

**THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL**  
**Volume 19 - Number 3**                      **Spring 1969**

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*Cover Design:* VERNON SHAFFER

*THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL*

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**WITCH**

She's been here before, not to collect  
anything. She walks in and sits beside or behind  
me, or in the bedroom alone, content with music  
and slick pages. When I reach to touch her,  
she turns pale and cold like a sea cow. I offer  
food or drink, and then myself,  
but she darkens holding her breath.

I ask why she stays but she avoids  
questions. I set up games with pitfalls  
but she moves without pattern  
and is never caught. Exhausted, I leave  
for the ocean, but she follows me. All day  
I walk the ocean's edge crying  
*O what have I done?*

In the evening she stands before me  
like an actress who's forgotten  
her make-up or about to commit  
adultery. She holds a blowfish, milky  
white, its eyes scraped out by her fingernails.  
She says, "It's you." and disappears into it.

**John Bean**

**VISITING HOUR**

High above the city in an embrasure,  
nub-end of a spinal column—hall and rooms—  
I wait with Rilke's Book of Orpheus.

In 904 some vulture gnaws upon  
my mother-in-law, brazenly,  
as if already flesh were carrion.  
Life, passionate as when it raped  
the single cell her start, wails in  
her now, whose parenthetical span was dumb—  
an irony she misses for the best.

Over her sheeted waste my wife  
sobs soundlessly behind a smile  
as thin as gauze, her tears as dry  
as pretense maimed by grief can wring.  
The daughter now is mother.

White-hooded Sisters of Felicia,  
gliding in and out, render charity  
efficient, though starched somewhat,  
make mercy incarnate, if capped  
with a little pride.

No breath of wind stirs across the rooftops.  
From canyon streets cut through cliffs  
of brick honeycombed for living,  
children's cries, the wheeze of engines,  
a closing siren, horns, clock's clung  
climb up the hanging heat.

Through a speaker I can't locate  
the Angelus is chanted by a voice  
not man's nor woman's—  
metallic benediction for this night.

I turn to Rilke— "*Wolle die Wandlung*"—  
tense my ear to catch those rolling chords:  
requiem for the lovely girl of twenty  
who had just begun to dance;  
death mass for the brown-eyed boy,  
disfigured by a squint  
though faultless as the Lamb—  
"*das du dich wandlest in Wind.*"

Does music lie like nectar  
in the flower of all dying?

Through evening haze loitering about  
the city, sun suddenly exposes,  
poises above the entablature  
of a distant building, while darkness  
crawls over earth's edge from the ocean.

Then gored on pediment's point, sun  
gashes, gushes crimson onto dusk.

The breeze that runs ahead of night  
slithers my neck and cheek. "Let's go,"  
my wife's voice whispers in my ear.

John Wheatcroft

## NEARLY NUDE INTERLUDE

It was a hot night  
and her bare bottom  
stuck to the leather  
of the black bucket  
  
seats in my sports car.  
A mosquito (intent upon

innocent blood letting)  
had kept us clapping  
empty humid air between  
our sweaty palms until  
we lost it in the  
middle of a sticky kiss  
that greased our groins.  
I bit her thigh at last  
(feeling like no mosquito)  
and she urged me over  
with little moans and  
fingers plucking at my  
shoulder blades. (If you  
have never screwed such  
a glorious redhead in  
a roadster, you have  
never lived!)  
The four-speed gear shift  
(synchro-mesh) gouged  
my knee as she arched  
upward and we fell out  
of our minds together,  
until our breathing  
slowed to the steady  
buzz of that fucking  
mosquito (tiny vampire  
driven by her eternal  
immediate necessity.)  
We untangled our melted legs,  
our merged fur, our tender

organs, our gear shifts.  
Now, I would die an eternity  
for her who has become  
my forever love,  
(forever, if that mosquito  
sucks forever.)

O. Howard Winn

### MOSES BY MICHELANGELO

The sun is a splinter  
caught in a cloud; the wind  
works at the cloud's  
tight fist, fighting  
for its chip of light  
against the spreading  
of the mist; below,  
the hand of the law is  
tangled in the prophet's  
stone mane, the snarling fog  
of grey curls trying to escape  
from the embrace of walls.  
He sits in the waiting room beyond  
the corridor to surgery—  
a corridor of rolling cars  
bearing bodies bloodied  
in untimely accidents of  
birth. Born from a contingent  
belly, watched by chance in  
mirrors: a natural birth  
on a sterile bloody slab.

The great stone statue sits  
with his hand  
tangled in his beard, as if  
his fingers might hold back  
the mighty marble flood, the  
blood in its cascade of curls;  
he waits  
outside the corridor,  
the broken tablets there  
already at his feet.  
The rod in his hand, and Moses  
divided the waters of the red sea—  
he broke the blood in two  
and laid it out on stone—  
and then he broke that too.  
A long and torch lit corridor  
of casualties, attended by the cold  
and certain hands of white gowned  
priests. The doctors fit  
the artificial limb—as good  
as new: a tree, through blossoming,  
drops its petals with a crash.

In silver haste a heron flies  
straight for the sun  
sounding a note so high  
it shatters the sky in a shower of  
white feathers and broken shards  
of light—a long splinter of white  
sinks straight  
into the earth's  
soft and swollen heart.  
And the earth turns, red,  
impaled on its own axis.

**Eleanor Wilner**



I'm carrying my sign, too, and not only that—  
I'm wearing my beard, long hair, and exposing  
my toes,  
Walking down Telegraph Avenue looking in shops  
at the beads and the boots and the frills and  
farout clothes;  
I'm right here strolling along past the helmeted cops,  
buying my *Barb* and nimbly avoiding the crap.

I'm stopped by a kid who doesn't know where he is,  
and give him the dime, though not the direction  
he asks—  
some church he'd heard of once where  
freak-outs stay;  
a girl goes by so made up she looks like she's masked,  
and plainfaced others who might have been  
forking the hay;  
a German Shepherd lifts up his leg to piss.

on the Bank of America, a protest with which  
I agree—  
even the dogs seem to be activists here—  
I'm smiling along with my sign which nobody sees  
though it's lettered in E.S.P. and perfectly clear—  
ARE YOU REALLY AS READY AS I AM FOR  
LOVE AND PEACE?  
IF I TOLD YOU OF SAD MIDDLE AGE WOULD  
ANYONE HEAR?

Harold Witt



### THE ROUND-TRIP SWITCH-HITTER

"The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression."

—*Frantz Fanon*

Accepting reality, its brawn and bite,  
 He took the assignment to drive,  
 Not knowing the woman and her two sons.  
 In pre-dawn light loading the U-Haul,  
 Overloading van and big car with household  
 goods

That had already come a long way down—  
 Stereo, T.V., rugs, lamps, dishes, beds,  
 Bedding, shoes, their and her clothing—,  
 He padlocked the trailer doors,  
 Checked the hitch, turn signals, tail-lights,  
 Started the car and headed south.  
 Her eyes, freighted with care, hung  
 Like stars in the rearview mirror,  
 And the boys curled puppy limp in sleep  
 Beside a battered cardboard box  
 That overflowed with bats, gloves, balls  
 And was loaded last on the seat between them.  
 On awaking they unbuttoned bright eyes  
 To measure map and speed and passing scene,  
 Seeking a new green playing field.

In the mirror her eyes, blue and far  
 Fixed on the past, were silently saying:  
 Don't hurt us, please; drive with care;  
 Don't deceive me as I have been deceived;  
 Speaking through him, impersonally  
 To some vague unknown crouching  
 Beyond the mountains of West Virginia,

Random decayed columns of shale castles  
Of the dispossessed, across Virginia's narrows,  
And North Carolina's red clay hills,  
Beyond the long, pine-straight undulations  
Of South Carolina, where  
At dusk they stopped at the motel,  
Felt the hot give of tar underfoot,  
And heard the air conditioner's clank  
Slowly overtake the mechanical whir  
Of the big car's motor in their ears.

In dark whispering from an inside door  
He awakened to three games he had known,  
Three faces present as moons to behold  
His antelope move through the secondary  
Into the clear beyond the defender,  
His taking the high hard pass,  
Cushioning it with one hand, drawing it in.  
Letting the ball's momentum lift him  
As though he were part of its spin  
In its fabulous flight to the goal;  
Again, just past center circle on hardwood,  
Breaking clear, fingering up the loose ball,  
Moving for one instant free of arms,  
He pumped a long one-hand shot,  
Rode with the ball in its perfect arc  
To the distant hole, the net's swish.

Knees and arms loose, he moved to the box  
From on-deck, swinging the white ash bat  
With flicks of his wrist to clear his cleats,  
Set himself for the pivotal swing. Taking that  
stance  
For which he had been criticized  
Before the coach beheld his follow-through,  
Loosening, he awaited the pitch. A ball,

A second ball, a foul tip, a third ball—  
Three and one, and knowing the pitch  
Would be in there. Thinking—swinging being  
one

With the white blur of the chest-high ball,  
Feeling only the solid prick of the bat,  
The carry-through of shoulders and torso,  
Knowing without looking there was no need  
for speed

Though his body was slanting, legs driving  
To bear him past first before he was sure  
It was what it was—all felt deep in arms,  
Legs, loins, the eyes on his face kindled,  
Bell-flower blue saying: Don't hurt us,  
please;

Drive with care—and his seeing the box,  
Gloves, bats and balls, last loaded, unloaded,  
The three of them standing in a playing field.

Bathed in blue light he swung from the left—  
To prove he knew the switch-hitter's stance—  
And the ball flew like a meteor  
Far over the fringe of a distant woods.  
The boys rushed after it, after him,  
Their eyes on it or him, running,  
Running as fast as their legs allowed.  
She moved with him across the soft grass  
Beneath overhanging trees that closed in  
privacy,

To the ocean's edge where the ball descended,  
Floating gently down like the sun in the sea.  
The boys, spurting ahead, leaped after it,  
The tide rose, roared and poured as a torrent;  
He saw the threat and dived after them,  
But their bodies turned to cold stones,  
Their wide open eyes shone like sea pebbles.



**White Tanks**

When the sun goes down  
    over the White Tank Mountains  
and the sternum of the earth collapses,  
    when the sun goes down and for miles  
        below the marshes settle with birds,  
    up in the crags the bears turn around  
        once and feeling the stars come sleep;  
I take off my buckle, the eyes of my  
    boots roll off and lie in the  
    rubble, pearls and cold seeds; the stone man  
        inside me stands, gall on his lips—  
    the last light shining through his ribs;  
and surrounded by wolves, the winds  
    of the dark ranges spinning  
        I stretch on a narrow  
    bench of sand, rock for  
a pillow, hands froze to my sides;  
    as the horde marches  
over the horizon, fills my mouth;  
    water fills my lungs. my teeth sing.  
    as the mountains circle beneath  
    them, the mud on my ribs falls in.

**Peter Wild**



three,  
I gather them for kindling;  
four,  
and I am joyous.

### 3. Fire

My beloved is mine,  
and I am his.

He gathers twigs and branches  
for our bed,  
and I abide him  
in this darkness.

He feeds among the hours,  
and I,  
among their ashes.

I am tinder  
for the fervor of his mouth,  
and the fervor of his rising.

We cleave among  
the secret places of the stairs,  
to light their corners  
with our cleaving.

And our tongues are knives  
against the silence.

### 4. The Sermon

When the learned Rabbis ask me,  
"What prayer  
is pleasing to the Holy One,  
Blessed be He,"

I answer:

Fervor in the morning;

in the afternoon,  
also fervor;

and at night,  
a man and woman,  
laughing.

### 5. A New Song

Lord,  
I hear.

In the psaltery  
of birds.  
Also oxen.

In the canticle  
of all things green.  
Or the closing hand.

No less the heron  
than the egg.

Or the shallow pit.

The falling dish,  
or the flinting stone.  
Tobacco,  
even doors.

The eastward corner.  
Or abide.

All instruments.  
Or praises.  
Even joy  
upon their bed.



Or glory.

\* \* \*

Too much,  
too much light.

I am  
blinded  
by my  
eyes.

*I*  
*beg*  
*you.*

L. G. Corey

### THREE POEMS

#### **Dont Stop Dont Look Dont Listen**

It is no journey to be made by night.  
They line the lonely roads: if you should stray  
The chances of your coming through are slight.  
You'll hear them calling shortcuts to the light.  
Don't follow them, you'll find it doesn't pay.  
It is no journey to be made by night.

They'll scent you in the darkness by your fright.  
If they should sniff you running, you can pray:  
The chances of your coming through are slight.

Their hidden eyes will mock your claim to sight.  
Don't look at them, unless you want to stay.  
It is no journey to be made by night.

There's one you'll hardly pass without a fight.  
Best stand your ground and take what hope  
you may:

The chances of your coming through are slight.

There are no other roadways, this one's right.  
Whatever you have loved must light the way.  
It is not journey to be made by night:  
The chances of your coming through are slight.

### Sauve Qui Peut

The gods of the dark go on  
Destroying to create  
And little they care if one  
Dies in the fire they make.  
*How then if two should break?*  
Little they care if two  
Caught on the edge of the world  
Slide in the heart of a storm:  
Making new worlds to find  
The gods of the dark go on  
And little they care what harm  
Breaks on the private mind  
Getting their messages late,  
Blind fires that cannot wait.

**The Unforgiven**

They are always watching you  
and no matter what you do  
or do not do  
you are always watching them  
watching you.

They will always follow you  
and no matter where you go  
or do not go  
you must always follow them  
where they follow you.

They are always looking in  
through the window of your sin  
and no matter what you do not do  
or where you do not go  
you must always look at them  
looking in  
until you say  
they did not sin.

**Joanne Turner**

**DRAGONFLIES**

My father hunted rabbits,  
My kitten teased grasshoppers,  
My puppy chased roosters,  
And with a spider web on the rake,  
I myself ran wild after  
The dragonflies.  
I seized their skinny tails  
Of yellow, green, red and gray;  
I tied their needle feet  
With a silk thread, and I swung  
Those diamond-eyed creatures  
In the evening air until  
They fainted and dropped on the grass,  
Liked crashed helicopters.

I recall my childhood sport,  
Whenever I see a kitten or a puppy  
Playing his cheerful game;  
The rabbits are frisking in the woods,  
The grasshoppers thriving in the weeds,  
Yet in his dusty berth,  
My father would not hear  
The roosters at dawn,  
And for many and many a summer evening,  
He leaves me here to watch the dragonflies  
Dancing gaily above the grass.

Stephen Shu-ning Liu

## THE GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

But what I have in mind is the rhythm of relationships, the harmonía, as the Greeks would say, whereby the whole body, inside and out, can be looked upon as a kind of organ with a music all its own.

—*City of God* (Bourke, ed.)

First we floated in the whistler's breath.  
Then someone said, "Shut up. The concert  
Is about to . . ." And the music  
Began. Strange fingers under the skin  
Played us into hair and muscle.  
So we were plucked from between the bars  
And introduced.

Quietly, as if we were the first  
Humans in that green space,  
The man in the rose-colored robe  
Led us hand in hand to a resting place  
And deposited us.

## Refusing words

Of explanation, refusing even to look at us,  
He withdrew his palms from our clutching fingers  
and left us  
Alone among animals and plants;  
Alone with that giant flower sticking out of  
the water,  
Tentacles quivering and an owl in its window;  
Alone with our ears fighting to keep out  
Doll-squeaks of a mouse  
As it died in the cat's drool.  
It was all green,  
Murderous; and we are left with nothing.  
So, out of desperation, we turned to one another.  
Days we spent  
Just breathing each other's breath;

Days spent touching each other, forehead, neck,  
and knee;

Days learning

How to talk to one another,

How to listen.

The sun rose, the dew began to dry,

And the dragon-bird munched on the frog.

We absorbed one another.

And then the others came,

Jake and Sergio and Georgina and all the rest,

And we had a party.

We rented a landscape, as far as we could see,

And romped around nakedly and ate fruit.

Day in, day out, the nude musicians

Conducted us from friend to friend.

There was no end to sunshine, new

Pleasures, and the generous faces.

I remember particularly love in an oystershell

And a cruise through the clouds,

Wings at my waist, a fish in my hands,

And a hawk as navigator perched on my ass.

All that time I was filled with blood and

the colors of the world

I spat pearls and flowers from every orifice.

And then one day I turned around

And there were rats; an amorous

Pig in nun's habit; the Insect-King

Swallowing my friends in squirming fistfuls,

Squeezing them out through his bowels.

Someone was branding music on a nearby anus.

The world was the color of excrement and fire.

My friends, my friends

Put through paces and gamuts,

A mild touch of horror on every face;

And I, myself, after a chase through junkpiles

of giant elbows.  
 Was finally caught by a rabbit, who chewed off  
 my feet.  
 Then I was stretched out to dry on a husk of skin,  
 Pinned down by six foaming dogs with talons  
 and snake-snouts,  
 Breath and hide stinking like wolves.  
 They were preparing to string me like a banjo.  
 We were all being turned into musical instruments.  
 We were all choking and cooking in the slop of  
 the beasts,  
 Tortured and digested to be reshaped  
 As violins, clarinets, or flutes.  
 Thus, in the end, we were made capable of music  
 And were comforted to dream  
 That they could hear us in the other places:  
 As birds and weird oboes and a green  
 Voice in the garden;  
 As castanets and saxophones up  
 There among the strawberries and the arms and legs.  
 So it is true, and we live ever after.  
 For the devils, it seems, are all insomniacs;  
 Therefore we must be guitars of shit and mucus  
 That they may while away their desperate nights,  
 Plucking out of our bodies their one song,  
 In which the flesh is finally made to speak  
 And endlessly repeat its name: I am  
 Eden, I am Hell,

## I

Am the Garden of Delights.

Thomas Frosch

**GIVING ONESELF A FORM AGAIN AGAIN**

A bathing of love  
sweet close mist of the breathing of love  
ribs stuck too close together  
for love  
the horizon is too close!  
too close!  
enchanted to a fine grim dust  
the soul recalls  
another shape, like stone,  
a child's shape  
tough as stone  
'Everything is too close!'  
The child will not be touched

After the swift tearing of cloth  
a woman recoils  
to her basic peace  
the body has always impressed  
her horribly

So she forms herself again  
with hands slightly trembling  
an uncanny knowledge strokes  
the legs to calmness  
like wasps the blood flares  
and subsides  
she forms again the thoughtful  
altitude of thigh  
forming again the face  
that minds sharp iron spikes of fences  
beside sidewalks of ice

Joyce Carol Oates



## WITH THE WATER

the quiet center is  
 all what it is

about

the quiet center is

to be

reached

for

when the breath

is short

the pressure builds

behind eye

lids

sucks

gut

pushes

hollow a pain

up under into chest

the quiet center is

where it is

all

at

it is being

& not being

scared

it is being

one

and letting all

be

and so being

all

blessed

& blessing

it is

the only way now we can bless

be

blessed

stripped of stories

not ready for the hard

images we have made

are made by

lost

to certainty

freed

into fear

having again

to

be

afraid

and

be

gentle

each

to

each

each

to

self

the self held

& cherished

until it

is not

trembling

until  
it

is

still  
at the still center

quiet

in the quiet place  
quiet center  
where the self  
                  mates

with the water

&  
the butterfly

**Thomas Fitzsimmons**

### THE WINNEBAGO TWO-FINGER RELEASE

Each ripple on this black water  
carries a twinkle of sun  
I wade out into a galaxy  
up to my knees in mud  
This is a hunt for the Chinese fish  
the carp  
swimming beyond the mind

I wade into the current  
which deepens the water  
I cross to an island  
of cat-tail marsh  
I stand among reeds  
near the deep water  
I silence my self

The breeze is on my face  
The mud is sucking at my feet  
The sun turns the arrow on my bow  
into a sliver of light

There, in the darkness  
the flash of his scales  
there, in the reeds  
a commotion of flesh  
His back heaves above the water-line  
each gold scale edged with black  
I feel my heart quicken  
in its lake of blood

I draw back my bow  
and calculate the distance  
between us  
Two hundred lifetimes away

But when my bowstring cuts through me  
my arrow flies perfectly true

Sven Hulbert

## TWO POEMS

Poem for John Logan      April 6, 1967

*After a poetry reading at Barat College of the  
Sacred Heart*

We waited plastered for your plane  
Two brandy filled hours to unstack  
As Brian's gimpy pup knocked over  
Sand filled ashtrays  
Standing the bar we wondered  
If it was possible  
To be thrown out of an airport

Everyone (or most) still waited  
& booze besodden  
Your poems struck pure chords  
Too drunk to hear or remember  
I at least knew when to clap  
(preoccupied  
as I was with the knees  
of Mary Anne  
sitting next to me  
eighteen years older & younger  
than I could ever be)

Then you disappeared with Joy  
Mary Beth  
With her tight rump  
Against my knee  
Ruffled my reserve  
Yet served to make pleasant  
The ride to Chicago



(not to mention  
    he outlived three wives  
        who had nothing whatever to do with it)

Sunday, June 16  
    the day of Leopold Bloom:

“Man and woman, love, what is it? A cork  
    and bottle”

Guinness and Irish whisky  
    wipe out the sweet taste of wine  
Alcohol dries up the juices  
    and I wonder  
        in the words of New York Times cartoon

Do I drink because I'm a poet  
    or am I poet because I'm a drunk?

**F. D. Gilman**

## TWO POEMS

## Return Passage

To go back, where the wild vines lean low  
Around sugar turning in slow liquescence  
And red berries blister gentian and spill  
Off stem, off bird-beak and bear-paw, clots  
Of unguent darkness on moss and fern

And morning falls on a tilt of sun  
Like gold coin skipped over dozing water,  
A yellow-brick road slanting a pool  
Where two dykes catch and lull a creek  
Rattling down rock towards the Sound and the Sea,

A creek to dream on for a child on a raft  
On a trail marked by feathers of water  
That lead to the Emerald City—  
Back and forth through the crowning day  
While the distant call of wild geese

Arches North and away on the wind.  
And nights alone, except for an owl  
And the eye of the moon  
Where firs mouth secrets  
And water sounds the darkness.

Until the night of the salmon run.  
In the gathering creek  
Shock through water: flounder and thrash,  
Spasms of silver striking the dark,  
Fins and bellies flailing ways



Up the bruise of rocks, flesh as a club  
 Beating a trail back home—pools,  
 Pull your threads tight, pulse with one  
 Peculiar ruffle, grain of spawn  
 Like a thin blade twisting marrow to flux,

To urge towards glycerine pools—it is  
 This luminescence that lingers as measure of sight:  
 Phosphorous rubbing its bones against  
 The dark—long ache towards a point  
 Where two tides cross and ride together—

Quicksilver, dreamt in a night when time  
 Was a spool to unspin,  
 When bones were fins under skies of iris stars  
 And morning was sun like an awl boring stone,  
 Like an eye opening.

### **Lunch Hour of the Supervising Clerk**

Office a hush.  
 Stacks of work frozen to desks.  
 Walls a blank back-drop on an empty stage.

Only two clerks with no place to go.  
 Hunched over lunches.  
 Wrapping themselves in solitude.

Through squares of window, drifts of fog  
 Press the pines to the hill  
 Like hooded mourners, muffled in mist  
 And listening . . .

Busy, busy under ghost-blue lights  
 I scribble numbers in squares, words

On a pad: Things to Do

And if I lift my hand this  
Is the image of my reality:  
Smudged lead on ruled blanks

Words are sounds  
That slide like cough-drops under the tongue  
And dissolve

I reach out to touch, and my arm falls away.  
A mannikin being dismembered.  
I am sealed in fog. A ball of mist. Thistledown.

You will walk in the fog, destination-bound  
And never know you have passed through me  
Leaving me scattered, a curl of dust . . .

When there were doors, I had no keys.  
Now I carry many  
But the rooms of my life have blown away unopened

The trees, snuffing-out on the hill—  
Is it the clop of horses' hooves  
They hear, and never see, through a film  
Blurring yesterday, tomorrow, until  
They stand, solitary, wraithed in webs  
Alone in now, blank  
And terrible

At night I dream of ships  
Traveling through a series of narrowing locks  
Leading inland.

**Janice Hays Loonie**

**RATS***For Kathleen Fraser*

Rats! No longer mice  
 not yet squirrels  
 ratting on fellow derelicts  
 ocean traversers globe scurriers  
 professional immigrants without visa  
 bubonic plague carriers & spreaders of  
 tularemia many-specied yet  
 once-a-rat-always-a-rat scions of the  
 nefarious Muridae tribes:

African giant rats black spearbearers  
 African mole rats gnawing pyramids  
 albino rats with bloodshot eyes  
 Alexandrian rats devourers of libraries  
 American kangaroo rats with Australian blackmail in  
 their pouches bamboo rats  
 black rats (*rattus rattus*)  
 brown rats (*rattus norvegicus*)  
 bushytailed rats cane rats (raising cane)  
 cave rats (strollers among scrolls runic  
 cave carvers) coffee rats for coffee breaks  
 cotton rats cotton rats  
 crest-tailed marsupial rats ( viviparous but  
 non-placental mammalian wombattant & bandicooted)  
 crested spiny rats dwarf kangaroo rats with  
 coathanger tails fish-eating rats  
 Florida water rats in striped bikinis  
 grass rats oh grass rats cool & green  
 grey rats for rainy days great sand rats  
 greater cane rats lesser cane rats  
 mosaic-tailed rats for art lovers  
 nestbuilding rabbit rats New Guinea water rats

Norway rats with Viking profiles pack rats  
pygmy rice rats for pulling rickshaws  
regular rice rats roof rats sand rats  
spiny rats swamp rats trade rats for trading-in  
true rats (to their wives) tree rats  
vesper rats (when the day is done) wander rats (with  
rucksacks) water rats wharf rats from Hamburg  
and wood rats from Zanzibar  
wood rats from Zanzibar.

**Felix Pollak**

### **CHILD, LOST AT SEA**

Wild, with ten wrong instruments,  
she pulls at air but cannot touch.

That fragrant toy  
is altered here  
and she, the heavy stranger  
in a liquid country.

In pantomimes of screams,  
her fingers clutch at light,  
feeling for the Known,  
having learned themselves  
only in a solid world.

Her body  
is one curved prayer  
for a fairy tale,  
for a bough of wind  
to hold.

Her valid bones  
churn into fantasy.

Coins of splash and bubble  
fly into the gold hands  
of the sun.

But no wealth of fear  
buys one wish here

though

small rainbows arc  
in mock response  
to her uncomprehending eyes  
that gleam,  
and widen once,  
and close.

What had blossomed kites  
and bright balloons,  
what had made her buoyant  
on the land,  
now presses her like seed  
into the water's furrow  
as though there  
she might somehow grow.

Air slows, resumes  
an innocent rhythm,  
prods a casual bird.

The sea adjusts its sound  
and random sail,  
becomes again a murmur  
and a massive sway.

The slight disturbance  
is smoothed away.

Irene Magee

**CRANBERRIES**

Frogs, violins, the rest of the  
Soft seasons sleep in the mind.  
Here are the bones and nerves  
Of another green animal  
We decorate with red berries.  
They do not sway when the wind  
Comes, they move like rat's eyes.

We crush them, soft  
Explosions of eyes, our seasonal  
Relish. Sugar, orange, spices;  
Even so, the sharpness of a  
Food that has its predator  
By the throat.

**Stuart Peterfreund**

**THE NEWS OF KENNEDY'S DEATH  
RECEIVED IN WEST TEXAS**

Hung in a wingspread over the winds,  
An eye's tuft blinks, a bone-hollowed ear is tugged,  
The mountain is steeped in swift invisible waves.

Grey facets flow, the surface is yet  
Static, the hawk drops past the foothills  
To ride tense muscles of the underair.

Here on the sun's anvil, the running plain,  
A battered car is stopped, its radio howling,  
Ringed by miles of deadened and cracked cliff-faces.

A startled scorpion flicks around a stone.  
Inside the car, shrinking against the dashboard,  
The driver tries with thumbs and fingers to  
bury his eyelids.

He sits and sweats in the dark.  
He remembers the road, but which way was  
he going?

And he tries to think of half an hour ago.

But in his shallow night he sees the mountain cave  
He found once, following its end  
The Apaches' retreat, last huntings, buzzard-  
flown burials . . .

Over the litter, on the windless walls of the cave  
His fingers traced shapes fragile as sails,  
Shadows of the bones of sea-floor fishes.

