

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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ABSALOM, MY SON, MY SON

The covenant is broken. Absalom
is hanging by his dainty girlish curls.
I wonder why he never understood
that peasants' sons may topple their fathers' rule
but never princes: I am king, the state,
the law, the representative of God,
the chosen Jew. My son. My son. Is this
my son, this puppet twitching on a limb
of the family tree? this paper effigy
of Jesse's line and Abraham's and Moses' ?
I wonder why he never understood
that chromosomes hold sons to promises
made in that raging male and female shudder
when past pours forth a future, and not annulled
even by another rage. Wind squalls.
He doesn't look much like God's blessing now.
I wonder if he ever understood
that kings, though they may grieve like men,
must act
like rulers. Futile leaves rip loose and fall
on him like rags that try to cover up
the family shame, like ripped, wet rags that cling
to a scarecrow after a thunderstorm.

Warren Kliewer

TWO POEMS**Tomba tomba**

The bumble bee
or Hottentot
may understand the apricot,
but he, with years and years of school
may still be some New Order fool

The dragonfly
or Cherokee
might understand astrology
but he, diplomaed to the eyes
may not be half so kind or wise.

Jay Ames

Boomer

I've gandy danced the C.P.R
the Pennsy and C.N
and if I had it all to do
why I'd do it all again.

I've watched the sun—right after rain
smear gold along the pike
and heard the mountains echo
to each muscle driven spike.

I've boomered down the Sante Fe
from Wichita to Worth

with every kind of man there is
from everyplace on earth.

I've took my chow with Jans and Svens
Pepitos, Karls and Joes,
with Ivans, Egberts, Bills and Pauls
in hails and blinding snows.

I've spotted for the Chesapeake
the Wabash, B and O
I've had my share of cakes and ale
so—when it's time to go

Just lay me down beside the track
ten rails around the bend
and on the marker at my head
inscribe — “Here lies a friend”

There let me lie, in sun and rain,
so I but snugly lie,
and listen to the whistles
of the big ‘uns rattlin’ by.

Jay Ames

TWO POEMS

Legacies

My grandmother, dying, kindled in me
The spark of my own death. She died of fire,
Poking and prying with arthritic hands
Among the paper bags and tinder wood,
Bread wrappers and thin, waxed milk bottle caps,
Caramel cellophane and twisted scraps
Of morning papers. What tidings she read,
Stooped over her bleak stove, conjuring flames
To heat the water for her bath, her shawl
Like a tatter hung from a scarecrow's back,
I do not know. She may have seen among
The discards of her proud senility
Some imitation of herself: her lungs
Wadded to thin capacities of breath,
Naked ribs turning yellow in the scaled
Constriction of dry walls, and wrinkled flesh
Glossy with wear; she may even have thought,
Glimpsing the souvenirs of last week's life
Through cataracts, of platelets bearing blood
Grimly, vainly, to all the body's ends;
She may have watched while the transparencies
Of brittle viscera uncurled from warmth,
Or how those twisted muscles which exclaimed
The actions of her years unwound and told
Again in slow, striated sequences
Her vanities. And though she could not hear
The stifled thunder of those mirrored parts
Muttering her mortality at last,
For she was deaf, she must—when she had felt

The ardent tongues licking their spittle words
About her wrists, and her lace bodice turned
To fire-stuff, and she knew how she wore
A shawl knit out of flame—she must have heard
Her own screaming, must have smelled her own flesh,
Must have perceived the dance of her own death
Performed in shadows on the cellar walls.

I was at school, my father was at work,
My mother was at market. No one saw.
My grandmother died with no witnesses
Save her own horror, her own disbelief
That seventy-three years could end in ashes.
You understand that this was kept from me
As well as such a secret can be kept.
The big black house with its warped window glass,
Its lightning rods, each one like an eyelash
Caught upright in a pale blue tear, its porch
Settling inch by inch at the hammock end,
Its twin hydrangeas letting fall the slow,
Small, summer snow of petals on the walk,
Its gardens glutted with the purple iris,
Its front door-plate gone green with age — all this
My mind has kept alive for life's own sake.
The cellar where a woman burned to death
Is where kittens were born, is where loud coal
Slid shouting down the winter chute, is where
We brought great sacks of salt on summer days
And waited with tedious joy to lick
The ice cream from the ladders of the freezer,
Is where I was a child. It was all life,
And there was nothing else I understood.
I saw the ambulance arrive too late
And park outside. I saw the doctors brush
The green hydrangeas and no petals dropped.

I saw, later, my mother nervously
Pluck withered iris blossoms from their stalks,
Certain that new color would take their place.
I visited the services and sat
Far back, on a folding chair, where the words
Were too remote for me to comprehend.
People smiled at me. The odor of flowers
Lay like too many candies in my stomach.

Just as the seeds of one's own life are sown
By others, so the seeds of one's own death
Are sown by others. I have fixed my blame:
The adult fears, the adult strategies
To shun the fact of my mortality,
And all the paraphernalia of death
Were mine when my grandmother died; the signs
Pointing to death passed from legend to truth
With fire's speed. The bird trapped in the house
Means death; the moth on the pillow means death;
The fall within the dream means death; the worm
Left by the rain means death. Death was conceived
In me that day as surely as if Hell
And my grandmother had in fact conjoined
Upon a bed made up with winding-sheets.
I am the womb, and I grow big with death.
Riding to the cemetery each May
In the car her modest bequest had bought,
I helped put blossoms by the woman's grave.
Sunlight shone grimly on the polished stone
Or, if it rained, gray mist clouded its face
Like sweat telling how deep its root was set.
Grown, married, children of my own, I stopped
Such pilgrimages long ago. I see,
Thinking of that, the spindly spigot pipes
Dripping at corner lots, grass growing thin

In sandy car tracks, and the long-spilled pines;
Cracked plant pots, and flowerings of toy flags,
And metal vases with green-needed roots.
I speak so much of death that you may know
My subject is not fire. I have laid,
Since then, many a hearth, and have enjoyed
The warmth—but I have seen my children grow
And wondered in my warmth if I can bear
Children's children watching for me to die,
To make their own lives prolific with fear.

Robley Conant Wilson

A Theologian's Mother Goose

Eden was like a children's nursery-land.
There, having named the tuffet (meaning Earth)
And next the pie (meaning the Universe)
And, last, the curds and whey (perhaps to stand
For Milk and Honey), two new playmates planned
The game of Paradise. Isn't it worth
Making mistakes if one can be the first
At something innocent? We understand

The whole mix-up was precious: There sat Eve.
Pseudonymous, she claimed it was the Spider
Roused that nameless mortality inside her.
There was Adam. Few parents would believe
He could not tell an apple from a plum,
And did not know his phallus from his thumb.

Robley Conant Wilson

TWO POEMS**Sun Bather**

I turn my flaming copper body in the sun.
Some Roman martyr would find my spine
a likely spit, to pivot first on this one,
then his other side, as I on mine.

I dream. My dreams go drowsy on the beach.
My separated words suspend me in the heady air,
and, shimmering the same mirage, my speech
turns into silence and consumes me here.

All water of gold the sun pours down
and fills and burnishes the shore.
I murmur vaguer mutterings, turn brown,
stretch into the flame and burn once more.

My many-ghosted heart seems purified
and burns alive. A wind begins to stir—
they lean, remarking who has nearly died,
huge angels who beat their wings into a blur

and hide their faces from a blazing flame.
The sound of flapping wings fills up the sea.
My eyes close. I feel the wind. There is no name
for what hot breath has covered me so massively,

pulsed once, flared up the sky. The angels pass
and cease. Their wings of stone lock shut.
The air burns into ashes, the sea to glass.
I turn. The sun may burn me pure and blacker yet.

Joseph de Roche

**For a Modern Jonah
who collects fish**

Good God, these fish have swum and formed and bred
and ate their young alive for generations ;
at Eniwetok the litter of their dead
stank up the shore in the persistent sun,

so great the numbers of such things so small.
A few, I should suppose, managed to escape
and breed at sea new monsters or new miracles.
Fish weave water in their grotesque shapes,

alien as they are and often delicate —
although hooked to the surface with the bends,
they bloat and gasp great quantities of fate,
drunk in the ecstatic brilliance of their end

where the sun flashes on these thousand scales
evolved to choke the cannibals among them,
even if they often fail. I think of whales ;
not fish, but still the ocean is the only stem
capable of bearing up those arching, vaulting ribs
and arching flukes and all the foam they float
their fury on, to dive unsounded and still live
past, shattered everywhere, harpoonless men and
boats.

In minutes the Piranha can devour a pig or a man
down to the bones, cartilage and flesh together,
letting the strewn bones lie like ivory or tin cans
shimmering under an unbelievably clear river.

Groupers, ugly for more than their ungainly size,
move slowly in the green and yellow shadows.
Angels in the form of fans with perfect eyes

fold and unfold their lives. Well, it all grows
quite endless really, complicated, strange.
Theirs is a foreign world and who would doubt it,
something so surfaceless no one could arrange
a comforting pattern either out of or for it.

Which is why yesterday when you stood —
surrounded by those double rows of tanks
before your window, emotionless, to brood
on winter — why all the glass about your flanks
became of a sudden breakable and dangerous.
Listen. I saw your fish push out. They moved
against that wall that held them in from us
as if to shatter all the glass at which they heaved.

And worse, I felt that we could really drown,
stunned by the tons of water that would pass,
stifled by those fins that would force us down.
And this is true. I saw you at that larger glass
you call your window, looking out on snow
and past it — you, too, imprisoned in some other will
but calm, as though you did not fear or care to know
how you are also lightly balanced, perishable,
how some vastness would grow round and take you
yet.
You turn and feed your fish who gulp great mouth-
fuls
of bubbling water, rising at the measured food they
get.
Careful feeder that you are, the food is still too
casual.

Joseph de Roche

A GIRL AT THE SHORE

Far off the shore, the clear sea shivers.
Boats turn like compass dials.
Gulls wheel above the beach. Tall barges
Of cloud glide over ledges
And wash the blaze of sun from waves.
She sits up from her sleep
And shakes the sand and sea-gold dream
From her brown arms and legs.
The juniper and spruce grow dark;
The needles of their boughs
Suspend the first wet drops of rain
And shine. At first she wants
The trees for shelter but the sound
Of muffled thunder holds
Her back. Wrapped in the candy-stripes
Of her wide blanket now,
She watches families run for cars
And narrow, rented porches.
The rain moves like a tall prow
Blown inland from the north;
She follows its sound on the basking sea,
Could she speak to the sea as rain,
Dissolving all its flecks of silver,
Or walk to the water's edge,
Spreading her hands above the spill
Of waves and rolling mists,
Contracting blue perspectives east—
Experience some change—
This squall would beat her from the shore.
Instead she sinks through its folds,
Bent by the wind, cold to the storm,
Turned monstrous against herself.
A gull alights on a rain-filled bowl

Of stone. With eyes vacant,
It searches distances that die
On every wave and tongue
Of fog. Her fingers clutch the sand
Grasping what is familiar.
*O gull ride over tides and thread
The rainbow through her eyes.
Let her catch the dropping rain and pour
Handfuls on her heart.*
Boats turn. The wind is stiff and dry.

William Goodreau

COMPANY

The somewhere that I live in
Is seldom where I am. The guests
Listen to the Brahms and perhaps
See pictures or whatever; I have
Been with my dead grandfather
Felling locust trees for a nickel
An hour. I did not ask for this
But do not know without it.
The somewhere that I live in
Is seldom where I am, and has
Its special pain to add to here.

Harold Grutzmacher

TWO POEMS

Imperial Tomb

Ravenna, Fifth Century

The old brick casing of the tomb appalls
The traveller—until he steps within.
As through an eyelid, there the sunshine falls
Reddened through little windowpanes of thin
Translucent alabaster. Suddenly
All the mosaics of the dome awake;
The chapel turns to jewel-box; we see
Stars in the bluest heaven, a blazing crown,
Doves, martyrs, emblematic harts who slake
Their longing where the water rushes down.

Confidently a band of sheep may take
Rest by their shepherd . . . while our spirits ache,
Thinking how near those craftsmen were to him—
Nearer than we to Shakespeare. By the dim
Sarcophagus with glory overhead,
We mourn that blessed interlude, too brief,
When saints were comforted by seraphim,
And the most halting traveler was led
By young religion and a strong belief.

Celeste Turner Wright

Dinner Time at Port Royal

Jamaica: June 7, 1692

Noon was an hour of security,
Good humor, with a beef-and-turtle stew
In Jemmy's cookhouse; there the long clay pipes

And onion-shaped Madeira bottles danced,
Pulsating as a bosun roared his jokes,
The saltier for wenches' tittering.

Siesta time would follow, curtained well
From the Jamaican sun and pillowed soft
On the assurance of prosperity:
Cotton, tobacco, rum, and sugar stacked
Up to the rafters of the warehouse roof.
O thriving city, once the waterfront
Most harborsome to Henry Morgan's mates;
Port Royal—marketplace, emporium,
Lusty Gomorrah of the Caribbean!

"Twenty to moontime," registered the tick
Of Captain Williams' watch from Amsterdam;
Warm in his pocket and invisible
It promised dinner: "Twenty minutes to."

Earth heaved and shook like billows: earthy mouths
Opened to swallow men; the houses cracked:
The tall brick buildings on that sandy spit
Dissolved in ocean like so many cubes
Of sugar in a bowl of planter's punch;
And then a tidal wave swept overland—
Over two thousand human heads that drowned.

For centuries the soup-bones in their pot
Lay under silting of the harbor floor,
Quaint storage place for pipe and candlestick;
Down there the sherry, though securely corked,
Became the bitterest Golgothan brew,
And coral thickened on the shining brass
Of Williams' treasure. (Water-scorpions
And barracuda never ask the time.)
When divers finally salvaged it, they found
The hands affirming, "Eighteen minutes to."

Celeste Turner Wright

WONDERING

I wonder whether it is harder to balance on the point
of a needle

Than to support oneself on atoms whose stability
is manifestly questionable.

There was a scientist who thought that wearing
snowshoes was

A practical solution of distributing weight on un-
certain density.

And I, myself, like to think of atoms which might
ooze, but probably do effervesce

Through rawhide mesh.

One is troubled, however, by not being able to put
a color on this process.

The theologian who worried about the number of
angels

Who could stand on a needle's point,

Did not have to do a time-study to be taken seri-
ously —

At least, he found a few who were willing to argue.

The matter was much complicated by the cherubim

Who are smaller and have no feet.

I was thinking that there is one difference to be
considered,

Which is that angels do not have to cooperate,

But everyone has to slither across atoms,

As far as we know.

And it is curious, finally, to observe that systematic
inquiry

Is likely to impale the investigator on a painful sliver
of dilemma,

While the investigated flutters away to tickle the
 soft skull
 Of some scholar-poet.

On the other hand, the question of what we are
 standing on

And how we manage to keep upright, if we do,
 Seems rather immediate and even real.

But since one sees other people and trees

Acting as if they weren't concerned,

It becomes sensible to drape that cover-all on an
 empty

Hanger in the hall closet,

Being hardly surprised at all, when the door does
 not shut

As easily as before.

M. J. Smith

HEBRAICA

from Cuadro Flamenco

Blessed is the Lord for blood
 opening opening its carnations
 on a green cry of flesh

Blessed is the Lord for breath
 in the mouth of a hanged man
 passage through the mountains
 strength to leave in each country
 fields that flow with carnations
 Blessed is the Lord for blood.

S. Dorman

TWO POEMS**Resurrection**

Abandoned in the stifling tomb
Facing his own face and no other face
He made the greater sacrifice:
The cross.

He brushed the flecks of dried blood from his lips
And knew the pitcher would sweat cold
When he drew it from the well
And that his lips would bulge with the touch of
water
Like shrivelled roots fleshing after rain.

He touched the foolish scraggled beard
Brittle with the dry salt of those hours
And the dry grit of the desert path
And knew it could stand the drench of hot water
And the stroking of a hard brush pulling through it
And the neat clacking of busy shears
And the quietude of a rough deep towel
Warm on his cheeks.

Touched the sharp blade of a rib
And remembered the famished days
The scuffled trudging from village to village
Staggering under the load of the unutterable word
That could not be laid down nor given away nor
taken.

His fingers trembled at his loins
And knew the pallor of immolation
Senses drab, dipping into death at the root

Gelding anger and love and hate and pity and lust
The flesh subdued—
The soul redeemed.

And there in the tomb
Facing his own face and no other face
He made the greater sacrifice: the soul
The soul undomiciled
Naked searching gull without a roost
Wings in the infinite wash of the white sky
And no landfall.

And he touched the ravished sinews and the holes
(Heritage of ardent spikes through offered flesh
and sullen wood)

And out of his grief for his harrowed bones
Yielded himself to the surgeon's art
To heal himself
Here in the flesh, hot in the hair and the breathing
Here in the life, the hurt and the gasping lust
Here in the sweat and the life
And the musk of the breathing.

Thus it came to him, concerning the Magdalene
What his eyes could not see then, blind in his preach-
ing

Her breasts
The amiable rising and falling of her two breasts.

Sidney Brenner

Kali

Molly Steneman, beloved sister
Joshua Parrish, treasured son

Reposing now in their rotund mother
Whirling around the sun.

Ravenous mother, ever feasting
Cracking bone and sucking marrow
Gravid sow, incessantly
Devouring her farrow.

We'll heap men and roses on your platter
and fields where blood is caked
Moist girls, minnows freshly spawned . . .
Is your thirst slaked?

We'll bring you foals of spring and bluebirds
And children with wandering feet
Puffed green aphids, brittle brown wireworms . . .
Are you replete?

We'll bring you sky-piercing hawks and haddock
And whales in spuming rut
Clenched molluscs, heavy blue dungflies . . .
Is this your glut?

Or will there be no end of feasting
In harvest or in drouth
Until the carnal mother falls prey
To the wide, enfolding mouth?

Sidney Brenner

ASSORTED ORNAMENTS
 FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREES
 OF THE MIDDLE-AGED
 MADE FROM SCRAPS
 LEFT LYING ABOUT
 THE ELEGIAC MIND

Ribbed
 Ferris waist
 I one-time wore
 in nineteen hundred twenty
 was buttoned
 (yellow bone, not pearl)
 by other fingers
 down
 knit
 front
 (back, of course, was girls).

Jap Rose
 was a pretty soap
 (translucent twenties reeling)
 when yellow
 bursting
 splintered green
 in glint
 from tile to ceiling,
 and bath-tub sun
 lit glycerin dream
 of shattered iridescent gleam
 to opulence
 of opalene.

Roller towel
rattled from
rickety rack
(blue lines on crash in twenty)
and spun from rung'd back
of pot-pantry door
to which we'd hop
a fresh-scrubbed floor.
(Oh, sun-white maple boards
new strewn
with isolate islands
of slidey
Tribune.)

Christmas trees
we dragged to lot
(oh twenties, resinous seeping)
and winter blaze
in twilight haze
enkindled to set leaping
balsam light
that licked back night
as curded sky bloomed rose
dissolving hush
where branches flushed
in arch of dark enclose
with black elm fringed
and violet tinged
by mortal boy's suppose.
For there I heard
whirred rush of bird
brush darkness as it came
to snowy land
where still I stand
to fly my kites of flame.

The
 Gold Dust Twins
 on print-blurred box
 (orangely then in nineteen twenty)
 wash-tubs thubbed
 and scrub-boards rubbed
 in corybantic sibling antic.
 Polylingual, polyglottal,
 gifted young with many tongues
 (Teutonic and Romantic)
 on back and sides they vowed to banish
 grime in German,
 French
 and Spanish.

Victrolas
 were *victrolas* when
 (oh echo, hand wound twenties)
 in running down
 they'd flat to bleat
 glint-glitter of bravura
 so Galli-Curci'd moo mad bass
 for Lakme's coloratura.
 Brass knob
 could treble speed and key
 and glib quartette
 from *Rigoletto*
 gabble into gibble shrilled
 as daggers sharpened
 to shrieked stilettoes,
 or Schumann-Heink
 in squeaked alt trilled
hoch-German jabber gibbered
 of falsetto *Stille Nacht*
 from guttural glabble glibbered.

Warren

Gamaliel Harding died
 when mint-bright were the twenties;
 we loved his middle name and tried
 to think it was historic
 that we should watch
 from pillared bank
 (the capitals were vast and Doric)
 his coffin in flagged parlor-car
 stop at suburban station.
 Young Legion blew its saddest taps
 and we, by invitation,
 went into director's room
 where a light collation
 was served to those so privileged
 to represent our nation.
 Our mothers wore black hats, black gloves;
 our fathers owned bank stock;
 outside, non-vested choir sang
 of cleft in Ages' Rock.

Hair

Receivers
 never held hair
 (Haviland lid had hole in twenty)
 and things you'd looked for everywhere
 often just happened to be there
 on account of their being
 such very good places
 for finding (or putting)
 of half-worn shoelaces,

 paperless stubs
 of purple crayola,
 fiber needles
 for upstairs victrola,

stamps without any glue
on their backs
(we sent for samples),
ju-jubes, jacks,

rubber bands,
Sen-Sen, aggies or mibs,
pennies, nickels,
(double *van dibs*),
Tinker-Toy sprockets,
garters for socks,
prizes once prized
from Cracker-Jack box,

puzzling pits
of plums and dates,
and fugitive keys
of roller skates.

Dressmaker
ripped, snipped, snapped, and sewed
(treadled twenties whirring)
in sewing room which overflowed
with clack of tongue and shears.
We called her "Mrs. Know-it-all";
she called us "little dears."

While we watched
from back-hall stairs,
(not invited in!)
our mother stood
on straight-backed chair,
and she crawled,
mouthing pins.
(Oh cutty scissors—
hers, not ours—

Oh duvetyn, monkey furred!
Oh scarlet velvet evening wrap
with collar crushly shirred!)

Napkin rings
succeeded bibs
(damask twenties sometimes soiled)
and in silver circle held
a past in past itself encoiled.
My brother's had his name, a stork,
his birth date, height, and weight;
it matched the pusher,
spoon and fork
with which he messed and ate;
mine had a Teddy Bear on front,
on back, my name in script;
our mother's we once made ourselves
of birch bark, yarn, and spit;
our father had no need of cramped,
camp-sweated handicraft;
his had been a christening gift
from William Howard
Taft.

Kitchen
Klenzer
teased the mind
of boy on pot in twenties
for cook in kitchen saw herself
complete in repetitious pan
and that cook saw herself again
in still another can.

Thus pan
succeeded can

and can
in mirrored pan
bright certitude reflected
which cook
who took
unending look
impassively inspected.

But boy on pot
(as who has not)
the paradox detected
whereby he
reflectively
in gaze from can to can
descried the lot
in pictured pot
of existential man.

For did he not cast glance with pants
dispassionately floorward,
and then expect in retrospect
to look obliquely forward?
Ensanguined dust
forever must
unknot implicit riddle
intrinsic where
extrinsic glare
obscures the mirrored middle.

John Stewart Carter

**A GLOSSARY FOR THE YOUNG TO ACCOMPANY
"ASSORTED ORNAMENTS."**

Ferris waist: This was the trade name for an undergarment worn by both boys (buttoned down the front) and girls (buttoned down the back). It was made of fairly heavy, knitted cotton with a series of other buttons to which our trousers (or skirts) were attached. From it suspended tapes which held the removable garters for our stockings. It was not worn on Sundays when we wore knee-length socks and our black velvet trousers were fastened by pearl buttons to our blouses (not shirts). We graduated from Ferris waists to B.V.D.'s, belts, and knickerbockers.

yellow bone: I have not seen a yellow bone button in thirty years. They looked like yellowish soap and had two, rather than four holes. They were much better for sucking than pearl buttons. It is, I suppose, sociologically significant that although we were brought up in what would seem to my own children the most luxurious and extravagant fashion, some atavistic puritanism dictated that as long as they did not show, buttons should be bone.

Jap Rose: This really was a pretty soap, about the color of Vaseline and translucent in the same way. It did not float. Fairy Soap and Ivory Soap floated.

roller towel: These, I suppose, have entirely disappeared. I know that for years our kitchen has been strewn with yards of paper toweling. They were generally of heavy linen crash and were generally dirty. They were always changed after the floor was scrubbed.

pot-pantry: There was only one **kitchen cabinet** in the kitchen, which was never a **cabinet kitchen**. Everything was kept in closets which were called **pantries**. Actually our roller towel was over the **fireless cooker** upon which we climbed to reach the towel, but if you want to put a fireless cooker in a poem some time, just try it.

white maple: Linoleum did not appear in general use until

the mid-twenties. Kitchen floors were always maple, and the woodwork was varnished, not painted, pine.

Gold Dust Twins: This was before the NAACP, and the twins were pickaninnies who cavorted, cartoon fashion, on the front of the orange box. We were utterly fascinated by the instructions. These appeared not only in German script, French and Spanish, but also, it seems to me, in Czech, Swedish, and Dutch. We often had maids who could read them aloud to us to our great delight. Silver polish also contained wonderful directions on a separate slip, which soon was soaked with the stuff.

grime: This is a **period** word. I would never use it in such a context for **dirt** today.

collation: This is strictly a **period** word. It meant something provided by a caterer and was perfectly all right for a bank. It would have been considered "meager" at home where it was presumed that, although extra maids might be hired, you were "equipped" to provide any number of guests with "decent" food. Chicken sandwiches and tongue sandwiches — even with the thinnest bread — **frappé** — which we always called **sloppay** — and "store" **petits fours** would never have been considered anything but a collation.

black hats: These were worn — even in the dead of summer as here — to all funerals and on all **sympathy calls, out of respect.**

Hair Receivers: These were round boxes belonging to **dresser sets.** Sometimes they were ivory; very often, as here, of hand-painted china. By the twenties, since nothing was ever thrown out, they had been retired to children's rooms, guest rooms, and sewing rooms (see below). I think their original purpose was to hold combings of hair. In any case, they matched the powder box (which never held powder) and the trays for combs and brushes. I even remember a vase that matched. This was for hat

pins, I was told, and considered it a conspicuous refinement. That it then appeared on the dresser of a new born baby would not have been considered even faintly odd. Of course, it never held hat pins.

upstairs victrola: Almost everything existed in two forms, **upstairs** and **downstairs**. As children we were very seldom downstairs at all, except in the kitchen and in the dining room to eat. There was an upstairs **living room** with its own fireplace arranged for a **gas grate**, a **library table** in the center of the floor, and the **upstairs victrola**—lower case because all phonographs were called **victrolas**, even when they were Brunswicks, as ours was.

dressmaker: The **dressmaker** came to the house one or two days a year, and there was a great flurry of making **over**. Evening dresses in particular were always being made **over**, and I remember three distinct incarnations of our mother's wedding dress. Her **best dresses** were bought—or made **out**—but last year's best became the new year's second best through the agency of a dressmaker who came to the house.

treadle: The sewing machine was powered by foot. The treadle was large, cast-iron, and ornate.

sewing room: All houses had extra bedrooms, the best of which would be called **guest rooms**. The least desirable (by the back stairs) would be called the **sewing room** and furnished with a brass bed, a painted dresser, the sewing machine, and a couple of dining room chairs from **before we were born**.

gift: We **never** said **gift**. We always said **present**, but in this case **gift** rhymes half-heartedly with **spit** and has one fewer syllables. Even so, it bothers me.

cook: The woman on the Kitchen Klenzer can was clearly a **cook** and not a **maid**. Maids wore uniforms with long sleeves. Cooks were crabbier than maids.

TWO POEMS**Fay Winfield**

She slept one night of her sixty-seventh year
with a dead husband.
Rolling against cold flesh at dawn
she drew away
as if shying back from a crater,
then waited,
and gathered her mind.

After the autumn Yankee funeral
where he lay old and shiny
like crackle-glaze ceramic,
Fay Winfield sat with guests,
accepted a ride to the base of her hill
and walked upward, home.
Shucking corn for supper,
the night rain mulched the ground with husks.

With the excuse of Christmas
she spun presents on her loom
for neighbors who sucked the muddy hill with boots
and carried store bought goods.
Standing in her ninety-seven pounds
she smiled, when asked, and dragged a shotgun
from her bedroom.
"What have I got to be afraid of?"
Later that summer she confided,
"I sneak down to the brook
and get myself a trout when I want one."

Two years ago, Fay Winfield perched
in mother's kitchen and ate half a piece of Johnny-
cake
while the cattails fluffed into the sky
and leafed the fowling clouds.
She told how she ate six times a day now
since the cancerous half of her stomach
was cut out like a rotten gourd.

But she never mentioned his muscling shoulders
reaching up with forks of hay
and her stamping on the springy pile,
his pipe thoughts inhaled on an autumn night,
his breaths wheezed out across an armful
of sunrise winter oak,
his nighttime touch and those close hours;
nor did she tell of that awful morning,
how she was cold inside
as if suddenly walking into a lowland fog.
But she showed mother the iron she spun
from her veins into seven aprons,
two tablecloths, and a comforter.

That October, she sat by her window
knitting for Christmas. For something that after-
wards
she forgot, she shuffled to the kitchen.
A crashing filled her head and noise
shivered through the rooms.
Some fool hunter flushed a partridge by her barn
and shot it flying past her window.
Glass spit at the corners and onto the shelves.
She told us she crept to the window
and waited for him to dare and fetch his bird.

Two hours later, while the sun set like melting steel
she went out and fetched it herself
and plucked it, and cooked it, and ate it.

Fay Winfield knitted through December
but wrote mother that she could not keep warm
even though she kept a fire in all three stoves
with wood the lumberjacks tossed
in her shed last fall.

"I wouldn't let them split it though," she wrote,
" 'Split it myself,' I told them" and added,
"I nicked my leg once, but it healed."

In February, a neighbor out rabbit hunting
found Fay Winfield in the woodshed
frozen to the floor like a brush bough
after a heavy frost.

She was curled up dead in four home-made woolen
sweaters, and held an axe half through a piece of oak.

That spring a lawn auctioneer
bellowed away the Winfield farm in the rain,
and the Methodist Church bought the loom at \$1.77
for the missionary sewing circle.

Today, Fay Winfield's dust
gathers on the wooden frame.

Donald Junkins

**Pickereel Fishing with a Long Bamboo Pole and a
Dead Frog**

Gray skies :
Swamp eyes
Ogled me
In silent scrutiny.

Close by the shore, sounds
Bubbled up from the mud and little mounds
Rose up with eyes.
Surprise
When I flopped my bait
Too close. They wouldn't wait,
Those frogs,
And snuggled under water-logs.

In open water where the wind made
Snarls and played
Them out in backward V's
My boat lugged over trunks of sunken trees.

I swung my bait and flopped
It by a log. Three turtles plopped
Down in the water

One
Two
Three
As if signaled by a starter,

Then calm
Again, and quiet. On my arm
A red mosquito
Needled so
It seemed the day
Itself was nagging to say
Something strangely
Important to me.

And when that lunging pickerel crashed
Against my bait, and thrashed
The weeds, I
Felt the sky
And all her warrior birds
Submerged
In combat.

Lifting in that
Twenty-six inch
Violence
Was like suddenly seeing
A dream, and a being
I had forgotten
I was trying to remember. When
He flopped as high
As the sides of the boat I
Lunged, myself, and swore
And breasted him to the floor

Where, in disguise
I looked into my own eyes.

Donald Junkins

THE WOMAN

She spends her children like money in the hand,
at least she speaks of money, massaging her stiff
knuckles,

the way she speaks of children. It's all investment,
and daughters-in-law are guardians of investment.

We unaccepted see her Spanish-black hair white,
her back a dromedary's, as she picks up bobby-pins
that hold the flowers to the carpeting.

What's happened to her feet? Thin, veined, arthritic.
"So long I'm on my feet," she says,
and walks on bathroom plungers with sticks of legs.

The clock is electric, so time is out of mind,
unless the phone rings loudly, long-distance Long
Island,

Detroit, or South Bend, Indiana, setting her back
three days.

Then, her head on pillows, her feet on pillows she
sleeps.

The shades are drawn against Pacific breezes.

Letters are no favor, the daily activity a worry.

Weather, colds, a troubled economy,
another mouth to feed, her son is fifty.

"Keep him warm," she writes in German script,
"Remember his heart murmur before the first World
War?"

She speaks a peasant's tongue,

"The niggers are taking over the city,"

proud of prejudice as her patio,

her stoneware dishes, the dinner at a fish grotto.

Too old for custom,

keeping kosher is a bother, and God is best averted,
a kind of evil-eye, who yet may call long-distance,

and set her back forever, lying horizontal,
when she knows the cure for all her troubles—
the double sets of pillows, the pheno-barbital for
nerves,
Vitamin B in the summer, and, after every meal, a
glass with baking soda.

The doorbell rings. She's unafraid.
It's the Mexican gardener, a newsboy, a lady friend.
It's old Mrs. Stanton, holding her purse by the
handles,
her only responsibility.
Mrs. Stanton eats her breakfast in bed,
preparing the tray ahead, the night before.

The door unlocks, the ladies embrace.
They're teen-agers, they're girlfriends. A movie is
playing,
wide-screen, technicolor, gorgeous clothes.
They run, extravagant, into the sun.

E. M. Broner

MONOLOGUE OF A SHELTERITE

Knock, knock. This porter will not equivocate;
I built this shelter for ourselves.

Jane, you must learn to love the night.

Those that carouse until second cock
cannot keep and eat their cake.

Knock, knock, knock. What nerve
to think I would share our oxygen
with the forlornest foolish virgin.

Endure your claustrophobia. Hear them neigh
like horses in a catastrophe.

It's their doomsday, not ours.

No,
you would not really rather die
in the firestorm than in this guilty cave
as you call it.

Selfish to be safe
while the knocker dies? Such a day
may come to us? Listen, the knocking and cries
have stopped.

No! It takes two to roll
that lintel stone away, and I refuse.
To what are we resurrected after all,
Jane? Not to life: most surely to death.
Sit down. Relax. We may be the seeds
of tomorrow's world if whatever gods
decree again.

Compassion and wrath?
Both belonged to Jehovah once.

You wonder if prayers can penetrate stone.
Never forget that cave dwellers always return

to the Stone Age where the spirit haunts
 every tree, every pool, every rock.
 When our bellies demand the strontium corn,
 we can panic to kneel before a rock
 to neigh, and knock, knock, knock.

Margaret Secrist

NOVEMBER

November is that distant tone
 When trumpets fade and echoes call
 And hearts proceed along their own
 Deep roads where white leaves fall.

Her days are not days but thin
 Metal pummeled by the smith's hand
 With bitter memories fashioned in
 And dawns etched upon a frozen land.

Her tree limbs are but bold veins
 Of native ore, something more than tree,
 A crusted hope that still remains
 Which we pass by reluctantly.

The grey waters of her face are plain
 And pallid, not purported tears,
 But only days of the world's rain,
 Of more sorrow and more years.

Lawrence V. Keegan, S.J.

STEIN SONG

I have never felt one way or another about Gertrude
Stein,
Nor she—and I have her affidavit for this, with
certificate of notary affixed, and she has mine—
About me.
You know. Be and let be.

A standoff. She works her side of the sty
And I,
I occupy myself with the realities of *e pluribus unum*,
ne plus ultra and such.

Being an obscure American poet (part-time)
I speak part-time for obscure America and that's
what I'm.

But to find that a description which she wrote of
Carl Van Vechten in 1923
Is an absolute plagiarism of an obscure American
poem which I was about to write, and which
is me,

Why,
That is a bit much.

John Pauker