to heal creation

is a timeless process
pondus amoris
what saves us in ourselves

enlightenment from within
 to heal what has been done
 by enlightenment from without

always within our power
 to help into being
 Prophets after the Law

assisted by language
 the means by which memory
 forgetting the sins of the past

remembers the best
 St Francis: renew the church
 or (in the words of his

contemporary Zhu Xi)
renovate the people
 by first cleansing our hearts

Daxue 1; Legge 356-58

this week's mysterious Haftorah
 invoking the Kabbalah
 vision of our great

weekly Prophet portion

participatory creation
with the breakup of the heathen kingdoms
(that the world would last

Humash 836

for 6,000 years
and be destroyed in the seventh millennium)
tikkun ha-olam

Sanhedrin 97a; Scholem '74 120
to transform the world

not so much amend
 as convert the world
My word in thy mouth

that I may plant the heavens

Is. 51:16

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TRAPDOOR

Barry Silesky

At first the old witch could be grandma grinning
at the boys she caught snooping. She's got two of her own,
grown evil louts, and a look stops
one from hurting the kids. The voice seems kind,
then the eyes narrow. The kids found the car in the garage
sprayed with bullets, but the louts found them.
The trouble's getting serious. There's something in the
basement, chained to a chair, spitting animal
grunts, a plate of food just out of
reach. One lout taunts it. You still haven't
got a job. See the mess your children are making?
Any of those guys you could've had make more
than I ever will. Unemployment figures worst in a decade.
Eight-year old shoots another in class.
And that's a good neighborhood. My own grandma left the scolding
to grandpa. When we broke
the basement window we caught the train home before
he found out. That house was bright
to the bottom, old coal bin rebuilt for storage, walls
of napkins, coffee, soup against the next disaster.
Grandpa shined our shoes on the caddy he built there,
each drawer's hardware labeled exactly. Took us
shopping for toys, gave us quarters, jokes, rides
each night to end at the Dairy Queen. We loved to visit.
The rules were clear: don't play in the basement.
We carried down clothes, detergent, when Grandma
did laundry and told us how she used to scrub on the corrugated
washboard that still leaned in the corner, squeeze
everything to sheets through the old ringer. Now, gray water
shot from a black hose, boiled in the concrete tubs,
draining as the machine rumbled. She told us this
was easy. When we finally see
the thing chained and grunting, one eye an inch
higher than the other, huge pointed saucers for ears,
we laugh. It's awful. It's human
and ruined. We can't quit staring. In the basement room

in the movie, the hero kid hears company coming,
 crawls under a fireplace grate. There's something
 in the dust. He blows. It's a handle. He opens the door.
 The bad guys are coming fast. He calls his friends,
 and they all climb in, pull the door shut behind.
 They're going down.

*

When I get to the hospital, you're dressed, sitting up
 and reading. The operation's put off a week for a cold
 that would make the anaesthesia trouble. For a while
 we'll pretend the whole thing
 won't be. Let's have lunch before you drive back
 to the vacation you've planned all year. It's an estate,
 there's a porch off your room, acres of prairie, field,
 old woods, trimmed paths, gardens of iris and daisy.
 There's a bike you can ride to the cafe in town, books lining
 the shelves, quiet. And time. If the food's not
 quite what you'd choose, someone else is making it, someone else
 is cleaning up. Thursday, we'll come to visit; but tonight
 I promised our children the movie they want: a doll's infested
 with murder. He grips a knife, staggers toward a mother,
 her son, everything we love. Our own
 are frozen as deer in headlights. Then one turns away,
 buries his eyes in the couch. The other says he's "not scared"
 over and over, eyes dark pools spread to their limit.
 An animal faces the terrible god, dropping
 forever in black. Nobody wants this. It's June,
 sweet peas and columbine, tomorrow a barbecue. Barely
 old enough for school, our kids haven't met
 the one on the bus who'll rip up the pictures
 they made for Mom, who'll punch one in the eye,
 demand a dollar or else. Of course they're on the way.
 And a home run, a campfire in the mountains, the long
 conversation of friends. A woman. But the doll
 is bleeding, his arm's shot off, then his head,
 and he's still coming. Next week, the long needle
 goes in, scrape and probe delivering news. Gap between rich
 and poor grows. Another bank fails. Recluse
 who lived in garden found dead.

*

And then she couldn't remember. Not all at once, but the slips widened, neurons misfiring, as if a synapse opened, then another, a flock, and the map's one lost tangle, vital directions crayoned over by the baby who found it to play with:

"Would you like a piece of fruit?"

That baby doesn't mean anything; he's after his own treasure: how does it taste? And the route's not some idle conversation—whether to go or not, which way, how, then the whole idea simply abandoned with another "oh, well . . ." We're too far already, and there's no trail. Dust her tables never had thickened. The kitchen counter stayed empty. After a meal at the restaurant, she wondered when we were going to eat. Then she didn't.

"Would you like a piece of fruit?" The cracks in the ceiling plaster spread and yellowed, grandpa's tools hanging in place as he dozed amid the talk. Then a dozen of us stood on plywood laid over red mud, each taking a turn to dump three shovels into the pit. A strand of my sister's hair blew against snow, and I blinked to notice its graywhite color. When my wife stepped toward the shovel, she was turned away—ancient law forbidding the pregnant woman such commerce with death.

A thousand dollars, grandpa said the coffin cost, each one harder for him to let go these days, though he had more than he'd ever imagined. It was the one fact we could say after the smooth pulleys sunk her to the bottom. The night he pulled the slivers from my palm as we sat on the couch watching tv, it was so gentle I hardly felt it.

And on Saturday mornings he took us to the office, let us play with the machines. When we got back, she always had lunch ready. Then it was him.

Filled with my clothes, his old dresser shipped from their bedroom smelled like their house for weeks.

"Would you like a piece of fruit?"

*

I was amazed how silent the schoolroom fell when I first
 tried the story. I told them to look under the bed
 and imagine: there's a trapdoor. There's a handle.
 It isn't a dream. No one has to go,
 but they're brave. The trip can be long, but the spaces
 are narrow. They must bring what they think
 they will need. They chose a jacket in case of cold,
 knife, rope, kleenex & cookies; a penny, a mirror
 for magic. They stared at the stone, iron rings, rusted chains,
 the tight passage I described. They wanted to know
 where it led. I gave them sun through a window,
 grass, any animals they could invent for this planet inside.
 They gave me tv monsters, guns, a "unacone."
 The windows of the old building were permanently
 sealed, light dim, numbers painted on the door long faded.
 Static and orders broke into the story.
 "Mrs. Givens, see Mr. Williams. Shana Deshay to the office.
 Use the south exit after lunch . . ."
 So Mari pokes Jesse and he hits back to bruise.
 So Ronald takes out a cigarette, points it
 at the teacher. The girl who can't learn keeps running
 into her father's sex, flounces out of the room.
 Who can follow the plot? How do you spell
 "explosion?" They all want to laugh. When the teacher
 walks out, someone giggles, someone screams
 an inch from a gun in a pocket. They're insects crawling
 over the trashcan's side, wriggling for light
 they don't know. At lunch, din rattles the ceiling,
 and the food's gone in a minute. The door's unchained.
 For a few minutes they're out. But their stories always
 end with death, a dream to wake from, no magic.
 The treasure's further down those steps.

*

Red carnations on this table are lovely,
 and when you come back, we'll ride our bikes to the play
 downtown. I need the exercise, we'll feel better
 even if the play's lousy. Maybe we'll have sex again
 if we can find time. Elections are coming, and the new candidate
 promises money for doctors, good schools, "real change."
 Not that we think he can help our salary, but we're going to
 vote. The woman with the hearing aid next to you
 in the theatre didn't mind the fireworks, thought the dialogue
 tedious, and we agree. We all loved the train tracks,
 colored lights, arrangements of bodies. If the movement
 was slow, solitude & slavery & no place
 to go—ideas half a century stale—in the New Order,
 there's no other power. We need someone to understand.
 Be tough on Japan. Bring jobs home. Keep the bombs ready.
 Stop those drugs. Fritzy Carlson swung
 the neighbor's cat by the tail, let it fly to vomit and
 disappear in brush behind the garage.
 Dickie Olson gave me a cup of "root beer" I brought
 to my lips before he told me it was his piss.
 It's not just in the projects. Your friend's story
 was true: when the rich boy's Dad broke
 his neck, the prince the boy dreamed lost the kingdom.

*

At the bottom of the stairs in that movie, the sky's
 a gray ceiling, air dim but clear. It's a huge room,
 and no way out but the way they've come.
 And there's the ship—ancient, perched
 in some dry dock, sails long gone, another century's rigging,
 intricate and dumb. The pirates are bones. There's gold,
 piles of it, though they have to leave a share for the skeleton
 captain, patch still over what was an eye. Now the problem
 is getting back. And here come the bad guys.
 But the fat kid they made fun of made friends
 with the freak. It's a boy stronger than any, and the weapons
 the crooks try won't work. Those punks are sacks
 he tosses back. The kids get home, rich. And the doll
 in the other film? Burned to ash, a spirit

dwindled to smoke at the credits. This morning, a child
came to my bed, real and warm. Of course he wanted you;
but he dozed then, and woke happy to me, and ran
downstairs bright through the rest of the day. He doesn't
know why you're not here. He plays on.

Tomorrow you'll go back to the hospital,
and we'll wait. The kids want to see that movie again.

ILLEGIBLE DUE TO BLOTCHING:

POETIC AUTHENTICITY

AND ITS DISCONTENTS

David Wojahn

No book of poetry of the past decade has attracted quite the same attention as Ted Hughes' *Birthday Letters*. Released simultaneously in Britain and the United States in January of 1998, the book sold out several printings on both sides of the Atlantic within weeks, was reviewed respectfully and frequently, and even became the subject of front page news items and feature stories, something unheard of for a book of poetry, even one by a well-established poet such as Hughes, who was Britain's poet laureate, and who died of cancer within a few months of the book's publication. Of course the reason for the book's popularity has as much or more to do with the public's craving for scandal and gossip than it does with literature. As everyone knows, *Birthday Letters* is addressed to Hughes' late wife, the American poet Sylvia Plath, whose poems are anthologized for the college market at least as frequently as those of Donne and Chaucer, and whose turbulent relationship with Hughes, culminating in her suicide after Hughes had left her for another woman, seems a motivating force behind many of Plath's best-known poems. Hughes had for over three decades kept a public silence about the pair's relationship save to act as editor of several volumes of Plath's posthumously published poetry and prose. But now, with *Birthday Letters*, readers were finally to get Hughes' side of the story. It's no wonder, then, that by March of 1998 the volume had sold over 125,000 copies in the U.S. alone—during a time when print runs for poetry are normally less than a tenth of that amount.¹ Sales continued to climb in the following months, and Hughes had sold the movie rights to the volume. The Merchant-Ivory team has a film adaptation of the book in development, and leaked portions of Ivory's script, entitled *The Dead Bell*, have made their way onto several of the Web sites devoted to Plath. Merchant-Ivory has even signed on, with Hughes' apparent blessing, the actors who will portray the pair. British actor Gary Oldman seems to have been selected for the role of Hughes, and, after actresses such as Nicole Kidman and Jodie Foster had been rumored to be in contention for the part, the role of Plath was awarded to Gwyneth Paltrow. The May, 1998, issue of *Vanity Fair* quotes Hughes' reaction to hearing Paltrow read for the part of Plath:

“She *was* Sylvia. When she read ‘Lady Lazaurus,’ my hair stood on end—it was as if a time machine had shuttled me back half a lifetime ago.”²

Unfortunately, however, the public may have to wait a very long time before seeing *Birthday Letters* on the big screen. The movie is likely to be put on hold indefinitely now that the strangest chapter of all in the Hughes-Plath saga has begun to unfold. The British daily, *The Observer*, was the first to break the story early in June, and it has since rocked the literary world, becoming a scandal which even threatens to shake the foundations of the several British governmental ministries. On June 8, 1999, *The Observer* revealed what had, for five decades, been a secret known only to a handful of operatives in the British Intelligence Service, MI5. Neither Ted Hughes nor Sylvia Plath ever existed.³ The pair were in fact the product of a hugely elaborate literary hoax—or more properly a literary conspiracy—originally concocted by MI5 in the 1950s as one of the more Byzantine operations of the Cold War, and continuing in an ever-more greatly elaborate form into the recent past, when the escalating costs of the hoax prompted the Blair government to downsize the project by alleging that “Ted Hughes” had died. That the intelligence community would be willing to perpetuate a hoax of this particular type and magnitude may at first seem to beggar the imagination. But the reasons for the continuing existence of MI5’s Hughes-Plath operation are in some respects self-evident ones, typical of most government agencies. What started as a simple project of minor disinformation and espionage turned instead into a governmental White Elephant fed by a bloated beauracracy. Although the exact budgetary figures remain secret, it is likely that the MI5 division responsible for perpetuating the Hughes-Plath Hoax, code named Operation Ariel, at one time employed between one hundred and one hundred and fifty full-time workers, operating from a secret suite of offices in Whitechapel. Over the years this group has been responsible for creating the entire oeuvre, published and in manuscript form, of Hughes and Plath, for training and coaching the agents assigned to act the parts of Hughes, Plath, and their family members, and for sustaining the campaign of disinformation designed to prevent readers and scholars from discovering the government’s ruse. It appears that the secrecy of the operation began to unravel this spring when retired MI5 operative Michael Weldon, one of the four agents who over the years had been assigned to impersonate Hughes, made a deathbed confession of his role in the conspiracy to freelance journalist Wilfred Olsen. Olsen then sold the story to *The Observer* and the rest is history, though history of a most improbable sort, proving once again that fact is stranger than fiction.

Operation Ariel seems to have begun in the middle 1950s, when a group of MI5 specialists on “cultural intelligence” surveyed the post-war British literary scene and in a top-secret white paper came to several troubling conclusions, one of which was that poetry in England was in a bad way. British literature, like the British empire itself, was in decline, and of all the literary arts, poetry seemed the most moribund. T.S. Eliot, the only poet of international stature dwelling in the U.K., was not a native Briton, and had lapsed into poetic silence. The younger generation of poets was indifferently talented, and Philip Larkin and Thom Gunn, its most promising figures, were problematic, at least as far as the government was concerned. Larkin, a balding and misanthropic Hull librarian, was decidedly unsexy, hardly the dashing and Bryonic figure who MI5 felt would be required for the salvation of British poesy. And Gunn, although he surely cut a sexier figure than Larkin, was sexy in the wrong way: Agency surveillance and phone taps revealed what several operatives had long suspected: Gunn was “an invert.” The white paper concluded by noting with alarm that poetry in the Soviet Union and in several of its Eastern bloc satellites was thriving. A “poetry gap” existed, and MI5 arrived at a novel means to close it. Seeing that no suitable young British poet existed, a small special operations unit of the agency set about creating one, and so, toward the end of 1955, “Ted Hughes” was born, savior-to-be of British poetry. The name was suitably manly, and the character was given a background deemed appropriate for a poet designed to act as the bard of a democratic and classless post-war Britain. “Theodore Hughes,” and “T.H. Hughes,” the poet’s original monikers, were rejected for sounding elitist. A cover story for Hughes was devised—an upbringing on a Yorkshire farm, a B.A. from Cambridge—and an operative was selected to act the part of Hughes in public. Hughes’ verse, however, would be authored by a committee of specially trained agents operating out of a small basement office in Whitechapel. Within its first two years the operation was judged a rousing success, so much so that MI5 sought to expand its range by creating an American poetess to act as Hughes companion, and it is at this point that Operation Ariel became a joint MI5 and CIA operation. In order to symbolically present the spirit of Britain and America’s close alliance in the Cold War, Sylvia Plath was devised, and several young CIA operatives, most of them recent graduates of Seven Sisters schools such as Smith and Vassar, were sent to London to assist the project. Various individuals of the Project Ariel office team devised the poems which later appeared in Hughes’ first two collections, *Hawk in the Rain* and *Lupercal*, as well as those poems which were gathered in Plath’s debut volume, *The Colossus*. As the poems were composed, microfilm

versions of their drafts and finished versions were left at various drop-off points for the operatives impersonating Plath and Hughes. Although none of the members of the Ariel Project's office team had written much verse prior to their assignment to the project, perusal of some literary journals and anthologies gave the team its models. Some of the poems were co-written by project members; others were the work of operatives working alone. Winnifred Eimers, a young CIA recruit who is now living in retirement in Florida, and who later played a crucial role in the CIA's botched efforts to assassinate Castro, and a young Cornishwoman named Millicent Shollworth seem to have been the most prolific authors of the Hughes and Plath oeuvre. It is Shollworth, in fact, who may be the indirect cause for the formation of the Plath cult—which seems to have arisen for reasons of expedience having little to do with the Ariel Project's original intents: Shollworth, born into a family of radical socialists and fluent in both Russian and Polish, made contact with Soviet agents during a 1961 trip to Frankfurt. Alerted to the success of the Ariel Project, and suffering major setbacks in their own poetry fabrication operations, the Russians sought both intelligence information and creative support. Shollworth provided them with both, and for two years acted as a double agent before defecting to Russia in February, 1963. Shollworth is one of the most brilliant and devious figures of Cold War espionage, and her defection hurt the Ariel Project greatly, for MI5 quickly realized that no other of its operatives could turn out Plath poetry of quite the same intensity and quality. Embarrassed at the loss of its best poetry operative to the KGB, MI5 decided to call in from the cold its agent impersonating Plath, and close down the Plath division of Project Ariel entirely. A cover story was then devised in which Plath would kill herself in reaction to Hughes' infidelity and as a consequence of her long history of mental instability. There would be no more Plath poems.

And yet the fact that there would be no more Plath poems did not stop the Plath Juggernaut, a consequence wholly unforeseen by MI5. The public, attracted both to the Plath fabrications themselves and to the glamorously tragic circumstances which had been invented to explain her death, could not get enough of the dead poet, and since 1963 the primary purpose of Project Ariel has been to simultaneously propagandize for the Plath Industry and to conceal the Plath/Hughes conspiracy; the 1963 decision to kill Plath off by suicide is one that many in the agency came to rue. As one anonymous operative who worked on the project during the crisis year of 1963 told the BBC last month, "We would all have been better off if we'd done her in some other way. No one makes a cult of someone killed by a falling

brick or run over by a lorry.” Although the staff of the Ariel Project has grown ever-larger over the years, Plath’s estate has generated a considerable income through book sales and reprint permission fees, and this has turned out to be an unforeseen boon to the agency. In his most recent *Observer* piece journalist Wilfred Olsen alleges that in the mid-1980s at least some of this money was laundered by MI5 operatives Tomas Disch and William A. Logan through a Cayman island numbered account and used by MI5 and the CIA to fund various covert activities in Latin America. Both Logan and Disch were later found garroted in a Guatemala City brothel, probably the victims of a Sandanista hit squad. In other words, Lady Lazarus helped to purchase Contra rifles, and was responsible for more deaths than her own imaginary one. Over the years, the Project’s Plath-related activities have tended to overshadow those centered around Hughes, so much so that assignment to the project’s Hughes bureau was seen by many in the agency as the kiss of death, the province of has-beens and burnt-out cases charged primarily to pen children’s books and laureate doggerel about royal christenings. The agency’s neglect of its Hughes activities’ production in recent years eventually became a source of embarrassment for MI5, and the creation of *Birthday Letters* last year was meant to rectify this problem. It was designed to be the poet’s final production, and thereafter Hughes, too, would be killed off.

Anyone who has watched the news in recent weeks is aware of the repercussions of the Plath/Hughes hoax’s exposure, both in London and to a lesser extent in Washington. Investigations have been launched by Parliament, the Blair government has replaced a number of ministers, and it seems only a matter of time before Operation Ariel is shut down for good. In Washington, Senator Jesse Helms, bemoaning the CIA’s involvement in a project deemed by him as frivolous, has used the scandal as an opportunity to once again call for the abolition of the NEA. Winnifred Eimers’ subsequent appearance on *Nightline* to explain to Ted Koppel how she composed certain of the Plath poems garnered ratings which hadn’t been seen since the Simpson trial. The media’s feeding frenzy about all things Ariel in recent weeks has been so rabid as to overwhelm those voices, largely from the academy, who have speculated about what all this means for contemporary literature. After all, two of our era’s principal poets, one of whom has been seen by many as a feminist and literary martyr, and whose poems have been the most enduring example of what has come to be known as “confessional” poetry, have been shown to be forgeries. Critics of a Foucauldian bent have seen the Plath/Hughes hoax as further proof that it is culture and power dynamics which create literary texts, and not authors. “This hoax makes the

best argument yet for anti-essentialism,” wrote Language Poet Charles Bernstein when the scandal broke.⁴ And surely the literary reputations of Plath and Hughes will now undergo a reappraisal. Here is how Richard Howard regards the situation: “The easy felicities of the Plath authors’ more canonical strophes, for many readers, myself regrettably included, have always carried with them the faintly detestable aroma of mere *applied* poetry. I have never regarded the oeuvre with the enthusiasm typical of the Plath authors’ legions of admirers. Today the work must be regarded with an even more assertive suspicion and—dare I say it?—disdain.”⁵ And yet for others the significance of the Plath/Hughes canon remains undiminished. As actor David Duchovny put it on a recent airing of CNN’s *Crossfire* devoted to the scandal, “Plath’s poems have changed my life, and my way of thinking. I guess I’ll always return to them; it doesn’t matter if they were written by her or by a committee of British bureaucrats or a coven of literary-minded extraterrestrials.” And Duchovny may indeed speak for many of us as we continue to survey the consequences of our knowledge that Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes exist only in the form of their poetry. Perhaps that particular form of existence is all that readers require; perhaps not.

Ah, post-modernism. Forgive me, gentle reader, for in the course of this tale adding certain embellishments to the facts. I admit to the possibility that Ted Hughes may have indeed existed, that Sylvia Plath may have existed as well, and that they themselves, or individuals quite similar to them, may have at one time or another written at least some of their poems. But in an era in which all of our negotiations with fact, all of our confrontations with what once was known as reality, have become ever more convoluted and daunting, in which virtual realities have cheerfully annexed the last remaining provinces of self-evident truth, in which po-mo fragmentation, pastiche, and a Pavlovian tic of irony as the proper response to all human endeavors informs or afflicts us all, the question is no longer, “Is it real or is it Memorex?”—it is instead that *everything* is Memorex, and what shall we do now? This condition creates all manner of hilarity, strangeness, ethical relativism, and what might be called factual relativism. During the weeks in which I first worked on these pages, a university where I once taught allowed a Holocaust denier with spurious academic credentials to give a speech on its campus—after all, shouldn’t “all sides” be represented regarding this “issue”?—; Bob Hope died at the hands of an AP wire-service report, was eulogized in Congress, and then, in the fashion of Christ and Osiris, was miraculously resurrected; a fired reporter of *The New Republic*

admitted that twenty-seven of the forty-one stories he wrote for the magazine were fabrications; serial killer Henry Lee Lucas, who had confessed to some two hundred slayings, but probably inflated that figure, finally was given a date with Old Sparky—although there is little evidence that the particular murder he is being executed for is actually one of his productions; a group of teenagers in an Atlanta suburb was arrested for passing counterfeit twenties, using as their printing press the same model of three-hundred dollar ink-jet printer with which I will copy this essay; and the radio blaring from the used car lot across my street had twice in as many days oozed “Unforgettable,” a wretched “virtual” duet sung by Nat King Cole and his daughter Natalie, its recording completed several decades after the former’s death. This bit of necrophilical treacle was then replaced by a news report of the death of Khymer Rouge generalissimo Pol Pot, perhaps the most infamous practitioner of moral relativism of our time, who declared 1976 the Year Zero, and then murdered two million in order to commemorate the birth of this blessed New Order. But wait—there seems to have been a factual glitch even here: several of the journalists who were brought to view and video the remains claimed that the corpse rotting in the jungle heat beneath their klieg lights could not be Pol Pot. Wrong morphology, something about facial scars that are missing; the “real” Pol Pot apparently had less hair, what there was of it was gray, and he was presumably too busy eluding capture to enroll in the Men’s Hair Club or purchase some Grecian Formula. Is it possible that Pol Pot’s death was faked? The decomposing body may have been a real one, but it was a Memorex Antichrist. And who would manufacture this stinking simulacrum?

Seeing of course is never believing, which is why the Zapruder Film is the century’s most studied example of cinematic art. And what, by the way, *is* art? If I were to aim my mouse to close this document, fire up my printer, and copy on the ink jet a pair of twenties, would I be able to call them poems? I am, after all, an author of poetry and not a counterfeiter, and with a poet’s characteristic hubris see myself as one of the last remaining custodians of the authentic. But then I must remind myself that authors no longer exist, having all gone the way of the dinosaur around the time of Foucault’s famous 1969 essay, in which I have become instead a rather dreary and ineffectual cultural product, “linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses.”⁶ Foucault dances upon the grave of my kind, declares his own version of Year Zero, and tells us that we have been replaced by a new sort of creature which he christens, “the author function.” It’s an intriguing term, sounding more like an option you can order on a luxury car than anything you could

regard as bardic. In other words, were I to print up my counterfeit twenties, I couldn't even claim them as my own, although, ironically, I *could* make the claim that the bills were not in fact counterfeit, in the same way that Andy Warhol could assert that the various hangers-on from his Factory who he sent out to impersonate him on lucrative campus speaking tours were just as good as the real thing. And who's to say that Andy wasn't right? He would have known best, after all.

But I'm telling you things which you already know, and have known for quite some time. As Hugh Kenner put it twenty years ago in a study which he entitled *The Counterfeiters*, "We are deep, these days, in the counterfeit, and have long since had to forego easy criteria for what is 'real.'" Yet no longer are we merely "deep" in the counterfeit: today we are in over our heads. But is this water real or is it Memorex? Words once synonymous with truth and actuality today seem quaint—"authenticity" snorts right-wing pundit George Will in a recent column, "that's a '60s word"—while words such as counterfeit, hoax, forgery, fabrication, plagiarism, deception, and fake have come to seem woefully inadequate in defining the degrees, subtleties, and purposes of the falsehoods we perpetrate and which are perpetrated upon us, as well as the necessary fictions, the anodyne masks, and various alternative realities which some of us who dwell outside the mainstream must inhabit. Drag queens will sometimes tell you that their personae are just as real as their other selves, and who is to say this claim isn't true? Like the Eskimos with their thirty-seven words for different kinds of snow, our culture demands a taxonomy of the bogus. As a gay friend of mine put it as we waited in line for a screening of *The Truman Show*, there is "good bogus" and "bad bogus," much in the way that there is good cholesterol and bad cholesterol. And there are ever so many shadings of bogus which range between these poles.

One small example of why this is the case can be seen in the continuing controversy over the Araki Yasusada hoax—which is, I should add, a real hoax, not a phony hoax in the manner of my Hughes/Plath conspiracy. Of course there are some Yasusada proponents who would claim he is not, strictly speaking, a hoax, though even they will admit that a corporeal Yasusada never existed. Who is Yasusada? There seem to be two prevailing opinions. The first offers the more certain definition. He was born in Kyoto in 1907, studied Western literature at Hiroshima University but left before finishing a degree. He worked as a military postman in Hiroshima, and survived the atomic bomb blast of 1945, which killed his wife and one of his two daughters. The surviving girl, Akiko, perished in 1949 as a result of radiation sickness. Yasusada himself died of cancer in 1972. He was fluent

in Western languages, and was an eager but unpublished participant in several Japanese avant garde literary movements, most prominently in the “Layered Clouds” group. He was influenced by classical Japanese poetry, as well as by modern Western writers, two of his favorite of whom were Roland Barthes and the Beat poet Jack Spicer. His importance as a poet began to be recognized when, as his translator/editors Tosa Motokiyu, Ojiu Norinaga, and Okura Kyojin write,

The notebooks of the Hiroshima poet Araki Yasusada were discovered by his son in 1980, eight years after the poet’s death. The manuscripts comprise fourteen spiral notebooks whose pages are filled with poems, drafts, English assignments, diary entries, recordings of Zen dokuson encounters, and other matter. In addition, the notebooks are interleaved with hundreds of insertions, including drawings, received correspondence, and carbon copies of the poet’s letters.⁸

This biographical sketch, with small variations, appeared along with translations of the Yasusada documents which were published with some frequency in a number of quarterlies, among them *Grand Street*, *Conjunctions*, *Stand*, and—in the po-biz equivalent of making the cover of *Rolling Stone*—as a special supplement in *American Poetry Review*, which also reproduced a pencil portrait of Yasusada and included bio sketches of his three translators. As Marjorie Perloff later noted in what will probably be the definitive essay on his work, Yasusada had a Zelig-like capacity to be a poet for every aesthetic, every poetic party line. Those craving what—thanks to Carolyn Forché’s problematic Norton anthology *Against Forgetting*—has come to be called “a poetry of witness,” had a bona-fide Hiroshima survivor to champion, a Hibakusha who also happened to be a little more talented (at least for Western sensibilities) than other Hiroshima survivor poets whose work had appeared in translation. Avant gardists had a genuine specimen, too. Language poet Ron Silliman singled out for rapturous praise a Yasusada effort entitled “Telescope and Urn,” largely on the basis of its arresting first line, “The image of the galaxies spreads out like a cloud of sperm.” Yasusada was, said Silliman, “a poet whose work simply takes my breath away.”⁹ The cause of multi-culturalism was also of course served by Yasusada, for although he was influenced by Anglo-European modernism, his Zen-inflected oxymorons seemed to wonderfully represent a non-Eurocentric “other-ness.” And even so-called “mainstream” poets

who would chose to remain aloof from the identity politics and aesthetic factionalism of today's poetics, found something to admire in the emotional nakedness and confessional vulnerability of certain of the Yasusada poems. Yasusada was poised on the edge of posthumous fame: Wesleyan University Press was about to issue a book-length selection of his poems and notebook entries; he was also to be represented in the second volume of Pierre Joris and Jerome Rothenberg's massive anthology of twentieth-century world poetry, *Poems For The Millennium*.¹⁰ Were the McArthur Foundation awards not limited to living writers, Yasusada would likely to have added that prize to his resume as well.

The other definition of Araki Yasusada is best conveyed by the following announcement printed in the pages of the Sept./Oct., 1996, issue of *American Poetry Review*:

To Our Readers:

We regret the publication of "Doubled Flowering: From the Notebooks of Araki Yasusada" in our July/August issue. Neither Araki Yasusada nor the three names identified as his translators, "Tosa Motokiyo," "Okura Kyojin," "Ojiu Norinaya" are actual persons. The facts in the note, "Introducing Araki Yasusada" as well as the "Portrait of Yasusada," are a hoax. All of the materials came to us from Kent Johnson of Highland Community College in Freeport, Illinois, an actual person who represented himself as the close friend of the ill and incapacitated 'translator' Tosa Motokiyo. Kent Johnson has admitted the above ruse, and has claimed the materials were written by an unnamed American poet whose name he refuses to reveal. Still other persons may be involved, as the hoax was carried out with the aid of a post office box in Sebastapol, California, an address in Tokyo, an address in London, and a disconnected phone number in Springfield, Illinois.¹¹

So there you have it. The feces had hit the (Japanese) fan. And the reactions to this occurrence are perhaps as interesting as the Yasuada poems themselves. The editors who had been duped were of course furious. Wesleyan deep-sixed the book-length manuscript, "concerned about the ethical issues involved."¹² Poet Arthur Vogelsang, an editor of *APR*, was quoted in an article in *Lingua Franca* as calling the Yasusada hoax "a criminal act," and *Conjunctions* editor Bradford Morrow did an about-face regarding the

poems he had earlier published, castigating them as “coy, self-satisfied, glib.”¹³ The Japanese media saw the case as another example of Japan-bashing, and a group of Asian-American writers co-signed a statement denouncing the Yasusada writings as racist.¹⁴ With hindsight it was pointed out that many of the Yasusada documents should have been suspect from the start. Yasusada seems to have sung the praises of certain writings by Barthes, Celan, and Spicer before they were even written, and Hiroshima University, which Yasusada was supposed to have attended in the ’20s, was not founded until 1949.¹⁵ And the material itself should have been a giveaway: John Solt, an Amherst professor of Japanese culture, characterized it all as “Japanized crap,” crudely devised to fit Western preconceptions of Japanese culture.¹⁶ Also, certain of the documents are so implausible as to have been intentionally comic: could Yasusada *really* have preserved so many English-language exercises done for an instructor named “Mr. Rogers,” a Scotsman who seems to have done his teaching in a kilt? (“What is the meaning of those broom-like forms attached to the front of his skirt?” asks Yasusada.) Would he *really* have attempted to engage in a correspondence with Jack Spicer, who himself engaged in an imaginary correspondence with Garcia Lorca and “translated” Lorca poems which were in fact his own creations? And what about that pencil portrait of Yasusada published in *APR* and later in *Lingua Franca*? A friend of mine who is a connoisseur of Hong-Kong action films swears that the sketch is actually one of Hong Kong movie mogul Run Run Shaw. But perhaps Yasusada merely resembles him—yet, to speculate about this may be another way of saying that all Asians look alike. One writer even claimed that “Araki Yasusada” is an anagram for “Klaatu, niktū, barata,” Patricia Neal’s famous command to Gork the Robot in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, although this is plainly not the case.¹⁷ No wonder that editors and readers felt taken in; they should have known in the first place.

Furthermore, the scandal around the hoax seems to have refused to go away, and—again—for some fascinating reasons. A year after the news broke, I found myself at a party during a writers’ conference where I was teaching along with Arthur Vogelsang. (Or someone who I presume to be Arthur Vogelsang: unlike Andy Warhol, poets haven’t the resources to send out impersonators.) Never having been exactly diplomatic in situations such as this, I asked him to talk about the Yasusada hoax, and about Marjorie Perloff’s recently published *Boston Review* essay on Yasusada, which was largely sympathetic toward Yasusada, but rather merciless in regard to certain of the motives of editors he had duped. Like an elderly widow talking to police detectives about the gigolo who’d bilked her of her savings,

Arthur spoke of Yasusada with a mixture of astonishment and rage. And could you blame him for this? As for Perloff's essay, he admitted it was pretty smart, smarter still if you were to share Arthur's suspicion—later expressed by him in a *Boston Review* symposium on the hoax—that Perloff herself is the likely author of the Yasusada documents.¹⁸ Johnson, according to this and similar scenarios, may be only an “unindicted co-conspirator” who might be working with a whole syndicate of Yasusada hoaxers, whose ranks may include the critic Eliot Weinberger (who is, with Perloff, one of Yasusada's most fervent supporters, having called him “the greatest poet of Hiroshima and its most unreliable witness”), Johnson's former teacher the poet Howard McCord, and various others who not even the resources and doggedness of Kenneth Starr would be able to identify.¹⁹ Johnson, for his part, has responded to all this with some spin controlling faxes to editors he'd bamboozled, with a slippery interview published in *Denver Quarterly*, and a continued insistence that if Yasusada doesn't exist, his creator Tosa Motokiyu—who Johnson claims was his roommate in Milwaukee in the 1980s—certainly does, or did.²⁰ It seems that Motokiyu—or “Moto,” as Johnson nicknames him—died of cancer shortly before the scandal broke. Some of these interviews with Johnson are alleged to have been co-written with an associate named Javier Alvarez, who lives in Mexico City. Never mind that Javier Alvarez is also the name of a Bolivian diplomat who appears in the Yasusada notebooks as a literary acquaintance of Yasusada's and who died in the Hiroshima bomb blast. Perhaps this is another Javier Alvarez—or perhaps Javier has been miraculously resurrected. (If Bob Hope can do it, why can't he?) There's also a Russian critic named Mikhail Epstein involved in this process, but let's not go into that. Johnson's spin-control in these documents is an interesting mixture of current theoretical dogma and chicanery. The most telling passage occurs in a fax to British poet Jon Silkin, whose *Stand* was one of the journals taken in by Yasusada. With small variations, what follows is the phrasing Johnson adopts in several such situations. After listing some famous examples of other writers who adopted alter egos, among them Pessoa, Kierkegaard, and Pushkin, Johnson tells him,

These writers, as I'm sure you know, wrote and published important portions of their works “as” others. For them, anonymity was not a “trick,” but a need, something intrinsic to their creative drive at given times. Likewise for Moto, anonymity—and its efflorescence into multiple names—was a gateway to a radically sincere (I use that

word with care) expression of empathy. Rather than being “fakes,” I would offer that the Yasusada writings represent an original and courageous form of *authenticity*—one that is perhaps difficult to appreciate because of the extent to which individual authorial status and self-promotion dominate our thinking about, and practice of, poetry.²¹

“Radically...sincere empathy”—Johnson may be using such terms guardedly, but even the most charitable reader of this statement would have to characterize it as singularly self-congratulatory. Does this mean that to write in a Hiroshima survivor’s voice is an act of only partial empathy, while going to the trouble to make your survivor an outright forgery is empathy of a more groundbreaking and courageous sort? This is not an arch question under these circumstances, because there is evidence that Johnson pondered it for a long while. While looking through some old quarterlies the other day I came across a 1987 issue of Michael Cuddihy’s now-defunct *Ironwood* and there, on the page facing a poem of my own, begin three poems “From the Notebooks of Ogawara Miyamora” —by Kent Johnson.²² All three of these were later reprinted under Yasusada’s name, including one alleged to be Yasusada’s final poem, written on his deathbed. So in 1987 Johnson seems only to have been writing monologues in the voice of a Hiroshima poet. Dramatic monologues are certainly not anything new or “radical” in literature (although one might question the appropriateness of an Anglo poet speaking in the voice of a Hibukasha, just as I myself now might question the appropriateness of the poem of mine which faces Johnson’s, in which I decided to turn one of my closest friends, a perfectly healthy individual, into a deaf mute). But somewhere along the line Johnson decided that it wasn’t enough to impersonate his Hibukasha; instead he had to *be* him. We are back to the question of what is real and what is Memorex: is “Trilobites,” which appears in *Ironwood* under Johnson’s name, written in the persona of Ogawara Miyamora, a less successful or empathic poem than the identical version which later appears as Yasusada’s? Johnson would seem to think so, though there’s a certain smugness and reliance on post-structural cant in the way that Johnson makes his points to the editors that gives you to suspect that it’s all an effete game for him. “Radical empathy” seems not to include carrying the Yasusada part to its logical conclusion and, for example, purchasing a couple grams of plutonium from some renegade Soviet scientists in order to more authentically method-act the effects of Yasusada’s radiation sickness. This is radical empathy without the hair loss and diarrhea, radical empathy as a problem of technique, as just one more

aspect of “author function.” But here I am launching an *ad hominem* attack against Kent Johnson, even as he keeps insisting that he’s not to blame; after all, he reminds us, he’s not Yasusada, not Motokiyu, not Javier Alvarez, Mikhail Epstein, nor Ogawara Miyamora. The only person he has not insisted that he isn’t is—tellingly—Marjorie Perloff. I’m reminded at this point of a line of Lynda Hull’s: “larger and larger circles of misunderstanding.”

Before I close, I want to try to narrow some of these circles, and the best way to do it is to separate the Yasusada materials from the controversies they’ve engendered, and to try to come to some provisional conclusions about Yasusada, which might in passing also say something about the state of contemporary poetry. It is easier to do this now that all of Yasusada’s work has been published by Ron Silliman’s Roof Press as *Doubled Flowering: From The Notebooks of Araki Yasusada*. This is presumably the same manuscript that Wesleyan got cold feet about, and it is to Silliman’s credit that he, unlike others who had initially lauded Yasusada but then condemned him when the hoax was revealed, has chosen to stand by his initial enthusiasm for the poems. As Silliman’s jacket blurb puts it, “the ‘scandal’ of these poems lies not in the problematics of authorship, identity, persona, race, or history. Rather, these are wonderful works of writing that also invoke all of these other issues, never relying on them to prop up a text.” Silliman’s confidence in Yasusada is strong enough so that he can allow such praise to appear on the jacket beside this statement by a Hosea Hirata, a Princeton professor of East Asian Studies: “Knowing its fictitious nature, with a slight sense of disgust, I find Yasusada’s poetry evil, and eerily beautiful.” (This is titillating stuff, certainly much more provoking than the blurbs on your average book of poetry, where someone like Richard Wilbur diffidently notes that the stanzas didn’t put him to sleep.) Roof’s willingness to face the Yasusada controversy head-on implies that one will finish the book on Silliman’s side rather than on Hirata’s. I am not sure that this is finally the case, but no one who seriously studies the book and reads the texts in their intended sequence will be unimpressed. It is weird, sorrowful, and wry by turns. In its attempt to use the convention of the notebook transcriptions, arranged more less chronologically, the book is more a novel in verse than merely a sequence of poems, and read as a whole the volume possesses an integrity (at least of a structural sort) that poses a challenge to Yasusada’s detractors which might not have been apparent to them during their brief encounters with him in the quarterlies. It is also, in the manner of Borges’ *Ficciones* and Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*, a witty parody of academic

scholarship, current literary translation practices, and patterns of literary influence. Most importantly, however, Yasusada emerges from the notebooks as a wonderful and masterfully constructed character, who tries with great poignancy to salvage his ruined life through art. Taken in their intended context, his elegies are shattering, and as he attempts to create a sort of home-grown avant garde poetry, largely in isolation, he recalls some of the century's great outsider artists. When reading *Doubled Flowering*, I found myself thinking of Rousseau (who was also a postal clerk) and Joseph Cornell more than of other poets, and yet at one point in the notebooks Yasusada writes a letter to an associate in which he talks of translating Dickinson—perhaps the greatest outsider poet of them all. And, like each of this trio, Yasusada is decidedly eccentric, crankily devoted to his art, given to naive flights of wild enthusiasm, and a little bit buffoonish. Taken as a whole, Yasusada is a memorable creation, at times even a brilliant one. The pose does not work all the time, however, and Roof and Johnson have made a major blunder by attaching as appendices to the volume several self-justifying essays and interviews about Yasusada's creation by Johnson, "Motokiyu," "Javier Alvarez," and "Mikhail Epstein," as well as Perloff's revised version of her *Boston Review* piece. To put it bluntly, it does no good for Yasusada to ever have the man behind the curtain appear, for whenever Johnson himself opens up his mouth he strikes us as a windy and slightly paranoid jerk. Perloff comports herself much better, but the inclusion of her essay suggests mixed motives on Johnson's and Silliman's parts—by printing all of the Yasusada materials under a single cover, Silliman is asserting that the texts should be allowed to speak for themselves, and yet at the same time Perloff's essay seems transparently intended to give the volume a bit of critical cachet. They want to have it both ways, and this is not a good way to present an author whose reputation for duplicity precedes him. (I'm of course referring here to Johnson, rather than Yasusada.)

I want here to examine two poems from *Doubled Flowering*, both of which derive from Yasusada's experience of the Hiroshima bombing and his daughter's subsequent illness and death from radiation sickness. They exhibit all of the hallmarks of Yasusada's style save for the loopy humor and gaga avant-gardism of later works such as his "exercises" for his English teacher Mr. Rogers. Like most of the Yasusada documents, the two poems are accompanied by the "editors" inclusion of footnotes, a practice which—surprisingly—serves to enhance their impact and appearance of verisimilitude. Here, then, is Exhibit #1:

Loon and Dome

January 1, 1947

The crying girl sounds like a loon...

Why does her mournful sound call to mind the sky
through the dome of the Industrial Promotion Hall?¹

You told me there you were pregnant with her
as we strolled through the plaster chambers
of the giant Model of the Heart.

I have waited all week, you quietly said,
to be with you here in this magical place
and to tell you something beautiful.
(It was your sentimental heart
that always made me laugh,
and this stain on the page is spilt tea.)²

[Yasusada note in margin] Insert breast plate stanza here?

Nomura, the long wake of our daughter
vanishes, ceaselessly, in our union.

[1. The Hiroshima Industrial Hall, a prominent city landmark because of its windowed dome, was one of the few structures left recognizable after the bombing. Its skeletal remains have been preserved as a memorial.

2. In the original, there is, indeed, a stain covering the first half of the poem.]²³

The associative movement of the poem is lyrical and compelling. The ill daughter's moaning is likened first to the loon's plaintive cry, and this in turn evokes Yasusada's memory of strolling with his late wife Nomura in the industrial hall, where she told him she was pregnant with their daughter Akiko, the same daughter who now lies wasting away. The contrast between Yasusada's mournful present existence and his recollection of the couple's moment of intense intimacy in the "magical place" of the industrial pavilion's giant model of the heart is an affecting contrast, in keeping with the emotional directness and bittersweet elegiac intent we find in translations of classical Chinese and Japanese poetry. The language of the poem evokes these models as well; it is fussy and a bit awkward:

“translationesque” is the best way to describe it. But of course the charm of many of the poems of Pound’s *Cathay* and Waley’s and Rexroth’s translations can be attributable to a similar awkwardness and syntactical inversion: think of the famous line in “The River Merchant’s Wife”: “at fourteen I married My Lord you.” Yasusada’s rendering of this moment of lyrical grace may indeed be “Japanized crap,” but it evokes for those of us who grew up on such translations a powerful tradition, and does so inventively. Inventive, too, is the metaphorical rhyme between the Industrial Pavilion dome—famous from photos of the Hiroshima bombing’s devastation—and the giant rendering of the heart. (I suspect this heart model derives not from an actual prewar Hiroshima attraction but from a walk-through heart in Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry, a place which a Midwestern teacher of creative writing such as Johnson would know as the subject of innumerable undergraduate poems.) But perhaps the most interesting aspect of the poem is its resolute resistance to closure. In exploiting the convention of the poem’s unfinishedness, by so strongly insisting on the fiction of the poem as a manuscript page, Yasusada and his editors leave us wandering with him among the ruins of obsession. The final three stanzas, along with the endnotes, offer us three abandoned efforts to conclude the poem. First we have the parenthetical stanza with its reference to the spilt tea which the editors—with a marvelous pedantry—tell us actually does stain the manuscript. This sort of gesture is used elsewhere in the manuscript to great effect. A letter to an associate of Yasusada’s printed *en face* to “Loon and Dome” is half “illegible due to blotching”; the marred passage thus appears on the page in fragmentary fashion, its white space and lacunae bringing to mind the manuscript shards of Sappho and the Greek Anthology poets. Then we have Yasusada’s reference to the unwritten “breast-plate” stanza, and finally the poem’s lines of even more emphatic address to Yasusada’s dead wife—lines which I suspect the author designed to be of great earnestness, but which are also quite woefully bad. Yasusada ends with a clumsy mixed metaphor, in keeping with none of the patterns of imagery which the poem had previously developed—unless the “long wake” of the couple’s daughter is meant to somehow evoke the wavelike blast pattern of the explosion and/or Yasusada’s obsessive return to the memory of the visit to the Industrial Pavilion. The effect of this triad of would-be conclusions is, however, quite compelling. The poem ends elliptically, with none of its sorrows relieved—and yet this seems fitting.

Such qualities are also present in a poem alleged to have been written shortly after Akiko’s death:

Trolley Fare and Blossom

—For My Daughter Akiko, 1930-1949

May 18, 1949

How can I tell you now
that the fire's warmth was pleasurable
on my body?¹

Your body enveloped by it
and somehow, still, by mine.
The round urn, so finely cut,
each blade of grass bent black
against a black moon. You, weightless,
within it.

How embarrassing, I thought, cupping it before me,
if in the middle of the ceremony I
stumbled, kabuki-like, and fell!

Thus, bearing you and weeping,
I paid the trolley fare.

How to tell you now
of this simple happiness,
of the children laughing in a ring
at Hiroshima's heart, the brushstrokes
falling fast and light?²

You, Akiko, thick branch
of which this scentless blossom
is breaking.³

[1. *This refers, at least literally, to his daughter's cremation.*

[2. *The poem, guarded in a rice paper sheath, is in calligraphy. See frontispiece.*

[3. *A somewhat amateurish sumi drawing (we believe by Yasusada himself) of a flowering branch runs down the right side of the page.]*⁴

As anyone who has handled cremated human remains is likely to tell you, one carries them gingerly, with an awkward delicacy that Yasusada heartbreakingly conveys. The worry that he may “stumble, kabuki-like” and

fall as he is presented with the ashes is a brilliantly apt way to describe the speaker's feelings, even as the statement also comes to us in Yasusada's characteristically clumsy "translationesque," and even as his choice of metaphor evokes an Orientalized exoticism of the kind which Solt no doubt had in mind. Yet I would propose that the passage is effective enough to transcend such quibbles. And, furthermore, the image of Yasusada later weeping with the funerary urn on the trolley is harrowingly described, a scene of abjection and pathos reminiscent of early Kurosawa films. Yet, in characteristic fashion, Yasusada cannot conclude the poem with this image, for its imagistic finality betrays the relentlessness of the speaker's grief. Instead, the poem goes on for two more stanzas, with Yasusada continuing to construct tropes to describe his experience, however tentative and provisional these metaphors may be. And once again this sense of unfinishedness is amplified by the footnotes, which bleed into the poem's text much in the same way that we are told that Yasusada's own "amateurish" sumi drawing does. The description of the poem as "guarded in a ricepaper sheath" comes to us as itself a wry comment upon the text: the visual impression which the poem leaves us with, one of seeing the poem's calligraphy through the translucence of its ricepaper covering reminds us that we must read the poem palimpsestically. In effect, the "manuscript's" condition asserts that we must read the poem itself as a kind of shroud. Such palimpsestic devices abound in the Yasusada manuscripts, of course. Each poem is a text layered upon several other texts, and the mask of the Yasusada character again and again appears to slip, offering us glimpses of other personae, be they the imaginary translator-editors, the probably real Kent Johnson and/or his co-conspirators, and, if you want to get post-structuralist about it, of "writing" itself, and all the heavy metal smoke-and-mirror and dry ice interplay of sign and signifier which this implies.

In conclusion, I want to make some generalizations about Yasusada which may be worth our attention. This is a subjective and by no means definitive list.

1. Yasusada is a better poet than Kent Johnson.

I feel that it is safe to make this claim even without my having read any of Johnson's other poems. Yasusada is also, as an outright forgery, a better poet than Johnson writing through the persona of Ogawara Miyamora in his *Ironwood* poems. Nothing which I have seen of Johnson himself makes me think he would be a poet of character or of talent: Yasusada, however, is both.

2. Yasusada is a better poet than Ted Hughes.

Birthday Letters is written by a poet of talent and character, of old-fashioned sincerity rather than “radical” sincerity. But Yasusada is the better writer, and he shows us again that sincerity, talent, and character are not always enough to make good poetry. Compare “Loon and Dome” to the following passage from Hughes’ book, which J.D. McClatchy rightly compares to something you’d find in a Harlequin rather than in a Faber:

We half closed our eyes. We held them wide
 Like sleepwalkers while a voice on tape,
 Promising, directed us into a doorway
 Difficult and dark. The voice urged on
 Into an unlit maze of crying and loss.
 What voice? “Find your souls,” said the voice.
 “Find your true selves. This way. Search, search.”
 The voice had never heard of the shining lake.
 “Find the core of the labyrinth.” Why? What opens
 At the heart of the maze? Is it the doorway
 Into the perfect vision?²⁵

Even in “translation” Yasusada is better. Can anyone read this and *not* suspect that Hughes’ poems are the product of versifying secret agents?

3. Yasusada gives good “author function.”

In other words, he plays with our presuppositions of authorial sincerity and authenticity, deconstructs the piety of reading with the willful suspension of disbelief—something which we can only do intermittently in Yasusada’s case, knowing what we do of his pedigree—, parodies literary scholarship, lampoons the politics of translation and makes such ironies some of the most prominent formal elements of his writing.

4. Yasusada reminds us again how woefully ignorant American readers are of contemporary world literature.

The Yasusada hoax would never have been successful if we knew anything about modern Japanese writing. Charles Simic, probably our most internationalist poet, has noted that the Yasusada hoax shows once again that ours is “a country where confident provincialism reigns supreme.”²⁶

(I should add that in the same essay Simic trashes Yasusada's "Loon and Dome," yet I think his appraisal of the poem is wrong.)

5. Yasusada is one of the better literary hoaxes of this century, and even compares favorably with some of the more famous literary hoaxes of previous centuries.

I'd rank Yasusada as a better bogus poet than Australia's Ern Malley, as good a fabrication as Bill Knott's Saint Geraud, Kenneth Rexroth's Marichiko, and W.D. Snodgrass' S.S. Gardons, but not as good as Pessoa's heteronymic alter egos Ricardo Reis, Alvaro deCampos, and Alberto Caeiro. Johnson's Yasusada will likely be one of those hoax-authors whose work is remembered for its literary value—like Chatterton's Rowley, and MacPherson's Ossian. Johnson even fits the profile of these 18th-century forebears: like them, he is a unknown writer from the sticks who no doubt took a great delight in hoodwinking the literary establishment. Being called a criminal by Arthur Vogelsang may not be the exactly the same sort of thing as MacPherson being vituperatively shit-canned by Dr. Johnson, but both denunciations are, in their way, indicative of a kind of literary celebrity. Yasusada is probably destined to be a hoax of lasting literary value, and not one of those hoaxes, like the counterfeit Hitler diaries, the forged JFK and Marilyn Monroe correspondence, or William Ireland's faked Shakespeare play, *Vortigen: A Tragedy*, which are remembered for their audacity rather than their artistic success. For a time in the 18th-century, *Vortigen* was admitted to the Shakespeare canon, even though, as Hugh Kenner remarks, it is "unreadable and absurd."²⁷ Yasusada may be absurd, but he is never unreadable.

6. Yasusada is a monster.

This is not a statement made "guardedly.": Yasusada is a monster. I agree with Perloff's belief that Yasusada is a "brilliant" creation. But he is not, it seems to me the product of what Johnson terms "a radical empathy." The problematic ethics of creating a faux Hiroshima survivor, claiming he is real and then foisting him upon a gullible reading public has to be seen as a sin of hubris against the Gods of Morality and the Muse. Yasusada is, finally, a version of the Golem or Dr. Frankenstein's unholy offspring: he should never have come into being. And yet, as *Star Trek's* "Prime Directive" would remind us, Yasusada now exists as a "sentient life form" and must be

accorded all of a life form's rights and privileges. Knowing Yasusada's creepy origins, readers can choose to ignore him if they so desire. But others can see Yasusada as a case of loving the sinner but hating the sin, and read him with the appreciation which his best poems warrant. Mary Shelley felt a similar ambivalence about her own "monster." In her preface to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* she tells us that, after more than a decade of mulling over the moral and artistic implications of her creation, she has now decided "to bid my hideous progeny go off and prosper."

So the Yasusada case shows us again—not that we needed to be reminded of it—that the motives for artistic creation are always infuriatingly complicated, and made even more complicated as we attempt to ascend the Virtual Mount Purgatory of Post-Modernism. Is art still the lie that tells the truth? Probably. Is art still the lie that helps us *bear* the truth? Perhaps. Or is art still, as Picasso had it, the lie that helps us to *appreciate* the truth? Maybe so. Hideous progeny, go off and prosper.

Postscript

Several noteworthy events have occurred since I presented an earlier version of this essay at the third annual international "Being and Nothingness" conference on post-millennial poetics, held at St. Jauss College, a small Jesuit school in Minnesota. In the discussion following the presentation an audience member identified himself as Okura Kyojin, one of the Yasusada translators, who asserted once again that it is Tosa Motokiyu and not Kent Johnson who is the author of the Yasusada notebooks. This individual further contended that Johnson's reports of Motokiyu's death are in fact falsehoods and that Motokiyu is presently living in the Phoenix area: he even promised to furnish "Moto's" address and phone number. But by the time I left the podium and tried to talk with him after the lecture's conclusion, "Kyojin" had disappeared. A private investigator I later employed to find Motokiyu in Phoenix could not locate him. Also, because the "Being and Nothingness" conference was covered extensively by the national media, I later received a number of interesting letters from readers of the Yasusada documents. Most of these letters expressed disdain for the Yasusada hoax, but others showed a strong partisanship in his favor. I've even been told that a number of Yasusada reading clubs and study groups have been formed. But two of the letters I received were a bit unsettling. One came from a representative of the Boston legal firm of Abrams, Abrams, and Weingarten, which I later discovered specializes in slander and copyright law, and whose clients have included Courtney Love and Tonya Harding, as well as Simpson trial notables Mark Furhman and Kato Kaelin. Abrams is now

representing “Ted Hughes” and the Plath Estate, and in a letter similar to one which has gone out to almost every writer who has published anything about the Hughes/Plath forgeries, it threatens legal action if I continue to claim in any way that its client does not exist. If the public is given the impression that Hughes is a fabrication, the letter suggests, his heirs will be deprived of book royalties. A publicity release also arrived from a public relations firm representing Kent Johnson, inquiring whether the university where I teach would be interested in hosting *Yasusada: An Evening of Doubled Flowering*, a one-man dramatic presentation by Johnson in which he plays Yasusada, in the manner of Hal Holbrook’s Mark Twain and Julie Harris’ Emily Dickinson. For an additional fee, the firm will arrange for a koto player to furnish incidental music for the play. It’s an interesting proposition, surely, but the fee is much larger than my department could likely afford.

Notes

1. Ed Brown, “Does *Birthday Letters* Spell M-O-V-I-E?” *Poets and Writers Magazine* 26: no. 3 (May/June 1998). p. 12.
2. J. D’Agostino and C. Geary, “Ariel Photograph: Hughes Sings His Blues at Last,” *Vanity Fair*, May 1998, p. 59.
3. Wilfred Olsen, “Poetic Injustice: How the Cold War Wrote Poetry and Invented a Laureate,” *The Observer*, 7 June 1999, Sec 1, pp.1, 13-15. Details relating to the Hughes/Plath hoax derive from Olsen’s account.
4. Charles Bernstein, “My Turn: A Column,” *National Review*, 14 June 1999. p. 33.
5. Paul Cullum, “The Beverly Hillbillies,” in *Museum of Broadcast Communications Encyclopedia of Television*, vol. I, Horace Newcomb and Noelle Watson, eds. (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997). p. 176.
6. Michael Foucault, “What is an Author?” in *A Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984). p. 116.
7. Hugh Kenner, *The Counterfeiters: An Historical Comedy*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985). p. 20.
8. Araki Yasusada, *Doubled Flowering: From the Notebooks of Araki Yasusada*, Tosa Motkiyu, Ojiu Norinaga, and Okura Kyojin, eds. and trans. (New York: Roof Books, 1997). p. 10. Subsequently cited as *Doubled Flowering*.

9. Quoted in Marjorie Perloff, "In Search of the Authentic Other," *Boston Review* 22: no. 2 (April/May 1997). p. 26.
10. Perloff, p. 29.
11. *American Poetry Review* Sept./Oct 1996. p. 14.
12. Emily Nussbaum, "Turning Japanese: The Hiroshima Poetry Hoax," *Lingua Franca* 6: no. 10 (Nov. 1996), p. 84.
13. Quoted in Nussbaum, p. 82.
14. Juliana Chang, et. al. "Displacements," *Boston Review* 22: nos. 3-4 (Summer 1997). p. 34.
15. Perloff, p. 27.
16. Quoted in Nussbaum, p. 83.
17. Dean Young, "Go Ahead and Make My Day (Anusmundi Series #5)," *The New Criterion* 15: no. 3 (Sept. 1997). p. 43.
18. Arthur Vogelsang, "Dear Editor," *Boston Review* 22: nos. 3-4 (Summer 1997). p. 34.
19. Eliot Weinberger, "Three Footnotes," *Boston Review* 2,"2: nos. 3-4 (Summer 1997). p. 37.
20. Kent Johnson and Javier Alvarez, "A Few Words on Araki Yasusada and Tosa Motokiyu," in *Doubled Flowering*, pp. 123-133.
21. Quoted in "Yasusada Revisited: Letter from Jon Silkin," *Poetry Review* 87: no. 3 (Autumn 1997). p. 44.
22. Kent Johnson, "From the Daybook of Ogiwara Miyamora," *Ironwood* 15: no. 2 (Fall 1987). pp. 187-191.
23. *Doubled Flowering*, p. 15.
24. *Doubled Flowering*, p. 18.
25. J. D. McClatchy, "Old Myths in New Versions," rev. of Ted Hughes' *Tales from Ovid* and *Birthday Letters*. *Poetry* 172: no. 3 (June 1998). p. 162.
26. Charles Simic, "Our Scandal," *Boston Review* 22: nos. 3-4 (Summer 1997). p. 32.
27. Kenner, p. 83.

WHEN MY MOTHER CAME BACK FROM BARBADOS

Robert McNamara

Did a fish ever swim with so flimsy an argument
of fins and pigment

as on the ballcap's applique above the bill, a fish
breaching in black air, a wolfish

grin beneath its dripping bowsprit—
How should I wear it—

Its clanging hues
tipped up above my Travelsmiths, askew

as I deboard in Lubumbashi or Ngatik?
Or like my students, backward, the cap demotic

as morning alarms and classrooms, cooking, sleep,
as dreaming a splashy, metamorphic leap

beyond—well, well-fed docility.
Or I could give the thing to charity—

if it weren't that this possible fish speaks
in intimations oblique

as its torquing from the unembroidered
sea into black air, a figure

of faith in which flesh and form jackknife
and the heart begs, openly, for life—

AFTER THE RAIN, AND KANT

Robert McNamara

At the sound, he turns from his cell-phone
toward the shag-barked cedar, looking
for the singer of this liquid, bell-clear and exuberant song
I feel rippling across my chest, cascading
from the rain-
tipped trowels of the rhododendron,
his body cocked, listening.

We listen as the song repeats, and again, irresistibly
smiling. Now it stops, and the speaker
turns back to his phone, and I watch
as with his free hand he points
toward the source of the gone song, smiling
still, his weight
shifting as though he needed it all

to convey it, the bird *there*, the song *there*—
now waits
as though to know what I see in his actions—
some deep and momentary
we unsayable as the song itself.

A robin flutters to the lawn. Is it
our singer? Soundlessly, it tucks its head
like a grade-school running back, and lifting its tail
skitters forward, stops, jerks
itself upward. Tucks. Runs.
We're back in business—

my neighbor tap-tapping on his laptop, me
grading papers on Descartes'
world-emptying dream. Now and again
I break, listening toward
the mountains for a music so transparent
I'll be tempted to say that it *is* us—
yet it will not be us, because it will be
objective, irrefragable, free.

FILM NOIR

Anthony Libby

“How could I have known that murder . . . can sometimes smell like honeysuckle?”

—*Double Indemnity*



The sneer is gone from Mitchum's Roman lips,
he's selling gas in Laurelville. Lana Turner,
flipping filling-station burgers for the Greek,
in the kitchen glowers and glows. For this
someone has to die. Joan Crawford a housewife
baking pies, Stanwick in a clumsy Dietrich wig,
brought down to stucco and Glendale?
No one believes it. We wait for the catastrophe.

So the actors sprout great shadows
as moonborne autos smudge the street.
The men with too-short ties, the women
with shoulder pads and fashion-plate revolvers,
grimace with the hurt of spitting bullets
from lips fattened with each other's kisses.
Uncolorized, the blood flows black,
and we relax into the soft plush of our own lives

while Lana Turner's Cora, adrift in lust and body fluids,
dies for us the death of love. And more
than we could hope, in her bedroom's chintz,
Lana Turner's Lana Turner will watch
her Cheryl carve the heart of Johnny
Stompanato, who fucked for us his way to death
in the soul's glut of the treasure-house of dreams.

FAR FROM LOWELL

Anthony Libby

It is indeed remarkable that in so numerous a family there is no person of national fame, no one who has figured largely in history, no one who has won renown in letters, nor in the arts. . . A notable feature of the family has been the frequency of inter-marriage. Ten of the immigrant's grandchildren married their own blood.

—Charles T. Libby, *The Libby Family in America, 1602-1881*

The humble life is hardest to imagine:
 the look of same crop at dawn after thirty years,
 did it somehow fill the eyes with new color?
 Were things still beautiful in the purple light,
 were there strange elations of the spirit
 that burned in these farmers, failing to find words?

When they married other Libbys, did kinship
 breed discontent; were there secret passions?
 I only know their deaths. Remembering is physical,
 as I sit here slightly coughing, with a heritage
 of straining lungs, domestic horrors. Three
 of the eleven children of Azariah Libby “died all

in one week, of a throat distemper.” Maine, 1765.
 Winter and rocky soil. All pasts are tragic
 in the light of memory, lavish with corpses,
 feet emerging from the strained wombs
 and groping toward inconsequential paths.
 My fathers married often, one wife or two convulsing

in the hard bearing of the born-to-die.
 When grandfather was born near Lowell, Mass.
 three siblings and a mother were already dead.
 He grew old cautious, unsmiling, frugal,
 enthusiast of the electric chair on economic grounds.
 His loves were doughnuts, Kipling, and the past.

Well his blood trail led through the lowlands;
who could fault the settled melancholy
of the old man? Our triumph is the unknown
future, not what we know of the death-clotted past.
The clouded sun will bear us onwards, bodies flowing
out of the myriad failings of our blood.

FALLING IN EUROPE

Mary Ann Moran

into picture postcards
dropped from some caring
angel's arms into this
raw November landing
heart-side up

beside Leuven's cathedral
your hands flat against cool flags
rainbow-stained by sudden sun
light through glowering clouds
with a cubit of desire you could
reach to that spire's height
or be crushed under an avalanche
of tumbling rock and memory
unbalanced buttresses collapsed
about your feet

frisson
touch stone brushed by the rough
robe of some cowed scholar, dark-robed
cleric whose footsteps yours overlap
through time

it began
a slow idea
as water drips down stained
stone here in this city's learned
solemnity you bump into a friend
on a rainslick street tripped up
by age-old possibilities below gargoyles
their foreign-flavored
humor primed
at your expense and suddenly
you find yourself in scene
after grainy scene
of art-film classics

the hotel window
overlooks a narrow time-cobbled lane
he puts an arm around you to draw
you back to bed later you will rush
into the streets
with wind-borne bells
imprint pictures greedy
to keep all odd tasting words, strangers' faces
you will ring around the town hopscotch
down each newly discovered alleyway
and anyone who sees you now will know
if you stumble
if you fall
it is the unexpected
shove of love
and carefully now
you close your eyes and turn

AN UNSTRUCK SOUND IS THE INITIAL/ MOVE

John Peck

The argument,
while we flow through these slow-burning forms,
is that the mind
on fire nests in logic on fire and slow-sounding.

And that the logos
of logic, then, no trick of the hearted mind
to sound it that way,
is flame strung beaded along combers of sound.

At Seven Pines
a storm the previous night left high reaches
of the air warmer.
Sound curved earthward. Baritones and basses

at the nearby front
mouthed and bellowed into a dome of quiet,
even the squealing
mortars. And so General Joe Johnston

heard nothing of that
and paced waiting, then galloped to it at night
shot from the saddle.
When finally you hear it you know it has been

beating there steadily and long, hearted
concourse at flood,
unvalved river. When you attend to it
at last, it comes on

totally, and is the total, roar at ease.
Sebastian Bach
soprano to bass set out the registers
where the fight throws them,
a plane otherwise mingled and confused,

esprit gloom joy *fides*,
and dangles them out into speech, ropey cataract
down to rock swaying.

And in their stepped
separations I hear slowness although
the years hasten,
bond enlarging throughout the speeding whole.

His chorus barks
for death, then in chorale measuredly
laments that and makes
peace with itself through sound wider than mind.

Feel it, oh yes, farther he did than most
or than I shall—
but past a feeling carried all the way out
curves the domed full

limit bellied
in wind thrown bellied by fire, sheeted fast
to the rail heeled
over in running seas, and it hums, all going.

He spread past any
single voice in the chorus, or choice foursome,
though here among tents in the
clearing come only these calls he gave them after

the storm's passing.
The jerky recitative of his gospeler—
it spikes and buckles,
then bleeds repose, space opening and salvaged,

one German spreading
through it to the skull's rim past Arcturus,
lucidest sleep,
the skull itself great fountain and great bowl

and he up its plume,

trajected among the swift stillnesses.
In the small hours
I hear the gurgle crowning that column, I've seen

a sail curve space.
The bony campaign cup of the footsloggers
in sutured calcium
is Euclid's father and the rim of peace.

And mother's domed mother:
dementia rippled from it, a soggy veil
across her blanked brow,
when my name went in, finding, her face a caress.

So: it lies everywhere?
This matte architecture of the dreamed
and yielded blood,
humps of it tilting from the fields? So: it

tents, pitches up, sinks?
Hulking Orion tilts on one heel unfazed
by the deep smear
of a meteorite down midriff and belt—

the long return
was over, his pride and blindness composing him
to shoulder a dwarf
who saw him home to the rising sun. For now

fate was different,
destiny had gone out in freedom among
those lanes and endless
sparkings and not been seared or scarred further,

the skull threw no more
Lutheran nights beyond itself but sped
to the maximum
velocity of event, sang, and floated,

for all the damage

had been done. The doers were now no more
 than four scorable
 tremors of the mind's heart of Deutsch

rectified, rising,
 As a splattered vee down the fast lane slides under,
 the contents thus of
 one sack of Roman lime and Greek will

to align columns
 on the wild aperture, arrayed trunks opening,
 spilled from a van
 and married to the rains. All at one speed.

Yes, it is ersatz
 prefab the stuff is destined for, yet porous
 and unmorose past it
 the next form waits to grasp and elevate it.

And shooting past there
 I hear them combine, rustling: trowelless hand
 of a great sower
 swiping, flared flat, and the pale nonstatistical
 corsage of horizons.

BILLY'S LAST SMOKE

Jarda Červenka

Billy decided to have a last smoke. It did not matter, anyway; he was sure by now that it would be the last one here, that he would start packing tonight. Life had not been too bad at the U. He had been employed by The Midwestern University for a short enough time to feel a sense of belonging, but long enough to make for himself a reputation as a nice guy, a near-fatal repute in any university, an established fact that Billy did not comprehend. He was lucky in not understanding well the ways of politics and, being lucky, he had been happy in fulfilling the Three Commandments of Academia: teaching, research, and service. Sadly, his contentment had ended, effective the first of December. That date had done him in permanently, because that was when The Midwestern University started to enforce the correctly intentioned, multiculturally all-encompassing, bizarre regulation banning smoking even in front of the buildings and on the Mall.

On December 7th, the week after the fateful date of the first of December, he had untied his woolen tie, stretched it and, with care, tucked it into the thin space under his office door. Not even a trace of smoke, not even a treacherous whiff, would escape into the corridor. Windows closed: check; door locked: check. Billy disliked the gray formica door. He had to watch it constantly to be sure it stayed open. It was in the regulations that all staff had to memorize: "...80% of time spent in the office must be devoted to work on grant applications. This ruling will be enforced and monitored by University Surveillance Troops (UST), using spot-checks. To facilitate the duties of our USTs, the office door must be open at least 45 degrees at all times."

Billy's door was locked, now, in defiance of the standing order, and he allowed his mind to wander. He could visualize the door of Dad's house in Montana. Made of Douglas fir, it smelled of resin, smoke, and time; when moved, it sang, not squeaked, in three tones, clear like the tune of a violin bird. The image of a zinc patch over the bullet hole above the doorknob made him homesick, now. That home seemed far, far away, in miles and in time, too. Outside, heavy, wet snowflakes tumbled down, announcing the imminent shopping frenzy of Christmas and, at his distant home, the great 2001 New Year's Eve party. There was something to look forward to in a couple of weeks, but not in thirty minutes. Only half an hour was left before the hearing.

The water was boiling for coffee. He added almost two spoonfuls of fine grounds to his cup, and a spoonful of brown sugar, pulled out the lowest drawer of the desk, and from under the pile of reprints of his publications he recovered a pack of Dunhill cigarettes. He put one cigarette under his nose and smelled the tobacco, a sun-filled, warm scent, unlike the fragrance of any blossom he knew. He laid the cigarette under his nose horizontally, lifted his upper lip, and let go. The curled lip held the cigarette under his nose. He smiled—and then it fell off into his hand.

Billy took a sip of coffee “to dissolve the mucus,” as he used to say, before lighting the cigarette. He leaned back in his chair, letting the smoke escape, first, through his nose and then, pouting his lips, he blew the rest in a clean milky stream without turbulence. In the still air of the room the smoke rose to the ceiling, where it dissolved in changing patterns: whirls and winding streams with their own life, independent of the smoker.

After the last smoke Billy extinguished the butt and hid the crystal ashtray, still with ashes, in the space under the heating duct. He knew it would have been a mistake to dump the ashes into the wastebasket, remembering the important function of UST in checking the garbage for information. Now, again, Billy started to feel fear as a heaviness in his belly and a slight pain in the middle of his chest. He was well aware that his hopes for L.T.—limited tenure—were surely gone and his days of employment were numbered in single digits.

To achieve L.T. had been his greatest aspiration for five years at the University. It meant a quite permanent position (subject to yearly review by UST and the Executive Committee, of the applicant’s sexual activity—limited to one legal partner, his avoidance of alcohol and tobacco, his Effort Certification, and his regular attendance at Self-Criticism Drills, Multicultural Sensitivity Training Workshops, and Desexualization Retreats). Appointment would be terminated instantly, of course, in any case in which the use of controlled substances had been suspected. The most recent instance of such termination was the infamous Tolarski case. One fateful evening, that physicist had been observed engaged in a mating ritual on a laboratory table with an employee of the opposite gender, his girlfriend, while consuming half a bottle of Swiss Colony red wine (a foreign import, according to UST) and smoking almost a pack of cigarettes.

Actually, Billy knew this fellow Tolarski. He was a funny guy, always humming a tune, grinning happily about something, so Billy had already suspected that he might come to a rotten end. And he did. He could have been just expelled from the School, but his girlfriend, a year after his termination, had revealed that she had not given him written permission for

his act of love. Now he was putting into practice his erudition in physics as a segment of the chain-gang at Calmwater Prison. Billy shuddered at the thought.

All the members of the Commission were in the conference room already when Billy hunched in. All except Chairperson Bolbolian. He was lingering in his office watching the clock, in order to arrive exactly ten minutes late.

Curak was sitting opposite Billy in a brown jacket, polyester slacks, brown shoes. His narrow lips, thin nose, and beady eyes formed the motionless, somewhat sclerotic mask of a "reasonable man." Curak was good, just, and reasonable, and notorious for derailing the academic future of many a student and incipient colleague, with his correct judgment and goodness. He had been striving for the victory of high moral principles for thirty years, and since the morality of humans is known to be suspect, he was disliked by almost every suspect. Curak nodded at Billy. Like a praying mantis, Billy thought. "Good day my friend," said Curak. "Good day to you."

Schonheit sat next to him, leaning back, his permanent smile on. He beamed in his new, wildly checkered jacket, a conversation piece he called Esterhazy with an all-knowing grin ("...imported directly from Budapest, Poland!"). Schonheit was a soft kind of a porky fella. His skin was soft; the remnants of his hair, his voice, his handshake were really soft. But Billy knew he was like the soft-shelled turtle, that cousin of an alligator snapper, with a soft shell but dangerous jaws. Schonheit had made it in the administration in the same carnivorous way that the soft-shelled *Trionyx ferox* makes it, in the strange kingdom of a swamp. "Shall we take a straw vote?" he said, but nobody paid attention. He nodded with his head slightly askew, acknowledging Billy.

The third member of the Commission, Olson, pulled out a notebook and placed a sharp pencil precisely parallel to it, avoiding the eyes of Billy and everybody else. And nobody looked at him, since he did not have a face. This had always struck Billy as strange: no eyes, no mouth and nose, no face. His language was complex, incomprehensible and verbose and full of words with Latin roots and ambiguous meanings, so he functioned very well and was much in demand as a member of many important committees, where he never once failed to vote with the majority, and never expressed his opinion in a way that could be interpreted one way and not the other. Thus, in effect, his presence diminished the number on any committee by one, and at the same time increased the vote for the majority by one. There

were numerous faceless administrators at the U., but Olson was the one quoted most often in the correctly amateurish *Midwestern Daily*.

Now Bolbolian jogged into the room, words jetting from his mouth in an even stream. He was the Chairperson (with only a vaguely recognizable sexual identity to be called Chairman or Chairwoman). Also, it had been rumored that he was gutless and spineless, but both of these attributes, Billy knew, should have been anatomically impossible. Yes, there were members of the faculty who believed that Bolbolian did not have a spine, but while it had been possible in such individuals to maintain posture by using implanted titanium rods, in Bolbolian's case spinelessness had not been proven beyond any unreasonable doubt. It was common knowledge that he had been nominated to chair the Commission for his unfailing eagerness to represent those judicious men of high morals who wielded the real power in the School. Now he spoke, modulating his voice with the deliberation and gravity of a philosopher.

"It is so wonderful to meet with you today, my friends. By the way, I have been thinking this morning that I will propose a new motto for the school. Really, believe me comrades, I am quite excited about it—because of its depth and originality. I dare say. Listen to this: "Do not ask the School what she can do to you. Ask yourself, instead, what you can do for the School!" He paused dramatically.

"Now, isn't that something? This thought came to me while praying." He hung his head with unfelt humility. "Oh my! But let us begin, so that we will not inconvenience our dear friend Billy here, and we can all go back to hard work, to contributing to the reputation of our alma mater, to attracting more funds for research and for our administration. And teaching." His toupee moved slightly.

Curak decided to bring up the agenda at this moment. "Comrades, I'd like to bring up the agenda at this moment." Billy got that sinking feeling, again. "Before we come to the serious charges against Comrade Billy, I must read to you, verbatim, the ruling by our Provost for Health and Morals: '...smoking of tobacco and other poisonous substances is not permitted near building entrances. Ashtrays at entrances are intended for visitors to use to extinguish cigarettes immediately, prior to entering the building.' Immediately, comrades; extinguish immediately. And urns are already in place!"

Billy? Billy almost choked. Urns! An image of an urn with his ash remains flashed on a screen in his brain.

"Smoking urns, that is," added Curak, without moving his thin lips. "This ruling was activated on December 1, and our USTs, with the collabo-

ration of volunteer cadres and other people, have been authorized by the authorities to observe, follow, and denounce violators.” He took a sip of Diet Rite. “So here we have the boilerplate. Boiler.”

The flat front of Olson’s skull, where ordinarily a face is formed in humans, slowly rotated toward Billy. Schonheit’s face also turned. A soft smile. The room was free of sound. “Boilerplate,” Curak broke in again.

Chairperson Bolbolian realized that in half an hour he had an appointment to interview, for the second time, an applicant for a secretarial position. He liked her positive attitude and the bulges of her physical attributes. He had to speed up the meeting. “Let us come to the charges, so that we can fairly and squarely proceed, early in the process of instigating and perpetuating the fascist...I’m sorry...the fascinating and humane rules and regulating of...anyway.” He looked in the direction of Olson, thinking *I bet that butt-faced loser did forget the papers with the charges sent from UST headquarters.* “Anyway, Olson, Comrade, could you kindly recite the charges without delay, in due process?”

From that faceless skull a hollow voice with a deep timbre resonated in the air of the conference room, equally in all directions: “On December 4th, in the year 2001, the member of the junior faculty known as William, alias Billy, during the twenty-minute period allotted for the consumption of the midday meal, approached the building called Deer Hall from the North and leaned on the maidenhair tree approximately twenty yards from the actual wall of the building. He lighted a cigarette and publicly exhaled the smoke into the atmosphere. Observers from UST at the scene, and four volunteer witnesses, hereby attest to this act of flagrant, fragrant violation. The discarded remnant of the cigarette (the butt) was retrieved. Please find it in the enclosed plastic container, as an article of evidence.”

Sweat appeared on Billy’s forehead, like tiny transparent pearls which grew in size, then descended in winding streams to hide in his eyebrows. Billy couldn’t hide. Then it happened. Billy’s hand released its spastic grip on his knee, rose up, and the hand pulled out a cigarette from the shirt pocket. Involuntarily, his other hand lit the cigarette—and Billy inhaled, and followed it with an exhalation. Three pairs of enlarged eyes watched the smoke in fascination.

Billy first reacted to that incredible betrayal by his own hands with an action which, later, would be described as a panic reaction in the records of the termination process. He spit the cigarette into the wastebasket, in which a few discarded papers ignited instantly. Bolbolian tore the fire extinguisher off the wall, activated it, and pointed it with a dramatic gesture at the fire. Nothing happened. Schonheit, seeing his chance, removed his

Esterhazy jacket and, with a patriotic howl, threw it over the wastebasket to cover the flames. They died.

Peace descended on all, as when a campfire has gone out and only cinders remain to glow in the dark. Thus peace overcame Billy—nostalgic and almost sleepy relief. All the commissioners had disappeared without a word, by now. The magnitude of Billy's transgression did not merit their comment.

The door filled with the bulk of Schönheit. A wide smile radiated on his soft face. He whispered softly: "Gotcha, fucka!" and disappeared. Billy was alone, again. There was no percentage in being a good boy, now, so he lighted another cigarette with a smoldering piece of paper from the wastebasket. His life would change. And all he had ever wished for was a bearable lightness of being. That was all he has desired.

Holding high his Dunhill cigarette as a calumet of peace, he blew smoke first to the East, then to the North, and to the South. He inhaled another drag and blew a straight stream of dreamy-blue smoke westward, over the Mississippi River, past the muddy Missouri, over the snowy camelbacks of the Rockies, westward to home. *What the hell*, he thought. *The New Year's Eve party is coming soon, anyway. It will be in J.J.'s place, the rowdiest in Helena, and everybody will be there, I reckon. Everybody. And Billy, free me.*

SOMEHOW EARLIER, FIELDS OF BRUSHY PAIN
OUTSIDE AND FLAT, THOUGH PAINFUL

James S. Proffitt

If there was someone earlier, now there is not.
Not inside, nor outside, nor anywhere else.
Like a plain it is wide and flat and empty.
Though there may be grain and brushy fencelines.
It is the solitude of no others ever which is painful.
Like a plain not inside nor out, the solitude.
Wide and flat and empty though there may be pain.
Now there is not, even if earlier, there was someone.
Now anywhere else, grain and brushy fencelines.
Like pain, though there may be painful solitude.
And someone else not here, nor anywhere else.
Brushy fencelines wide and flat, like pain.
Though someone earlier was not inside, nor out.
Wide and flat, even if earlier, painful grain.
Not outside, pain, nor wide—but inside and flat.

THE HOUSE MUSEUM

Peter Robinson

Often, now, the paths lead nowhere.

Take, for instance, these brick ways
skirting untended flower beds;
they reach to patches of sandy earth
and abruptly stop: a standpipe,
shrubby, segment of lawn
mark out where the houses were,
show houses in a private garden.
Here, I used to sit and read
the baby asleep in her trolley;
weekends, families would come
enjoying the spacious properties,
children given a coloured balloon.
Among last signs of habitation,
weeds seeded into crevices,
the odd smashed tile, coarse grasses,
I look for a place to sit down.

But the benches have all vanished,
their varnish peeled in the sun.
Though I came with a sense of trespass,
no taciturn gardener, no custodian
stares at me pushing the child to sleep.
Like earthquake damage, divorces,
dead dirt where structures were razed
has been left to its own devices—
herbaceous borders bereft of people
to make themselves useful for.

Somebody'd made the decision.
Before you know it, that wheelchair
with well-wrapped-up blind crone
being crooned love songs by a carer
and what we called the house museum,
its dream residences, are one
more memory in need of a home.

SOMETHING TO DECLARE

—for James Lasdun

Peter Robinson

Last off the flight out of Amsterdam,
I was asked, all casual like,
where it was we'd come from...
But the customs officer's sniffer dog
needed no time on some holiday wear.
Passports controlled, we took the Blue Channel
with not a thing, as usual,
(apart from the tiredness, incipient jet lag)
nothing to declare—

except that on these skylines
as in a recurrent dream
ghosts of Burtonwood aerodrome,
a closed asylum's crenellations,
flashes, grassed heaps, road signs
made themselves felt with local tones
painlessly understood.

But mostly it was agitated leaves
flapping at reflections on a window pane,
or late June light that lingers
over heaped cumulus after rain;
like a conversation, rudely interrupted,
they come through with an answer
drawing out what it is to be
in this home again.

AFTER METAPHOR

Ryan G. Van Cleave

When it's all said and done,
some things still sneak up
on you in the bludgeoning dark,
even this late in the century.

Remember me? asks the jumbo jet
carrying an old flame you cannot forget,
its wheels not yet gripping the runway
as it careens into terminal B.

Or your dreams are siphoned of color
and you wake to the reek of gas
in an all-electric apartment.

Then the epileptic rain becomes a language
no one but you can understand —
everything can be erased, it says.

Three crows crack the night
with insistent squawks —
they are the fates who pluck
sinews from the heart of the world.

The meat's served hot and steaming;
shut your eyes and swallow
or we'll all know you're crazy.

POETS OF THE CIMITERO ACATTOLICO

CarolAnn Russell

I take the number thirteen bus
 To the end of the line
 To find you. A pyramid
 Burns white in December sun,
 Opening the inner door
 To all who follow. Your
 Guardians are the cats of Rome.
 Free as your soul and fed
 Without obligation or regret,
 They pad outside the Aurelian Wall
 Washing their feet
 In leftover rain. A black one,
 His tail dipped white
 I call "Resurrection" and follow
 To the gate where, taking a deep breath
 I pull the iron bell.
 Three times I ring
 Before someone comes.
 Three times I have nearly died,
 My heart on the ground
 And three times
 Brought back to the knife edge.
 In this, the miniature city of the dead,
 Beauty wears a strange face,
 Frozen, a stone angel
 Among earth's rich green.
 A tiger cat is waiting
 Where I sit near Shelley's tomb,
 Rubbing his whiskered face
 Against my thigh, pawing
 My leather jacket. He stands
 Motionless in salute, his nose
 Pointing toward the open door
 Of the tower. I follow his gaze
 To the other side where a young tree grows.
 Now your benedictions

Are Italian, freely given
By those who come
To remember what song is,
How it bursts the gates of anger or joy,
Flaming heart
At the heart of things
That keeps us human
And in love. What we give
Abundantly death cannot
Barter nor gain —
Our mortal celebration
Like sunlit rain through cloud,
A cellular flowing from,
A river to the sea-change
Without need for a single coin
To bring us home. Come,
Blow a kiss with me
To the ashes
The beautiful bodies
Death has dazzled into sleep
And dance upon the leaden shield.

POLAROID

Reginald Shepherd

1

Propositions, presuppositions,
a small summer in my palm.
It hollowed out a heart
in me, backdrop of burned leaves
already burning's color. October
evening recovers summer, renders it
Oil Drum Fire with Bum huddled
at horizon, glittering past
complacency. These

2

*early lighthouses had wood fires
or torches in the open, sometimes
sheltered by a roof.* Tungsten lamps
fizz on at five to six, flaring like myth
in the making with borrowed
bits of shine. No getting around that
smooth skin, sealed envelope of poison.

3

Let empire, let rage: I said
to worms, you are my mother
and my sister (unearth my then),
we are death's firstborn
festival. The young men
saw me and hid, and the old men
smiled like ash: waited for me
as for rain, acid, for the most part
memory.

4

I cover the sea's voice with chalk
 and circumstance, having only myself
 to say, scattered smattering of singed
 doll parts. They make their way
 by means of breakings (schist
 and marl): collapse into a clamor
 of crows before appearances'
 sake, and stand simple

5

in their wreckage. *Coal by-product
 ovens extract ammonia, tar, light oils
 wasted as smoke when coal burns:*

the mindless heat of substitution
 tended and intended, burning
 razed fields flat as photographs.

6

Pillar and halt, pillar
 and stall, a sinking
 water table leaves behind
 its salt: the man I made of him.

LEGACY

D. James Smith

Uncle on the bed, oval of lamplight
 grazing his shoulder. I know he's awake,
because I'm seven, bright, already saddling

 the mares of my imagination. I like
the tin horse on the nightstand.
 I like when he coughs that his chest rattles—

a leather bag of marbles,
 the way he winks without meaning to
when he talks. He's given me a taste of a Lucky non-filter,

 two fingers of milk in a glass tumbler to see
me through stories of Berlin, the war,

 the farm gone bust in Nebraska, shrunk
now to a spoonful of bourbon
 the bottle, without a ship, has tipped on the floor.

 Morning edges the windows then blossoms
and unintelligible pink on the wall,

 and I know what *black sheep* means,

and I know of the ladies he falls for—*like a fool*—
 in saloons that leave his eyes polished

and still. I know I could go into that distance
 just by sitting in the closet, holding my breath
until stars spill like confetti and I awaken face down

 in a ruin of shoes. Already I'm worried about the future.
That dark angel who quashes my sleep

has peed my side of the bed again,
 and when father comes to get me,

woolen slacks, polished brogues, white shirt,
 pressed crisp in submission,
he'll hide his shame and his disapproval

 in the arch of the doorway,
and nobody's eyes will ever meet, though we were

 just lambs, then, and tired and so lying down.

NOW THE CLOUDS ARE GONE

D. James Smith

though wind still moves the trees
 where tiny leaves unfolding
 net the moon, back of it, stars
 treading black water. I am dumb
 beneath that bright constancy,
 in a way I used to go
 when a girl I knew
 undressed, standing at the morning windows,
 trembling, a sparrow my voice couldn't calm,
 so that when we would lie, finally, down
 I could feel her beating about

somewhere above us, thrashing the ceiling.
 At seventeen, she had a child—smooth coffee-colored skin—
 who'd lift each found thing and pronounce it,
Pretty bug. Buttercups, twig or stone—
 all pretty bugs; we'd laugh,
 charmed by such simplicity. One day she said
 she believed books were the coffins of dead men's minds
 and refused to see me anymore.
 She didn't know
 that it was worth wanting what we'll never have—

 all the trees in the city struck red
 come April, the apartment walls
 sloshed with shadows tugging evening
 and the white paper glowing . . .
 It could have been today, my wife, my love, and I
 let the truck spin down
 the sand trail that edged a creek,
 the snow-melt running early, the first grass
 dumped with flowers—popcorn, butterweed,
 even the little bonnets
 of some stickseed showing, and the breeze sifting
 down soft as grace. The dark pennies of her
 breasts pressed her blouse, her rabbit's eyes

LATE NIGHT*Corinna Vallianatos*

The divine and the would-be divine,
 self-sacrifice and its purveyors,
 listen, they can see you,
 kneeling, arms crossed
 against the air conditioning,
 eyes rolled back in your head
 like a racehorse or a saint,
 shame pricks your skin with telltale light
 and the boy behind the counter can see you.
 He asks, fake friendly, *Cookie dilemma?*
 and it's true, you've been crouched
 in the junk food aisle too long
 for happy selecting, and before
 that witness to the ice cream's
 deep freeze, idiot scientist
 charting the coldest place on earth,
 stripping herself to testify to it,
 hammered in deference.
 He sees that your mind
 hasn't made itself up, and even late
 at night minutes slip by,
 so steadily, so steely,
 they must be moved by something
 more resolute than time.
 That if a leaky faucet dripped
 one drop after another
 on your forehead for years,
 a canyon would not be revealed,
 not one juniper, not one misshapen pine,
 but a chasm, which is what
 a canyon clarifies. That you've
 asked yourself what you started from,
 not meaning what single germination,
 not meaning what rapacious
 growth of reason, but that
 some flat fate has stranded you,

and you want to know what it looks like,
you want to buy it, bag it, and leave.
Outside, the sky is zebra hide.
It looks nothing like this—lines
of cloud and cloudlessness,
horizon-precise, and as infinite—
nothing that you know, or know to turn from.

**BOY LOADING WAGON;
FATHER "OVERCOME BY DESPAIR"**

— September 24, 1998, *New York Times*

Corinna Vallianatos

It could be anywhere, but this time it's near Kosovo;
the boy's just rolled up a rug and on top of that
balanced what looks like a bass drum, but can't be.
He's Albanian, and his father's Albanian,
and his home is burnt and his belongings,
the few that are left, loaded onto a wagon, and his mouth
moved by what looks like disdain, but can't be,
because it's his father who's weeping, not a sibling or a schoolmate.
They're returning to, not fleeing, Kosovo,
even though the Serbian police and Yugoslav Army
are still in this provincial capital, still setting fires.
There is little that a picture in a paper—
or the picture, if you're the boy, of your father in a crouch,
checked sweater, slipper-thin shoes,
gray head in one hand—can communicate,
though what you might say back is as diminished, and the smoke rising
toward the hills as intricately figured
as an icon's gilt frame, but disbanding, manic,
iconoclastic. The boy won't invoke anything. Under his curly
brown hair his scalp itches, and he misses his mother
like he cannot this man,
who, having weakened, has shown himself to be less father
than a weak man, just as many people have shown themselves
to be less.

IN THE HAZE OF PONDERED VISION: YVOR WINTERS AS POET

The Selected Poems of Yvor Winters. Edited by R.L. Barth with an introduction by Helen Pinkerton Trimpi. Athens: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1999.

Robert Archambeau

If you were to ask the nearest poet or critic about Yvor Winters, the response you'd most likely get would be "Ivan who?" But if your local man-or-woman of letters had in fact heard of Winters, and had not been one of Winters' own students at Stanford back in the 50s or 60s, you'd probably get a negative response to his name, something along the lines of "That reactionary!" or "Such a vicious and narrow man!" I've heard both of these responses, along with my share of "Ivan who's?" since I started working on a study of the poetry written by the last generation of Winters' students. It is too easy to forget Winters, who never much cared to work the literary publicity machine; and when we do remember him, it is too easy to forget that he was many things in his time: a formalist and an experimentalist; a recluse and a public-spirited man; discerning to the point of narrowness in his conception of an enduring tradition but adventurous in his reading and his sympathies; a traditionalist who was simultaneously an iconoclast.

Winters was a much more varied figure in his time than he is in our all-too-sketchy memory of him, and as both critic and poet he is an important figure for our times too, polarized as they have become by the rhetoric of formalism and the rhetoric of the avant-garde. As a critic Winters is important to our times because so many of his terms, concepts and critical inventions have an immediate bearing on the current state of American poetry. He has been called an "American Leavis" because of his ethical concerns and his sense of a narrowly-defined great tradition, but in truth Winters was a much more considerable thinker than Leavis ever was, a theorist of substance as well as an idiosyncratic and forceful critic. Whether one agrees with Winters' final, conservative conclusions about poetry or not, his theories of pseudo-reference and expressive form pertain to current debates between New Formalists and the various brands of experimentalists,

and would do much to provide a more coherent framework for the discussion of the cold war between America's different poetics than is currently on offer.

As a poet, Winters presents us with a unique case: unless one of the senior LANGUAGE poets makes some immediate and radical announcement of a conversion to blank verse, Winters will prove to be the only substantial American poet in the twentieth century to have had a career that began with the avant-garde and ended with traditional formalism. Marjorie Perloff has called Winters "the great counter-critic" of his period, but in a century in which the master-narrative of the poet's life has been one of the breakthrough to new freedoms (Eliot's famous self-modernizing with *The Waste Land*, or Lowell's liberation of his line in *Life Studies*), Winters is also a counter-poet, whose career provides a kind of counterpoint to such stories of formal liberation. Again, one needn't accept Winters' conclusions about formal and experimental verse to find his career instructive. To read him is to see a man consciously, sincerely, and above all *seriously* struggling with alternatives that are now all too often taken up as unquestioned dogmas. There is much we can learn from Winters, and Swallow Press has made a real contribution to literature by putting a substantial selection of his poetry back into print.

R.L. Barth has given us a carefully yet unobtrusively annotated selection of the poetry, showing both Winters the experimentalist and Winters the traditionalist to good advantage. The early, experimental Winters has not always been well served by Wintersians, those passionate advocates of the theories Winters developed after his conversion to formalism, but Barth has been admirably ecumenical in his selections. He has also included an introduction by Helen Pinkerton Trimpi, nearly thirty pages in length, which amply demonstrates both the virtues and the vices of the Wintersian approach to Winters.

Trimpi is tremendously well informed about Winters and his world, and an excellent reader of Winters' later poetry, which is treated in much greater detail than the early work, and clearly lies closer to Trimpi's heart. She follows Winters' own technique of careful formal analysis and equally careful moral or ethical analysis to good effect in her readings of such mature poems as "A Summer Commentary," "The Slow Pacific Swell," and that lost classic of American poetry "On a View of Pasadena from the Hills." But, like most Wintersians, she is too quick in accepting the master's own assessment of his early, self-consciously modernist work. Trimpi's charge is that the early poems, particularly the experiments in imagism, are unhealthily solipsistic – a charge that echoes what Winters himself said in 1940

about the poems he had published in the twenties (this self-assessment is helpfully reprinted by Barth in his notes to the poems).

The later Winters broke with the earlier Winters for reasons that are characteristically complex and serious: he felt that the imagist and other experimental poetics he had been working with were not capable of engaging all of consciousness, that they privileged sensation over rationality and encouraged a dangerous solipsism. The change in Winters' poetics is evident as early as 1928, but it was solidified after the 1932 suicide of Winters' friend and correspondent Hart Crane, whose dangerously self-destructive state of mind seemed to Winters to be linked, at some level, to experimental poetics. The wrong approach to poetic language came to seem immoral to Winters, and he came to distrust the juxtaposition of images without a context making clear their social meaning and value. The Winters whose work had appeared alongside that of James Joyce and Gertrude Stein in such periodicals as *Broom*, *Pagany*, and *transition*, the Winters whom Kenneth Rexroth had called a cubist, was no more; the brooding sage of Palo Alto had taken his place.

For this new Winters, poetry was to tell, not show; poetry was to mean, not be. This approach later made Winters the most unfashionable of poets in the age of workshop poetry with its fetishizing of the simple image, but it allowed him to write some of the finest meditative poems of his generation. It also created a climate of expectation among Winters' most committed advocates in which the early work could not possibly get a fair hearing.

"Solipsistic," Winters' derisive word for his imagistic poetry, echoes throughout Trimpfi's introduction. But is it a fair assessment of that poetry? Certainly not, if we take the word 'solipsism' in anything like its strict, metaphysical sense, as the belief that the world exists only as a content of the subject's consciousness. And not, I think, if we take it in the much looser and more vernacular sense in which it becomes a mere synonym for self-obsession. In fact imagism, for its first practitioners, was meant as a riposte against the self-obsession of symbolism. While symbolism shunned referentiality and the external world in favor of hermetic castles of the interior, imagism set out to place consciousness in a real, external, physical world, through acts of devout attention to that world. It is world-obsessed or other-obsessed rather than self-obsessed, and represents a philosophical position at a far pole from metaphysical solipsism.

The essential imagist position is that we are cut off from the real by walls of discourse and dead language, and that a poetry of clear images can return us to an awareness of the world of things. Pound wrote that the imagist poem is a record of "the precise instant when a thing outward and

objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective.” It is not self-obsessed, nor is it, as the later Winters and some of his followers have implied, a loss of consciousness in a moment of pantheistic union. Instead, it is a call for a consciousness rooted in the world rather than in our habitual ways of thinking or speaking about the world, an attempt to make language and consciousness new by basing them on the immediate experience of the world. This sense of an external world that takes priority over our received thinking is at the heart of many of Winters’ early poems, whether strictly imagist or imagist-inflected, like the remarkable “José’s Country” in which the stark, hard, physical reality of “A pale horse,/ mane of flowery dust” running far away across the dry New Mexico landscape presses in upon “the haze/of pondered vision.” The poem aims to ground the otherwise isolated consciousness in a real world “Where a falling stone/ Would raise pale earth,” a world of things “beyond a child’s thought.” Lonely it is, and unsociable, but it is not dangerously solipsistic.

The change that strikes one most in the evolution of Winters’ poetry, besides the conversion from experiment to form, is the growing sociability of the poems. Poems like “To William Dinsmore Briggs Conducting His Seminar,” “To a Young Writer,” and “On the Death of Senator Thomas J. Walsh” all emerge from and speak to particular social contexts in an almost Augustan manner completely alien to Winters’ early work. It is in this quasi-Augustan mode that Winters emerges as a political poet, too, one to rival the later Auden in such poems as 1942’s “To a Military Rifle,” which begins:

The times come round again;
The private life is small;
And individual men
Are counted not at all.
Now life is general,
And the bewildered Muse,
Thinking what she has done,
Confronts the daily news.

This has almost everything you’d find in one of Auden’s poems from the same period: a strong sense of meter, a deep concern with the relation of the public and the private in time of war, a sense of the intersection of the muse and the news. What Auden had and Winters, to his detriment, lacked was an ability to write an Augustan poem in the syntax and diction of our time. “I sit in one of the dives/On Fifty-second Street/Uncertain and afraid”

begins Auden's own meditation on private experience in a time of public calamity. Nothing in it comes close to the archaism of "And individual men/Are counted not at all." One could catalog Winters' archaisms ("The evening traffic homeward burns," say, or "...there haunts me now/A wrinkled figure on a dusty road") but this would be to make too much of what is ultimately a minor flaw or mannerism for which Winters has already paid too high a price in lost reputation.

Another part of the increased sociability of Winters' poetry in his later period can be seen in his treatment of landscape. While the early work is stark and eerily depopulated, the later work increasingly gives us humanized landscapes: the Pasadena hills; the San Francisco Airport; the highways and the vineyards outside Palo Alto. As Donald Davie observed in his introduction to the now out-of-print *Collected Poems of Yvor Winters*, there is something approaching a Virgilian *pietas* toward local places evident in such lines as these from "In Praise of California Wines":

With pale bright leaf and shadowy stem,
Pellucid amid nervous dust,
By pre-Socratic stratagem,
Yet sagging with its weight of must,

The vineyard spreads beside the road
In repetition, point and line.
I sing, in this dry bright abode,
The praises of the native wine.

Davie also took pains to point out that such *pietas* is one of the many treasures of Winters' poetry that we simply can't get at by reading it too obsessively through the lens of his criticism. While Winters' criticism has much to say to us just now, his poetry can offer us riches undreamed of in his criticism. With the poetry back in print thanks to Barth and Swallow, it's a good time to seek those riches out.

A BLUE MOON IN POORWATER

Cathryn Hankla, University Press of Virginia, 1998. 278pp. \$14.95.

Wise but not wizened, precocious beyond her years, in this memoir-like novel of 1988, now reprinted, ten-year-old Dorie Parks is a girl caught in the in-between space of childhood and almost-aware youth when the late 1960's social upheavals reach her sleepy hollow, Poorwater, a town on the Wye River in Virginian Appalachia. Tough as Mick Kelly of Carson McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, Dorie weathers reprisals aimed at her father in his fight against a mining company that regards accidents, acceptable death tolls, and black lung as the traditional hazards of a coal miner's life.

This is a time when astronauts are making forays into space, when television carries the news of a changing nation over the mountains and into Poorwater's homes. With her copy of *The Arabian Nights* expanding her worldview, Dorie looks to the moon and stars as the places where her hopes and dreams lie.

But she's tethered to Poorwater, too, by the realities of poverty. While not as destitute as the shoeless "holler" kids of the hill shacks, Dorie's a girl who scans the ground for change, who nearly drowns trying to pluck a dime from the

deep end of the pool. It's her friendship with Betty Grayson, a local rich girl, and Betty's dissolving family, which shows her how little happiness money can command. It's money, too, in the end, the reckless pursuit of it, which brings on the tragedy of her mysterious and disturbed older brother, a draft-dodging itinerant preacher.

Holy Rollers and hippies, snake dancers and moonshiners, a neighborhood "witch", "dirty boys" who chase girls with sticks, hard scrabble union men, company thugs with a knack for breaking arms, are a few of the raw and real characters who color Hankla's novel of social chronicle and coming-of-age. At times as quiet as the simple pleasure of a hot biscuit brushed with butter, at times as furious as a mine explosion, *A Blue Moon In Poorwater* is the story of a man's need for justice seen through the eyes of a girl who loves her daddy. A wonderful book resurrected by a university press.

—Tony D'Souza

EDITORS SELECT

R. D. Skillings, *Where the Time Goes*, University Press of New England, 1999. A frequent contributor to *NDR*, Skillings' new collection is a sequel to his 1980 book, *P-town Stories (or the meatrack)*, and, like its predecessor, is full of trenchant, poignant short narratives that assemble the mosaic portrait of a place and a time. A trove of prose gems, glittering with "cults of healing and self-acceptance, multifarious 12-steppers, unregenerate hedonists of every stripe," unified by "a huge chauvinism of place, personality and independent mores."

M.G. Stephens, *Where the Sky Ends: A Memoir of Alcohol & Family*, Hazelden, 1999. Stephens' new memoir, a portion of which appeared in *NDR* #3, tells a common Irish-American tale most uncommonly. A harrowing portrait of a family and a journey taken from Brooklyn to Florida, where the "father died brainless, competent, incontinent, isolated and alone amid palms and alligators, geckos and floral shirts." A necessary threnody for damage and drink.

Jay Neugeboren, *Transforming Madness: New Lives for People Living With Mental Illness*, Morrow, 1999. Novelist and short-story writer Neugeboren's more expansive follow-up to his successful

1997 memoir *Imagining Robert* is both a survey and critique of the mental health and insurance complex, its politics and personalities. He makes "the psychiatric diaspora" tangible and judiciously weighs both the despairs and the victories that population endures and achieves.

Jamie Kalven, *Working with Available Light: A Family's World after Violence*, Norton, 1999. A memoir, inspired by violence, which powerfully recounts a contemporary marriage and family life riven by trauma, the beating and sexual assault of his wife by a stranger in a park. When the extraordinary is becoming more ordinary throughout society, Kalven shows how his family rises above the senseless and cruel in everyday life. A memoir that is a powerful personal story and important social document.

Virgin Fiction 2, Rob Weisback Books, Morrow, 1999. A new series of very fresh fiction, indeed. The writers within must have not been published in a book or national periodical hitherto. The result is lively and thoroughly hypercontemporary. One of the best stories of the collection is "Behind Sharp Branches," by Tom Coyne, a '99 graduate of the N.D. creative writing program.

A. Manette Ansay, *Midnight Champagne*, Morrow, 1999. Ansay's

new novel, after *River Angel* and *Sisters*, surveys the territories of passion and marriage — and even passionate marriage — with her usual acute prose and sharp, riveting and skeptical eye trained on the midwest and its citizens. Like the title's namesake, the novel is a lively concoction with a pleasant, lingering aftertaste.

Christopher Merrill, *Only the Nails Remain*. Rowan and Littlefield, 1999. Merrill's book about the breakup of Yugoslavia expands on the historical, political and poetic vision of his brief but beautiful 1995 volume, *The Old Bridge: The Third Balkan War and the Age of the Refugee*. Merrill is a poet and translator who knows the region all too well. *NDR* # 6 published a chapter from the new book in 1998.


John Phillip Santos, *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation*. Viking, 1999. Santos, a writer and producer of television documentaries for CBS and PBS, was a Notre Dame undergraduate and the first Mexican-American Rhodes scholar. Cornel West calls this memoir of his family "a poetic exploration of the ways in which remembering and forgetting inform our fragile modes of surviving and thriving. From Texas to Oxford, from grandparents to Borges, Santos takes us on a poignant pilgrimage that ends deep within our souls." *NDR* will review this book at length in a future issue.

John Peck, *Collected Shorter Poems 1966-1996*. Carcanet Press (distributed by Dufour), 1999. *NDR* readers will know John Peck's work well from poems that have appeared regularly beginning with the excerpts from his long poem, *M*, in the inaugural issue. Peck is one of the best poets in America. The 400 pages of this collection will be read and re-read by anyone who cares to examine a poetry of uncanny insight and great technical accomplishment remote from the trivial fashions of the day.

Sandra Alcosser, *Except by Nature*. Graywolf Press, 1999. Alcosser's second book of poems is winner of both the National Poetry Series competition and the 1998 James Laughlin Award of The Academy of American Poets. Eamon Grennan, who selected the volume for the National Poetry Series, says of it: "I love the buoyant verbal manners of these poems, which bring politeness and ecstasy into curious alignments and which—without betrayal—transform the plain facts of life into fixtures of radiance." The book has a local Midwestern resonance as Alcosser writes in one cycle, "Sweat," about growing up "on an acre between Dixie Highway and the Illinois Central tracks" in South Bend.

Michael Coffey, *87 North*. Coffee House Press, 1999. This is a rather surprising second volume of poems after the language-centered *Elemenopy* published in 1996. Coffey says of his

book: "I try to convey both the sense of living in a metropolis teeming with the impersonal and that of being in an expanded terrain in which everything makes sense, if only because one knows it so well, and everyone knows everybody." The book deals both with the Route 87 of the title, running from the bottom to the top of New York State, and with Coffee's youth in the Adirondacks where he grew up in a town of only seven hundred people. Coffee is a Notre Dame graduate and managing editor of *Publishers Weekly*.



CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Archambeau edited *Word Play Place: Essays on the Poetry of John Matthias* (Swallow, 1998). His long poem *Citation Suite* was published by Wild Honey Press in 1997. He is Director of Creative Writing at Lake Forest College, and has just returned from a year as visiting professor at Lund University, Sweden. **Julianna Baggott's** poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in numerous magazines including *Poetry*, *The Southern Review*, and *Indiana Review*. Her manuscript was a 1999 finalist in Breadloaf's first-book prize, and her novel, *Girl Talk*, is slated for publication by Simon and Schuster early in 2001. **Laton Carter** is from Eugene, Oregon. His work has also appeared in *Ploughshares*. **Jarda Cervenka** was born in Prague. He immigrated to Minnesota three decades ago and has traveled and lived on three continents. His collection of stories *Mal d'Afrique* won the Minnesota Voices contest and the collection *The Revenge of Underwater Man* won the Richard Sullivan Prize for 2000. **Susanne Davis** has other recent work appearing in *American Short Fiction* and *Descant*. She has recently completed her second novel; her first novel won the Hemingway First Novel Competition. She lives in Connecticut with her husband and two sons. **Annie Finch's** collection of poems, *Eve*, appeared in Spring 1997 from Story Line Press. She is also the author of a book on poetics, *The Ghost of Meter: Culture and Prosody in American Free Verse* (Michigan, 1993), and has edited two anthologies: *A Formal Feeling Comes: Poems in Form by Contemporary Women* (Story Line, 1994) and *After New Formalism* (forthcoming from Story Line). She coedited *An Exaltation of Forms* (forthcoming from Michigan). Finch's poems have also appeared in many journals including *Paris Review*, *Hudson Review*, *Partisan Review*, and *Kenyon Review*. She teaches on the creative writing faculty at Miami University in Ohio. **Norman Finkelstein** is the author of a volume of poems, *Restless Messengers*, and two books of literary criticism. He recently completed a study of Jewish-American poetry, parts of which have appeared in *Contemporary Literature* and *Religion and Literature*. He is Professor of English and Department Chair at Xavier University. **James Finnegan** lives in W. Hartford Connecticut. He works as an underwriter in the field of banking insur-

ance. His poems have appeared in *Poetry Northwest*, *Shenandoah*, *Southern Review* and *Willow Springs*. **Geoffrey Gardner's** essays, poems and translations of poetry have appeared in many magazines. *Tamarack* has published a selection of his translations from the poetry of Jules Supervielle as *The Horses of Time*. At present he is finishing work on *The Fable of the World*, selected poems of Jules Supervielle in translation, and on his introduction to *The Selected Poems of Paul Goodman*, which he is editing for Black Sparrow. **Robert E. Haywood** teaches modern and contemporary art history at the University of Notre Dame and is a 1999-2000 Getty Postdoctoral Fellow in Art History and the Humanities. His critical essays have appeared in *Art History*, *Art in America*, the anthology *Critical Issues in American Art*, and the exhibition catalogue *Experiments in the Everyday*. He is completing a book titled *Interventions: Art, Happenings, and Cultural Politics in the United States (1958-1970)*. **Kurt Heinzelman's** recent publications include an article in the *Stanford French Review*, a review in *Massachusetts Review*, and poetry in *Southwest Review*. **Janet Holmes** is the author of *The Green Tuxedo* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), which received the Minnesota Book Award in Poetry and was named *ForeWord Magazine's* Poetry Book of the Year. She teaches in the MFA program at Boise State University. **Teresa Iverson's** poems and translations (from the poetry of German author Gottfried Benn) have appeared in *Agni*, *Boston Review*, *Partisan Review*, *Delos*, *The New Criterion*, *Orion Magazine*, in Katherine Washburne's anthology *World Poetry* and elsewhere. In 1995 she co-edited the anthology *In Time: Women's Poetry from Prison*. **Anthony Libby** teaches film and literature in the English Department of Ohio State University, and is currently Director of the Computers and Composition and Literature program. His *The Secret Turning of the Earth* was a winner in the Wick Chapbook Series, Kent State University Press. **Robert McNamara's** collection of poems, *Second Messengers*, was published by Wesleyan University Press. He teaches in the Interdisciplinary Writing Program at the University of Washington. **Gerard Malanga's** "On the Bridge" is the concluding cycle to a long poem titled "Bosnia and Herzegovina." His most recent book is *Mythologies of the Heart* (Black Sparrow Press) and the CD, *Gerard Malanga Up from the Archives* (Sub Rosa). His website is: www.gerardmalanga.com. **Mary Ann Moran** is Head of Cataloging at the St. Joseph County Public Library. She is an active member of South Bend Civic

Theatre, behind the scenes as well as on stage. Her poems have appeared in *Iowa Woman*, *No Exit*, and *Wordplay*. **Claes Oldenburg** studied poetry, literature, and art as an undergraduate at Yale University. He is most widely known as one of the central artists who defined Pop art of the 1960s. In addition to his inventive writings, drawings, and sculptures, he was among the pioneering producers of visual theatre known as Happenings. Oldenburg's art is housed in almost every major modern art collection in the United States and in Europe. Since 1976, he has collaborated with Coosje van Bruggen on large scale sculptures which they design for specific sites. Over thirty of these projects, which they envision as sculpture on the scale of architecture, are located in parks, public squares, or on buildings in cities from California to Japan. **John Peck** has just published his *Collected Shorter Poems: 1966-1996* with Carcanet Press. **James S. Proffitt** is a police officer in Reading, Ohio and editor of *Great Midwestern Quarterly*. His work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Potato Eyes*, *Poet Lore*, *NYQ*, *Yalobusha Review* and elsewhere. **Peter Robinson** has published four books of poetry, the most recent being *Lost and Found* (Carcanet Press, 1997). A volume of his critical writings, *In the Circumstances: About Poems and Poets*, appeared from OUP in 1992. With John Kerrigan, he has edited *The Thing about Roy Fisher: Critical Studies* (Liverpool University Press: 1999). **CarolAnn Russell** is a widely published poet who completed a new manuscript of poems while living in Italy and Australia last year. She lives on lake Bemidji in northern Minnesota with her husband and their two sons, and two cats. **Geoff Schmidt** lives with his wife and daughters in LaSalle, Illinois. He received his MFA from the University of Alabama. He has recently had stories and poems published in or accepted by *The Southern Review*, *Agni*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, and elsewhere. **Peter Dale Scott** is a former Canadian diplomat and professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. His long poem, "Minding the Darkness," will be published by New Directions in Fall 2000. It forms the concluding volume of his poetic trilogy *Seculum*. The two preceding volumes are *Coming to Jakarta* (1989) and *Listening to the Candle* (1992). **Reginald Shepherd's** third collection, *Wrong*, will be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press this fall. His previous books are *Some Are Drowning* (1993 AWP Award) and *Angel, Interrupted*, both also published by Pittsburgh. **Barry Silesky** is author of the verse collection *The New Tenants*, and

the volume of short-short fiction, *One Thing That Can Save Us*, as well as poems in *Poetry*, *Boulevard*, *Witness*, *Grand Street*, and many other magazines, including previous editions of the *Notre Dame Review*. He has also authored the biography of poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti and is at work on the biography of novelist John Gardner. His autobiography is in the Gale Research volume of *Contemporary Authors' Biographies*. **D. James Smith**, a student of Philip Levine's, is a recipient of an NEA fellowship for 1999. His work has appeared in: *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Hayden's Ferry*, *Laurel Review*, *New Virginia Review*, *Nimrod*, *Poetry Canada Review* and other journals. His first collection of poems, *Prayers for the Dead Ventriloquist*, was published by Ahsahta Press. A novel, *Fast Company*, is forthcoming from Dorling Kindersley. **Corinna Vallianatos** is from Alexandria, Virginia and has recently been living in Arizona. **Ryan G. Van Cleave** is a freelance photographer originally from Chicago whose work has appeared in recent issues of *Oxford Magazine*, *Maryland Review*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *Poems & Plays*; new work is forthcoming in *Shenandoah*, *Quarterly West*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Southern Humanities Review*. He is the editor of *Sundog: The Southeast Review* and also serves as coordinator for the annual "World's Best Short Short Story" competition. His first book, *American Diaspora*, is forthcoming from the University of Iowa Press. **Gordon Weaver** teaches creative writing at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is the author of four novels and eight short story collections, the most recent of which is *Four Decades: New and Selected Stories* (Univ. of Missouri Press, 1997). "A Carted Whore" is from a work-in-progress. **David Wojahn's** most recent collection is *The Falling Hour* (University Pittsburgh Press, 1997). He teaches at Indiana University and in the MFA in Writing Program of Vermont College. **Martha Zweig's** chapbook *Powers* won a statewide competition and was published by the Vermont Council on the Arts; *Vinegar Bone*, her full-length collection, is now available from Wesleyan University Press. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Black Warrior Review*; *Manoa*; *Northwest Review* and others.

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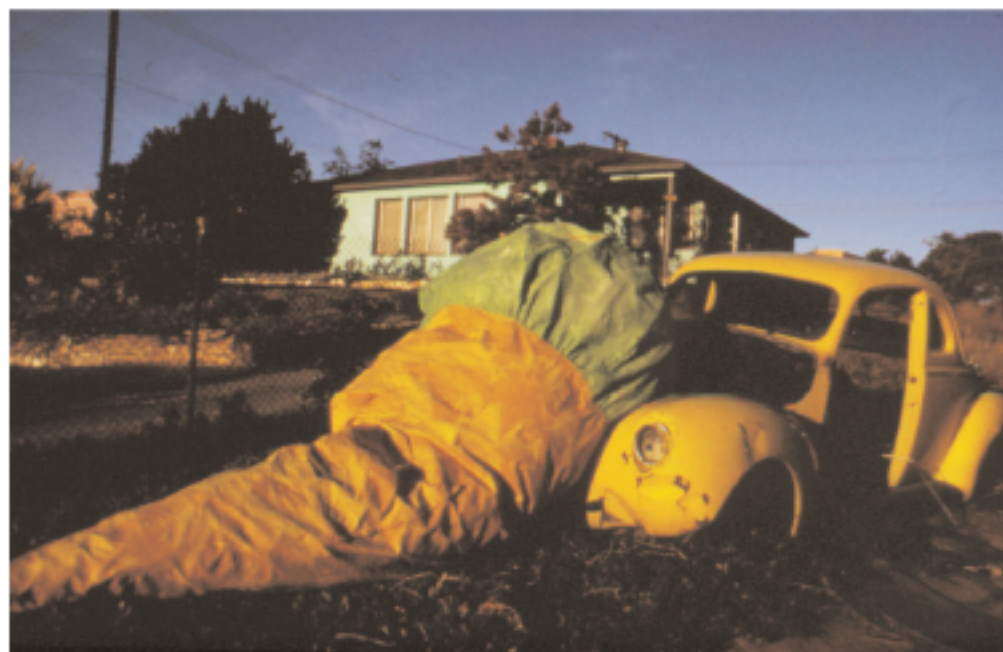
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