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THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

Volume 6 - Number 4 Summer 1956

A NOTE on "Younger Poets"

It is not that the emperor has no clothes but that the clothes have no emperor. That is, our Mandarins Junior-Grade imitate docilely the literary clothing of Eliot, Pound, or Stevens but lack the rebellious originality that thirty years ago filled that clothing so imperially. Because lyricism requires unadjustedness, a maturity of technique in the very young is no longer the virtue it used to be; it may merely freeze them into conventionality (a conventionally "unconventional" modernism). To ring true, a mature style must be hard-won, not an unearned inheritance. Younger poets suffering from this disease of premature maturity seem to be wearing an urbane, ironic smile already with their diapers.

In contrast with that fashionable elegance, the criteria for this selection of younger poets have been spontaneity, lyricism, intensity. An ideal example here of these three much-needed qualities is James Dickey's "The Flight" (any poet with such intense imagery deserves to be published in book form soon). Too incomplete to call itself an anthology, this selection claims merely to present the **most lyrical unpublished** work of one sample cross-section of younger poets. Some are already well-established, deservedly so; others like John Hay, who has one of the best ears for lyric rhythms of anyone writing today, deserve vastly more recognition than so far received. (At the request of the regular editors, something has also been included from my forthcoming book of verse, "The Persimmon Tree.")

Peter Viereck, Guest Editor

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HIS CATARACT IS REMOVED, LETTING THE LIGHT IN

Since it is up, and dizzingly bright,
That is the sky; and that, because spray in the air
And sounds of scrape and smash come from it,
That band of broken, unresting greens is the sea.

On the sand, at a damp mound, I notice twins,
Oblongs of beach-life, reversed identicals,
Glowing (as everything glows); I touch to learn:
Feet: whose head shouts "What's the matter with you?"

It's long as my forearm, pointed, and pale green.
With my eyes shut I smell it: eucalyptus;
Lift it: a leaf. But light is all if you look—
This grey sand flea, this twig's brown socket: light, light.

Love's touchings have taught me the texture of your
roundness;
But which of these in white and blue bathing suits,
Dazzling beyond identity, can you be?
How could my blindness have learned your shades of
brown?

His red and blue umbrella tilts cornerless;
His robe is yellow, his hair black smoothing to grey,
And the dusted black of his skin is netted with cracks;
Only if I touch him could I guess his age;

Meanwhile I love him because he radiates
Glory—not his, yet without him not.
Glory is what I hope never to learn,
The making light visible on, say, you.

George P. Elliott

THE MOTH

The light browses, wading these shallow walls
 As though it could be patient, but can not.
 A light comes through and gradually recalls
 Me to a place that no-one would have thought
 Hidden within the manoeuvring waterfalls,
 The trim cascades. The walls. The walls. The walls.

A death's head moth is fluttering in my room.

Darkness knocks at the window. I hear it move.
 The light is trying to reach it but can not.
 Land is outside, earth and the fields I love
 And would be still as but that every thought
 Makes flesh a wall of water where lights have
 Drunk and gone on. They move. They move. They move.

A death's head moth is fluttering in my room.

I follow hard on a whole herd of light,
 And try to see by it, but I can not.
 Only the walls, water, land, windows, darkness, night,
 Impel themselves at me. My flesh and thought
 Feel for a destination, but my sight
 Meets only light. The light. The light. The light.

A death's head moth is fluttering in my room.

Burns Singer

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SUMMERS AGO—for Edith Sitwell

The ferryman fairied us out to sea
Gold gold gold sang the apple-tree

Children I told you I tell you our sun was a hail of gold!
I say that sun stoned, that sun stormed our tranquil, our
blue bay
bellsweet saltfresh water (bluer than tongue-can-tell,
daughter)
and dazed us, darlings, and dazzled us, I say that sun
crazed
(that sun clove) our serene as ceramic selves and our noon
glazed cove,
and children all that grew wild by the wonderful water
shot tall
as tomorrow, reeds suddenly shockingly green had
sprouted like sorrow
and crimson explosions of roses arose in that flurry of
Danaean glory
while at night we did swoon ah we swanned to a silverer
moonlight than listen or lute,
we trysted in gondolas blown from glass and kissed in
fluted Venetian bliss.

Sister and brother I your mother
Once was a girl in skirling weather
Though summer and swan must alter, falter,
I walked on the water once, son and daughter.

Isabella Gardner

IN THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Whales hang bone naked high in the inland air
 Here within these vaulted roofs of history
 Where the city men may stand and stare
 At these bones and guess them the fishy
 Fiend that once gave Ahab his deepest scare.

Talking of whales with Ahab or Jonah
 Would have been better, for this museum air
 Has so impotentized the fish of evil
 That his mere shadows flicker on the walls.
 It's not that Satan's father with his fingers made

Shadows into monsters on the walls of Hell:
 How deep that Cave or rank the fumes
 Grim Ahab nor moist Jonah would never tell.
 Nor such delirious fears as lined their dooms
 Are told by these dry skeletons of air.

Robert Richman

**THE EYES OF CHILDREN AT THE BRINK OF THE
SEA'S GRASP**

The eyes of children at the brink of the sea's
 Grasp, dilate, fix; their water-sculpted hair
 Models their heads; crouching a little they stare
 In motionless ecstasy of panic

As the upreared load, tilting, tilting titanic
 Pitches and shocks them in a rainbow crash

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And is upon them with a cat's flash
Before the nearest shrieks and flees.

Most true terror carries them high to us
Up sand as white and dry as safety—thereafter
Gooseflesh and shudders rack them to drunken laughter.
They reel, self-conscious, pantomiming . . .

But presently sober, cautious down the shining
Dark slope of invitation, outward, to the prize
Of shaping danger they go—and widen their eyes
Innocent and voluptuous.

Josephine Jacobsen

WORLD VIEW

The stir of a man through a whirlpool of air
 Sucked the hawk backward and down.
 Lithe waters caught fire, wild weather
Went whirling the three-o'clock sun around.
A decade of seaweed split open a boulder
 The burning high tide gulped down.
 In the hawk's high lingering stare
The spell of a man, shuttered by boughs,
 Became a fallen feather of sound.

Edwin Honig

CLAIR DE LUNE (after Laforgue)

It comes with the force of a body blow
 That the Moon is a place one cannot go.
 The world is yours when you advance,
 Moon, through magical August silence!
 When you toss, majestic mastless wreck
 In seas where black cloud-breakers break!
 Ah, if my desolate soul could mount
 The steps to your pure baptismal fount!
 O blinded planet, fatal light
 For the migratory Icarian flight!
 Great sterile Eye of Suicide,
 The disgusted have convened, preside!
 Icy skull, make mockery
 Of bald, incurable bureaucracy;
 O pill of absolute lethargy,
 Be dissolved in our cranial cavity!
 Diana with overly Doric chlamys,
 Take up thy quiver, do thy damage.
 With thy one dart inoculate
 Wingless love that sleepeth late!
 Planet flooded with powerful spray
 May one chaste antifebrile ray
 Descend and bathe my sheet tonight
 So I may wash my hand of life!

William Jay Smith

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FLOWERS (in a vase in Elba)

Wild world music, unconscious bravery
Of being; kittens stand spear-furred and arched;
Crying, crying, all the concourse here
Of flowers; vivid before our X-ray eyes—
The flames that give them all they have of form.
A martyr song of actuality,
Crystalized in all its wild constraint,
Rings each petalled flower, each diagonal stem.

There is no dimension for lament
In time's perpetual crucifixion.

Julian McMaster

A SECOND SONG WE SING FOR OUR LOST INNOCENCE

I rode with my father in a truck
To a pleasant country
Where you turn to the right
I think it was called Saint
Louis for I sang that name
So loud over the heavy wheels.

When I grew old I lost
The turn to the right
I never could find that
Beautiful land though I sang
So loud and I drove
Clear to the edge of town and back.

John Logan

WATERSKIING: SARATOGA LAKE

Swung like a toy upon this bright
And ancient blue festooned with firs I joy
To feel wet rope snap tight —
The sudden tug plays with me like a boy,
The ski divides the water like a dream — gaily
The dripping strip lights up the sabered wake,
As the boat burns like a jewel through the lake.

Magnetic toy and stationary glaze,
Dancer and dance, signed fast in steely glitter,
I joy harmless to sway through foaming haze,
Cut spray like fields of flowers in the air,
Pass through the vulnerable spaces and where
The water hardens in the sun's last glare
Inscribe sleek scribbles on my blade of fire.

Omniscient skier on a leash of lead,
A steady shadow at the mythic rim,
Bird-like I circle wider, am unmade,
Made again into a mesmerizing gem,
A bloom that flames on its taut stem,
Knife like a diamond through this slice of glass,
And fall like flesh and bones, alas.

Geoffrey Wagner

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ELEGY

What
is more incredible
than the dead who refuse to die
names of men standing up
while history whips & whirls around them

what
is stronger than true memory
lives no bookshelves can contain
for these men stretch beyond bindings
or social law or titles

they advance past syntax of praise
they voyage further than word colors
or stumbling inadequacy of language

they know the grip of hands
the practical impracticalities
that bridge gaps between dream & reality

they live forever as long as men live
their names rumble in undertones
their examples of perpetual revolt
sing like a human chorus between two stars

Leslie Woolf Hedley

THE SECOND COMING

Beside the tomb where the Messiah lay
The great white stone was rolled away;
Beside the tomb three soldiers sat;
They chewed their cud, and snored and spat.

And where the soldiers sat and spat,
Armies tramped, the worm and rat;
The Syrian and the Coptic Priest,
The bully and the mail-clad beast.

Each sect claimed its own corner,
Stabbed heretics, and every mourner
Of dead Christ who dared to mourn in his own way
Was called a heretic and shoved away.

There was the sallow Russian Priest,
His face as puffed and pale as yeast;
His garments made him seem a bat
From his winged coat to his peaked hat.

Then suddenly the confused tongues
Turned to a single uproar; the lungs
Were pierced by a great cry,
"What is that mushroom in the sky?"

Suddenly babbling tongues were still;
A single hush fell on them all:

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"It is the Second Coming," they cried.

"It is man's Doom," the sky replied.

A solitary tower of fire,
Above the city higher, higher,
With golden fist filled up the sky;
"Jerusalem," was what it wrote on high.

David Lutyens

OAKLEAF ELEGY

Oakleaves clinging to the bough
God knows how,
Spring's sinister spectators, skinny now,
Make music paper-thin.

Until the March wind whistles and they go
Head over tail down to
The town of no more dancing, where no light
Falls on dome or avenue or height

And music soft and subterranean
Laps them and they become
A part and portion of the lower town
And cannot recollect the upper one.

E. L. Mayo

TO WOMANLY BEAUTY IN MOTION

I. ODE

This way, that way, as distraction earns it,
 Perfect beauty, turning with her side-glance,
 Jars the taffeta of statue-poise with
 Harmonies of rumplings. Only odes are
 Fool enough for praise that earns no swerving
 Shoulder and dislodges not one pin.

Motion, motion ruffles brooks and sinews
 Back from winter. Beautiful is beauty
 When she desecrates—redeems—her sculptured
 Mere perfection back from Form to warmth.
 Cleansed by clasping, sweet is imperfection;
 Unwise waywardness laughs warmly wise.

Daïling demagogy of the flesh,
 Art's but static half-glimpse of your shimmer.
 Rummaged spread of harbor after venture,
 Yearly slope of loam toward warmth and wings:
 What's ode's recording's immortality
 But trashy shadow of that mortal sweep?

Arch spanning seed and crop in one shrined sweep,
 Be sung; and never waste, to glance toward song,
 The sensuous cataract your torso turns, —
 Sinewing down from mobile pause of throat