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WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

A MEMORIAL CHAPBOOK

INTRODUCTION

This chapbook of poems by foreign and American poets was conceived during Williams' last year among us, with no thought of his approaching death. Many of us were aware of the seriousness of his illness which had deprived him of the use of his right arm. His speech had been severely impaired. He was in a depressed mood and had virtually given up any attempt to continue writing, but so strong was the influence of Williams, the doer, that we received the news of our eyes and ears through the pulsation of his lines. We saw and heard him fighting, buoyant, unshaken and undefeated. It was the occasion for a chapbook of poems in joyful hailing of the man and his life.

It was at my last visit to his house several months before his death that I sensed Williams was going rapidly. His depression had turned into a kind of triumphant bitterness in which he looked forward to death as an event. He yearned for it and spoke as if it were something lacking in his work that he needed to round out his poetry and thought. Coincidentally, poems had begun to arrive for the chapbook somber and foretelling of death. None directly presaged his own yet they were dark with such a sense of it that I could not hesitate to accept them, especially now that his situation had indeed become grave. These tragic poems were added to the chapbook. They are there to take note of his death with all the power that is in them, while the collection ends with poems of continuing love, pleasure and enthusiasm, as Williams would have approved.

At this high moment of his fame, it is almost superfluous to enumerate the man's qualities as poet, they are so well known, loved and appreciated. He stands beside Walt Whitman, a world figure, with *Paterson*, a poem of tragic and

universal import. Its theme is at the root of every social and political upheaval in the world today. In *Paterson*, Williams delineates this theme as the failure of language, the failure of communication, of necessity referring to himself as poet and contemporary in the grip of this modern dilemma, but this is only to point at the basic failure among men themselves in their attitude towards one another and towards life. It is one of separation. "Divorce is the sign of knowledge in our times," from which springs those calamities that we now witness among men, women and nations. Williams takes the small, nearly obscure American city of Paterson as his focal point, weaving symbol and reality around it on each level of society, using himself as the operational figure, sometimes as the city itself, often as man, as woman, and as the great, roaring, dumb Passaic waterfalls pouring down from above the city its torrent of power without direction, except as dying in the sea, without purpose, without soul, which is to say without language. Like *Leaves of Grass*, it is a work unprecedented in scope and intent in American literature, and as with *Leaves of Grass* comes of harsh reality in collision with an exuberant and loving man. A poem of such courageous insight and resolution was hardly to be expected in these despairing times, but then it was like Williams to go counter to the prevailing current, to state life's fullest potential against the force of the fashionable. *Paterson* is read with intense interest here and abroad. It has restored among men our first truth and idealism. In Williams America lives and is honored.

David Ignatow

Dedicated to
Flossie Williams

LETTER TO WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

I don't know how America *looks*
(from this city of tired lagoons)
but I know what America *is*
from the books of its poets —
flowers of tar, dilated eyes,
a hunger for land, a thirst for waters.

Each poet is a city,
labyrinth-city, man-city,
but there's an old one who is a man-
continent, the capital of poetry, of America,
an old poet my friends have boasted of:
"Out there, someone's out there who is
writing and making America with his words."

I'll send him a letter (I said)
I want to hear, to understand
if there's more than movies and Florida
resorts, a deeper
empire, an invention of life.

I've started this letter: "Dear,
dear Williams, here in Venice . . ."

Carlo Della Corte
translated by Sonia Raiziss

PHONE CALL TO RUTHERFORD

"It would be —
 a mercy if
 you did not come
 see me. . .

"I have dif-fi / cul-ty
 s/peaking, I
 cannot count on it, I
 am afraid it would be too em-
 barassing f f—
 for me . . . "

—Bill, can you still
 answer letters?

"No . . . my hands
 are tongue-tied . . .
 You have. . .made
 a record in my heart . . .
 Goodbye . . ."

Paul Blackburn

THE NEXT

The funeral procession swinging empty belts
 Walks on the road on the black rain
 Though the one who is dead was not ready
 In the casket lid the nails are still turning
 Behind it come the bearers
 Of tires and wet pillows and the charred ladder
 And the unrollers of torn music and a picture of
 smoke

And last the boy trailing the long
String cut off clean
Whom a voice follows calling Why a white one
When a red one would have done just as well

Under the casket the number
Is scratched out with signs of haste

We let it go we gather with other persuaders
In the parlor of the house of The Next
And I in my wax shoes my mind goes back
To the last dead Who was it I say

Could it have been my friend the old man
With the wet dog and the shed where he
Slept on a ladder till the whole place burned
Here just now was his other
Friend the carpenter
Who was besides a crusher of shells for cement

No they say he was months ago this was no one we
knew
But he was one of us

We let it go we are
Gathered with other persuaders in the parlor
The Next is upstairs he is
Ten feet tall hale and solid his bed is no deathbed
He is surrounded by friends they enjoy the secret of
safety
They are flush they are candle-lit they move to
laughter
Downstairs it is not yet known
Who will go instead of him this time
Like the others one after the other because they were
scared
The laughter keeps time on the stairs

These words start rising out of my wax shoes I
 Say we must tell him
 We must go up there we must go up there and You
 Are The Next we must tell him
 The persuaders say he would deafen us
 When we say No no one hears us

 My shoes are softening but at the same time I am
 saying
 Someone would help us and it would be us
 Even the carpenter would
 Help us when he went out he said
 He would not be gone long
 Removing a knocker from a door
 And the caskets are clearly numbered not ours we
 Must rise under the turning nails
 I say to the persuaders downstairs in the house of
 The Next

 And when they say Yes no one hears them
W. S. Merwin

A CONTRACT
(for the destruction and rebuilding of Paterson)

Flesh, and cars, tar, dug holes beneath stone
 a rude hierarchy of money, band saws cross out
 music, feeling. Even speech, corrodes.
I came here
 from where I sat boiling in my veins, cold fear
 at the death of men, the death of learning, in
 cold fear, at my own. Romantic vests of same death

blank at the corner, blank when they raise their
fingers

Criss the hearts, in dark flesh staggered so marvelous
are their lies. So complete, their mastery, of these
stupid niggers. Loud spics kill each other, and will
not

make the simple trip to Tiffany's. Will not smash
their stainless
heads, against the simpler effrontery of so callous a
code as gain.

You are no brothers, dirty woogies, dying under
dried rinds, in massa's
droopy tuxedos. Cab Calloways of the soul, at the
soul's juncture, a
music, they think will save them from our eyes. (In
back of the terminal

where the circus will not go. At the backs of crowds,
stooped and vulgar
breathing hate syllables, unintelligible rapes of all
that linger in
our new world. Killed in white fedora hats, they stand
so mute at what

whiter slaves did to my father. They muster silence.
They pray at the
steps of abstract prisons, to be kings, when all is
silence, when all
is stone. When even the stupid fruit of their loins is
gold, or something
else they cannot eat.

LeRoi Jones

from. . .THE WEATHER'S CRIMINAL

1. Sleet in May

Patient for his cue,
he waits
to say the thing that hurts.

2. Play of Early Sun and Clouds

He slinks beneath the shadow of
his jury's fragmentary smile
and works his lips
until
he gets them fixed
to his imagined understanding of
their total
soon-to-dawn
least possible
compassion.

3. Rampageous River

All heart, no head, the bold man
lives alone,
and quarrels with the stone
he dines upon.

Edwin Honig

POEM, FOR:

Give me something a heap
Of rocks, to break
Into pattern, the eyes.

Like quarry all over, —
But particularly, for

Every stone of sight.

You see, you break:
Rocks are never
Sensed, the way

They are, nor stars
Ingrained
Into another, life.

The world is half
One's eyes, and that
A rock of time, sledged

Sometimes, into a love
And fenced both
In and out of stone.

Robert S. Sward

ARIZONA

*“. . . The law gives us nothing
but a corpse, wrapped in a dirty mantle.”*

“The Desert Music” — W. C. Williams

The clawing
suicidal

brush fumbles among scabs of heat
the sahuaro
apart abstracted
sinks its thirst
into the ground's sucked veins
—the ground grows
bone cages of beasts

cultures of ant heaps
one gopher's shy caper
the snake sneaking from its own shape
abjectly

What sun ever ends like this
and bleeds down the wrinkled
hills, the jaws of a mine,
between rock corridors that disgorge
distances of light

—an archaic

telluric
fire has fused
those forums of quiescence

An abrupt crackle,
the buzzard with its gopher
rides up as if taken
then planes downward
in space

to a point
of dark instinct —
the sahuaro
slipping its shadow
founders in the night crater

Alfredo de Palchi
translated by Sonia Raiziss

LET US GO NOW

The man's head is a vehicle. No no, let it sleep. . .
It has hair growing from its trouble; hair grows
out

of the idea of death. Idea is death. The head is death with hair upon it. Also it is a vehicle upon which it is itself to ride through dream and supertime.

Do you see how the china is full of intestinal matter?

Soon, too soon the soft mouth of the worm is eating the idea of itself.

Turn on the wheel, let us go where nothing waits. I tell you, let us go now.

Russell Edson

TO A CHILDHOOD CHUM

There's not much left to say —
and time and again the same landscape.
What should we do but roam it, yelling
our futile secrets between us in the wind
believing them the whole
truth and pageantry of life.

“But you have your beauty. . .”

The gibbering

dark wind, the pieties
of death: years passing
such as they are, the hill inflamed with fall,
bell towers
strong in the sun,
the stony bones of the dead, our roots
too akin from too far back
for grieving apart when that wind

afflicts them . . .

Soon a highway will run some other
wind through these ecstatic names — Creva,
Germignaga, Voldomino,
Trebedora — they will recover
with an altered sound and meaning
in a boast of light. . .
Beauty is not this,

but

the straight blow of the whip, the imperative
gesture
toward the rancor twisting absurdly in us
knowing that beauty is always
a step away in the spicy air ;
this,
which the profligate dimly seek
and I've worked hard to learn.

Goodby the trees keep saying.
It's my turn now, I'm saying goodby to you
with the same soft fervor
the same humility of trees
though they'll stand whispering
far after the immediate gaze.
Seems no one's at the bridge
I'm bound to cross: not that fellow
with a mask of nothing, not one rueful traveler.
So the way is clear, and I'm done with visions!
In the Sunday confusion
where the river runs out
they scuffle in me
for my own good . . .

Vittorio Sereni
translated by Sonia Raiziss

WINDOW WATCHER

A rich summer recoils so
slow
only the mind not winking
could catch the bluegreen
changes
the fevering of leaves

Petals have flown apart
the grass is greying
stones still warm
shudder

It's getting late —
eyes miss the sly
torsions of weather

A season overtaken
suddenly
lies all wound

Under the window
the brown
convalescence of dying

Turn back where
the room darkens —
would you outwit
winter or nighttime
with watching . .
let it go
let go

GHOST OF A CHANCE

You see a man
trying to think.

You want to say
to everything:
Keep off! Give him room!
But you only watch,
terrified
the old consolations
will get him at last
like a fish
half-dead from flopping
and almost crawling
across the shingle,
almost breathing
the raw, agonizing
air
till a wave
pulls it back blind into the triumphant
sea.

Adrienne Rich

SONET

for WCW

Cup your palms
at the open side of
your self
where

blood is the color
of plum

and your sun
flower
body will burn

you
merciless
and numb

under the
wound of a poem

Raymond Roseliep

BULLETIN ON AN OLD MAN'S EYESIGHT
hommage à william carlos williams

his eyes, i am told, are in a bad shape.
but i tell you: they serve us better than
any satellite's sight-seeing (russian
or otherwise), better than *look's*
outlook, the views of the pentagon,
hollywood's bleary sunglasses,
the blood-shot night-watch
over twelve empty channels, or
mount palomar's vision of the universe
(including new jersey)

he is seventy-nine, i am told.
but i tell you: he has looked
at his own backyard

full of chicken and sick people
 and seen the light and the darkness
 (whatever ophthalmologists say)
 precisely, and told us about it,
 clearly, told blind minds
 about it, about light and darkness
 (including the chicken)

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

POEM

One by one must old-timers be departing,
 Stevens, Hemingway, Faulkner, now Cummings/
 Ole Ez and Bill Williams near to the shades
 I fear/ forspent and the kids forlorn . . .

And were by ways of being everichon
 Peaceable men and men given up to peace
 In the general way of speaking/ the makers
 Who knew how the grainy word came glowing
 Under the plane, given to peace, given
 To the good sound sounding in good quiet
 Peaceably/

forspent and the kids forlorn

Hayden Carruth

TWO POEMS

It is dusk.

A man and his wife
grumble at dish they've dirtied.

A jet
has cut a thin pink slit in the sky.

just before it set the
sun shone out huge and

the whole grimed sky
went violet and all

the neon signs
—an instant—
were soft as chalk.

Jacob Leed

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

All that goes to make a life,
 a hawk for a nose
 and a modest demeanor,
 a sharp ring to destroy the finger
 until nothing was there—
 from the knuckle that ached;
 the broken bottle in the cinders,
 the scattered parts of speech
 welded into a waterfall
 from the roof of the mouth;
 sand on the lips
 the petals of the beloved,
 her body, purple-veined,
 twisting out of her clothes!—
 but most of all an engagement with the soul
 of speech divorced from the old
 world and showing nothing
 but divorce

until

until the whole air had been changed
 and freshened here—
 not with art, but with truth, I say;
 all the scorn and power
 of the actual, so that speech
 confronted the speech of things,
 the anarchy of slatternly roofs,
 the terrible gulps
 of the elevators in office
 buildings; the news given hot
 to those who will take it
 and protest, and love it—
 who has shown so clearly a spray
 of water or the slow agony

of trees, a girl deep inside him
 so fastidious—and honesty
 became the rule of fingers, as many
 as could last the cruel bite
 of the weather, the American freeze—
 (no wonder, unlike Goethe, dying,
 he asks for warmth, not light,
 the light can only terrify) ;
 so that constantly looking for something
 in him that isn't there or poem
 a la Yeats, it dawns, it dawns (slowly!)
 here is a world truthful and lazy
 as fish, blank as the lightning flash,
 and offering, in the end,
 the shudder of love.

Neil Weiss

CIRCLES, AS IN THE EYE

(for WCW)

this way of being women! years ago,
 first, to find that odd geraldine
 of Gregory's, moving
 among Chinese musicians.
 well-made: memorable. and
 now yours, to him: that
 Chinese woman who, passing,
 startled your afternoon into poetry.
 memorable. the circles. let me

give you two women:
the pert Spanish whore of Barcelona
in Panam's, wearing a sailor's
indiana highschool ring
even when he was at sea. drunk,
seventeen, her five-year-old son's
picture next to my son's, also five;
the mother then thirty-two. yes,
Williams, the gentle discipline,
past music and passing women. but
memory: the craft: after all, it moved
from China through women, and the
women of Mexico walk like the Japanese.
and it was a Spaniard
who tamed the mid-continent. so near
to me, to American poems.
these women! but i disturb you.

Carol Bergé

A CONFESSION

(for W.C.W.)

I fell asleep, reading your new book.

It's
a gift, to be able to fall asleep almost
anywhere.

I was lying on a riverbank,
within the sound of a waterfall,
listening
to the water. And to your words.

The
recurrence of the phrases. The currency of
the thought.

It's one of life's greatest
pleasures, to be able to sleep of an
afternoon.

To read your poems. To hear your
voice.

To sleep, when tired. To wake,
refreshed.

Gael Turnbull

**A PALIMPSEST FOR
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS**

Lookout Beach, a British island, Windward,
Swimming alone in a summer sea of mountains.
(And God did tempt Abraham)
I dried my pale body in a sandy shadow,
Thirty-two innocent years dry fast.
("Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac")
"You want to?" the strange girl giggled,
Sixteen honey-colored skinny years.
("Offer him there for a burnt offering")
I never had before, you understand;
The girls I knew don't ask you.
(And he took the fire in his hand and a knife)
I was too embarrassed to refuse
So we went up to beach to the graveyard.
("But where is the lamb for a burnt offering?")
I can't remember her naked at all;
She looked at my manhood furtively.
(Stretched forth his hand and took the knife)
The graves rocked briefly; she never moved.
"Does it hurt?" I asked; she said, "A little."
(The angel of the Lord called unto him out of
heaven)
At the climax she laughed; I wanted to shout.
We washed off in the sea and exchanged names.
("Thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld")
"Don't you tell anyone what we did," I said;
"You speak just like a child," she said.
(Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld)
I gave her two dollars in BWI money;
Sailors at the hotel told me it wasn't enough.
(Behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns)
She walked in the street near my hotel that evening

But I put out my light and stayed in the room.
(Abraham went and took the ram and offered
him up)
Between the cemetery and the sea; that's how it
happened.

It's a letter for Patterson VI if you like.
(For a burnt offering in the stead of his son.)

Philip Murray

PROGRESS REPORT

(For WCW)

yesterday
they cleaned up
forgotten debris
between dark walls
of the hospital
you wrote about
but never touched
the smooth pieces
of that broken
green bottle
in the hearty sun

David Pearson Etter

VOICES ON RIVERSIDE

in homage to William Carlos Williams

Vermilion. Orange. Two shirts
on two darkskinned boys on a bench in the summer
park.

Trees are less green than the drum like a long gourd
one pounds with the heels of his palms.

The other
has twin small drums his fingers tap like a lover's
fondling

a girl's hard little breasts.

Slow, the long

drum

booms;

the twin drums flutter and snap. Rhythms
hot as an orange shirt

open

on cocoa-colored skin,

rhythms

bold as a vermilion shirt

under a black face blind with consummation.

Brilliance mates with brilliance

to assert

wealth as of tropical suns. The colors drum
like the heartbeats of boys flooded with salt joy,
with health shouting like Nile and Niger and Zambezi
in tumult and unison.

It strikes the streets dumb,

the dusty park

hears only the speech of two shirts
on two dark drumming boys. Orange. Vermilion.

Babette Deutsch

**SOME OF THE BOYS PRACTICE
CLASSICAL RAGTIME:****A Nigh Poem for W. C. W.**

I walked into the auditorium
and there was big Tom Eliot
sawing away on a bass fiddle.
“Hi, Tom,” I said, “how’s it going?”
“Not badly,” he replied, “I’m a little unstrung
by all this, though,
and my rosin’s running out.”
“Anything I can do?” I asked,
checking Ezra swiping
at his double mandolin.
“Hell,” Ez mouched over his big knuckles,
“quit that trilling, Lionel;
that’s baroque.”
“And a-one, and a-two,” Allen huffed,
and he blew up *Dixie* on the sweet ’tater.
“No,” Tom said, “there’s nothing you can do;
we’re almost through rehearsing,
so now comes the bomb.”
“Bomb?” I queried.
“Yeh,” Ez said, jabbing Allen in the chops
with the neck of his mandolino;
“the other boys never showed,
and we’ve gotta perform alone.”
“Like, who’s missing?” I wondered,
watching Bill Williams, the cleanup man,
kicking butts under the curtain.
“Three quarters of the double octet,”
Lionel snorted, knocking spit from his
English horn.
“Too bad,” I commiserated; “you guys
been here long?”

"Long and long," Tom intoned, knocking some straw
out of his big fiddle.

"Okay," Ez chewed, "take it from Canot I."

"And-a-chop, and-a-chop," Allen gritted,
wiping his brow with a big bandanna.

"Bazoo, zoomeroo!" went the Lion's horn.

"Come on, dammit! let's get with it!"

Ezra yelled, his nails all tangled up
in his cosmic git-box.

"Not with a pow, either, but a tinkle,"
big Tom added.

And old Bill Williams swept the flat notes
under the curtain.

Lewis Turco

THE NEWSPAPER

Hearing the sound of noon, the old
man out of the ditch
split open his bag filled
with bread, cheese, peaches,
and put it on yesterday's news.

Sucking the peach stone, slowly so
all good would go in,
he pushed the crumbs aside;
and he spat the stone
at the editorial. "Damn

fool!" he said; then he turned to see

a bird after crumbs.
He was still, and he watched
till the bird flew off.
If he thought of words, he said none;
simply leaned an ear toward the sound
of a dumb language,
eloquent and complete.
Song done, the bird shat
on the news; and the old man laughed.

Joseph Joel Keith

TO WILLIAM CARLOS GULLIVER

By time wrecked
amid
our Lilliputian
lyricists, big
enough to rack
yourself you would
not be pinned
down
under such lowly
lines so mean
they mean what they
must fasten on—
voices yellower than
eggs all
afraid
of cracking, seldom
raised to tell
which end
is up.

James L. Weil

THE HIGH COST OF PATRIOTISM

when the guests had eaten their fill of june,
 tongues licking up the crumbs,
 i offered up the fourth of july.

no thanks, i'd never get the flag down,
 you get stars caught in your throat; and
 besides, the black powder biscuits are too dry.

they left romping off in yesterday's past,
 leaving the table slanted a little bit left
 of eternity in vacant lawns of earth.

you might leave a few trifles for relative
 sparrows, giggled a moral bubble inside me;
 and as i held my hand up to clear the sky of

cloth, i thought, hold it! for you never know
 when some poor hungry bastard will show up for
 a hand out and, if turned away, start a revolution.

Harland Ristau

TO A PATRIARCH IN JERSEY

*"The birth of your son has been duly
 recorded in what remains of my social brains."*

William Carlos Williams
 in a letter of Nov. 30, 1959

What remains of your "social brains"
 is a piece out of my body.
 And what is lost is like the years

I have added to my life.

I have watched you woo that Lady
who has been your wife.

A wedding is what a man hears
in the evil minutes of his pain;

above the din — a music. As a poem
is a name for which the face is lost.
Sweet Chance, what man has been more
battered, tossed more often

to the dogs of death? What man
has lain between their crooked teeth
with more asperity? Tonight, the moon
is hidden and the sky seems lower.

I came on such a night,
dripping like an athlete's towel.
We spoke of hunting, and of Esau,
and of words like arrows let go
at a target out of sight.
You said, "bring me your son one day."
Was it to bless him, unborn, or
was it to curse my hissing dread?

I have been north and wide
since then, and fearless in the pit.
I hunt! But never has the rain been more
immortal than that night I went back into it.

Oswald LeWinter

THE SECRET

Two girls discover
the secret of life
in a sudden line of
poetry.

I who don't know the
secret wrote
the line. They
told me

(through a third person)
they had found it
but not what it was
not even

what line it was. No doubt
by now, more than a week
later, they have forgotten
the secret,

the line, the name of
the poem. I love them
for finding what
I can't find,

and for loving me
for the line I wrote,
and for forgetting it
so that

a thousand times, till death
finds them, they may
discover it again, in other
lines,

in other

happenings. And for
wanting to know it,
for

assuming there is
such a secret, yes,
for that
most of all.

Denise Levertov

FOR WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

July 1960

queen-ann's-lace
sways in the wind

then holds the
summer stillness

a child white
lace upon lace

almost to her eyes
spreads her hand

to encompass
the flower

the picked weeds
fall in a

white
powder

each needle-
tube

that has held and
fed

the minutest sub-
traction of

flower
releases a

dry
seed

except the
dark

flower still
soft

purple
at the center

Mary Ellen Solt

FOR WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

The last, absolutely the last
dahlia

on Ridge Road, Rutherford, New Jersey,
October 18, 1960,

you have outlived it
and wear the epaulet
to prove it

I salute you in your
Garden State

You taught us to
scrape all the leaves off the bottom of the barrel
because the leaves can equal

the sacred red anemones of Osiris
falling in the blue waterfalls of
Lebanon

and you knew it

Jonathan Williams

EQUATION

(for William Carlos Williams)

Anonymous these autumn colors flow
into a democracy of hue ;
dogwood
is not redder than maple, nor oak
more yellow than goldenrod.
The single rose in the vase

of majolica is no less subdued
than the green tomato reddening '
on the burning sill, as if an unwilling sun
(like the interfering gods of Euripides)
gradually descended
to make all things equal.

Joseph Leonard Gucci

AMID THE ELEMENTS

(for William Carlos Williams)

Window glazes up
its parable. A swallow
dips
toward the glow but meets
(inside, we toast)
man's seal, hard rebuff.
I crouch and serve the fire.
There's yet an outside
freedom.

Sam Bradley

POEM

When I have turned all to body
And a stillness I take place in
And then a tall uncertain dark
Raked by wind
I shall see all the stars give way
To mirrors in my lakes of steam
And I shall swear in the downward swarm
That it is a window of faces
In which only one, not mine appears.

When I will advertise serenity
And I have turned all to body
I will still see the permanent stain
Of my headlong path
And I will line my tears with grasses
And suffer my change
In which there will still be fond mixing
And lips bending
And even stones.

When I will have turned all to body
And buried a small portion of you
I think I will be strewn like light
For I will have gone streaming from the bow.

When I have turned and am all body
You and I will be evenly dispersed
In the natural anatomy of a wet landscape
Making great persuasion.

Robert Dash

SUNG REASSERTIONS

after a poem by William Carlos Williams

The cock announces dominion
 to the morning: does
 not wake uncertain whether
 to claim the field
 or sneak away pheasant-like
 through the grass: the sun,
 his embassy of light, colors
 the throne-room of his breast:
 his cry obliterates the stars:

 from farm to farm
 the kingdoms are laid out,
 each call a challenge
 and congratulation,
 sung reassertion
 dispelling

the threat of night that clouds blends
 obscures

 melts into one, shapes lost,
 boundaries drifting,
 the dark coop floating through time:

 the scream of precise outlines!
 of defended orders
 commanding the insurrections
 of dream and night:

 the cock wakes, crows, treads,
 feeds, fights, sleeps: sleeps
 fitfully, impatient
 of time's insinuating treachery,
 and crows defiantly in the middle
 of the night.

A. R. Ammons

A HEIFER CLAMBERS UP

a heifer clambers up
 nighthawk goes out
 horses
trail back to the barn.
 spider gleams in his
 new web
dew on the shingles, on the car,
 on the mailbox—
the mole, the onion, and the beetle
 cease their wars.
 worlds tip
into the sunshine, men and women
 get up, babies crying
children grab their lunches
 and leave for school.
the radio announces
 in the milking barn and the car
 bound for work
“tonight all the countries
 will get drunk and have a party”
russia, america, china
 kissed by the poets
pregnant and gracious
 sending flowers and dancing bears
 to all the capitals
fat
 with the baby happy land

Gary Snyder

THE NOSTALGIAS OF CHANGE**To William Carlos Williams**

Now traffic rumbles past a wide front porch
at Rutherford to tunnel to New York
from Jersey flats, the sea-swamped earth, crisp
weeds
around the junk-yards, gas-tanks, chemicals,
highways as tricky as Russian roulette . . .
All towns across this Country are alike:
Main Streets with shops thin out to mansions where
Victorian facades take tourists in.
Change, like a bombing, hollows neighborhoods
with car-parks. Change, eating out Tradition
like a rust scraped clean as steel, keeps moving,
bumper-to-bumper, just to see new sights.
The Tudor-Gothic home of 1905
corners the old where King and Queen Streets cross,
just as it should. The railroad line cuts round
the outskirts. Downtown, the sooty train-shed dusts
the demolition crew. As maudlin as
a heart-laced Valentine, a sentiment
involves the typical, not beautiful.
The recent past sheds gaslit living-rooms
of horsehair sofas, doilies, plum plush chairs,
grandmotherly, maternal, just as though
a poet put aside his stereopticon,
decided what was basic, and went on from there.

Byron Vazakas

FOR W.C.W. (2)

The rhyme is after
all the repeated
insistence.

There, you say, and
there, and there,
and and becomes

just so. And
what one wants is
what one wants,

yet complexly
as you
say.

Let's
let it go.
I want—

Then there is—
and,
I want.

Robert Creeley

ONCE AGAIN

While someone sings La Paloma,
the dream happens.
I walk from the couch
to my desk, the secret
in my head, the beginning
and end of my life.
I am stunned by my luck—
to have heard La Paloma
on the dream jukebox
in a Mexican town
while something spills into my glass
and I'm rescued from art
once again.

Harvey Shapiro

PAVANNE (for William Carlos Williams)
*"He that asks me what heaven is, means not to heare
 me, but to silence me."*—Sermon XXIII. John Donne

Bending
 over
 to look
 at these
 dust particles
 I think they
 are
 held
 by tensions
 At first
 I see them
 moving
 only as
 drops of water
 move
 in which
 they are
 suspended
 My eyes
 clear
 to light from above
 then
 to reflection
 at the
 bottom
 springing
 back
 dance—dance beam
 the many
 dances

Ted Enslin

WATCHING FALL DUST INSIDE SHEDS

The motes dance in the sun
 With slow and grave steps
 Like those who dance for the birth
 Of a prince in a huge castle.

I have slept in heavy waters.
 My body is sailing
 On the river of the fish,
 Born over and over again!

Wife, come out into the sunlight.
 Here is the wind falling and beginning again
 In the chilled leaves of the trees,
 And sunlight in pools at the roots of the grass.

Robert Bly

STILL LIFE OF THE MAN OF VALUE

for my wife

when he breaks the silence
 or what happens when he breaks the silence
 makes its own space
 concern for the crackup in a neighborhood
 After 8:30 in August something hangs from
 lampposts;
 what he faces is almost hidden, he loses to a radiance
 impossible without another figure
 and a decent contempt for the light.
 Puppets occupy children, it is true they see
 themselves

it is also true about the string of nerves.
The child of value is not the man of value
This is paper and this
is what is written on it
The man of value is the radiance
in the child of value
and looks at him curiously
for a health, what can be made of it.
They seize the earth in sadness
they are lonely they wait for themselves to happen
but he is for a toehold on the diving board
in the spring of space and the arrest of space;
he can be surprised by a tremor in his feet
or quiet water
his tender flesh is supple with the difference
place of invasions
invasions of a neighborhood
the surprise of dark figures in outlines of light
or the contempt for silence
When Doloris gives birth she will have waited
in her own space, there are gifts
for resisting acts of violence

Armand Schwerner

I AM WELL

Say what it is,
I have put a knife
in the sun - my sacrificial
edge to see me through.
I am exposed to you,
offered
by desires from the sea.
Fish me
fish me from the flood,
my unsteady dream;
cut me where I am not free,
my death for you,
I am awake,
I am well.

David Ignatow

OUT OF YOUR HANDS

(on receiving W. C. Williams' *Theocritus*,
June 5, 1953)

Though you regret it,
out of your hands it must go,
out of your hands still warm on it,
loving with the best love, a bare mind,
undaunted, inside the hands, casting
the familiar line, a child fished,
a poem—the issue
life: this manuscript your note
calls “a unique copy” you would hate

to lose. How unique only those who try
to make as well, having staked out
their pleasurable awareness

in the clearing
of your verse, can know. June
now, the first sultry day, swept in
in a swollen glare on the back of last
night's thundrous rain, the morning
looking as though its masons

have just broken off.
And you, returning whence you
came, closer daily, have mailed us
your translation of Theocritus: Idyl I
after your local hundreds, ground
from which this new-fangled

garden of America
you still trim, hard as it is
to believe, has sprung. You return
(for all the times between, Rutherford
and Alexandria not so far apart)
as though in age you know

that hungering again,
the virgin green—this a field
where crops garner crops—growing
through practised hands. No yokel you
to luten notes, whatever disguise,
and of the few equipt to face

Priapus equally
with old Chronos, out of Libya
or wherever, engrossed, hang-doggedly,
and grazing in your songs. You alone,
shepherd of cool shades, puffball
flocks and winds dipt in sleep

under squat weeds,
twig and shiny leaf, refining
silence, manage (inside highnoon's
strident busyness) to keep the musics
going, freshets as of a deep-down
source, that Pan, chase-worn,

exasperation alone
reedy at his nostrils, can find
a cove where revelry, love and folly
know some ease. Despite your vigilance
the gifts come to you hardly goat,
shag-white, or firstling kid,

a dainty fleshed
for being eaten before its milk
begins, you feed on bramble-berries,
make iron, refuse, yield. Now even this,
your hands not letting go except it,
naming, bless, must slip away.

Your poems will
stay—your voice alive in them,
compelling as odors from a summerday—
carved like the cup, dipt in the spring
of the seasons, given Thyrsis for his
song, *The Afflictions of Daphnis*.

Your poems, passed
through whatever hands, under-
standing or not, put to lips, what-
ever their taste, what pots they drink,
will keep the marking of your clean-
edged knife. A seasoned wine

poured in, and winds,
involved in the curving ivy,
carved, flickering through yellow
flowers, flaunt their airs; April, May,

frisky months again, leading groves
in frolic: alewives too, tails

flashing in this sea-
dark surge: and bees, bull-drunk
in a mazy rose—all garlanding a girl,
in turn a mazy rose. Summers, those
long moons ago sunk in the grass,
mornings, bulls, and bells

well up, a ritual,
for her, fairer than the gods
might dream, your mind's familiar.
Beside this stir on a furrowed rock
a furrowed fisherman whose hands mend
nets, tie knots, repair long-

tangled lines, and lend
their skill to rods and pipes
that these release their wood's most
ingrained spell. One pair of hands
to do all things, strike human
moods from time, the harmony

past need that makes
the need the more. Set to cast
now, the thousandth time—his whole
heart in it—the mighty net. And near
the veteran, straddling the ruddy
vineyard wall, indifferent

to grape-roused foxes,
winter, and the Foe, greedily
fixed at his foot, a boy, plaiting
star-flower stalks around a reed into
an airy pet-cricket cage in intent,
wise and thoughtless joy.

Theodore Weiss