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WHY ANOTHER "LITTLE MAGAZINE"?

This is the first issue of THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL, a quarterly sponsored by Beloit College. Our aim is simple but difficult. We want to get hold of the best contemporary poetry we can find, and print it.

There are countless little poetry magazines, but most of them are specialized in one way or another. **Kaleidograph** goes in for highly coventional verse; **The Lyric,** as one might expect, publishes lyrics; **Experiment** is what the name implies. The dean of them all, **Poetry,** maintains its unique position, but in recent years it has given so much space to learned essays and analysis of the political implications of poetry that its subtitle is in danger of becoming "a magazine **about** verse."

The JOURNAL hopes to provide a varied diet for the reader whose first loyalty is to good poetry, regardless of whether it conforms to the formulae of the New Criticism or not. If Ezra Pound and Robert Hillyer both submit manuscripts to us, their works will receive equally sympathetic consideration. We shall try to keep our readers abreast of the most significant developments in the world of poets and poetry. But we shall resist to the utmost the temptation to devote most of our thirty-two pages to reviews or technical essays. At least a good three-fourths of our space each issue is earmarked for poems, in all their nakedness.

To stimulate the production of poetry and to bring to light interesting poets we plan to arrange contests from time to time for particular groups of poets, such as college or high school students. Occasional issues will feature translations. As an added precaution against the individual crochets of the editors, one or two issues each year will be guest-edited by well known critics and poets, who will be free to assemble material they like and justify their predilections in a special foreword.

We are particularly happy that this first issue has been edited by May Sarton, whose poetry and novels have won her a distinguished place in contemporary American literature. The fourth of Miss Sarton's books of poetry, THE LEAVES OF THE TREE, appeared this summer, only a few months after her third novel, SHADOW OF A MAN. The poets whom she here presents include several of the most eminent American poets, as well as several interesting newcomers who appear in print of the first time.

One word more. Any "little magazine" becomes known by word of mouth. If you like the JOURNAL, please tell your poetry-reading and poetry-writing friends about it. Also, letters to the editors and short critical articles are always welcome. The best will be published. But, as we have promised, the magazine is and will remain primarily a magazine **of** verse.

Robert H. Glauber
Chad Walsh

FOREWORD

This is my first experience as an editor and I have found it a searching experience; by that I mean a self-searching experience. To be an editor presupposes a standard. What makes me decide that one poem will do and another will not? One hopes that more than certain convictions about one's own aims will be involved. But I do believe that criticism by poets, though the best we can have, is always to be taken with a grain of salt. Without being aware of it, our criticism is almost bound to be a self-defence. That is the danger. So it seems fair to warn the reader of where I myself stand.

I would like to say first that all absolute statements about poetry make me angry. I have felt for a long time that we are endangering poetry by taking sides. I happen to believe that both Frost and Eliot are great poets, or to take two other poles, that Dylan Thomas and Marianne Moore are each great poets. The house of poetry has many mansions. One must have personal preferences to be a person at all, but surely a literate person who cares for poetry should recognize if not love many kinds of poetry as having value. For an editor, catholicity of taste would seem to be an essential. For myself in my own work I have wished always a deceptive clarity rather than a deceptive obscurity, an intellectual tension great enough to seem like a straight line drawn taut, at least a temporary solution of the complexities involved. This means a constant cutting down of the exuberant imagination and has its own dangers. Guarding against them, I find I have chosen poems with, in some cases, baroque imagery, when it came to choose poems by other people.

The excitement of being an editor is the excitement of discovery. My own experience was that I knew almost at once: this is a poem I must have. Each of these

choices was a seizure of me by the poem. In several cases, they are first appearances. I am proud to publish here three poems by Carol Vonckx who is a high school student in St. Louis and not sure yet whether her final choice will be music or poetry. I felt in her a much rarer thing than her fresh way of speaking, a fresh way of looking. Another first appearance is that of Alida Carey Gulick who is a grandmother and has started writing at a time when many poets stop. She lives on the island of Martha's Vineyard and writes poems between haying and milking. Her special quality seems to me an innocent eye, and this quality of innocence, which means originality in essence, is rare when nourished at the same time by the wisdom of maturity. John Rowell is a student at Harvard University and this is also his first appearance. I did not choose his poem because I did not entirely understand it. But I found that it had chosen me and that the rhythm and sound of the poem haunted me. It is a poem full of artifice and charm. If the meaning escapes, it escapes in to one's subconscious, disturbs, makes one think.

The other poets were not discoveries. Richard Eberhart's **Selected Poems** are to be published by Chatto and Windus in London this fall and by the Oxford University Press in New York. I have long admired him, and without stint. I feel proud to be able to include him here, surely one of the glories of American poetry. He has to a superlative degree the kind of intellectual tension which I admire, and it is always grounded in deep feeling. Eberhart, like Wallace Stevens, is a business man by day and a poet by night. John Holmes should need no introduction. His simplicities are full of subtlety; his honesty is complex; his poetry has the great virtue of appealing equally to what Virginia Woolf calls the common reader, and to his fellow poets. Marie Welch lives in California. She writes little but her books have each been in a pure event. Each poem has the stamp of a gold coin, and I am happy to hear that a new collection is on the way. John Ciardi lives in Medford, Massachusetts, teaches at Harvard and has launched

this last year his very successful Twayne Library of Modern Poets. As an editor and as a poet he has, it seems to me, a rich Renaissance view, a wonderful freshness and power of images which pours its Italian quality into the American stream. Twayne will publish J. R. Squire's first book, **Where the Compass Spins,** this fall. Mr. Squires teaches at Harvard. James Boothe has had poems in **Harper's Magazine,** and is a Texan at present living in New York. I do not need to introduce the readers of THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL to Chad Walsh, one of its founders. I am delighted as guest editor to have the chance to print one of his poems. Always Chad Walsh's poetry combines a metaphysical wit with a true lyric gift. I have included one poem of my own because I felt that it says better than I can do in prose what my belief about the writing of poetry is. The reader can thus take into account my private prejudices.

In making this list of contributors and in thinking about them, one by one, I am again struck by what poetry is and can give, by the variety of the response it calls out, by the poles of personality and technique it may include. But one thing all these poets and poems did have for me, the power to seize my imagination and take me into themselves. It has been an enlarging experience.

May Sarton

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WAR AND POETRY

To make a poem cased as honey in a comb,
For it seems pure to be so held.
And of our vocal thrusts, our dispersed days
How to draw all together to a purity,
A rarity? The war was rot of imagery
And bought us off with mammoth extravagance,
That big bad dream of bad small boys.

The poem should be the things we lost, the heart
Of heavenly integers, shells on the sea shore,
Red leaf of Autumn, red bud of Spring,
Soft touch of flesh, nude touch of dream,
Imprisonment of the escaped personages
Valued as historic messengers, elected
Testaments: the poem should atone.

No eclectic dialect, no feverish impishness
Should wrest from flesh nor take from us
The powerful bent; no histrionic extravagance
Conceal the central impetus.
All should be calm, massive, and perpend
The welfare of the inner ecstasy,
Inviolable voice of universal form.

Richard Eberhart

THAT FINAL MEETING

It is what you see on a death-bed
That you cannot ever understand.
The strangeness of the cumulation,
Against which nothing can be said.

It is this universal silence
And the cold serenity of mind
After the vast abuse of life
That folds us all in mystery.

It is not what you can do or say,
Not any tenderness, or memory,
But only the brute recognition,
The bareness, the sting.

Richard Eberhart

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GARDEN

How various, fantastical the flowers are,
Shaded by arbors waving heavy with the birds!
The twisted lily flaring from a knotted base;
Forests of fleshy, brittle, angular, or sprightly stems;
The striped or freckled lilies with their airy stamens;
The pineapples of husks, then leaves, then stalks
That bear their huge, thick, hollow blooms.
Among you lies the wiggling water, palely in the granite
    pool;
The swishing of a waterfall drops through lichened stones;
The smell of moss and dust is breathed
From moist and mottled flower-pots;
The sun and shadow palpitates across the flag;
And a boy follows a red-haired girl between the trees.

Carol Vonckx

ADAMANT

I mock the stress and tension of the toiling air
That cracks as crystal with the cold. I bear
Sealed in my vaulted skull a reservoir
Of humours and convulsions violent more
(As spirit always is than flesh) than those
Whose wrestlings antler-locked stern winter knows.

That silent, jarring roof of clouds may give
And let a stream of storm or sun burst through
My storms would make the sky collapse; I live
Through phlegm and choler's flow, wormwood and rue.

Buttressed and beamed my flesh, and ribbed with stone.
The world's weather beats in vain my six-foot walls;
But by this knotted brow may some be known
Of wailing winds that wind and spectered halls.

Carol Vonckx

10

LOVE POEM

He slid the sheet of paper onto the tilted desk.
One whisper and it stretched immobile, flat, against the wood.
As if terrific pressure from the air,
Welding the two elements, had glued it there.
I gasped, and in my chest
I felt the paper-edge of pain;
My eyeballs ached as from a blow
To see such white untouchable virginity.

He should have lowered his eyes before he came so near,
And yet he felt my reverence too;
His elbow shoved the encroaching rules, pencils, and the splayed compass back,
And with thumbnails alone he squared the paper with the board.

11

And then I heard the clank of tools and winced,
But when my eyes had shut and opened again
I saw that he with imperious fist had flung
A nest of lines upon the page.
"I asume you know," he said as he looked up,
(Nonchalant, as is the way of men,

Slight panting in his throat only betraying him)
"That these lines stop not where they seem,
Or at this paper's edge, but each continues on
Its own direction to infinity."
Closer then, but touching not as yet, I looked
Down through the lovely lacerations—for the lines had shattered
Two dimensions into three—and saw
The paper now transfixed with crisp unbending arrows shot
Criss-cross into each one's respective Infinite,
A knot of meanings, numberless, yet separate each,
The tangled kite-strings of the stars.

And then I realized that God is good,
That things conceal delight beyond delight
With doors of awe between, for as the paper is,
And as the mathematician with his tools,
So the two sexes are.

Carol Vonckx

12

THE CHANGE

The electric clock hums all night
And shines late.
The wrist-watch and the alarm-clock
Unwind and wait.

The hale boy in the house outgrows
His bones. A rock
Whiles time away in the drying sun.
Southward a hawk

Among hawks in the annual flight fails.
The world creaks
This November night on a dry pole
Till time breaks.

But I have let the clocks run down.
I forget time. Space
Is the immeasurable change
In a changing face.

John Holmes

A TASTE FOR REVENGE

It began with the yellow terry-cloth trousers
They took, not kept; to bury, not steal. A dream.
It was a northeast summer shore, the sand gray.
Rage maddened me in my sleep. I'll destroy you,
You bastards, I'll tear you to pieces, furniture,
Window-glass, your children's toys, and then you.
What have I done to you? Give me my clothes.
They were lost, I found them. Give them back to me.
I whimpered in early morning sleep, and woke,
And lay miserable in my bed a long time alone,
Wondering, my murderous hate quieted a little.
Who is it I want to kill? I want to kill someone.
Who for no reason robs me? Somebody does.
Not the two beach-friends, our cottages and wives
At our backs. I never saw these till this dream.
When I was wide awake, I thought with pleasure
Of the power in me dredged up out of the dark
To wreck. It drove me for days to do good work.

John Holmes

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PAST UNDERSTANDING

The peace we think possible will come
After the effort for it is over,
But the effort for it will never end.
We had this peace, we think we had it,
Before we began to make the effort.
But the only peace possible we know is
Now. Peace is the effort we make now,
The peace of knowing we make it now.

John Holmes

CIRCUS ACROBAT LEAPS 65 FEET TO CANVAS CHAIR

—Boston Globe

With one great grain of salt
Rex Maximus atop his pole
    (the lilac pole, the always spring)
Rex Maximus atop his pole
    (ripe the petals of always spring)
Let loose the lilac cloak. The roll!
The roll the toll the minstrel pole!
        pose there
        poise where
        take him if you dare you dare
        poise there
        pose where
        take him if you care you care

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With one great grain of fault
A pistil shot in sommersault.

over and down down
over and down
down down through tubes
through lumping and round flat cubes
past nothings oh millions of nothing
through tubes with nothing for stuffing
past faces not faces at all
down down in an emptiness fall
down to a terrible clown
no laughter still laughing the clown
down down in a still born gyre
down to a canvas desire

sudden spank
splintering plank

He missed he missed he missed the chair!
(take him take him if you care)
Cloak him in a lilac shred,
(dust the platform where he bled)
Take him take him anywhere
But only get him out of there!

With one great grain of salt
Maximus lost it by default.

John Rowell

CORPUS

This, waking, knows
The sleep that grows.
The body dies as the mind does, not as the heart;
Not young, nor instantly, by nature. Feeling
Each exit out by millimeters, part
By piece it goes.

What will recalls
Of body's walls
Remained unchanged in passing violent ways
Or slow ones, crumbling by the minute, building
By the century of special days.
It leaps, it falls.

It flies. And then
It is, has been,
And will be, having fallen, all its own
And ours—the god, the green bog devil merged
At parting, yet, at meeting, each alone,
Quite real again.

James Ross Boothe

LATE APPLE

Her lighted window ripens high
In the spotty leaves of an autumn sky
At greying of afternoon and tree,
Most yellow time of all for me,
For them—before the winds begin—
The hanging window and the girl therein.

James Ross Boothe

THE COW

A greensweet breathing
Wakes me from my noon nap
In the high grass.
Her head swings in above eye level
Weaving through the parade of grasses
Like a Chinese New Year dragon.

You see a new cow this way:
A sod's eye view of a munching dinosaur
Peeling the grass from time,
All sweetslobber and greenfleck
At the going going going
Of her machine jaws.

She sees me now
And roundabout as a steamshovel's boom
Her neck swings its bucket
To the upper air of a question.

But she finds no answer,
Or is used to me and doesn't care,
Or does but forgets,
And back swings the boom
Into the sagebottoms of grass,
And here we are eye to eye
With a single daisy snarled between us
In the stem-tangle

Of sweetdrooling no-time
Going going going
In her machine.

Into the glazed eye
Of the munching cow
Leans the daisy
In a foreground of the hills.

John Ciardi

ELEGY DEFERRED
for F. O. M.

Our friend is gone to death by his own key
In that too-simple door. So desperately
He slammed it shut, our walls and waking
Tremble, our dreams distrust us, our meetings
Bring us only to questions of one another:
"Is this man desperate too? Does his smile shudder?"

How shall these memories be one memory:
The gentlest of us all in sweet reticence
Measuring goodnight in the hotel elevator
To stand, a gesture later, on the surreal ledge
Against distorted faces of midnight, lean and leap
Into the rant and whistle of what voices?

Our gentlest friend escaped from his gentleness
Into our doubt. And because we could not pray,
And because he confused our memory of his memory
And troubled our memory of one another,

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I have paced three nights away to the hope or horror
Of understanding the violence of the gentle.
Is there a final meeting of understanding?

How shall we recognize our friend in his going?
Whose act was this? What is it we should have said
And did not say? Have done, and did not do?
"Friend, friend," I think to cry, "forgive our lives
That would not see the whirlpool in your shadow."

But naked from her bath my wife comes shining
Whirlpools of light into my shadow-walk
And "Wrong! Wrong!" I cry, "I will not be forgiven!"
Poor friend, poor gentlest friend, poor fallen friend,
This error is all yours. I will not need
To ask again. We will not meet again.

This is a ghost I will not take to bed:
Lovers need no forgiveness from the dead.

John Ciardi

THE BLACK PHOENIX

In darkness of ravines
From mould and rich dying
The toadstool gleans
His tissue and, rising,
Stands in shell-colors like a sea-miracle.

No honest green betrays
The leisure of the monotrope;
Yet idly sucking at the pap
Of hideous decay
He genders honest seeds in deathly follicles.

Regard: Even where death slackens
His weary mechanics,
A sardonic vitality quickens.
This is the black phoenix
Which nests in shadow and rises in the oracle.

J. R. Squires

FROM THE STEM-HEAD

From the stem-head of this fragile cup
Yellow stars are rising without cease.
Forming and swarming—brisk bees eddying up
To the sun—from out transparent matrices.
But as wax candles crowned with light decrease
Through waxing hours and fire-drained tendrils pass
To nothingness, so will this delicate piece
Dwindling shiver into a dusty mass.
The wine of flame's what matters; loss of glass
Wick or wax column, not valid for despair.
Praise then the light, the delectable hippocras—
Let goblets shatter, candles ascend like prayer—
There will be fairer substances to wall
The golden ferment: readiness is all.

Alida Carey Gulick

CAMERA OBSCURA

I am an eye dilating in the dusk;
Filled with reflections.
A mirror for clouds, for passing wings.
A lens holding the Image
As a leaf-top holds the sky.

Alida Carey Gulick

ALL A GREEN WILLOW

All a green willow is my garland. Deep
Its clever roots go down to their secret end.
Down to the everlasting, delectable source
That flows unseen,—the eternal watercourse,
Life within life, living lapped in sleep.
Above, the branches bow like rubber, sweep
As delicate antennae. In the force
Of the gale the lissom lingering tubes retrorse,
Relax before they leap leap leap
Flamboyant! Happy willow, which can bend
With docile patience in the hurricane,
And with sigh-soft resilience transcend
In weakness, springing fountain-free again.

Alida Carey Gulick

SO MANY MIDDLE-AGED PEOPLE

So many middle-aged people twitter and cheep,
Women and men cackling around and about
Like disheveled fowls astir.
Again and again, their mouths forever mincing, they cluck out
Sound, while in pathetic attitudes they keep
Their claws waving in wool, leather or fur.

Laden with gossip they lurch or walk
Like boat wrecks listing and pitching,
Their throats creaking arasp,
Their poking necks on shoulders sagging and hitching,
While continually leaking talk,
They sigh with heaving gasp.

Let the young speak if any must!
Let **them** devulge, inform, let **them** confide,
Assert, reveal great matter;
Grandly indulge their pride - - -
That blue-steel joy, a lust
Like any other - - - with ego chatter.

But those who have traveled a long way,
And have stooped waiting at many cues and corners,
Bowed to the ground with bargains and consignments,
Who have drooped in mourning and been the companions of mourners,
Now nearing the gates should have little to say,
For experience cannot be told in randoms of sound.

Alida Carey Gulick

26

IN A PIG'S EYE

(Those magnified models of the eye-ball found in optician's offices are often copied from the eye-ball of the pig, which is exactly like that of the human.)

There is the eyeball, innocent and alone,
Surgically living, sculpturally not quite dead;
The means of sight, the model of my own,
My open eye, taken from a pig's head.

There is the eye I see with, but the where
I see with it does so arise and shine,
Darken and fall, it does not well compare
With the more settled vision of the swine.

Whatever may enlighten a pig's eye
The head behind the eye is not like men's—
Who once observing small lights in the sky
Distrusted their small sight, and made a lens.

But is it not all daylight and delight,
Pig's vision, reaching only just so far?
Have we not come by an excess of sight
Through wonders to the terrors that they are?

Yet could I use another lens, I would:
Attain the field of vision of the stye;
See through the pig whether for ill or good
I do not share his blind faith in the naked eye.

Marie de L. Welch

UNTIL SUNDOWN

The head was severed with one chop of the blade
And the snake continued onward, lithe and sure,
Not seeming wounded, not even dismayed.

I know the snake is dead.
Here are the facts of death: the dampened blade,
The little scaly pebble of the head.

And there the body continues unbroken, unslowed,
Arrow and ripple towards the weedy meadow,
Away from the somewhat dangerous bare road.

This is the end. I know this is the end.
But snake continues, by a nerve too dull
To notice death, or too fierce to attend.

Marie de L. Welch

TOADS GO INSANE

In daylight if the toad should doze
Green-bottle flies lay eggs within its nose.

The reptile breathes them to his brain,
The maggots hatch, and he becomes insane.

They eat direction's nerve first from his mind;
He gropes and lurches, going blind

As next they eat the nerve that kept his eyes.
It is their duty. They are ordained flies.

They will be flies and will be beautiful,
Fibre of blood and facet of a jewel.

A wakeful toad sees, hungers, springs,
Snaps shut the perfect circle on their wings.

The painter-etcher Daragnes
Loves toads, the line, the mass, the rays.

He rages at the maggot gem
That deals unconsciously with them.

Daragnes walks the country roads
On the alert for stricken toads.

For he has methods to and will
Outwit the fly, curetting the nostril.

Precious indelicate business, that demands
The landscape eyesight, laboratory hands

And sheer aesthetic sentiment to combine,
Resolute against absolute design.

Marie de L. Welch

Author's Note: See Jean Rostand, **Toads and Toad Life** (Chapter on "Enemies and Parasites")

EPITHALAMIUM FOR BOB AND JACKIE

As the world quietly vaporized in a mist of white flowers
And organ music, you were atomized with it.
When its component parts reassembled in the valid
pattern,
The pronouns of your egos swirled like atoms
And **we** recessionally was construed with a singular verb.

Stand on the mountain peak and trace the thin path
Twisting through the geometry of English 201
Past dangerous April nights and cliffs of music
And sands of separation. See the detours
At every turning, the lost paths you did not take.

Yours was the freedom to veto predestination,
To tangent off to the nowhere whose name is hell.
But in free necessity you walked by faith in the mystery,
The world is made new by the might of the mystery,
And the mystery and you forever are one.

Chad Walsh

THE STONE RESITS

The stone resists: the chisel does destroy.
But out of deprivation the grave image
Slowly emerges, and the sculptor's joy
Is made out of a self-denying rage—
Cut down and cast away, break to the core.
Whatever easy triumph falls in chips
And lies dispersed in waste upon the floor
He gladly yields for the sake of those lips,
That savage throat that opens the whole chest,
Tension so great between him and the stone
It seems he carries vengeance in his wrist.
Now take the chisel and make for the bone,
Difficult love, you are the sculptor here,
The image you must wrest, great and severe.

May Sarton