

NOTRE DAME

REVIEW

age and envy



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NOTRE DAME REVIEW

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NUMBER 5

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AGE AND ENVY



Janet Bloch, *'Til Death Do Us Part*, 1993, gouache & mixed media, 22 x 25". Courtesy of Lyons-Wier & Ginsberg Gallery

HISTOIRE DE FLORIDA

Robert Creeley

You're there
still behind
the mirror,
brother face.

Only yesterday
you were younger,
now you
look old.

Come out
while there's still time
left
to play.

•

Waking, think of sun through
compacted tree branches,
the dense
persistent light.

Think of heaven,
home,
a heart of gold,
old song of friend's

dear love and all
the faint world it
reaches to,
it wants.

•

Out over that piece of water
where the sound is, the place
it loops round on the map from
the frontal ocean and makes a
spit of land this sits on, here, flat,
filled with a patent detritus left
from times previous whatever
else was here before become
now brushy conclave thick with
hidden birds, nimble, small lizards.

•

Whatever, whatever.
Wherever, what-
ever, whenever—It won't
be here anymore—
What one supposes
dead is, but what a simple ending,
pain, fear, unendurable
wrenched division, breakdown
of presumed function, truck's broken
down again, no one left
to think of it, fix it, walk on.
Will one fly away on angel wings,

rise like a feather, lift
 in the thin air—But again returned,
 preoccupied, he counts his life
 like cash in emptying pockets.
 Somebody better help him.

•

Remember German artist
 (surely “conceptual” or
 “happenings”) ate himself,
 cut bits from his body
 on stage while audience
 watched, it went well
 for awhile. But then
 he did something wrong
 and bled to death.

*The art is long
 to learn, life short.*

•

It must be anecdotal,
 sudden sights along the so-called way,
 Bunting’s advice that David Jones
 when he first met him had moved but once
 in adult life and then only
 when the building burned down
 to a place across the street.
 They were having tea
 when abruptly Jones got up,
 went to an easel at the far end of the room
 whereon a sheet of drawing paper

with, in his immaculate script, a “t”,
added an “h” to say,
“I’ll have the ‘e’ by Monday!”
Affections flood me,
love lights light in like eyes. . .

•

*Your two eyes will me
suddenly slay. . .*
Such echoes
of heaven on earth

in mind as if
such a *glass* through which
seen *darkly*
such reflected truth.

What words, then,
if you love me,
what *beauty*
not to be *sustained*

will separate
finally
dancer
from *dance.*

•

Sun meantime
shining

just now (now) a
yellow slid

oblong
patch (light)

from wide
window

•

But don't get physical
with me. Topper, or the Cheshire cat
whose head could appear grinning
in the tree. Could appear
in the window.
Could see
in the dark.

•

You still think
death is a subject,
or a place
in time?

Like halving the distance,
the arrow that never gets there.
I died and came back again
to the very spot I'd seemingly

left from, in a Raj-like hotel,
Calcutta, 1944. From lunch of prawns
got up and went to my room,
an hour later dimly recall was on hands and knees

crawling to quondam toilet
to vomit and shit, then must
have collapsed completely enroute back
to the bed and a long time later heard

voice (hotel doctor's, they told me)
saying, must get him to hospital,
he can't die here. But I'd gone away
down long faint space of path

or up, or simply out,
was moving away into a reassuring distance
of somewhere
(heaven? I don't think so—

My temperature was 96 etc.
Délires! Whatever—Wherever
had come to, gone to,
I wasn't there.

•

Leary at Naropa for celebration
of Kerouac I remember saying, it's dumb to die—
It's for squares! Gregory
thought it a dumb thing to say to the young.

Was it metaphysical?
Did he mean something else.
Whether with drugs or not,
be rid of such terminal dependence?

As if, and why not,
closure were just fact
of a clogged pipe,
all coming to naught?

Get it out
Open up?
—But the syntax would be,
“What proceeds and what follows,”

in Pound’s phrase,
like a river,
the emptying sounds
of paradise.

•

In pajamas still
late morning sun’s at my back
again through the window,
figuring mind still, figuring place
I am in, which is me,
solipsistic, a loop yet moving, moving,
with these insistent proposals
of who, where, when,
what’s out there, what’s in,
what’s the so-called art of anything,
hat, house, hand, head, heart, and so on,

quickly banal. Always reflections.
No light on the water, no clouds lifting, bird's flap taking off—
Put the food in mouth, feel throat swallowing,
warmth is enough.

Emotions recollected in tranquillity. . .

which is what?

Feelings now are not quiet, daughter's threatened
kidneys, sister's metal knee replacement, son's
vulnerable neighborhood friendships, Penelope's social
suitors, whom I envy, envy.

Age. Age.

Locked in my mind,
my body, toes broken, skin
wrinkling up, look to the ceiling
where, through portals of skylight,
two rectangular glass boxes in the stained wood,
the yellow light comes, an outside is evident.
There is no irony, no patience.

There is nothing to wait for
that isn't here, and it will happen.
Happiness is thus lucky.
Not I but the wind that blows through me.

•

Another day. Drove to beach,
parked the car on the edge of the road
and walked up on the wooden ramp provided,
then stopped just before the steps down to the sand
and looked out at the long edge of the surf, the sun glitter,

the backdrop of various condominiums and cottages,
the usual collective of people, cars, dogs and birds.
It was sweet to see company,
and I was included.

Yet Crusoe—
whose mind was that, Defoe's?
Like Kafka's *Amerika*, or Tom Jones come to London.
Or Rousseau, or Odysseus—

One practices survival
much as we did when kids and would head for the woods
with whatever we could pilfer or elders gave us,
doughnuts, cookies, bread—
Even in one's own terror,
one is proud of a securing skill.

But what so turned things
to pain, and if Mandelstam's poem is found scratched
on cell wall in the gulag
by anonymous hand,
and that's all of either we know—

Why isn't that instance of the same
side of world Robinson Crusoe comes to,
footprint on sand a terror,
person finally discovered an adversary
he calls "Friday,"
who then he learns "to be good"—

But I wouldn't, I can't
now know or resolve
when it all became so singular,

when first that other door closed,
and the beach and the sunlight faded,
surf's sounds grew faint, and one's thoughts took over,
bringing one home.

•

At a dinner
in Kuala Lumpur

where I was the guest
together with a sewerage expert

had most recently worked in Saudi Arabia
where drainage was the problem,

and here it was the same,
we talked of conveniences,

shopping malls, suburbs,
and what had been hauled over

from stateside habit,
the bars and people,

while just down the street
was what the Kuala Lumpurians called

The Backside of Hell,
a short alley of small doorways

and open stalls.
They said here anything was possible.

Meantime in our hotel lobby
they had dyed some chicks a weird bluish pink

and put them in a little cage
out front for Easter.

It's always one world
if you can get there.

•

HISTOIRE DE FLORIDA

Old persons swinging their canted metal detectors,
beach's either end out of sight beyond cement block highrises,
occasional cars drifting by in the lanes provided,
sheer banks of the dunes bulk-headed by bulldozers,
there a few cars backed up, parked
People walk by or stretch out on cots,
turning in the sun's heat, tanning.

The line of the surf at some distance, small,
the white edge of breakers where the surfers cluster.
On the far horizon, east, is bulk of a freighter,
to the north, tower of a light house across the inlet.
Back of it all the town sells the early tourists,
the stores filling with elderly consumers.
The old are gathering for an old time ritual.

One knows that in the waters hereabouts, in a particular spring,
Ponce de Leon staggered in so as *to live forever*.
But poisoned with infection from a local's arrow
and conned by the legend of eternal youth,
he'd led all his people into a bloody cul de sac
and ended himself being fed to alligators
ate him skin and bones, leaving no trace.

So it may be we all now look
for where the first of these old folks went down,
seeing his own face in the placid creek,
hearing the far off murmur of the surf,
feeling his body open in the dark,
the warmth of the air, the odor of the flowers,
the eternal maiden waiting soft in her bower.

•

This is the lovely time
of late afternoon
when the sun comes in
through slatted blinds.

The large glass panes
show streaks in the dust.
Bushy laurel's green leaves
turn golden beyond.

I hear plane pass over
high in the sky,
see flowers in vase tremble
with table's movement.

Company's become
room's quiet hum.
This hanging silence
fills with sound.

•

Determined reading
keeps the mind's attention
off other things, fills
the hole in symbolic stocking

now that Xmas approaches—
a truck through proverbial night,
the buzzes, roars, of silence
I hear here

all alone
Poor, wee Robbie!
Flickering light in small window,
meager head and heart in hand,

I recall William Bartram
somewhere in 18th century Florida
on night not unlike this one,
after he'd hauled his skiff up on shore,

then laid down, so he wrote,
to sleep when sudden uproar
thumpings, bangings, poundings!
all seeming very close,

awakened him to possibility
he was going to die.
But, stalwart,
checked it out

to find an alligator had clambered up
and over the gunnels of his boat
to get dead fish Bartram had left inside—
and all was finally well.

He drew great pictures of “the natives,”
looking like quaint
18th century English persons
in beguiling states of undress.

He had a heart I wish I had.
My car is parked in the driveway.
My door is locked. I do not want
to go outside.

•

What was resistance.
How come to this.
Wasn't body's package
obvious limit,

could I fly,
could I settle,
could I even
be I . . .

And for what want,
watching man die
on TV in Holland, wife
sitting by.

She said, "He's
going off alone
for the first time
in our lives."

He told her,
"to the stars, to the
Milky Way,"
relaxed, and was gone.

What is Florida
to me or me
to Florida except
so defined.

•

You've left a lot out
Being in doubt
you left
it out

Your mother
Aunt Bernice
in Nokomis
to the west

and south (?)
in trailer park
Dead now for years
as one says

You've left
them out
David
your son

Your friend
John
You've left
them out

You thought
you were writing
about
what you felt

You've left it out
Your love
your life
your home

your wife
You've
left her
out

No one is one
No one's alone
No world's that small
No life

You left it out

•

The shell was the apparent
inclusion, that *another* might be here.
Form, the provision,
what one took, or didn't,

from another. What form
did it take,
what way
did it matter?

My mind was a supermarket
or a fading neighborhood store.
I couldn't find anything anymore,
or just didn't have it.

I is another. . .
and another, another,
blocks fading, streets
fading, into an emptying distance.

Who tore it down.
Where was it, what
was it. Where do you think
you left it?

My mother in Nokomis,
Aunt Bernice in Nokomis,
David in Sarasota,
Mary Ann, Cecelia, Rebecca

in Sarasota, John in
Sarasota, or Long Island,
Pen, Will and Hannah,
Helen, in Buffalo—

how use *them* simply as loci,
points of reference,
who made me substance?
Sarah calls to say she is pregnant

and *that* is a delicious sound—
like the music Caliban hears
sometimes in Prospero's cell
surrounding him.

•

Rise into the air and look down
and see it there, the pendant form of it,
the way it goes out, alone, into the ocean,

the end of a pattern suddenly extended
to cover, in itself, the western reach, the gulf close beyond.
Its fragile surfaces are watery, swamps to the south,

to the north where its population gathers in flat cities,
sandy wastes, oaks, palmetto, laurel, pine and (for me)
an unidentified particularity more seen, felt, than known.

Perhaps the whole place is a giant pier out
into nothing, or into all that is other, all else.
Miles and miles of space are here in unexpected senses,

sky washed with clouds, changing light, long sunsets
sinking across water and land, air that freshens, intimate.
Endless things growing, all horizontal, an edge, a rise only of feet

above the sea's surface, or the lakes, the ponds, the rivers
all out, nothing that isn't vulnerable, no depths, no rooted senses
other than the actual fabric of roots, skin of survivals.

•

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
In Florida I place a jar
And round it was, upon a hill. . .
And all around it grew important air

. . . And tall and of a port in air.
It was my first time there
It took dominion everywhere.
and I was far from home and scared

The jar was gray and bare.
in Florida, like nothing else
. . . Like nothing else in Tennessee.
In Florida. Like nothing else.

—*New Smyrna Beach, Florida*
28 November-13 December, 1994

SOUTH BEND STORIES

Steve Moriarty



Severely handicapped adults were once housed in huge state hospitals. When these institutions were shut down, patients were farmed out to smaller communities. These photographs were taken in South Bend, Indiana, where the more fortunate have found shelter in residential group homes. Some have been relegated to the back wards of nursing homes. A lucky few have legal guardians or family members who take interest in their lives. Others are out of sight, forgotten.



BARBARA

When Barbara was less than two years old, her mother became depressed at having a handicapped child, and tried to choke her to death. Barbara was removed from her home and placed in the Muscatatuck State Hospital, which had originally been named "The Indiana Farm Colony for Feeble-Minded Youths." She grew up there and has lived in various state institutions and nursing homes.

Barbara now lives in a neighborhood group home, and is forty-one years old. Her mother, who is also named Barbara, still doesn't see her, but every year sends her a Christmas card with a five-dollar bill inside, signed "Your loving Mother."



MARILYN

Marilyn was born without eyes in Tipton, Indiana. She lived with her family until she was thirteen, and then was institutionalized. For a while, a volunteer guardian took her to see her family at Christmas, whom she appeared to recognize.

Marilyn was placed in a nursing home where she was mistreated by the staff. She always preferred to sleep curled up in a ball, but the staff strapped into her bed every night on her back with her arms spread out on either side.

She was also strapped in her wheelchair. One day she tipped over somehow and hit her head on the floor. She was moved out into a group home, but her health rapidly declined, and she died a month later.



D O N

Don is thirty, but looks much younger. He was born with slight mental retardation and cerebral palsy and lived with his family in Mishawaka, Indiana, until he was twelve. He attended special education classes at a South Bend public school, Darden School, until he had to leave at age eighteen. His sister still visits him occasionally. He can communicate somewhat with sign language, but the cerebral palsy makes it difficult to use his hands.



ROYCE

Royce was born in Marion, Indiana, and was sent to live at Northern Indiana State Hospital in South Bend when he was five years old. At age nineteen he was transferred to Riverside Nursing Home, which was eventually closed after a police investigation documented widespread, serious abuse of residents.

Royce's mother kept in contact for a while, but moved to France. A baby picture of Royce shows a smile identical to the one he has today.



JAYE SUE

Jaye Sue was born in southern Michigan, and is thirty-nine years old. She was blind at birth, and a buildup of water caused the enlarged cranium. Today, a shunt would be used to drain the liquid and relieve the pressure.

Jaye Sue was once more interactive, but in recent years she has suffered from strong epileptic seizures, which have apparently further damaged her brain. She no longer “curses up a blue streak,” but can still occasionally laugh or cry. She has never had a visitor.



T O M M Y

Tommy was born mentally handicapped thirty-eight years ago. When he was seven he was sent to Northern Indiana State Hospital, and at age twenty-one was transferred to a nursing home.

In 1977 surgeons removed a brain tumor from Tommy, which also necessitated the removal of his right eye. When he returned to the nursing home, his file incorrectly stated that he had dug out his own eye. As a result, he was unnecessarily strapped into leather arm restraints day and night for ten years.



JIMMY

Jimmy grew up with his family, and as an adult was placed at Riverside Nursing Home. Responding to numerous complaints, an undercover police officer was placed in the nursing home. There he observed the staff punishing Jimmy by immersing his feet in scalding hot water.

There is some evidence that Jimmy's profound mental and physical handicaps may have been caused by a childhood bout of encephalitis. His mother still comes to visit him.



CATHY

When Cathy was born, her mother left her at the hospital and told her other children that Cathy had died. A couple was interested in adopting her, but withdrew when they discovered that she had Down's syndrome. Cathy was then sent to Fort Wayne State Hospital at age one month. At age three she was transferred to South Bend's Northern Indiana State Hospital, where she lived until she was twenty-one.

Cathy was especially adept at wiggling out of restraints on her wheelchair (and her clothes), earning the nickname "Houdini." A caseworker wrote in her file: "Cathy will scream when she doesn't like something, and is the most persistent person I know. Cathy responds wonderfully to gentle people who talk to her and touch her with respect and softness."

Cathy died a few years ago when a very strong seizure resulted in her windpipe being restricted.



MARSHA

Marsha is fifty-nine and currently lives in a group home. She lived most of her life with her mother and sister. The sister was slightly handicapped, and the two of them took care of the mother as she had all her limbs amputated one at a time due to circulatory problems.

Marsha chose to have her portrait taken in the sun, sitting on a picnic bench.



LARRY

Larry was sent to live in Fort Wayne State Hospital when he was twelve. He is now sixty years old. When Larry was forty he was sent to live in a nursing home, and his mother began to take a more active interest in him. She had set up a trust for Larry in her will to insure that he would always be well cared for. She then met a younger man whom she was dating when she died.

When the will was read it was discovered that the boyfriend was now the sole heir, leaving Larry with nothing.

THE LEXICOGRAPHER'S PRAYER

Pattiann Rogers

Write for me now the name
of the hanging willow branch in cold
rain, then the name of the willow branch
moving with summer wind. Give me
the word for summer wind as ruffling
killdeer feathers, the word for cold rain
off black umbrellas.

Not the name of the poplar, not the name
of the coral-yellow evening sky, but tell me
the name for the single thing that exists
as they are one, a seamless union.

And what is the pine woods snake called
when it is unwitnessed, imagined beneath
forest leaf and litter? What is the name
of the same snake when exposed to the sky,
observed, in the hand, remarked upon,
a different entity? Pronounce
the words slowly.

And what is this—ice enclosing fallen
cattail stalks, not two together, but one essence,
each constituting the other.

Moon and moon and moon all over the lake,
broken, misshapen, fluttering, one of them
penetrated momentarily by my toe. . .these are not
sky moons, not rock moons, but something else.
Wavering-water moons? Elusive liquid moons?
One toe moon? One moon-wet toe? Or, being
without substance, no *moons* at all?

Here are my definitions: 1. street lamp
with no magpie atop 2. street lamp
with three magpies atop. Spell
the word for each.

And say the single sound for this: autumn-
morning-crow-call in the heart. Altered,
altered, I'm certain; neither call nor heart
is the same alone.

Come now to my aid. My book
is frighteningly incomplete.

...AND THE INDIVISIBLE UNIVERSE...

Pattiann Rogers

...and the withered universe
of toad hulls and cracked crusts
of winter mushrooms, black fallen
ferns and mildewed cresses and the dead
summer flight of hatchling sparrows
spilled from their field nest in May
and the multiple-titted breasts
of one-eyed witches. . .

...and the bursting universe
of ripe plums, bloated carcasses
of drowned cattle and butchered
dogs, the rages and cores of super
novas and hatchet murderers and orange-
white molten rock boiling forth
like day at the night-bottom
of the sea and bedded lovers
in the loving hands of their lovers. . .

...and the one dizzy universe
of spindles and suns and suns
through swarms of dixa midges, suns
spun by waterspouts and whirlwinds
and circling seeds of green ash
and silver maple and the wheeling
molecules of their varied arts
and equations and suns like circus
rings and suns like ponies tethered. . .

. . .and the closed system
of the aerial, arboreal universe
of lemurs, dusky titis, pollinating
bats and monkey-eating eagles,
strangler figs and woody lianas
all twining and swooping together
with the separate strands of the wretched
universe and the stalwart universe
and the wayward universe piercing
and tangling through the defiant
universe of forest canopies
consequently resulting. . .

. . .and the faltering universe
filled with crutches and braces, rusted
nails, staggerings and stutterings, cement
patches, mucilage, mending rubber glue,
bandages, bolsters and buttresses, putty,
paste and the universe of festival
and the universe of faith. . .

. . .and the sublime universe existing
inside the universe of sleep awake inside
the dens of cactus owl and stag-horn
beetle nest, pack rat hovels, inside
the buried ova of crocodiles, cicadas,
green turtles and ridley turtles
and likewise inside the biding
of the new moon and likewise
inside the biding of the unknown
existing inside the waking universe
asleep inside the universe
of the sublime. . .

. . .and the momentary before the first
categorically, seamless universe
of universal categories, and the momentary
immediately after. . .

THE BEARERS OF FLOWERS

Pattiann Rogers

I.

Gathering and gathering all morning,
walking among the rows of the flower farm,
he has two big baskets of them strapped now
side by side to his back and one balanced
on his head. All are filled above their rims,
blossoms of white narcissi, blue flags,
honeysuckles, sweet pea dangling, spilling
occasionally to the road around his feet.

Who can deny he is a vastly different man
today than he will be tomorrow when his baskets
are loaded with paving stones, red rocks
and chat taken from the riverbed?

II.

Terra cotta pots shaped like goats
and geese, turtles and cupids, bear flowers
in the spaces where their bellies
should be. I once watched a mountain marmot
eat yellow petals from a stem, thus bearing
for a while a coneflower in his real belly.

III.

Some people bear flowers by piano or violin,
by tambourine or flute, performing The Song
of Moonflowers, A Serenade for Gilliflowers,
The Festival Overture of Wild Petunias and Phlox.

How strangely their fingers and breath
sustain those blossoms.

One widow places double glory lilies
weekly in the shiny bell of her dead
husband's French horn propped up
in the parlor corner.

IV.

In the library of a horticulturist,
many shelves bear the books of the sweet brier
rose and the cabbage rose, the encyclopedias
of the mock orange and the Indian sorrel,
five legends of the woodland strawberry, plus
leather-bound copies of the history of catmint,
an atlas showing the migratory routes
of night-flowering cacti through the desert,
the journeys of lespedeza from field to field.

V.

I wonder which came before—those
possessing the potential for bearing?
or the flowers, in first being
that which can be borne? or the bearer
who bears all flower-bearers and flowers,
the archetype from whom all bearers
and borne flowers must take their definition
and form? or any bearer engaged in the act
of bearing flowers, without which act
there could be no archetype at all?

DE OCCULTA PHILOSOPHIA

Charles Simic

Evening sunlight,
Your humble servant
Seeks initiation
Into your occult ways.

Out of the late summer sky,
Its deepening quiet,
You brought me a summons,
A small share in some large
And obscure knowledge.

Tell me something of your study
Of lengthening shadows,
The blazing windowpanes
Where the soul is turned into light—
Or don't just now.

You have the air of someone
Who prefers to dwell in solitude,
The one who enters, with gravity
Of mien and imposing severity,
A room suddenly rich in enigmas.

Oh supreme unknowable,
The seemingly inviolable reserve
Of your stratagems
Makes me quake at the thought
Of you finding me thus

Seated in a shadowy back room
At the edge of a village
Bloodied by the setting sun,
To tell me so much
To tell me absolutely nothing.

THE CRICKET

Arturo Vivante

A cricket was chirping in the kitchen. Under the sink? Behind the stove? He could not tell. For a moment he even wondered if it weren't outside. No—the sound was too distinct for that. It was within. But where? The shrill, piercing note had a ubiquitous quality. It filled the room the way its companions outdoors filled the night. The only difference was that outside a choir was playing; this was a solo. And his only company. Playing for him. No—playing for itself, his presence absolutely irrelevant to it. It would chirp on if he left the kitchen and went upstairs to his bedroom. It wouldn't miss him. But he would miss it. Sometimes, for reasons unknown to him, it stopped, and the silence that followed soon became a tingling sound as the crickets outside took over. Or was it merely the tingling of the night, the night making “a weird sound of its own stillness”? Everything was so very still.

He had no radio, no television. To hear the news he sometimes went out to his car. He was alone in this house, one of several reserved for the faculty of the college where he had come to teach. He had been here three days. There were four other rooms, but so far no one else had shown up. Classes hadn't yet begun, that must be the reason. He was new and had come early, taking literally the college's recommendation to arrive right after Labor Day. The others, old hands, and most of them—from what he had heard—weekly commuters from New York, would wait. But any time now, someone would arrive, he was sure. Another day passed, however, and he was still alone. He and the cricket.

Outside, squirrels and chipmunks leapt from branch to branch, with a wavy motion and lightness that astounded him. At night, an owl hooted in the distance, more softly even than mourning doves cooed. Were he a bird, such a sound, he was certain, would be hard to resist. It was too entrancing, tempting, seducing; he would move and betray his presence, his where-

abouts. Early in the morning, flickers would peck at the shingled walls of the house and wake him more effectively than an alarm clock. The sharp pecks struck more rapidly than the rapid spacer on his electric typewriter, or intermittently, like a loud, irregular escapement. On the lawn there were trees laden with ripe apples that no one picked and that fell “to bruise themselves an exit for themselves.” The grounds of the college were extensive—the nearest house was at least a thousand feet away. Beyond the lawn, to the south, he walked into a field of corn much taller than he was. Soon he was quite hidden, felt himself disappearing from view, becoming invisible to any observer. Not that there were any observers—of his species. It was good to hide in freedom, as in a wood.

In the distance, almost on every side, were mountains, their outlines like great wings aslant, the open wings of a seagull. It was rather pitiful that he should make the comparison—he missed his village by the sea where his home and family were.

He returned inside to have a cup of coffee in the kitchen, and heard the cricket. How tirelessly it went on, and for what purpose? Was it simply *joie de vivre*, a song of summer, a song of summer dying? Or was it a love song, played to a mate who wasn't there, a lonely call that one might come and join it?

He sipped his coffee—instant, with a little milk—in the bare kitchen, so distant from the one at home, where there were two of his children's paintings, a Russian icon, a bronze relief of crabs over the stove, a copper pitcher from Arabia, many pots and pans on display; where his wife made Italian coffee, and where people kept dropping in—they lived right in the center of the village. Here, apart from the sink, the stove, the refrigerator, the table and two chairs, there was almost nothing, and no one. Yes, someone—he heard a door on the ground floor being opened and steps coming his way. A middle-aged, slender, mild-looking, bespectacled man, with reddish hair brushed down and curling at the lobes of his ears, appeared and stopped at the threshold as if surprised to see him.

“Hello,” he said to the newcomer.

“Hello,” the man replied. “I thought I was alone.”

“I did too.”

They laughed. “Thaddeus Dolmen,” the man said.

“Emilio Buti.”

They shook hands.

“That’s an unusual name,” Emilio said.

“Yes, people don’t know what nationality. It presents certain advantages,” Thaddeus said in a slight, not unpleasant foreign accent.

“I won’t ask you any passport questions. When did you arrive? Oops, there’s one!”

“What do you teach, may I ask?”

“A prose workshop, a course on late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century novels, and some Italian. And you?”

“History of ideas, literary criticism and theory of language.”

“That sounds very intellectual.”

Thaddeus pursed his lips, exhaled and tilted his head as if to brush aside the remark. “I am a structuralist and a semiotician,” he said. “What novels are you doing, may I ask?”

“Controversial ones—novels that were hard to publish; *Resurrection*, because of the Czar; *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and *Women in Love*, because of the morals of the time; *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Remembrance of Things Past* because they were considered underplotted.”

“Interesting,” Thaddeus said, then began talking rapidly about other novels that he thought were ahead of their times—novels that for the most part Emilio didn’t know; English, French, Scandinavian, German, Russian, and even Italian novels—and with such enthusiasm in three cases that Emilio thought he had better write down their titles and the names of their authors. He wondered if he had ever met anyone so erudite. Thaddeus came very close as he spoke, and more than once Emilio felt a droplet of saliva landing on his face. But never mind. It was worth it. He thanked him, which only encouraged Thaddeus to say more. With considerable zeal, he dictated two other titles and spelled out the authors’ names for him. Next, he recommended a book on Dante that was unknown to Emilio. He felt so ignorant. I shouldn’t be teaching, he thought. I ought to be painting

houses, or gardening, though I am not very good at those things either. Oh God, what is it that I do well?

Thaddeus paused for breath, and, to his relief, Emilio heard the cricket chirp. Such a familiar, simple sound.

“A cricket,” he said to Thaddeus.

“Ah,” Thaddeus said, and went toward the sink. He tapped the sink. Immediately the cricket stopped chirping; then, after a moment, it began again. Once more Thaddeus tapped the sink. Again there was stillness. “He stops,” Thaddeus said, “then resumes. Stops and resumes. It is funny.”

“Yes. Well,” Emilio said, smiling, “I guess I’d better go back up to my room and do some reading.”

“Oh, there is another novel you must read. This one 1910.”

Dutifully Emilio took pencil and paper again while the other dictated. “Well, thank you,” he said. “You’ve given me quite a bit of homework. I really feel very well equipped now.”

“Oh, you are welcome,” Thaddeus said with a discounting gesture, as if he had offered him two peanuts, then looked down at the floor at a rather large bug, and, before Emilio could say stop, Thaddeus had crushed it under his shoe.

“No!” Emilio said.

Thaddeus stepped aside, uncovered a crumpled little heap from which two long legs stuck out, flattened.

“The cricket! You killed it.”

Thaddeus looked at it and shrugged his shoulders, then rubbed his shoe on the floor. “And there’s another book—” he went on.

But Emilio wasn’t about to listen. “No,” he said, softly, and left the kitchen. As he went into his room he still had in his hand the slip of paper he had written the names on. He looked at it the way one looks at a distasteful object and, tearing it to pieces, threw it into the wastepaper basket.

SEMIOTICS

Lorrie Goldensohn

An eye like a body of black
water in which the soul's swan drifts,
I have no words to give back
what we take from her, those rich gifts

at her command even now—drunk
out of her skull in a cement
doorway, October chilling her, sunk
to her muttering anger, bent

low to scald me with her talk, talk—
heedless of damage. But the tongue
that burns others turns on itself, balks;

she straightens, tips back her silk sleeve,
flashing the scarred wrist where the strong
blade bid. The wound wants me to forgive.

SKID

Lorrie Goldensohn

i

At last the white, ripe pillow
held up a great darkness
in which I sank.
If there were dreams I dismissed them,
not wanting to think. Nor feel the car

fishtail over ice, the whack
of the guard rail, or the black
wild spin, you toiling and turning,
until at last our runaway car
surrendered: presenting its flank
to the frantic pick-up
behind us, poor soul,
helplessly oncoming,

who stove in the righthand doors, back
and front, and the glass showered in on us.
Another thump
and then we were still.
Unhurt. Others halting on the snowy highway,
slamming their doors and running forward,
shouting above the wind,
were we all right?

Nothing, until the next morning,
 when my ribs remembered that smack on the side,
 like a ball cued on a billiard table:
 A touch. A mortal nudge.

ii

In the dark cab of the flatbed
 towing us home,
 we could barely make out
 the driver's soft southern phrases,
 words tuned below the engine hum:
 I'm a traditionalist, he was murmuring.
 I believe in flannel shirts in baseball,
 fly-fishing, and American cars.
 Casting a sidelong look
 at our Japanese wreck behind him.

You grasp at what he offers.
 In minutes the two of you
 troll summer, riverlight
 flashing and shifting in the dark cab
 cancelling the hands
 at tension on the wheel—
 the bruised knee, the scattered purse.

He fishes the Battenkill;
 ties his own mayflies, nymphs.
 You've used the staple woollyworm
 when you're just about to fold,
 pick up your creel, collapse the rod,
 and put the stingy waters behind you—

The flatbed rakes our corner, enters
our drive, and from a golden rectangle
on her second floor, a curious neighbor
watches us tenderly unpack our ruin.

You shake your head
to get the last glass off,
spit on your thumb
and wipe at the single scratch
written in thin red on your left cheek:

isn't it tremendous? the flesh,
just barely broached; the clean
cask of your skull still hidden.

MADRON

(From "Conversations with David Jones")

John Montague

I'll tell you something
I rarely speak of:
I *was* granted a glimpse
of the Goddess in Ireland,
a sort of vision,
(*an aisling, we call it*)
something that's stayed
with me, a sweet scent,
(*a Proustian savour*)
all these long years
and you should hear it,
since you come from Ireland!

*

Swaddies, on the way
back to Sarsfield Barracks
from a route march
and three lovely lassies
came dancing along
that wet hillroad
by a thatched cabin.
That pale Irish skin
which makes auburn hair
flare so beautifully.
And they wore red skirts
with plum-coloured flounces.
(*petticoats, we call them*)
Surely they were sisters,



Inscriptions by permission of the trustees of David Jones

those three graces
with the Western sunset
bloodred behind them.

Fuit Ilium!

*

I was fearful
our five chaps
might whistle, break ranks,
after three hard years
in front line Flanders.

But they stept smartly
past, with a salute:

Fuseliers, eyes right!

*

Then I saw it, and
said I *must* go in
to that crumbling cabin. . .

It was all overgrown,
more like a burial mound
than a dwelling place.

There was an old crone
hunched over a fire
of smouldering peat,
and immediately inside

I nearly pitched in
to a hollow, scooped
in the clay floor:
a duck and her ducklings!

*

The smoke, the smell,
that rich, dark interior.

It was like something
straight out of

the Bronze Age,
and when I think of Ireland
I come back to that vision:
O I love your land!

*

*(On another visit;
with twinkling divilment
remembering Limerick:)*

Robert Graves said
he was in the Third Battalion
about the same time
but *we* never saw him:
he *was* an Officer.

I don't really like
his old war book,
far too haughty, and
disdainful, dismissive.
And I certainly can't
warm to his Goddess,
That scorpion lady!
Imagine praying to her
when you're downcast;
she'd gobble you up,
kneebones and everything!

*

Graves ignores the pain
of wives and mothers,
those endless tasks, children
clambering over them.
I see Her as softer,
more maternal, vulnerable.
Mother of Rome, mother

of God, mother of us all.
 That Welsh word, *Madron*,
Madre Dios,
 (Mere: *mother and sea*.)

*

(*In the Hague's house*
in East Cork,
a sweet drawing:
a tumbled abundance
of breast and thigh,
his first love.

Tu es Petra, et
upon this fertile rock
I will yet engrave
signs of enduring love.
"David loved her,
of course," said Joan,
"but he wasn't really the marrying kind."
A shy celibate,
a born bachelor, James'
lonely old artist man.
But always aware
of female beauty,
the beauty of our earth,
wheatfields of Beauce,
Brigit's sunny Kildare)

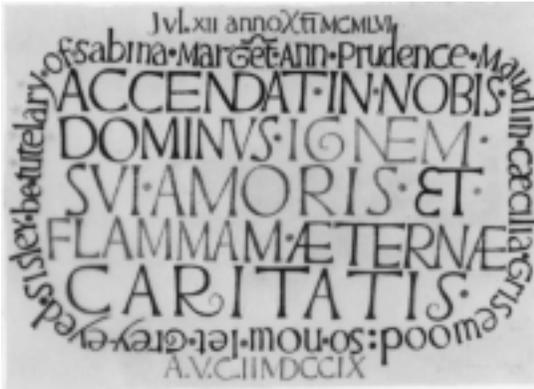
*

Rhiannon, our Welsh Queen!
 She goes so far back,
 the Lespuges Venus,
 fifteen centimetres in height,
 buttocks and breasts,
 a sacred object nonetheless.

JOHN MONTAGUE

We should honour her force
as maiden, mother, crone:
the old three-in-one.
And there's always love's pain:
Have you heard
that lovely old ballad,
In Green Woods She Lies Slain?
And he sat upright
abruptly, in bed,
and sang this aloud:

*Cold blows the wind to my true love
And gently drops the rain
I never had but one sweet heart
And in green woods, she lies slain
In green woods she lies slain.*



NOVEMBER, IN THE RAIN

Anne Bingham

Although the London-Dar es Salaam leg had gone reasonably well, a shake-up in one of the ministries had scrubbed the flight into Nampula, forcing a roundabout approach that took him a good 700 kilometers out of his way. Father Anthony de Souza finally made Sombali on a maize-and-mail flight, sitting atop two sacks of hard-shell corn in a rusty DC-3 whose engines popped alarmingly. The cargo also served as armor against snipers on the forest floor.

That had been three days ago. Standing in a freshly ironed alb outside the Sombali cathedral, de Souza felt like skin stretched around a frame of desert night. He assured himself that the hollowness was mourning, compounded by jet lag. There had been no time to follow the feast/fast pattern that usually saw him through time zone changes.

The past month's schedule back home was also a factor. He did not regret his workload; still, he would have better paced himself had he known he would be here again before the year was out.

But of course, one did not know these things were coming.

Behind him Bishop Rodino conferred with his master of ceremonies, a slim, jet-black priest whom de Souza remembered from the Propaganda in Rome. To Rodino's left stood a representative of Cardinal dos Santos, who was said to be engaged in delicate and necessarily quiet talks between government and rebels. Ahead were three other African priests of the Sombali diocese; the bearer of the Word was Pedro Eloto, who had taken in baptism the name of the priest who had taught him to read. A mixed group of Europeans backed the cross-bearer, including the half dozen Escaninhans who had been foolhardy enough to brave the roads, a Trinitarian Sister from Ireland by way of Nova Freixo, a Comboni journalist who happened to be in town to interview the bishop, the Graal woman who put out the newspaper, and an Anglican priest from a resort on the coast.

Mass was supposed to have begun half an hour ago, but family and friends of the eighteen martyrs were still pushing through the crowded square. The diplomatic community waited outside on long benches, led by an attaché, widely assumed to be CIA, from the U.S. consulate. The five professed Sisters of the Chaetelamain community, whose novices were preparing *matapa* and fish for the meal that would follow the funeral, were seated by the Fatima altar in the transept. The Sisters would provide most of the music.

Luc Doc, the Vietnamese stringer from the *New York Times* who had interviewed de Souza the day before, squatted on his heels by the main door. It looked to be a long ceremony, even by African standards. Technically speaking, the rite would be a memorial service, not a funeral. A funeral required bodies, and the bodies had been buried at Mbaaso by the army. It had not been considered safe, or practical, to have the service there.

How to represent the dead had required much discussion. Eighteen white crosses? Eighteen lilies? (“This is Sombali, for God’s sake, not Chelsea,” Rodino had growled.) Eighteen rounds of ammunition—this after it had gotten late, and whisky had lightened the mood. In the end, they decided on candles and wondered why the obvious had taken so long. Beeswax pillars would have been the Western solution. The Sombali approach—a ragtag grouping of squat votives, Mass candles in varying degrees of use, a sawed-down Pascal candle—seemed to more accurately reflect the character of the dead. The known dead, at least. Three had been buried without names.

Also unknown at this point was the cause of the massacre.

If it had been a policy signal, whose? If freelance, whether by rebels, bandits (small difference) or militia on a lark, would there be repercussions from Robert Ortez?

A tow-headed Swede from CNN slipped under the long line of hemp that separated mourners from the market day tumult in the *praca*. He asked Rodino about taping inside the church.

De Souza straightened his stole. His brother should have been buried in its companion. Their sister had woven the fabric from cotton Pedro had

found growing wild in a ruined plantation, adding to the mix a bag sent from Peru and soft brown bolls from a California grower. A true missionary's vestment—grown on three continents; carded, spun and worked on a loom in Coimbra; faced with silk. The bands of color were dusty and organic, the colors of the land in this part of the world, and also, he noticed now, the colors of the crumbled plaster by the door of the church.

He hung on the stole with both hands, sawing it across the back of his collar, rocking on his heels, anything to occupy his attention until the bishop gave the nod to the crossbearer. The day was overcast; otherwise the heat would be one more cross to bear. The weather was mild for November on the 14th parallel, and unusually dry.

The *praca* was once the twin of the town square in Caminha. The fountain, many-tiered in an old engraving on the wall of the bishop's dining room, had succumbed to target practice in the aftermath of independence. The soldiers now cleaning their AK-47s on what used to be the fountain steps were young enough to be grandsons of the men who had destroyed it. Most of the grillwork was gone from the windows of the buildings, reborn as walls or fences in the cane towns that sprawled outside what was left of the city walls. Some buildings were gutted, but most seemed in use. And everywhere the khaki grit in this year of smiling skies.

The cameraman faded into the background. The master of ceremonies returned with a note for the bishop. De Souza reminded himself that schedules were leisurely in Africa, and that this was a cultural virtue. Any other time he would have tried to gear down, but if he relaxed today he surely would faint.

A hand on his shoulder.

"Ortez has given us a convoy," Rodino said. "He has been out to Mbaaso himself, shortly after the . . .event. To secure the area, so he says. That might mean to clear away damaging evidence, or to preserve, perhaps highlight, tracks left by TOPODA."

Rodino paused, smiling without joy.

"His motives are undoubtedly humanitarian in some degree. I think we

will be safe if we go to bless the graves tomorrow.”

De Souza reached up and covered the bishop’s hand with his own, the only response he was capable of.

“All right, then. Let us begin,” Rodino said. He folded the paper and tucked it up a sleeve. “Oh, one more thing. There are iced cans of water on the table to the left of your chair. I think it would be a good idea for you to take some every fifteen minutes or so.”

Rodino nodded to his aide, who stepped slightly out of line to relay the gesture to the young man holding the processional cross. The Viking materialized at the door of the church, crouched low to catch the processional cross in wide-angle silhouette against the bright East African sky.

Anthony de Souza took a deep breath, and walked into the crumbling church in a procession of mourning and celebration two thousand years long. The teenage soldiers watched as soldiers have always watched, and children played in the dust with toy trucks made from electrical wire and flattened aluminum cans.

Mbaaso was fifteen kilometers north of Sombali on a wide red path meant for feet, not wheels. In August, the trip had taken an hour, bouncing along pre-existing ruts and avoiding the deepest potholes for the sake of the Toyota’s suspension. In August, it had been safe to drive it alone.

Today, with ambush on everyone’s mind, the mottled trucks escorting de Souza’s party crawled through the red dust in first gear, stopping at every bend in the road until the scouts radioed in. Perhaps the plan was working. Except for duiker startled from their roadside grazing, the trip had so far been uneventful.

The ancient station wagon was third in line, protected front and rear by armored trucks, its orange flanks vulnerable. Behind the wheel, Moises Cossa pointed out that the acacia had been bulldozed fifty meters on either side of the road, and that the dust would also reduce the danger from snipers.

Annunzio, who had arrived from Rome too late for yesterday’s service, sat in the back with Rodino, swapping war stories with CNN. Wedged into

the front between the procurator and a teenager riding shotgun, feeling as foolish as he probably looked in the helmet Rodino had ordered him to wear, de Souza concentrated on the scenery.

He remembered Mbaaso as a cluster of round cane huts roofed with thatch that rose cone-shaped to the sky, a colony of thick-stemmed morel springing from the finger of savanna that pierced the forest in this part of the highlands. Two hundred people lived there, mostly women and children, a few wrinkled men who were younger than he, many of them from somewhere else. Mbaaso was an old village, but few of the old ways remained; now it was part refugee camp, part commune along the ideological lines favored by Ortez.

Pedro had settled off to the north, across the pumpkin fields. An unprotected location, as it turned out, but as close as the authorities would permit at the time, and useful, with the pump house and outbuildings. As the months grew into years, and the people watched Pedro live as they lived, the new government's claim that missionaries were still tools of the colonial oppressor fell on increasingly deaf ears.

Pedro knew his way around wood, and his hand tools, primitive to a suburban handyman back home, were space-age to the grandfathers of Mbaaso, who eventually became helpers, then partners. They re-roofed the barn, fitting it with an altar table and long benches. Much had been accomplished in so little time.

And destroyed even more quickly.

August had held such hope, with peace talks underway and South Africa, the root of TOPODA, operating under a new government. This far north, and so far from the borders, mercenary attacks were rare.

Had been rare.

“How much longer?” Even at eight kilometers an hour, a pothole was still a pothole, and Annunzio's hemorrhoids were acting up.

“Only a few minutes,” Cossa said. “This stretch of forest, then a termite colony just before we arrive.”

Rodino offered water from his cooler. De Souza took a can, and turned to watch the road again.

The land around São Miguel's had once been a very small *prazo*, an estate granted by the king. The owners had fled with a quarter of a million other Portuguese-Africans after independence. They were remembered in every Mass offered at São Miguel's. The Wabasso did not take offense at this. They could have been forgiven if they had, because by any measure the colonial experience under the Portuguese was brutal. Church and crown alike considered the Wabasso a natural resource, renewable as the grasslands, put on earth to pry beryl from the highlands and to walk elephant tusks to the coast.

So many had gone quickly to heaven that way, staggering along the banks of the Zambesi beneath their crosses of ivory, food for hyenas when they stumbled the third time. Those who died on the path were the fortunate ones; slave ships awaited the survivors.

The Garcias' *prazo* had subdivided nicely into *machambas*, vegetable plots allotted one to a family. Pedro, who in his youth had not known a squash blossom from a geranium, taught himself to farm by reading old *Organic Gardening* magazines from Cossa's storehouse and by working with the wives and daughters of the men who used his tools.

The church Pedro brought to Mbaaso did not resemble the sacramental regime known to the Garcias. Confession was not applicable, a fact disguised by mutual agreement in reports to the Generalate in Rome. The dying chose to die and be buried in the traditional manner, although burial ceremonies were conducted with a Christian presence and as much Christian ceremony as the family could handle. The one marriage he had witnessed with Pedro was similarly traditional.

Sunday was a seamless program of breakfast, teaching, and worship that segued into afternoon festival, with dancing into the night. Monday it was back to the fields; the pastoral staff met formally on Tuesday to handle temporal matters, and on Wednesday to plan the following week's liturgy. Pedro's letters describing the staff—the catechist David Nakombe, from Marrupa, and Tomas Ubura, missing an ear and part of his nose and all of his family as a result of a bandit raid on a school to the south—had been widely reprinted. They gathered daily for morning and evening prayer, with

any visitors who wished to join them.

The attack had come during evening prayer.

The church had been full, people drawn by the scent on trouble in the air. Some escaped by a side door. Eighteen did not. Ubura, Augusta, their daughter; Tomas, Adelia, their unblemished twin sons; Chiboa the potter and her two blind aunts; Jamar, Luisa, Vidro, Errega, the three nameless dead, and Pedro de Souza.

Orate pro nobis.

It had been nothing personal, Ortez had assured de Souza after the funeral. They had been out to hurt Ortez, and the mission had been handy. And they had been drinking. Empty liters of cashew liquor had been recovered from the scene.

De Souza stared at the trees, which shuddered in a breeze that seemed to precede the convoy. He remembered another bone-jolting road along a river in the Mato Grosso. The village at the end of that road was gone, its people routed by bulldozers. Brazil had taught him this, if nothing else: one died in the countryside because one happened to be in the way, a mosquito to be flattened and forgotten. In the city, death was more deliberate, more personally directed much of the time, although if all those caught in the net had been dangerous to the regime, the government would have toppled in its first month.

The old martyrologies recorded that the saints had died because they refused to worship the emperor, to burn a pinch of incense, to honor the old gods. A court reporter was always on hand to preserve their final, inspiring, orations. An updated edition would hold few saints disappeared for declining to abjure Jesus. The more prominent entries would have been slaughtered for insisting on the right to food, clothing, schools for their children, a clean, dry, safe place to sleep.

And legions more died, with names known only to their kin, because a bunch of adolescents brave on a keg of Tanzanian hooch decided to make a name for themselves.

He folded a handkerchief and wedged it between his collarbone and the shoulder belt, which had begun to chafe. Perhaps the old stories were more

formulaic than he realized. They were, after all, family stories, and family stories are memory, not history, memory with a point to make about how family members are expected to behave.

The woods thinned. The trucks rumbled past the termite hills, some blunted by weapons fire but still resembling the fossilized spires of a great German cathedral. They cast long shadows in the early morning sun. An aardvark padded to the shelter of underbrush. In the distance several dog-like shapes paused over breakfast, decided the trucks were not a threat, and continued their meal.

It would not be long now.

The roof had collapsed into the foundation, and Ortez' men had bulldozed the remains of the barn-church and covered it with dirt. Except for the odd timber protruding from the mound like a splintered femur, there was no sign of the carnage he had been steeling against since London. The faint smell of charred wood was diminished by the cleansing draft sweeping down to the ocean from the mountains in the west.

"The bastards," Annunzio hissed as he strode toward the barrow. "They had no right to do that without my permission."

A soldier with dull brass bars on the shoulder of his sport shirt stepped out of the house to intercept them, followed by the man from the *Times*.

"I am Machel Mgumba," he announced. "I will assist you to visit the graves." His authority was the rifle slung over his shoulder on a strap that looked very much like a tooled leather belt.

Their escorts left the truck and made a show of securing the area, an unnecessary precaution since Mgumba's men had undoubtedly accomplished that several days ago. Mgumba motioned to the convoy's sergeant-equivalent and talked with him in a Niassan dialect; the soldiers assembled in front of the larger truck and watched. Magumba turned back to the missionaries. CNN huddled with the *Times*, then the two newsmen separated to gather color according to their needs.

"Please excuse the delay. If you will follow me, I will take you to the main house to refresh yourselves. I have arranged for your escort to refresh

in the village. It will be quieter this way for you to honor your dead.”

De Souza retrieved his fishing hat from under the seat and stowed the helmet.

“How did Luc Doc get here?” Annunzio asked, glowering in the direction of the *Times*.

Rodino lowered his voice.

“He has more contacts than Ortez, and a talent for showing up at trouble spots. He filed the first story, you know. Stopped by to bum a beer from Pedro on his way back from the negotiations at Zomba, and instead found Mgumba’s men cleaning up. Or so he says.”

The graves were behind the garage. It was a logical choice; the ground there had been cultivated to some depth, and was easier to dig than unbroken clay in the uncharacteristic spring drought.

“We wrapped the bodies in *capulanas* and white cloth from the beds.” Mgumba spoke as if the burying had taken place a decade ago. “After the machetes and the fire, it was difficult to identify them. I have a list here: they are buried from this end to this, in this order. After the description is a notation about any personal belongings that helped identify them. The families have already claimed much of the items, and some of the bodies have been given to their care.”

De Souza looked over the list. It was easier than looking at eighteen long mounds of earth, or the young pumpkin vines that lay wilting in the sun like a mound of decaying snakes.

“This is a good job under difficult circumstances,” Rodino said.

Mgumba scanned the field.

“The first time, I only buried the dead. Then the families came to me, wanting to know. So I began making lists.”

De Souza knelt before the third mound. Prayer did not come. He waited, studying the clods of red earth, trying to remember what Pedro had looked like. He made the Sign of the Cross, batting an insect away from his face as he moved his hand from “Holy” to “Spirit.” He strained for a psalm, a hymn, a poem—anything, in any language. His mind would not cooperate.

He gave himself to the moment, the red earth pushing up against his knees, the blood swelling his hands as they hung at his side, a small insect tickling through the hairs of his arm, the soft chatter of distant galagos.

Rodino had packed more than mineral water in his cooler, and after the prayer service the priests had repaired to the privacy of the house to help him lighten the load for the dash back to Sombali. The sky had darkened, and the voice on the weather band was sounding hopeful about an end to the drought. While this was good for the long term, in the short term rain would transform the road into a channel of mud. The front had already reached Ixito Cabral, about two hundred kilometers away. This meant, at most, another hour of Escaninhan presence at São Miguel.

And then?

Annunzio stretched, then rubbed his shoulders.

“I doubt there will be a shortage of volunteers,” he said. “Jesuits doubled-queued for El Salvador after the murders in ’89. However. . .”

He stopped, and studied the rim of his beer can.

“However, you can’t stomach sending anyone else to his death,” said Rodino.

“Only in part. I am also wondering if we are not back where we were a hundred years ago.”

“Isn’t that overly dramatic? We’re not exactly tools of the status quo these days.”

“No, no, I refer to when we first tried to go beyond the coast. Europeans did not last. The heat, the water, the insects, the fevers killed us off, within weeks of disembarking.” Annunzio finished his beer and crumpled the sides of the can. “A parish on the Western model no longer makes sense beyond the city. Whole villages flee over the border, and who goes with them? We’re too old and too white. Tom Sam’s men send us packing, and after his preachers are done with the migrants, they’re back where they were under Salazar, awaiting justice in the afterlife and letting the government run the temporal sphere any way it likes.”

Rodino laughed.

“You honor your Bolognese roots, Luigi. But fundamentalism isn’t the worst thing. We can build on it. We are not so very far from it ourselves.” He let that float for a moment before asking, “What’s your solution? Wait until there is a local man to send?”

Annunzio threw up his hands.

“You know I have no one! We turn over parishes as African clergy become available, but most of them are in the West. Nigeria has such a supply they’re sending missionaries to North America, like Ireland a century-and-a-half ago. What does that do for us? You have how many, Frank? Five ordained in the past decade, and one of those dead already; five in seminary, a few peering through the gate hoping for a steady job and food for their families? At least you have that many. We have no African seminarians, not one. *Nulla. Zero. Cifra.* And fewer and fewer of other nationalities, to cover more and more places. There’s now a call from a bishop in India . . .”

“What happened with that?” It was the first time de Souza had roused himself since stating a preference for Philippine over Japanese beer.

Annunzio shook his head. “*Nulla. Zero. Cifra.*”

De Souza flattened his back against the wall and pushed himself to his feet. The stucco snagged at his shirt.

“Why not ask Cossa to look in after a few weeks?” he said. “He has made useful contacts.” He looked around for someplace to rinse out the can, but recycling was close to the bottom of Ortez’ priorities at this point in his government’s history. “I’m going to sort through Pedro’s things. It shouldn’t take long. Call me when the truck is ready.”

He identified Pedro’s room by the stark black crucifix on the wall opposite the bed. All Escaninhans since the Foundation saw identical crucifixes the last thing before sleep and the first thing on waking. Because the twisted guilt of the corpus caught and magnified the faintest glimmer, they saw it during intermittent wakefulness as well. It was rumored that Estremoza, who had night terrors, planned it that way.

In the drawer of a night stand he found a small red comb, which he wrapped in a handkerchief to preserve the two gray hairs caught in its teeth,

and a black rosary identical to his own, the beads dull with wear, the tarnished corpus bright about the knees.

He turned to a rough wooden chest beneath the window, which contained the expected hodgepodge of shirts and slacks and dingy underwear. He thumbed through a directory of religious houses in Sombali and neighboring dioceses and put it back on the shelf over the bed, along with a copy of the Rule written by Father Estremoza, adapted to the modern world after interminable discussion in the Society's chapter of 1968, and revised, to pacify the Swiss houses, in the 1972 Extraordinary Session. The third book was a Portuguese-English dictionary, the fourth a collection of poetry that ran heavily toward Victorian imperialism.

He paged through the anthology. Pedro had been easy prey for a strong beat. The dawn was coming up like thunder over China by the bay when Annunzio tapped on the half-closed door.

"You might want see this," Annunzio said. "Mgumba has just brought a box of things he salvaged from the church."

Anything of value, including the shoes and wrist watches of the dead, had long since crossed the border, so the carton contained nothing whole. A cracked glass cruet and a blueberry-glazed ceramic chalice missing half the bowl. Several tattered hymnals and a lectionary, all charred. An English-language breviary, cover broken, ribbons frayed, red-edged pages rippled with the stain of a darker red. Two buttons typical of a sport shirt, a few gray coins of the lightweight alloy peculiar to desperate economies. A broken neck chain, the thick links fused at one end. A cracked and mildewed altar card, framed in gilded metal, with an illuminated "I" of Celtic flamboyance beginning the Gospel According to John.

"It makes no sense," said Annunzio. "This mission has been here less than five years. No one has used an altar card for thirty-five, maybe twenty-five out here. Perhaps this belonged to Pedro?"

"I doubt it," said de Souza. "He did not mourn the past."

He reached for the breviary and looked inside the front cover for the thick-nibbed scrawl he would never again see on an aerogramme.

“This is the sacred book of my brother,” he said to Mgumba. “Thank you for saving this. It will mean much to my family.”

The chalice, black with soot, was instantly recognizable to the priests and provoked no discussion. Most priests who had passed through Assisi early in their careers, or whose relatives had, owned identical chalices and a wide, dish-like paten, sometimes in several colors. Duplicates were quietly packed off to the mission field.

“That chain might have been Pedro’s,” said de Souza. He pulled its twin from underneath his shirt. “He would have worn it with this medal of St. Anne, from our grandmother before we went to Rome the first time, to keep us safe at sea.”

He separated the medal from his medical tag, and leaned over to show Mgumba.

“Do you remember anything like this?”

The soldier shook his head. “It will be protecting a boatman on Niassa now, or his woman.”

De Souza dropped the medal back down his shirt before Mgumba could ask why the dead priest had not worn a talisman to keep him safe on land.

Rodino briefed his household during a later supper after the return to Sombali. De Souza slipped from the dining room soon after the fruit, and retrieved the broken chalice from his duffel bag and wrapped it in a T-shirt. He took the back stairs to the courtyard behind the kitchen, set the bundle on the ground by the corn stone and smashed it several times with the pestle. Then he eased the fragments into the hollow of the grinding stone.

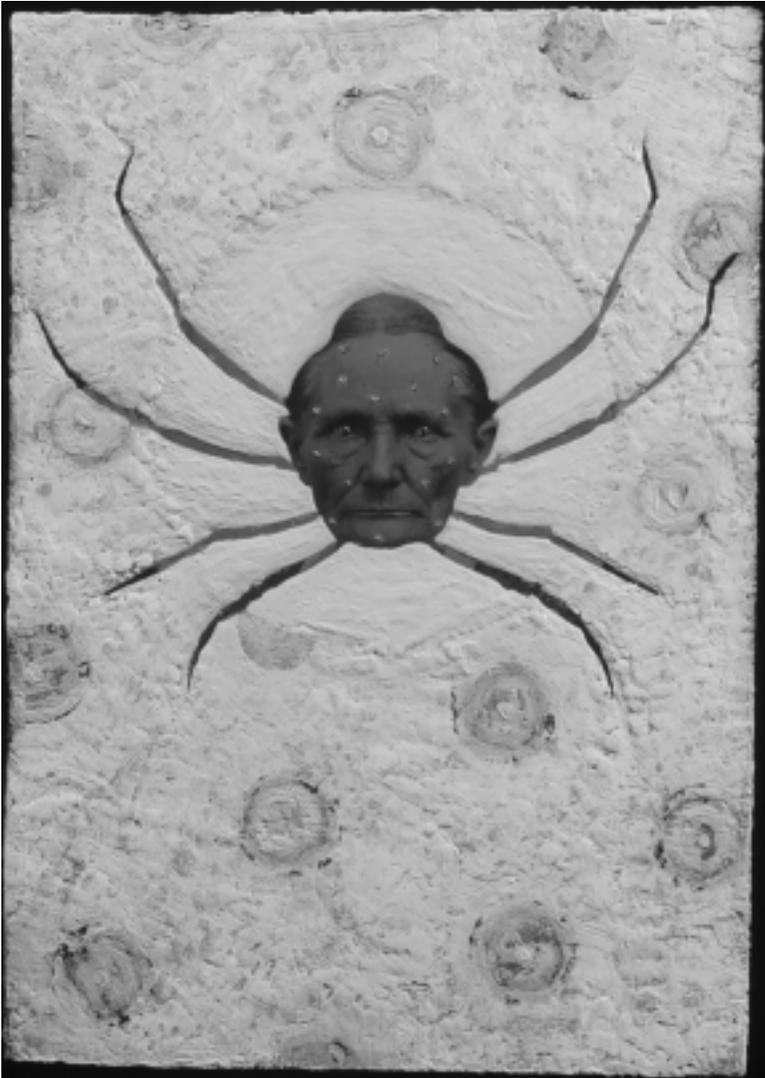
For several minutes he pounded the shards into smaller pieces, and smaller, and smaller, until the chalice had been reduced to a handful of soft-edged chunks banded in cream and blue. He scooped them into a plastic bag from his shaving kit, and wiped the pestle with an edge of the shirt.

By the time Rodino noticed his absence, de Souza was on his way back to the dining room. The gathering lasted another twenty minutes, including evening prayer in English and Portuguese. An hour later de Souza was

in bed, staring at the ceiling, the generator below his window pulsing across the courtyard like a drumbeat, like a heartbeat, like a love enduring forever. When it stopped with a shudder and thunk twenty minutes later, Anthony de Souza was fast asleep, rosary beads twined through his fingers like liana. On the far side of the courtyard, a drift of thick blue powder in the hollow of the corn stone turned to slurry in the softly falling rain.



Rick Hards, *Sanctuary*, 1994, oil on tintype, 17 x 13.5"
Courtesy of Carl Hammer Gallery



Rick Hards, *Poison*, 1995, oil on tintype, 13 x 11"
Courtesy of Carl Hammer Gallery

ST. JOHN AND THE WASPS

William Logan

The scrub was dry, dry as pitch.
The naked wasps lifted their bodies
through the heavy air, and as they landed
on the crumpled paper globe, they shivered.
The globe was brown and dry as wrapping paper.
They scoured it like an army of salesmen.

*Where do we go when we die?
We're born in heaven, like the wasps.*

*We had come to expect the plagues.
Why shouldn't the rivers stink?
Why shouldn't the water change to blood?
In the wet season, why shouldn't our houses
fill with the scream of frogs? In the dry season,
why shouldn't the dust boil with maggots?
We have suffered the hail. We are covered with flies.
Why should the evening be better than the morning?*

Now the boy lay
beneath the rafters eaten up with termites,
where moths outwaited the daylight,
where the small things devoured larger things.

The stunted palms, as tall as a man, disappeared
along the hammock. Delicately, unsteadily upright,
they faded into the cloudy undergrowth.
The canvas chaise was spotted with rosettes of mildew.

The boy was discolored, too.
He watched the wasps come and go, go and come,
as if they had found order on their little globe.
It was not a large world, as worlds go.

CANOVA AT THE FISH MARKET

William Logan

Canova's marble pyramid, uneasy amid
the rococo doges, each block a lesson in Euclid,
offers its jigsaw to the puzzle of the dead.

There, the lamenting hooded ghost;
there, the ghost of marble draped on marble,
as if their cold possession of the stone

had grown sad, mute, and insupportable.

Below the vaulting, four monstrous African slaves
bear the heaving shelf of a doge's triumph,

ebony skin splitting their marble trousers,
muscles bearing their world as wounds.

In our mournful country,

a sniggering black skeleton staggers over all.

There is another quarter, where fish-market capitals
have been carved into outlandish figures

of seahorse, squid, and octopus, boats shored
against the stone, Halloween creatures of the lagoon.

From what marble depths of water

does salt eat out the crevices of their pores?

Fish unnamed, unsalable, lie beneath the sweet
vaginal stink of the market stalls, wooden tables

tilting their boxy metal trays—blue-veined
steaks of tuna, ropy lengths of the sulking eel,
bullet-headed mullet, open-mouthed red gurnet,

translucent bulb of the humbled cuttlefish.

There, the bloated faces of drowned politicians,
there, sailors of the bribery and the fraud

lament the salty nets of commerce.



SUSAN HOWE

An interview by Amy Wray

In your lecture on Chris Marker, Andrei Tarkovsky and documentation in film ["Real Variables: Poetry and Documentary," given at the University of Notre Dame on April 3, 1997], you described poetry as "factual telepathy." Could you expand on that and talk about it in terms of your own work?

I used the expression "factual telepathy" because documents (i.e. manuscripts, photographs, transcripts, newspaper reports) always lead me somewhere in poetry. If I follow certain clues or threads, they set me on a track in some direction. Going forward involves going back to some connection, some conductor of sense, almost estranged but still signaling; often as an afterthought. The coincidences and surprises seem to come by pure chance at first. But if any arrangement of ideas can become through some apparitional force in itself, a new idea, then maybe there exists a doctrine of chance beyond any human understanding.

This psychic approach or double consciousness is what I think of as telepathy and what I find so wonderfully imagined in Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Mirror*. Marker calls it animism, Tarkovsky calls it nostalgia. Optical symbols and acoustic signals occur on film or on paper,

but most of all outdoors in the landscape. Both these filmmakers work with the spirit of place—and not in some vague sense, but in and with particular places.

My interest (one might say obsession) with seventeenth century New England began when David and I moved to Guilford, Connecticut, beside Long Island Sound, in 1971. Our children were five and eleven years old. We lived in a house in the woods just near the water and everything seemed so fresh, and at the same time so tied to memories—of my childhood summers on Cape Cod and David's in Ogunquit—that we both had a sense of beginning over. And that was where poetry began for me; I had been a painter until then.

Writing for me is almost a reaction to walking. I used to take long walks in the woods and out on Leetes Island in every weather every season...I still do but then it was all Firstness, in C. S. Peirce's sense of the term. I remember the sensation of vivid consciousness from other centuries *before* the view we take in now. On Leetes Island I can still look out across the water and in my imagination the land we can't quite see across to because of pollution is Ireland. In fact it is Long Island. Places I love always seem to form a link with Ireland and memory but most of all *light*. Midsummer light, late August light, November light, February light, under the burden of changing seasons particular transformations. When I first came here I literally felt people of the 1630s around me in the rustle of oak and maple trees on Moose Hill Road, in the salt marsh that separates the Leete farm from Leetes Island, or what seemed like miles of woods between Lost Lake and the center of town. Putting myself in that situation in my imagination was a moral and physical necessity. If Iconoclasm leaves revelation to mere air, who will remember the hard record (meagre farms and rocky soil) their obstinate refusal of consent?

The thing to catch sight of and keep in the ear is cruel place names here; Sachems Head, Bloody Creek, Stony Creek, the Regicide Cellar. So walking

has led me to Mary Rowlandson, to Hope Atherton, to Thomas Shepard, to Ann Hutchinson, and Mary Dyer. I could never have imagined them not in the sense that makes them actual if I hadn't come to live in Guilford with David, Rebecca, and Mark.

Do you think the factuality of those people and places exists?

Records of events, histories of places, dictionaries, legal documents, changes in the land, artifacts. . . these are all we have to go on. We have faith that there is something called "truth." Walking through the forest near his home, Hawthorne's young Goodman Brown suddenly discovers this little blessed word-cipher "Faith" (also the name of his wife) is apparitional. Certain North American artists still believe in spectre evidence; it makes their work nervous. American nervousness: positivism with a certain twisted lyric genius.

After your lecture on Dickinson's manuscripts ["Arcs, Corners and Broken Lines," given at the University of Notre Dame on April 4, 1997] there was some dissent about how to view her writing, especially whether viewing the poems as visual works was appropriate.

When I show the slides of Dickinson's manuscripts, obviously I am privileging the way they *look*. That's what slides do. But at the same time I know the heart of a poem is its *sound*. For me it is literally a fixation of belief. When I am writing, if a line doesn't sound right, I have to change it. "We hear with our eyes," as Bottom/Shakespeare so beautifully expresses it in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, echoing St. Paul in *Corinthians*. Dickinson points this out constantly in her poems and letters: seeing is hearing; hearing is seeing. If you don't pay close attention to these manuscripts you miss understanding the evolution of this great poet's thoughts. You will miss any awareness of changes in her working *process*.

Much of her writing is about writing. Increasingly, her work enters a place

where categories are abolished. As she goes on writing, her genius extends into a variety of disciplines, including the visual arts. Ralph Franklin's facsimile edition of *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson* has made this transition accessible to readers. Perhaps he does not see it as a transition; we will see what he thinks when his variorum edition of *The Complete Poems* is published by Harvard University Press next winter. Marta Werner is currently working on a CD ROM edition of the late letters and fragments for the University of Michigan Press. She has already edited *Emily Dickinson's Open Folios: Scenes of Reading, Scenes of Writing* for Michigan. The work of these textual scholars has added a new dimension to Dickinson scholarship.

Language poets have gotten a name lately for being visual, where the work is really a combination of the visual and the musical.

Each person now categorized under that rather absurd label has a separate voice. Charles Bernstein and Bruce Andrews edited the very lively magazine called L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E during the 1970s; there was core group first at N.Y.C., Berkeley, and San Francisco; also, there was Steve Macaffery in Toronto. Lyn Hejinian's Tuumba Press was crucial. More recently, she and Barret Watten are editing *Poetics Journal*. Ron Silliman edited an anthology called *In The American Tree*. But all of these poets and editors have different voices. One of the liveliest things about the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E magazine was its insistent blurring of categories.

By now many "Language" poets would like to shed the L word. What poet isn't a language poet? I don't like the term "experimental" poetry either. I don't feel myself to be a Language Poet or an Experimental Poet. Generally speaking, the categories "Language," "Experimental," and "Post-modern" are used to ghetto-ize and thus isolate a certain group of poets felt to be "difficult."

You mentioned Dickinson, Melville and Whitman as the precursors to your own

work.

I am not so arrogant as to consider them precursors; I just feel that they have helped to create a tradition in North American writing where I feel at home. Herman Melville, Edgar Allen Poe, John Cage, Charles Sanders Peirce, Emily Dickinson, H.D., Jonathan Edwards, Cotton Mather, Ezra Pound, Charles Olson, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry and William James, Gertrude Stein, Marcel Duchamp, Robert Smithson; all these dead writers, theologians, philosophers and visual artists would be in my anthology of Language Poetry (but it would have another name anyway).

One thing that particularly interests me in the work of Dickinson, Melville and Whitman is their awareness of the importance of Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1828. In Dickinson's case, it is an immediate connection because Noah Webster lived in Amherst for a number of years and was a friend of her grandfather Samuel Fowler Dickinson. Emily Fowler, one of her best friends, was the lexicographer's granddaughter. Webster and Samuel Dickinson were instrumental in founding the excellent primary school that she attended. Later they served together on the first Board of Trustees of Amherst College. When Dickinson tells Thomas Wentworth Higginson that for the first time her lexicon was her only companion, she means her Webster's Lexicon.

Walt Whitman often wrote to Noah Webster. He followed the progress of the American dictionary closely. Names and words enthralled him. One entrance in *Specimen Days*, called "Cedar-Plums Like — Names" concerns the problems he had naming a book. In a footnote after providing a list of thirty-five suggested and rejected titles, he adds an outburst in parenthesis: "It is a profound, vexatious, never-explicable matter—that of names. I have been exercised deeply about it my whole life." James Murray, the editor of the *The Shorter English Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles*, called Noah Webster "a born definer of words." So is Emily

Dickinson, but she adopts a new plan of investigation. Defining the known reasoning *from*. Each sounded syllable doubles the world of sight. Print gives only an indication of what is possible.

That makes me think of the double meaning in your line “collision or collusion with history.”

I put that line down to visual telepathy. It has to do with sight and disobedience (misspelling). All the best words are somehow disobedient. You see “collision” on the page. Suddenly the possibility of substituting u for i causes a little revolutionary drama. One definition of “collusion” is “a secret understanding between parties.” Maybe there is a secret understanding between letters, a conspiracy to carry on a fraud by secret concert. This could be one definition of “history.”

Was this also the way your other word pairs were discovered, such as “savages and salvages” in Secret History of the Dividing Line and “every goal a gaol” in Melville’s Marginalia?

With one parent a Bostonian and the other a Dubliner, there was always a great deal of emphasis in our family on the differences between English or Anglo-Irish pronunciation and American English. During WWII I tended to follow my mother’s speech patterns, as my father was overseas in the army. I said *ither* rather than *eether*, *been* rather than *bin*, dew with a *you* in it rather than *doo*. These little differences carry great psychic weight to a child. It was a way of trying to hold on to something I suppose one might even call landscape—to an imagined Ireland I learned from her.

In 1947 my mother was finally able to take Fanny and myself to the place she considered home. It was the feeling of landscape and language becoming one thing, and I felt what it was to be foreign. I can’t speak for Fanny, but I know I felt that my voice was hideously shrill and that there was nothing more lovely than soft musical Irish voices. Our friends and relations there did imitations of our nasal drawls. To an English or Anglo-Irish ear, A is a

letter Americans (particularly New Englanders) mutilate.

What amazed me was that in Ireland they called the all-important last letter of the alphabet Zed. I used to puzzle over that a lot. Z was a single letter when you said it the American way, but adding a consonant D to the equation denied Z's status as a single letter. It wasn't a buzzing noise you made with your tongue against the front of the top of your mouth near your teeth, it was a hard three letter word.

In *Melville's Marginalia* when I was working on the last poem I stumbled upon the gaol/goal combination: "then he/would call whatever gaol a goal." My sisters and I were brought up on Oscar Wilde's Fairy Tales, and when I was about twelve I moved on to *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. That "gaol" was the same as "jail" was as tantalizing as the Z-Zed problem. Z is the end of the alphabet; Goal is the end of the road, something reached at last or something you set out to reach. In sports it is connected to winning. Gaol (jail) is a reverse Goal. A place you end up trapped in. Again it all involves shifting two letters. But the ghost of exchange is still present as a visual echo. So it is telepathy.

It has a double meaning that comes through.

Yes, sound carries its own meaning quite apart from spelling, and those tiny shifts, those acoustic and optical singularities, are what you can't translate into another language.

You said your interest in Dickinson, Melville and Whitman has now moved to Charles Sanders Peirce and the late work of Henry James?

If you define my "interest" as being writers whose work I would like read with students in a seminar, this is true. After 1896 James dictated his work to a typist because of severe arthritis in his hands caused by years of writing with a pen or pencil. This shift occurs after the failure of his play *Guy*

Domville. I would like to explore the connection between his work in the theater and the composition of his novels and short stories by speaking sentences out loud. It seems to me that in *The Spoils of Poynton*, even more than in *What Maisie Knew*, a major change is occurring. Not so much in his handling of plots or characters but in the structure of his paragraphs and sentences, even in his use of single words. It would be interesting to teach a graduate seminar on his ghost stories, their connection to William James' *Essays in Psychological Research*, and the influence of Henry James Sr.'s Swendenborgianism. We would start with "The Altar of the Dead," then go back to earlier stories. I would include *The Aspern Papers*, *The Sacred Fount* and *Turn of the Screw*, and that would lead right back to questions about collected editions and manuscripts as many of his short stories concern the subject of letters and papers.

It isn't that my interest has changed, just that I love to read and most writers whose work I love to read were also readers whose work tends to be based on their own curiosity about the writing process. What I like about teaching graduate seminars is that when they work well you are working together and sharing ideas as a group. You must be as specific as a detective at the same time that the chemistry of the group makes the investigation active and open. It all involves sharing.

Another thing that interests me about Henry James is his understanding and identification with children, especially pre-adolescent and adolescent girls. *What Maisie Knew* needs to be read in conjunction with *The Turn of the Screw* for many reasons; also, *The Awkward Age*, and even *Daisy Miller*. This concern makes his writing particularly American as far back as Cotton Mather's "Brand Plucked Out of the Burning," the account of Mercy Short's possession. You find it in Jonathan Edward's "Narratives of Surprising Conversions," and there is Hawthorne's Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*, or Ilbrahim in "The Gentle Boy." Hyacinth Robinson in *The Princess Casamassima* is another Ilbrahim. You could do a seminar on Hawthorne's influence on James, which is profound. It is there from *Roderick Hudson* through *The Golden Bowl*. Both Hawthorne and James make the move

from America to Europe, a reverse crossing. *The Marble Faun* shows up covertly time and again in James, and very interestingly in *The Golden Bowl*. *The Golden Bowl* is an amazing novel; there is room for everything, every kind of reading or interpretation in its forty-two chapters.

James's link to America makes me think of your introduction to Frame Structures, where you use your own personal background to delve into American political and literary history.

I wrote the essay called "Frame Structures" because I was asked to write an introduction to help explain my early poems, which New Directions was reprinting. Peter Glassgold, my editor there, assumed I would write a *brief* preface; little did he know the preface would take over the book.

An idea of firstness or earliness is always what my work is after. I hadn't realized it until I came to this particular problem. This is another thing about James—his Prefaces to the New York edition of his work. You could do a whole seminar on them and use his photographs in the New York edition, adding to this his later work exploring in some sense the preface to his writing life, i.e. his own childhood and his return to America after being away for twenty years. Prefaces are usually written afterwards after you have finished something; prefaces are another kind of footnote. A footnote that spreads over the margin. So it is somehow connected to marginalia. In my poetry, when I react to certain landscapes I always go back to an earlier history. I have a problem dealing with the present in my work.

How has your own past affected your work? Has your writing or your vision as a poet changed?

My husband David von Schlegell's death in 1992 has made it impossible for me to write the way I once did. When he died I had just finished *The Birthmark* and all the poems in *The Nonconformist's Memorial*. After that I worked for two years on the Marker essay, then spent several months on

Frame Structures. I moved further into a kind of prose-poetry. Paragraphs interested me rather than single lines, and for me poetry had been largely a question of lines, even lists of words, rather than stanzas. The panicked sense of isolation I felt in Mary Rowlandson's narrative, the treatment of Ann Hutchinson by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Thomas Shepard's self-repression coupled with ecstatic belief, are the other side of a line before October 5, 1992. Then current reality took over.

Recently I have been writing poems again, but they are different. I am still working with landscape in some way, but the mysteries of time and memory are harder to pin down. More fragile, more fleeting. My reading has changed. Herman Melville is not comforting. Emily Dickinson isn't either. Maybe their work is too hungry for comfort, or just too vivid for comfort. But Henry James *is*—profoundly so. Because he is tender. The tenderness is there in the structure of the sentence. He knows the way the poor and the dead are forgotten by the living, and he cannot allow that to happen. So he keeps on writing for them, for the dead, as if they were children to be sheltered and loved; never abandoned.

Perhaps it is the process of writing that you are going back to. You said "process is the joy of writing" when you were discussing Dickinson's manuscripts, her handwriting, whether you could see her process and whether she was editing.

—and you can see on some level she didn't care if the public saw what she was doing; the joy was in the doing. Charles Sanders Peirce's manuscripts are in some ways totally different; after all he is not a poet—he keeps filling pages, almost for the sake of filling pages. Lists, numbers, charts, diagrams, sentences, doodles, definitions, on and on. But both Dickinson and Peirce have in common a feeling that explanation is somehow diagrammatic. Also, to accomplish such a tremendous amount of work they became reclusive. I envy them their isolation. If I had my way I would stay at home and endlessly shift sentences around. Type them out and move them around. It is this "cutting and pasting" (and erasing) process that brings me to the

subject in the end. Then each afternoon I would take a long walk out on Leetes Island or over to Sachems Head. Writing essays involves basically the same thing except that it also involves research and much time spent in libraries. When I was writing the essays in *The Birth-mark*, especially the one about Thomas Shepard and early American conversion narratives, I knew I was writing about specific people, I was dealing with “facts” but somehow they were all bound up in the structure of each sentence and paragraph. All of the excitement in writing for me is in the *process*. I believe process is part of the meaning of a poem, and is just as inseparable from meaning as sound and sight. It is all one mysterious entity.

Do you think critics of poetry understand that?

Not that often. They are writing about something they are not inside of. For that reason it is always interesting to read what a writer has to say about another writer. Melville on Hawthorne, James on Hawthorne, Williams on Poe, Stein on James, Olson on Melville, Duncan on H.D., Hejinian on Stein, Susan Stewart on Gerard Manley Hopkins. For them it is a matter of life.

Is there some way to help those who don't understand this process?

Well, the important thing is not the critics, even if we do privilege criticism over poetry or fiction at this moment in time. The important thing is some telepathic connection between the work and the reader. Though I might not like the way a book of mine is printed, there it is in print. I have to let it go. The letting go is also a process. A reader connects with the words as they are on the page according to another world view. I don't own the words. I borrow and improvise. Teaching calls for improvisation. So does acting. The essence of poetry is precision and wild speculation.

(Susan Howe was interviewed following her lectures at the University of Notre Dame for the Ward-Phillips lecture series in the spring of 1997)

FROM
VIA SAURO VARIATIONS

Peter Robinson

for O.

‘...notre destin qui t’étonne
Se joint au jour qui va finir’
Guillaume Apollinaire

1

Despairingly, you asked would I like to live *there*
as we drove in or out through swollen suburbs:
hypermarket parking, towerblocks, shrubbery,
geometric shapes and reflections in the air.

Surfaces of ochre, brick red, a plaster grey
had been taken from an architect’s prize sketches
—enough to suppose this Emilian city’s edges
were a few lines on some paper by Paul Klee.

2

Well no; how could you love
that place after all those years
minutes from the main square’s
cafés, four flights up above
this long and narrow street
with its open shop doorways?

Curious proprietors gaze
 at passersby who meet
 a schoolfriend or acquaintance,
 step close against the wall
 expressing surprise—as if all
 life itself weren't an off-chance
 encounter, a second glance.

3

Outside, youth's vagrant chatter
 washes along the street below;
 to close a slatted shutter
 you climb from interior shadow
 in pyjamas, on to a chair,
 stand out against another clear night
 over rooftiles; in the lit square
 of that window your thin silhouette
 for a moment plainly reaches.

4

Recalling my appearance in that darkness—
 who, hesitating, came back to the floor,
 I'm what was reflected on silvered glass
 of a wardrobe mirror by your door.

In the face will have been fear—
 of what might follow, immediate or late,
 but also desire, abandoned, still great,
 to approach you and reach near

an original, translate distances
in the miscarried language we say,
and even know ourselves in all senses—
as I hurried down the passageway.

5

Yet still those ten days shared
were put by like a hidden gift
as if this life would not forget us,
although there seemed nothing left
to give but a few brief letters
in a syntax that made little sense
and two signed books, the souvenirs
of a brief affair: no recompense
for the unlived or the ill-lived years.

6

You drove us in that aftermath
to Bagno-Vignoni, its small town
square a therapeutic thermal bath
in which we were to drown
our remaining nostalgia beneath
Tarkovsky's greens and browns.

The Maremman town, it was no dream;
by wooden-raftered loggia, liquid sound,
I watched the bubbling waters steam,
peered at a camera, the bitter end
of our story, our musical theme—
we seemed about to comprehend.

7

Under Populónia, the site custodian
 approached us with today's dog barking
 and excavated mounds, Etruscan tombs
 outfacing a somnolent horizon.

'So have you noticed any ghosts?'
 teasing me, you said; our pasts,
 and not the sum of faults, returned
 (if faults do die when they're confessed)
 to a sculpted ancient married couple,
 the look of fierce repose between them,
 couched together on their funeral urn.

* * *

23

Ten years back, we took this line.
 The train from Parma to Monterosso
 just couldn't get there soon enough
 for me, and maybe you, those years ago.

Arrived, we did what the infatuated do,
 booked a hotel and, being alone then,
 fell, as I hoped we would, in love.
 This far into that different future,
 one September day, we came on purpose
 but stumbled upon the place again by chance.
 Ten years back, it had taken all the force
 of feeling and circumstance.

24

Your bedroom walls resilient enough
to survive those few years' silence,
we'd squeeze past furniture or glance
around at each framed photograph:

the landscapes, sunsets, ancestors . . .
signs of an independent life
crying out loud not to be left
alone; here, on the chest of drawers

a mirror speckled at its edges
contains me a moment, the ghost
of years ago who loved and lost
and gained dependents by slow stages.

25

It was not the place I loved—
no tinkling chimes, ivy buds,
coral clasps or amber studs,
the landlady's property shoved
into an alcove, every room
bare of variegated leaves
where a spider's web survives
you'd unhook with a broom,
taking possession, as if to prove
by a corridor full of shadows
one last time now shutters close,
it's not the place I love.

WHALE

—in memory of James Dickey

Libby Bernardin

I was crazy in those days, drunk
from the quarter moon, the rolling sea,
I shot straight up from the dark water
 not knowing
 knowing
my lungs would burst black liquid
if I let the surface of the water hold me—

Crazy from the motion of waves, jingo men,
the woman with the gold-flecked eye
who made me feel light as a gull, laughing
 how I wanted her
 riding my skin
 slick with foam
and the danger of falling, swept into dancing
white water, I could have sucked her into my belly—

Somewhere north of the equator tailing stars
of the sea monster, Cetus, its triangular head
shouts in a whispering voice, but I am not
 afraid of that sky
 deer muttering off shore
like strings holding me in their sway, I tell you
I crave the secrets of their pooling eyes—

I am not afraid of the sky tonight
Mars scattering breath under the hot white moon
this comet—the one Moctezuma must have seen—
on course high above the pines its faint nebulous tail
ancient as Elijah, as I old whale rise in the whirlwind,
fear lost in the authority of sky, ocean, words.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE BLUE GUIDE TO INDIANA

Michael Martone

TWO CITIES

Fort Wayne

Here, an exact replica of the original, early nineteenth century American fort stands right downtown (tours available). Authentically dressed interpreters recreate a summer's day in 1816 through a thoroughly detailed living history re-enactment. Visitors often attempt to trick the fort's employees into revealing their actual twentieth century predilections. More fascinating is the elaborate modern wall which protects the fort (tours available). Constructed of cyclone fencing, galvanized corrugated steel sheets and locally fabricated concertina wire, this outer wall contrasts strikingly with the wooden walls it guards. The modern Fort Wayne is itself enclosed by a connected system of breastworks and ramparts, copies of famous European fortifications and castles. A walking tour of its parapeted walls makes for a great day outing. Under construction in the suburbs, yet another wall of imported timber and carbon polymer resins nears completion along the city's busy beltway. Beyond that, excavation is under way for an encircling moat in whose waters the remaining fields of corn will be reflected. And in a north side park, a small museum (free) provides a history of defenses. Scale models of star forts' geometric ravelins, bastions, glacis, and covered ways are encased in clear glass cases.

South Bend

Here, in 1875, Albert Einstein, while filming another instructional movie explaining his theory of general relativity (this time using the Dop-

pler effects of the New York Central's crack streamliner, The Twentieth Century Limited, as it tore across the state to illustrate the concept), visited a local tourist curiosity called "The Blue Hole" where an enterprising local charged two bits to observe an azure opening in the air. There, Professor Einstein realized that this "Blue Hole" was simply another anticipated rip in the fabric of time and space. The savvy reader will have realized, by now, that the Professor, in 1875, had yet to be born (nor had the motion picture and the train, named for a century that hadn't happened yet, been invented). The actual filming took place in 1939. Now the site of a college football stadium, the disruption in the continuum contributes to the phenomenon, reported by many, of seeing revered past coaches and entire backfields present in the present and simultaneously, in their own time. Upon witnessing the déjà vu-ed scrimmages of this particular gridiron, the visitor senses an uncanny pattern of sameness to the games, a predictable drama, which is currently identified as "Tradition."

Author's Note

Michael Martone was born at St. Joseph's Hospital in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1955. It is interesting to note that the attending physician was a Doctor Frank Burns, Major, United States Army, retired, and recently returned to Fort Wayne following service in the police action in Korea. It was the same Dr. Burns, it turns out, who years later served as the model for the character "Frank Burns" appearing in the novel M.A.S.H. by Richard Hooker and in the movie and television versions based on the book. Martone recalls the modest premiere of the Altman film in 1970, and its initial screening at the Embassy Theater in downtown Fort Wayne. Dr. Burns, who had continued after Martone's birth (it had been a difficult one, sunny side up, where forceps were used), to be his mother's gynecologist, arrived at the theater, the guest of honor, in a Cadillac Seville provided by Means Motor Company on Main Street. Sally Kellerman and Jo Ann Pflug also were there. All during the run of the television series, Dr. Burns, now in semi-retirement, happily appeared at strip malls' ribbon cuttings and

restaurant openings, a kind of official good will ambassador, and took the ribbing from the public whose perception of his character had been derived from what they had read or seen in the movies and on television. His son, Frank Jr., was two years ahead of Martone at North Side High School. Frank Jr. anchored the 4x440 relay on the Redskin varsity track and field club where Martone served as team manager. Martone remembers Dr. Burns, team physician, coaching him in the use of analgesic balm and the scrubbing of cinders out from beneath the skin after a runner fell on the track. It was Dr. Burns who, later, diagnosed Martone's mother's ovarian cancer in 1979 and performed the failed hysterectomy that led to his mother's death that summer. It was Dr. Burns, still in his surgical scrubs, who met the family in the waiting room of St. Joseph's Hospital in Fort Wayne, the same hospital where Martone, twenty-four years before, had been born, and delivered by means of forceps by Dr. Burns. The television was on, of course, an RCA model made in Bloomington, Indiana, and Martone remembers how hard it was not to watch it while, in a strange way, he also felt he was watching himself listening to Dr. Burns rehearse the final few minutes of his, Martone's, mother's life.

SOME SPORTING EVENTS

Grand National Locomotive Drag Racing Finals
Whiting

Gone is the era when the crack streamliners of the Pennsylvania and the New York Central cruised between Chicago and New York. In those days, the premier all Pullman Limiteds, The Broadway and the 20th Century, would stage nightly races, emerging from the train sheds and terminals of the Windy City's Loop and then speeding on into the gloaming Indiana prairie along their paralleling high iron straightaways. The muscular K-4 Pacifics of the Pennsylvania and the sleek J3a Hudsons of the New York Central, their moaning whistles once ubiquitous in the dreams of the

residents of Gary, their spent cinders and smoke ash settling on the drying laundry of the clothes lines of Hammond, now, sadly, are no more. Gone, that is, except for each fall when steam locomotive enthusiasts from all over the world gather along the historic right of way to witness the annual Grand National gathering.

Sanctioned by the National Association of Locomotive Railroad Racing (NALRRR, for short) a thousand engines and their crews vie in over fifty classes based on wheel arrangement, tractive effort, and firebox grate area in this the final venue of the steam racing season.

Here the steam fan may witness the Raymond Loewy designed T-1 4-4-4 duplex with a modified Belpaire firebox go head up on a Union Pacific FEF-3 4-8-4, boasting a static exhaust steam injector driving the water pump and feeding the water heater. Watch as they break the beams of the electric eye with speeds of up to 120 mph.

In the articulated class, spectators witness clashes of the Alleghenies and Challengers, as well as the super-qualified Big Boys of the impossible mountain grades contending with the segmented Garratts imported all the way from East Africa.

In the modified heats, the cowled and varnished 4-8-4 of the Southern Pacific Daylight and the Norfolk and Western J grace the ribbon of rail, deploy their colorful drag chutes after streaking along the quarter mile course.

S-2 Turbines and Jawn Henrys, Atlantics and Pacifics, Mikados and Mallets and Mogols, Ten Wheelers and tank engines roar along the lake shore, their sanders sanding and their whistles whistling.

Perhaps the best represented class is of the red hot hot-rod 4-4-0s, American pattern engines, where even the garage hobbyist with ten tons of coal and a willing fireman can highball with the likes of Old Number 999, the first steamer to break the 100 mph mark back in 1893 on the head end of the Empire State Express.

Curiosities include the funny cars of the Erie's Triplex 2-8-8-2, B&O Camelbacks, geared Shays Loggers, and cab-forward oilers.

A special treat is watching the the watering trails as crews compete at

sluicing water on the fly using a special scoop beneath their centipede tenders to refresh the tanks without stopping.

The colorful and noisy meet lives up to the famous bellowing of Hoosier AM radio d.j.s who tout the race repeatedly: “You think you can, you think you can, you think you can be there!”

With any luck you’ll see a boiler blow.

Eugene V. Debs Memorial Pro-Am Golf Tournament
Terre Haute

A PGA sanctioned event held each May Day at the Hulman Links north of the city, this three days match play routinely draws the most competitive players on the tour as well as the largest gallery west of Augusta.

The Trent Jones designed course is known for its stands of mottled sycamores, its hand-scythed fairways, its innovative use of the Wabash River, its ground brick bunkers, and its excruciatingly difficult running dog leg of the seventh hole.

The award of the coveted red jacket to the tourney’s winning amateur is considered the ultimate prize for non-professional play.

Commemorating an obscure local politician, the “Debs,” as it is affectionately known, commemorates the great American invention of the weekend while it also perpetuates the unique tradition of being the only professional venue on the world tour where the use of a caddy is strictly prohibited.

The 24 Hours of Indy
The Beltway
Indianapolis

Not as famous as The Indianapolis 500 or the Brickyard 400, the 24 Hours of Indy is, nevertheless, one of the premier events in motor-sports.

One Sunday each fall, the 106 mile beltway encircling the capital city is closed for this endurance test of Midget class front-engine roadsters. The

continuous racing takes place on the inner lanes of I-465 while the outer lanes are reserved for the massive blocks of hastily constructed box seats and bleachers packed with racing's most rabid fans.

Averaging speeds of nearly 70 miles an hour, the Midgets complete the circle in a little over an hour, thereby giving the spectators ample time between laps to socialize, picnic, and watch the race they are watching on portable televisions while perched upon what is often up to twelve stories of scaffolding. The various office buildings clustered at the highway exit ramps also offer great views as the pack of racers putter by below.

The 24 Hours of Indy is most notable for the unique pitting of its cars. As its course is, ordinarily, a public roadway and all remnants of the race are dismantled within two hours of its completion, the 24 Hours of Indy does not reserve a special area for repairs and refueling. In keeping with the endurance nature of the event, all servicing must be done while the cars are in motion. What has evolved are the justifiably famous rolling refueling trucks that also roam the course, searching for the running-on-empty racer. Docking, at times, with up to three cars by means of an elaborate winching system of hoses and accordion-like collapsing cranes, the fuel trucks themselves participate in their own contest of speed and endurance, a race within a race.

Occasionally, this risky maneuver at speed goes awry. The coupling which locks the hose to the tank springs free while the fueling is in progress. When this happens, the nearby stands of observers, who just moments before felt themselves lucky to be witnessing an example of the mating, now find themselves drenched in a spray of the highly flammable nitro-based racing petrol. Drivers who have followed in the wake of such an accident report witnessing thousands of people in whole segments of the bleachers ripping off their clothes, pouring from the stands naked, and running to bathe in the nearest insurance company's complex's picturesque reflecting pond.

LAST TURN AROUND THE GARDENS,
THRICELY

Carl A. Gottesman

i

Tasting, but as a stranger, the delirious
aromas of world without end . . .
tossed amid glamour so remote, so unappeasable
the mind grows cunning, feigning cure
in lovely, convoluted porches, in radiant stone

Heels pressed against rusting rails, head back,
I follow dull blue dollops that appear pigeons, yes,
spinning, circumscribing wide loops, then dipping
behind the corner of apartment blocks.

Yes, my eyes are dimmer,
pressed back like oyster heads,
and the rooms behind they long to peer into
again, loved places, locked and shaded
by a kind of police.

A nod; a blink. Nothing lasts. And when
we return, when we stroll up and look
into loved, familiar faces, that burning innocence,
those unfathomable patinas . . .

A breathed, alien life. Slow death.
Following the perfumes through fading portals . . .

Peace then. Settled exile. But I shake myself awake—
and turn once more to the gardens,
the burning roofs, its fibrilated, harsh,
tenuous, fixed, icy foliage.

ii

Through the avenue of globed mulberry
I enter the park—cloud change faded
from sky light, the canopy now fused
and burning, the park glows

too painfully for the eyes to rise
and not blanch . . . shadows absolute,
without fissure, barren and hellish
through a proximity to light—

the pensioners, leaves, our foot-
steps, half-distinct Then, face it,
bend yourself, fold the morning news
and face it No wind flicks shade

across dozers' hat brims, but they sway,
exhausted, unblinking, and odd, dark patterns
sway, as on a tide. And behind them the fishpond
fills, secret pressure mounting

against dam wall, water pressing
outward, languid, when from the hush
around old men the mechanism begins to crawl,
the brake turns shrill, gates lift and flow begins.

iii

Rush through grating, through sluice
into dry channels; shade over shade,
a pulse between light and water
teasing the underside of leaves,

a fresh irritation to be absorbed
 into a third, indivisible element
 neither light nor leaf—only to drown,
 the senses blocked, nonsensical,

in delicate pools around bitter citrus.
 As I nod, then lift my head, the timbre
 of the controlled flow varies
 from tortured to the entirely natural,

becoming grave, then lighter, sparkling,
 channeled through a narrow throat. Gardeners
 in worn pajamas damp down rough paths,
 causing now and then a thin spray

to float clear in a narrow band of light.
 The fishpond drains; behind me, children
 peering through wire mesh count
 swarming goldfish into submission. Overhead,

pigeons wheel towards the duck pond, downhill,
 drawn, like flow through thick foliage,
 by gravity, their shadows dribbling
 over stone steps into the calm,

pulsing surface—and they skim,
 suave emanations, wringing the final drams
 from the stillness beneath, adding new balance,
 new perplexity—light off water off leaf,

now light and water off wings, then all wing,
 all reflection, seen again skimming water.
 A cloud passes, the mirror dulls
 and the perfume of these slender appearances

dissipates, only to flicker like embers
broadcast from a tomb, or is reabsorbed
in dull slime color, as pulse leadened
to await the lightning of awakened interest.

iv

The eyes close; understanding
impossible, and too painful
even to approach half-hearted—

perhaps most in the famous light
of a Greek summer the futility
of common speech, searching, haunted,

is borne home, despite dreams
of clarity under tunneling foliage—
each leaf remaining vexed,

but solitary; somehow, by a trick
of light, brightest at the heart
of the darkest tree, the blending of shade,

the dwarfing of color inescapable,
perhaps merciful as the plumes
from lush, disintegrating sources

rise confluent but austere.

BROWN RECLUSE

Elizabeth Gold

Brown Recluse—(Loxoscelidae, order Araneida, Reclusa) a species of spider, originally from Mexico, now common in the southern and western United States. Has a dark violin-shaped design on its back. Is often found under stones or in dark corners inside buildings. Its bite destroys the walls of the blood vessels near the site of the bite, sometimes causing a skin ulcer several inches in diameter. The wound, which may require several months to heal, is occasionally fatal.

What do you want me to do? Apologize?
 I didn't invite you in.
 You're the one who should say it:
 Sorry.

When you live alone so long
 you get your own way of doing things.
 Want your splinter, knot, whorl
 and root, arranged just so.
 I hang my hammock in a corner
 of the dining room. Feast alone.
 Nights skunks cavort, possums
 trail naked tails over the grass.
 I bolt the door.
 Play the fiddle on my back.
 Old Mexican melodies, songs
 I can hardly remember, plaints
 of sugar and dust.
 I go to bed.

You held out your hand.
What do you think you were asking for?
A Monarch, wrapped in his cloak
of sunset? A Ladybug,
in her mantilla of black spots?
I slide poison under your skin.
Teach you what it's like
to die a little.
You won't forget me.
I give so much, for what?
If you don't want love,
don't touch me. Don't
touch me.

BELIEF*Stephen Gibson*

I believe in miracles. In the alternative high school that I go to at the county youth facility, we hold half-hour weekly prayer meetings in the morning, at a table in a corner of the cafeteria, which is our table, until the cafeteria building opens. At first, Mr. Lopez, our principal, wouldn't approve it, but then he said that since all of our grades had improved, and since the five of us were all doing excellent work in pre-algebra, he changed his mind. But I think that had more to do with the lawsuit that was won in Oklahoma which allows students to have a Christian fellowship club at school, and to hold meetings just like a camera club or a student council can.

I started the group with Evalina, who is also sixteen and has had three abortions. There are five of us—four girls, counting me—and Brian, who is a reformed homosexual. The four of us girls all share the same dorm suite, so it's like we're a sorority, except for Brian, but we made him an honorary member.

I started the group a year ago March, three weeks after I was sent here after being released from Hardison General. I was in the hospital eleven months—first Hardison when I was dead and they operated on me, then eight months in Judson Sweet Rehabilitation Center, where I learned to speak again after I was reborn. Billy was not reborn, at least not in this life, but I don't question that.

The night I was killed I was fourteen, and Billy Hackett and I had been together almost three months. For two and a half months I thought I would marry him. In the last half month, I knew I wouldn't. For the last two weeks, we lived like brother and sister, except for the two occasions when we had sex when Billy wasn't high on poppers, and the one other occasion when Billy tried to but couldn't, because he was. We were staying in one of the old migrant camp cottages that are still around the lake from

the time when there used to be migrants. That was before the winter vegetable crop moved south and west and mechanical harvesters replaced the sugar cane workers from Jamaica and Haiti. So the cottages mostly stand empty, except for one or two fishing rentals every once in a blue moon to sport fishermen who visit Palm Beach and don't know any better.

The cottages were outside Egret's Cove, which is near Moore's Haven, which is also on the lake. A piece of cardboard stuck behind a front screened window of a house was how Billy and I found it. Billy was living out of his mom's stolen station wagon then, and I had run away from the Asagrove Miracle Temple Farm where I had been sent because I was fourteen and pregnant. The cardboard read, "Fishing Rentals," and there was a number underneath in black grease marker.

So we called. Actually, I did the calling. Billy was twenty-one, but without any practical sense. I handed Billy the pay phone outside the convenient store when a Mr. Stuart Granger from the sugar co-op answered—a different Stuart Granger, not the movie star from my granma's generation. I gave Billy the phone and told him not to say anything about me or him living out of the station wagon. Billy had a hard time knowing what he should and shouldn't say to people.

"Just tell him you want to rent it for a week to go fishing," I told him.

I didn't want Mr. Granger to know anything. That way, no one could say anything to Rev. Asagrove at the Temple Farm. Rev. Asagrove was a great believer in knowing everything about everybody—everything worth knowing. He made sure of it. When he placed that red prayer handkerchief on top of a person's head, and squeezed with his two big hands just like he was squeezing a pumpkin to test it, it didn't matter how old or young they were, or black or white, they felt the power of him go through them until it made them wiggle.

"Give it up," Rev. Asagrove would say. He'd stand real close, with those banana fingers of his squeezing until he lifted the person right out of their metal folding chair. "Give it up," he'd say and lift, and the rest of the body had to follow. Sin, he meant. He'd stare into the person's eyes and he'd say it so that every one of us could hear. We'd feel it too, what was needing to

be given up. Then, when that person's head looked like it would be separated from their body, they would. Whatever it was, they'd give it up. Whether it had been done yesterday or a hundred years ago when their great-granmas and great-granpas were young, it didn't matter. They gave it up. That was how old Earl told what he did with his sister-in-law Florence when Earl was a young married man and Florrie came to live with them. Earl paid for the abortion with the money from his own wife's mother's life insurance policy. So two souls never got a headstone, Lillian and Florrie's mother, and that infant.

At other times, the sin wasn't nothing. Usually just someone wishing someone would come to harm. But whether the person had sugar diabetes or arthritis or a problem liver that even doctors at Hardison General couldn't figure, when the Rev. Asagrove put his hands on them, that person victoried and was healed. We saw it. Rev. Asagrove pressed one big hand down on the red prayer handkerchief on top of the person's head, and had to keep it there just to contain them so they wouldn't victory and fly off. Everyone felt it. Old ladies that morning who couldn't reach into the cupboard to take out a box of cereal because of their arthritis, they bounced up and down, waving their hands up to God. "What kind of cereal?" Rev. Asagrove would ask them, and he'd be bouncing up and down along with them. And if the person looked puzzled or confused by what kind of cereal, someone might shout "corn flakes," and a box of corn flakes would suddenly be produced and would be passed down the rows. Rev. Asagrove would dance the old lady down the aisles while she waved the box of cereal over her head, Rev. Asagrove telling everyone to praise Jesus because a box of corn flakes had proved victory over Satan.

Everyone was a bit crazy at the Miracle Temple Farm. And I had to stay there for almost a month of the three months I knew Billy. But some people are hog crazy. I didn't really understand that until the night I got killed. A hog will lay low in bushes until you're on top of it, before it comes at you. My stepfather in Ocala was like that—only he was hog crazy just about wanting me to have sex with him. Which was why I ran away in the first place, when I found out I was pregnant. I mean the other kind of

crazy—the violent crazy—the kind that comes at you when you don't see it coming. That kind I didn't really understand until the night I got killed.

When I ran away from home, I ended up in West Palm Beach, which was where I met Billy. Billy cleared table dishes at Denny's. The morning we met, I had gone straight for a booth that hadn't been cleared yet. I picked up a menu and held it open far out in front of my face, just like I was waiting for the waitress, considering what to order. Billy walked by me, shaking his head and laughing. He was carrying a white plastic tub that had grip holes in the sides, the tub loaded down with silverware and dirty dishes that rattled when it banged against his legs. Billy had seen me take the three singles that were under the sugar and Sweet'n Low holder, but he didn't say anything. Later, when he re-filled my Sprite and he was eating my pickle and the crust from my bacon grilled cheese, he said he thought it was funny. When he asked me where I was staying, I said Denny's. That's when he decided I would move in with him and his mom.

I lived with Billy in his room in his mom's house for three weeks. Everything was all right until Denise found out Billy wasn't going to work—Billy called it his "rotating shift." Denise worked a rotating shift as cashier at the all-night SunGas, but Billy was staying home in the daytime with me any time when his mom wasn't. Denny's fired him. Denise blamed me and wanted me out. Then Billy told Denise I was pregnant, but didn't say it was Frank's, my stepfather's.

That's how Billy and I ended up living out of the back of his mom's station wagon for a week, after his mom threw me out and Billy left too. Billy said it wasn't really stealing that he took her station wagon because she could use the blue car. The first night we stayed in the closed-down drive-in on Military Trail, but I thought that wasn't a good idea because if the cops came by and searched the station wagon, they would have found Billy's drugs, which Billy simply kept in a brown shopping bag which he scrunched down at the top. Billy just kept the drugs in back with all of his other stuff. He didn't try to hide them, like under the bald spare in the wheel well, like I thought he should.

The next three nights we stayed at the Victoria Landings construction

site next to the artificial lake they were putting in. Billy thought that that was just great and that we could stay there forever because by the second morning, he sold out the rest of the shopping bag to the workers. By the third morning, he was able to get rid of a Ziploc baggie full of joints and poppers which he bought on Military Trail. The artificial lake was what gave me the idea of us going out to Lake Okeechobee because there wasn't anybody out there.

And that's how I ended up at the Rev. Asagrove's Miracle Temple Farm. One morning, one of Rev. Asagrove's field workers found Billy and me asleep. It was part of the grove that we should never have parked at—beside the pumping station next to one of the big canals. Like I said, Billy had no practical sense.

I was at the Temple Farm a month before I found out my mom and Frank had already been contacted through HRS. The Temple Farm was allowed to keep me until the county decided what it wanted to do. The Farm was a county-licensed home and school for runaway adolescents.

That's why if Rev. Asagrove had ever found out where I had run off to with Billy, he would have victoried me back where my "sisters" would have followed me around twenty-four hours a day, including into the bathroom, and where they would have taken my shoes away at night.

The night I got killed, Billy and I had been living in the cottage for almost three weeks when Billy drove up in the dark, followed by this beat-up pickup with a fat guy driving and a skin-and-bones blonde girl sitting in the passenger seat next to him. Billy had met them outside the Kountry Korral convenient store when he'd gone there to buy beer and to sell dope. Billy kept the brown scrunched-up shopping bag next to a broken crockpot that was on top of the refrigerator when we rented the cottage.

Billy introduced the big fat guy as John and the skinny blonde girlfriend as Sherrie. Fat John kind of nodded, but his skin-and-bones blonde girlfriend just walked past me and flopped down on our cot. Billy said they had come back with him so the three of them could go turkey hunting in the morning. "Gobbler hunting," Billy said. Billy didn't know one end of a

turkey from the other, not unless it was on a plate and you gave Billy a fork to scrape it off into the garbage with the leftover mashed potatoes and brown gravy. But he acted all excited-like and important. Fat John said he didn't know anyone else was staying at the cottage—Billy had never mentioned me—but that I could come if I wanted. John set down a twelve-pack of beer on the green shelf nailed to the window sill that Billy and I used for a table.

“She’s pregnant, not by me—her stepfather,” Billy said.

Billy took a baggie from his dungarees and tossed it to John. “There’s this,” he said. Then Billy moved the crock pot aside and took the shopping bag off the top of the refrigerator and set it down on the floor next to the shelf. “And this—and this—.” While Billy scooped out poppers and greenies and handfuls of rolled joints and set them on the window sill and the green shelf that was painted green like the rest of the outside and inside of the cottage, and set the money bunches tied with rubber bands down on the window sill, John sat on my folding chair, just watching and gulping from the can he’d popped open.

“Are we going to do it or not?” Sherrie said from my cot.

It was part whine and part something else. It was the something else, and the way John looked at her, and then the way he sort of smiled and laughed at Billy when Billy said, “Of course we’re going—after we get high”—that made me know something wasn’t right.

Billy licked a joint and then lit it and then handed it to John.

“A gobbler will see you before you see him,” John said, taking a toke. He was talking at me, and handed the joint back to Billy who was standing. “He’ll see the whites of your eyes when you blink,” Fat John said.

“Well?” Sherrie whined.

I looked back at her slumped across my cot leaning with her head back against the wall. She was wiping something on her hand on our blanket.

“Don’t do that,” I said.

“Do what?” she said.

“That,” I told her. I thought she had wiped a booger on my blanket.

“That’s why I wear camouflage,” Fat John was saying to Billy.

When I turned around, Fat John arched himself back and pulled something from his back pocket. It was a camouflage cap and a black net. He pulled the net over his face and then put on the cap, pulling the brim down low. “I wear a net so the gobbler can’t see the whites of my eyes, I pull the brim down like this so that my eyes are shadowed—”

“Holy shit,” Billy laughed, looking at me.

Fat John arched back and took something small and black out of the front pocket of his dungarees. “And then I call him with this.” Fat John slipped the black thing under the net over his face and struck it in his mouth. Out came a turkey gobble, just like the gobbler was in his mouth.

Billy said, “Holy shit,” and nearly fell out of his chair.

As Billy said that, Fat John spit the black thing into his hand. “It’s called a diaphragm,” Fat John said to Billy. Then Fat John turned and looked at me. “It’s not like the diaphragm Sherrie uses,” John said, and as he did, he leaned forward and reached for something behind his back. “I wouldn’t put her diaphragm in my mouth.”

That was the last thing I remember hearing. That and Sherrie behind me saying “Fuck you” and Billy saying with a laugh, “I would.”

Billy and I were found the next morning on one of the islands in the lake by two boys my own age, the one boy a native from Moore’s Haven and the other, his cousin who was visiting from up North. By a miracle, the boys had decided early that morning to row out to the little islands in the lake to cut palm hearts and take them home. Seems the cousin from up North had never eaten cooked palm hearts. Billy and I were on the third and smallest of the islands that the boys went to—and they almost didn’t go because it was so small—but they did anyway, so that too was part of the miracle of Billy and me being discovered. Billy was in a shallower hole than I was in the mucky dirt, but since he was almost completely covered with dirt and muck and sea-grass and fronds, the boys didn’t discover him even though his body was closest to where they pulled their jon-boat up. And

that too is part of the miracle of my being discovered at all. Because I was the second body in from the boat, if the boys had found Billy first, they might have run off in the boat to get one of the state conservation police and maybe no one would have looked for me or found me in time. So that's part of the miracle too, that the two palms the boys went after were in my path, and the boys had to practically walk on top of me, which they did, and I made a noise. That too is part of the miracle, although I don't remember any of this—it was told to me weeks later when I was in the hospital and I was also told that I had been shot twice, once over my left eyebrow, which came out the side by my temple and once in the top part of my chest, where it struck a bone and came out the front part of my neck.

I was dead, and so was the baby, which I have since read was probably very tiny and shaped like a cashew. So that too was part of the miracle of my being found—I mean the boys just happening to go after those two palms, about them deciding to stop on the third and littlest island, about them finding me first and not the other way around—because it was already too late for Billy—he was already dead when Fat John and his skin-and-bones blonde girlfriend Sherrie rowed back after depositing me to go get Billy—maybe they thought the alligators wouldn't have bothered with us if they just dumped our bodies in the water, so that's why they decided to bury us on the island—who knows?—but that too I count as part of my miracle.

Fat John and his skin-and-bones girlfriend Sherrie—who maybe thought Billie was some big-time small dealer—are in jail, and maybe some people would count that as a miracle, that Fat John and his girlfriend got caught at all.

I used to never believe in miracles. Even when I was at the Miracle Temple and saw Rev. Asagrove work his with his red prayer handkerchief, I didn't believe. I do now.

Like I believe in sin.



Janet Bloch, *Martyr*, 1996, gouache & mixed media, 28 x 14"
Courtesy of Lyons-Wier & Ginsberg Gallery

JANET BLOCH



Janet Bloch, *Dear Prudence*, 1997, gouache & mixed media, 13 x 13"
Courtesy of Lyons-Wier & Ginsberg Gallery

PANDORA

Mary Jo Bang

1.

It's the human side of nature: zygote to blastocyte, inertia or standstill—the binary character of choice. Was it bad or good to have been ambitious? You know but refuse to say

or else choose *Undecided*. Regardless, your answer is silence. Worth is the second question. Recitation (sometimes called *Mantra*), the third. A practical section—eleven tasks graded by a similar

who now stands before you. Conviction will of course be measured, counted toward a total. Do you know your lines? Do your gestures correspond? What were you thinking?

2.

What have I done? Key in a lock. Hand against the check—old bone, you are still delicate behind this skin. The children cry when they pass; throw stones against the door. Three o'clock is all the sun they give me,

a bitter taste when I wake. Morning is a tree, a wooden box, a black dress. Shoes. The tiny heel, nails that work their way up. The taste of a coin caught in the throat.

3.

She says the container is irrelevant, jar or box—
either can be lined with black glass. What escapes is the flawed
view of the face, a garbled name, the clean reversal of all
except hope—which is gifted with symmetry and looks.

4.

What can be weighed against attraction, irrepressible
and palpable cathexis. I wrote you, *I have never moved
from perfect to perfect*. Who has? It's the yellow-green beneath
today's paint that hides the story's end, the thread of *all said, all done*.

Even transgressions change names: this moment's small sin
will be tomorrow's sacred. I've been rereading the letters:
yours are evenly dull. Mine are a bit like true love: five shades
of gray and an opening.

5.

Who opened these doors: turned the knobs right then left
gas mixing with whistling, a metal jackhammer breaking
the dense kitchen air? An empty cup is neither

half-full nor half-empty. She returns, bends to listen again
to what he said. Was it yesterday? Takes down the tin. Measures.
It's difficult to say enough. To say yesterday or the day before.

He had said—Then she had said, *You see. . .*
Turns her head to the kitchen white, listens to the stand pipe
directing its ration. Water once settled everything—witches, adulterers.

Only those who swim, she thinks. Tomorrow she will try
to be beautiful for somebody else. Some other way. Today, the usual
injustices. And no one to ask after hours, *May I? Can I?*

If, then what will happen?

TO DANCE THE TARANTELLA

Mary Jo Bang

There will always be those who wear a felt hat
pulled over their face, a Fra Diav'olo
hiding in the mountains of Calabria, frater in exile,

renegade from the imagined hag, False-faith.
Which Edgar doesn't have a fiend? A Frateretto
who whispers that Nero lives as a trout in Lake George.

The jackhammer's *ratta-tat* reenacts
the tarantella, music once thought too frenzied
for the wearied ears of tourists.

But love in any language means
she invited the disturbance into the house;
locked all the doors, the windows, and stayed awake

for the better part of a century. Where can a person learn
Take me, will you? and the other catchy phrases
one never finds in guidebooks. To dance,

to dance the tarantella. To speak
a language of tongue rolls and lip twists. What sweeter?
Sweet rose. Sweet oleander. Sweet olive tree.

Wherever you are, I am: a jewel in the crown,
a bright cyclopic eye, bound to outstare. To feel the rush
of air, the soft breathe-out, brief as last night's sleep.

NOTRE DAME REVIEW

In the afterdance, everyone admits
that what they've fallen in love with is mayhem.
Oh you, yes, *you*. There's only you and I here.

Take off your felt hat, I beg you.

SYMMETRY

Randall Dwenger

Charlie stands atop the ladder leaning against his house, changing light bulbs on the Christmas decorations. He's not sure why Helen has him doing this, replacing their traditional hodgepodge of multicolored lights with alternating green and white ones. It is Christmas Eve already. Next week he will be back on this same ladder taking down the whole shebang, to store it away until next December. But a basket of flowers arrived for Helen this morning, which seemed to change things—made her unusually flustered and excited—and on her return from the beauty shop, she found a sale on bulbs at K-Mart. Hence the new chore for Charlie. Last week, Helen had not wanted him on the ladder at all, arguing they could do without outdoor decorations, intimating he was too old for such tasks. Priorities change, Charlie thinks, as he unscrews red and blue and yellow bulbs, gently placing them in the pocket of his sweatshirt. Priorities change.

Inside, Helen, his wife of thirty-five years, is readying the house for another Christmas celebration. She organizes these family gatherings every year, always the same, always with the expectation that both their children (now adults themselves) will be there. She has never been let down. “The Christmas Nazi,” their son had joked, referring to her rigidity when it came to this holiday. And she does generally get things the way she wants them, although this year she was nearly disappointed. Both children had proposed bringing along their new “lovers”—Helen cringed at the word when she repeated it to Charlie, as if it left a bitter taste in the back of her mouth. They argued on the phone for weeks, until finally a boycott was threatened. “I refuse to be subject to the moral law of Helen Brenner’s household,” their daughter, Kate, said on the phone. Charlie was careful not to take sides. “They’re grown children with lives of their own,” is all he offered, thinking this was safe middle ground. Although Charlie would miss them if they weren’t home for Christmas, he generally takes great comfort in their

geographical distance. He is a parent who does not need the details of his children's private lives.

So it is surprising to Charlie that they are now coming, "companions and all." Helen, apparently, blinked first. This is what he finds most peculiar, Helen's willingness to concede. He banks on her staunch immobility. He doesn't understand the change. It worries him.

Entering the house, Charlie examines the dining room table where the basket of pastel flowers sits on Helen's lace tablecloth. The perfume-sweet smell of the freesia seems nauseating to Charlie. Pine boughs and carnations, he thinks, would have been more appropriate. The attached card perched on its clear plastic fork simply says *Kenn*, and he studies it briefly. Charlie hopes it is a misprint, this extra *n*. The word *pretentious* comes to his mind, which makes him think of the word, *pretend*. Pretend he's just Carl's roommate, Charlie thinks, practicing. He pushes words like *lover*, *companion*, and *boyfriend* out of his head, places the card back in its florist envelope, and slides it underneath the basket so that it's out of sight. He removes the clear fork and heads toward the kitchen to make a drink.

"Want one?" he asks his wife, who's checking the coffee cakes in the oven. The familiar smell of warm cinnamon pleases him.

"It's one-thirty," she says. "Too early."

This is meant, Charlie knows, as the answer for both of them, but he makes himself a Christmas Eve drink anyway. It won't upset her. She has little time or cause to be irritated with him. "What can I do to help?" he asks, using the three-pronged end of the florist fork as a swizzle stick.

She smiles at him. "Boil some shrimp?"

"Sure. Peel and eat, right? Just put them out in a big bowl?"

"You think?" she says.

"Or I'll line them up fancy if you want. It's just a lot more trouble." Such things are important to Helen.

"Well, I guess it is just family, right?"

"It's up to you," Charlie says, not answering her question on purpose.

Their daughter, Kate, is the first to arrive. Charlie is grateful for this.

He helps her five-year-old, Daniel, remove his coat, and moves to assist Alex, eight, but he's already managed on his own. They are good boys, and he is pleased and proud that they are unfazed, at least to Charlie's view, by their parents' separation. Young children are easier, more resilient, Charlie thinks. This again brings to mind fresh pine boughs that bend but don't break under the weight of snow. Charlie glances toward the driveway expectantly.

"He's not coming, Dad," Kate says. "Didn't Mom tell you?"

"Who?"

"Mark. My new boyfriend." She lowers her voice. "You know, the alleged home-wrecker."

Charlie is unable to suppress a smile. "Oh, that's too bad."

"Right. You sound real disappointed. His ex-wife beckoned louder than I did, I guess." She rolls her eyes and gives her father a hug. "Why do I always choose the head-cases?"

Charlie shrugs. "Score one for your mother."

Charlie goes out to the driveway to retrieve the overnight bags and Christmas packages from his daughter's car. A crisp winter wind smacks his face, and for a moment he feels energized, newly alive, like Frosty the Snowman, a cartoon he'd watched with his grandsons last Christmas. He lingers there in the dusk of his front lawn, watching the green and white lights outlining his home. He likes the symmetry, the order. He smiles, thinking this new color scheme may need to become an annual Brenner tradition.

Back inside, Charlie shows the boys how the lights work on the Christmas tree. Controlled by a computer chip, the lights flash green, then white, then red, then yellow. The youngsters, of course, are more interested in the presents beneath the tree than the decorations, and they pay little attention to their grandfather as they check for packages with their names, count them, shake them.

"Santa's been here," Danny exclaims, finding a gift with his name on it.

"He's so immature," says Alex. "He still believes in Santa Claus."

Charlie scrunches up his eyebrows, faking confusion at his oldest

grandson. “Don’t *you* believe in Santa Claus?”

Alex rolls his eyes. “I’m eight years old, Grampa. Nobody in my class believes it anymore.”

“Well I’m fifty-five,” Charlie says, “and I tell you, you can’t be too old to believe in Santa.” He winks at the boy. “Help me carry these bags up to your room.”

Alex obeys, dragging a duffel bag up the tinsel-wrapped stairway. “In here?” he asks, heading toward the first room on the right.

“No, we’ll put you in your mother’s old room,” Charlie says, going past the bathroom and around the stair railing. “Carl’s staying in there.”

“Carl and Kenn,” the boy says, correcting his grandfather.

Charlie doesn’t respond, just deposits the luggage on the floor of the bedroom. He wishes his grandson would go back to believing in things such as Santa Claus, innocently accepting what you tell him without the complications of details and logic. He pauses as he passes the room that Carl and his friend will be sharing for the weekend. Helen has pushed the twin beds together, making it up as a double. He shakes his head, perplexed, as he follows Alex down the stairs.

In the kitchen, Helen and Kate busy themselves with preparations for the feast and festivities. Charlie, in the next room, watches his grandsons continue to arrange and rearrange the collection of gifts around the tree. He strains to hear the women’s conversation, wondering what it is they have to talk about. Even when they are feuding they talk almost daily on the phone. “About everything,” Helen says when asked. About nothing is what Charlie thinks, although he couldn’t begin to fathom how to talk to his children about such nothingness. Charlie never asked for grown children. Although he admires them for the most part, they are not the pink and needful bundles that he recalls carrying home from the hospital. They have grown into acquaintances, strangers almost. He does know things about them—demographics, statistics—but nothing vital. He knows, for instance, that Kate is a doctor, OB/GYN, in Ohio. He pictures her delivering healthy babies to happy families. He tries to forget that she’s stopped doing

obstetrics because the malpractice is so high, and now she spends her days in the world of PAP smears, D&Cs and hysterectomies. He knows that she's been unhappy in her marriage, that David (her husband) has been depressed and is taking medication, that they are separated, but not divorced. Helen tries to tell him more about the problems in Kate's life, but he tunes her out. Charlie wants to believe things will simply get patched up, the same way he patched her knees after kickball games. He doesn't know why everything has not worked out fine for Kate. He doesn't want to know why. He listens to the rhythm of their voices in the kitchen. It has always been enough that Helen knows why.

Entering, he sees that Kate has made a red cocktail sauce, and is peeling the shrimp Charlie had boiled, leaving the tails attached, arranging them on an oval crystal platter. "Changed our mind, I see," he says.

"Kate convinced me," Helen says apologetically, but pleased at the added effort.

"Taste better this way, Dad," his daughter says, dipping one in the red sauce and pushing it at his mouth. "Besides, I needed to feel a little bit useful around here. Has she arranged the perfect Christmas or what?"

Charlie bites the shrimp in half, holding the tail end between his thumb and forefinger. "Perfect," he agrees.

Helen smiles at this word of confidence from her husband as the low hum of a car is heard in the driveway.

"They're here," one of the boys yells from the living room.

"Don't be nervous, Mom," Kate says, kissing her on the cheek.

"Nervous?" Charlie asks. "Just be nice."

The two women laugh together softly, some sort of secret. "I'll be fine," Helen says, patting him on the head. "You get the door."

Charlie dips another shrimp into the sauce, and pops it into his mouth, swallowing it tail and all, his wife and daughter watching him, laughing louder. Laughing at him, Charlie is certain, not with him.

Alex holds the door open, acting as official greeter. Carl and Kenn enter with shopping bags of Christmas gifts, their luggage still in the rental

car. Carl lifts Daniel up in the air toward Kenn who is a head and a half taller than he. “Danny, this is Kenn,” he says, choosing the youngest, the safest, to begin the introductions.

“You’re big,” Daniel says, and Kenn musses the boy’s hair, laughing a light chuckle. It’s an easy laugh, boyish and wholesome, infecting the rest of the family, excluding Charlie.

“And this is Alex. And this is my old sister, Kate,” Carl teases.

She punches him in the shoulder. “Old! You’re still so mean.”

“Meaner,” Kenn warns. “Hi, Kate.”

She stretches up on her tiptoes to kiss him on the cheek. “Hi. I’m so glad you’re both here.”

“And this is my Dad,” Carl says.

The two men shake hands. “How was the flight?” Charlie asks. Carl and Kate break up laughing. “What did I say? I don’t get it.”

“I told you,” Carl says to his sister. “Now Kate has to do the dishes all weekend.”

“I was positive you’d ask about the rental car first,” Kate says. “Thanks a lot, Dad.”

“Way to go, Dad,” Carl says, wrapping an arm around Charlie’s shoulder.

Charlie feels himself flinch at his son’s touch, but no one seems to notice this reaction. “I think my children like to make fun of their father.”

“The flight was fine,” Kenn says. “It’s nice to meet you, Mr. Brenner.”

Helen enters the crowded foyer from the kitchen, wiping her hands on a dishtowel. Charlie notices the pretense in this, as she has clearly been at the bathroom mirror touching up her lipstick, not working at the kitchen sink. She has removed her apron, and is wearing a pale green print dress that he has not seen before. He feels a blush of embarrassment for her, certain that everyone sees she is trying too hard.

“Mom,” Carl says, and he hurries to her, wrapping his arms around her shoulders. They hold on a long time, and Charlie sees that words are being whispered back and forth, but he can’t make out or even imagine what they are saying. They both emerge from the embrace with the shimmer of tears

in their eyes.

“Hello Kenn, I’m Helen,” she says to her tall guest, extending her hand. Kenn leans down and kisses her on the cheek. “Thank you,” she says in response to this, a comment that confuses Charlie further. “Thank you for coming.”

“What’s everyone drinking?” Charlie asks. He reads the bewildered looks on their faces, perhaps startled by his voice, as if they’d forgotten he was there.

With all the scenarios Charlie had imagined experiencing with his son, entertaining his boyfriend wasn’t among them. Being told he was gay was one thing. But that, it seemed was an abstraction, another *fact* about his son that would never resonate with any of Charlie’s own life experiences. Like Carl’s loft in SoHo, or his job with the Philharmonic, or his “share” on Fire Island, this was something that could be catalogued and practically forgotten. It was not as if the knowledge itself changed anything. When Carl first told them he was a homosexual, it was Helen who had erupted in anger and insults and blaming. Charlie had simply said, “That’s okay, if that’s what you want.” He believed it was the kind of answer that a father should give. It wasn’t that he didn’t care; it was just not in his nature to interfere. “That’s okay if that’s what you want.” It was the same response he’d given when Carl was in high school and decided to quit football and join the cross country team. He accepted it and dutifully went to all of Carl’s meets, watching with the small handful of other spectators as, one by one, the runners crossed the finish line. Sure, he missed the proud thrill of sitting in the bleachers while the crowd cheered one of Carl’s catches—but Charlie kept those feelings to himself. It was important to Charlie that his son would never know he had disappointed his father.

Charlie finishes making the drinks and loads them onto a wooden tray, hanging back momentarily to listen to his family in the next room, chattering away, their voices getting louder and louder as they talk on top of one another. They don’t sound like a family that has been at war for the past few months, with the two children taking sides against Helen, while he

remained neutral. He had imagined a holiday of strained politeness and stilted conversation; news of neighbors no one cares about, forced laughter, faked smiles. He feels a twist of jealousy at this unplanned camaraderie. After delivering the cocktails, he steps back, leans against the door jamb—half in the room, half out—and listens, as their animated conversation continues.

They are re-telling past Christmas stories, and Carl is speaking. “I remember one Christmas Eve when I was seven years old and had the chicken pox and we were all quarantined. I was determined to stand guard at the Christmas tree to see if Santa would really come. You guys tried everything to lure me out of the living room, even offered to take me to McDonald’s in my pajamas. But I stood my ground.” Carl laughs and looks around the room to make sure Danny isn’t within earshot. “Eventually, they hired some guy to wear a Santa outfit who delivered the toys from the back of our station wagon.”

“That was Dad,” Kate says.

“No way,” says Carl. “Dad was there, taking the pictures. I remember. I think it was Mr. Watson, the old guy who used to live across the street.”

“It looks like it’s up to you to settle this one, Helen,” Kenn says, joining right in.

“I’m way too old to remember,” Helen laughs. A girl’s laugh that strikes Charlie as peculiar.

“Okay, Dad, confession time,” Kate says. “What’s the truth?”

“Yeah, Grandpa,” Alex says, wanting in on the adult conversation.

“Who was it?”

Charlie smiles, pleased that he has been included. He winks at his grandson. “It was Santa. I promise.”

Later, Carl retrieves an old photo album from his mother’s cedar chest, and the whole group gathers on the floor looking over memories of past Christmases, laughing at hairstyles and lopsided Christmas trees. Charlie notices that he, as official photographer, is absent from most of these family snapshots. Feeling sorry for himself, he makes his way toward the other end

of the family room where Alex and Daniel are watching TV. There's a bowl game scheduled, but the boys are engrossed in a cartoon—the Grinch, a green-faced lizard in a Santa suit. It's a Dr. Seuss story he read to them a couple years ago, and his mood lightens as he watches with the boys. He thinks of past family traditions of reading stories by the fire, marathon Christmas carols, assembling trikes and bikes after the kids had gone to bed. Charlie starts feeling warmer lost in the daydream. He finishes what's left in his glass to try and hold onto that feeling.

Helen excuses herself to the kitchen. "I just need about thirty minutes to get dinner on the table," she says.

"Let me help," Kenn says, getting up off the floor.

Helen smiles. "No. I'm fine. I can manage."

"Let him help. He's really good in the kitchen," Carl says. "And besides, we can't talk about you if you're both in here."

"She likes him," Kate says, once Kenn is out of sight.

"She should. He's just like her: stubborn, opinionated, generous, reads me like a book. I can't believe it," Carl says. "I married my mother."

"So did I. But that's why I'm getting a divorce." Kate laughs. "Why do you suppose we do this to ourselves? The challenge?"

"Maybe," Carl says, thinking. "Or the passion."

They both laugh again and turn their attention back to the photographs.

After dinner, the younger boys pull the adults into the living room, gathering them around the Christmas tree. It is time to open presents. By tradition, it is Charlie's role to play Santa each Christmas Eve, selecting gifts one at a time, according to Helen's bidding: "Now one for Alex; now one for Kate; now one for Carl." As each package is opened, the rest of the family watches, whispering "oohs" and "ahhs" as if the gifts were fireworks. When he comes to one with his own name on it, Charlie sets it to the side, to be opened later. This, too, Charlie believes, is part of their unspoken tradition—as if the magical rhythm would somehow be broken by Santa stopping to open his own presents.

After several rounds of Helen's prescribed order and precision, the young boys take things into their own hands. A frantic blur of excitement and chaos fills the living room as packages are placed on laps, opened and set aside, and the floor becomes littered with shredded wrapping paper and empty boxes and plastic toy parts.

Finally, Alex crawls across a scattered collection of miniature racing cars, and checks beneath the evergreen to be sure there are no more presents. "Well, Christmas is over," he announces.

The adults acknowledge him with a collective sigh—unequal parts satisfaction, relief and longing.

"Santa may be back, you never know," Kate says, referring to their tradition of saving one gift for Christmas morning.

"But I know he won't come until all good little boys are in bed," Helen adds.

Kenn and Carl, sitting next to each other on the couch, laugh at the same moment, and Charlie shoots them a look of irritation and confusion. "I'm pretty tired myself," Carl says, combing his hand through Kenn's thick, dark hair. Watching them, Charlie feels heat rising in his face.

"We've left him a cookie and a glass of milk," Helen says, "just in case."

"I told you, I don't believe in Santa Claus," Alex says wisely, making his case to stay up longer.

"I don't believe in Santa either," Daniel whines.

Charlie, sitting next to the five year-old, grabs him at the shoulders, squeezing him a bit too tightly. "You have to believe," he says, his voice strange and strained.

The room goes silent as everyone stares at Charlie.

With the rest of them upstairs in their respective beds, Charlie sifts through the cardboard box in the corner of the living room, pulling out the crumpled clumps of multicolored wrapping paper, inspecting each wad for bows and ribbons that might have been missed—bows that could be used again next year. The house is still, except for the rustling of paper, a noise that he's creating. Yet Charlie knows there is much going on beneath the

stillness. He senses that he will never know what it is, what it is about. This is his fear and his hope.

Upstairs there are people that he knows, yet doesn't know. They have gone to bed on this Christmas Eve night, both of his children kissing him good-night and Merry Christmas. He knows their kisses are perfunctory, like the *love* at the bottom of their greeting cards, but it is what's expected, and Charlie accepts it, having more respect for tradition than for sincerity.

And do they know *him*? When he finally opened his presents, Charlie found no surprises beneath the bright wrapping: a tub of pecans, expensive golf balls, a shirt he'll probably never wear, a new set of barbecue tools (although the old ones are fine). "Dad's so hard to buy for," they complain annually. Yet, for Helen, they found "the perfect thing"—a scarf from Mexico, an antique brooch. Carl had given her a tiny bottle of perfume, and when she opened it he told her, "When I smelled it, it reminded me of you."

Charlie shakes his head (as he had when Carl said it) and gets up to make himself another drink. He's had plenty, but he's not drunk yet. He is uneasy. There are strangers in his house. There is a man upstairs sleeping with his only son and he doesn't understand this. He does not know why Helen has allowed this to happen. She was opposed, and he knows this. She swore she would never accept this. She said awful, hurtful, hateful things to Carl: that she'd rather he had cancer; that she wished he wasn't born. But despite her vengeance, Carl had not changed. Helen had. Perhaps he doesn't know her either.

It is after two in the morning, and he knows he has a task to do. He pulls the *Santa gifts* down from the top of the hall closet, where he's hidden them, where he hides them every year. Charlie kneels in the middle of the living room floor, and arranges the gifts neatly beneath the tree, as he is supposed to. He examines them, studies the tags, the bows, the shiny paper. *To Carl, To Kate, To Alex, To Daniel, To Kenn, To Helen*, each in Charlie's handwriting, each signed: *From Santa*.

Santa, Charlie thinks, and then he remembers Danny's words, about not believing. He can still feel his grandson's bony shoulders enveloped in

his large hands. He hadn't meant to frighten the child when he shook him. But it occurs now to Charlie that this is what you do to awaken someone from a dream, not to send them back into it.

No. This is the Christmas of shattered dreams, of broken traditions, where everyone and everything has changed. Charlie stands back to look at the whole picture—the Santa gifts perfectly displayed beneath the lighted tree. Perfect—just the way Helen and the rest of them expect it. But this has not been a perfect Christmas, and Charlie, at least, is through pretending. The lights flash red on the Christmas tree. This should be a warning, Charlie thinks, but he ignores it. He carefully gathers the packages back into his arms, and returns them to their original hiding place at the top of the closet.

In the morning they will laugh at him for forgetting. They will tease him, saying he'd had too much to drink. They will not comprehend the statement he's making. He feels an urge to pull the ornaments and lights and tinsel and candy canes from the tree, and store them away for a better year. Perhaps then they would understand his feelings. But he is tired, and it is late. Too late, Charlie knows, to do anything to make them understand. Before turning out the lights, he spies the snack that has been left out for Santa. He drinks the glass of milk and, as he passes through the kitchen on his way to bed, drops the cookie in the garbage.

THE GLASS

William Bronk

That awareness that sees us aside from a world-in-the-self
and a self-in-the-world, holds in its hand the glass
that sees us as self that isn't aware and finds
awareness is only to see and is not to be seen.

LONG FINISH

Paul Muldoon

Ten years since we were married, since we stood
 under a chuppah of pine-boughs
 in the middle of a little pinewood
 and exchanged our wedding-vows.
 Save me, good thou,
 a piece of marchpane, while I fill your glass with Simi
 Chardonnay as high as decency allows,
 and then some.

Bear with me now as I myself must bear
 the scrutiny of a bottle of wine
 that boasts of hints of plum and pear,
 its muscadine
 tempered by an oak backbone. I myself have designs
 on the willow-boss
 of your breast, on all your waist confines
 between longing and loss.

The wonder is that we somehow have withstood
 the soars and slumps in the Dow
 of ten years of marriage and parenthood,
 its summits and its sloughs—
 that we've somehow
 managed to withstand an almond-blossomy
 five years of bitter rapture, five of blissful rows,
 (and then some)

if we count the one or two to spare
 when we've been firmly on cloud nine).
 Even now, as you turn away from me with your one bare
 shoulder, the veer of your neckline,
 I glimpse the all-but-cleared-up eczema-patch on your spine
 and it brings to mind not the Schloss
 that stands, transitory, tra la, Triestine,
 between longing and loss

but a crude
 hip-trench in a field, covered with pine-boughs,
 in which two men in masks and hoods
 who have themselves taken vows
 wait for a farmer to break a bale for his cows
 before opening fire with semi-
 automatics, cutting him off slightly above the eyebrows,
 and then some.

It brings to mind another, driving out to care
 for six white-faced kine
 finishing on heather and mountain-air,
 another who'll shortly divine
 the precise whereabouts of a landmine
 on the road between Beragh and Sixmilecross,
 who'll shortly know what it is to have breasted the line
 between longing and loss.

Such forbearance in the face of vicissitude
 also brings to mind the little 'there, theres' and 'now, nows'
 of two sisters whose sleeves are imbued
 with the constant douse and souse
 of salt-water through their salt-house
 in *Matsukaze* (or "Pining Wind"), by Zeami,

the salt-house through which the wind soughs and soughs,
and then some

of the wind's little 'now, nows' and 'there, theres'
seem to intertwine
with those of Pining Wind and Autumn Rain, who must forbear
the dolor of their lives of boiling down brine.
For the double meaning of 'pine'
is much the same in Japanese as English, coming across
both in the sense of 'tree' and the sense we assign
between 'longing' and 'loss'

as when the ghost of Yukihiro, the poet-courtier who wooed
both sisters, appears as a ghostly pine, pining among pine-boughs.
Barely have Autumn Rain and Pining Wind renewed
their vows
than you turn back towards me and your blouse,
while it covers the all-but-cleared-up patch of eczema,
falls as low as decency allows,
and then some.

Princess of Accutane, let's no more try to refine
the pure drop from the dross
than distinguish, good thou, between mine and thine,
between longing and loss,
but rouse
ourselves each dawn, here on the shore at Suma,
with such force and fervor as spouses may yet espouse,
and then some.

REVIEWS

ANOTHER IRELAND: PART TWO*Robert Archambeau*

Maurice Scully, *The Basic Colours*. Durham, UK: Pig Press, 1994.

Geoffrey Squires, *Landscapes and Silences*. Dublin: New Writers' Press, 1996.

Catherine Walsh, *Idir Eatortha and Making Tents*. London: Invisible Books, 1996.

I began the first half of this article (*Notre Dame Review* #4) by mentioning some of the limits to the legendary hospitality Ireland has shown to its poets. If you arrive in Ireland from any point of departure outside of Eastern Europe, you will indeed find a public far more willing than the one you left behind to grant poets the recognition all but the most ascetic secretly crave. However, this hospitality has never extended to Irish poets who seek to write too far outside of the dominant tradition of nationalist-regionalist aesthetics, and the considerable achievements of those poets who have ventured outside this tradition have yet to come to light outside of a very small circle of British and Irish enthusiasts. American experimental poetry, even in a country renowned for ignoring its poets, is supported by a fairly strong network of journals, small presses and sympathetic academics. In contrast, Irish experimental poets like Billy Mills, Randolph Healy, Trevor Joyce and the three poets reviewed here have survived in the shadows of near total obscurity, with virtually no support from the institutions of Irish literature that have nurtured such talents as Seamus Heaney, Derek Mahon and Eavan Boland.

In an interview for the 1991 book *Prospect into Breath: Interviews with North and South Writers*, Catherine Walsh quotes the critic Jim Mays on the

dilemma facing poets in Ireland: “You need to be incorporated into the tradition to be an Irish writer and you exist as an Irish writer on those terms or you might as well not exist.” Walsh goes on to add that, as a poet, “you are only supported if you are part of that tradition, that same tradition that must celebrate above all else your sense of Irishness and your sense of being part of an ongoing linear tradition of Irish writers, writing out of bondage, almost.” It was Walsh’s desire to break free of this bondage that attracted her, early on, to the experimental work of Billy Mills and Maurice Scully, the only poets she knew who “aspired to anything other than to be a part of that establishment.”

Walsh’s first book, *Making Tents*, came out with Mills’ *hardPressed Poetry* in 1987, and was followed by *Short Stories* (1989) and *Pitch* (1994), both published by English presses. Her most recent book, *Idir Eatortha and Making Tents*, juxtaposes a new series of poems with a reprinting of Walsh’s first book, also an assemblage of linked pieces. The two works make apt companions, as both take up themes of dislocation and the finding of one’s way in unfamiliar places and unfamiliar languages (‘idir eatortha’ means ‘between two worlds’). The two series have a further affinity in that, at times, each makes use of a radically disjointed syntax, in large part as a means of expressing dislocation formally. In these as in her other works Walsh explores not the sense of belonging, community, tribe and tradition that she found so binding in Irish poetry, but a sense of unbelonging and of being in between.

The poems of *Making Tents*, as the title indicates, concern themselves with the ways we can make ourselves, however provisionally, at home in the world and in language. Written while Walsh was living in Barcelona, these poems can be quite lucid and poignant in depicting personal and linguistic alienation:

soaking. knees to chin.

thinking how much
more uncomfortable

R E V I E W S

you must have been
how loud the burbling
of the washing-machine
seems

during the siesta

conversation
drifts up the ventilation shaft
(there are 4 floors below)

snatched and strange

I understand nothing

When the syntax of *Making Tents* breaks with convention and makes this sense of dislocation manifest at a formal level it does so in a number of ways, some of which can be interestingly reminiscent of Gertrude Stein's experiments with repetition:

I needn't think
of needing not to think
not thinking I need you
needing I think of how
not to think I need you
thinking of needing you
not thinking of thinking

In *Idir Eatortha* Walsh explores similar thematic terrain, but with a more refined sense of sound, both as a way of experiencing an environment and as a medium for poetry. Some of the strongest sections of the piece consist of a kind of aural landscape, in which Walsh captures with remarkable accuracy the disconnectedness of the urban soundscape. Snippets of

half-heard steet conversations and sudden, unidentifiable background noises combine to suggest, but not to reveal, a possible linking narrative:

“it’s coming down any minute now where? well?
where is it then? (SHOUTS) *where’s the jacket?*”

[scrabbling]

“they do but they don’t”

“the council, The Council. The Local Borough Council.
no corpo and county here. no craic
the greetings . . .”

“here’s a likely looking pair”

[politely, respectfully]

[shovelling sounds]

[accelerating footsteps
female voice]

“*I don’t know George, drunk*”
“this time of the morning dear? don’t know”
“well, Irish, Scottish perhaps”

Walsh’s attentiveness to the aural dimension of poetry has made her a remarkable performer of her own works, and *Idir Eatortha* includes several reading cues — [horrified], [singing] — as well as a number of spacing and typographical techniques loosely derived from the oral poetics outlined in Charles Olson’s seminal essay “Projective Verse.” For all these cues, however, much of the poetry remains indeterminate in meaning until voiced. In the following passage, for example, it is impossible to say whether the

revisiting of a familiar landscape while coming home is meant to be a positive or a negative experience until we hear the nuance of the voice reading the poem aloud:

the same

sky

close your eyes

Is this a turning away in disgust from the familiar, and therefore an embracing of cosmopolitan wandering, or is the sky of home soothing, and homecoming welcome? On the page alone one cannot tell. Some readers may find this to be a fault, or a technique more interesting in theory than in practice, but it is just this kind of indeterminacy that Walsh celebrates when she calls for the breaking of interpretive limits in “the endless strata of / conceptual errors.” With this poetry of fragmented experience, disjointedness and not-belonging we find ourselves never quite sure of where we stand, always on the verge of making ourselves at home in poems that won’t quite allow themselves to be domesticated.

Maurice Scully’s poetry, too, revels in indeterminacy. Influenced early on by such American poets as Williams, Pound and Zukovsky, and impatient with what he saw as the inherently conservative nature of the Irish poetic establishment, Scully has, more than any other Irish poet of his generation, acted the part of the avant-garde impresario. Hosting readings and performances in Dublin in the 80s, publishing poetry by Randolph Healy and other Irish experimentalists, and bringing English alternative writers like Tom Raworth to Dublin, Scully has been a dynamo of literary energy. This energy extends to his own poetic output, which, along with the books *Love Poems and Others* (1981), *Five Freedoms of Movement* (1987), *Priority* (1994) and the soon-to-be-released *Zulu Dynamite* includes pamphlets and chapbooks too numerous to list.

Hyper-conscious of the conventionality of poetry and of all art, Scully is

at his best when he demonstrates the inner workings of such conventions. In a pastoral setting he adopts a mock-pedagogical voice, drawing attention to the conventions with which neo-pastoral poetry treats nature when he writes that:

the breezes intervene between the leaves and us
 & tilt the shapes of themselves for literate
 old Yahoos like us to note
 & have sophisticated doubts about

And, when Scully shows us the old poet-pedagogue's audience, he draws attention to the convention of the poetic audience's expected reaction "*I see!* nodded each student in the dance." To instruct and delight, Horace's command to the poet, comes echoing down to us in that students' dance.

Like Walsh, Scully writes in sequences of linked poems in which the connections between pieces are not immediately apparent. Scully's paratactic and disjointed poetry comes out of an aversion to the idea of the poem as closed system, an aversion that is, in turn, the product of his very Heraclitean view of the world. "There is nothing static in the world," writes Scully, and in this fluid world "a poem is beautiful to the degree it records an apt humility in face of the complexity it sees but fails to transmit." In the linked sections of *The Basic Colours* (a book that is itself part of a planned series of books called *Livelihood*) Scully retains just such an attitude of humility toward a world to which poetry can never be entirely adequate. He begins with a scene that sets literature up against a world that, in its loudness and urgency, overwhelms it:

Hey!
 they said I'm
 we've got a new book out
 have you seen it
 they said
 quick! the bus red

the notebooks
 in your pockets I
 it's about
 it I think they said
 it's about
 disparate/desperate
 the battles of a lifetime
 (love, death & the rentman!)
 fading/phrasing
 I could barely
 with great care
 hear
 then
 just the lips
 & in the eyes
 that aggressive glare again.

But there are moments when literature feels adequate to the world—in
 Scully's Heraclitan world even scepticism about language and literature ebbs
 and flows:

watch how
 the shadows catch now
 & then the multiple spines
 of books containing, entwining
 the trick-flicker, the tides
 of this

material life
 satisfied for a while, yes—

 crazy to
 know where the tides go

& how, underpressure
of lies, mistakes, flow where
how such a tug is nightly
& daily beyond us

anyway

write to me soon.

In full recognition of the flowing impermanence of the world and of the inability of the mind to grasp it, Scully delivers that last line, an unambiguous affirmation of the written word.

Geoffrey Squires is perhaps the most idiosyncratic of the poets writing outside the Irish mainstream. While Walsh and Scully write a poetry that is a not-too-distant-cousin to American experimental poetry, Squires' work has few relations on either side of the Atlantic. Born in Derry in 1942 and raised in County Donegal, Squires was educated at Cambridge, lived for extended periods in Greece, Iran, France and the United States, and currently lives and writes in Hull, England. Squires' poetry has always had an experimental bent, as "Summer," his 1971 BBC sound-poem for three voices makes plain. His first significant publication, *Drowned Stones*, appeared in 1975 with Dublin's New Writers' Press, then as now one of Ireland's few venues for formally innovative poetry. With its mix of collage, different voices, found text and cosmopolitan references, *Drowned Stones* bore all the hallmarks of the modernism the press was promoting as an alternative to the more traditional Movement-based poetics Philip Hobsbaum had brought to Belfast and that had such an influence on the young Seamus Heaney.

Squires was not, however, to develop into a modernist in any conventional sense. In 1976 he went into a kind of retreat from the English language, living in an isolated village in Crete with no access to the media and almost no access to reading material of any kind. This year-long retreat, along with a growing interest in the phenomenological philosophy of

Merleau-Ponty, was to lead Squires out of the modernism of ellipsis, collage and the interrogation of language into another poetic territory altogether. This new poetics, which Squires began to explore in *Figures* (1978) and *XXI Poems* (1980) and refined in *A Long Poem in Three Sections* (1983), is a poetics of perception, concerned not so much with the inner workings of language as with the play of consciousness in the world. As such it represents a kind of road not taken in postmodern poetry, at least not in America, where early calls by critics like Ihab Hassan for a postmodernism based in a “literature of consciousness” were to be all-but-forgotten with the subsequent emergence of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets as the dominant alternative to mainstream poetics.

In *Landscapes and Silences*, a book-length poem of untitled short sections, Squires continues to develop a poetry concerned with the minutia of perception, and his greatest strengths lie in an intense attentiveness to how we see, hear and are conscious of phenomena:

The sound changes as it moves
or you move

like voices descending a stair

or in the hills following a beck upstream
as the gully narrows deepens and then bends
exposing suddenly the full force of the falls
that blank incessant roar from which the mind
detaches itself with difficulty
and decides to go on

Often what we get in Squires’ poetry is not so much a hearing or watching of the world, but a watching of the self in the act of watching, as in the following passage:

All that intelligence
 which watches and finds ways
 the eye caught by the merest movement

that slight hesitation
 so slight as to be hardly noticed

everything is thought appraised

and the seeming inability to fix on anything
 which is itself an advantage

The whole thrust of this kind of poetry is to bracket off memories and personal associations in order to emphasize being-in-the-moment. Even those metaphors we habitually use to humanize experience are stripped away in order to leave us more directly in the position of a consciousness confronting the radical otherness of the world. When Squires writes that “the small cries in the darkness” are “noises rather than cries” he is taking us one step farther from a world humanized and made familiar and one step closer to a world alien, other and bodied against us.

This is clearly not a poetry of mythic or historical consciousness (there are no Bog Queens lurking in Squires’ landscapes). It is, rather, a poetry of immediate consciousness; and if there is a memory at work in the poetry, it is not tribal memory but the memory of the body, a memory that lives in every moment of our daily lives:

Movement without strangeness
 the knowledge that comes of long use

the hand reached out without thinking
 finding what it wants

It takes a poet as attentive as Squires to show us the workings of such a

memory.

American experimental poets often demonize the concern with the personal that has characterized mainstream American poetry since the confessional verse of the 1960s, and support a poetry that aims to make the reader more aware of the broad social and historical injustices that confessional poetry tends not to address. Squires, coming from a country where historical injustice is poetry's constant concern, turns away from history in order to affirm the realm of personal experience. If there is an ethics to his poetry, it is an ethics concerned not with historical injustice but with an awareness of the world that, in its intensity, becomes a kind of reverence. For Squires, what is to be regretted is not so much the nightmare of history—the subject at the heart of mainstream Irish poetry—but the moment lived without attentiveness. We need to wake, not from history, but from the sleep of unawareness that steals from us our lives:

inattention of lives
so much done without doing
and the principles of our death
carried in us always

There is a preoccupation with death behind *Landscapes and Silences*, and not merely an abstract one. In the only passage of the poem where a figure recognizably that of the poet himself appears, we hear of new frailties to which he cannot quite reconcile himself: “Stumbles he does sometimes now a little/these days when he is walking in unfamiliar places/ . . . he should get a stick that would be the answer.” But along with this preoccupation with mortality there is a surprising, though tentative, intimation of immortality or transcendence at the end of the poem:

what is it this being which is ours not ours

faint stir

and the stillness everywhere
as if there were a watching the whole thing observed
and a waiting if that's what it is

What vision of transcendence could be more right for a poet so deeply concerned with the attentive eye?

It is certainly possible to sense, while reading Squires, Walsh or Scully, the presence of the nationalist-regionalist tradition, if only as a force to which the poets react. Squires' concern with immediate consciousness, Walsh's poetics of unbelonging and Scully's interest in American experimentalism from Pound through Charles Bernstein can all be seen as paths around the monolith of Irish literary tradition. In seeking such paths these poets are far from alone—Trevor Joyce's cosmopolitan poetry and the scientific/epistemological poetics of Billy Mills and Randolph Healy are trails blazed around the same mountain. But perhaps the metaphor of the trail-blazing pioneer is a misleading one, as this kind of reaction to the nationalist-regionalist tradition has gone on for generations. In the 1930s poets like Brian Coffey and Thomas MacGreevy, along with Samuel Beckett, wrote a radically modernist poetry, in no small part out of disaffection with the dominant poetic tradition. Inasmuch as the current generation of Irish experimentalists has read and been influenced by the generation of the 30s—and all of them acknowledge the influence—what we have is not merely a precedent, but a tradition. One of the many things we can learn by giving poets like Walsh, Scully, Squires, Mills, Healy and Joyce the attention they deserve is that the monolith of the nationalist-regionalist tradition, with all of its very real glories, is only a part of the whole tradition of Irish writing. There is not only another Irish poetry, but another history of Irish poetry, and that history has only just begun to be told.

THE INOBVIOUS MINA LOY

Keith Tuma

Mina Loy, *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*. Edited by Roger L. Conover. Farrar Straus Giroux, 1996.

I hadn't meant to write anything on Roger Conover's new edition of Mina Loy's poems, happy as I was to see it appear. I figured the more interesting approach would be to wait for the reviews of the book and write something about them. I had an inkling that Mina Loy's time had come, that this Conover edition, given its publisher, would reach a public an earlier Jargon Books edition had not. The nearly simultaneous publication of Carolyn Burke's biography, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*, would help to push Loy over the top. I was right, I guess—the books have been widely reviewed in publications as various as *Harper's Bazaar*, *Modernism/Modernity*, *American Book Review*, and *TLS*, and Mina Loy's name seems to be everywhere. In the week that I type this I've found it in an electronic *Postmodern Culture* review of the University of Buffalo's Electronic Poetry Center and, out of the blue, on a listserv devoted to experimental British poetry, where Loy's poem "O Hell" was cited by the Australian poet John Kinsella. In London a month or so ago I saw the Carcanet edition of Conover's book on the shelves of some pretty average bookstores where nothing was stocked by contemporary British poets such as Tom Raworth, J. H. Prynne, Maggie O'Sullivan or anybody else not right down the center or floating behind a mainstream. Reviews of the Loy edition have been overwhelmingly enthusiastic, though Helen Vendler is not, it seems, altogether convinced that the gates should be opened and Loy admitted to—to what? The elegant badger is already out the barn door. The predictable response of Vendler and some others breeds discourse, accelerating the name already ineradicably a part of the discourse of modern poetry, feeding the fires of those for whom Mina Loy's work has long been a "cause," near the center of various arguments about aesthetics and poetics,

or gender and modernism. Beyond Vendler others have felt it their duty in life to make ill-informed statements about Loy's fitness as a mother, sometimes allowing their exhaled righteousness to pollute an evaluation of poems they would rather not read. A few boos to set off the chorus of cheers.

Conover's edition is surely deserving of praise. It's meticulously edited and annotated to be of use equally to scholars and readers needing introductions to the personalities and propositions of Italian Futurism and whatever and whoever else enters into the poems. A few changes have been made in the poems also appearing in the Jargon edition, most of which are carefully explained though not all of which equally please. The opening lines of "Three Moments in Paris," for instance, have been changed from present tense—"Though you have never possessed me/I have belonged to you since the beginning of time"—to past: "Though you had never possessed me/I had belonged to you since the beginning of time." The breathlessness and consonantal richness of "have never" is deflated to wry narrative, the awkwardness of articulating "had" after "never" seeming of a different order than the metallic stuttering of her best poems, where hard consonants rattle like arcane dictionaries bouncing on the tin roof of a music hall, and verbs (and nouns looking like verbs) are often offered their own line—as if the power to propel a racket of eroticized jargon and ironized poeticisms toward the stony propositions of sentence were a perpetual source of amazement. If the cost of getting toward an accurate, usable, and widely available text is one disappointment, that's small cost indeed. And the gains—several previously unpublished poems, the short essay "Modern Poetry" with its remarks on jazz and American speech and the Americannness of the modernist moment in poetry, among others—are cause for another fifty hurrahs. The only unfortunate limitation to the edition is the omission of the long poem "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose" for reasons of space, but it is soon to appear in another book edited by Conover. I'm not sure everyone knows how much the poetry world owes Roger Conover for decades of work on Loy's behalf; together with Burke and a few other scholars and poets he has brought her back from near-oblivion to the celebrity she knew once briefly in New York. There was something perfect about the page in *Harper's*

Bazaar, the sensation become a sensation again as she enters the archive, touching down just once in the glossy pages, beautiful and scandalous in the sheen of sex and fashion.

While few can regret an available Loy, I wonder sometimes whether the romance of her previously “inobvious” status—to use a word from one of her best poems—will leave her most ardent and longstanding admirers shaking their heads at a new world with Loy really in it as a public good. And I wonder what will be made of Loy, and which Loy? It’s neither a surprise nor necessarily a bad thing that the life has sustained its fascination, for the life no less than the poems challenges us, less for the earlier years of cosmopolitan avant-garde engagements than for the years in the Bowery, where Loy wrote the poems which now seem the most unassimilable and surprising. They have the ethical and emotional force of someone who has drifted beyond any point at which art and poetry might matter to art worlds for shock or for scandal, for Futurist super-consciousness or satire of the same. The poems exist in nearly the same relationship to modernist poetry as George Oppen’s years of silence: they’re of another, more desperate world, “unauthorized by the present.” Inobviousness was her fate, but it also became her aesthetic as the theatrical self contracted to a point of pain and an earlier irony turned to project the miraculous upon a staggering, everyday world of “human rubble.” In the scheme of Conover’s edition, Loy’s last and most crucially unscrutinized poems are gathered in a section entitled “Compensations of Poverty.” One is glad for the opportunity to think of them as a group, to see what’s left of the satirist present in the book’s first grouping, “Futurism and Feminism: The Circle Squared,” where Loy shows herself to be better at manipulating Futurist conventions in idiom and so forth than the Futurists themselves, even as she is skewering the misogynist posturing and rhetoric of the movement.

I can say that this last Loy seems the oddest and most challenging only because of the now seemingly secure status of “Songs to Joannes” as a definitive modernist poetic sequence, a poem every bit as important as “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley” but more interesting for the emotional range and complexity of its diction and the polyvalent relations among its con-

densed sections. Less burdened than “Mauberley” by its historical moment, its real competitor among the modernist poems of its era are Pound’s “Propertius” and maybe this or that by Stein and Williams. The shorter poems with the lengthiest critical pedigree, having attracted comment from Yvor Winters and other poets and critics among the few who kept her name alive across long years of neglect, are primarily gathered in this edition’s “Corpses and Geniuses.” Here one finds the poems for Poe, Stein, Lewis, Joyce, Cunard, and Pascin, plus others such as “Apology of Genius” and “Der Blinde Junge,” which Thom Gunn thinks Loy’s finest:

Sparkling precipitate
the spectral day
involves
the visionless obstacle

this slow blind face
pushing
its virginal nonentity
against the light

Pure purposeless eremite
of cenripetal sentience

One can hear those plosives in the couplet popping with the anger and unsentimental studiousness of William Blake spitting on the fire; the language intrudes upon our social indifference like the blind youth it describes, defining postwar pavements. It’s Blake I sometimes find myself reading Loy beside lately, more than Laforgue, Stein, and her closest peer stylistically, Wyndham Lewis, largely because I know of few other bodies of work manifesting such an indiosyncratic admixture of lexicons and traditions. The most esoteric modernist discourses in art and psychology mingle with a still more esoteric mysticism crossed by Christian Science and locked in a struggle with the mind-body dualisms she found responsible for most

of the evil done to women and others in the world, the blindnesses of religion and poetry both. Beyond Bergson and Laforgue there are a host of forgotten utopian socialists, post-Freudian psychologists, and writers on religion whose influence on Loy will be a matter of some speculation for years to come in the wake of Conover's and Burke's work.

But to cut such formal clarity from such a muddle—that's what's remarkable. She did it, I think, by dragging all these discourses across the simplest of grids—neo-skeltonic leash rhymes irregularly deployed, as Marjorie Perloff has noted, words and phrases allowed the tactile resistance of a gob of paint on the canvas, begrudgingly pursuing the proposition which is to be, as it were, extracted like an impacted wisdom tooth. She wrote what one might call "Songs After Experience" for a world purportedly beyond fable but more often than not incapable of understanding what was right in front of it glimmering in painful and ecstatic opacity, a world where the automobile and the skyscraper and jazz music had stolen the iconic force of tigers and lambs. For all of her vocabulary, hers remains a populist work in form and sometimes in sentiment, aimed at initiates and hypersophisticates who'd lost sight of their surroundings, sometimes documenting her depression at what had become of the woman who'd wanted like most everybody else early in the century to leap electrically into possibility. A feminist materialism made to absorb the pressures of the desire for transcendence. I don't imagine she'll disappear again soon, if only we can find her. The work, at least, is now here, and once again Roger Conover deserves our thanks for that.

SOULSKIN

Marilyn Krysl. NLN Press, 1996.

WARSCAPE WITH LOVERS

Marilyn Krysl. Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 1997.

Joe Francis Doerr

Had Mother Teresa been asked to write an addendum to the *Song of Songs* under the tutelage of Creation Spiritualist and recent excommunicant Brother Matthew Fox, she might have produced a work not unlike Marilyn Krysl's *Soulskin*. Krysl draws from a wealth of life experiences in both the world of academe as an award-winning poet and teacher, and as a volunteer at the Kalighat Home for the Destitute and Dying administered by the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta. Her voice is at once profoundly compassionate and supremely sensual.

Soulskin is divided into seven sections beginning with *Self Healer* and ending with *Death, Life*. The poetry itself is musically elegant, and is written in a variety of forms including free verse, couplets, and quatrains. Poems such as *Planetary* and *Sound Healer* are visually reminiscent of Marianne Moore's experimental stanzas, but are much less idiomatically and metrically restrained.

In the prose preface to *Self Healer*, Krysl plots the book's thematic progression and defines "soulskin" (coined by Clarissa Pinkola Estés in her book *Women Who Run With The Wolves*) as that "transforming energy" required to "leave the surface spaces of our lives and go into psychic darkness" in order to emerge both physically and mentally refreshed. In the title poem, she speaks of this soulskin as a "shimmering/sex skin, my saffron monk's robe/skin, my wet suit walrus skin, my SINGING AT THE TOP

OF MY LUNGS skin” which “shines/as only the body can shine.”

At times, her work bears a striking resemblance to the poetry of twelfth century abbess and mystic Hildegard of Bingen with whom Krysl shares a manifest concern for the precarious health and future of global interconnectedness (what Hildegard saw as the “web of the universe”) when she writes, for instance, in “*Innanna*”: “If they take away the small things/I will hold to the immensity.” As Hildegard observed that we humans “do not even know who [we] are,” Krysl reminds us of our inattention in the preface to *Self and Nature*. There she writes: “Nature is who we are...I wanted to ‘remember’ the unspoken knowledge that we have when we live fully in our animal bodies.” In *Transformations: The Terrace*, the body, in merging with the natural world, is reborn as a “damp, dewy” entity nearly identical to Hildegard’s conception of the body resurrected in the contemplation of a “cosmic” Christ as “green and juicy.”

Section V of *Soulskin*, simply titled *Calcutta*, chronicles the months Krysl spent working among the poor, sick, and dying in that city. The tone of the poems in this section wavers between frustration and hopelessness. However, with “soulskin” firmly buttoned to the chin, Krysl plumbs the most bitter of emotions and emerges with her sense of compassion intact. Consider this from *Devaluation*: “A scattering/of ash, a flute, the pyre disappearing. I pass/the ghat: a girl calls out, begging her mother/for something to eat. Her mother slaps her. I’m/a dying woman, passing by. Garbage/as dirge. Look: those scattered crows converge.” The fatalist underpinning of lines such as these gives way to life triumphant in the poems of the final section, *Death, Life*. Here, a Buddhist funeral serves as a framework for the resilience of life and its promise of reincarnation: “Let me go into the pure gullet of the vulture/Love me and let me go, as I am bound.” And in these closing lines from *Contraction* which celebrate the birth of a child, Krysl completes the cycle with a pleasing resonance: “two people, without / the advantage of marble,/polished by the sweat/of what they’ve accomplished,/facing each other/across the small,/distinct distance/of the human.” Pure soul.

Warscape with Lovers is Marilyn Krysl’s seventh and perhaps best book

of poetry to date. Exhibiting writing that has matured both structurally and stylistically since the publication of her first book, *Saying Things*, in 1975, Krysl demonstrates the most comprehensive range of work yet in the four sections that comprise this cycle.

In the first section, entitled *War*, using as a backdrop the combined landscapes of present-day war-torn Sri Lanka and the mythico-biblical worlds of Adam and his Sumerian counterpart, the primeval sea-goddess Nammu, Krysl explores the concepts of gender, power, and power relations between a) the sexes, b) man & nature, and c) economic & cultural enemies in a patriarchal society with an agenda seemingly determined by what Foucault called the “battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays.” Krysl skillfully crafts and balances a tension between two such “truths” in this section’s poems. Take for instance the fine sestina *Nammu: To Adam* in which an isolated, floundering Adam waits for the curative powers of water to dissolve his “faltering name” into that of Nammu. She writes: “My name burning your lips. You/have been a torch in the midst of a wave of destruction./Your shroud of water is ready. Come with me.”

The second section, *Ghazals For the Turn of the Century*, finds Krysl using the traditional Arabic love lyric, the *ghazal*, to greet the millennium by examining the violent century that precedes it. Subjects ranging from the optimism of Whitman, to the folly of Vietnam, to the simple horror of spousal and child abuse offered in the fourteen lines dedicated to Hedda Nussbaum are excavated then arranged in the strata of unrhymed couplets. In the last of these *ghazals*, Krysl seems to play up the archaeological imagery in the final lines with a faint optimism for the next century when she writes: “I swing the pick again, break open a vein./It is this gleaming that becomes dawn.”

There is a return to the Calcutta Krysl explored in *Soulskin* in the third section also called *Calcutta*. Initially, one wonders at the redundancy of this title choice, but ultimately there is no other single word in the contemporary, global vernacular that can express the magnitude of suffering and the maintenance of human dignity Krysl captures in these poems.

Again, she offers the healing powers of water as a spiritual balm for suffering, although she doesn't appear to hold out much hope, short of a miracle, for a panacea. *Calcutta* ends with these few lines from Transfiguration in which she describes a thorough cleansing of the cathedral cum hospital ward of the seemingly endless streams of excrement issuing from the sick and dying: "I dipped a handful of rag in a bowl,/watched the water gather in its threads./Little by little the water filled it/to the lip with the shine of wetness."

Part four of *Warscape with Lovers* explores the possibility that the panacea for the world's suffering so longed-for in the first three sections is nothing more than compassion, and that compassion in itself is nothing short of miraculous. The imagery of water in this section is once again important and recurrent as it becomes synonymous with *agape* and spiritual renewal. Appropriately titled *Love*, section IV contains several poems written in lyric forms often employed in the examination of love as a central poetic theme. *Love* includes an exercise in sapphics, and three sestinas: *Carpe Diem: Time Piece*, *Homage to Pierre August Renoire*, and *Eden of Water*. It is in this last sestina that Krysl unites what had initially appeared in the cycle as irreconcilable; namely, the patriarchal and the maternal. She does this quite simply and elegantly in a few ordinary words: "Water is God's womb. Know/your origins..."

LITTLE APOCALYPSE

Wendy Battin. Ashland Poetry Press, 1997.

Jere Odell

Wendy Battin's second book *Little Apocalypse* earned her the Richard Snyder Memorial Publication Prize from the Ashland Poetry Press (her first book, *In the Solar Wind* was a National Poetry Series selection from Doubleday). *Little Apocalypse* deserves its award and more; it deserves readers.

As suggested by Battin's well-chosen epigraph ("They ought to make it a binding clause that if you find God you get to keep him." —Philip K. Dick), she fills her book with the intensity of a religious quest. *Little Apocalypse* is full of daring, thick with irony, paradox, and vision; it looks for the big questions and the big answers in small things. This is nowhere more obvious than in the final poem, "At the Synchrotron Lab." In this poem, about a particle accelerator at Cornell University, Battin finds the lyrical and the mysterious where other poets would meet only confusion. Here, she writes the central metaphor of her quest, and (in part) the originating principle of her book. The poem blends the scientific, the religious, and the poetic:

Downstairs they're arguing voltage and money,

 and the quarks in their colors and flavors: *up, down,*
charm, strange, truth, and beauty, real
 as love or numbers, true
 as a fable. Like this one: a woman walks over the earth

 with a lamp, looking for One. She looks in the sky
 as it blues and darkens

 and she is unafraid.

R E V I E W S

Battin tells us in her notes that the “Robert Wilson Laboratory . . . where this poem is set, discovered the ‘top’ or ‘truth’ quark.” From her vantage point, scientist and poet peer into the lab’s dials looking for “truth” at the end of a world, even if that world exists (or ceases to exist) when electrons collide with positrons—the most minute of matters and anti-matters. Battin’s poem (and book) ends:

The little apocalypse repeats and repeats. I can see it
in the dials, in the needles swinging. The digits roll up
in their windows. This lab
is full of the paraphernalia of light—the spectroscope,

oscilloscope, the meters and glassy lucite cable
coiled on the workbench like a failed basket—
to hold the flash that comes
when the matter breaks open, and whatever the numbers

say about the world. Is it only that the world
is in the numbers, in the tracks through the cloud chamber?
And in this probing: what I close
my hand on, name, forget. Then want again. (72-73)

In the midst of continual destruction “truth” is found, or is it?

Added to its internal coherence, its persistent searching, this book also has a carefully considered external arrangement. Battin divides her book into three sections; the first section is most concerned with human efforts to make or manifest meaning, the second takes a personal and specific look at the author’s own questions, and the third explores nature (or the mythic garden), all its little apocalypses.

In all these sections, however, my favorite poems are the longer lyrics and sequences. The first section begins with “Anamnesis” (“when forgetfulness is lost”), probing the phenonemom of past lives remembered. The

same section includes a sequence that profiles six patients of a mental institution, “The Women of the Ward.” The third section begins with “Sense, Sensed,” a series of aphorism and riddles, and includes the timely poem, “The News from Mars.” Sprinkled throughout both the first and the third sections are prose poems written as entries from “The Dictionary of Improbable Speech”—they begin by flatly defining the unusual and then bursting into the playful. For example, here’s the first part of “sloomy:”

sloomy *adj.* from the French *allumer*; to illuminate oneself, to light up.

1) uncanny; affording a glimpse into another reality or level of perception, as of a hand-painted sight in the woods off Interstate 95 in Connecticut: GNOSIS? Call 1-800-2GNOSIS.

And, here’s the end of “telson *n.* as far as you can go. To the limits of sound”:

2) The point at which one of a pod of dolphins mutters a single not untranslatable but still unprintable word into the ocean and finds the whale-watch boat, at which they interrupt dinner and even sex to woo the humans on board, doing their profoundest diplomatic duty on behalf of their homeland, delighting the poisoners with honor, making first a hieroglyphic for play, and then a rebus that says

leap up

plus

dive down

equals....

3) The other side of the equals sign, where the bipeds listen for the rest of the equation.

Of all the longer efforts, however, my favorite is “Lucid Dreaming: A Book of Hours,” which comprises the entire second section. Battin writes this section in tight unrhymed couplets, recording the visionary and the mundane experiences of insomnia. Anyone who has spent a night staring at the digital clock while their partner sleeps will find this sequence familiar. Take, for example, the beginning of the first hour:

One

in the morning—odd that this fulcrum rests
in the middle of darkness. Heliotrope, solar top,

the earth rolls us into the glare, out
of our duncecap shadow—

Or, see the mixture of love and anger in:

Five O Five

says the insect light of the digital clock,
and in the leaching dark I watch him sleep,

his eyes turned inward, his walk begun
down the nerve-lit alleys of his body.

Then in “Six of One”:

I tell him I stayed awake but not

that I spent those hours in orbit around his sleep like some
derelict planet, careening toward his dark side,

never catching up. . . .

.

. . . What did you
dream? I ask, and he says

I was with him all night,
that he dreamed what was real,
all that I wanted to hear.

My emphasis on Battin's longer lyrics should not diminish the precise control and the edgy images of her shorter poems. For example, see the eerie "Old Cat;" hear the "slip of the tongue" in "Aubade. How Truth Will Out" or in "Creation Myths;" see how she displays these leaves:

Fronc

That which opens its hand but grasps
nothing, cradles without drinking
the globe of water last night
left it, amulet
that holds the sun now
rising, and who could discard it?

That which blooms from its wrist
like a green fist
and then finds peace. Its twin
unfurls, on the same stem,
in the same breeze.
Applause. Applause.

Visionary poetry the quality of Wendy Battin's is rare these days. Look for her poems; read her books.

EDITORS SELECT

Mark Behr, *The Smell of Apples*. Picador USA, 1997. Behr's award-winning first novel, recently reprinted in a paperback edition, is a growing up story set in South Africa, a country still beloved in an older generation's eyes, less so in the newer, which are the ones *The Smell of Apples* trains on the menace of the regime in its last years of supremacy. A clear look at the murkiest of worlds.

Geoffrey Hill, *Canaan*. Houghton Mifflin, 1997. This is Geoffrey Hill's first volume of mostly new poems in ten years. Although certain poems appearing in the last section of Hill's *New and Collected Poems* of 1994 are reprinted here, such pieces as "Respublica," "Scenes With Harlequins," "Churchill's Funeral," and the title poem take on new meaning in the context of the new work, especially the poems dispersed throughout the volume called "To the High Court of Parliament" and "Mysticism and Democracy." This is a Blakean vision of a corrupt contemporary England seen against certain defining moments of her

recent and more distant past by one of the best poets writing in English. Any new book by Geoffrey Hill is a major event.

Brenda Hillman, *Loose Sugar*. Wesleyan/New England, 1997. The most ambitious and successful book to date by the author of *Death Tractates*, *Bright Existence*, *Fortress*, and *White Dress*. Hillman's language is often incandescent, and the dazzling individual poems are even more impressive as they cohere into cycles within cycles. This is a highly experimental but also a rigorously structured volume. The subjects range from sex through politics to Hawkingsque space-time; the poetic sources range from Emily Dickinson to Barbara Guest.

Zane Kotker, *Try to Remember*. Random House, 1997. A sensational subject, recovered memory and incest, handled unsensationally by novelist Kotker: a writer of sensitivity and depth artfully threading her way through the gaudiest of materials.

Anne Landsman, *The Devil's Chimney*. Soho, 1997. Landsman

weaves memory and myth to tell the story of the most ordinary of women, a white South African who looks back on the century that has so utterly changed her country. The evocative settings include an ostrich farm and The Devil's Chimney, a menacing cave; the prose is inventive and often dazzling.

Bret Lott, *Fathers, Sons, and Brothers: The Men in My Family*. Harcourt Brace, 1997. Novelist and short story writer Lott's first collection of essays, one of which, "Learning Sex," appeared in NDR #3, is a baker's dozen of meditations on men and boys, fathers and sons, work and play. Lott captures all the fine male ambivalences in prose that is not ambivalent at all.

Emer Martin, *Breakfast in Babylon*. Houghton Mifflin, 1997. Martin's first novel, an award winner in Ireland where it was first published, is a young woman's continental version of *On the Road*, but a trip more worldly and dangerous—no pastoral highways and byways here, no visionary drugs, just lethal chemicals. A cautionary tale concerning a truly lost generation's

diaspora of dropouts.

Craig Nova, *The Universal Donor*. Houghton Mifflin, 1997. Nova's ninth novel is a quest for blood, set in a California which seems to squander more than its share, told in a style hypnotic enough to be a medical condition itself. This one ranks as one of his best (and all of them are fascinating and rewarding).

Daniel O'Rourke, ed., *Dream State: The New Scottish Poets*. Polygon, 1997. A few years ago it looked as though not much had happened in Scottish poetry since the death of Hugh MacDiarmid. Now things have changed. In fact, the Scottish poetry scene at the moment looks as lively as the Irish, if not more so. *Dream State* includes work by twenty-five poets born after 1955. Poems appear in Scots and Gaelic as well as English. American readers may know a few of these poets—Carol Ann Duffy, John Burnside, Jackie Kay—but most will be unfamiliar. Of particular interest are the selections from work by Robert Crawford, Kathleen Jamie, W.N. Herbert, and Alan Riach. O'Rourke's introduction places the

poetry in its cultural, historical, and political context. With the recent success of devolution and the return of a Scottish parliament to Edinburgh, this book has more than just a literary significance.

Cheryl Pearl Sucher, *The Rescue of Memory*. Scribner, 1997. The daughter of Holocaust survivors herself, Sucher creates a fictional daughter of survivors who moves toward the rescue of memory in prose that is sharply intelligent and bracing, but perhaps most remarkable for its humor and big-heartedness. A fine novel of witness.



CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Archambeau's long poem *Citation Suite* was recently published by Wild Honey Press in Ireland. His book on the poetry of John Matthias will be published next year by Ohio University Press. He teaches at Lake Forest College. Mary Jo Bang is the author of *Apology for Want*, published by the University Press of New England. She is the poetry co-editor of *Boston Review* and lives in Manhattan. William Bronk's poems in this issue are current work. From his earlier published work, Henry Weinfield has edited a *Selected Poems* which New Directions published in the fall of 1995. Libby Bernardin is the author of *The Stealing* (McGraw Hill). She is a South Carolina Literary Fellow and her poems have appeared in *The MacGuffin*, *Negative Capability*, *The Devil's Millhopper*, and other journals. She teaches English at the University of South Carolina. Anne Bingham is a Milwaukee journalist and author of several nonfiction books. Early in her career she covered the missionary beat for the *Catholic Telegraph* newspaper in Cincinnati, Ohio. Robert Creeley's recent books include *Edges* (New Directions), and *Selected Poems* (University of California Press). New Directions will also publish a new collection, *Life and Death* in the spring of 1998. Robert Creeley was named poet laureate of the state of New York in 1992. Joe Francis Doerr is an *NDR* editorial assistant pursuing an M.F.A. and a Ph.D. in English at Notre Dame. Selections from his thesis received a 1997 Academy of American Poets Prize and appeared in *PN Review*. Randall Dwenger's stories have appeared in *The Nebraska Review*, *South Carolina Review*, and *The Beloit Fiction Journal*, among others. Originally from Columbus, Indiana, he now lives in New York City where he practices psychiatry. Stephen Gibson's work has appeared in *Black Warrior*, *Chelsea*, *Epic Fiction*, *Georgia Review*, *Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Southern Review*, and *Western Humanities Review*. He has recently finished a novel. Elizabeth Gold is a writer living in New York. Lorrie Goldensohn is a poet and author of *Elizabeth Bishop: the Biography of a Poet*. She is currently working on a new collection of poems, *Seven Bullets*, and teaches at Vassar College. Carl Gottesman received an MFA from the University of Iowa, and spent ten years in Greece where he taught, traveled and edited an English-language newspaper. He has published in *Salmagundi*, *Poetry East*, *Confrontation*, *South Carolina Review*, *Sycamore Review*, among others. He now teaches at Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan. Susan Howe's books of poems include *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (New Directions, 1993), *Frame Structures: Early Poems 1974-1978* (New Directions, 1996), and *My Emily Dickinson* (North Atlantic Books, 1985). Her most recent critical work is a long essay on films by Chris Marker published in *Beyond Document: Essays on Nonfiction Film* (ed. Charles Warren, Wesleyan University Press, 1996). When she is not teaching at SUNY Buffalo, she lives in Guilford, CT. William Logan's next book of poems, *Vain Empires*, will appear from Penquin in the spring of 1998. A book of early criticism, *All the Rage*, is due, also in the spring from Michigan. He teaches at the University of Florida. Michael Martone is the author of five books of fiction. *Seeing Eye*, the most recent, was published by Zoland Books. John Montague, one of the foremost Irish poets of his generation, has recently published his *Collected Poems*. Steve Moriarty is the curator of photography at Notre Dame's Snite Museum of Art. He holds degrees in theology and the fine arts, and since 1985 has been visiting and photographing in El Salvador. The photographs and stories

CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue will be part of an exhibit at the South Bend Regional Museum of Art in February, 1998. Paul Muldoon, who was born in Northern Ireland in 1951, is the author of seven collections of poetry, most recently *The Annals of Chile*, which won the T.S. Eliot Prize in 1994. Paul Muldoon teaches at Princeton University. Jere Ode11 is a former managing editor of *NDR* and a graduate of the Notre Dame M.F.A. program. He has published poetry and translations in *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Private Arts*, and elsewhere. He is presently teaching first year Creative Writing at Notre Dame. Peter Robinson has published four books of poetry, the most recent being *Lost and Found* (Carcaret Press: 1997). A volume of his critical writings, *In the Circumstances: about Poems and Poets*, appeared from Oxford in 1992. Pattiann Rogers' sixth book, *Firekeeper: New and Selected Poems*, was published by Milkweed Editions in 1994 and her seventh, *Eating Bread and Honey*, published by the same in the fall of 1997. As well as having three of her poems awarded the Strousse Award from *Prairie Schooner* in 1996, she has had a poem included in *Best American Poetry of 1996*. New work has appeared recently or is forthcoming in *The Georgia Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, among others. Charles Simic was born in Belgrade in 1938 and left Yugoslavia in 1953 with his mother and brother to join his father in the United States. Since 1960 he has published eleven books and several anthologies of his translations of Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian and Slovenian poetry. Author of nineteen collections of his own poetry and five books of prose, he has received numerous literary awards, including the MacArthur Fellowship and the Pulitzer Prize in 1990. His new book of poems, *Looking for Trouble*, is due from Faber in November 1997. Keith Tuma's *Fishing by Obstinate Isles: Modern and Postmodern British Poetry and American Readers* is forthcoming from Northwestern University Press. He also co-edited the book, *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet* (The National Poetry Foundation). Arturo Vivante is best known for his short stories, many of which appeared in *The New Yorker*. His latest collection is *The Tales of Artruro Vivante*, and his latest book, *Italian Poetry, an Anthology* (a translation). Amy Wray is managing editor of the *NDR* and is pursuing an M.F.A. at Notre Dame. Her work has been published in *100 Words*, *Ariel*, *River King Poetry Supplement*, and *Neologisms*.

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