

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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THE GUEST EDITOR POLICY

For the second time in its relatively short existence, the **Journal** has a Guest Editor. This time it is John Holmes, the author of **The Double Root**, **Address to the Living**, and most recently, **The Symbols**. Mr. Holmes is associate professor of English at Tufts College, where he teaches twentieth century poetry and advanced writing. He directs the Tufts Writers Workshop and is vice-president of the New England Poetry Club and regional vice-president for New England of the Poetry Society of America.

The duty of a Guest Editor is to select the contents of an entire issue. The current number, therefore, is a reflection of the taste of one of America's leading poets. We feel that the Guest Editor policy serves an important three-fold purpose.

In the first place, it allows for an occasional and vitalizing shift in the editorial outlook of the magazine. Though the often-stated policy of the **Journal** is to favor no particular school or technique of poetry, to publish the best available in all fields, a certain unity — a monotony if you will — is bound to arise from the unavoidable prejudices of the regular editors. No matter how hard we strive for objectivity, personal preferences are bound to color our judgments. The Guest Editor relieves this situation at least temporarily.

In the second place, it enables the magazine to tap a source of poetry not often available for inclusion in its pages—the college classroom and writing seminar. Both

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the current Guest Editor and the previous one (May Sarton, now an Associate Editor) teach and were able to include the work of some of their most promising students in their selections. Many of these young people, while not finished poets by any means, still deserve the encouragement of publication. Their presence here and we hope, in future issues is an important service of the Guest Editor.

But perhaps more important than either of these, however, is the third aspect of this policy: the fact that it is designed as a safeguard against stagnation. It is woefully easy for a little magazine to fall into the comfortable rut of middle-of-the-road modernism. The editors come to know their subscribers. Consciously or not, they strive to please them so the magazine can stay alive. It's a human enough gesture, but none the less dangerous. Every precaution must be taken to guard against it. When editors stagnate, their magazines do. When the magazines retrench, all of poetry suffers.

The **Journal** strives to cast as wide a net as possible. This is a good policy, we feel, but it can backfire. Catholicity can become characterlessness. The individual point of view of a Guest Editor, even for only an occasional issue, tends to reshape and resharpen the point of view of the entire magazine. For this reason we shall try to select our future Guest Editors from as widely varied aesthetic backgrounds as possible. The transfusion of new blood must be a continuing process. If it is not, the publication will soon become moribund.

R. H. G.

NOTICE: "A Man's Work" is from a forthcoming collection of poems by Archibald MacLeish to be published by Houghton Mifflin Co.

ARS POETICA

To see, to say "I have seen"—that is not yet
to be believed. To see, to make visible
and to say no more than "see"—that
is the eye fathomlessly itself and free
where freedom is a skill and his belief
what everyman must wear like his own flesh.

Here is the moon through scuds: a mouth of light
wiped by the wind, soiled in the motion of wiping.
Is the wind a dirty hand on such a night?
The wind moves west from the tide drawing
the backs of a thousand hands across the sun
before it draws the backs of a thousand more.

To feel, to say "I have felt"—that is to be
fathomlessly the wind across the moon
by its own rule, and not to be believed
or disbelieved, but simply come upon
as, opening in the thousand-handed light,
the eye—shaped like its tears, shaped like its shining—
sways like the spore of a mould on its long nerve.

John Ciardi

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THE PRIVATE FACE IS SCREAMING

(at any writer's conference)

Providing the expected stylized answers
And gladly running daily routine races,
So dazzling, so exposed, our public faces
Wear masks extreme as those of Chinese dancers.
The mask of poetry: heroic attitude—
And under it a child, uncertain, rude;
The mask of dogma: holy certitude—
And under it the quickened naked doubt.
Behind our masks we play the questions out.
We suffer childish rages, sweat and weep,
And hate ourselves before we go to sleep.

Look at these public faces, gentle eyes,
And turn away before such crude disguise.
Oh, we would shut our eyes too if we could
And run away, though masked, to private places.
For all we wish now is to ask a pardon
For all the public words and public graces
And on our knees to weed a private garden.

May Sarton

FUGUE

Behind the granite church
the sky has taken on
the quality of stone,
its weight, its triple tone
from grey to purple hue;
the pigeons dip and wheel,
purple, slate-grey, and blue.

Purple, slate-blue, and grey,
the shadows blend and shift,
the shadows load and darken
the late December day—
darken and fade and lift,
resume and fade—a chord
that swells and dies away,

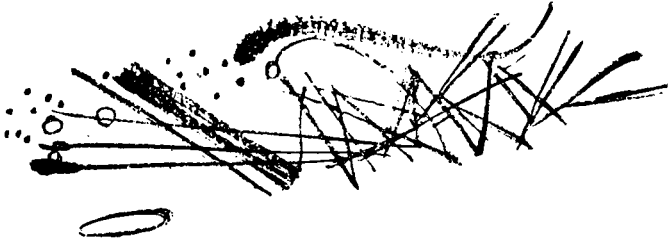
that dies away and swells,
against whose dominant
the birds in spiral flight
go up across the stone,
up like the sound of bells,
then, like the overtones,
drift downward past the stone.

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Pigeons and cloud and church
resolve their medley toward
both counterpoint and chord—
the sullen troubled slow
clouds, moved against their will,
the church, a silent **No**
to motion, and the birds'
nervous arpeggio.

Perceive, O innocent,
here in this triad plain
(dead calm, and flying storm,
and motion grave and slow)
the ancient argument
of bone and blood and brain,
whose tones, tho they remain
antiphonal, afford
both counterpoint and chord.

Constance Carrier



FOR A NATURALIST DEAD AT SEA

We'll not deplore you, though we know what's gone
 The sea in no laborious swell can haul
 Back on our beaches; such a freight as yours
 Will never deck our tideline. Out of love
 You gathered learning, and your human kin
 If loved no more than conches, than the race
 Of crayfish or the childish porpoises,
 Were yet well loved by you. We mourn to hear
 Of bridegrooms gathered nightward by the gales,
 Of boon companions chug-a-lugging brine,
 Lost to the red interior, the benign
 Circle of beer-lit faces. You, our friend,
 Were still the friend of all that crept or swam:
 We cannot think you lonely where you end.

Why should we call you shoreward? You will speak
 With the drowned captain drifting by the shoal
 On which his ship was broken; you will hear
 The lonely scuffle of the hermit crab
 Seeking an empty tenement. The trail
 Of nets and anchors off the human coast
 Will not detain you, nor the squeak of rudders
 Far overhead. Oh, you will loaf and drowse
 By fans of seaweed nodding in the stir
 Of ocean currents. You will drink the cream
 Of the great wetnurse whale, and hear from her
 The lullabies that make leviathan dream.

Adrienne Rich

THE MOTHER

Bowed down she turned but, halfway up the stairs,
Broke over—fingers, gray head, on the banister.
She cried out: "Everyone I met today
Had someone to take care of them but me.
Everyone wishing me a Merry Christmas,
Then I come home to this dark and empty house.
Aren't you two children grown enough by now
To know what it's been to bring you up alone,
Earn every cent it took? And you don't give
A damn to be with me on Christmas Eve."
And we stood frightened there, seeing her cry
For the first time; deserted, shamed to be
Shamed by having not known what we did,
And seared by shame and pity then we cried
For the first time since we were children, and
She hurried down to us and put her hands
On both our shoulders and said "Oh, my dear boys!
What did I do wrong to hurt you so!"

Winfield Townley Scott

SIMPLES OF THE MOON

I

Who defames walks in Bronx Park?
Spiked railings and the closure
of stone walls, white, crum-
bling like an old skull,
cannot long suppress the will

of a seed. Lightnings
never forget their lineage
as grass goes, most Mardi Gras,
through the dullest dump. As you,
Albert Ryder, slipping out

(at least the caul of the wide-
eyed moon between you and the scar
called city a glacier craved,
its rifts the signs once sighed,
blue Mondays caught as a woman

bent to her feverish child;
the torment in its cry turned
all to stone. Still you listened
among mortalities: murmurings
of moonlit bodies, thighed

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II

for thrashing not a little
of love's wheat. The field went
on as under stone the toad
that lived some thousand years.
The giant eye, looking out,

twy-vision in itself,
you heard abysmal music, warm,
massive: ballad's offspring,
terrible in their joy. For you,
at last, chance seemed

choice; that season
round the ballad like something
sung and something danced,
a climate only lovers chance,
proceeds moonlit-seemly) as you,

Albert Ryder, slipping out now
between newspapers, a dried cod-
head, a bread, partly decomposed
mice snug in their traps,
a lopsided pot simmering all day.

III

These you, loving, lived by
are apt as any inchworm's perch
to revolve in the air;
so the windows in your workshop,
shaggy-browed two casements
that commanded an old garden
engaged by great green-and-moon-

laden trees, constantly shadowing
 you. There you waited till things
 entered, the wind, the wind,

the wind, that you could see
 as someone came to see you.
 Demeanors of the mind they were,
 less than the faun scaring
 the graces, unseen wanderings

like faun and flavor
 of a violin, yet instinct
 with a valor, innocent of failure,
 taking any air as able to endure
 a passion equal to all hope,

IV

as a vacant lot suffices
 the moon, unfolding a scene,
 leaves and simples culled from
 favorite nooks; crows, alight
 on wilted evergreen, act

Black Mass, the devil's flock,
 paper and sticks in huddled fire
 flaring liquid eyes, mouths
 loose and dominions of the dark,
 as you, wind-mounted, mass

princely countries coming
 in, spices, forgotten portions.
 The rankness of the earth springs
 fresh. The fountain in the park,
 not long remarking wall-eyed

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faces, builds the edifice
of song: moon-limned, the grain
as of girls throngs the wood.
In this ground and in this seed
who shall tell the bones,

V

the stirring scenes and deeds,
still restless, packed.
Have we not thought our ears
would break with the cries
unfathomed in the blood?

There ballad's lunar broad
dance out for you, ever
a native in the Bronx or West
15th St., the true ways of man.
Yet in the nebulous cold fire,

the moon no golden mean,
only a thin step, crafty stip-
pling moonlight, between you
and the world, what figures
tread that spectral grass;

what lightnings coil
behind your mist as ships are
launched from some dim shore?
What happens to your visions
before the earth-set sun?

T. Weiss