

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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TWO POEMS

The Knowledgeable Cat

The owner of the fruit stand's the black
Cat, sleeping in the sun behind
A pyramid of oranges his paws
Touch but do not roll. At noon,
He's always there. As the sun moves,
He rises, designs a dozen arcs,
Tidies his apron and quietly flows
To warm rays near artichokes
And buffed peppers. After a snack
In his private office at closing hour,
He leaves by the front door, slips
Through a gap in a paling fence with such
Finesse he might be president
Of a city bank making his way
Through crowds to a waiting limousine.
But I think he prefers to manage his store
And retire at end of day to a place
Where the lion in him can lash its tail
In a manner not guessed by his clientele.

Louise D. Peck

Lambing

The farmland walls leapt lavender
When lightning breached the sky. The old
Ewe strained in the bright straw, her lips
Rolled pain. Maybe, I thought, I was wrong
To have bred her again, but she'd always lambed well,
Been proud.

 The great gelatinous sack hung
Purple, picked up straw, announced first
Miracle. She rose, the vegetarian,
Licked blood, turned, pawed, yawned
For air, nested. Her groans ground against
The cudding of the quiet flock, watchful, aware.
Amber eyes trusted, questioned me.
"It's all right, Susan. You'll be all right."
I washed, greased my arms to the elbow, knelt
In the worried straw. My fingers found the lamb,
Rump first, and something I'd never felt
Before. I swore for the loved ewe and the lamb
We hoped. What could be done, I did, blind
Among treasures in the old sheep's womb. I'd have
run.

But the lamb bruised through, shoving his dam's
Life out of her as he gained his own.
The lamb steamed on the spilled-wine straw.
Spasms seized, shook, woke him. He coughed.
I placed him by her head and she licked the sack
From his nose, busied herself with life while her own
Lay in a mass behind her. She licked

Him dry. I moved him so he could suck the first,
Precious milk. When he was full, he walked
To her head and lay there while she talked gentle
sounds
That echoed longer than the pistol shot.

Louise D. Peck

BLACK IS ALWAYS BLACK

Snatch a black olive from the dish!
Run to look at the seals!
Enjoy the taste secretly—
Don't laugh too loudly; they're not fish.

How strange each toothpicked olive feels!
What dainty ears and silly whiskers that one has!
Dripping on the tablecloth—
Shining in the sun.

Olives frighten small children—
Seals bewilder them;
Animal-colored food makes them cry—
But olive-backed sea-cats can't be understood.

Could a seal balance an olive on his nose?
Can an olive be compared to a seal?
If so, it would be quite an awkward pose—
Yet poems are, although unnecessary, real.

Florence Victor

FEARS

The streets are dark. Stray dogs—
old blankets thrown over sticks—
examine the life of alleys
while simple enemies in pool halls
practice their assaults with cues,
long and wooden. Grinning, they nod
at each woman on each corner.

But somewhere, in a dusty room perhaps—
where he hides from a loving wife—
the man waits amusing himself by plotting
all the routes of women who come home late.
By climbing lamp posts and unscrewing bulbs
he prepares the streets and then crouches
in shadow stroking his mustache and listening
for the delicate step of embroidered maidens who
bring
the feather boa of their innocence to his hands.

The ladies, pursed lips daring
the dark to leap at them, stroll sedately
and behind rimless glasses their eyes prod alleys
as they plan the stories they will tell
and the weeks devoted to recovery.
Each night they wander all the streets,
poking at the shadows with their eyes,
imagining the unwashed man who must hide there
aching for the dry sandwiches of their bodies.

Vern Rutsala

TWO POEMS

Notes from My Mother

Because of my mother's penchant for leaving notes to herself or God or anyone who would in divers nooks and drawers, I still am finding (though it is two years since her bright book's colophon was traced in marble glossed with year-round grass) the poems of her girlhood and old recipes, adages and patterns for embroidery, an envelope addressed to her young sister, a grocery list: *Three doz. Rings, Parafeen (sic), Envelopes & Tablet.*

Now I know that in some undated year there was supper & singing each first Friday night at Liberty lodge hall, though it isn't now. My mother listed her blessings, and I was one. She listed her faults, and "Time spent on phone" was underscored three times; but to my mind that fault was mine, who thought the telephone would be good company. Then folks called up and ate the hours out from under her that when she stood the black hole towered above her—
but she keeps sending these forgiving notes, God love her.

Edsel Ford

Hunting Fishing and Forest Scenes. By Currier & Ives. ("Good Luck All Around")

Because I have lined my creel with trout, and you display a brace of snipe which you have bagged, and nearby a gentlewoman and her son smile on arriving at an eddying pool and the sun prisms the sky all down the wood,

does this, does this convince the looker-on that God's in His heaven and October sweet when one may see backgrounded in the scene the fire-red blast, and the partridge torn from air?

Our backs are turned: we all are trading tales. I have a trout to take a hook from, you must praise your snipe, the gentlewoman peers as if to see what father to her son will offer supper if she catches none.

Yet one need not tripod nor plumb nor sextant to know that here is not good luck all around, for dead beyond the partridge broke in air are two vague, innocent figures in their shelter above the lake. It is a dirty trick.

Not one of all the pampered pastoral pups lapping the trout-laden waters at our feet has pricked an ear, nor I, nor you, nor even that gentle woman's incurious son.

I do not blame such things for happening nor their occasional necessity.

It is the *how* that troubles me, the rendering. I should have caught this moment a moment later and we should all be laughing through October instead of wondering if it would be proper.

Now I rustle the pages of this essential calendar
to see if perhaps in November's frosted field
two innocent figures lie in a chilling heap
of broken partridges. But no. A bright red engine
of the Chattanooga chuffs placidly
under the green vantages of Lookout Mountain.

Edsel Ford

BLASTING AT THE RESERVOIR

After the steel-like flash of noon,
Heat pale as insect-spray or gasoline
Washed forms and color out of the air
Though the greenhouse burned in the blankness
there.

Or when the scald was rifted by indigo space
Against thermal structures of nickel and glass
Like great Leyden jars holding the line-storm's
fluid.

But only the radio reception was affected
In the low sky condensing its warm narcosis
Like pipes beneath the plants in the forcing house.
At sunset the ferment blocked out the light.
I would walk down on the car-tracks to the pit
Where men worked covered with dynamited stone
By the dam and the cold detonation of spray,
To see the fiery sum of water and gravity
Deep in ammonia suburbs ignite the town.

Byron Colt

TWO POEMS

The Trial of the Poet

1. Containing as much of the early life of the poet as is necessary or proper to acquaint the reader with the beginning of this history.

It's true that mother had always struck me as being a bit zany. That business of making her bats fast over the weekends, for example. But when my eldest brother vanished, I first began to divine her avocation. She maintained to the end that the good fairies had stolen him, but I knew only too well that there were no good fairies in that neck of the dark forest. Shortly after this we all moved to the cathedral, but my other brothers continued to disappear at regular intervals until only I was left. And when mother flew up into the belfry on a crucifix, my suspicions were confirmed. One particularly wild night when the wind was bullying the bells and snuffing out the candles, I determined to have it out with her. Descending the tower stairs, I surprised her at her ablutions. Needless to say, she slashed away at me, but I cornered her in the sacristy and beheaded her with quiet ceremony. When I placed her head on the altar, she congratulated me, saying, "Well done, Hagseed; I am pleased to find that you hold nothing sacred." So I anointed my feet and shoulders in her bloody chalice and went forth to join the other poets.

2. A digression concerning the marvellous, from which it may be inferred that some things are liable to be misunderstood and misinterpreted.

The driver
beard afire
hotrodded in and out
around the Sunday drivers,
whoaed his wagon
slambang still
in front of the saloon,
and let the air
out of his white horse.
Then he turned 3 cartwheels
and began his pitch.
"Step right up, folks,
Step right up.
Tell you what I'm gonna do.
I ain't gonna
Turn cowflaps into gold bricks,
But if it's tinned truth you want,
I've got it,
And if it's bottled beauty,
Well, I've got that too."
But they weren't buying any
so the driver
extinguished his beard
and with 3 deep breaths
blew his white horse up again.
Then he tipped his hat politely
and they loped out through the summer air
and climbed right up the stars.

3. A broadside in which the poet himself steps forth and makes his appearance in print.

*Once upon a time,
A Stickleback,
A Clatterbuck,
And a Ticklebug
Went for a walk in the Forest.
And they walked,
And they walked,
And they walked.
After a while
They met a Ruffed Grouse,
A Whiffled Moose,
And an Awfully Shy Gnu.
And they all fell in love
At first sight
And lived happily ever after.
But that was in another Forest,
And besides,
Those fools are dead.*

4. A digression concerning a very domestic scene with connotations of old mythology.

The man

and his gimpy woman
entered the park through the west gate
she carrying a picnic basket,
he a battered banjo.

Eventually they spread their poncho
and ate.

Nearby, a small
boy shoved a snowball
through the wet snow.

the man, After lunch,
strumming on his banjo,
sang Home Sweet Home
His gimpy woman
turned her back to him
and died of boredom.
Nearby, the frozen
snowman
chuckled in the snow.

5. Containing the whimsical adventure which concludes this history.

My bats, hanging head down in the charcoal air, heard them first and fluttered in their sleep. When the first hobnails rang on the stone stairs, the host smashed through the stained glass window and, swarming out Abaddon's forehead, streamed into the night. The red eyes on the threshold thrust my broadsides in my face. Then they dragged me down the tower to the crossroads and hammered seven stakes into my heart. And all the time the full moon writhed behind the clouds. Oh, the night I died, my kith and kin sat down and cried, for joy.

James C. Waugh

AHAB

At four thousand feet

is dust and drowze and wretched meals,
limbs turned to sun,
eyes turned away from the sun.
Around the campfire circle stones
one druid speaks to another,
“Thirty years on the job.
They gave me a medal.”

Beach balls bound from the pool.
Someone is playing “Valencia.”
And with scrabble, ping pong, shared
complaints—
“I’d never come if it wasn’t for the children”—
they hold to the slipping ball of the world
as if it would bounce through space
and spin them off.

At six thousand feet

in mountain country there are signs—
pickaxes, crampons, alpenstocks—
of the climber, already feeling snow on his head,
purified, skull packed with ozone, above
the beercans, fishskins, bonemeal, mulch,
ready to stamp on the world with climbing shoes
and imprint on the faces of bathers
the mark of his scorn.

But already the mountains
are writing his elegy.

At eight thousand feet

the wall-eyed waker

sees on the wall
of his tent, in his fever,
a shape as tall
as the mountains, as real,
and cries, "O never
changing, O final, O love!" and thinks
this is some comfort.

But as he puts out his hand to touch
the final untouched thing he prizes—
the one organic, pure, real vision,
ambergris image of white, of water—
he sees, through its blood and phosphor
the marks of a million harpoons.

At ten thousand feet

is heaven, an uninhabited place.

Joseph Kostolefsky

CONVENT SWALLOWS

Clustered in curves carved from arches
pinioned where arcs join firmly
swallows hive or bead in the roof
white-edged feather flurries on each
in fourteenth-century-rhythmed wings
diving and swooping (in gloria mundi)
from sun atrium into deep high dark:
over the heads of nun-ghosts hushed
in their chanting, wings brush out
ovaly toward the dome inverted
sweep for centuries like rosaries
hanging sharp-beaked as wasps, round-
nested, curved in arches like beads
telling natural songs to lives.

C. P. Berge

PROLOGUE TO A READING

Ladies and Gentlemen!

If by a secret sign I fail to summon
a bevy of blue doves to flutter here,
please bear with me. The conjuration
for this illusion may be difficult.
On my way here I came upon a coven
of envious magicians who cursed me
and pointed sticks at me tipped with cat's fangs.
I defended myself as best I could
with my wax image of Horus; and retired,
if I do say so, with dignity. But the experience
left me somewhat shaken, especially
since some of them followed me into this hall.

So if I fail to make chrysanthemums
bloom from an empty wall-socket
ascribe this to unfriendly sorcery,
not to a failure of my own powers.
I see you lurking there, wicked enchanters,
spawn of Asmodeus, devotees
of the Black Mass! and you, Madame,
you need not try to conceal that broomstick!
Defend me, young devil-dancers, shield me
from their scorpion stings, intercede for me
with the radiant Baalith of moonlights!

Ladies and Gentlemen, my credentials:
though once a novitiate of the Sabbaths
I am now content with practical charms,
the more common exorcisms, the minor
rites of Dionysus. Now, if I were to tell you

that a certain whisper of mine concerning
death's profile in the moonlight
caused stones to suddenly blossom
and the air to carry a sharp new sweetness—
would you regard me as mad . . . or merely tiresome?

But I see disbelief written clearly
on all your faces! At times I swear I'd rather
perform only before my colleagues!
Was it for this that I haunted
stone vaults and dusty shadows
for rare volumes on divination,
alchemy, theurgy, moon-lore?

At times I wish that the white witch Hecate,
disguised as our housemaid when I was an infant,
did not wet my tongue with Stygian water
enveloping me in a numinous aura;
sending me to kneel before the nymph Diana,
dreamy and motionless, barely breathing,
while scrolls of my parchment gathered
glows and glimmers of her radiant tresses.

However, Ladies and Gentlemen, hear me!
I am about to perform my favorite wonder.
I will surround myself with a wall of silence,
a glass-like wall with stars and lunettes
and multitudinous eyes shining in it.
Listen intently; you will hear a canzonetta,
a theme with variations of tinkling iambs.
This is a delicate trick—so watch closely!

You do not see it? You do not hear it?

Clearly, this audience
is bewitched by unfriendly wizards!

William Pillin

A JEW RETURNS TO GERMANY

My feet touch these cobblestones
and I suddenly sense a cry from bodies
buried somewhere underneath.
But I must control my mind. I must move
as a ghost among six million forgotten ghosts.

I sniff the country like a man
hunting for his lost home,
and I suffocate ashamed to be alive.
Irony plants European guilt in me.

I feel like the last man
on a betrayed planet. I feel as though
the atmosphere is clogged with names
begging for their tombstones. I must control
my breathing for fear of inhaling
too many souls of murdered Jews.
My lungs are too fragile for such crimes.

I must behave as one newly resurrected.
But should I act the part of Christ?
Must a Jew become a Christian god again?

I will search German faces for some sign
or fleck of blood. I will look into their eyes
and watch for shadows of concentration camps.
There must be some memory that wrinkles the skin
or paints the pupil with a taint of shame.

But the avenues are clean, the parks tidy,
students study how to be German,
restaurants sell *Coca-Cola*, waiters eagerly serve
even wandering Jews who somehow survived,
and history has quickly washed the haunted air
until even existing phantoms are invisible there.

Leslie Woolf Hedley

TWO POEMS**Apology for Distance**

Lady I will not lie —
there are three reasons why
I am so silent now;
the first is an old vow
I took to an oak tree
aeons ago; and free
of that, the second one
is worship of the sun
that sends its dreadful rays
down my indifferent days;
and free of that, the third
concerns a certain bird
whose dying now and then
must raise him up again
until with restless wings
of ecstasy, he sings; —
and Lady, in that song
whatever comes along
to celebrate our love
will be made good use of:
then I shall sing your hair,
your hands, and all the fair
desires of your eyes;
and I will tell no lies.

William Packard

Near Hannover in Lower Saxony

Know that near Hannover, in German earth,
some fifty thousand Russian soldiers lie
where they were lined up, shot, and left to die
absorbed by soil that never nursed their birth.
Here searchlight, shriek, machine gun and grenade
undid in one brief day what ages raised:
these men had seen the light, breathed life, and
 praised,
and now their fifty thousand glories fade.
Our minds cannot contain so grave a mound
as rises in this field of German spring:
we make the same mistake, tomb everything
into the silence of indifferent ground.

O where is there a resurrection wreath
to place upon this earth, this underneath?

William Packard

**THE DREAM OF ALBERT CAMUS
(1913-1960)**

Behind me a sea, and prophecy asleep in the sand,
and pebbles flung in the cosmos of sleep.

Phoenician come inland, sailor found native
to ruins, and borne up on the sweep
of sand over ruins—am I
of the blind singing columns, brokenness of
man?

Shards cry: my people, my land.

Sisyphian stones leap
beyond old cairns. Sky will not keep
covenants with my darings. Yet I dare to own
deaths heaped beneath my sky
—beneath its barren blue where I'm paced
by tombed millennia . . .

Faust, who can leap
up to God from this whirl of stone?

I am compelled. By old quarries I'm seized,
beset by blocked sky, caught in the stone-heap,
path-yoked by rebellious griefs,
fragments, fables. Here is scrolled
"the limits of the possible," here, on the great
columns of brokenness. Will chalked pentagram
hold
any crush from me?

By old quarries I'm seized.
Debris overawes—will not be appeased.
I, anxiously essaying a fastness of love,
stumble, curse. An old path. Toward what God?
Some Bearer of All? Burden shortens my
breath.

On sand a surging, trembling. What unyielding above
 my yielding? Come to hasten my death,
 a sun savagely rebukes me.
 And ever, as I serve suffering, as I serve beauty,
 a waste falls before me
 (something inhuman that's part of all beauty),
 and wherever I run, stones run before me . . .
 Has a God beheld me? Or is Nothingness the
 word
 that tenders a bread of indifference
 and a wine of the absurd?

Sam Bradley

MADAME, WITHOUTEN MANY WORDES

Wyatt's mistress fled lament's refrain
 And Sidney's Stella found that rime was poor;
 A brittle lady gave our Shakespeare pain,
 And Maud left Yeats's book upon the floor.
 All play charades until time's strict arraign,
 Then drop the mask, take off the gown we tore,
 Accept some proper fellow with a crest,
 And give some wailing babe that flawless breast.

We lay our hard-wrought, ground, bright stones
 Before their feet, for which they give the cry
 Of joy they know we cherish in our bones.
 And still it is the most that we can try
 For them because it is the most that hones
 Our edges whet in blood against the sky.
 But all their awe is fine pretense, a game
 To match our enterprise, protect our shame.

Harry Morris

FOUR POEMS

First Confession

Giddy with goodness in an advent world
 laid out in ices hard and cold as evil,
 the frozen night of my first confession I hurled
 saucy schoolboy taunts at the Devil,
 the stars igniting the ricks of rigid snow
 in the courtyard, and I blued the blinking stars
 like coppers in a sweet-shop vertigo.

I lavished Venus on Mary, threw away Mars
 on Michael, and squandered the petals of rose-colored
 Sirius

on the Little Flower, hoyden to the rose.

Oh I laughed to think I had thought God furious,
 and my neck grew stiff from laughing up, my
 clothes

gone white and I was heaven's snowman.

My laughter linked with the shooting-stars to
 vanish

like spent fireflies at morning, omen

of laughter which a smile would learn to banish.

Paris Leary

Hal Ogilvie, Sewanee '48

He turned, dismissed her gladness like a cab,
 and walked into a month of isolation,
 saying he needed to give up alcohol,
 sex, routine . . . in short, to chuck it all—
 but just for a month, not quite in the fashion
 of cenobites who make detachment drab
 by the very permanency of the thing.
 He took back her engagement ring—

but just for the month—to symbolize his release and freedom from all entanglements and ties, needing to get inside himself, he said, to see what really went on in his head, smiling when she called it “the cold-feet phase.” “No, not cold feet, just a quest for peace—the kind of trip one has to take alone, quite unchartered, with ports of call unknown.”

With a patience more effective than her love she stepped aside and took up films and lectures. Though she threw her slow calendar away she felt the pull of each adhesive day as it roused, not stilled, in her the absurd mixture of passion and boredom over and above the mere intensity she had expected.

He had claimed so many times that she erected walls round him; if he let her she would mother him, make him feel trapped, hemmed in, caught and fixed by love. He taught her to say, “I like you so much, Hal,” turning away from lovers’ words lest the clear thin wall between them shatter and she smother him beneath her fragile hands or seize him in the quicksand of her gentle eyes.

Mere sex they found elsewhere, like a wife and spouse who go to different churches. “*That* would spoil it between us . . .” “Oh, yes,” she agreed, “but only until that day when our need for one another has consumed what life we have apart from one another, We’ll wait, because when it happens, there will never be anything else, anyone else for me.”

He was to go back for a month to the Deep South, the place of his boyhood. "Tennessee will purge me," he said when leaving. "I can feel the clarity of those simple skies, the real uncomplicatedness of it. I've an urge already to revert. I want the truth about myself, and if I can't find it there, well, then I won't find it anywhere."

"How curious," she thought, just as he left, "that he can be 'in love' yet not be able to grasp a single consequence of the word." Small wonder that he never could have heard her if she told him he was capable of re-opening Eden to her in his laugh, for she rarely offered anything but chatter about the most profoundly trivial matter—

her shield against the possibility that in a silent moment she might give the one thing that he could not yet accept—herself. His indifferences she kept like gifts, the only things he ever gave which belonged to her wholly and uniquely; and she filled his absence somewhat with a quick affair which made her only mildly sick.

Wandering alone through the green Domain empty of gowns in the last of the summer sun, he found no answer waiting in the woods, at the KA House, in the changing moods of Gothic visages of featured stone shifting under heat, in the fresh pain of seeing what he had once been part of without so much as learning how to love

it or what it gave him. By St. Luke's Hall he stopped for a moment, suddenly realising that not once in his life, except when bound by blood, as to his father, had he found anything he didn't start despising when it held him!—but that was the meaning of hell, to be unable to accept love given, as well as earn it striving after heaven.

The rest of the time, in Chattanooga, he spent finding Thomas Wolfe had got it wrong—that one can go home again. All was the same, except one of his sisters' maiden name, and he found no more of himself through the long heat than what his mother could have sent by post: old letters, snapshots, souvenirs, and beer-mats from a hundred college bars.

And when he returned, tanned and heavier, with talk of food and kin and the Negro Question, and, blushing a little, told her, "I'm afraid it will take a little longer than I said to get to the bottom of things," the last bastion of her defences trembled but upheld her, the patience in her eyes like a migraine dulled by Christian Science or codeine.

Paris Leary

Atavist

Not even the poets with their chalk-faced girls
and Greek-love buddies knew what to make of him.
So young, with those yellow-blond curls
on his white forehead, skinny too, not slim,
he stood like a colt and stammered when he spoke.
Most everyone dismissed him as a joke.

He called the Boy Scouts "Philistine,"
I remember, once. He was the younger—
he couldn't have been more than eight or nine,
and I twelve. And though I was the stronger,
with a lot more common-sense, I thought that he
had got an in on some mystery,

and rather envied him because I guessed
he liked me not because of what I was,
not because I played and fought the best
or did his Latin for him, but because
of something in me I couldn't see,
someone, perhaps, a different, ideal Me.

Older women, and men sometimes too,
sensed he had a certain beauty, tried
to tell each other what they thought they knew,
but never with success. They were defied—
not by that voice, his strangeness, or his mien,
but by something he, not they, had seen

and kept his face turned to, like an unheard
voice, like a sort of private sunrise
in the face of a God who had a morning word
for him alone. The college thought him wise
with something he had found in a book;
but even as a child he had had that look.

Odd, yet never quite unpopular,
he seemed a throw-back to another age:
brooding on the "next and final" war,
he tried to turn our apathy to rage,
talking as if Spain and Budapest
constituted one event, one test,

a single betrayal, and how his little feet
danced as he called us "ex-liberal"!
We laughed when he said that we were "beat"—
the word so strange on his unmanageable
soft voice—but when he took up the Poor,
he was set down finally for a bore.

No one paid attention, even at first,
when he started in canvassing the House—
something to do with how we had cursed
some Jap sailors, and he wanted to "rouse
our lethargy." They all called him a fool,
and the pledges threw him in the swimming-pool.

He took the hint, all right, and receded
into the weird world of committee,
panel, and debating, always pleaded
his work whenever conscience got after me
and I asked him out for coffee or a drink.
"You're going to save the world, that's what you
think,

isn't it?" I asked him on the phone.
There was a pause, and then with that same
voice that used to cut me to the bone
when we were kids together, he spoke my name
and said, "I'd like to. That's the difference
between us," still low on common-sense.

We lost touch, after college, with each other,
and I hadn't heard of him in several years
until I read in a note from his mother,
which, thinking of our past, she wrote in tears,
that he was dead. Something of the throat.
And I sat, folding up the quiet note,
thinking, not of what it must have cost
him to die so young, before he knew
whether his world would be saved or lost,
but of his beauty noticed by so few,
wondering if death had turned away his eyes
from that damned invisible sunrise.

Paris Leary

Miss Dodie

It was a shut house, but it drew the wind within it
by flue and floor and fastened double window.
It was a Yale-locked, chain-locked, bolted, tight-shut
house,
but the wind brought burglars, peeping-toms, and
neighbours—
all one to her—by screen and scratch and pane
and walked them through her dozing and her waking.
She slept, her body arched against assault,
the electric flakes between her eyes and eyelids
charged with fluttering dreams of knock or step.
She slept, and woke, and slept again, starting
at sound of leaf or creak of masonry.
She heard the buzz of the eiderdowned receiver
on the landing, taken off its hook in fear
of improper messages and threats,

and the dirty words and promises of death
 hummed in the wires the wind whined through
 outside.

And silent, silent, by the steamer-trunk
 the rats had their way with kitty, wicked Puff,
 locked away last month in the silent attic
 as punishment for crying in the night.

Paris Leary

GAMES, HARD PRESS AND BRUISE OF THE FLESH

boys banging oneanother break and breathless
 brush past arms brash Flagnatcher!
 but blocked bash bam hearts thick
 in the birdchests ache squeeze topple and tum-
 ble tornshirted and kinder crazy scramble and scratch
 in the grass bump bone and shoulderscratch
 smack slap swat greenkneed raw
 push press pound pummel and pop
 bodies—nosewhacked breath faster and cold
 shove! and then rip-out-ragged, knuckle ankle,
 stomach sucked tight on the run balls
 hugged up trip but though thump overhead
 overheels crumple safe at base, spit rise and spout
 snot and tearstreakers bloodyhot rage ram-
 page weep holler clobber them clout o snort
 triumph! trample gag and rout:
 not flags of sex even can brag such sport.

R. G. Vliet

**FOR ALLEN AND NATALIE MARQUARDT,
KILLED ON THE HIGHWAY**

On the gray frenzy of the highway, still
The broken line points beyond frenzy
With authority admitting of no doubt.

Your car was headed for a wedding. Underneath
The asphalt uncoiled, steady in the morning glare
Of Midwest summer. Suddenly the noon of your life
came in a

Crash, never to be repealed:

It hangs forever on the published smile
That proclaims queen of local youth the vanished
Bride. And while that halo in the newspaper
Begins relentlessly to yellow, you
Gently mock us survivors left to how many highways
And to the mercy of statistics. To be, then not to bear
Nor to become: one swerve from the white spine
Of the road was enough. Reptilian shudders
Rippled the asphalt skin, a metamorphosis
Was improvised under the sky,
Most unbecoming ceremony! The day came of age.
But you, newcomers almost, could not tell.
You had a rendezvous to keep. At the end of the way
Another consummation waited; marriages are formal.

Now, lifted beyond voice and listening, baptized
And remarried in blood, you hold secret discourse
With me. I grieve over lost youth; you insist
From the immobility of a photograph
That the art to shed a world, untaught, unlearned
But in a totally unrehearsed flash,
Is appropriate goal for any journey.

Glauco Cambon

TWELVE HAWKS

From the burning highway where I drove
with my small daughter, I saw their shapes,
blurred through the pane of August,
black lumps sticking to the bones of oak,
and my gorge filled with ancient sickness
and my daughter with strange fire.

When we had climbed the wire to invade
their wild land, and bleached in its blue shroud
the bone-bare tree grew taller,
hooked heads swiveled to our captured eyes,
and the song I had thought was silence
became a dirge of locusts.

A hot wind rustled in the grasses
where the small prey crouched. Close to the creek
a cardinal flashed and whistled.
And she, thigh-deep in briars, hands bright
with goldenrod, laid bare with wary foot
the tiny, broken skull.

Then the heavy, deliberate wings
shrugged loose, broke black against bright air,
exploding out of the bone,
a slow storm of brutal, beautiful
hawks, climbing the wind with heavy grace
and sun-raking symmetry,

until, shooting the blue cataracts,
coasting the cold mountains of the air
between our flesh and the sun,
the twelve circled through a zodiac,
trailing shadows that possessed the world
and my daughter's upraised face.

Full of the skull, sky, oak, and wild land,
I drove on, on the burning highway,
my daughter listening beyond
the wings, the music, and her father's voice
that fought hawk shadows fondling the earth
through an August of savage flight.

Donald W. Baker

ONLY MY HEART

Only

I child-walked with stovewood
Indignantly splintered they said.

Only

I foot-squashed a ripe peach

Only

The peach stone burst out

Only

The peach had down-feathers

Only

Blood circled a spout

Only

They reasoned, a chicken
Had only a little bled.

Only

I stepped toward darkness

Only

My heart wept dead.

Genie Rollings Valentine

ELEMENTAL

Denied the upper air
Where burning is clean and free,
Fire sinks below the stair
And creeps along the floor
To plunder endlessly.

Behind the inner door
In mounds of castoff clothes,
It billows to their shape
And confidently goes
Down corridors of cold
To kindle my threshold.

I waken from the sleep
Of disciplined desire
To waterfalls of light
And pinnacles of fire;
Survey the flaming north,
The whirling upper air,
And fling myself to earth
To take my comfort bare.

Sister Mary Gilbert, SNJM

FOUR POEMS**violence is love****(to jeanette)**

it was simple for us
we had no place to go
but to ourselves
through each other
no one who cared
to keep us apart,
bread of hunger
when you're hungry
angry
sweet angry bread of love
you tend to food
there is no time
for introduction
violence is now
is love
it helps
when you are poor,
we met that way
worlds too busy
with other things.

Emile Snyder

lullabye to no child**(and my son)**

if the mountains stood still
and stable horses came back
if the sun was no one
and streams flowed downward
you'd be a man
with no dream
a man
no dream

but the mountains travel far
and stable horses disappear
where the sun has a scar
and streams find their spring
for the child with a dream
a child
a dream

Emile Snyder**illegal**

1. i live in constant terror
of being illegal
steal a flower
par megarde
in someone's garden
put it in my pocket
people after me
to my doorstep
for restitution
it is even worse

when i lose it
or swallow it
for sheer pleasure
they're sore at me
think i'm lying
or perverted
that is illegal
too

2. where is the permissible
and how many tickets
(for i have many friends)
can i buy
at the airport
i don't attack
your restrictions
only i feel
you do not understand
my faith

they looked at him
without meanness
with amusement even
closed the windows
locked the place
went home

and around the child
who spoke miracles
the walls caved in

Emile Snyder

goldfish at home**(for my daughter)**

in the fish bowl there is
 a water snail
 a green plant
 two small fish
 a gold a black
 that is all
 but some afternoon
 between two naps
 a child
 perched on her youth
 stares with delight
 like a cat

Emile Snyder
**SUBURBAN MATRON ABHORRING
 UNPLANNED PARENTAGE**

Hers is a chaste crusade in the pure cause
 Of order in the orchard; she will pause
 A tense tendentious week computing needs
 Before she violates a pack of seeds.
 She will not set a plant before she knows
 Precisely its portent, the shade it throws,
 Its height, its breadth, its fragrance, its diseases,
 The bugs it tempts, the type of bee it pleases.

Behind her back, the renegade breeze steals
 Pollen from pure bred blooms; incestuous roots
 Clandestinely entwine beneath her heels;
 Fat weeds thrust insolent unlicensed shoots
 Between the virgin rows; a dim worm creeps
 Into her teeming hot bed while she sleeps.

J. Rachuy

TWO POEMS**The Yellow Packard**

My Uncle Jopie, a quite successful
And very dashing medical doctor,
Married a slightly neurotic widow,
With whom he traveled brightly to Florence,
Bought wrought-iron gates and intricate windows,
Gessoed ceilings and piles of pilasters,
Even brought in some kind of Italian,
To build a dashing Renaissance right in
The old home town. It was a beauty,
Except it somehow never got finished:
She was forever tearing a wall out
Or changing the loft to take the organ,
And he'd go blithely singing and tearing
Along the back roads without his hat on,
Cheering his patients. Each of them carved in
A deep relief a beautiful bedroom
Door full of mendicant friars, abbots,
Nuns and virgins with beautiful niches.
His gold pompadour sang like a comet in
Beautiful tenor, heading a rolling
Curdle of dust of back roads merrily,
Taking the hills like cream in the yellow
Packard with bulging F. Scott Fitzgerald
Fender boxes and steps to the rumble,
Snappy cylindrical shock absorbers,
And sixty-pound tires that blew one morning,
Smashing the dart on the dash at sixty.

Sheridan Baker

The Cottage

My Uncle Bill knew how to putter and
Turn seasoned time on a lathe of humor.
He knew, as the bright wood skirled, that life was
Really something you didn't want finished.
He and his boys made a diving helmet
To watch the fish come twitching and drifting
In through undulant trunks of kelp with a
Lazy fan of green sun and crepe shadow.
Later he carved a marvelous chess set
With different comic worried faces and
Odds and ends of hand-me-down helmets that
Never quite fit. He never used it. He
Dabbled in potting, he planned and built a
Tight redwood cottage, plumb as a box, with
A pitch to the roof like a Greek temple.
There were powdery grapes, and an arbor,
A little stippled lawn of dichondra,
Stepping stones, tropical leaves, a fruit tree,
Sun and shade and big pots of begonias
Hanging on wires. He went partly blind. The
Lazy humorous light would sway slightly,
The chessmen waited as if expecting
A wide-eyed fish at the square window where
Shadows curled from the waxy begonias.

Sheridan Baker