

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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VEIL OF PERFUME

His black dog asleep by the emery wheel
my ninety-year-old grandfather sits
sectioning an orange, juice trickling
into his stubborn goatee as he eats

saying "Schmecht's gut," his straw-hatted
sons at lunch (like a Breugel) before
the broad red door slid back that reveals
chicken feed spilled on a dirt floor.

Out of the barn's blue depths a leghorn
crosses the dazzling gravel, idiotically,
red comb awobble pecking at rocks;
the sons doze under the umbrella tree.

My grandfather gets off the old Buick's fender;
the dog shakes himself licking my grandfather's
affectionately freckled hand. They go to look—
walking the elliptic ditches of the orchard

at God's work, specking the leaves here with aphus,
stripping this branch bare, and there
hanging a whole tree with a veil of perfume
and bees and oranges, in the certain air.

Harold Witt

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TRULY WE CAN NOT LOVE STRONG ENOUGH

Truly we can not love strong enough my dear
To thwart the heavens. O while I hold you
In my best embrace and taste your sweet
Delight, while I am swimming in the flood
Of love with you more hot and close
On me than my own heart, while we kiss
And mingle and are a single laugh,
A pair of eyes, one tongue within
Our mouth! No, you are the blood that thrills
My veins, my food, my drink . . . while you are this
My dear I wish you more. I wish us locked
Together by birth, a strip of flesh always between,
And oh, I'd take my nourishment from you;
Breathe your air, drink of your blood,
Step not one step from you for love, my love,
Flies. It might wing away at some
Insolence of fortune, by a dream coming
In the night between us, a word I said
You heard and killed me for! Yes the earth
Might split and lose us; the moon, the heavy sun
Could dare to vanish and leave no light
To love you by. Who knows what may happen to lovers!
Then love me dear beyond all forgetting,
Above your strength and mine, in and out
Of season. Love me when I love you not,
For oh, I mad might one day be and need
Your kiss to claim me; love me better
Than yesterday and I must love you all tomorrows.

Jack Pustilnik

THE EYE WHICH TURNS

When every curly eye
 makes introspection peace,
 turning in to cry for optic mercy;
 then the blind face
 seeks light and bliss
 from the heat of any sun
 or the sympathy of the gun.

Inside the socket
 of the withdrawn skull, the privy pate,
 are all the withered corpses (turned and wrecked
 by a heresy of taste)
 of the common race;
 and the communion of the dumb
 shrivels towards the world to come.

The eye which turns
 away from the ecstasy of the known,
 away from the glory, miracle of the vulgar,
 exalts the brain—
 O but rots the bone
 of the lovely sculptured head
 which burns white flame to light the dead.

The blind face
 hesitates before the sounds
 and odours of the blank new space;
 the vision of the blind
 is viciously kind.
 The eyes which turn

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are not the eyes which teach, which burn.

Burn, burn,
eyes who, tall and straight, see light
among the fortunes of the flesh which thirsts
because the height
of Will is yet such spite,
weeping because the nerve's elation
cannot trill deep enough high Incarnation.

See . . . there,
instead of the sun there is the light,
instead of the very is the always mere.
Eyes muster right
only in numbers infinite;
the communion of eyes exults the bone
where Sight himself, our sight, sees and is known,

Albert Paris Leary

ANNALS

This was the year of the blackbird.
That was the year of the swallow.
Time is a bird on the wing.
Today is an owl in a hollow.

Tomorrow will be for a robin.
Yesterday's only a lark.
But the evenings of Spring are to me
Three nightingales singing at dark.

Maxine K. Hamburg

TALL WITH WORD PROPS

I was failure
in a shiny suit

I was borrow
till the next borrowing day

I was sorrow
in sad and nauseous prose
until I bloomed into you.

You were cautery
to my wound

healer with a golden tongue
that lied like hell
into my over-ripe ear.

Then I was tall
with word props—

apple-cheeked with promise
tip-toeing rungs
that leaned up.

But the face of midnight
bland as milk
stared the facts to life

cold-eyed me toward the wall
to wail and thump pale fists

for a lovely garden
I chanced to see—

for a lovely house
without a key.

Dorothy Dalton

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ROCK OF AGES

1. The church leans on its mortared crutches,
Old Sphinx-head high against the clouds of light,
Inspired with spirits of time
Against the moving timelessness,
Brimmed with music

Where the choir crawls onward toward the apse,
Ancient serpent sweet behind the tree;
And every man and woman
Fills the nave with breathlessness
Between black notes

To mortify the stony flesh;
While underneath the starched and billowed cloth
Stalks naked bony man;
Fat or bonny blessedness,
Crisp or matted,

All scan the altar's high eventual
Bliss of death, where we lay small change of life,
A reasonable sacrifice,
Invested mites of righteousness
For the last great Change.

Sunlight through glass, blue and russet,
Smokes on skin and granite near the Feast;
In pews above the crypt
All settle into hopefulness
As rites begin.

2. And cease. Faithless seas. Sad Sophocles.
"A was a merrie man." "His eyes were kind."

Old wives engrossed in dim embroideries.

Beneath the beating waters of the mind,
 Beneath shrewd sermons in stone churches,
 Earth's naked basalt crust compels
 Spindrifting dreams. As ritual scratches
 Surface, pure attendance fails
 And falls toward the vast sea-lip that catches
 The last washed mites of shattered ribs and shells.

3. And finds the winds

Riding the dunes,
 Fierce under white or blue burnoose,
 Dun sand deserted centuries since by sea
 Graved only by a breath
 Older than Eve's labored sighing,
 Galling and soothing sand in the last long gale.

The Sphinx recumbent in the midst
 Frowns at the sun
 From whose hot rib he was clawed.
 Hardened years in igneous pools,
 Sawn by bronze saws set with jewels,
 Cut with chisels,
 The wind-pocked noseless visage blurs
 Above the altar just against the chest
 Which knew the same approach
 (Between the paws) of awful hope.

Religion is erotic;
 The asp feeds at the breast
 Each skull-rock holds our private temples,
 The chancels and groined vaultings of the mind;

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Life, sacred and obscene, coheres
Above the death of love and love of death,
Some-middle-where beneath
That timelessness which moves the clouds to tears.

Sheridan Baker

A PRAYER FOR PRAYER

This bone of honesty wedged in my throat
Bars my prayer passage so that I can neither
Cough up the bone nor swallow down the words.
How shall I take my heart into my mouth
When the two cramp each other? Deepen and soften
Alike my clanging clapper of a tongue
To the precise proportion of my meaning?
For if I took the truth upon my lips,
Its nitric would devour them. If I learned
The way to form the labials of silence,
The teeth of thought would gnaw them into pulp.
Christ, from the pincers, speech and dumbness, never
Absolve me till I am dissolved, but dangle
Me and my word over the flame and fuse us,
A lesser word-made-flesh enunciated
Clean to the bitter syllable of blood.

Vassar Miller

CHORALE WITHOUT CHOIR

When the excommunicated communicate
 In their gardens, they often mumble in glee
 Beneath their jargon's jumble of hate
 and burdensome levity.

We are imprisoned! They state,
 Adding crumbling curses to shod
 Those sentences addressed to Fate
 To prove their belief in some God.

We are wild outcasts who wait
 For more than that garden of grails
 In which roses bloom still ornate
 Embroidered on balcony rails.

For us Eden's ultimate fruit
 Needs neither a fertilized hedge
 Nor Eve in a fashionable suit
 At ease by the vestry's last ledge.

We have made real women sibyls,
 Each virgin we worship a vivid wench;
 And so have been spared those vast quibbles
 Which bind a man's eyes to his bench.

Withdrawn and discarded from choirs which sing
 In tones twice rehearsed of men who are free,
 We are those mumblers who bring
 Ourselves as ourselves to Gethsemane.

Our ways have been twisted and bent
 As His head was against that stiff cross

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When during his endless descent
He proved fleshly gain to be loss.

Our courses are courses we chose
Not to perfect some fond choir,
But in order to prove God arose
Although this condemn us to fire.

Warren C. Hennrich

THE STRAW

And so you thought that I was always strong,
That you could clench your arms around my neck,
Draw warming out of me as cat from brick,
Sapping, depleting through the muddy work
Of stumbling on mile after narrow mile
Your whole weight awkwardly askew my back
You blaming and complaining all the while.
Now, now that we rest for a brief space
For breath under a quiet leafy spread,
Nothing to fear, nothing to make afraid,
I look at your sick-pocked, self-pitted face:
More than all else that pitiful smile alone
Makes of my heart a shattered stone.

Alida Carey Gulick

THE DEATH OF QUEEQUEG

I saw his arm go Heroding
 To mime the spirals that the sea already owned
 To pits that could not read its smaller legend:
 Billows far as the arm could fling,
 The sea's small circulation varicose
 With him—
 Thought **arm, arm**, how it once described his princely
 home

To the vagrant, masochistic eyes of whales
 And knew that in this silly pageant
 It rocked the ocean like a stein of foam
 And waved up snores communicative as a kiss.

My hand struck syntax everywhere.
 Beside this cup, that attic jar would melt to stone,
 Establish branches in a dry forever,
 When all we heard was the vehement air,
 The cry, the black arm's ultimate weapon thrown,
 And all that spoke,
 Its dead precision. And there, remote enough to speak,
 My ten loud dirges, locked in the mirror lake
 Of mind! Ferments of river
 Mocked my metaphor; my tears were smoke,
 And sky the wintering page I lost the sky's grief on.

To find the southern spring—!
 To taste the rind-sharp morning of its peculiar blue
 And, rocking the abstract prison, the Grecian home,
 Know that our Being is Becoming
 (The smallest of the sacraments we owe
 The dead)—

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But first his arm went Heroding like any fraud,
Leaving us all the air, a vacancy,
And time to tell the truth of him:
He snored, kept idols, and a shrunken head.
His arm was older than we knew.
His coffin (Ishmael has said)
Could float us all to shores that speak our language true.

Robert Hutchinson

MARINER HOTLY

O new found Land
and profoundest
Now, Ophelia live,
your riverreach of arms
my locus.
Whatever fugitive, whatever far
dismantled aftermath
through any winnow of these islands
one snare day
or in the dark of certain diggings
this century,
that country:
I shall hear the windcock, see the swan
return; and be
unsourced again.
Their white equations each spring
these simultaneous and same corollas
shall restore.

Here the pattern is of going ships
that pirate me.

But when I leave,
still figure forth; still be the promise
and the prospect: us.

Ophelia.

Clap of flame, my crux
both through and through, my crucible
o still become,
unfinished. Harden whom it will,
the pivot dark must fail. We improvise
ourselves, restoring
heirs of: us, beyond surprise.

Make way.

Light slumber of light, you are
promise; straightaway
return and return from clenched
horizons; silent in these wondrous flights
of rain or the still drench of sun,
one stalking faith of joy
returns renewed and newly wed
again, again.

By covenant we'll meet at every turn.
Protector of the place called: us,
most fiery coalesce,
your face becomes
the habit of this heart.

I cannot know who I will be again
at then or then, but you will taste
the tree upon my lips, first tree

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and many other.
We will countersign,
speak unspeak, endure in kiss enclosing.
How unlike the rest is!
We will know each time
and searching rediscover, improvise,
become our hope;
are what we will, will be,
will endure matter and despite matter's
"through any given point one time one place
one person," will
occupy each other.
My found
Ophelia; live. I cannot
find you dead. Fare well.

Leonard Casper

GRANDMOTHER

Under the protection of a tree
an old woman keeps the sun off.
She watches with her life-used eyes
the playful child of three.

"Oh grandma, your face is a leaf;
your hair is a bird's nest;
your eyes are wild berries-
Next to the grasshoppers I like you best!"

Can it be that an old woman turns
into such things a child can see?

Rose Graubart

THE SNAIL

Now we go to the snail
 and he tells us things:
 Speaking of being curled-under a cool shell.
 We are sentimental for freedom;
 assuming complaint because of high walls;
 seeing our world as an inverted
 prison of crippled deeds and swallowed dreams.

 And we babble into an anger.
 But what has been generous, contracts;
 it is now a shell that tells us things:
 speaking hard in our palms of
 a compression guarding the compassion for life;
 speaking of a mind placed highly;
 speaking of a Love, aloof but unlonely
 that never yearns the exposed freedoms
 that vulnerable involvement with others—
 as a face too long in the sun
 which dries, or withers and dies.

The snail hunches slowly toward
 the shadow of our hands
 speaking from the depth of his living; deliberately,
 in reticence, giving
 from the curl-twist wall of his reality.

 What we call a shell could amount to wisdom.
 What is called the mind assumes
 an attitude, or creates the world.

James Albert Sullivan

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MUSICAL CHAIRS AND COUCHES

I enter mine own history
prepared for saucy analysis
but the month is July
and I refuse to try,
my friends find me excessively shy,
he calls my life an alibi
in short, I am refractory.

When lo!
From out the lazy wheat
amid the fly-twitching heat
the tiger flushes me
back into the present, just beat.

Oh, it was nothing new
nothing I didn't know
But the way he said it,
it just goes to show
I'll never go back there again,
I refuse. Or did I confuse
the tiger with the muse?

Oh, why did I begin in July
to enter mine own history?
April, cruel as that month may be
is more for the likes of me
In April I just rain desire
and all kinds of memory.

Mortimer Slaiman

AN HISTORICAL TRESPASS

Cattails and Catullus
 lived simultaneous
 sometimes side by side
 in the Pontine marshes.
 The Roman and the furry plant,
 one on a holiday, dodging malaria,
 the other swaying immanent.
 The man come to rest at the foot
 of the plant (did he carry a picnic basket?),
 dolorous, weary of orations, so oppressed
 that the weight of the cattail
 weighed him down, weighed more
 than the weight of his own body,
 and he tubed the furry plant
 in one palm of his hand, to shed its coat
 sifting it out to the breeze, as he sank,
 exhausted, in the sand, mortal,
 while the cattail seeds spewed all about.

Mortimer Slaiman

IN MEMORIAM: Mortimer Slaiman 1924-1953

The recent death of Mortimer Slaiman, the young author of the preceding two poems, was a great shock and loss to his friends and associates. His passing, we feel, deprives us of the full realization of one of the most interesting talents the staff of this magazine has known.

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FOR FEAR TO BE A KING

1.

How strange that things which happened long ago
Form such sharp shadows on our memory's wall,
But that we are unable to recall
What happened just last week. How well I know
The faces at our wedding, but the woe
Of these last hours and the woe of all
Those twenty years with him from my mind fall
Away like withered leaves before the snow.

I always thought him weak; his will was mine.
But was it I who made him what he is?
I cannot see beyond me to define
The passions that expanded him and led
His soul to buckle with the soul of this:
I knew him not—by his hand I am dead.

2.

It is the same spade with which I planted her roses
In the spot she had appointed.
This is the bed in which she always had hyacinths.
I will have to plant a yew tree here in the spring.

The stars are so close tonight.

I wonder if she had time to be surprised.
Yet it is I who should be surprised.

The king awaits the slaves' rebellion,
But the slaves do not anticipate their act.
It is the action of a moment, completed
without consideration;

Yet long has the king known it would come.

Strangely, however, I am not surprised.
 Perhaps it is because the knocking at the gate has not
 occurred and the measurable reaction has not begun.

The parenthesis is not yet closed.
 The clods of yellow clay heavily—

On each I see a word.

On this: "Life"

It shatters against my spade.

On this: "Death"

It shatters against my spade.

On this: "Love"

It shatters before my spade has touched it.

On this: "Peace"

It is a solid stone.

I have looked long into the eyes of the earth.

I loved her really, I suppose;

And perhaps, as the poet says, that is the reason it
 happened.

It is the coward that uses the sword, however, not the
 brave man.

Love is a melted metal,

Glowing from inward heat,

Destroying all that cannot resist it and coating even
 that which can,

Hardening into a cold and brittle substance,

Yet always remaining basically the same material.

There was no reason—no immediate reason—for my act.

I walked into her kitchen drying my hands;

And there she stood, cutting up radishes for a green
 salad.

I said to my self, "I will think of nothing, nothing

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at all. I will not remember."
I walked over to her and took her paring knife—no,
the paring knife.
She jerked her hand away and stepped back—
But not quickly enough. . .
I said quite calmly, and aloud, "Now I must wash my
hands again."

The darkness is a strange comforter.
The lawn is covered in black velvet
Which extends into the excavation and forms a fitting
shroud.
The darkness hides me from myself.
I will go back into the house when it is done.
I will stand in the center of the room with my eyes closed.
I will think then.
I will think of what will come that I may expect.
I will decide that I do not care.
The stars are so close tonight.
I will take a few into the house and keep them in the
refrigerator until they spoil.

3.

There never was a brighter blade before,
No steel has ever boasted such a glint
As this my blade now has; and nevermore
Shall knife have lustre so magnificent.
For now the fury of the man is spent—
No more need he experience my goad.
I shall return to radishes content.
There is no polish for my blade like blood.
I caught his eye as he came in the store
And read the mark of his imprisonment.

I knew that I could make him taste of gore,
 That I could stain his hands so innocent.
 Beneath my spell his will was impotent;
 He chose to buy me as I knew he would.
 To nothing I proposed could he dissent,
 And there's no polish for my blade like blood.

Ah, how I longed to pierce her to the core!
 I ached with passion through each argument
 To take from both what no one could restore.
 To each from me a fitting punishment
 For every radish and for every dent
 That almost caused my surface to corrode!
 To each my brightness as his monument!
 There is no polish for my blade like blood.

L'envoi

Fools to whom murder is a sacrament,
 Use only knives to kill. All of the crude
 Weapons gain nothing from their ravishment,
 But there's no polish for our blades like blood.

K. Raeburn Miller

THE HOUSE THAT FEAR BUILT

This is the house that fear built.
 This is the forest of bleeding trees
 that skirts the house that fear built.

This is the swamp of dread disease
 that rings the forest of bleeding trees

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that skirts the house that fear built.

This is the puffy bullfrog choir
that lives in the swamp of dread disease
and croak of doom in the stagnant mire
that feeds of forest of bleeding trees
that skirts the house that fear built.

This is the house you know it well,
gabled and shuttered with blinded eyes,
locked with tongues that can never tell,
tongues of terror and wordly wise.
This is the roof, mossgrown and leaking.
This is the staircase old and creaking.

This is the door above the stairs,
thick and bolted and firmly barred.
These are the walls decayed and bare.
This is the room above the stairs,
webbed and moulded and half forgotten.
No one sees that the wood is rotten.
This is the monster raving, rumbling,
waiting till the door goes tumbling.

This is the door decayed forgotten,
no one sees the wood is rotten.
This is the staircase old and creaking.
This is the roof mossgrown and leaking.
This is the puffy bullfrog choir
that croak of doom in the stagnant mire.
This is the swamp of dread disease
that rings the forest of bleeding trees
that skirts the house that fear built.

Tom Wright

ON READING JOHN CROWE RANSOM'S
"FIRST TRAVELS OF MAX"

The littlest Van Vrooman was named Max.
His hair was curly, and he met the Red Witch
Deep in the forest near the dark tarn
(From which Psyche shrank in the old days)
And went straight home, as the poet said,
Straight from the Allegory into real life,
Into the real life of a small boy.
And all this was in the old days, long gone.
He went straight home by the old path,
A crooked stick in his small hand,
And held it behind him, hitting the hard ground;
For in those days the blue racers raced fast,
And hoop-snakes looped through the high woods
And across the fields, striking the trees dead;
But when he looked they'd gone in the deep moss.
And the littlest Van Vrooman shook the long stick
And the littler stones bounced off under the nut bush,
Into the wild brush, behind on the old path.
The unseen has its dangers that a small boy
Must guard against, toting his oak stick.
This was because he had met the Red Witch.
(That was the malignancy of blind fate.)

Today the littlest Van Vrooman has made peace
With his sisters, and he snores now,
A drowsy curmudgeon in an arm chair.
The Wall Street Journal slips from his limp grasp.
(This is the malignancy of blind fate.)

For the littlest Van Vrooman might have gone East
(Not North to the Witch Wood)
To the noon hillside and the lost field,
Where sassafras saplings bend under a boy's weight.
And he might have found the honeysuckled sun slope,
Where thwarted vines spread over the warm ground,
Where rabbit paths run over the slim stems
(Zigzag and crooked like an old city),
Where the rabbits run with their scutes up.
And he might have stood with his heart dumb.

And the littlest Van Vrooman might have gone South,
Dreaming of hens flying up to the barn roof,
South to the steep hill where the grape trunk,
Large as a boy's arm, hung from the red oak,
And have swung up, up to the low branch
Of the chestnut tree in the deep hollow,
Like Sinbad's roc from the deep vale.

He might have gone West where the clear brook
Laughs away from the three springs
And have seen the minnows flash there,
Swift darting under the green bank
Near the wet home of the bullfrog
(Malignancy of fate)
And he may have felt an unwordable boy's joy
When he saw the exuberant fish swim.

And then the littlest Van Vrooman may have lived long
In a small house under the oak tree
And have died into the place where poets go.

Richard Ashman

CAVE PAINTING

(In memory of Max Raphael)

In the Aurignacian cave they drew
 A horned bison, black, small-footed, male and a female
 Hind, listening in gentleness and many elephants
 Enormously wise.

Darkly, through holes, we see
 Not in light, but in sometimes lesser dark-
 Nesses, widely pivoted, swung through them in a wind
 The shadows flee from.

Dry as ten thousand years
 Of white bones falling, drier the cracked leaves
 Piled careless as years and the wind shakes them
 Into time, heedlessly under and down, over Altamira.
 There they lie and the shadows roaring
 Us out of and into season, time and over and cold
 The year finally on us.

Though we flee there is only
 Man (not god likely) but only one hand
 Writing, drawing, saying, erect standing and
 Standing still, watching himself and his
 Trying the same thrust outward, what
 Is never repeated but is
 Gathered in one place where, unlikely companions
 The magician makes them; out of (perhaps)
 Pity: what of truth, what, unflattering, of praise.

Hilda Morley

GLORY IN THE SUMMER SHINE

The heavens declare the glory of worldly man;
The smoke stacks billow in the summer shine.
The highways testify his might; the whine
Of motors sings to his delight and life.
His children love him, and his second wife.
Down the diversity of many ways,
Sometimes by accident and sometimes plan,
Much that is beautiful to bless his days

Rolls from his cumbersome factories.
Refusing at the ultimate, last death,
Always, to be tantalized, he takes a breath
From war to pick a crocus or to shine
His shoes. The almost ultimate design
Of hunger softens, and he eats his peace
And turns his hate to war upon disease
And lifts his face and trusts in the police.

The sun in yellow summer glorifies
His labor and the caged canary sings
Glory frequently to man who flings
So often inadvertently his kin,
His love away in enterprise to win,
But missing often wide, in hope to good.
Sweet man, your speeding Buick testifies
How much you blunder to beatitude.

Richard Lyons

NO DUSKIER WOOD

Dante trod no duskier wood
than this with jeweled burnings glazed;
nor fire where branded Ahab stood
darker flared: this black flays
in crimson cleavage living skin
from savage ledge; the raw within,
naked of its proper mask,
snarls to fire's sleet-attack.

Dante feared and swooned intact among
what tortures laureled Virgil kept him from;
and Beatrix and Mother Church redeemed
what was after all an angry dream.

Old Ahab cried, proud and bloody-brained
lonely Ahab, seized with maddened pain
of god blasted from godhead; Ahab bore
his fire volcanic in bowel's raging core.

But these—these have left no mask to fix
assurance of dreaming and dreaming's sweet conclusion:
no solidity of flesh intaining the licks
of fires that work a fierce and deep delusion,
no chance for pride, for any ergo sum:

no memory of any even dismantled room.

These should by any means escape
the foetus-need to marry shape.

Sweet and lipping arch to heaven's bend,
dusky flight from jeweled horror's glint:
stern dare that fire can only brand,
dark collapse in flare of burning sleet.

With final assertion of cicatrix,
rigid as abandoned crucifix.

From these, their bright and dire confusion,
we by simple narration are not excluded:
we all have made the sirens sing;
expect and dare not hope a sudden spring.

William Hull

MOUNTAIN SHOWER

In the high Rockies, near a chilly lake
Scooped out, times past, by the great glacier
Whose dirty snows still cling to the gray crags
(Though shrunken now from the brave giant of old
Half-filling valleys with its rubble-heaps)
We sat, catching our lungs full, after our climb
Through the thin mountain air. The water swept
In iron-dark ripples all along the shore
Out to the footing of the further rocks.

We watched, and talked, sometimes shifting our legs,
That twitched from climbing; and wondered what it
meant.

When suddenly, with a flap of our collar-ends
And abrupt chill on shoulders, a whooping air
Rose up from nowhere. Raising eyes, we saw
The rock-clefts darken: scuds of broken cloud
Brushed past them, billowing; soon half the lake
Was circled in fog that shut the echoes out
And left our clothing heavy. As we turned
To find again the dry, well-beaten trail,
A mutter of thunder followed from the air
Somewhere in front of the tall glacier,
And split itself in fragments, stuttering
From rock to rock down toward us. It was not
The hard, flat thunder of the lower valleys,
But more like someone laughing down a pipe.
We heard it nearer and more often, boomed
From the far end of the hollow canyon, as
We took the path zig-zagging down the slope
By the steep plungeway of the mountain brook;
And then, with a low chuckle, came the rain.

Carl Huntington Ketcham

OPHELIA AND THE JESTER

Listen, for now she is poetry
And soundings that rise from the green glass.
She will spin in the well of her limbs
The hyacinths that hang
So thread-like on the edge of the garden pool,
And violets will spin from her eyes.
This flown princess will never be lost,
For here is a death that presses
The strings of the hours,
And green glass of pool and hyacinth threads
And the spinning of limbs are a pattern.
Listen, for now she is poetry
And violets will spin from her eyes.

This flown princess will never be lost,
For she is wrapped in green sheets of ice,
Hiding the well of her limbs.
And no wind can move
Through gardens that hang within ice.
For ice that is green can be a poetry,
And green the shine of the jester's candle
And a jester can be even a poet.
Her room has no stars at the windows
And no birds on the sky-light
And no door that ever will open.
This flown princess will never be lost,
For ice that is green can be a poetry.

And green the shine of the jester's candle
That lights the hanging gardens,

And as his fist strikes the frozen pool,
There are cymbals held under one arm,
And their white sound is thin
And flows lightly over her emerald tomb.
A jester is never a dark pearl prince,
But the birds that perched on his cap, shaking
The bells, were hers, and the pale streams
Of afternoons that he peered through were hers,
And she was the keeper of all his hours.
And green the shine of the jester's candle
That flows on her emerald tomb.

Listen, for now she is poetry
And violets will spin from her eyes.
This flown princess will never be lost,
For ice that is green can be a poetry.
And green the shine of the jester's candle
As from the emerald tomb there flows
Many high echoes, the white echoes,
And his cymbals are soundless now,
As he listens to the echoes of ice.

Gerald Sacks