

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

Volume 19 - Number 1

Fall 1968

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Cover Design: Verne Shaffer

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MOUNTAIN CORRAL

The gate was open; the fence under the aspens, fallen.
But horses were there, I knew it.

I went in to find them—transparent creatures
with ribs showing white as aspen bark
through the glistening hides.

One, with a broken star on his forehead,
came and laid his cool muzzle in my hand.

I thought this the presence of horses only,
and then I sensed the riders,
two girls clear as bright bottles
who leaned the blonde filament of their hair
in the horses' manes, a gesture for lovers,
a prophecy.

I could see it, like looking through water.

In the glass-white air the girls mounted.

Horses, girls,
sunlight shining through them,
stood still,
a clarity of shining.

Then they cantered away,
taking the light with them.

Helen Sorrells

THREE POEMS

Statuemaker

A sorry statuemaker I am!
My work shows less craft than kindergarten clay.
An undertaker has more skill to simulate life than I
have.

Behold my statues: crooked as crippled old men.
They're supposed to be children. But you'd never
guess.

They're supposed to be my childhood friends
with whom I played the game called statuemaker.
I grasped their tender shoulders in my hands
and whirled them round and round
and sent them sprawling into these impossible
postures.

I meant no harm. I wanted only to capture them
young and beautiful forever with my frozen-tag
touch.

Or was it just my greedy gaze that turned them
to stone for my living grave?

How cold they are and smooth, like wax
whose wick I've snuffed out to save.

How I wish they'd laugh. How I wish they'd totter
alive

from their awkward balance in time.

Sometimes I imagine their lips begin to tremble with
a giggle.

Sometimes I think this has all been a bad dream
and I will wake in my childhood bed with my friends
calling Oh my name beneath my morning window.
Poor little statues. Poor little nicknacks of time.
They are my childhood friends with whom I played
the fatal game called statuemaker.
I have grown old without them.
I am a weird Gepetto
who fashioned real live boys
into these wooden things you see.

My First Dragon

Fierce from the hell of stained glass windows
And from pictures in my grade school catechism
He reared, breathing flames between my legs.
I slew him not with lance or sword
But with my own bare hands.
Unlike St. George, I was ashamed of my victory
For my heart had no armor, and seeing him dead
I realized how harmless a dragon he had been—
Harmless as the grass snake
I used to turn over rocks to find,
Harmless as that soft liquid tongue I loved
To let play against my palm. And I wept
To see him slain now, under the Virgin's foot.

Juventutem Meam

Serving Forty Hours Adoration,
it seemed the incense
was slowly smothering me.
As if the pupil had offended
and been plucked out,
the blank Eye of God
glared at me a sunburst,
a Let There Be Light
that shattered my darkness
and made my eyes glisten with
shame. White, white, pure white,
it made me imagine my surplice
the sepulchre of my soul.
"O my God, who art all good
and deserving of all my love . . ."
Dead at twelve, I prayed Him
to raise me as He had Lazarus.
Kneeling before that nightmare
monstrance I shocked myself
that only part of me had risen
during my penitent meditation.
I fled the sanctuary in horror
lest my unintended blasphemy
should show through my cassock.
That night I dreamed a gallows,
priests murmuring through the grating
which collapsed beneath my feet.
Strangling on the noose of Judas

I woke to my mother's voice:
"Hurry, you'll be late." I arrived
just in time to hear the priest say,
"Introibo ad altare Dei."
"Ad Deum qui laetificat," I replied,
"juventutem meam."

Jefry Poniewaz

THE VICTORY

Word-juggler
David,
soon-to-be Psalmist,
approaching Goliath,
said:

"The moon
is a dead
man's eye
upturned!"

Whereby
the Philistine,
mentally stunned,
was, by a pebble,
stoned.

William Garrett

THREE POEMS

The Making of an Old Maid

An infant is pushing its mother along in a baby carriage.

The mother says, I have incubated an engine in my womb.

When the infant returns home with the baby carriage it must drag its mother into the house by her heels. The mother says, I never knew that life could be so pleasant.

The infant feeds its mother from one of the dots on its chest.

Oh no, this will never do, says the mother, at this rate I shall starve to death.

The infant must slap its mother.

I do not wish my offspring to lay hands on me, cries the mother.

But the infant must slap its mother once more.

Very well, I shall behave, cries the mother.

But the slapping mechanism in the infant has gotten stuck, and so the infant slaps its mother again.

The mother cries, I shall behave.

But the infant, owing to the sticking of its slapping mechanism, continues to slap its mother.

Stop stop stop, you are ruining what was otherwise a complacent and docile personality—You shall cause me to fear people; and when I grow up I shall become an embittered old maid who sees in the male organ that aggression which you now administer, cried the mother.

Feeding the Cows

An old man sleeping in the hay is fed to the cows because he has forgotten to put a sign on himself: NOT HAY, BUT MAN.

The farmer says, it is up to an old man to declare himself; I have enough difficulty identifying myself from the hay; I cannot spend the day identifying each straw.

His wife says, did the cows complain? And if they did they ought to be ashamed; here we feed them for free and they turn on us with complaints.

No no, I am complaining old men that sleep in the hay expecting one to pick them out; while yet trying not to lose myself in the hay, said the farmer.

The Further Adventures of Martha George

There was a woman named Martha George who had discovered one day that her chest was a radio. She turned it on with her left nipple. A voice came out from between her breasts:

We now present the
adventures of Martha
George.

As you remember in our
last episode Martha had
been fiddling with her
breasts—We find her now
fiddling with her breasts.
She turns her left nipple.
She's afraid it might come
off. But, instead, a voice
comes out from between her
breasts:

We now present the
further adventures
of Martha George . . .

Russell Edson

STE. ANNE-DES-MONTS

That was the night we tasted
codfish tongues first time,
practicing "Trés bon!" "Superbe!"
That night a warning in the wind.
Next morning you were
gone before I woke.

Alone at breakfast,
I watched a fat
Gaspésian slide six
fried eggs into his mouth,
grinning with yolks
instead of teeth.
I could have slapped his face,
but the truth is
there are gluttons and gluttons.

Virginia Brady Young

WHAT SONG THE PTERODACTYL SANG . . .

Once Feather-finger
Eldest of birds
Preened by a dark pool
Wing-scales of words:
“Blood minds beginning
Oath from the east
Long though the hunger
Blood minds the feast
“I shall not always
Mumble the dark
I shall trill dawn-winged
I shall be lark
“I shall not always
Fall when I fly
I shall be eagle
Gold spear at sky
“I shall not wallow
In black ash alone
I shall be wild goose
Skeining to sun
“I shall be seagull
Knife at the wave
A white ship, a swan-king
Graceful and grave
“I shall pour comets
From proud peacock’s tail
I shall pour wine out
I, nightingale

"I shall fly jewelled
Huge hummingbird—
What shall I not be?
Blood minds the Word

"Blood minds the promise
Before the land came
Dawntime and earthfire
Abyss said I AM

"I shall be angel
Praising and praised
I shall be phoenix
Burned and upraised

"I shall be seraph
Stern-winged at doom
Bright suns will bow then
Begging for room:

"Winging to world's end
Flame biding flood
Blood minds beginnings
I shall be God."

Thus Feather-finger
Sang all alone
On dark pool till dawn rise
Bade him begone

So died the bat-king
Icarus fell
Firedrake to hellmaze
Talespinners tell,

Heroes who harrowed
House of his hoard
Rich pearl to ransom:
Blood minds the Word.

Blood minds beginnings
Nightflyers know
Sooth spoke the proudwings
Dust long ago

Hard is the hunger
Cold earth is long
What price **cicada's**
Clearwinging song?

Huge in the heart's hold
Foul to unfurl
Deep coils a dragon
Round the word-pearl

Long is the striving
Longer the feast
Sing, leather-locust
Deathwinging east,

Sing till the day break
Rich song to rend:
Fly, Feather-finger,
Blood minds the end.

Joanne Turner

FOR FOUR NEWSMEN MURDERED IN SAIGON
May, 1968

The sickening hush. Your auto
caught idle in the humid noon,
with tires and windshield shot out
and surrounded by your riddled
bodies. These penalties for
point of view are accurate report
even in death. The street stinks
of terror and dust. In a moment
cowering refugees emerge from
hiding and quickly pass,
mumbling with stunned tongues
of watching you become the means
of your lost existence.
You might have been five dead—
but one, stumbling like a frightened
fawn at open-fire, has feigned death
full account and lived
to tell us how it is trying to tell
us how it is.

Gerald Costanzo

FOUR POEMS**Prologue**

This tongue, this clapper,
hangs like a mammal bat
within the bell.

The mass is done,
the angelus is sung three times . . .
three times swung to the silver dome
deaf to its tone.

Wedded families rejoice,
the dead are garbed in rosaries and white,
the hand bell of the acolyte
marks the marble altar stair.

In vesper light
the rope will hang
where wind and color die,
where limber mammals swoop to strike
the spiral tower of grace,
to toll the bell of the dead sky:
black constellation of the precious
metal, whose tongue, whose clapper
hangs in leaden dark.
Daybreak and I am blind.

Horizon No. 1

One stands back
until distance is raised
to the last power of itself
and alternates
tundra peaks and snow clouds:

back until even an eagle
cannot break
the barren landscape,
the absolute horizon:

one stands back
to remember, as if homage
were the one obligation,
back until he can see nothing,

and remarks in passing
the twisted limber pines
and the graceful agony
of their stretch
out of the stone.

Blind Man's Bluff

Whether it was the eye
that closed first, or the mind,
after the robin came and went,
and came, and would be counted on,
and would not change
his rustic colors
or churrip, churrip;

whether seen or only known,
he brazened down the porch
with twigs and trash
to procreate under the one sun,
and litter reality
with his own image;

whether the eye,
meaning to exclude,
enclosed the rude bird
that summersaulted on the retina,
or that the mind
shrank from the obvious
and did not care what images
were unattended in the yard,
wanting only his own fierce mental birds
to warble their rare harmonies
sounding nothing twice,
and breed mutations on the golden air;

whether eyes knew and mind saw all at once,
whether a simultaneous ennui
signalled the *pas de deux*,
by some mistake or inefficiency

the pair still concentrate upon a robin,
cased now in the imagined glass:

a corpse equipped with fins and feet and wings,
the emblem for the mind
to comprehend its own museum,
a reminiscence of the obvious birds
unseen unknown, who will one way or both
be the blind man's bluff,
who multiply in his oblivion.

Mocking Bird

Whether the heron
 stilted midstream
 picks fish, or flickers
 sound the bark of chestnuts
there is no more difference.
 Images mean nothing: all are
 memorized and relinquished.
 Heron and flicker merge;
the violet plush throat of one

the red nape of another
bruise until metaphoric
realisms blind the eye
and whitewash the earthy
feathers, once green and brown.
Out of the eye floats
a virgin bird, a white
sun drone, synthetic and flashy
clown gone limp in the dumb show,
falling down to comedies

where he flutters, twists
and climbs to nothing,
baring the black ink marks.
His cry is laughter
who splashes on the creek
to bite a silver fish,
swallowing on the rise,
whose radiant afterimage
shivers, and picks the ladybug
and **flea out of their circles**.

Prize, he pumps into sight
treating old images like carrion,
sweet meat of his, not mine,
pecking there as the plummet
of his own implications,
fabric, wild reductio
who falls where I feel
the landscape turning green,
and shrinks into the blackness
of no bird.

Joan Cavitch

THE RIVER NETS THE PENINSULA
a nursery rhyme

the river nets the peninsula. all the rest
are fishes flowing through okeanid fingerweeds
like fertile sand, or silt, with one foot tucked
beneath the other island riding. a dawnple
upon the water.

 a messofish, said Bertha
Hewitt, out like a messofish,
in and out the circle. my breasts they call bellies.
out of the opulent rievary, prolific mornings
out of beds. borne up borne up, and keep the baby
from the river, she calls. the sprite and hungry
call for fresheggs and cream as rich as dreams.
to the familial breaktoast gathered round they come
in a row like scales. the first we made our Mark,
 his words,
and the daughter Donna climbs from the delta.
 whoaup,
her whoart beats. there's so much river, she says,
Sam almost drowned and got his feet wet.
o ho the riparian frogs leap
for water, later the tadpoles leap for shore.

Horace

Hewitt mellifluous drunk
 by the yellow riverroom, shadown, boom roam
 in the floodsblood the crackling creatures
 and painted dragons are teeming, paddy
born in the dillweed
he's the salt
of the earth, his wife, Bertha Hewitt is. with an eye
turned inward and an eye out for riches.
her children like toads in the mud or primitives
behind mud masks preserved in the boggy. while

Horace dreams he says of streaming winebarrelful
whereupon each is written,

Come, Horace Hewitt, draw and drink.

that, he says,
is the finest potte potted,
and the finest finest potery.

(to my sor

who has brought and blessed the wave down broken
upon the shore.)

down by the murgèd riverine
tipdipt into the flow like swans, drinking horses
drunk, raccoons that wash their food and feet. (the
reeds

they root so peacefully, she muses briefly absorbed.)
up and forth, back and to,
the mounding banks and bounding river by, shelving
sundairy chosen on the shores. between the eyes and
knows

of the hills, each cliff and ledge the rocks built
imaginable: his face, her face, the hindquarters
of a grazing mare. (eyes and knows, he laughs.)
further upstream, 'twixt the lips whence the flume
flows

in browken wrinkles, sphinxen old and enigmatic,
lie the still fat flats
where the river has been poured out over the landtop,
a bog of peace not deep enough to drown in.
down by the riverine

the suns
a daycomequickcreek. ev, he addressed
the flowing

in a babeling
gwa brook's a baby river out

in August's dreamer days (Lored, the ponds
 never freeze until they're full, Horace told me).
 augustly there they purposefully play. Mark,
 get out of the water your lips are blue. that's ink,
 he says, I'm a poet. so says your father, she answers,
 now come sit on the plank and splash your feet
 if you must in the pool.

split splat fishelldy sam
 standing above the old mill dam
 splish splash nowee sallwet
 and that, said the fish, is what you get.

from here's where we watch what's coming down,
 she says,
 upon the overbearing riverapt plank that touches
 shore

to shore. things that are. aren't, he says,
 in eager assertiveness. just like so can't I,
 eye can. riverbirch and milky way.

Vitis vulpina. all there is to be,
 and meant it. dreams and good digestion are.
 leap frog over the plank, turtle on the log,
 pheasant, muskrat, mouse, richly berried bushes
 and creatured riverbanks (bear more than coins).
 censor no details.

sobeit: my panultimate benediction (before the
 inevitable separation).

cancel no images.

yet the children continue to ask
 do all rivers run to the sea?

the ev is so mild, the current cx past
 and xc lappaps. in byb, child.

tllk tllk

from the linquid rivermouth
 deltoothed, the awords of sounding.

sdeeper. the dust smells like honey,
 says Donna. you know blueberries when they rot
 smell like sweet wet wool. o ho, says Horace, the
 dust

drapes deep the dust drapes deep the dust
 drapes deep the dust dapes dreep the dohoho
 hewn out of wood, she says.

hoarse. he approaches with drink
 and she shouts atim horse, gid
 or shut. but all is forgiven,
 I make no reproaches.

what can the alpha beta elephant do
 with twenty-six laces tying his shoe?

dance

o river river river thrice o children
 of care and carefor fond dotey fond am I.
 in this backstep backstep backstep dancegame
 (hey, says Mark, look out you'll fall in) I step
 into the center and circle around, it
 at the heart of a sphere I see
 from afar.

I'm bursted
 from being so full, says Donna. I'm now bust,
 all of us. ripe in the garden. has Sam enough teeth
 for tomatoes? run it off around the tree then,
 Mark answers.

I cannot catch her; I cannot catch myself.
 untagging it forever.
 the surface broken, flung up in silver ropes.

(to my son
 in his oblivious innocent amoral sleep
 and the energies spent in making the circle turn.)

into the night good the day barges, ropeset,
 thus the travels of tempustation, withowl hoot
 or whistle and pursued by the children who have run
 and playn after all day (nonobjective lovers
 out of focus) ; past them and us, peregrinations
 of the river, what a work it is.

then a dream

allnight of day replete, up dawnoonight down
 flowing like an augur or goldaurose sign
 of the morrow repeated. iconographic bankbeasts,
 symbols of plenty, bedded in the horn of Amalthea,
 a revelrous rivery, riot of rifewife, a reverent
 flumenous soul

in meternity. breath be arth fecund
 out of riverot. (the river nets the paninsula.)
 amen ram-headed.

tlk tlk.

the owl calls hewitt, hewitt, and the quail.
 hee-ew. witt!

riverman riverman where do you go
 along the riverbed?
 up to the mountains or down to the sea
 wherever I am led.

riverman riverman where do you go
 around the riverbend?
 over the rapids and down in the pools
 until the waters end.

unbottled up he says.

high and inebright, riches. hoarse
 as a parrot but brightbeautifully feathered.
 coxcombed like the garden rooster through the
 goldenrod.

pepperth and saw't. ah ah ah my birth, think how
 abundant

the earth and how. dower me that, old nanny
 nursey goat.
 eyes mind heart and belly, my oldated. the belly
 that belies the obscure love. embreacst.
 the mares backed
 to the dophiont northwind; mounts them.

cx xc tilk o

o she an' us. bodybend, shugged,
 and finally in the riverbed cx xc. the ev.
 ni, she says.

dawnight to. downight inexorable.
 so they go, so they grow

into the heart
 of it flooding with opulence
 and vulnerability

holplessly silent moths
 how to . . . that I accept and submit to o the . . .
 sentunder and get bliss them. I gowunderfull.
 slips past, riveruns.
 let it sleep then, let them.

riveruns

sethisunsandowns
 scalethemergeverainarrowwaterriveroverapids
 soriverimbibeatheasiness
 softheearthoneyellowealthateems
 sofecundammedeepentyieldinggreateriches
 slipasthedgesofturnowitheastrailingloommarshes
 serpentineaseawardropastheatedayoungirls
 sleepetulantheiredimouths
 stillazilyethroughoursweetlyawningoes
 stagnanthenextouterillslovetrills
 sleepereachomewardownightips
 sweethebbendeltandrops
 swifterivereacheshoresandreamazes.

Come, Horace Hewitt, draw and drink.

C. H. Hejinian

REXROTH AS HE APPEARED TO EXIST*March 24, 1968, 5:15-9:00 P.M.*

It were as if he were slowly falling asleep,
Sitting in that chair, while everyone at the party
asked him questions.
Suddenly I wondered if someday I would become
a beard
And if I would, as they asked me questions,
tilt back my head and for a minute or so
pretend to doze, eyes peering under lids,
And I wondered if then, in that future crowd,
There would be anyone like me who once
could not think of any questions to ask.
And only through my mind the thought: how soon
he will be dead,
An that's the way he'll look in a coffin,
his head back like that
with Halley's Comet hair
And the crowds whispering A GREAT POET HAS
DIED
yet feeling about as sad as old men do
when they see a boy lose his beauty
and become one of them.
Years from now when I hear the news of his death
I will remember that night and this poem
Shivering a little as I did now and as I did then,
Surprising myself,
with the thought of salmon shooting
up the rapids of his brain,
What he was as far as Orion, as near as a grosbeak,
And what he is now —
the sound of mice moving delicately
in the walls of his flesh.

Antler

LETTER TO TU FU

to Fred Leshner

Forgive me if I write, lacking your culture,
 Though you are removed from me as the stars,
 and I read you only in translation,
 a small knowledge of things is my only inflection,
 and the fact, too, that I dream of snow in the
 mountains.

I have just returned from camping with a friend.
 At first we couldn't sleep nights for the excitement:
 we drank whisky by firelight and talk of ideals
 until our words were moth husks left on the ashes.
 Later I fished for days and caught nothing,
 but one trout that struck as my line snagged.
 I had to land him hand over hand, stumbling
 against rocks to the middle of the river.
 Since boyhood I've had these currents within me;
 I am trying now to rhyme their directions.

One morning, near three,
 after my friend had left quietly
 to watch wild birds at their feeding,
 I rose from the dampness to re-ignite the fire.
 I used squaw-wood gathered from wet spruce trees,
 and I watched it flare briefly, once broken to pieces.
 I had no thought then, but joy:
 like stars, faint, above rivers and blackness,
 or points of pure orange that speckle a trout.
 When my friend returned, he talked of whippoorwills
 and the sheer contortions their bodies make freeing
 the song.

It is now I understand an exile's communion,
the wine that turned moonlight on your earth floor
to snow.

This I hope you can understand, for you are its native
tongue.

John Judson

BIG FIGHT, AGE SEVEN

Your hand (no fist really)
shooting up a blur,
exploding red and white and red
bandanna dots behind my eyes.

Me then, far backward felled, upturned, flip-kicking
toward the drivewaylining boulders:
totems whitewashed: others had fallen.

You then,
calm over me some tall good guy John Wayne;
your hands
there fairly at your sides. But then me, quick,
hooking your leg with my foot, (a feint, tricky)
and I leap up a wronged brave
when you sit blunt with a not-too-surprised look. You,
such a little kid just then.

And then at once me, Jack Palancely
kicking you, the kid, my friend,
slowly, deliciously and grinning
when you guard your face with your hands.

—But then your mother, the midget,
bugling down the driveway like the law.

Me thoughtfully
taking two, last, lovely kicks; then me
jumping the fence as you shout you'll get me,
and all that;
and me,
yelling back, yah, yah, that'll be the day, and all that;
me,
crying with wishing I'd hurt you worse while I had
a chance;
me already
worrying about the next time; me
lope-running as fast as I can.

Martin Wampler

THE INSIDER

Shot from a blunder, some wet buss sundering
A night's calm, jerking I straighten out my quirks
In my own good time to make myself the same
As those who made their sport without long thoughts
Of me, prodigal of her who beguiles
These last days easying her belly. Assayings
Of my character, sex, coloring have vexed
These begetters, raddling old bloods new to unriddle.
She sulks, sighs, wants, eats, devours, distressing late
Nerves and rounding glands. And should I unbalanced
Be by his importuned prods? Bent to lick wounds,
Not being yet, I'll move to physic any ills
Beset on me, if I can, before the moon's
Shoving of my self-loving me into living.

Karl Patten

TWO POEMS**The Story Lady**

The Story Lady from KWZY is sitting in the park
by the big
lake even though it's cold and nobody else is around.
She
is out of a job and not in the best of moods. "You'd be
pissed, too," she said to nobody in particular. She was
feeling pretty rocky but tried her best to remember
exactly
why it was she got bounced. Was it because she was
a little
pregnant? She didn't think it showed on the air, and
anyway
they didn't know about her and Marvin the Midget
from Channel
9. So maybe it was because she wrung the kitten's
neck that
time it peed on her hand? They got a lot of letters
about that
one. Or it could have been because Bar-Bar the Bear's
trainer
kept goosing her with his big whip during their 4th
of July
show? That didn't sit too well with the mummies,
either.
Then she remembered: nothing was as bad as the
day she came

in stoned and couldn't get the animals straight. Moo-
moo

for the doggies and tweet-tweet for the horsie.
"Jesus," she
said, "the PTA is still on my back." The Story Lady
had just
about decided to go back to San Diego and try to get
a new start

in radio when something caught her eye. "Whoops,"
she said.
"What's that? It looks like the goddamned prince in
his little
frog outfit. I'll just give him a big smackeroo and
zingo!

I'll be the princess." So the Story Lady followed the
frog
to the edge of the lake and when he hopped in she
did too.
It was remarkably pretty under the water and she
decided

that prince or no prince she would live there anyway
and tell
stories to the little fishies that go bow-wow all the
day long.

Sometimes

My only love reads big books, behemoth works
of unassigned origin: *War and Peace*, *The
Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Gaddis'
The Recognitions and gloomy Spengler.

She only tackles these monsters when things
go wrong upstairs: her childlessness, my
childishness. Usually in the mornings, some-
where between the bran flakes and the mail

I hear her groan of exertion, a wheeze of
heft, whoosh of the page, howl of upholstery
and I know her blood is running grim and
this is no place for a kid like me.

Ronald Koertge