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CONTENTS

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|--|
| 1 | ROBERT BERNER | <i>To Catullus For #8</i> |
| 2 | BESMILR BRIGHAM | <i>The Thief and (The Crucified)</i> |
| 3 | FREDERIC YOUNG | <i>Southern Girl Dancing</i> |
| 4 | JOSEPH FIORAVANTI | <i>Education of a Second Generation American</i> |
| 5 | JIM SMITH | <i>The Bleeding of Penelope</i> |
| 13 | JONATHAN HOLDEN | <i>The Genuine Article</i> |
| 14 | T. CUSON | <i>Variations on a Theme</i> |
| 15 | DORIS MOORE | <i>Narrative</i> |
| 16 | ROBERT FLANAGAN | <i>The Open</i> |
| 17 | WONG MAY | <i>Cross-Examination</i> |
| 18 | JOHN ALLMAN | <i>Release</i> |
| 24 | BILL MEISSNER | <i>Three Poems</i> |
| 26 | JANICE LOONIE | <i>Two Poems</i> |
| 31 | DORIS BETTS | <i>Mrs. Longfellow's Death</i> |
| 33 | BENJAMIN K. BENNETT | <i>An Arch of Words</i> |
| 34 | RALPH MILLIS | <i>Simon Downs</i> |
| 35 | JUDITH MCCOMBS | <i>Horse and Rider</i> |

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TO CATULLUS FOR #8

Poor horny Catullus you
scratched at an unendurable
itch writing to that proud
bitch Clodia not knowing
how things would end how
centuries would dump themselves
on Rome vanquish Caesars
slay legions how barbarian
decades would humble
the empire tumble it
into time with marble
torsos cracked chamber
pots spent coins

Now

the dust of Clodia
quicken the sweet
meat of later sluts and
we curse lust lusting
to be free

while Catullus
in a poem endures
his eternally aching loins

Robert Leslie Berner

THE THIEF AND (THE CRUCIFIED)*from a painting by Mantegna*

the sudden light
shines on the thief's body
under the cloth
his virility, the sex organs
hair

 muscles strain
pushing their force
against the cross

he is the Christ!

not the grey resigned figure
with arms flung out
despite the nail heads—
death is the same, the agony
flesh, a certainty
held

in the open mouth
 the unaccepting belief
a bare skull
lies at the base of the center post
the legs
are not yet broken, the side
not pierced

Besmilr Brigham

SOUTHERN GIRL DANCING

I slide my beer down the bar
so I can see perfectly

She starts curving & never
stops orbs circles arcs
ovals christ gently undulating
dead centered dart on pleasure's map
pointing *here*

wow I'd better think
of something else I'll think
of bikes & speed & Trout Fishing &
huge death & peace &

round O

my god she's turning
round slowly &

ab-so-lute-ly

well I'd mortgage my house
if I had one
leave wife & 5 kids
if I had any
sell all effects & goods
if I had some
rob banks
convert to Islam
disclose military secrets
slave 14 yrs in South African diamond mines
for 4 minutes
if I could last 4 minutes
in her honeycomb

What a bitch to ruin
utterly
a man she doesn't even know

Frederic Young

**EDUCATION OF A SECOND GENERATION
AMERICAN**

the hero of the piece was
 listed
 in
 the
 program:
 a doctor fellegrini savant and scrutable
 who came with briefcase and stethoscope
 in search of the solifidian truth;
 halfway through la donna's cacciatore
 (she
 was
 once
 queen of denial)
 the mustard plaster head of john
 the rapist beckoned in the arbor;
 when we read it in the daily news
 behind
 giacomo
 (the
 mad
 policeman)'s
 garage
 we choirboys snickered at the joke:
 how fellegrini savant
 and
 sage
 discovered act and causation
 through the instrumentation of marco's
 knife
 when the scrutable doctor's bumbershoot
 was discovered in the lady's avid chute

Joseph Fioravanti

THE BLEEDING OF PENELOPE

*And this whole land shall be a desolation
and an astonishment . . .*

—Jeremiah 25:11

Two years after Protevyeve tore
down Penelope,
ripped open the door-bells,
the icy steel of the
Bullshead,

they still sought blood.

Two years after the north fields
ran barn-paint red
and the swamps that had
lain stagnant since the

Pleistocene boiled in
vicious puberty,
they still sought blood.

So we hid in the caves,
fighting the whine of bugs
driven from the swamp,
we sought our own kind of
blood.

Blood to avenge the deeds
of vicious little bastards
who opened the mustard kegs
to suit their sexual thirst.

And most of all,
as the ancient waters
dripped minerals far back in
the bowels,
where stalactites like mountains
grew in a quiet men cannot
stand,
we fought to stay ourselves.

to the cry of "*Bourgeois!*"
Or the fairness of war
is their fantasy,
and I had time to think
about it as the water
dripped down in the back
of the cave. . .

In the middle of the third year,
like dust clouds,
soldiers came riding on great
black horses,
snorting white plumes of steam
on the mountain air.
And we retreated back into the
cave,
where none would find us.

The word came again,
by another ragged man
and they all were the same;
faces the color of old sawdust
and eyes that looked beyond
then, or even now
and their hair,
gone white by what?
No one knew how old
they were—
children of revolt,
worn-thin men in tatters of
flag.

One brought, then, the word—
Delgrande
had fallen—
The moon had looked down
on a black night of

hounds
 and creeping fog.
 Listrado, the young,
 vicious little bastard

who would eat his
 government's heart,

had taken it to the earth
 and sown the cinders
 with rock salt and
 vinegar—

All saw him coming—
 with eyes so burned-out red
 they waited,
 searching the scrub pines
 far down the slope,
 where soil and damp moss

clung to the slate,

until dawn
 when we went farther
 into the belly of the cave,
 to a place where dark had always been,
 and no man had ever been

before—

and we waited. . .for Listrado,
 the young.

In the fourth year,
 while silent snows piled
 deeper than a man is tall
 no one came,
 nor went,
 save to kill for food
 or to cough out the germs

of consumption,
 for which there was no

cure.

And we still knew,
white-skinned,
thin-fingered people
very like the ragged messengers
who had been this way before—
we knew
that Listrado, the young,
would be followed by
another and another. . .

Pautoli still stood,
and Remindo would write

acid words 'til his
fingers had no flesh left
to blister—

there would always be a
cause for flame,
and caves to die in. . .
always and always.

Thus in April
we left the cave,
five and thirteen,

.

mind,
crossed the Fernier
into the green midlands
where spring sun was a

armed with rock and

black and dismal eye,

and joined
Claudien, who said Remindo
had died
with a pointed stick up his
and we pushed north

rectum,

past the grey remains of
 what had stood as
 fair Penelope,
 and entered the Corlot

in June,
 dragged down in
 sludge

and remembering the caves—

There,
 as the sun burned trees

brown

and the mud baked and

cracked,

we met Listrado,
 carrying a flag of faith to
 Protevyev,
 whose fate had been to

creepin fever a year
 after the denunciation of
 the Bullshead.

Mortende ad infidelandoes,

he screamed

and we met a grim fate
 more than had he thought for us,
 though a bullet fired by
 Protobo, the magic one,
 cut him quickly from his
 saddle.

And we moved

across the lands to the border
 country,

away from deltas,

away from memories of a

nameless revolution

that called itself
freedom. . .

.

And I had time again,
to think.
About Listrado with a single,
bloated strand of gut
drooped between his young
legs,
hung from a hole like
the cave mouth,
where Protobo had shot him
once,
the only man Protobo ever
killed,
for he died, too, there on
the sun-baked Corlot.

.

And now it has been
fifteen years
and Listrado rots in his
grave,
the sullen flag of Protevyev
marking the spot.
No acknowledgment
tells the rest spot of
Protobo,
a bitter piece of ground
somewhere out in the
fucking Corlot.

They talk of a god,
these people new,
but this is a new land
and a stupid people

