

# THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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**PROFANE WITNESS**

"Hosannah to the beasts!" the angels cried.  
"Praise them who by man's hand are crucified  
for meat and leather, ivory and oil.  
Bless them whom men call spoil.  
Praise to their patience, courtesy, and trust.  
Since men won't praise them, God's own angels must!"

I stood among the singers, and I tried  
not to look human, opened my mouth wide  
and sang, though scarcely as an angel sings,  
hunched up my shoulders to resemble wings,  
pushed my hat backwards, praying that the brim  
looked like the haloes of the seraphim.

Useless. The angels smelt me, turned about  
and pointed at me, till I dwindled out.

On hands and knees I left, but not before  
I'd heard a lion from the altar roar  
and twenty elephants from twenty trunks  
blare TE LEONEM like Gregorian monks.  
Rising, I peered a moment from the porch  
and saw the whole nave blazing like a torch.  
The music ended. All was hushed because  
of the laying on of huge angelic paws.

**Dilys Laing**

# 2

## **NOT NOW**

The clouds are surrounding the  
moon up above,  
hiding from me my only love.  
The sky is angry, there's red  
in its face.  
Starting my way I quicken my pace;  
the storm is very near.

**William Saunders**

## **ONE DAY TO ANOTHER**

Yesterday, its time being years,  
Being so full of all the fears,  
Unknown love, thus, happiness none,  
Losing all, nothing ever won,  
Life dogmatic, so factual,  
Taking the world as actual,  
All prayers were prayers to be from it;  
Black days, when you go to sum it.

Today, golden light from the sun  
With not a thing completely done,  
Colors filling the blue blue sky,  
Picking roses that shall not die,  
Love, happiness, joyously found,  
Wind and the willows, lovely sound.  
No more sadness, no gloomy days in sight;  
For yesterday ended last night!

**William Saunders**

**PERPETUAL MOTION IN MONHEGAN**

White chases white, neat butterflies indict  
the air as endless bubble of glucose  
with veiny dripping pictures, slip their  
pincers to a petal, fold huge vans and  
twang the swollen pistil. No garbage on  
the sea, the sobbing gull forces his shadow  
to be still, mates with it on the dropping-  
spotted rock and folds up. I see the bee  
working the fuzzy duster of his belly,  
punishing a flower with so much relief  
it rotates like a pinwheel or a star.  
To get into the act, I whirl a stone,  
watching it slap-slap the skin of water,  
splashing spastic tendons that heal over,  
until it sinks through barred and smoky green  
and strikes, sending the fine slow spread of sand.

**Neil Weiss**

**LETTER TO LEDA**

Leda! I will, before I send snow,  
hold you fast. — It's because you think of me!

There was a time I could let you go  
when I saw you crawl, dug almost to your knees,  
your hands all creased with twigs, I hov-  
ering, too torrid to touch my wings.

That time is past. Earth and love

# 4

in autumn have their flourishing  
before winter: burn of the sun is special,  
one is caked with love, as a potato,  
you feel fuzz peel and burst and fall,  
until it hurts to stand erect, to know  
things are not what they are. Hope gone,  
we'll be dripping weed, croaking swan, swan, swan.

**Neil Weiss**

## **HURLY-BURLY-AH**

As flipping I was to the birds  
Ungainly walking on her grave,  
Almonds, with no spirit-words  
She upward with the wind said

Dave,

Come again young to me with a hey  
And shining violets; and come  
To me from enormous Eden; play  
The hurly-burly with maybe some  
Ah, sweetness; come (but in the grass  
With birdies, say no more Alas,  
Nor whimper) and in dreaming dress  
These bones, in kiss these cheeks of air;  
And surge with earthen loveliness  
Your old-new hands through this white hair:

As I was dreaming in the breeze.  
And suddenly, the awkward birds  
Cooed, flew to me with an ease  
Of nesting in her feathered words.

**David J. Lyttle**

**THE TERMINAL CALLING: IWO JIMA**

Pfc O'Higgins  
(Or Hicky as the frat boys used to call him)  
Has done got a hole in his head;  
Put there by a Jap maybe,  
Or perhaps a buddy.  
Anyhow, he's just lyin' there  
With his brains on them rocks  
And his belly open.  
No petty frat brat was he. No sir,  
He was on the Dance Committee.

(What's the catch today, he asks and turns towards the sea.)

They used to say Ol' Hicky  
Came from some shithook town in Nebraska,  
But when it's raining hell out of them damn hills,  
They don't generally ask ya.  
(Christ man, it's hot.)  
They used to say when Ol' Hicky was a kid,  
He'd say to himself, Man, am I going  
To have a time of it. I've got brains.  
(On the rocks, please, I'm tense.)  
Then them goofs went and shot off the lid.  
(Christ man, I'm soaked.)

(Peter sorts out the good and bad in the net. By God, he thinks, if that fanatic comes by again, I'll tell him a thing or two.)

They say he used to think a lot, that boy.  
Not like the other frat brats, not a sot.  
Was going to be the conscience of the world, that lad.  
Takes long walks and talks things over with his dad.

# 6

(And won't his mom bawl when she gets the news.)

Had a girl too, that boy. Yes sir,  
Hicky was well-rounded. So's she.  
Jesus, what a body. Here's her picture  
From his wallet. Name's Midge.  
(Oh hell, goof, what's his old lady  
Going to do with it?)  
That bastard just lyin' there  
With his brains on them rocks  
And his belly open, hell,  
He weren't nothing. He weren't no bridge.  
Hell, he was just the rope walker that fell.

(But that fanatic does come by again, and so Peter dies  
in Rome instead of in the net with the fish.)

**Thorne Deuel**

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## **FAULKNER**

Moustached, dapper, seated amidst the bric-a-brac of  
success,  
Weighty honors and a considered esteem,  
He writes with unrhythmic passion  
Of the South's languid violence,  
Walking in the sweating dark through leafy arches of lust  
To the casually curious Saturday-night square,  
Or sleeping in sunlight on a tobacco-stained porch  
With a hat over its face.

**Joseph Herman**

**THE AUNT**

When children are very young  
 Aunts can be quite anyone  
 Who is old and unremarkable.  
 This aunt was archetypically correct,

Doubting children and their dogs  
 Aching when it rained, praying for accord  
 Between the sexes and the late arrival.  
 Content with nothing if it were right . . .

When I was young I thought of God  
 As color and found that it was hard  
 To banish him to blue or white,  
 The colors I knew from watching.

Once when I was ill and wrapped in bed,  
 At five o'clock my Aunt stood at my head  
 And swished me with her crinkled hand.  
 And, as she bent to kiss me I saw descending

An assault of color, moving in the air  
 A troop of peacocks tails, a flair  
 Of spectrum wrenched from light.  
 Astounded with this sudden firework

I carefully constructed God again,  
 His temper and his mind, his ken,  
 His fatal hand, and discovered  
 My Aunt had carried on her head

My God without a single angel  
 To help her with the load!

When will

The Aunt reveal again the answer and  
 The question: Quem colorem habet Sapentia?

**Ned O'Gorman**



# 8

## PEOPLE, THINGS, AND SPACEMACHINES

1. A little dwarf one time  
had feet as big as a dime  
and a very ridiculous daughter  
with feet as big as a quarter.
  
2. The smallest girl was Wistery  
she read the wars of history  
she bought a book of Barahant  
and gave it to her mother's aunt.
  
3. The beds are dancing in the streets  
the beds are dancing in the streets  
the clouds are blue  
the sea is new  
the moon is eating caribou  
the beds are dancing in the streets
  
4. The little girl said  
as she looked at the moon,  
it looks like a beautiful locket.  
The old man said  
as he stood on his head,  
go soak your head in a bucket.  
  
The little girl said  
as she looked at the moon,  
for sure you aren't very nice.  
The old man said  
as he ate pears and bread,  
be quiet or I'll say it twice.

5. One hundred and twenty reams of time  
 one space with seven blues  
 an angleworm committed crime  
 to buy a pair of shoes.

One hundred and fifty pails of now  
 and sixty crocks of here  
 a raven could not reason how  
 a worm could steal his beer.

6. A pair of shoes spoke up one day  
 and said, now listen here,  
 if I must work to earn my pay  
 I'll have a fine career.

If I must work both night and day  
 I'll work both day and night  
 I'll work a year, or ten, I say,  
 I'll work with all my might.

But what about your soles, I said  
 to which they did reply,  
 when those wear out I will be dead  
 but not until I die.

**Douglas Browning**

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### **A PRAYER FOR MICHAEL**

You asked me for a prayer, who if he pray  
 prays to the rose of darkness dead to prayer,  
 unfolding dark of dawn for all I say.

If not my faith, yet love shall show the way,

# 10

mounting the furies of the heavenly stair —  
what if a life, what if a world away! —

to where your god redeems us by a hair.  
May his shed blood your faith holds true be true,  
and bless these words I cast into the air.

If Agony flow in me, flowing in you,  
my heresy may better plead the cause.  
And if my darkness pray, shall God ask who?

O you are exiled from the light because  
you know the light, but darkness rules my bones  
with weeping wisdom that there are no laws;

yet shall I kneel on chaos, time's cold stones,  
and lift my heathen prayer to that Love  
the stars spell out in their mysterious runes,

and pray for you. O God whose mercies have  
the bleeding dove in keeping and the snake,  
the swarming mouths within the hungry cave,

speed Michael on all journeys he shall take,  
and may his journeys lead him to the tent  
of marriages, where warring selves shall make

communion with what is and be content,  
whether he suffer the incubus of night  
or suffer the lightning of Your ravishment.

Confound the angry eagles of his doubt,  
grant him thy morning's nuptial grace, I pray,  
o light in darkness, darkness in the light.

And plead for me, my prayer, that I too may,  
waking like him, leap into naked day.

**Robert Friend**

**THE LOTOS-EATERS**

(*Odysseus, in finery on his terrace,  
entertains the ladies of Ithaca*)

I knew the type: the kind  
You could push around. Some  
Were suckers for this — their  
Gut was full, after all that sea.  
— “Why do **anything?**” the faggots sighed,  
Who saw us retching on the beach.

Even from where I lay, it was rough.  
They were so sweet, floating  
In couples, offering their berries  
Here and there, like zephyrs  
Suddenly uncombing an Achaian.

Ladies, what would you have done?  
Well, could one man do it?  
Ship had drifted in dead calm,  
Till, under the Wenchmaker’s cloud,  
The Lightning — and the current  
Took us. Hard to say, sighting  
Those freaks, if the gods had  
Claimed that land or left it!

Our men didn’t help much. If only  
A panic, at least a shudder, we’d  
Have bundled them off to the ship (the  
Few of us) — but they sidled around us  
Like silk, worse than the ninnies.

I had to see for myself. With me,  
It wasn’t so simple: they didn’t  
Talk big. They played at my feet.  
Every pipe: an apology. It was

# 12

Hard to be uncivil. They fed me  
Fine wine from Ithaca (how did  
They get it!) and told me I was  
Pleasant. How could I leave!

I rose up worried, and even my own  
Men cheered. "Bah!" I grunted  
At one point; and they all politely  
Assented, like sheep. I stood  
In a fine rain of berries. Noble  
Ladies, there was nothing to it! —  
We all got up, helping each other,  
And sailed for days, for days . . .

**David Galler**

## **SIMON OF CYRENE**

If you ever go alone, on a path down a mountain,  
the sky all  
around you, and a crowd gathers at the bottom,  
you cannot  
go back. So I descended, like a fool, bumpkin  
that I was,  
thinking of my cats. Whistling, I entered  
their midst.  
Before I knew it, they had raised their staffs,  
and piled up  
on me, spilling my milk-pots. My head  
rose, cork on  
that sea of bodies, three times, and I saw  
the quiet one,

whom the crowd had hidden, who smiled (yes, like my  
father had once).  
A nice one, I thought, this all must be a game;  
they will pay  
me for my milk, if I play along. It was hard,  
not knowing  
the rules. But when they herded me up to a huge  
cross, I swung  
it to my back without question. That seemed  
to please them.  
(I sagged under high sun, once nearly losing  
my balance —  
they all jeered, and his smile seemed different.)  
We walked on.  
That seemed to be what they wanted. Sallow men,  
they were a  
strange lot . . . I could have put it down as  
a bad joke,  
but he walked before me, crowned with thorns, and  
a word for  
everyone. You should have seen how many wept.  
Strange game, this . . .  
And the soldiers kicked him, when he dropped.  
I'm a country  
boy. I see few people but the goats. It is  
an honor, I  
think, to be asked to do anything, but  
I hate to  
be shoved. I climbed through the wails and insults,  
trying to  
forgive them. When we reached the summit, they tore  
it from me,  
and sent me spinning down the path, in the dust.  
From the bottom

# 14

of the hill, I thought: Fine game! now I miss  
everything . . .  
and what about the money for my milk! I shaded  
my eyes. There  
he was — no doubt of it — stretched like a bat —  
and the cold  
clear air tumbled their shouts — and his eyes  
shone like coins  
for me in the sun . . . Something went wrong that  
morning don't  
ask me what. Don't ask me why I stay  
alone, near  
my shack, without even thinking . . . Did they **have**  
to play their  
game **that** morning? THE DEVIL TAKE MY GOATS, THE  
PATH, THE LOT!

**David Galler**

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## **AFTER RUBENS**

Olee, a woman cried for joy, a child  
Between this carved-out region in my back  
And this my sweeter part. I almost split  
To see my husband creep around the house.  
Last night he kissed my belly, and today  
He sang all morning in the fields.  
(I watched him pull a turnip from the ground  
Turning it over and over in his hands . . .)  
And two days now he's been afraid to touch me.  
I laugh myself to sleep . . . Tonight I'll have him.  
Olee, I'm filled with fingers like a glove.

**Bruce Berlind**

**MOBILE XXXXVIII**

large men who weep  
 can seldom carry  
 heavy tragedy

with grace,  
 becomingly  
 as large men should,

the regimen

of sorrow defeats them,  
 turns them into mourning cattle  
 headed for high clover  
 hoping sorrow will poison food  
 having too little ingenuity  
 to brew a poison that will work  
 having too little courage  
 to walk beneath rivers  
 or choke themselves,  
 they mourn and shake with  
 elephantine fears  
 dripping huge elephantine tears  
 too large to court for pity,  
 too soft to stand like years,  
 plinths in the memory,  
 the severe basalt face,  
 the alabaster tree.

**Kenneth Lawrence Beaudoin**



# 16

## THE UNDERGROUND AGENTS

Between classes,  
In this basement room,  
The vines outside mew  
In the sunlight, and tendrils  
Pry at the ignorant glass  
While student feet, all mismated,  
Snuffle the walks

In a poet's eyes.  
Now the casts rattle in the cast  
Museum, and Zeus himself braces  
His buttocks against an old man's  
Feather duster, while I — I  
Affect the jeopardy of sleep  
Perhaps to lure

A phrase that will rave  
Or will swing like the bat's  
Black wing, or will grow within,  
Round as a wen, or the rubber  
Detonator soft in a pocket,  
Ready and quivering to explode  
The infernal mirrors

Of all the minds  
Of all the keepers of our  
Poetry, in poetry's Managerial Age.  
Now all bells ring and Keats  
Writhes once again under the  
New Instructor's steady sneer  
Or a New Scholar

Leers above  
The corpse of John Clare's

Giddy hours, smiling the kill:  
 "And can one **really** write, if mad?"  
 No matter, though some may hear  
 Good sleep takes the girls  
     And no one reads.

Now on the steppes  
 Of these classroom hours  
 Hoof print and these Tartars overriding  
 Thunder benumbs the brain's chaste  
 Corridors — or like Dinosaurs their hides  
 Foul the halls, and their eye  
     Is reptile and sly

In every transom.  
 But still, outside  
 This room and our appointment's  
 Unlocked door, he scowls and conjures  
 Still the forbidden delicacy of flight —  
 His jacket leather, buttoned high  
     Against them all.

Somewhere concealed  
 Under the old boards  
 Of memory are his muddy ciphers:  
 The night attack, or his mother  
 Dying slowly, now, of a cancer.  
 He advances, drops the emblems  
     Of his redemption

Squarely between  
 Us, and I see a line  
 That reads, "The lilies bloomed like fires  
 Of Hell, or tracer bullets". Behind  
 The jacket one sees the squirm

# 18

Of talent which will surely bore  
Like a spirochete

Devouring at last  
Even the shins of his pride.  
Zeus rattles and all the tendrils dive  
But this new poet smells my death,  
And imperiously rattles his verses:  
We leave, but I go to be milked  
In committee meeting.

**James B. Hall**

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## **RITUAL**

After mother's embroidered tears  
He was brought to an ivory room  
Floating with white gauze curtains,  
Unaware of clinical whispers  
Arranging the feathery surgery.

Then the mild Rabbi blessed the event  
And the traditional flaming blade  
Slashed a son of Abraham's seed  
To bleed and thirst for God's vintage  
In the wound and the wine.

Later, the rain wrote its liquid script  
On the windows, and mother kissed his tears,  
The secret flower that lit  
His face with arching rainbows,  
And he slept again in her fruitful garden.

**Selwyn S. Schwartz**

**IT TAKES A HEAP OF**

home, home on the range  
where the deer and the buffalo play  
but not mama and papa,  
they fight.

i am home  
because of hysterical entreaties  
from mother:

"come home, come home,  
your father is exciting me" —  
i come home and that monster,  
my father,  
is a man  
not a monster;

and all is sweetness and light;  
well, not exactly —  
sort of an armed truce prevails  
and i strike the only discordant note  
with my shrieks of rage  
because mother has sent my favorite coat  
to "underprivileged" european relatives.

"get it back," i scream;  
get it back — indeed.

until the episode of the coat  
all was well  
all hostilities were almost successfully veiled  
for i had proven my love.

how did i prove my love?  
i engaged in a 48 hour eating marathon  
chain eating  
downing dynamite specials  
which left little room for psychosomatic disorders

# 20

so real were my digestive pains.  
did you ever eat beans and stuffed cabbage at the same  
meal?  
powerful. almighty!  
and quarts of jello.  
and why should i kick?  
it's good  
and takes care of the compulsions born of tension  
and proves that i can appreciate mama's culinary  
prowess —  
six pounds worth in three days  
that's how much i appreciate it,  
six pounds  
the size of a medium chicken  
or large squab  
or small turkey —  
take your pick.  
  
but why gripe?  
i should, and do bask,  
in the unquestioning affection  
of my two sweet, aging parents.

**Martha Glaser**

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## **OUT ON THE LONG, LONG PIER**

Out on the long, long pier, at summer's end,  
the long day closing and the night at hand  
over the water, and over the quiet land,  
we left our playing in the sand, our senses opened.

The late bird found us watching.  
We felt the twinkling crescent of the shore lights swing  
to the same cool breath that crossed our hands.  
We heard time pass, and thunder coming.

**David Melvin Paul**

**THE VIGILS**

It is time for the trees in motionless flight in a ring  
Through the shaken powder of fatigue,  
For the dogs, nosing their rippled bodies,  
And for the shadow of a burning table  
Reversing, into the lake,  
To lift from the heart of the urn  
Of water a man limbed all in metal,  
His visor dazzling, that his iron lips  
Describe in excessive silence as he moves  
Skyward, the blue hilt of space  
Buried in the lake, and its handlers  
Tangled in the roots of the ceremony he makes clear.  
A shout knocks and blazes; water destroys the wood with  
light.

But the two boys sit quietly  
In the cure or vigil of their fallen dusk,  
And the shining-flat of the ring  
Of pines on the yellow window  
Is slow and intense as wheels  
Silked close with turning-speed.  
The sun cannot blow white enough to flower  
Their breath in the lidded lake  
More still. Though they must try to rise  
To their feet, and aim the long spark of the blade  
Through the sun, and with it cross  
The heart of the voice of a fasting choir,  
Though with their bodies they must shape the water  
Until the ebbing needles of their heat

# 22

Spring, nail them to holy armor from within,  
They cannot quite bring sound  
The figure haunting the latent sky:  
He wavers between them, his mailed feet  
And hands nearly living, nearly  
Shaded out of dust, drifted,  
Rocking, as the pines clear  
Continually from the depth.

Once more their father calls.  
A squirrel banks off high through sticks  
That should be winter's but have flowered,  
And the water shakes under the dogs,  
Their jaws unearthly warmed, and their eyes,  
Half holy with fear of the dream  
Of sunlight crossing the open lake,  
Descend, stop at the reeds, turn back  
In a mist of boiling glass and flying

As he tries to step down from the death  
Of the knight: from the barbed leaves  
At his elbows licking the sun,  
From the untouched, immobile cloud  
With its water trembling to be lit  
By his passing face, to the full purity  
Of the world fed blindingly, and legendless,  
The unaltered feast: but his eyes blur  
In the sweat of the marvelling iron:  
The sun-marked dazzle floods  
Over his hidden face, his scaled, rustless fingers  
Raised from the head of the living dog into cloud,

He being half the ritual of the dead,  
And that sustaining. Virgin, Lion, Pale Horse, Dove:  
Their veiled, historied waiting is now,

To have always been, the lake  
 Between their breaths, and he, come  
 Burning like a locust, a raised power of light  
 Helpless in leaves and reeds above the lake  
 Not quivered by his voice spread blown away,  
 Alone unceremonious, and of a falling bright.

**James Dickey**

---

### **THE LAST WATCH**

What does a nor'east blow portend  
 To a sailor whose sailing  
 Days have come to the rope's end?  
 His hands have the feel of a running hawser,  
 His eyes are sharp  
 For any sign of wind or weather;  
 His feet are shuffling but still able  
 To walk a deck;  
 His spine is a knotty length of cable —  
 But he knows each wind may be the last,  
 Nor'east or south,  
 That he will ever feel go past,  
 So he sits with his back to the boat house door  
 To watch the sea  
 And test the strength of the wind's roar,  
 Knowing all storms are impotent  
 To wreck the life  
 Of an able seaman ocean spent.

**Mary N. S. Whiteley**



# 24

## THE BLUE HORSE

That summer we saw the Blue Horse.  
We tamed him. His sky-splashed mane  
Hummed with the current of surcharged hoofs  
That flowed into our stony lane.

His love for us was infinite:  
The head held high; the tender mouth  
That never knew a bit; the eyes  
Compassionate as rain that follows drouth.

We loved him; loved, but not because  
He was blue and blue horses are rare —  
He taught us love; he tamed **us**, too —  
Our wild minds learned new meanings for care.

Winter: the Blue Horse was with us still;  
The mane now ragged; the eyes still bright  
But brightness now admixed with pain;  
We taught him hate; we showed him fright.

For Christmas found us listening in the church  
To cruel stories; worshiping the star of war;  
Our fear forgot his love — forgot  
His grief at the sickly fear we bore.

We fought among ourselves: we killed;  
The more we fought, the more we feared;  
The Blue Horse cried often; you struck me  
One day and the Blue Horse disappeared.

We found him when the snow had melted —  
Rotted eyes; the mouth become a leer —  
He tamed us with his eager love —  
We killed him with our feeble fear.

**Melvin Walker La Follette**

**THE RETURN**

**When dreams superintend your dancing sleep,  
 Films of fear and intimate journeys  
 March through your darker antechambers  
 Revealing crude extravagances in our memory**

Go with me and be my memory  
 And we will all our terrors find;  
 The equal desolations of our route  
 Will shape murderous models of our minds;  
 In some private purgatory of our race  
 You'll find your image and your sacred place,  
 For the Century stammers with disorders  
 As every factor animates its actors,  
 And like a public servant with a private purpose  
 Your morality is your own security;  
     The void's within, but outside  
     The City invests its suicide.

It rises within your holier family  
 Dueling in a bedroom's tightened air;  
 Paternal, real, consummate with love,  
 You recall a hundred taut realities  
 Mothering your infancy and savagery;  
 And as you face the things you were,  
 The lives you lived and the lives you lied  
 In childhood's green magic and black misery —  
 you re-enact the stages of all your raging ages.  
 Indelible, nimble, acquainted and distorted,  
 Our youth inherits many modern maladies,  
 Heroic external whims and mystical fallacies.  
 Though the world is young, we are old,  
 Abysmal, indexed, having secret passports  
 To the sacred fountains of ourselves,  
 To water the places that sanctify

# 26

The massing mummeries of our eye.

The street of my childhood is a jewelled slum  
Festooning the awkward mesmerisms of innocence.  
Yet the picture here is all wrong;  
It was a street of murder, mimicry and malice.  
In my youth it killed  
Ten citizens of fear and poverty . . .

This street is a tomb, for I saw it yesterday:  
A soundless crumbling church  
Near a pitiful synagogue  
Facing two exits to vision and piety.  
Tattered newspapers, in the cornered garbage,  
Vie with the names of streets I ravaged  
To lighten my burdens as a boy.  
Their past stab my dust-laden eyes,  
As antennaed, pigeonless roofs impale me,  
Corrupting the low skies  
With ambushes of grief.

The ghosting docks I knew are still with ships,  
Loading every commodity of our industry;  
And massive buildings have shimmered heavenward,  
To make new tenements when the Century ends;  
I know, it was like that forty years ago.  
I see similar faces cradled to their mothers.

The house that I was born in  
Is now a parking lot for trucks;  
Another, boarded and unevenly shuttered,  
Closes in its evil with the night;  
And the factory where I stole candy  
On Armistice Day, now celebrates decay.

Some old citizens are still here, waiting  
For time's induction to another stillness.  
The Negroes have come and made a church

And their singing is strangely real to me.  
The fat little stores, so ancient, then,  
Wear their age with commercial indifference;  
And on some suburb's green patch, the friends  
I had as a boy, have settled  
Their middle age's brooding disenchantment.

I walk alone, vainly competing with my sentiments,  
Remembering what I was and what I have become,  
Breathing from each street a fable of my world.  
I grasp for the age that turned my Century  
To create my innocence and my rage.  
I remember the strong boys, who robed their fists  
As boxers, to general us in gangs;  
And those who became thieves, and murdered, later,  
Incorporated into crime like movie-scripts . . .  
    I wear ten scars for cruelty, five for cowardice;  
    I wear three for fear, two for innocence,  
    And one for my father's rage.

And I remember those who walked alone  
To listen to themselves as they paced careers;  
The teacher who lectured to me avidly  
On the Russian and the German souls;  
But he is dead, like the nations  
He had not known too well.

This is a moment in another Hell,  
And I know each step that walked my way.  
In some blackness before my front door  
I saw ten nationalities become American.  
Brimming with venom, filled with Europe,  
And cursing their strangeness, I knew  
Ten versions of malice, race and hate . . .  
And I knew their vagrant daughters  
Pregnant with bastards at fifteen . . .

**Harry Roskolenko**

# 28

## HOME-CROSSING

In the town a young fellow comes, dreamy-eyed, calling  
My name. He was at camp, it seems, when I  
Last counselled there. "You did a thing," he says  
That struck me more than all the things I have seen.  
It was on the ferry that night coming home

Across the river; the current was bad. A stranger  
Said he'd dare anyone to swim. You stripped  
And stood at the stern. I thought, 'My God.' Then you  
Went in, swam with the ferry, caught it, climbed on  
Again. I'll not forget it as long as I live."

For me, I had lived too long. "You mean you don't  
Remember, at all, a thing like that?" he cried.  
"I've done so many damn fool things in my time,  
I can't keep them straight," I said; and to myself:  
"What a stupid act to celebrate so long."

But then like water widening the gap it has made,  
All that poured back through the crevice of his words:  
I saw the river glowing under the moon  
In sweeping turbulence and liquid sound;  
Once more I took the dare — not false or vain —;

For night and water cried to unclot what we are,  
Breathe a time in the moon, then out and down . . .  
Mother of waters, may no turn or flinching  
Mar the clean line of the plunge, when we  
On the home-crossing dive in the deep river of stars.

**Charles G. Bell**

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## I WILL NOT TALK OF LOVE

A giant sat in a stream,  
Played patty-cake with the sun

And spangled fish that swam  
Round him as round a moon.

Below, the water glowed  
With palest light where good  
The clarities swam, as fish  
Nodding against his flesh.

About him danced the leaves  
As if a thousand loves  
Had mated him with them.  
He smiled, who could not swim,

And waved them on to flow  
Between the vastnesses  
Of blue and blue, a sum  
Inside gigantic wisdom.

When taught of other room,  
A pool or stream, he rose,  
Too huge to swim, and walked  
In sunlight, splashing, home.

**Anthony Ostroff**

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**NATURE MORTE WITH RED AND GOLD  
CHRYSANTHEMUMS**

Their angular wounds  
Sink, unknown,  
Like Cambodia,  
Overgrown.

Pollen and light  
Rest, congealed,  
As though the root  
Still toiled.

They fade, flourishing,  
In a jar's breadth,

Their sap nourishing  
Their death.

Chrysanthemums  
On bone branches  
Wane and gleam  
In two bunches:

Gold and rust,  
Sun and dust,  
Would and must.

**S. P. Zitner**

# 30

## NOT AGAIN

Sometimes I am embarrassed  
by the recurrence of that pronoun  
which calls into question, rather into  
prominence, my own face.

Of course I  
am embarrassed, what else?  
Like with the waiter with the tray on which  
repose (only) his own hands.

Always —  
SundayMondayTuesdayWednesdayThursdayFriday  
Saturday —  
no matter where I look,  
I am there.

It was a breeze and a seashell  
brought in Venus —  
but I can be here  
without going anywhere.

So goodbye  
until we meet again,  
and when you come, walk right in.  
It's I.

**Robert Creeley**

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## BEACH SCENE

Two girls strip among the June palmettos.  
Two cats, one black, one grey, sit in the sun  
Gazing blank-eyed towards the harbor.

Two sailors, savoring shore-leave and summer,  
Walk from their ship. In the heat they pause,  
Sexbrimful eyes caught by glints in the shade.

Grey and black cat walk on sly feet, bored but lively.  
 If a mouse takes a turn they will pause.  
 They will stiffen, backs arched. They will pounce.

**Carroll Coates**

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**PAIDEIA**

At sixty, and retired  
 He studies psychoanalysis  
 In the division of adult education.

He expects to be getting a degree  
 Next year or the year after  
 Then he would like to read some poetry.

A man who stops learning, he says  
 Might as well be dead.

**Howard Bennett**

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**GRACE**

What do you mean: you're lonely and afraid?  
 What do you say: your heart is black and bare?  
 You are not tenderer nor feebler made  
 Than all the rest, entitled to despair!  
 You cry that friends are false or else half-hearted  
 Or dead or dying, leaving you alone,  
 That it's too late to get a new growth started;  
 The worried world impervious as a stone.  
 Late to set out (you moan) umbrageous plants  
 (A lifetime between cone and spreading fir)  
 You'd never see the fruit, but only wants  
 Always recurring each remaining year!  
 So did God seem to chide me in my need:  
 Then lowered to my heart a shower of seed.

**Alida Carey Gulick**