

# THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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## AN AMERICAN VIEW

This work bristles revolt against a modern classicism foisted upon a long-dwindling audience for new poetry, and which has fostered credulity that poetry is dying and only older things are worth reading. Many of these always will be worth reading, to be sure; but not the adept imitations which have comprised the other category of late-years compositions which has been touted by another school of criticism and crammed into the anthologies. Most people seeking what's new, regrettably have been hoodwinked. There is also much living poetry.

Yes, throughout "decline," free spirits have been pouring freshness into traditional forms and making modern applications of ancient myths, and evolving new forms and composing contemporary parables. They are the neo-romantic, individualistic seers of the magic of analogy. They madden orthodox judges; but they are commencing to restore poetry audience.

Some of the more confounding expressions from what's rather inaccurately called the American Underground (and with the innuendo that they'd jolly well better *stay* down there too) have been selected by the editors of this magazine, not by the writer. Diversity of rude, even crude, dissidence (with concededly-diverse success) and predominating pessimism are seen here. This is not a condemnation. Both are logical and justifiable means for aiding man to regain realization of his intrinsic need for the dramatization of never-fulfilled search after meaning in the universe. Shock may be the only effective expediency; and, not unexpectedly, some administrators of this desperate treatment will prove ill-qualified and some just out for "kicks."

Exigencies of space permit neither detailed consideration of these poems nor an historical survey;

however, a key lies in the acknowledgment by one of them, Gil Orlovitz, to Rainer Maria Rilke. And although Rilke commonly is mentioned as having been influenced by Baudelaire, the record in beginning perspective indicates that his has been a prime influence in America, and England also, to revive, in modern contexts, the imaginative and emotional emphasis of early Nineteenth Century English-language poets, who carried on both from Blake and Cowper.

Outstanding, in "far out" modern romantic, besides their alive expressions (which also characterize less-radical and better tolerated poets either too polite or not moved by major concerns), is an unashamed earnestness declared irrelevant by careful academy critics who really are rationalizing avoidances of fear-some truths. No need to document the obvious—that enduring *major* literature has comprised more than semantical jigsaws or brilliant imitative rhetoric upon less-crucial themes. And not arguing that even competent poems (if there are such things) inevitably spring from the most shining honesties. Rather, to put a sharp light on what is central to the work meant here, while admitting that *mere* neoterical (often strained) phrases simply focusing environment and conjuring sensations, add to no greatness.

Declaring that thought has become so concentrated on pragmatical physical realms, particularly data bearing upon bodily health and comfort, that more humanbeings are left more worried than ever, in a faith-weak era, is just old hat. And intelligent people are aware that the finest semantic exactitudes pull no rabbits of healing revelation out of that hat. And yet, even poets, themselves, are astoundingly slow to see how true poetry can help. That is, poetry undertaking to express whole purpose in whole man. And to answer the objection that 100 percent accomplishment of this is impossible, reference need only be made to an ancient wisdom, that perfection would

render the very consciousness to create *anything* superfluous.

Many have noted how the sciences exceed themselves, trying to solve what no science can solve. Also, that science's requisite particularity of language leads but to *non*-communication, when diverted to the complexities of speculative imagination. But what seems unclear to many is that today's musings, loaded with connotative ramifications and layers-upon-layers of simultaneous meanings, *demand* multi-dimensional language. Attempted objective scrutinies of pages-and-pages of minute brittle images entail (assuming these compilations are not indiscriminate!) abandonment of recognition for the essential condensation which makes poetry.

For, in recent decades, "authorities" have been judging poems with total disregard for the crux of creativity, that *all knowledge is subjective*. In the long long end, after all hashings and rehashings, the only thing that matters is subjective impact within a reader. This does go back to the way a poem was made in the first place. But, these critics have been analyzing details, without first reading wholes, for transferences (if any), and to ascertain whether writers met any challenge of opposition involving genuine endeavor to realize some facet of fulfillment. This not only has perverted and subverted their findings, but has ignored that each real poet must be speaking from his own unique frame in his own idiom; and if this is not accounted primary, poor receptivity is assured. Every serious poet deserves that his effectiveness be gauged by the results obtained by his own methods, not those fixed upon by a critic. And there is no other fair basis for comparisons. This is what this writer would like readers of this magazine to bear in mind while enjoying the exciting work gathered here.

**James Boyer May**

## TREASON

Colymbourne crossed a King with a poem  
 and inherited new gallows on *Tower Hill*,  
 and they cut him down while he still bubbled  
 and tore out his disenchanted bowels  
 and tossed them in the fire by his side  
 where they sputtered and curled like live snakes,  
 and the butcher put his hand into the hole  
 of his body  
 and moved the fingers  
 like a suckling red spider,  
 (and the trees stood watching without comment  
 and a bird flew by  
 wings-to-body, wings-out  
 bouncing boundless in the sky  
 like a rock thrown downhill;)

and the butcher sliced away  
 his testicles and his manhood  
 with one small blot; and  
 a bloodless eye larger than the moon  
 stared into his brain,  
 and he said,  
 "Oh Lord Jesus, yet more trouble," and,  
 victoriously,  
 died.

Richard III, stale with vengeance  
 slid the small ring upon his little finger  
 and felt  
 that men died too easily and  
 not often enough:

*The Cat, the Rat and Lovell our dog*  
*Rule all England under an Hog.*

he watched the first fly settle  
upon the viscid edge of the hole,  
tremble eagerly with legs,  
withdraw a moment  
awed with the size of the prize,  
and then flatten itself  
to feed;

he spate, smiled, and turned as a King should turn  
(already he seemed to smell the fumes of decay)  
and clapped his hands flatly  
like two wicked boards sounding  
for some jester with a flagon  
of self-abasement and vertigo  
to make him forget  
that for a moment the fly  
had seemed to look upon him  
with its thousand eyes  
and flicked its  
filthy awkward stinging snout  
toward him  
as if it had sensed the  
tangled viscera that  
sucked and puffed and pulled  
the thin living silver  
through his body.

ah, but visions and dragons and nothings!  
the fool ran, belled and gesturing,  
toward him  
and the fly  
frightened  
rose from the poet  
and circled about the monarch's head  
like some fat drunken bee

readying to raze a flower . . .  
 the King slapped out  
 and missed  
 and decided the jester too  
 must die.

Charles Bukowski

## TWO POTS ON A HOTPLATE

It was a beat, bent, battered thing, but boilable,  
 Perched—this percless 'lator—next the glue-pot  
 in the casement.

My guess, anybody's guess how long these new  
 grounds

grafted on old buds

Had withstood well-wish of water or seam-scour of  
 suds,

Nor yet recall from sweeter-reared remembrance,  
 if rancid right remaindered

Regularly reflected was in reason or in rime?

No saw nor sense to standing so, but there to shod  
 the slip-shelf steely-wise

It seemed a sesquitarian stump as though all shell  
 broke loose and slumped the ingle cell.

A caution uncraven, this caffeine carriage

with crenelated crest more crass than clue

To craftsman crew confined within its coil;

Toil took its tithe of sickened thenses, as

We tipped the brue lusch in the gopfee bod  
 and grank the blue.

James Hiner

**NOT**

not the commander grinning through the periscopic  
bowel,  
not the butterfly masses sucking pyramids they  
wormed,  
not god with his totem earth, not the devil with red  
suspenders,  
not the sweating angel, not the potpourri ape,  
nor a moment to be lost, not a love that giggles  
ghastly  
over green gall and greasy ghosts, not the woman  
engineered from a mans squib, not my life  
nor yours nor the hairshirt of history,  
not the slimemould chewing gum, not the hairpin  
penis  
for a monsveneris permanent wave, not the epileptic  
clown,  
not the jolly specialist addressing the whole conven-  
tion,  
not bathing beauties springing leaks, not the foam-  
titted sea,  
not the storm with the heart of a haggie, not jezebel  
jelly,  
not jesus jerking off, not mohammet with his coeds,  
not confucius with scotch&soda in the mens club at  
dusk,  
not while theres time, not the housefly taking baths  
in eyes  
not the weathervane tattoood on my windpipe, not  
moses  
cracking his knuckles as the thoushaltnots bored  
him,  
not the Old Testicle nor the New Testicle nor the  
Hypocrypha,

not the hydrostatics of spit, not the dynamics of  
     gored mirrors,  
 not magnetism laying an egg, not the condoms  
 of executives from saudi arabia to death valley  
 with prickly heat on the grass roots of profit and  
     loss,  
 not gothic spiders, not arthritic architecture, not the  
     matadors  
 in hysterical capes corkscrewing through the mu-  
     seum of bulls,  
 not while theres a stone unturned, not for a minute,  
 not that you know, not that theres anything to hide,  
 not for anything, not for all the jade in china,  
 not for the reason you think, not the old men  
 with their tomahawk memories, not the old masters  
 urging purring electricity to lap at the milk,  
 not atlas with his base on balls, not the smiling  
 little boys with their equation-mustaches, not the  
     revolutionaries  
 stroking the convulsives into catalepsy, not the  
     financiers  
 pissing silvergray numeralhairs into steel urinals,  
 not the artists riding their paranoid nags to sacrifice,  
 not the general astride his hydrogen fart,  
 not squashed insects dreaming of bubbling light,  
 not the north and south poles in their vast owls of ice,  
 not black and white and yellow tungstens of hate,  
 not the bunomastodontidae of industry  
 with the openhearth tusk and the whanging gut  
 and their salesmens suburban fury, not the nerve low  
     on radar,  
 not the children wading in the waters of their  
     mothers and fathers,  
 not my love my woman with the tiny blue trumpets  
     in her eyes,

not the people waiting in their stalls to be saddled  
with bright  
jockeys, not the spirituals or the blues on the four-  
footed tremors,  
not the moviestars posing on the drums of stills,  
not the twilight my darling my love pausing in my  
throat,  
not the friends impacted wisdomteeth at grief and  
death,  
not the sandpipers tacking darts along the shore,  
not the last of the suns snowballs at the moon,  
not the kitchenwall copperware chiming the sizes of  
home,  
not the tv comic thinning under the spotlights bald-  
spot,  
not the sprocketwheels in the deaf mans ear tugging  
at his eye,  
not the tears trapped in the wilds like small game,  
not the woman intent on calisthenics in the coffin  
to lose weight, no, no, not anything like that,  
not while theres time, not while theres time, not  
while theres time.

**Gil Orlovitz**

### **POETRY, BANANA, WIFE AND THE SONNET**

1. Once upon a time, poetry was poetry.

And all the metaphor, and unmetrics  
In the world. And more. Were poetry's.  
Like Spring, for example, she was full  
Of Monkey, Testicle, Fact and myth.

And the ape, and the ape-woman, sang.  
Also they grunted, and they sounded;  
Said-grunts . . . and body-sounds

Are better than any words. And then  
There certainly was not no prose.

The yesterday, and the day before  
And even that very every-day  
God had never ceased to be saying,  
*Let there be not no damn prose!*  
And there was light. And the sonnet.

The sonnet slid along the iambs  
That have always been its belly,  
And said unto the female  
Of the apes, *Ma chère, j'aime beaucoup*  
*Votre grognement vers libre*—

And he gave unto her pencil, thesaurus  
Paper . . . and said, *da dah, da dah;*  
And rhyming up her thigh, he caesura'd  
Tried an anapest, giggled and said,  
*Ma chère: this, my dear, is poetry.*  
*That tickles!* she said. And he said,  
*Now mind the metric!*—trochee'd her.  
And she began to come unto him: *oh Dear*  
. . . *ohdear, ohdear-ohdear, O*  
*C'est ça! c'est ça; vive le metre!*

2. And unto her dearly beloved, . . . *darling*  
*Banana*, she said, . . . *dearest*  
*Why don't we ever rhyme, or scan?*  
And he ate of an iamb. And the Lord  
God passed from out of their unmetrics  
Saying unto them . . . *In the sweat*  
*Of thine brow thou shalt labor*  
*But not sing thine vers libre;*  
*And from out of thine scansions*  
*Thou shalt Spring but damnéd prosody!*

Robert S. Sward

**AUTOPSY REPORT ON THE BODY  
OF A FAMOUS GENERAL**

See

there is a river running through him  
stuffed with pictures like a reel of film  
unwinding

he seems to have miles of death in him  
he flows so easily

and all medallion victories disappear

our knife locates no conscience  
no crucifix god leaps angrily out  
waving a battleflag

nothing comes out but bourbonblood

he never really had a name of flesh  
or a pound of love in his liver

empty him of his nothingness

see

his muscles quiver at our prodding  
and we explore his red wet kingdom  
finding no feeding inner man  
for all is waste all is swamp

his fingers stiffen on parade  
and blue veins whiten  
like attentive West Point cadets

see

his head falls back like an open valise

his adam never had an apple  
and his skull spills white lard of armies  
marching into sewers of limbo