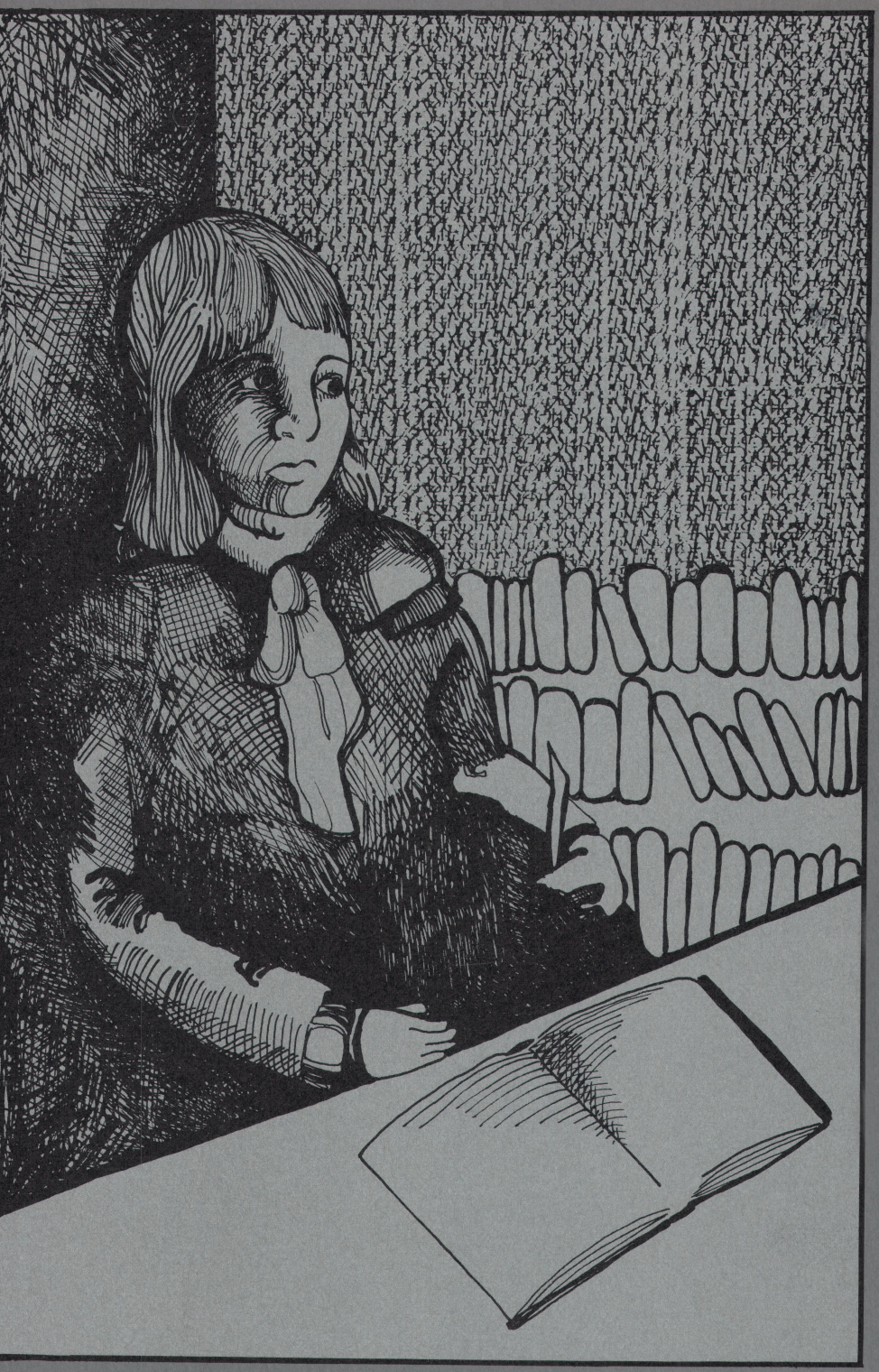

# RED CEDAR REVIEW

# RED CEDAR REVIEW

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CHUCK KNOCK

# Bones

H.E. Francis

July 17. Five a.m. A trawler out of Greenport is headed out to sea. Long Island has long since fused into night. Against the east the ship moves black. Shadows begin to sink; is lightening almost perceptibly. Morning lies under the ship. The trawler sits light in the sea, empty of its shrimp haul; at its width the water is low. The prow streaks foam left and right, and a turbulent wake of luminous darkness leaps up, falls and dissolves into the serene shadowed regularity of the waves. The only sounds are the rush of water and the engine put-put put-put beating far over the surface. High, the sky turns dusty, thinning gray, reflecting light into water. Now the waves turn metallic, ridges individuated ahead. Around the ship the mist glows luminous. Suddenly light blazons glints and sprays everywhere, penetrating the mist brilliantly. Three men stand dark against the first sun — one in the pilot's cabin and two on deck. A fourth, a dark bulk bound hand and foot, lies between the two. Besides the body, tied to its legs, is an enormous rock wrapped in a net. At a signal from the pilot, one lifts the boulder and one the body; simultaneously they drop them over the side. Water leaps high, the surface foams, clears, and gives way to successive waves. The man nearest the pilothouse laughs loud but starts at the echo of his voice over the surface. The younger stares where the body sank, abruptly glances at his partner, scours the sky, turns and goes quickly to the bunks. The other shrugs, crosses deck, sits on the scuttle, takes out a pocketknife and sets to work carving a skimmer half shell. Close, the winch ropes rustle in soft whispers. Metal plates fastened to the boards drawl an occasional *claaaaaaak*.
Broken shells roll, their passage halted by brown nets spread to dry. Everywhere paint is

*Body and stone plunge*

*straight down together*

*while, above, water*

*splashes, falls, and closes*

*around; on the surface*

*bubbles and foam drift*

*over, fine dark lace*

peeling — on deck, doors, windows, trim. Moorings, winches, dredging platform, and guard plates are rusted. Docking buffers — auto tires — are chafed gray. Even the ship's name, Gwendolyn, is so faded only END N is clear. On the cabin BADLOWSKI BROS with an enormous exclamation is crudely painted in new black. Piloting, Tadeusz is enclosed with the engine noise. Over the panes a residue of salt, dirt, and gull wastes is streaked into still snake lines by the night damp. Tadeusz gazes through it at his brother Ignatz carving. "Atta go, Iggie," he says, but his voice is trapped behind glass. Then he raises his eyes and stares at the forward door, where his brother Roman has shut himself in:

You and Ig done good, Rome. That'll fix Will's ass. That mother! Screwin around with my sister, thinkin he'd get him a little'n get her away from us, an who the hell'd care for the house then? Likes the ocean, does he? Well, he got a mouthful he ain't spittin out. Nothin's so beautiful like the sea, says he, but he don't know from nothin. Try livin off it sometimes in winter when them ropes're ice 'n everything's chunks, even your balls freeze, 'n you'd wise up. Aw, shut up, Tad, Wanda says, you ain't got no poetry in your soul. Poetry, shit! An poetry ain't what she wants when she's itchin either — just ask Tad. The idea Will comin back to this town to bury the old lady 'n see the old home 'n decidin he'd come live here stead a sellin it — an keeps comin back 'n comin back — an he don't think old Tad knows nothin, eh? Smellin around Wanda, suckin around the house — an think I don't know she never cooked like that since the old man kicked the bucket. Oh, she though fillin his gut'd tickle the old man's ass till he left her the house 'n set it straight in writin. Well, she got fucked if anybody ever did — 'n she'll stay that way long's old Tad's got anythin to say about it. I'm the one's doin the sayin around here. The old bastard was too stupid to know what's a will'n them lawyers ain't settlin the place long's nobody'll sign — the house'll rot out from under before anybody does. Keeps thinkin she's so smart — always workin her little angles: You guys sign it over 'n I'll fix the shack

*against the sky, and clear, as the sea comes over the open eyes, the flesh; at first the body descends horizontally; then, carried by the current, stone and body drift, the stone sinking faster, pulling the body so that it lowers at an angle; the clothes pressed close fill with water, loosen, balloon out, impeding the descent, twirling the body very slowly, and infinite bubbles fountain upward; the sleeves torn in last night's struggle flutter up too, but are sucked down, flatten thin in the wake of the body; and the island of sand packed*

up, make you proud of it an you live here till you die with me lookin after the three a you — you're my brothers, ain't ya? Shee-it! Sign over, give her the deed, and up the old asshole — booted, the three of us — her marryin Will Turnbull, move into his place an sell this 'n an bank the cash, leaving Tad 'n Rome 'n Iggie out in the cold. Nosiree, not on your life, sister. I'm used to you now, baby — ain't no goddamn high class trash from past East Street hornin in on my territory. Remember that, Wanda. What's Will comin round here day an night for? I asked her. Oh, she plays it cool: We all went to school together, didn't we? Suh-matter with *your* memory, Tad? like she ain't shakin her ass at him every chance she gits. But nobody's around an it's Tad this an Tad that. Tells everybody: Ted's my hon, gives me a 'lowance to run the house just like clockwork — but not Iggie and Rome, them no-goods. S'pose Tad just cut off her food bill and taxes an stuff — think the boys'd take over? In a pig's ass. I told them, and didn't their jaws drop! Cash out a their pocket's the *last* thing. Payday Ig blows every cent drinkin 'n gamblin, an a kid with Rome's face got to get his rocks on paid stuff. Ted, he wasn't born yesterday — he ain't no dumb Polack. Yeah, they listened to my plan to get Will — couldn't hold them down. Not *now*, you bastards! Wait, goddamn it! You wanna blow it? Wait till night, Sunday, when Will's headin for the city an Wanda ain't expectin him back till next Friday — get him aboard, let him have it! Chuck him in the fish hole'n you ain't worryin no more. Wanda ain't findin no man in a hurry, I'll see to that. But that stupid Iggie — Will's already in the hole — says, Let's go *now*. Sure, I says, an have the whole town wonderin how come we ain't waitin to shove off in the a.m. like forever we been doin? Yeah, I didn't think, Ig says. Well, try it sometime, I says. *She* thinks she's marryin Will's ass and his money'll fix it so's she can make it so miserable we'll haul ass out a the house we're born in? *Uh*-uh! You're off your rocker, girl. It's Tad's house an he's stayin, an the boys know it too — doin what they're told; they know which side the bread's buttered on. Old Tad seen to that for sure. Once you get

*hard in the mouth*

*dissolves in a slow drift*

*over the face, flecked*

*against the light above;*

*schools of tiny fish swim*

*over the eyes, streaking*

*dark against the light,*

*strings of floating*

*seaweed wash against*

*flesh in passage; now far*

*light makes a deep tunnel*

*up, a light far off*

*shimmers, ripples, sends*

*out rays brilliant as a*

*star's; deeper down, the*

*morning white high*

*above turns green, the*

*green grows deeper,*

*turns gray far out at the*

*edge of a wide*

*circumference, and dark,*

*shadowed into vast deeps*

it easy you ain't rockin the boat for losin it. 'N her too — she'll learn not to get hot pants 'n go strayin. Says: You want my kid a bastard, you son of a bitch? Tellin me Will don't even know it's *his* yet, lookin me straight in the eye like she believed it, like I ain't lived in this house my whole life, like she never seen me'n forgot what it's all about — 's if she wouldn't be back in my upstairs bed first time Will ain't lookin. Old Tad don't give up so easy, Wanda baby. He ain't lettin no mother make a scrounge a him.

In a few minutes the deck is blazing white. Seated, Iggie feels the vibrations of the engine to his bones. He keeps his eye on the knife, the shell, the deck boards so they will not water. Under the sun everything is bared — the finest lines in the skimmer, the wood grain, paint peelings, cracks in his boots, the threads in his jeans, even the finest knife scars in his skin, freckles, blond hairs. Saliva drops onto the shell so intent is his mouth on his task. The back of his hand wipes his lips, the knife sweeps in a glint across his vision. He blinks. The humid mist, divided in patchy drifts by the ship, is dissipating. Already Iggie feels heat flow over the deck; on his head, shoulders, legs the summer day begins — water throws sun up, air holds the heat still, oppressive. The sea glows with widening light. Ahead is an undeviating white path impossible to look into. Headed into it, the ship seems to stand still as the sun bears toward it:

Tad says, Ig, Will's gettin on no train, get the son of a bitch away from Wanda early and make sure you get him on the Gwendolyn, then we'll take care a him once'n for all. Count on it, I says. Rome'd be aboard waitin in the bunks like he ain't there 'n me seein the taxi gets to the house early to pick up Will an then I'd hang around the depot to run into Will accidentlike. I keep hearin Ted — he'd kick us off the boat just like he'd swoop the house out from under if we didn't do the job by the numbers. We done it too. I says, Hell, Will, I know train time, you got a half an hour yet. We haul ass 'n it'll only take five. What say? Least, I says, you can give a looksee from the outside, next time you'll know which one — not but two secs . . . An me all the time walkin

*of black; and slowly, slowly — rolling and righting — with the rock below, the cord taut between, both plummeting down, the feet stand on water, thick streaks and clusters of blood on the face and clothes and matted back into the hair soften, and smears and tiny filaments fold into the drift; bubbles cease loosening from the surface of the rope, from the mouth, the clothes, the body, as sea permeates everything, the body moving like a strange new species among fish which flee,*

— it helps it's dark an he got to stick close cause we're past the lights by Preston's dock. That's it, I says, stoppin where she's docked. But I'm thinkin Where's Tad? Tad's watchin, me hearin him like he's in my ear: You want that mother Will drivin you outa your own home? takin food out of your mouth an shaftin ya? Then what'd we have? You'd let him 'n Wanda do that to us? I even see Will's head in the dark sky with all them masts and spars like a spider's been workin, an I think You betchyarass I don't, Tad, not to *my* brothers; an fore I know a thing I had Will's head tight in my hands an his mouth covered an drug him down so fast he didn't know nothin — light an small an weighin nothin; just fast I lugged him on the dock an quick I see Rome come out the bunks — only sudden I heard feet behind me, scared shitless somebody seen me. An wow! what a load off! It's Tad — gives me a shove, says Throw'm in the fish hole. They's still some shrimp down there, I says. Them shrimp ain't worryin none! Tad laughed. Cut it! I says — his noise scared hell out a me. Shut your mouth, he says. Before I could lift Will, Tad's got the hatch off. I chucked Will in. He plopped down in them shrimp like hittin water. It was shiny down there. Put the hatch on, Rome. Rome's got his eye down in that hole. Put the goddamn hatch on! I says, What's *with* you? and poke him. Okay-*kay*, Je*sus*, he says and slides it on. I sit on it. What you sittin on that hatch for? he says. Don't I always? I says. He don't say a thing, then says, I can hear air like the air's breathin. Christ, I says, you sound like *him*. Who? he says. Who you think? I says, Will's always talkin poems about oceans 'n air 'n sand for Wanda like he's a woman hisself. What's he know about all that? Well, he's gettin *his* all t' one time. Rome didn't say nothin, just looks over the side. How come it's dark but you see water flashing? he says. Stars maybe, I says. What stars? It's black night, he says; but the waters streakin like snakes all over the place. Yeah, well, I guess, I says. Goddamn it, you two, Tad near spits, this ain't no party. Get your ass back to the house like nothin happened. I'll roll you out at four. So we git. All's I can see's Tad standin on the dock black as the devil in the sky.

*swim over and under,*

*pass indifferently around*

*it, a creature making its*

*descent into new territory*

*but once primordially not*

*alien to it, miles from the*

*130 miles of its island*

*habitat, from the 3,000*

*mile width of its greater*

*continental island habitat,*

*but carried lying parallel*

*to it, carried too like that*

*island once glaciated,*

*lifted and shifted,*

*deposited bit by bit and*

*then whole to settle along*

*the sea bottom, its great*

*spine emergent from the*

*Atlantic, on which each*

*day millions walk, drive,*

*lie; still cross currents*

Forward in the bunks Rome sits staring into Tad's rumpled blanket. The air is close, stifling dank and motionless, with the heavy odor of stale wool, gasoline, shrimp, flesh. The light bulb on a cord rigged by Iggie is paled dingy by the morning sun which, in the unbroken motion of the ship, casts shadows high, low, high, low, baring the pile of clothes in the corner, the buckets, lifesaver, loose shoes, cartons, newspapers, empty beer cans, bottles. Rome simply stares, clutching his still hard fingertips white. Rapidly the light brightens over streaks of beer and wine and blood, semen stains, tears in the blankets. Now and then his breath makes a deep catch, then draws deeply; his head drops and he stares between his legs at the floor. Morning light glows from all sides, the portholes burn with brightness. When he looks out again, the mist is dispelled. Up, he can see clear, far. The sky comes in:

He didn't look dead. The eyes were wide open and shining, and the shrimp shining down there too. Drag his ass out a there, Rome, Ig says. A hell of a time lifting him to Ig — slipping on the shrimp — I dropped him twice. He's sure dead — too heavy to be living, Ig says. And Will's mouth wide open too, like talking, but full of sand. I wanted to stick my hands in and clean his mouth out. I heard his talk at the house and saw Wanda's face — Tad watched her face too, hating every time she smiled or got kind of lost and sunk, like not even *with* us — Will took her away. Wanda tells me Rome, you're young, get yourself a girl and get out fore it's too late and you get like the rest of us: she's crying, I never saw Wanda cry, but *almost* — like when she don't want Will to leave, afraid he won't come back. *My bones will lie on the bottom of the sea, Not I but my bones for eternity.* Will taught her that — it got in my head. See what I mean, she says, he gets *to* you; you want — want . . . Her face gets far, she can't say it, sticks her hands in the dishes — I think she'll cry — then dries them, touches me, then looks at her hands like she's disgusted she touched me — I don't know — and shoves me away. What in hell I'm saying this to you for? Tad laughs like he does in poker — Wham-o! a grand slam! — and his eyes all

*sway the body, deviate it from direct descent, for long moments nearly stilling it, suspended before it veers and falls headlong, jerked askew by the stone to twist and turn and stand; while great beings, curious or preying or startled perhaps, strike the stone or the body, propelling it aside, the rock momentarily arrested, then lunging it into a new direction, the body torpedoing straight until jerked back into a reverse dive deep into increasing dark, a darkness visible, were the body to see it,*

wet, him reeking, and pushes the table away. I wish Will was here, she says. And Tad laughs, laughs every time she says his name; then she gets quiet like Tad makes her mutt Terry scoot out back, his tail between his legs. Wanda stands at the back screen looking out like seeing somebody's coming. Well, he won't be coming now. When Will's out of the fish hole, Tad said, That rock's gonna hold him down on the bottom till the fish eat the meat off his bones. They'll never find that mother! Yeah, but we got to face Wanda; she'll be waiting for Will come next Saturday, thinking every minute's time for the train. And keep your drunk mouths shut when you're in the barrooms, both a ya, Tad said, You're my brothers, We got to stick together or where'd we be? But Wanda all the time says, Another thing, Rome — you don't need that boat. If there's a chance, that louse of an Iggie'll just beat you out of it cause Tad favors you cause you're the kid in this family. I tried but you can't talk to Tad; he's so big he thinks when he gets his hands on you, everything's — She gets that look of far again. And me ashamed — I want to sneak out like Terry cause years now I know Tad's like the old man — don't matter who with or blood or nothing: Tad comes one day up the stairs, Wanda's at the top, he stops by her a long time and his hand grabs her arm and next thing I hear them in her room — they don't know I'm there — and pretty soon the mattress creaking — I couldn't stand it, afraid, and sneaked down, so hard I couldn't stand it and hid in the shed and jacked off and stayed till he went and she couldn't see me come out. My blood brother. Least, if nothing else, we saved Will being part of this family. Cold he was, too heavy — he didn't bend. Wanda'll say Will's coming Friday night, we're getting married in June, but never mentions her belly and don't miss a day's housekeeping for the Talbots. Wanda's eyes'll be every minute on the road expecting the taxi. She'll say his words about the sea and how things could be; and say Leave here, Rome, before Tad get something on you. And I ought to go too, but what'd I do? Where'd I go? The water's the only thing, I got salt in my blood, all the Badlowskis were fishermen. Shit,

*deep toward farther black*

*below, and they make the*

*long entry into the*

*darkest region, below*

*heavy currents, into still*

*waters where now dark*

*tangles flutter about them*

*in invisible dark, where*

*there are scurries — fish,*

*fronds, clumbs adrift —*

*over rock, rope, flesh, and*

*with momentum now*

*they strike — first the*

*stone then the body —*

*disturbing silt, sediment,*

*digging into sand, in a*

*slow motion bouncing*

*upward, suspended a*

*second before falling*

*back more easefully into*

*invisible clouds about*

Tad says, Rome'd be back here in two shakes. Sides, he's gonna have the boat, ain't you, boy? Tad's got to be rubbing it into Ig, using me, knowing Ig's itching to get his hands on; and I want the boat too, it's mine, the old man said so before he died. *My bones will lie on the bottom of the sea.* His eyes shining. Iggie tied him. I said That's too tight, it's cutting. He's dead, goddamn it, Tad says, laughing. *Him* laughing too, his voice downstairs with Wanda, and singing — in this house we never heard a thing but that accordion at the hops, everybody stomping in the barn and drunk and pawing at each other and ending on the floor with nobody caring who with; even stealing money out of their pockets Tad was, and the old man too, and mama laughed: Money, You give money, Momma says with her iron hand out, sitting too big to move in her chair, but her eyes not missing a thing. Get out, Rome, Wanda says. Tad laughs: He's a Polack like the rest of us, once a Polack always a Polack, ain't that right, kiddo? And me wanting to knock his teeth in. But he's right: the ocean and island and this goddamn boat and fish got me good. But honest, Wanda, I didn't kill him. But maybe Will wasn't even . . . His eyes were open. He went under like that. In the dark. In all that ocean. Tied. Wanda'll watch the road. And nobody to say a word to her. Him sitting in the pilot's cabin and holding it over us — this boat, money, the house, and who's putting food on the table. Wanda says Go. She's my sister — why'd she say it if she don't mean good to me? But I got to remember they're my brothers too. I can't forget that. And remember: Will can't come back, he can't.

Tad cuts the engine. The trawler slows and gradually drifts, lulled idly by the waves. The ship stands white in the waves. The water around blazes silver. Far, silver recedes into deep blue, gray, meets a horizon vague in morning mist. Tad comes out of the pilot's cabin, shouts, "Rome!" who appears from the bunks now. The three shake the nets loose. They stand under, raising the nets high, shifting the black shadows thrown over them by the sun. They are ready to cast over. "And clean the shrimp out of the stinking hole," Tad says and goes back to the

*them to settle in tangles,*

*in darkness absolute, and*

*settle, stilled, into the*

*sounds of silence,*

*murmurs unheard, to lie*

*parallel to the island, to*

*islands, to earth itself, to*

*planets in seas of air*

*beyond earth, and now*

*hair and nail and flesh*

*settle where flesh will*

*dissolve and hair, nails,*

*and sand lie beside*

*skeletal bone, sediments*

*around the spine; and*

*bone unquestioning and*

*nameless will lie on the*

*floor of the sea with*

*myriad unknown*

*creatures and forms*

*holding each its own*

pilothouse. The engine starts, the boat pulls out. Rome and Iggie check to see the ties and loops are fast. Now the sun strikes the ship head on. Over the deck the glass in the pilothouse gleams brilliant as a single white eye blinded by the sun. Already the water begins to reflect heat, the air heavy and close with it. Perceptibly the sun inches higher. It looks like a great golden hole drawing the trawler rapidly into it. Rome and Ig heave the nets over the sides; the nets tear back fast into the wake. Ig turns to check the winch, but Rome stares into the water, fastening his eyes on the nets as they sink through the clear surface, farther and farther down.

*silence and motion and*

*meaning far under roots*

*and stalks and leaves that*

*stand in infinite darkness*

*at the bottom of the sea*

*far far below all light.*

PET SHOP
PET FOOD

# At the Pet Shop and After

No ideas but in things.
—William Carlos Williams

"This terrarium is not an aquarium,"
The clerk had said, pointing at the differences
In seams, and latch, and lid.
It set me thinking hard about
William Carlos Williams and the sort
Of song he might have found
In Yeats' glass Byzantium
Or in Walton's bed of fishes.

But song would not have kept the child
Intact; there was no world
Clear enough contained, in space
Or in time, where it could work
Its charm on her. What she had seen,
She had seen: the mouse had really been there,
Sleeping at a handspread's distance
From a red-tailed boa constrictor.

I nursed the child for days,
Touched her, fed her, held her.
She would not look at me,
Except with the grain of her eyes,
Where I could see, up close, a cold ripple
Of grey, as if she were molting
Inside, or needed to find a place
To shed her skin and hide.

# The Two Tongues of the Rose

Michael Rutka

(dedicated to his snoring from whence the voices came.)

Rosebudweiser (house-wife)

Black coffee black coffee black coffee
Black coffee Make the beds and drink
Black coffee Roll his socks into a ball
Vacuum the hall the hall the hall
Vacuum the vacuum the the vacuum the
Hall the hall the hall

Woman with scary
voice

petticoat made of glass and roses
nylon stocking crotch sandwich spread poses
thrusting trusting his fantasy
our bones are singing in voices clear
the morning alarm won't find us hear
a beer is a beer is a beer

Child with a flute
and inclination
for ping-pong

Who put the rose in the refrigerator, Who
put the rose in the refrigerator, Who put
the rose in the refrigerator, Who put the
rose in the refrigerator, Who put the rose
in the refrigerator.

Rosebudweiser

You walked in
and shook my head
so you could see
the snow falling
inside of me.

Woman with scary
voice

When you refrigerate a rose
the cold steals its blood
like a small animal in a claw
it can not breathe
in the frozen air it will not change.

Rosebudweiser

At night I hear boots crunching in the snow

Child with a flute
and inclination
for ping-pong

How can you tell if there's been an
elephant in the refrigerator, How can
you tell if there's been an elephant in
the refrigerator? How How? Because
there's footprints in the jello that's
how!

Pandora's box
(the inscription)

Refrigerate.

# Hospital for the Flute

Michael Rutka

Mrs. M is lighting the orchids in her pillow
on fire.

Mr. K's fingers have doves in them.
The doves are dead now and must be removed.

Mrs. G hears music in cracking ice cubes.
She feeds the doves in Mr. K's fingers
orange peels which grow in her earlobes.

Mr. T was a tightrope walker so his lungs have wings.
The nurses don't think it's very funny
when his lungs fly out the window
and perch on the sun deck.

Mrs. H raises flowers. They die every night
and bloom in the morning.

Mr. S went tobogganning with a cow.

All the patients from Ward D have holes in their hearts
which the dead doves from Mr. K's fingers
fly through, as if they were stringing flowers.

Mrs. M's hair is like a witch's broom
In it, the ghost of a calliope plays
like a pinwheel of death
turned by the songs of the dead.
Like a child riding his bicycle
for the first time.

# Miles Like Skin

Krysia Kolodziej

Tonight I write you
a poem kiss,
to find in your glove
when you really want a map.

I know you like the veins
on maps, miles like skin
stretching over your family and past.
I know you like the feel of road

moving under you
like your own blood moving
thru your children.
Their names are embroidered smiles: Katya, Yuri.

They wrap your head in father-clouds,
make you write tear-stained dreams.
You try, but can't outswim their growth.
They make you a witness to their futures. It rains.

You file yourself in another city.
The blood moving thru your children
will meet you there. The fragility
of a skinny-legged boy meets with years

in your father, meets with you
in your tears.

# Victoriana

Ann Barclay

Chairs poise separately
around the pale border of the crimson oriental rug.
A mahogony credenza gleams under the lamplight.
I have seen my face in its bloodlines
brought up by polishing of so many bloodless hands.
The table is draped in ivory lace,
its holes too tight for fingers to invade.

This room loves itself behind thick doors,
in fervid seclusion; the wood burns into itself.
I sit here in another century, stiff in the back.
High over my collar, lines of longtied hair are knotted
like questions I cannot ask.

# To an Unknown Woman at the CLS

James Kalmbach

(Chicago Linguistic Society Annual Meetings, April 17-20, 1975)

You were 6–3 at least.
My eyes reached your chin.
Brown hair, brown eyes,
and a distinctly Australian vowel system
though you talked mostly with people from MIT.

Syntax and Semantics?
I still can't tell a factive
from a perfective from dative movement;
opacity, transparency, cliticization!
This year everyone is talking functionalism,
what is the function, what is the use?
What am I doing here
lost in Hyde Park
and never smiling at you?

When I said something
it usually seemed incoherent
sentence that never fit together
ideas cascading like slinkys.

Too often language is a woman
and I, with a willing tongue
leave her wondering
who was that fair boy from East Lansing
that phantom linguist, that
poetry by which I nearly came?

In 1968 there was a woman in my dorm
who was 6–3, perhaps 6–4.
When she crossed the cafeteria
she negotiated a tangle of erections
like the struts of a pinball machine
and was said to carry a six inch switchblade in her purse.

But you are fairly chunky,
more a matron than fashion model
and never a fantasy fuck.

Rather we seemed so out of place,
poet and redwood woman
who could out-armwrestle Noam Chomsky
who could block out all the light from a doorway
and look down on almost any man
so I memorized your chin.

# Returning to Blind Lake on Sunday

James Kalmbach

Driving this morning to Ann Arbor. Down M-52,
asphalt straight to the horizon, and turning on 36,
hills and curves through Gregory and Unadilla
to the dirt roads beyond the boy scout camp;
the air that hugs the windows mixing with dust.

At the turn off I stop and walk, past
hunters standing motionless in the road,
shotguns held easy with both hands,
dogs barking along the slope, flushing rabbit.
The old road leads to an empty parking lot,
the green lake flat and bottomless.
The shoreline is a crescent
of white sand rimmed with topsoil,
a log juts out and disappears into sand.
The water is glass, the bottom all clay.
From here to the sandbar,
each thermocline a new shock—
a globular vision.

Then, backtrack up the terraced path
to the ridge where the Potowatami trail runs
and bobs and turns ten miles to Crooked Lake.
The breeze carries memory to face and hands,
the lake a puddle, the trees still with color.
Beyond this ridge another and another
broken only by the distant streak of powerlines,
dogs, shotguns, and rabbits.

If I sit here all day,
I may learn to see
as the sun perceives the countryside;
to see dimpling bottoms and nipples flat as paper
in the exact definition of a tree
or low trembling sumac.
But, instead, I get up,
chat with the hunters and drive home.
Retracing back roads, lost in speed,
and stopping every mile or so
to scribble down some lines of this damn poem.

With each curve the cars come closer
faces pale and disappear.
For just one image
I could leave my memory on a tree trunk
or end up spinning along the pavement,
or rolling over and over down a glacial dump,
finally splashing into water,
the wave rising high and blue
and wrecking the hill and sliding back.
Four bald tires gleaming black
and sinking as ripples splash
and cover and cover and are gone.

# Brancusi's Bird in Flight

Wendy Schultz

for Sonia

the line of your shoulders,
muscles folding,
shadows on bones
and moving,
hurts.
your back owns wings
I ache to see.

# Esau Was A Manchild

Greta Bolger

"I saw Esau kissing Kate.
Fact is, we all three saw:
I saw Esau, he saw me,
And she saw I saw Esau."
—Children's Rhyme

In the glaring light
at the kitchen table
They talked, laughed;
Shared a bowlful of smoke.

I sat in the shadows to hide my flamed changings
and watched them spill outside the lines of the secret.

They are different men.
When I look at the four hands:

two brown & smooth
two white & hairy

that have touched me hard in the night
and soft in the morning

I feel I was trembling alive before the world began
Clay of the earth turning gold by the fistful
Alchemized by hot volcanic explosions
Set spinning, wild with mysterious power

that touches lives silently

In dark rooms and well-lit kitchens.

# Yin/Yang Equation

Greta Bolger

I

Clearly cold and objective.
November.
Black-boned trees etched a numb pattern
Against the black sky.
The white moon was a screaming O
over the Western world
And nobody heard.

That was a most Western time, then.
All was things; had uses and disuses.
November suited it well—
Black and white landscape.
Too cold to feel.

In the foreground stood the brown man
Clearly apart from black and white division.
Full of mystical Eastern ideas
Of Life
Love
and Woman.

II

Saying "au-revoir" seems unnecessary
To a mechanical woman
The gears gone toothless;
his smooth skin repulsive.

Seeking the darkness
The woman left, walking.

He followed after,
Frantic.
Knowing too well the self-destruct mechanism
Built in
To the American machine.

III

He had tried to hold it.
Sooth and satisfy it.
For a while the darkened silence
Made the mechanics of love
Workable.

But the steel rusted out.
The device broke down.

IV

Driving reckless
He saw her finally
Walking the dark road and talking alone
Embracing the only trustable reality
Self-oiled gears with no doubts or regrets.

He screeched the car over
Jumped out, babbled endlessly:
"Please, please, don't make me to worry again like this,
my angel, my always love."

He sat in the road, crying
Pounding the car till his knuckles were bloody
Proving a humanness
That exists in broken flesh.

V

The black road, the white car
Under the screaming moon
The eastern man bled helpless
At the mercy of his own
Absurd emotions.

The machine grew disgusted
At this display of theatrics
Ran over the brown man
And went on her way.

# The Mariner's Daughters

R. Sue Smith

At the moment of orgasm I visualize my mother wringing her hands.

I press my fingers further into the stained satin lining of Renee's body; fingers inserted, exploring both holes, we walk the hall to where my mother wrings her hands and my father fights the lock on the door.

I pin Renee's legs to the bed and we begin again. Her eyes scan the ceiling for a pinpoint of light which widens inside her like a tunnel so she may shoot through herself toward a rosy explosion and my mother is wringing her hands and my father threatens to unbolt the door if I do not come out this minute.

My passion grows.

I respond by lovingly wiping out her mouth with my tongue, running it over the tiles of her teeth, sucking the moisture from the well, replacing it with my warm and nourishing self, fitting my hips against hers our bones cracking with the frantic gyrations of two women in love; my mother wrings her hands and my father pulls the belt from his pants and rages I'll beat you with this and I laugh and together we watch my mother wring her hands through the mile long tunnel, through the pink and lucid tunnel where she sits and wrings her hands.

Strained and trained Renee kisses me back. Her hair spills down my face and breasts as she works her way to where the moss curls brown and fragrant where the lotus floats pink and placid on the pond. Some stark birds, sticks of feather and bone, crane and crone, cry into the silence of the big dark autumn room where my mother wrings her hands. She presses her face to the watery world of my immersion and begs me out into dark halls of shadows spread-eagled held fast across the breathless years that cannot resist the thrust of the shadow the threat of the belt.

Now Renee runs her tongue as mine has run, repeating the rimming absolution of the crevise of the cavernous place where my mother sits wringing her hands.

Now Renee watches my eyes for the pinpoint which will pierce me with the recognition of my father's eye against the keyhole.

She inserts the key so he cannot see. She inserts the key so the door flys open like the lid of a Jack-in-the-box and out springs my father, belt in hand, my mother behind him her eyes all teary, wiping them on her red apron saying No.

Renee slips inside me, rocking together, springs, squeals, the shimmy of the bed, the pumping of legs against the pumping of legs, the rocking back and forth on its spring of the Jack-in-the-box, whose serpentine whip lashes me securely to her legs, together we strain the storm like a mast plunged

between us and the mariner's daughters drown in the waves as my mother wrings her hands saying No.

# heaven goin' to heaven /// went

Joan Stroud

The front door swung open—the screen's mesh slithered and flies pranced annoyingly like there was cabbage on the iron four burner oil heatin' stove.

//"where's ya mama—judson"—said percy struttin in the front door //he glanced—sittin' at the table—eatin' a jelly donut and mouth rimmed with milk—usin' his thumb to dabble the frosted fallins' of sugar—.

"she went to pick some corn and okra——for a few of her city customers—ya know how good fresh vegetables is."

Fred percy said "yea, that sure sound good—i jest got a full tank of gas—and the time to deliver ya mama's orders—tell her—i'll be back say in the next few——minutes——say half hour."

yo-yoin' his head up and down—judson heeded his words—finishin' his donuts—and lickin' his fingers after the plastic table cover was clear—

as percy pulled away he went and latched the stick your hand in the open the door—screen—and hooked the pronged nail secure—he grabbed his 4th of July—//parade straw brimmed hat—

then jumped out the side door—that kinda hung high like a window—like a door window—placked like part of the house—except for two joined pieces fittin' either corners//like an "X"

Judson looked—then saw that percy's red-green jalopy soundin' pullin' down-up the street as goin'

his sandles worn lopsided turned over rubber—slapped at his heels//as boy's feet in the dust//....his toes chocked with dust—his throat silent happy songed

from a distance he could see his mama///sister siletha///and brother—g.d.—gentle dan//pickin' from the okra row—

lined behind them fine straight delicious respectable ears of corn

"the windows of the world are covered with rain."

The whinnings of the winds rhythmed string guitars and blues in the country——colored of dancin' to the drag or the boogie—like lights dimly flickerin' and country people dressed like shufflin' around and dancin' to pass the time//

Judson—had percy's message pinned to his mind—it was only 15 or 20 minutes passed—when he heard the fenders//like puffed cheeks—goin' like bap! bap! flutter metal and tires hittin' the ruts///splatter! splatter! raisin' rocks and dust to reflection swirls like clingin' dry waters////

quickly judson ran to the side—and caught a ride on the runnin' board//foot board—and held onto the door and the mirror//and the josslin' and jugglin' kinda shook him up like butter//hot dry and sticky//the sun pored down with harps

"ya didn't see ya mama yet!"

"naw! i had trouble gettin' the door windar latched—kinda kept slippin'—

so as not to startle them—percy honked his horn—sounded like a horn with fuses plugged backwards—or a time machine from yesterday—geared with a blimp sound horn—the taps of a trumpeteer playin' "gabriel come blow your horn—sheep is in the meadow and the cows is in the corn—"

the way he had to tap the right spots to get vibrations—then a sudden woooo stop—percy got out of the truck//

"good mornin' miss justine."

"mornin' mr. percy——i can't be talkin' and croppin' at the same time."

kinda movin' towards the rows—he said//"that i know—i'd lend a hand but i been to the doctor's and he tell me to be careful——cause my heart ain't exactly in good shape." siletha and dan carried together bushel baskets—when percy said to judson—"come on boy—we can lift those bushel baskets on the truck// and ya can check the names off the list."

it was pretty near an hour——and perspirations clung shower drenches —singings' like "oh mary don't you weep!" siletha's and her mama's head bandanas were soaked like kerosene sour ignitions——

HIGH NOON

"good lawd—can't do anymore for the day—seven row of corn—bout 50 ears a piece and bout 31/2 to 4 bushels of okra—then with some—ah that's right we gotta get to the smoke house and get some ham hocks and salt pork—say we should clear bout $two-hundred and forty.00"

a sparkle lit in percy's eyes——"miss justine, that's what i like bout you, ha ha, lawd woman ya sure got a head for money and business!"///

Percy and judson latched chained either sides of the panel truck's rear tongue—and jaws real tight///then covered the corn with pieces of burlap—so they wouldn't become parched and dried//——**

While the boys helped percy—siletha and mama justine kinda cautioned themselves on the leather hidden coil springs—waitin' to just nip-or or tug or scratch

gentle dan stood strummin' his fingers on the roof of the "cab." // "hey siletha-" he yelled—toyin'—knockin' at the windar—she

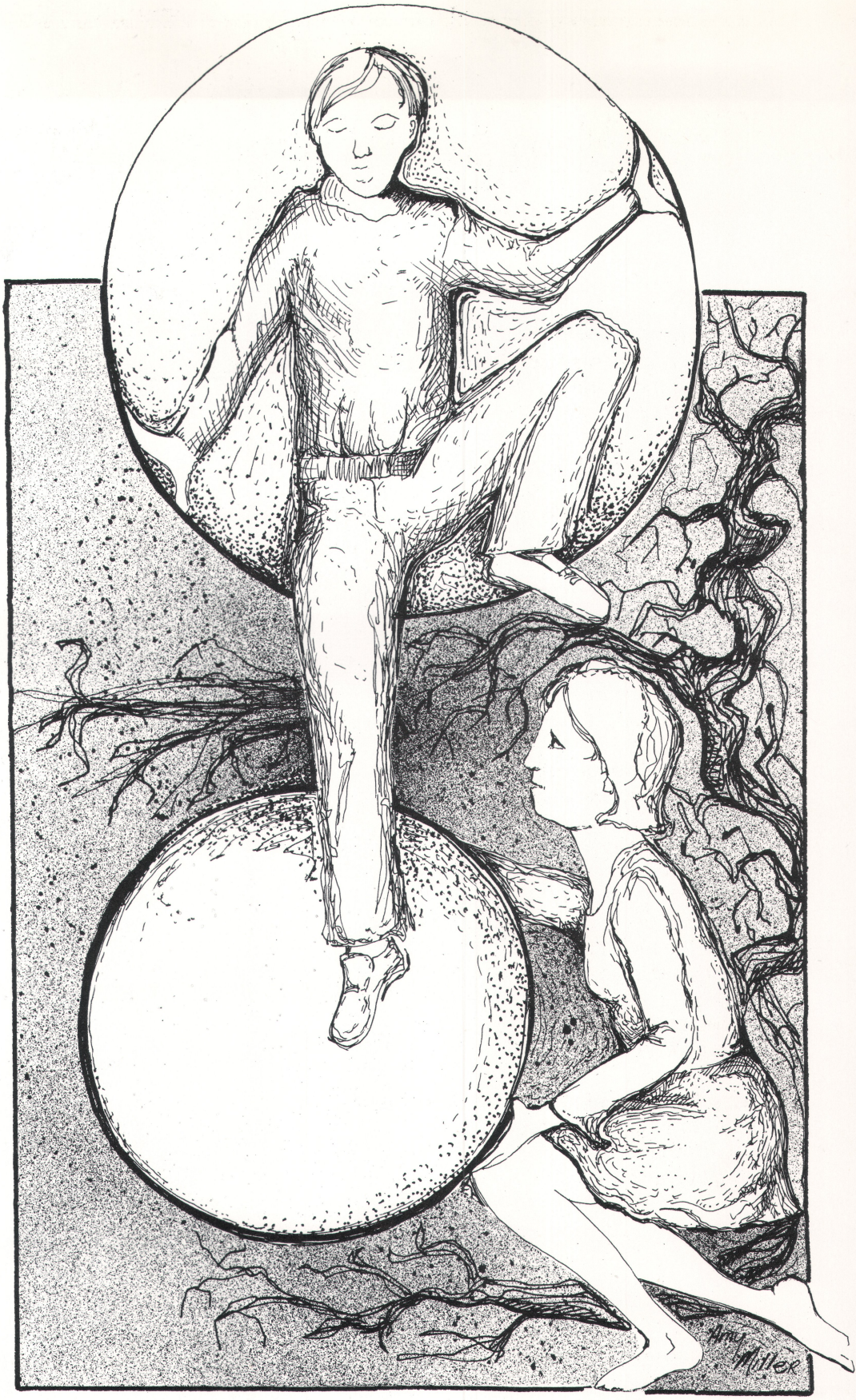
huddlin' her thin legs together afraid of touchin' the clutch//
unfamiliar with
motor machinery—gears clutches—and so on and so forth//
"mister percy//
i'm gonna climb aboard and sit inbetween the baskets!"

"make sure ya don't sit on any of the croppins' "——
judson levied his feet—upon the tire and over the metal work isle and crouched himself real comfy//and sat real country refined with straw bittins' hangin' from his mouth, knees elevated—his ragitty denims—snaggled—and sleeveless shirt minus buttons//—with his brim shade—
he shouted—"hey
mister percy let's move or i'll drive."
"boy be patient," his mama screamed—
just at that moment the buck—and ole' man percy jerked his truck away—with "boomph!"——the front tires went into a small land openin' and out——he hit the accelerator and bam the rear end almost snapped! "God!%$%$%† my goodness3535454%$%†$$%†" they screamed. ' ' ' %"
Ole' man percy didn't respond—he kept his foot iron press on the pedal///
reachin' a certain speed//he lifted his foot//but the truck continued to raise speed——somewhat quiet—gosh he thought—what in the devil is the matter—he pressed the clutch—and went through all of the gears///

Siletha and mama justine were eyen' the dusty road about to end and extend into a washline of speckled cows—bails of hay bob-wired
their eyes
were stretched like hoot owls—judson panicked—"mr. percy——stop this thing—stop! i'm gonna jump——"
//the rattlin' and shakin'——judson could barely hear mr. percy yell——"sit down boy! keep calm!" ——gentle dan was happy as a tickle—thought he was really on some type of whoopy ride///
the fumes spurtin' from the exhausts clouded the front view like a veil of wool blankets—
the clouded fumes thickened like so—heavy with poison perfume—till they congested into their lungs——
mr. percy tired veerin'
the wheel the tires were lifted from the ground surface//the barbwire snapped like thread///as the eye of its needle bumper protruded//the truck began to glide like///
the summer winds were like sheer transparent sheets of ice//the tires skated like perfection

beneath their sights they couldn't see the spills of milk splatter the air like paint———wash——
they became///unconscious///
their consciousness became the motorin' of the engine
the brakes shrieked

like blackboard on chalk––indigo was heavy upon their eyelids
lullabye and
good-night//serenity—quiet serenity slipped like evenin' upon them//––
the soundins' of the brightness-ess of the stars the chirpins' of the
crickets///the mornins' of country churned sun shine butter-milk
the hoot
moos of cows in pasture––//the sound of the engine////a boy's mama said to
him—standin' besides a pail of clothespins––stop pushin' that clothesline
reel/////in the sounds of squeals and squeaks////////–––!


Amy Miller

# Chiaroscuro: The Man and Woman Within

Lee Upton

He pulls the moon down
and drops it from his fingers.
She scoops the moon up
and puts it back in the sky.

Each pretends the other is not there.

The dark-skinned one loves the shadow,
the black soil, deep patent leather and the long root.

The other loves the moon, round as her forearm,
familiar as a spoon, silver and white
with a woman in it.

She knows the man needs the iron kettle,
the polished boot, the black, swimming eye of the calf.

He knows the woman needs the saucer,
the ovary, her swan-pale stone.

He pulls the moon down.
She tosses it up.
He pulls the moon down.
She tosses it up.
He pulls the moon down
and throws the woman in a silk bag.

The moon he throws with her,
like a glowing crust.

Silver tides roll behind the eyes of the man,
running through the forest,
bent with the sack,
shining like a ghost.

# Intuition

Lee Upton

Intuition is the long root that sinks in the ear.
It winds like a ribbon of birds,
spooling through a canal of rocks,
blackening like tea leaves.
Intuition is homing.
The silent witness snaps.
The first signal taps,
a red insect against the windshield.

Stepping off a bus, a woman senses death.
Suddenly a man sees the hatred of his wife,
floating like a bloody yolk in the frying pan.

Intuition vibrates like a faint Indian drum.
It strokes the ear, then, a black canoe,
it shoots the high white water of the brain.

Messages fall on the man,
boxes from a closet stuffed
with the startling brown eye,
the lung fluttering in all its pink rooms,
fingers that dip in light.

The woman stops.
Silky parachutes drop, blossoming
with the heavy knowledge of soldiers.
A tiny fork trembles inside her head.

# untitled

Larry Gabriel

1

naked-except for
a bracelet
i stand here
palm touchin belly
(seat of my sense)
think of it slidin
easily
    effortlessly
across d curves
(or lumps &bumps)
cock hangs loose/
            left
bein a right hand
        masturbater

does d body sway
does d body sway
standin in d door
w/words to say

hell
i love my flesh
bein conscious of self
to maintain  grow
&act on cue
be sensuous (jewelry
hangs on wrist at side
ornamental/
it hides nothin

hair grows where it may
i never cut it
afro workin down neck
chest bare &pubic pad
where fingers scratch
or sometimes pull at chin

w/balls cupped
in hands
sleep
comes easier
its security yknow
bein biological its all
one has to make his
children

does d body sway
does d body sway
it moves w/d rhythm
when d music play

lean &stretch
bend to form
my angles r my art

II

for exhilaration i run
legs step ahead
d head leans
i breathe
deep till pain leaves chest
movin past d city
thru d world
till
horizon eats
my movements

does d body sway

# nadine oh honey

Larry Gabriel

"nadine oh honey is dat u
seems like everytime i see u
yr into somethin new"

1

u came to me
erotically as usual
ass pinchin &warmwomb
i went
in there more sure
than ever-
yr smile
&big ol eyes so
serious—callin my name
head rockin—fingers long
artistically bent

2

what will u do with me
stayin here
waitin
each year
that energy i once
despaired of turns
to me
deepdiggin
i come close &hesitate

3

i wear yr bracelet
once on its difficult
to remove
i believe u did it on purpose
&when i made love
to that other woman
she liked it &sent greetins

"come sister &join d
revolution"
but we already talked politics
sittin in d bar
with our words
legsrubbin
-u told me
have some more beer
even though u dont
drink

# playin d bass new orleans style

Larry Gabriel

david henderson-
he dug it
buddy bolden-
dey say he played it
now bessie smith-
she sang it
danny barker-
well he wrote it
my daddy (his daddy &a
whole buncha other cats)
lived sweated prayed
worked-in other words
were it

-me-being a first
generation removed
had to be told about it

new o-crescent city
look like d/moon
feel like d/madness
ack like d/culture
music in d quarter
oysters on d half shell
(eat fish live longer
eat oysters love longer)
women in d half light
&church on sunday

w/more musicians
in d family
den u can count
&stories ive heard
percy gabriel
&danny barker down
&out in NY playin
muskrat ramble
w/bird round d corner
playin bop

so dey live cookin creole

transplanted
i learn slowly
story by story
note by note
scale by scale·
d 4/4 time
d 12 bar in b flat
d wang wang blues
dat big man taught
    my daddy &he
    teaches me

# The Pleasures of Being Thin

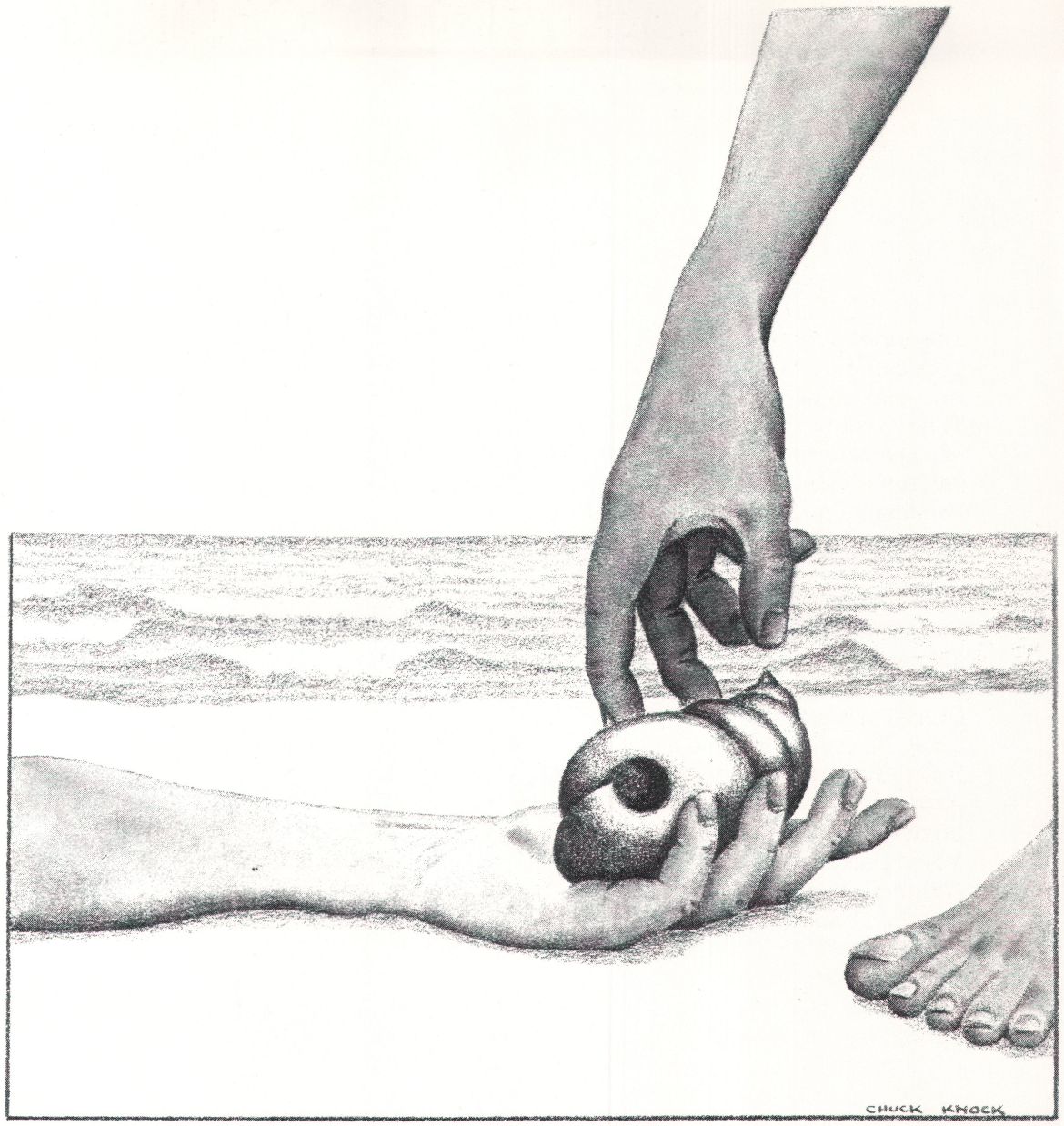
Susan Rea

(for David)

A writer should live on grapefruit rinds,
My love, and sleep on bare tables,
Inhaling only the amount of air
Birds breathe out when they're singing.
A writer should be capable
Of walking out just as the curtain rises;
Of wearing half a shoe; of winging
It all night, alone as air.

I followed all those rules
Once, a diaphanous saint.
Asleep all winter, buried alive like a tulip,
I was rewarded with a sprouting head.
How gladly I would have completely shrivelled up,
Squeezed into myself like a left-over carrot,
Laying down my fuzzy roots,
Hunched in that darkness like the dead.

But you crept below me, a subterranean brook,
Carrying your hunger like a fat baby
Crying for the breast,
We were twins, a cleaved tree,
All the rest.
I write you over and over, lover, a new book.


CHUCK KNOCK

# Gathering Seashells

Susan Rea

The waves approached us in a rush
Like commuters whipped to a frenzy,
And hurried past, whispering.
They never bothered us.
How entranced you were with shells—jewels
Perfect as debutantes;
I watched you, busy
Gathering your fans, bones, wings.

You might have gathered my hands
Before you left;
You might have snapped me up like a jail.
I waited, itchy as hives,
Useless as a visiting aunt,
Until the sea snapped on a cleft
Rock, broke in a dozen spumy pools,
And clattered at my feet like knives.
Little pockets rippled on the sand
You'd picked, left forlorn as a minefield,
A riddle of petrified lace, braille
For the blind sky to read.

# Spring

Deborah Richardson

Toad with one eye spying on the
inside of the page, of the inside
of the upside down chest, delicately
I remove the diaphragm eeking substance
a burst of unborn babies, swishing
in an ivory cup, inside my stomach

I wonder, washing it carefully, holding
it up to the light for holes,
hearing the hole in me, unfilled
undone, dusting it with Johnson's
baby powder putting it carefully
in
its
little coffin to wait another
year or so again. I go to the

window. I see the birch tree and
a pine I can't name. I stand in
the bathroom, the cold air from the
unmended break soiling my face, I

stand hoping something is growing
in me, a tongue full of fist
baby chicken teeth, hair by
the sixth week, the woman's body
upright pushing out the

poem, hitting the lick side of
stamps in the ice cage wishing
a seed would sprout to shout

there is something
pouring out see her belly it blooms like
an infected fish

she bares
she does not bleed
she has been touched

# The Mobile

Deborah Richardson

(for Clare)

I see you looking up with your coat
and your gloves in your hand, you
wait
-His leggings are in that bag- you say
You wait
I look up and you are waiting

-Why don't you stay- I say
You hardly change, smile just a little
and quickly put down your things as
if I might change my mind

Our son gets out some paper and you
teach us both how to make snowflakes
Mine always turn out wrong -That's
because- you say -you are not making it
a perfect square.

So we sit on the floor, your son and me,
and we make a mobile which is now moving after
both of you are gone

I wonder about the thread I tied
the white paper flakes with
and why it moves without me doing
anything. I think about us
in the middle of reading a Conrad novel.
"Nostromo." Somebody is hunting silver.

Was it, that you always knew how
to make the paper square, and that
it would come out right, that I left?
Maybe
I wanted the paper to be the shape
I wanted it to be and still come out
perfectly. But it didn't.

Your sister makes dinner for you both
every Sunday
When you leave I put in tins of baked
English pies from Kresges.

It's strange but maybe the mobile
Wouldn't move if it were perfect
because just before you left
our son took out a long piece of
plastic and attached a little boat he had made
out of paper and it balances perfectly.
It still moves and his last quick
addition created it

He is both of us. The even. He balances
and a quick look and change makes it
like no other
It's better this way. We move better
apart
and he balances
Can't you see the shifts between father
and mother? We both meet the
scales evenly, finally, and with grace.

# Kansas Love Dream

John Hohlt

The prairie house
that was birth-shelter for some of us,
seed house,
stands open now,
a cracked husk
and no seed more housed within.
The door is open:
breezes come
touch the dust
that longs to settle here.
Prairie winds come
pant like vandals,
engender heat in sofas with
bellies swollen
and tarantulas for children.
Every law here is binding:
something like sighs,
the gasp of wheat falling before the scythe,
clings to the mowers' smeared and
tacky hands,
goes with them to the homes at evening.
In moonlight the floor is drenched
and drenched
the yard beyond:
a silt dark water to walk upon,
silt dark water flowing
past the screens we sleep behind
and into our eyes.
All night our souls
move on the flood:
are christened by Herod's hand
and take up his lance.
When we wake we feel
sand chafing our summer-sweaty necks
and the taste of blood is
unkillable
in the throat.

# your stride father

John Hohlt

your stride
father
was enormous

your heels resounding on mere floors
of wood
like hail showers
beating my heart

it was never so late
or I so tired
but I could hear it
somewhere out there
where August nights racked
their bodies with dry thunder

now in sleep
I am in my own country
here
the windows crack with hail
and earth itself
dashes its head
against my stony sill

I am alone
and you repeat yourself
walk with even greater strides
gash the land with long canyons

# say someone were to teach us

John Hohlt

say someone were to teach us
to use our teeth
to burrow

to make tunnels in the loam

a fine gravel might coat our bellies
our lips know the smear of earth

our shut eyes might learn to abhor
a surface

the penetrable dark would be our love
caverns shaped to a coiled body
all that goes hollow and unknown

and even those altered lips attract
a kiss

# Rounding the Bases

Ray Cosseboom

Back there then any knock on the door opened days that began with Mrs. Ludden's lilacs across the street, the Fletcher family working on their new house, — and we walked past all of this with our gloves, bats, and a ball, and soon at Whithman's Field what skipped across the grass at the edge of the infield would take a big bounce, and even before you could stop it, all the dreams in the world would take big cuts, and swallows would go over, hollers blossoming behind me, and I felt then I was rounding the bases of something so large each small town in Maine was ninety feet away, and all I had to do was slide, and this miracle would be safe, and everyone would win.

Then Ikie Booth would hit one almost as far as Goose could, and it would go across Grove Street, over the telephone wires, take big bounces on Bangor Avenue, and come to rest in one of the endless small gardens near a small porch, — and we would all run, and look for it, — and even before we could get back it was years later:

Goose was living in Augusta, Ikie was on the coast, and the rest of the kids had evaporated, and I would come often at night under the stars and walk around, and when I did everything ever would begin to run again, a big wind would unwind, and Goose would holler again from short, joking about how Dickie said thirteen: "Thirtheeen to two is the score, thirtheeen to two."

# The Lady Who Collects Sunsets

Del Sneller

My neighborhood owns usual things:
Potted geraniums, divorces,
Thin hounds that karate trash,
Professions interesting as cuts,
A few automatic sons exploding forward on cycles
And noticeable exotic trees
Small as foreign children
With fingers spread to feel
What different rain might fall.

All is like this where I live
Except her,
The lady who collects sunsets.

Every evening she waits
Outside or by a window
With her camera
Hoping for "real beauty."
Her blonde hair gathers traces
Of emerald and red.

I agree with her; not many things
Are easier to find than twilight.
It appears most often gently and on time.
I tease her I prefer
Grey sunsets or nearly white.

On narrow winter evenings
Just short of scarlet
The way a scar is just short of hurting:
She comes to my house
And we drink home-made Burgundy.

We know what farfetched sadness needs
But she explains consistency
And laughs.

CHUCK
KNOCK

# For Terri Allen

Del Sneller

Galaxies that look like carnivals from afar
I like to think are lights no one tends,
And no motion or sound complicates
Their single color.

I envy the quiet inside iron,
The waiting at the core of old oaks
Where time rounds outward,
A stone house in snowfall.

For what is still
Is perfect.

# to the girl in the attic

Alison Hedlund

you have been
there for years
picking moss off
the walls reading my
childhood books
playing scrabble
in the corner.
have gone thru
all my old sunsuits
pretending beach scenes,
shaken moths
from my parkas,
have stamped around
in my too-small boots.

now you smell dead mice
in the eaves
& hold your nose.
you sweep dead leaves
into neat piles.
you've started
dusting trunks
& arranging
cracked furniture,
unwrapping knick-knacks
& setting them in rows
on rickety tables.
old spiderwebs come down,
fish plaques go up,
persian rugs with holes
are shaken
& laid out.

haven't you noticed
the leaking roof,
broken windows,
insects calmly
crunching wood?
you pick at your moss;
the walls grow thin.

# true poets meeting in bookstores

Alison Hedlund

(Village Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan)

give each other the brother handshake,
show off new beards or bellies,
brag about how many poems they've had published,
chew their lips & frown meditatively,
talk about who won what prize which year,
push fists hard into tattered coat pockets,
say each other's names loudly so others in the bookstore
will be impressed & buy their books,
shuffle their feet modestly,
occasionally itch an armpit or tit or crotch to show how
little they care for convention,
quote shakespeare or discuss how much they detest him,
pull up holey socks,
walk around occasionally picking up & smelling a book,
give each other the brother handshake,
hope no one will think they are ordinary.

# Circumference

Joland Mohr

the search for a father
can begin anytime,
anytime you notice he's gone

perhaps it will start
when you send your voice
to a person who doesn't care

just outside a town
birds lead the car
toward the next intersection

a deer crossing sign tells you
to hold your breath: beauty
could be around the next bend

the grandfather horse by the fence
tries to stay out of
your next dream

you'll have to find out why
your arms close around you, your
head resting on your breast

# Finding Reasons

Joland Mohr

Cloth coats, heavy work shirts,
going round and round
making a pattern
where there wasn't one
before.
First we put down this rug
made by hands.

Crossing the old porch rug
you begin to feel the difference—
how a house becomes another skin.
Here you don't apologize
for cracks in the wallpaper.
The house stands.
That is enough.

It hurt me
to see the blue porch mat
rotting in the snow
where we left it last winter
trying to give the car
a way to get out.
Did we leave more than footprints
on this rug?

A rug is a small thing,
what you put down
for a small reason, then
it becomes something
you can't do without.
It's where people go
on their way to say good-bye.

# Kathy found Bill at the store

Midori Matsumoto

Kathy found Bill at the store.
Armed with lists
that sailed in the wake of not-browsing
propelling her forth like flagella
She told the man, "What I want is..."
The smart shopper always makes a list
To avoid impulse buying:
Dented cans in the quickie bargin bin,
Their contents might be spoiled.
Crushed boxes are full of crumbs.
Cracked bottles have sly slivers.
Impulse is my list.
There have been in my life
Cans whose edges creased my thighs.
Leaky boxes and itchy crumbs.
Fad foods that could never last.
I found you at the dinner table
Lean as a soupbone
Peppered with puns
Spinning roulette spoons for no apparent prize—
We followed.
Something hanging in the breath over my shoulder;
Not too soon, you said, then spun suddenly
me into the disjointed laughter of your bone dance.

# I watch you wobble in the glass

Midori Matsumoto

I watch you wobble in the glass
like seeing you
so many mornings
over the toaster—

& I tell myself
it really isn't you walking away
leaving me
on the other side of the window;
it's only a mirror you are walking into
& soon you will return
quicksilver & reversed.

I watch my legs
expanding & collapsing like bellows
in car bumpers
expecting any moment to see your legs
inter-weaving large & small with mine.

I walk slowly past polished granite buildings
& the clean windows of banks.

I stare into revolving glass doors until
someone thinks I am too timid to cut in,
& stops it.

So before I skim off leaves that have fallen
into the birdbath, I pause/ to wish
your face is waiting beneath.

CHUCK
KNOCK

# Flight

Joseph Garrison

At the sudden sound of helicopters,
The jays rush, like wind, through the trees,
Their wings bringing the air to pitch,
Their crowns narrowing. They go straight
For the blades, fore and aft, in consort.
Nothing gives: the plane, the jays,
Or the air. The sun shines unseasonably;
And the full blue of the sky holds,
For a moment, a day's maneuvers.

# Dying A Somewhat Less Than Graceful Death in the Public Market

M. Michael Lester

With effort and the support of his crutches the black hunchback hobbled down Brush Street south toward Palmer. He wore a dark sheeny suit, threadbare, a white shirt neatly pressed, scuffed brown wing-tipped shoes, and a narrow maroon tie. On his head was a crimson wool fez capped by a dangling tassel, and an AM/FM portable radio fixed to a thin leather strap was slung about his neck.

"Old man . . . look at the old man," said a boy to his companion on the other side of the street. "He walks two blocks and can't go no farther 'cause he has to stop to rest."

The faint late summer breeze blew the hunchback's tie over his shoulder as he pikestaffed his way down the sidewalk. Occasionally he glanced up at a passerby, or someone going past in a car — squinting his right eye (affected by a cataract giving it a grayish look), holding his right hand above his brow.

"That's because he's got to carry more than his own weight with a body that can't do the job by itself. Look . . . he even has to walk using four legs!" The two boys watched the hunchback go down the street.

The conspicuous bump of the cripple's back caused his shoulders to fall together above his chest, making it difficult for him to turn his head either one way or the other. Whenever he paused for breath or to look up he put more weight on the crutches, driving them further into his armpits, pushing his shoulders even higher. Because he was so disfigured, his dark suit coat fit badly his crooked body. The hem of the coat hung unevenly, high above his buttocks behind, and lower in front.

How was she become a widow, he thought, who was once a beauty? "I speak to you," she told me. 'In the morning . . . you'll hear me when I look up to you, you're not mean at heart. I would like it if you were to listen. Even if my voice trembles . . . in the morning perhaps. I still like it when you look at me . . . and when I talk to you and you listen.' How was she become a widow who was once a beauty?

The hunchback paused on the bridge that crossed over the Ford Freeway, looked east, toward the interchange where the Ford and Chrysler freeways converge, at the cars moving in all directions; the sunlight glinting brightly off chrome caught his eyes briefly when they met at the right angle.

A bridegroom comes from his chamber and rejoices as a young man to run a race; the circuit is from end to end . . .

He continued to peer out over the strips of road with brows contracted to prevent too much light from striking his eyes. Beyond, the interchange revealed several levels of traffic and roadway — spans of concrete and steel

intermingled in a variety of involuted curves; some gradually ascending, some descending. He looked as though he were trying to distinguish some distant object but in actuality his eyes had become slightly divergent and, lost in thought, he saw nothing.

I've been quite discouraged since you've gone as it was the case I can't remember all of the happy times we had together. Whether it was in the factory or when we were out of work and riding the trains around. I don't remember all the times we were working at the factory — it was a long time. And the times we were riding the trains to all different places across the country was a good time. Not that it makes any difference at all though . . . I was just wondering about it. Sometimes while I'm walking I think about you. I think about you, and sometimes too I think about your widow. I go for walks quite a bit, or at least I try to as these legs ain't what they once was, Cyrus. When we were living back home near the park on the old street in the purple house . . ., and many years kept it. What people knew it as. That was long before you died . . . I think it's probably better that you're dead, Cyrus, probably better for both of us. I wouldn't be able to keep up with you anyway, not in my condition. So we couldn't keep together now anyway. You're better dead I think. And they tore down the old house by the park anyway. Just like everybody else you'd be caught. Now me . . . with nothin' to do: I just walk when I can straight ahead tryin' not to look to either side. But though I try to walk in a line it seems I just keep going in circles. I don't know.

The hunchback gazed up at the sky, hazy, washed out and faded — the clouds like cotton on a background of white — and pursed his thick pink lips, tightening the muscles in his face. One o'clock. A factory horn sounded in the distance. The temperature was still rising; already it was ninety-two degrees and humid. The hunchback pushed his right hand into his pants pocket and pulled from it a white linen handkerchief to wipe the greasy sweat from his forehead. He felt uncomfortable in the heat and as he looked back to the pavement, the vision in his right eye blurred even more than was usual. His face, shallow and rotund, contorted as a wave of nausea swept over him. He spit on the sidewalk. He let his crutches fall and leaned foreward seizing hold of the railing. The radio slung about his neck swung out from his body and banged against the rail. The crimson wool fez fell off his head and lay next to his feet. He lowered his head and blinked hard, breathing deeply, to rid himself of the ill-feeling.

A moving horn blared from a Mack trailer-truck behind him to the south down Brush. Bang! to the north. The hunchback with a spasm of surprise, twisted his body around violently and saw on the corner of Brush and the service drive, back in the direction from which he had come, a delivery truck jerk ahead a couple of feet and to a halt with a squeal of tires on the pavement.

Beasts driving, he thought, and them trucks and cars sputtering foul, polluted air. He spit again, and holding fast the rail bent at the knees, straining, and gathered his crutches and fallen fez. First he put on his fez, then he managed to tuck the two crutches under his left arm. Struggling, he stood up again.

The driver of the delivery truck, a dirty blonde-haired man of about twenty-six years, sweated and wearing a soiled coversuit, a cigarette hanging from his mouth, jumped down from the cab and slammed the door. He looked at the traffic that had collected in the lane behind him, held his arms akimbo, and cocked his head in a sign of defiant exasperation. He opened the door and climbed back into the cab, took something out of the glove compartment, and as he scrambled down again, locking the doors in the process, he let his cigarette fall out of his mouth. He crushed out the butt with the toe of his work shoe. After lifting the hood he stood for a short time, hands in pockets, mumbling to a small group on the sidewalk that had assembled to see what happened. He pulled another cigarette from the package in his oversuit pocket and asked a tall black teenager with a goatee for a match. When his cigarette was lit he thanked the boy and began walking down the street in the direction of the hunchback. The hunchback watched the man come nearer. When he passed, the two exchanged expeditious glances and ignored each other. When the man had progressed a block further the hunchback continued to walk, following him, though he was not able to keep up with the younger man's pace and maintain the distance between them.

The black hunchback continued walking until he stood before a block of brown brick tenements. In the middle of the block he saw sitting on the porch of her apartment the widow, Mrs. Elsbree. But all he could see was the back of her head. It was her; he had no doubts. Nobody had hair as red or curly as she did. She was wearing a pink dress. At the step of the porch sat a big white shepherd dog which barked when he saw the approaching hunchback. This caused Mrs. Elsbree to turn around and see him. When the hunchback saw her smile, he feebly turned up the corners of his mouth and glanced toward the ground. The woman strained to stand up; the black dog tied to a leg of the chair on which she was sitting began to bark; she trudged down the porch steps. She was a fat woman. The white dog ran away when she came near. Mrs. Elsbree stood on the sidewalk in front of the apartment waiting for the hunchback with a broad smile on her face showing all her teeth.

When the hunchback came nearer she said to him:

"I saw you coming down the street while you were still some ways away. What were you thinking about?

"Psalms," he answered.

"Well Reverend," she said, "you always were one for thinking on lofty subjects."

"Yes . . . thinking on them is true enough. I don't know that I've been able to talk with anyone for a long time though about anything serious. Cyrus and I could get into many fine discussions about lots of things. We spoke about almost any subject almost any time of the day or night at all. Why, I remember . . ."

"Yes, you sure did, didn't you? You and Cyrus. You both talked together a lot. I think it's wonderful that you still think on Cyrus as much as you do — I do too. It's difficult to think about him always though, being dead now nine years, but little things all the time remind me of him . . . I should imagine he'd

been awful happy that we would still care about him and feel so close to him even now he's been dead of so many years."

As Mrs. Elsbree was speaking, the hunchback spied the man who drove the delivery truck coming back north. He was going back to the busted truck. The hunchback twitched uncomfortably.

"I know . . . but, like today," he said, leaning heavily into the crutches, "I was walking here and I can't remember . . . I can't fix his face, you know, what he looked like, in my mind. I guess I feel kind of badly about that. I feel like I'm not able to remember. I feel like I should remember. Remember the way he looked at least.

Mrs. Elsbree blinked and winked her eyes. Then she crumpled up her face and said reflectively:

"Yes . . . yes I wish sometimes that I, we, could see him or maybe talk to him just one more time. Then maybe it wouldn't seem so that he was fading from my memory. Now, I think I could describe him, his features and all, what his face looked like and that. But I believe I know exactly what you do mean, Reverend, that you can't *see* him in your mind. Then again, he never did have no pictures taken of him that I can recall. And we could never afford one of those tape recorders." She laughed and rubbed her fat hands together. "And I just can't conjure a picture of him in my mind either."

The driver of the delivery truck passed by. This time the two did not look at each other.

"How did you get here? What made you come down this way?" said Mrs. Elsbree, her eyes following the driver down the street. The hunchback saw her watching the man and when her eyes returned to him he averted his gaze and looked toward the ground.

"I thought I'd go for a walk and come this way as I haven't seen you since quite a while. It's too hot a day for me to simply sit in my room and do nothing . . . without no fan to put on or anything."

Mrs. Elsbree pulled on her lip. The vision in the hunchback's right eye became blurred again as he looked at the widow. There was a short period of silence and he looked up to the sky, squinting. Mrs. Elsbree gummed her lips.

I don't know why I thought, don't know why I thought at all. For me it's hard to walk this far, thought the hunchback, especially in times when it's hot like today. No pictures of Cyrus? . . . no, I don't remember ever seeing one. I don't remember any times a picture was ever taken either. I wonder why it is? Caught.

Mrs. Elsbree turned and began walking back up to the porch. The black dog lying there wagged its tail. The hunchback watched her.

Caught. Cyrus, you . . ., me. All caught. Even now we talk about him all the time, thought the hunchback. We never talk about her; she never speaks of herself. Never talk of me . . . or us. Never. Never mention nothing at all. "I love you so much," she had said. Said that to Cyrus too. "My desire . . . my sorrow. I need you. I want you to love me. I still like it when you look at me . . . and when I talk to you and you listen. I pray that you know I love you." The hunchback stared at the widow, but did not see her. His eyes had become divergent and his field of vision blurred.

"Lost in thought?" Mrs. Elsbree called from the porch. The hunchback saw her, and walked toward her. He struggled up the stairs. Mrs. Elsbree sat down on the unvarnished wooden chair she had been sitting in earlier. There was an identical one next to it. The dog lay on the porch floor panting.

"Yes," said the hunchback, taking care not to disturb the dog or hurt himself as he lowered his body into the empty chair. He pat the dog on the head. He placed his crutches on the floor next to him. "Yes." Mrs. Elsbree watched him. He carefully unslung the radio from about his neck and held it in his lap. He turned it on. Nothing. He shook it and held it up to his ear, smiling at Mrs. Elsbree.

"Something the matter with your radio?" she asked.

"I guess it don't work," he answered shaking it again. "I dropped it on the way over here. The strap fell apart." The dog shifted its eyes back and forth between the man and the woman. The hunchback gently set the radio down by his feet.

"Stranger . . . so where have you been? Have you been hiding or something?" asked Mrs. Elsbree. "You must've been hiding seeing as you haven't visited or paid a call more often. I don't even recall exactly when it was the last time I saw you! It must of been long ago!" she smiled at him and rubbed her hands together. The hunchback returned her smile although he did not feel like smiling. Then he looked at his feet. When he looked back up at her he noticed that she was looking past him out toward the street. He shifted his body in the chair. He wasn't shocked when he saw that the big white shepherd dog had returned to his position on the porch stoop. The woman stared directly at it, hardly blinking at all. The dog never advanced, but simply sat there with its tongue hanging out of its mouth to the side, watching the black dog tied to Mrs. Elsbree's chair. The black dog looked back at the white shepherd, and now and then, panting, it shifted its eyes and glanced at the man and woman.

"Do you remember when the old house came down? The rafters and the beams?" asked Mrs. Elsbree, still watching the white dog but placing her hand on the hunchback's arm.

"Do you mean the house by the park?"

"Yes." She looked at him.

"It was a long time ago . . . It was like an accident on the corner watching them tear down that house."

The two did not exchange words again for five minutes. Mrs. Elsbree continued to stare at the white dog. The hunchback reached deep into his pants pocket, took out his handkerchief, and again patted his forehead.

"Do you remember the stories he used to tell all the time?" asked Mrs. Elsbree.

"I remember many of the stories he used to tell," said the hunchback. He looked at her, readjusting himself in his chair. The widow looked back at him. "Why?"

"He used to talk sometimes about a man he once met when he was young, before he knew either you or me. And this man he met was kind of a pilgrim. He was German and he wore a straw hat."

"I remember it piecemeal . . . not the whole thing." The hunchback

laughed a little." Funny . . . things that happened to him. Interesting things, mostly. And he always told stories about them . . . sometimes to the point where other people would retell them: 'Hey! Did you hear what happened to Cyrus?' I don't remember this story all the way though. What were you going to say about it?"

"Well, this man who was a sort of pilgrim, wandering all around the country, from city to city, talking to people just to talk, to get to know them, not for any other reason in particular if I remember correctly — in many respects this man Cyrus spoke of sometimes reminds me of you. I really don't know why. I mean you're not German and you don't wear a straw hat . . . but you talk to many people . . . walk around a lot. Talk about many things. Like when I asked you what you were thinking about and you said Psalms. You think things. I don't know about that . . . I wonder at times what you're thinking. Just as Cyrus wondered why the man who was a pilgrim was wandering."

"And then he was runned over by the train that one time when the cinderbulls was after him," said the hunchback. "That was a short time after he left you, wasn't it?"

"I can't be certain . . ." said Mrs. Elsbree, looking at the white dog, "I mean, he told a lot of stories. I don't know. I can't keep them all separate . . . one from the other. They overlap . . . all of them. And I can't remember when things happened. He was killed sometime after he left but I wouldn't be able to say when. And if I was to say whether or not I did know or didn't know, well, then I still wouldn't know for sure whether or not I did know or I didn't know. I wouldn't know for sure whether I was telling the truth or a lie. I do recall though that he used to tell many stories. And you're right about saying that most of the stories were about things that happened to him. Most of the stories he told were like that."

She looked at the hunchback; he looked at her. The widow's eyes were wet.

"Why, I remember he used to come home to me all the time when you two were working at the factory and tell me the things that happened during the day — the foreman did this, or Charlie did this today." She paused. The hunchback looked away from her. He leaned over carefully and picked up the radio, placing it in his lap.

"This don't work no more," he said.

"You used to take it with you everywhere you went since he died, didn't you," said Mrs. Elsbree.

"Yes . . . listen to it," said the hunchback, not looking at her.

"Slung about your neck."

"When I go out for a walk. It's too hard for me to carry, having to use these crutches, so I sling it around my neck using this strap." He tugged on the strap and glanced at her quickly. The widow still had tears in her eyes. "But I carry it when I go out to walk. Not going to listen to it no more though. No more company in a radio that don't work."

"Yes, I can see where it'd be a lot easier for you to keep it around your neck. Maybe it can be fixed."

The hunchback shook his head and looked at the white dog; then he

looked at the black dog tied to the chair. The black dog wagged its tail. He looked up to the woman, whose eyes were still upon him.

"What did you used to listen to, Reverend?" she asked..

"Not any music and no dance," said the hunchback. Both he and the woman smiled.

"Would you like to have some lemonade?" asked Mrs. Elsbree, "I still have some left over from yesterday."

"It was good yesterday," said the hunchback.

The woman forced herself to her feet, and rocked into the apartment. "I'll be right back out," she said.

When she had entered the building the hunchback began rubbing the black dog's back with his foot. The temperature was ninety-three degrees. The day was coming up on three o'clock. The hunchback sweat profusely. From time to time, sighing, he pulled his handkerchief from his pants pocket and wiped the perspiration off his forehead.

I remember that Cyrus used to say it would be foolish for a man to . . . God rest his soul. He's dead now, when all's said. He's across the river. He was runned over by the train that one time when the cinderbulls was after him. I do regret, Cyrus my friend . . . the widow's dear husband, is no longer with us. Deceased. To grow old with *us*. If you were alive we'd of been able to talk still. We would have a grand time talking about things. This time and that time. The time was we used to wrap ourselves up in our Chicago and Alton coats and ride the rails when things wasn't so good. Pack ourselves up and leave carrying the passengers: active citizens, bosom chums, the light infantry: fleas, mites, ticks and lice. Like someone crazy with itching to travel, from east to west and back again, we'd ball the jack . . . and hop aboard a slowly rolling freight. Cyrus. I guess you might say you was a doughnut optimist, living hand to mouth for days on end — and happy to do it too. Happy to be seeing new things, to be out in the open, out in the country. Sometimes we'd go to sleep outdoors covered by nothing but the moon. That was nice, to sleep like that . . . unless it rained or was cold, or both! I guess we both liked it. And you never much minded that there was never very much money in the pocket. Never acted like you was better off at all than you were. Cyrus . . . never complained either. He was no pretender. "A man ought not to pretend to be rich when he ain't got a dime," he used to say. "He'll starve if'n he does." *Cyrus* never feigned to be other than a cinder grifter, a hobo I guess you might say. Just somebody who when he couldn't get a job rode around. There ain't really anybody else who knew you as good as I did, Cyrus. And there've never been a better set of chums than what we were. Remember Cyrus, remember . . . oh remember?

The hunchback took off his crimson fez; he placed it next to his feet, and the radio next to it. Mrs. Elsbree came back out to the porch carrying two glasses of lemonade. She handed one to the hunchback. "Nice an' cold," she said smiling.

"Thank you," said the hunchback.

"Reminds me of when I was a girl and made cold lemonade for all of the boys," she said. "I'm going to have to get some more lemons to have some for tomorrow."

"I'll be happy to go to the market with you to get some if you'd like to," said the hunchback.

"It can wait," said Mrs. Elsbree. She drank from her glass and smiled gently at the hunchback, who trembled, softly. "In the morning."

CHUCK KNOCK

# A Cool Day in the Sun

Phyllis Janowitz

You gently dust the skin
  from the blowfish
like a cobweb. It is left
  headless, small and white
with silver fins.

There is no end to the patterns
  that can be made on water.
Ours is an iron fretwork
  we impose upon the wavers;
when we leave it will
  still be there.

Like the water and sky
  or the cool bar of the flute
you play, leaving
  a permanent stain on the sand

Or the bird
  sitting on a rock
since yesterday.

I feel tied to the blanket
  on the beach
waiting for a different bird
  or until you get hungry
and we go inside.

If I were here alone
  I would stay forever
until my skin
  slipped off like feathers
and my bones
  bleached, and I disappeared
into the sand
  or blew over the water.
  So effortless, painless,
    natural.

# Walking through Winter

R.K. Meiners

1.

As one has somehow lived and walked
through the empty times and gray places
one must live in this cold and walk through it.
One keeps walking through this white winter
with the empty nests in the leafless branches,
bearing this cold landscape and these rocks
that once listened as one walked through them.
One counts all the holes in being,
numbers the cracks in the silent earth
that sees nothing, and speaks no language.

2.

I live as I walk in what I see.
In this white landscape I am what is seen
when the cold silence looks back at me.
The gray wind tangles the gray branches
and speaks mind and leaf to the eyes.
I watch the folds and wrinkles in time,
in cold earth, in me, where the seeds lie.
Light is growing at the heart of things
and an eye is waiting in the light,
a day's-eye, a narcissus, an iris.

Somewhere in this cold a flower grows
that will bear like a strange blossom my name.

# Mountainous Landscape with Hermit

R.K. Meiners

(on a drawing by Paul Bril)

1.

I can hardly think the way it was,
can hardly penetrate his strange brooding
over his book as he sits here
where the forms of trees and rocks
tower up in their leafy, mineral abundance,
proclaiming their own magnificence
to themselves and perhaps to God
(whose Glory they declare)
but not to the hermit.
They fill the paper
with their presence and the viewer pauses,
stunned at this plenitude.
The hermit finally
is discovered, lost in a brown wash and study,
buried at the lower left corner of the universe.
He is here, and maybe the Holy Spirit,
beside a little shelter beneath the ridge's brow
where some sparse ruins stand. An allegory
of vanished paradise? Some goat-herder's
abandoned winter shelter? Who can tell,
here where everything is filled
with the great rolling cosmos.

I can hardly think this, can scarcely dream
a place to stand among these mountains.

2.

Still, the viewer imagines this scene,
thinks himself there. With a notebook, maybe,
a pocketfull of nuts and raisins, a canteen,
two or three moral books or the old fables
he had meant to read out in the open
under the trees and clouds, motives naked

in the view of sun and sky and eternity.

Why will this hermit not leave his piety
and look around?
I think he stirs
for I am imagining this and all this quiet
is too much for me. I, sitting here—
in my glen poised above Spring Creek
while the sun sifts through the aspen leaves
and turns all the fir needles into a prismatic forest,
notebook open, horizon narrowed—
I think he stirs.

He turns from his Vulgate,
yes, and dreams of Ovid and all those erotic
limbs and tongues swarming into a tangle
of creepers and tendrils. The universe plucks
at the margins of his robe and page,
and deceitful love swims everywhere
through the outlandish mountain light.
The letters blur upon his learned page
as they blur upon mine, but only I
reach out to pick a leaf and look at it
as if it contained the secret, and we both gaze
at trees, at mountains piled on mountains,
musing on near and far and love
and the hard joys of desire
and the will to nullify distance and desire.

3.

One is here because one has seen it,
has walked back through the dream to here,
drifted up this hill to reach Cathedral Spires
or the spot below the brow of Windy Peak.
And here are pack, books, binoculars,
provisions from the world that waits below.
And here is the hermitage, and one knows he waits
supreme in his indifference to all this grandeur,
and it to him.
But how shall I perform
the task I must have thought I came to do?
The books lie untouched, notebook unmarked,
and all around the amorous universe sprawls
and sings me into it and I respond.
I pull the glasses from the pack and stare
down the path by which I came
and wonder what I know of distance
or why I care, and wonder how that path
could ever form the measure of desire.

I dream again the hermit of Paul Bril.
Now he must lay aside his book.
Now he must glance at this landscape
that he must know by now we share.
The small buildings of forsaken towns
lie down there below our feet, filled
with all the customary lives. If he looks
will he think of her who lives back there,
the one with quiet eyes, with long smooth legs,
with a few soft words that cloud our page?
Oh, she flies through our memories
like the shadow of a slender bird!

4.

A quiet summer day. The water splashes
at the bottom of the gulch. A day
like many others, but different, overlaid
by the unholy calm and concentration
of that accursed hermit I saw last night,
then dreamed again before I could awake,
and now I cannot wipe his strangeness
from the quiet day I'd planned.
What was it I came up here to find?
Not some ancient from an allegorical heaven.
No, and not the brown nude girl
who walked along the stream a moment ago
and vanished up the mountain with a smile
for me sitting by my rock and tree,
musing on the strange dreams of reality.
If she walks through his scene will he turn
to her, or to his books, or pack up all
and return to the shattered, expected world?

5.

Here we have a drawing by Paul Bril
who is among "the northern masters of
the Italian manner" and in the sixteeth century
placed a hermit in this landscape to delight the eye
and chasten the mind with anagogical reproofs.
Conventions change, and images; only fifty years
and they'd be placing at the foreground
of this very landscape the figure of a small artist,
gazing intently into the obedient world,
recording the forms of the very drawing
in which he now sits, thus teaching us
that perspective is from a place that we may
move inside another place, relocate the eye,

and make of great things small ones.
*He* will not see a hermit above his hill,
and he will not draw one. I cannot dream
that he will draw me sitting here.
Nor do I believe that a brown girl
has walked through his world as I know
she walked through the hermit's dreams,
as she walked up this glen and past this rock
where I sit with my books, papers,
and my impotent binoculars,
dreaming of near and far and distance and desire.

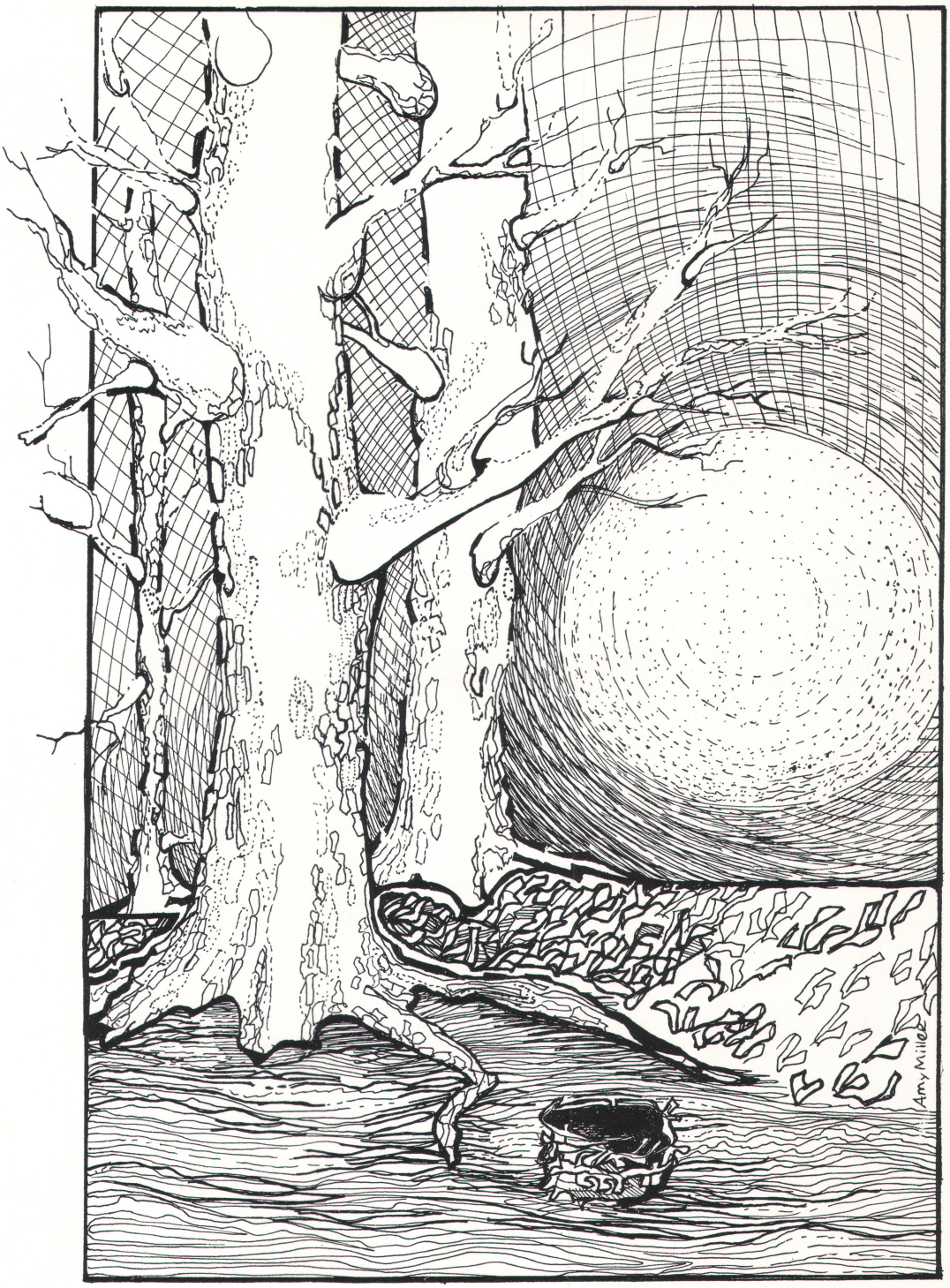
# old peter's world-and-life-view

R.D. Swets

old peter had it right  slow  gaelic whiskey
in dark bars is the proper solace
for sins  sorrows  & confessionals

he also had it right  concerned to keep
the altar gold & inviolate  the monasteries
cool  & damp  & always in prayer

old peter understood his great commission
that the gravel truck he drove was a kind
of fiery chariot  that he was a kind
of angel  bearing elijahs  rattling
like bones behind him over the highway
that the cement plant was a kind of heaven


Amy Miller

# blue raisin

Andrea Moorhead

in the wild damp clay
a bird nest
under shell the blue raisin
here a fruit
so still
under sun and under the black raining
tree.

a bird shell
the moon mirror,
green and the warm clipped
grass
a flower under
my hand
and a waiting light
green and cold
a bird shower
in the rain black
sea.

# Canticle of Joy and Ice

Andrea Moorhead

without blood or the coarse wild
flax green
willow
bends my bone,
and the frail canticle splinters
without blood
or cruel jar of unending
peace the wind hides
slow
in sleep,
and the first chill enters
snow and green
snow and the ash
to my brow
leaves
without blood or green green sound
and chasm has in bark
shoot stem
and a raw raw splinter
tied, by my feet
and earth
long
cold,
worn in the rain
and dim.

seeping
snow
and the green tender stalk
rough and rain
on the shore
pummel grit and rain
pummel and the thirst grows
dim
seeping snow
and the raspberry thorn
settles low,
and the green green shoot
on my mind

thorn and wet wild
rain.
and the rough grit hides my palm
shore on my eye
and the green snows
wait.
and the red rains
hide.

invisible one
without tatter or
shape
or the breath which
clings,
invisible
and the rain cease
and my mind grows
firm,
speech of an instant
and the clutters build resin
and the red raw limbs
cold and skin
and the wind howls low,
and my amazement
knows no green invisible
but the breath breathes
pure,
and the limb chill
cease.

red rain on my heart
and the door freeze shut,
slight of an instant and rain
crease the black
mud,
the hollow reed and my tree here
is dark and snow
falls the red
rain on my heart, and the cool
breath
one which never seen
and one which never
hears the rain snow fall,
the peace black and limp,
leaf of another
fall
and wind
lights
my
grave.

i have never an instant removed,
nor stone
on my head belittled,
but the thick tide
which my bones endure
shall shatter the grail
imprint rain
for your lips bury the grave,
and the red rain of my boneless
seal.
smolder the light
and shatter
the dew!

# The Four Aunts

Pat Mooney

daughters of the same woman
who came from germany and denied it
for false polish ancestry.

first they lived on a farm in alpena
sharing
two small beds between them
feeding cobs to the pigs
scrubbing with lye until the wood
floors were white,
their mother could whip them sharp
with a leather strap
she called johnny.

daughters of the same father
who sold the farm to pay
off gambling.

they moved into the city
finding jobs in automobile factories
leaving school before graduating
marrying as soon as they could.

daughters with hair of the same gray
with grown children
and vague polish city accents
they live in the same houses they found
after marriage,
the walls going dingy
rugs worn through to the wood.

# Martha

Pat Mooney

I am a poet waif
so you take me
in
feeding me bagels and cheese
bedding me in the attic-
room of your
big belmont house.
You ruffle my hair nervously.

You like scotch with ice
in tall coke glasses, banging
at the ice, drinking fast
but only after
four o' clock.

You fight
with your son
though you love him, you say
if only
someone like me could care for him;
you're drunk sleeping
when we make love
on the attic bed.

You like the poems
I write in your house,
kissing my cheeks,
break more ice in its tray
crying dewar's-mist;
you still love your
husband who left you.

Late into the night
you play old musicals
and sing to them.
You used to act and sing
before you married,
you could have been a star.

# Gretel Alone

Pat Mooney

Night blooms like a house about her.
Firs line the dead end
great pointed assassins.

Old women live
on the odd side of the road
peer through oat straw blinds
they are pinched and brown as old fruit.

Weeds curtain every lawn.
Every weed glows like mushrooms in garbage.
The women never sleep.

Her shadow fans into many.
She screams at ghosts.
The shadows scatter, sheets on a line.

These bird face women
have a way with ingredients.

They are witches, every one.
They control the rat trap evergreens.
Can turn women into cats
trees into rapists with a bleeding eye

they can change the composition of water
animate used vacuums
they eat flesh
they make weather in cauldrons

they watch every movement beyond the weeds
they watch as if they have no sight.
They wait and do not sleep.
They watch faithful as hell keepers
until there is the smell of rain in the air.

# Balancing

Tom Cwynar

Winter grinds deep furrows;
February ice
trees stark
clouds lying gray
persuade me to the lake edge
where bergs stack tall
against the shore.

I tend toward green water
where slick bluffs fall
in tired heaving
where a high wave
or insidious melt
could topple
my point of ice
stand
picturing an ant
struggling
against the sides
of a bucket;
the cheap thrill
of the edge.

# Sheba Waits for the New Exhibit

Janice Zerfas

in the mirror—the same still face—
thin hair flat behind the ears—
the dim blue eyes—the pale rolling cheeks—
the short nose above the set mouth—
the marble skin.

at the art gallery—dismantled
paintings shoved on others—
replacements rearranged under imagined niches—
the Calder mobile lacks wind
to test balanced circles—
locked rooms await the new exhibit.

OLIVES
MUST
Amy Miller

# I Have Never Seen My Neighbor Without an Apron On

Lee Upton

She wears blue ones that wrap around her neck and flap at her knees
to go down cellar and line up cans.
Her throat makes thick German sounds, full of bright, harsh notes
and recipes.
It's no secret her grandchildren spill from their mothers
like egg yolks, or drip like milk to the floor.
Each child's eye is a wet raisin in a sugar cake.
Each arm, a bolt of blue cloth.

# After Twenty Years

Lee Upton

I've known you twenty years and it's always the same.
I watched you carve out your head when someone needed a bowl.
I saw your face shut like a refrigerator with a child in it.
When your husband had a punctured throat
you nailed your hair to the door.
"It makes a good black wreath," you said.
When you burnt your face
and your children were afraid to look
you jumped into a shiny mouth.
You hoped they wouldn't see.
But I saw.
I saw you stirring soup inside a white shark
with a picket fence for teeth.
I found you locked in the same drawer you keep your aprons in.
I cried for you most of the night,
listening to you rustle inside my father's clock,
a pinched bird with a plastic wing.
I watched you struggling in another woman's hair,
sprayed there, stuck and comical, like a bow.
I wanted to laugh.
But still,
I could scream for you.
I could run out of my body and leave my hands.
And then, as always, you would pick them up
and make somebody a nice pair of gloves.

# driving straight through

A.J. Wright

alabama
we watched the sun
burning like a rose
in the mountains
and a woman's hand
floating palm up in a pool.
the shadow of crossed tree limbs
passed over our faces.
later the moon
cut into the night
like a golden scythe.
near the border
someone called our names
and we turned back.

# The Choice

Lynne Savitt

Her children will puncture
the soles of their feet
on the cloud debris
of last night's party

Her husband poisoned
by the perfume of conversation
she sweats
on their dream warm bed

Breakfast she watches
them drowning in cornflakes
their clothes saturated with milk
as they slip from the side
of their bowls

She cannot help them
She eats poetry pancakes
and grows fat
alone.

# Lillith Poem #4
# Lillith As Problem Solver

Lynne Savitt

Lillith, lilac lace shawl
bounding the grassy hills
in her filigree wheelchair

Propelled by her womanly strength
waving at the hyacinths
blowing kisses to the willows

Ringlets whipping the wind
Infant daisies caught in her spinning wheels
Heading for the cliff

Lillith, sneezing poems in her lace cuffs
Singing music box songs when her key is wound
Rolling over the fingers of playing children

Watching the eyebrows grow back on emaciated models
Spray painting air ferns as she whizzes by
Heading for the cliff

And when the brake sticks

she will bound over the edge

air filled hoop skirts

falling slowly

breaking

one bone

at a time

# Lillith Poem #5

Lynne Savitt

noon
Lillith doing ducks, churches, birds
shadows  masterpiece  shadows
on the headstones at the cemetery

midnight
lighting jasmine burning candles
flickering wall glows
she sways  creates magic movements

he takes the sun for a bookmark
hangs candles on his key ring
wears a vest of lightbulbs

steal the light
pocket the sun
blow out the flame

Lillith will make shadows wherever she goes

# George Washington Meets The King of Spain (on the Magellanic Clouds)

Diane Wakoski

for John Martin

John,
no one understands
that I always have my tongue in cheek,
checking out all possibilities of my own foolishness.
Silence is the media
for beauty.
I think this, walking through Barbara's beautiful carpeted rooms,
arranged by her own fingers of Lalique glass
and ordered into the serenity I search for in poetry
or music.
Heavens! Where did you think the Magellanic Clouds were, if not
in your own living room.
And surely, you know that when I wander through yr house
pausing to understand the muted amber or puzzled blue surface of
some opaque piece of glass, that I am looking
not for the King of Spain
but a glass slipper
I might slip on my tan foot
and walk elegantly out of the state of California,
wearing.
But of course
what I find is the print of the King of Spain by your swimming pool.
No, don't worry.
He isn't after your princess-like teenage daughter, whose tall
strawberry blond head is a little gold coin,
and whose hands will make bread for poets beside her mother's.
He's there, in exile, to follow me
and give me the sun in the form of a flamenco dancer, black-hatted
and tapping against my castanet lips,
with words of Peter Quince, arguments to Ramon Fernandez.
Even the clouds become shellaced and hard,
wood clacking together, little round gold suns moving in my fingers.

You wonder, in your white adobe walls, gleaming against the terra cotta roof,
all of Spain's wealth of arch and patio
curving into your books,

how I, the often silent daughter of the silent father of our country
come to your house to meet these men,
fathers, lovers, protectors, soldiers, captains,
my glass tongue like a bud vase
holding Lorca's bloody roses and the gardenias
of my own white face.
But they are what poetry is.
The exotic oranges and palms, the flamenco-dancing sun
beside the bunting of a stiff portly pearshaped president
understanding that we must each survey our own wealth
to acquire it.

And no, John, no one understands
my castanet tongue, in its cheek of fire,
clicking, laughing, clicking, laughing,
while I watch
from my window.
Waiting to see George Washington ride up on a chestnut,
to the King of Spain where he walks
in the landscape of my imagination,
and my tongue as fragmented as the rings of Saturn,
the grey rocks clicking together, as it moves,
laughing, clicking, laughing, clicking
when you say
"go on to something new."

Not understanding,
that the new
is the old
viewed
and reviewed,
viewed over and over:
George Washington rides up.
His chestnut casts a shadow. The King of Spain looks up.
He stands in gold light.
My tongue of glass melts and becomes a tongue of fire.
It is in my cheek and I am laughing,
clicking the castanets of my uncle, the flamenco dancer,
of my lover, the sun,
dancing brilliantly into my morning window
with the sun,
the fire to which I am married,
the ring of it I carry with my keys,
the ring of fire I sleep in
waiting with laughter
for the same old thing, the only thing which is new,
love,
poetry,
music,

God, they all sit in your house,
the Magellanic Clouds weaving into your rugs,
fluffing the feathers of your cockatoos,
rippling the fans of your aenemones,
keeping in control the fire of my tongue in cheek
that, yes, no one, John,
as you say,
understands.

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