

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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THEODORE ROETHKE

(a little memory)

Come—as summer woods,
Worn with futures that
we lose, I see you strewn
within the changing moth.
Teaching the smallest life
its start, running with
children after dark to free
things trapped, you kept
love wise, taking only what
was there and moving in and
out of death as flowers
eat the air. With you
the convolutions of the worm
had pulse and speed.

It was discovery in what there
is; death—love; demands
we stiffen or disclaim.
To keep alive despite
the daily dying forms—
and searching under time
for mixtures folding and
unfolding in the islands
off the bone, stitching
gaiety into the rock . . .
Under casements in the heart
of things, I always find
a poem of yours.

James Lewisohn

THE SOURCE

He kept his mouth forever
at the source, catching
even in drought
the few drops
coaxed
from the ancient spring

kneeling in dry grass
liking the feel of it
sparse now, parching
he stole

without malice. In floodtime
too, in plenty
he knelt with his lips
& it poured to him

still without greed
he received it, abundance
filled
& flowed from him, over
the dry earth
he soon would be

Phyllis Masek Harris

350 R: LD/50

(Nagasaki)

Eight years ago the deathless ape
Yanked down a sun
And cut loose its barbaric yawp
Of photons up above the town

Where I began to die, and live
Still, for a while. It
Licked up all the sea of roofs.
Strong light pressed men into flat

Lampblack shadows at ground zero.
Flash in the brainpan
Has seared away my memory;
Remembering is in the bone—

Electron, a synaptic flash
Arcing between frail jellied cells;
And milk in the blood and eyes.
Now movement more than the heart's pulse

Cracks, in cannibalistic spasms,
My beta-pitted bones, my raw
Fractures have pale blood for chrism,
Stars come down and eat the marrow.

G. N. Gabbard

TWO POEMS**Taurus**

Hurtle the Hyades behind my horns,
hive of stars from a single star begot,
wedge of impetus that blinds and burns.
I am the driven one. My brow is taut
with luminosities that lure me on
into spring meadows where my fore-hooves gouge
young grasses by the water hole and stun
a frog. Hollows are steamy with my rage.

Everywhere Venus seems, and yet asleep,
soft as the fall of catkins, unbetrayed
by breath. Lashed by a drift of her hair, I leap
and quiver. But the shadows even evade
my lunge. I, who would couple with love and sire
the summer, am the fool of my own fire.

Capricorn

Enamored of my flesh,
I nourish it
on the rich scour of compost,
render decay into orneriness,
sour ferment and flabby rind
into musk.

I enjoy the irritable:
hornets that busk over my fodder
to be snorted off
an itch methodically scuffed
against a gate;

yet I do not grumble
that short light and a long dusk
are, it seems, my fate,
for the byre of night reeks of me warmly
and I sleep there without dreams.

Eunice de Chazeau

VIEW FROM THE RIVER'S SIDE

Behind her curtained window
Mrs. Grundy watches
lovers in the park, condemns
the little alleycat and her Tom
who disappear beneath the bridge
emerging some time later wet earth
on knee and back, the girl's hair
haloed gleaming
with bits of grass and leaves.
Mrs. G. denounces fornication
a word these lovers never use
who listen to their heartbeat
blend with the city's own,
new music tuned
to the singing bridge and flung
above the roughtongued stones.

Dorothy Farmiloe

POE

Nobody recognized
the country:
underground ghouls cells,
tubercular cottages
remodeled
in the imagination:
a few cheap tremors,
a little lip-service to their
puritan ethic,
hysterical women pursuing
their Raven Boy . . .

Nobody recognized
the country—
their own strange ghosts
frisking him for souvenirs
where he fell
(face down on the pave
as Walt would say),
his morbid blab
going silent,
near a polling
place . . .

Seth Wade

TWO POEMS

Ophelia

to have so touched the beauty of oblivion
 like death, which she did find too lovely
 beneath the lily pads. like bliss, is sleeping
 innocence, and does one chasten. she sleeps
 suspended and ever, after that soft first
 tentative taste of the ambrosial Lethe. who loved
 and erred thus loving lost not her grace, so fondly
 doting.

wherefor the mad are made trebly wise, said the
 doctor,

once for themselves, once for others, and once
 and for all. if that is sleep, the dawn lies
 on the other riverbank. a plaintive artful fool.
 of this there's no renewal now the rapine flood
 besought upholds her. and yet the pale silk
 seems still to weight her walking.

I would that I were
 wooed again, she said, though dapple-damned
 beneath the twilit trees. outreaching hand for hand
 in the madwoman's angelic posture of erring
 supplication. he said we would be fleet and gold
 as the gray sky's parting. and raucous
 as riddles. ah, so cruelly does romance progress
 and gull itself. get thee, get thee. thyself. while
 the doves above the window are cooing. wooed
 and dapple-damned beneath the twilit trees.

a laugh,
 a leap, no more the cadence of her chosen speech.
 beside a clown beneath a play of swords
 (which in the wedding crossed above the bride;

I licked the frosting from the blade and charity
 was changed at last, and charged with more
 than her soul's keeping). the paper turns to dust
 the wind shifts, erasing any mortal scratchings
 laid there. and so. the dole of wits with herbs
 and flowers. o he was Hamlet princely.
 and she is ever so, how sadly given,
 with wits divided before their time from time,
 and, in the art of it, reasonless, purely.

From "The Guermantes Way"

"In one of these water-colours one saw a poet wearied
 by long wanderings on the mountains, whom a Centaur,
 meeting him and moved to pity by his weakness, had taken
 on his back and was carrying home."

Marcel Proust, *The Guermantes Way*

this is to. I pause on the upswing of the thought.
 more noble unknown things are silent
 as the great and pale glaciers in the dark
 (in cold eternity awestruck, brightly embraced
 too deeply down, or up against, and cannot see
 the mountains for the, ah, iced-white vice
 of rock, my god, still
 only the smallest falling lethal stone, awe),
 above the timber, above the cows whose bells ring up,
 and clouds above as well, right on up to very death,
 to. and there, it is, because.

mind wanders,

stops, foot steps step, stops.
 no wonder, she said, that northern peoples people
 with deities their mountains. in the valleys
 fog-rendered abyss. some sleeping swiss van winkle,

wonders.

and how, she added, the swiss love
their mountains.

are these first snows
or last, snows
of which winter, here in midsummer (a
weathered world
of illusions, a welter) betwixt the two of us,
now three, he catches joins us, we continue,
climbing into sudden view of haggard fingers, an open
frozen hand
behind the ridge, past
which the slightest breezes moan, the awful sound
of absolute silence.

always
at some point on the climb, I told him
quite frankly (the ahumanity, inspires one),
I think that at the next step I will be dead, submissive,
slipping back on exhaustion; and always at that point
the trail falls,
or terrain changes from woods to rock or rock to peak,
and the second breath of elation could carry me right
on
past you, past . . . from Flon to Grammont,
Sonchaud to Naye . . .
from col to dent past the frogs copulating
in the lake below.

voilà, regarde les grenouilles, cry
the lively schoolchildren picnicking
on the shore.

and thus halfdead
I was a battered man
atop the world. there, look; Cervin; one seldom
sees it. where Croz and Douglas, Hudson and Hadow,
fell,

and Whymper and Taugwalder père & fils made their
descent
alone.

there lies that summer upon rocks, and ice
of winter, white we climbed.

in a sacrificial spirit,
humbly willing. ranging about the earth, reflected
in the ocean trenches, labyrinthean,
god of mazes, the sculptortured mountains
are unlike the crouching restless sea, a difference
of light and dark, the sea a mothering
sort of death but not Thanatos,
upon the rock keen and kenning, reigning.

to death
l'arête & le pic. and the Centaur who kindly
carried me home.

C. H. Hejinian

TWO PAIRS OF GLOVES

(Elizabeth I and Charlotte Brontë)

Two pairs of gloves in a glassy case:
The tiny ones are commonplace,
Well worn besides and mended well;
But these, long-fingered, nonpareil,
Adorned a queen for a little space.

Two separate ways the ladies went;
Their hearts were not so different:
What hammerings their gloves have masked
When veins rebellious, overtasked,
Admitted no impediment.

Celeste Turner Wright

VILLANELLE

The Massacre at Sand Creek (1864) described by American Heritage in *Indians of the Plains* (p. 88, paperback):

The first blast of gunfire killed Left Hand, the Arapaho chief. When Black Kettle saw that he had to run, he called to White Antelope, a Cheyenne chief, to run with him. But 75-year-old White Antelope wrapped his blanket tightly around him, and started to sing his death song. As he solemnly chanted the words, "nothing lives long except the earth and the mountains," a bullet cut him down. Black Kettle was the last to leave.

Dark cuts the sun down as the season wills.
In this wild country
nothing lives long but the earth and the hills.

The wren's tongue stops its throat, the swaying gills
of fish shut, sudden wings slit the sky.
Dark cuts the sun down as the season wills.

Our children die and the branch fills.
Even our old songs cannot tell why
nothing lives long. But the earth and the hills

outlast our lives — though the rain stills
the silence, trees leaf fruit and die,
dark cuts the sun down. As the season wills,

young deer crowd before us and the sap spills,
days weigh like earth in our fingers, like dust lie:
nothing lives long but the earth and the hills.

Singing, I become my song, until
death drowns my cry,
"Dark cuts the sun down as the season wills.
Nothing lives long but the earth and the hills."

Joann Cattonar