

# THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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**THE TABLE IS THE DAY  
ARRANGED**

I understand my father.  
Eating these foreign delicacies,  
placing them on the table  
in their own implicit order,  
I can dig it.  
Fishing the rare herring in wine  
from out of crowded shops,  
buying the tomatoes, onions, olives  
I am performing the same  
transmutation.  
I am desperate, this morning,  
to get things right.

I am putting faith in  
my father's magic,  
not remembering if it worked  
for him.  
I am experiencing the love of  
things in their place:  
onions sliced thinly, and salted  
till they sweat, laid on  
the tomatoes, ringing the cut  
fish.

**Alex Silberman**

**UPI TELEPHOTO**

Now, the impact is gone.

But, somewhere down in St. Louis, Mo.,  
Stands an outhouse.

An unwanted privy.

Wealthy neighbors in the fashionable section,  
Calling it 'unsightly' and 'offensive  
to the sensibilities.'

Years ago, when I was young,  
Never a day went by that I wasn't  
Thankful for, well . . .

Trying to restore a historic home in  
St. Louis, the Hanley House,  
To its original condition:  
Authenticity offends.

Sixty-five years old seems  
Pretty authentic to me, and  
When she said, 'There is no place  
in a neighborhood of this type  
for an outside privy.' . . .

Well,

**Anthony P. Jarzombek**

**SOME VERY OLD FAMILIES**

The death watch beetles of York Minster  
are conservative.

Experts claim that those who eat oak  
remain in oak.

The dynasty in the Northeast Master Beam  
are descended from a hard-shelled yeoman  
who came in the original tree  
from a grove near Whitby.

Whether or not there is intercourse between  
the Northeast Master Beam  
and the First Maple Lintel  
has not been explored beyond gossip.  
The Lintel family are said  
to remain in maple.

Genealogists think a Master Beam Romeo  
and a Lintel Juliet  
might produce a strain  
worthy of yew or blackthorn,  
or an immigrant from the tribe  
that chews the work of Herr Riemenschneider  
could start a Renaissance.

**THE TRAVEL AGENCY ASSUMES  
NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSSES**

**1.**

Safari is not for everyone  
announced the biggest-mouthed Bwana  
in our group, dousing himself  
with Bug-Off.

So our driver Koske  
would say "Gentleness is everything,"  
while the Land Rover bounced across  
the red-ochre plains, cameras talking  
click language,

the black rhinos  
grunting to water buffalo that  
gentleness is all, "It's becoming."

**2.**

If money could buy time back, The Mouth  
would be hunting with Teddy instead of  
sporting a Leica round his red neck.

*"Mais la gentillesse, c'est tout,"*  
said storks haughty before hoopoe,  
vulture, and guinea fowl, recalling  
their Grand Tour.

Africa disarms:  
we learned he'd never fired a gun—  
not in wrenching control of American,  
nor driving United to the wall. (Liar?)

*"La politesse, aussi,"* by rote  
the whydah-bird recited.

3.

When Bwana saw unicorn, Koske told him they were only oryx; but that night, naked in living dark, he smelled an orange moon splinter through acacia trees.

"Gently," they told browsing giraffes, "for our thorns have tender shapes."

His banter with the porters about a piece of this tourist trade formed against our will pictures of how Bwana teases a conglomerate together, the broken gnu sighing "Gently does it," to a lion tearing away hind quarters.

4.

The day Saidi served tomato sandwiches and tea where we'd climbed up to the edge of Ngurdoto Crater, The Man hushed over that vast purple pasture and thought he recognized Eden,

not hearing an impala—"My sires, oh my sires, did you have to?"—being finished-off by cheetahs—"Why me?"

5.

In the tent camp, roped and signed  
DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS, Bwana  
crossed the barrier by himself,  
fists loaded with a hand-out for

one crazy elephant sucking up salt  
our Agency had spread.

I didn't see  
(was turned to take tomato seeds from  
my partial) when we lost him

in much  
the same way, I dread, as once he had  
amalgamated Amalgamated.

William McLaughlin

### THREE POEMS

#### News from The Front

The eleven o'clock news.  
A reporter points out that the back  
Of this Private's head has been shot away.  
He describes the plastic plate,  
Which is temporary,  
Then breaks into the interview saying,  
"These doctors saved your life,  
You must be grateful."

The soldier scans the undamaged front,  
Checks his foxholes of memory,  
Happens on the shin of a girl,  
The words 'take care,'  
Back home,  
Back where . . .

He confuses grateful with his bed,  
Tomorrow's mail,  
And knows he must be.

"Yes," he says, "I'm grateful."  
And we are grateful.  
Ungrateful is the enemy.

### Escape Act

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Quiet please, I have one last . . .  
Observe . . . a halo of quivering knives,  
Twelve tongues shivering  
In a dream of her hair.

And now, chained in tiger skin,  
You, sir, in the first row, check please.  
Lunatic tight, good, and now she is  
Gently lowered into boiling . . . .  
Time's up. I will taste to be sure.  
Yes, the soup's ready.  
Observe, the empty skin,  
One vicious little claw,  
But no sign of cat lady.

And now, our grand finale.  
Nailed to her bed of spikes,  
Double locked in this burning jail . . .  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
If you'll allow me one last kiss . . .  
Applause, the catching of breath  
As cat lady goes up in flames.

We're half way home  
By the time the smoke clears,

Old trickster thinking:  
She needs me,  
That last kiss,  
The key honeyed to my tongue.  
What's a lady without knives?  
And I always help in the kitchen.

Old magician keeps track of her lives,  
Holds her warm coat of sleep,  
Lives for her disappearing.

### **The Underminers**

It began with flowers, the sweet stems of grass,  
Childlike fists of dirt, a cheer  
For a broken root, stones  
Wiggling like teeth.

Before too long they could sit  
On its edge and look into it.

Neighbors thought, 'How sweet.  
Like a children's story, clothed rabbits  
In their five room burrow,  
Sturdy little tables, pictures on the dirt walls,  
Snug winters, soon a family.'

But it became wider,  
Like a bruise, and deeper,  
And it was dirty.

"They must be stopped," worms said,  
"That hideous hole, snake pit."  
People couldn't sleep. It was like a bad dream,  
Watching all night for devils  
Or Chinamen.

Houses began to wilt,  
Their roofs sinking like old cheeks.  
Dogs and cats started acting funny.  
It didn't rain for a week,  
And so finally the mayor  
Perched on the edge,  
Rattled his crisp wings  
And shouted, "Hey, down there.  
What in the hell do you think you're doing?"  
"Undermining," they lied.  
"What for?" he asked.  
"An old potato, a lost rib,  
Something solid to build on,"  
They replied.

Norman Klein

## IOWA GOTHIC

*for Danny and Eleanor Aker*

Outside Room 2 of the Hotel Tipton  
in Tipton Iowa, (which has the richest  
black earth in the state) a man  
shuffles to a stop. He is breathing  
heavily, for he has just climbed  
two flights of stairs.  
He is old. I can tell.  
Like in the black and white  
mystery movies, the listener  
who is never seen, whose identity  
no one in Hollywood knows:  
the lonely one, poised always  
over a tarnished ring of keys.

The wide floor-boards are squeaking,  
and I am two flights up and two  
blocks south of the Utopia Nursing Home,  
in Room 2 of the Hotel Tipton,  
home of three retired farmers  
who have sold their used Fords.  
It is 8:10 in the morning  
the day before Easter, and  
though I intend no symbol,  
I am writing in red ink.

The wide floor-boards squeak  
as he goes up the hall a few paces . . .  
And the calendar above my desk  
has a picture in full color  
of a young man in a panama hat who  
is taking a picture in full sunlight  
of his blond wife and their two children.  
She has her white arms draped like lace  
about her son and her blond daughter.  
The family is, I can tell,  
All Iowa,  
All Midwest,  
All Big Ten,  
and part German.  
The calendar is a gift of Fred Wilbur,  
Life Insurance & Real Estate.

The hall is quiet now,  
but he is only a few paces north,  
looking back. I can tell.  
I am listening hard for his board-squeaks.  
So hard I can hear my heart.  
So hard I can hear silver church bells  
in Fred Wilbur's pocket.  
I am also listening to traffic pass

the Utopia Nursing Home,  
and to Iowa's rich black earth.

And I cannot write him checks  
to pass under the door as my fathers did.  
I can talk to him only by long distance telephone  
or in short hand-written letters,  
concise yet strained in the platitudes each of us  
demands,  
for Tipton and I have never openly thought of doors,  
only of our right to separation,  
nor have we questioned how many pieces of silver  
Fred Wilbur bought himself for.  
We have more roots than one in ideas of New  
England,  
where you are always polite and you don't talk to  
strangers,  
where you name the guilt of your age Pleasant Acres  
or Maud's Nursing Home,  
where the earth is as rocky as fists of hard-earned  
money,  
and hearts are boulders in a glacial field,  
granite and large enough to hide behind.

And so I write him this poem in the only ink that  
I have.

This poem that began with a wry smile,  
that seeds a darkness as rich as that black earth  
he had harrowed with his life,  
that is as real as the root of my tongue  
or the mud on his shoes,  
that is open and extended as my hand.

**John Judson**

**TWO POEMS****The Thoreau Pencil**

“Thoreau’s father was a pencil manufacturer, and young David Henry improved the Thoreau pencil in several important ways.”

Arnold Biella

I am not writing with it  
 right now you can't buy one  
 for ready money  
 anymore but  
 I dream dream of it  
 (who has not)  
 the steely graphite  
 at the center  
 rock-dark  
 black-night-lake-surface-dark  
 inscribing scribing  
 the wood around the outside  
 a fir-tree a birch-tree  
 —I don't know the details—  
 pared down to size  
 what characters it must write  
 what clean old nineteenth century  
 hieroglyphs  
 pebbles from the shore of Walden pond  
 (beyond the trailer park)  
 nut shells mosquitoes wings  
 tangled branches intricate  
 and indiscreet  
 “to glorify God and enjoy him forever”

they say Thoreau could pick up twelve  
Thoreau pencils at a time  
without looking  
like picking up a year    all at once  
in a minute

### The Electric Vase

—for Jean Kennard

I am an *electric* vase.  
When you plug me in,  
I keep your roses warm and fat,  
no matter how old they get.

I keep your daffodils alive and blinking  
when their petals should be sinking.

No one has invented me yet  
(but there are florists in London and Toronto  
and in Rome and Juneau  
who dream of me at night).

(There is a little man in Prague  
working on a thermostat.)

(Someone is writing a treatise in Vladivostock.)

I glow in the dark.

Sandra M. Gilbert

**A STRATEGY**

Hear my honing and whetting of the blade.  
From somewhere  
there on the hill  
where nightlight and shadow and coat blur  
in the shriek of silver wind at timberedge,  
his eyes, mongoloid, intelligent, patient,  
follow me;  
his tongue moves caressing his snout;  
he howls a hymn of need of me,  
thinking,  
"I have you, my lovely, if I am a little careful."  
Looking up to where the trees  
seem colonnades of buildings in the night,  
knowing how certain he feels there,  
I work to kill him, honing, whetting  
a blade that already can slash the wind  
without sound or sorrow.  
"Work, my lovely. Tire in your dying light,"  
he thinks, shifting a paw forward;  
frightened and glad of his confident appetite,  
I keep awake honing and whetting.  
When pain is ground from the blade I ready  
the scene,  
instinct and will married at my fingertips:  
he will find only the smell of me, strong,  
and a strip of fat on the tip of the blade;  
no need to be cunning, he will suppose:  
"I knew, my lovely, you were always mine";  
he will taste the fat, licking it, and not feel  
his tongue passing over the blade like the wind;  
he will know the blood and taste deeper,

urging, "I knew how it would be, my lovely.  
More. More."

The afterhurt will go concealed in his wildness,  
even when he flails the inside of his mouth  
with red, ragged ribbons of tongue;  
he will consume himself in heat in the cold,  
believing, "Mine to devour, my lovely.  
When I saw you from the screaming pillars on the  
hill,  
saw you were of age and fatted and lost  
in thought  
scraping on a harmless stick,  
I knew I would have you, my fodder, my lovely."

Cruel  
my honing and whetting, my strategy?  
Still he lives with the feel of a fang  
popping my jugular, my blood  
streaming  
against his tongue,  
a trickle of it growing sticky  
in a corner of his mouth  
where drops of foam are freezing on the hairs.

Alan Shucard

**PARCELS FROM HOME: Three Excerpts****Positive Millstones**

No risks. No risks at all  
—only the crossbow, abacus, usury,  
and the wily Macedonian wedge  
(put to good use by Bronco Nagurski  
and Yalies with quilted cocks);  
not the *moon*, surely?

Why, back then  
the invention of gunpowder  
was as grisly to them  
as the aerosol bomb is to us  
and everyone had the sense to foresee  
that mousetraps would, eventually,  
fall into the hands of the Inquisition.

They didn't care then;  
they can't afford to now.

Horizon has slipped  
rare Spanish Fly,  
all the way from Cathay,  
into our jellied consommé  
and we bray; Titanic's curse  
or Titania's, Horizon always  
arises with us in her eyes.

Who *will* be the first  
to plant spikes in those craters  
and cover them over with papier mâché?  
There's not a sage alive who can bear to resist  
the thought of a succulent Snipe fillet.

20 July 1969—Sunday

after Armstrong's great leap  
forward; a "positive milestone"  
in the history of human inquiry

### Autograph Hound

Like Schleimann,  
who scratched no one's back but his own,  
I found tonight a mouse turd amid  
the venerable mounds of my poesy.

The lights were out when I left the office.  
No cheese, certainly; no cuisine at all,  
only the murk in my trench mug.

I can only infer, therefore,  
those adorable gestures left by the shy,  
moved, as it were,  
to express themselves on the sly  
in tokens of rude felicity.  
But does he, I wonder, wear glasses,  
eat carrots, can he read in the dark?  
Are his ears red from sensing these lines?

There's no reason to doubt impetuous praise.  
And I'm not embarrassed to say  
I take pride in this turd, this canned applause,  
this urgent reward for the role I unwittingly play  
on the rodent's road to poiesis. Besides, it's a great  
relief  
to know my audience grows so.

And then, we'll probably meet some day.  
 I'll instantly put him at ease. We'll smoke,  
 who knows, cite ourselves obliquely  
 and laugh. And, of course, if he asked  
 I'd give him my autograph.

20 July 1969—Sunday

no mention of life on the moon;  
 cluttered rooms are still the best  
 place for explorers; apropos of  
 my first fan letter to WTS after  
 his reading at UNM in 1963—his  
 reaction

### **Less Than We Bargained For**

To die statuesque  
 for sentiment  
 in a village square,

limestone, sun  
 hewn by bare knuckles  
 in well-phrased,  
 older worlds . . .

In those days, death  
*was* a gesture  
 of gentility, good breeding,  
 better than widows  
 or wheat.

Nowadays, to die  
 means to malfunction  
 and we tend to resent  
 shoddy goods.

26 July 1969—Saturday

after viewing a frank but  
strangely romantic swindle  
entitled "The Pride and the  
Passion"; you can't transplant  
a Purple Heart; yet it's usually  
fatal to reject it

**Vincent Barrett Price**

**THREE POEMS****Arcadia**

Back in the war, when meat was rationed  
we kept rabbits out in the backyard  
far enough away so we wouldn't smell them  
but still we treated them about like pets  
except for eating them.

We killed them clean, no blood or fuss  
a sharp blow to the skull or sometimes two.  
Cleaning them of course was a little messy  
but still the skins were white and very soft.  
I made some into muffs.

That's why it's hard to figure out  
what that dream was all about  
or what white rabbits had to do  
with that black man that looked like you.

The way the dream went, William, was like this:  
a bunch of friends of mine were at a farmhouse  
out in the country, and we heard this noise  
a sort of random thumping from the yard.  
They asked me what it was.  
I told them rabbits  
thumping the fieldmice  
standing on one foot, flattening them with the other—  
they did it all the time.

The people said they'd like to see that thing  
and so we all walked out into the half-light  
watching the rabbits as they thumped around  
and pretty soon we started out ourselves  
and thumped some on our own.  
And then we started  
thumping the rabbits  
standing on one foot, flattening them with the other—  
it was a lot of fun.

By now our feet were flat like skis  
from crotch to toe enormous Z's  
bony powerful and spare  
pelted with white rabbit's hair  
and every buck I'd smash with mine  
I'd feel the shock go up my spine.

It finally woke me up. I lay there wondering  
but soon I drifted off to sleep again  
seeing that party at your place last Easter  
hearing the throb of music and the laughter  
the beat that I couldn't dance to.

The people finally left, and from the door  
I turned to see him coming down the stairs  
holding a wooden flute, and halfway down  
he stopped and looked across at me and raised  
the flute to his lips and played on it.

Oh William  
was it you?  
He looked like Pan  
I was sure his thighs were rough with shaggy hair  
some sort of jungle stalked me from that stair  
God, William  
is it true  
dreams make the man?

### The Last Eureka

I have deciphered Linear A.

In my winedark unfathomable bathtub  
 or while bestriding like a colossus  
 my everflowing cloaca maxima  
 or brushing from between my cavities  
 the relics of Odysseus' crew  
 I have meditated masturbated mastered  
 the Secret of the Past.

Epigraphy paleography graffiti  
 scarred stone, the lacerated clay  
 skins flayed from unborn lambs  
 crushed reeds encode  
 a mummied past that begs our question.  
 All inscription  
 undeciphered mocks our humanism  
 deciphered mocks it more.  
 (Sappho in strips  
 wrapped a grinning mummy grinning still.)

I have perfected my transliteration.

On transparent squares of pine pulp dabbled  
 red yellow brown earth colors to earth men  
 I now bequeath the ultimate translation  
 of those ten thousand tablets.  
 [All texts read the same.]

THE MOVING FINGER WRITES  
 THE SLASHED WRIST BLEEDS

[Before men learned to write they lived forever  
in caves and glades beside their human fires.  
Hieroglyphics tombed the stiff Egyptians  
Ashurbanipal was cuneiformed, the Greeks  
impaled on Aristotle, Rome declined  
beneath the weight of Gibbon.  
History is their epitaph, this poem mine.]

THE FINGER WRITES  
UNTIL THE BLOOD RUNS OUT  
SUBMERGING  
IN THE UNFATHOMABLE EARTH  
MERGING  
INTO THE WINEDARK PAST

### Samothrace

This man I lived with  
back in graduate school  
had a replica of the Winged Victory  
submerged in the toilet tank.  
He stated  
it kept him regular.

And sure enough  
I get this funny feeling  
whenever I lecture  
on the uses of the past.

Ann Deagon

**SEVEN HOSPITAL POEMS****Tools**

No one speaks of the Craftsman tools  
He polishes in his surgeon's shop.  
Sander? Saber saw?  
What crowbar will he lean on  
To pry this hollow hip  
Out of its socket?

I see the bone man smile  
Like a Sears ad, big face and open collar,  
Arms hairy among chips  
And bonedust. His fingers  
Confide in the ground steel  
Of the knife.

**Adultery**

White and red. The bone curves  
Voluptuous in his professional  
Eye. Launcelot of calcium. Casanova  
With auxiliary tools.  
I pay this cool hand  
To visit the sweet  
Blood of my blood, bone  
Of my bone while I am absent.  
I foresee the event:  
The big man swaggers in  
Loosening her garments,  
Fondling the most private turns  
And crevasses.

Woman,  
You have reason to wonder  
At my complicity.

### Flight

Done. Strung with ropes. Wired up,  
A bi-plane banking and looping  
Over a cornfield.

I watch  
Calm as a farmboy  
To see if the bragging pilot  
Will nick a windmill and burn  
In the alfalfa.

### Cleaning the Fish

A fish flat on a board.  
Gills heave on this slab,  
Sour work for a fishwife.

### Itch

Ripped off the tape  
To expose an ecstasy of itching.  
Oh, the deep indulgence  
Of scratching, the tender skin  
Crying for more, even as it  
Breaks and bleeds. Pleasure

Beyond the most exquisite eating  
Or drinking, beyond  
A naked dive into the cold  
Water of a quarry.  
Rub against the sheets, massage  
With hospital lotion,  
Scratch.  
Dig in to the knuckles. Pain  
And pleasure like love  
In the sweet briar. More,  
The skin cries, More.

The big handed lover  
Neglected to write this spasm  
On the chart. The itch  
Has given my body  
Back to me.

### **Horsemanship**

Vertical. Moving again  
Down the corridor I wave  
To all the poor cripples.  
Showing off. Placing a crutch  
On the foot pedal, I catch  
The water cooler at the top  
Of its arc, then wipe my mouth  
On my shoulder, glancing  
Back, signalling the other cattle  
To follow through the break  
I have discovered in the electric  
Fence. At the end of my trip,  
I sit cocky as a cowboy  
Astride a porcelain horse.

**Steel and Bone**

One day I may go with hardly a limp.  
Still, the steel squeaks and sighs  
Against the bone. A horseshoe  
Nailed to a tree and overgrown  
By bark. Planted, it will  
In time grow steel ankles, steel  
Elbows, steel balls. A heaviness  
Already troubles the joints of my tongue.  
I will race my daughters again  
But I carry a cold sound  
In my hip pocket.

Conrad Hilberry

**THE AMAZON**

This is a myth utterly conceived by males—  
One day the grown boy will meet the Amazon,  
A handsome girl enlarging before him,  
The whole world suddenly getting out of hand,  
The secret pituitary code mastered,  
The entire adaptive situation altered.  
Who will curl in under his powerful arms,  
Whose eyes will meet the eyes upon his chest?  
The boy considers desperate measures:  
The girl should wear a capstone on her head,  
Giving some great, harsh ceiling to her sex,  
A caryatid set upon a porch  
Where men discuss the matters of the world.  
But the girl keeps growing and disrobing,

Threat, seduction, in an hyperactive loom—  
Could God, the Man himself, now stunt her growth?  
The boy cannot accept supportive role,  
His ego delicate as the sperm he bears.  
The woman who wears the tight, applied myth  
Undresses forever and still must grow—  
The girl studied the arts of reduction,  
But the woman pushed her head against the sky.  
It was only when remembering boyhood  
The man could ever put a stop to it,  
The time before the ground was strewn with fetishes—  
An early morning glow just to seeing,  
No thought of would be, preponderate—  
The girl stroked him, a tassel in the wind,  
No sacked cities yet, ruins to contemplate—  
The girl washed her stockings in the river,  
The boy dropped the stone carried in his hand,  
His body like a lovely, lidless eye.

Charles Edward Eaton

## SKY TALK

In upper seas along earth's south,  
 Cetus swims, a fire-whale headed east.  
 In upper seas along earth's north,  
 Draco swims, fire-dragon headed west.

Constellations, Homer says, the Lord of skies creates,  
 Portents for mariners. Upon marked stars  
 Aratus, poet also, calculates,  
 For compass, sky-snakes and Leviathans, declaring,  
 North by west, the dragon, south by east, the whale.  
 Acknowledging Aratus, one Saul Paul  
 Recalled Aratus' words to praise Heaven's Lord  
 "In whom we live and move and have our being."  
 What we discern may most portend our faring.

Sea-faring, count it loss  
 To lose last rope's end to an eyeless surf.  
 But rope's end still in reach may still firm-hawser  
 whales and dragons.  
 Always within earth's skies but newer come to sky-  
 mapped figurations  
 Stands mark for mariners, halter for whales and  
 dragons, high seas'  
 Anchor-sign.  
 Among old stars new eyes discern  
 A cross.

Jeremy Ingalls

**METAMORPHOSIS OF A SONNET BY GÓNGORA**

1.

Infiere, de los achaques de la vejez, cercano el fin, a  
que católico se alienta.

En este occidental, en este, oh Licio,  
climatérico lustro de tu vida,  
todo mal afirmado pie es caída,  
toda fácil caída es precipicio

¿Caduca el paso? Ilústrese el jüicio.  
Desatándose va la tierra unida;  
¿qué prudencia del polvo prevenida  
la rüina aguardó del edificio?

La piel, no sólo, sierpe venenosa,  
mas con la piel los años se desnuda,  
y el hombre, no. ¡Ciego discurso humano!

¡Oh aquel dichoso, que la poderosa  
porción depuesta en una piedra muda,  
la leve da al zafiro soberano!

(1623)

## 2.

He can tell, from the infirmities of old age, that death is coming on, but he is heartened by his religion.

Oh Licio, this is the western setting, this is the lustrous climacteric of your life; where every uncertain step becomes a fall, and every easy fall precipitous.

Your step is failing? See the light! All this earth has lost coherence, disintegrates. And what prudent man, inside the edifice, sees falling dust, and waits for more to fall?

The envenomed serpent sheds not only his skin— with each dry cloak he takes off years; and man cannot. Oh these blind human decisions of ours!

Only he

who leaves behind the heavy part of life on some mute rock, is happy. Then he gives his light to the center of a great sapphire!

## 3.

Northern California/Thanksgiving 1970

Walking the edges of the rain-soaked cliffs  
in the rain. Caught in a little coastal town for three  
days,  
waking early to the sound of rain, reading Spanish  
poetry,  
staying in this old hotel on the continent's western  
edge.

Vapor. We could hear the earth below us  
over the edge, crumbling and falling, vapor rising,  
the hundred foot high earth sodden and shifting;  
knots of earth untying. There was

a cliff side rail way fallen into disuse,  
the winding cliff's edge like a great snake shifting  
in its wet sleep. We do not know why.

Huge rocks lying at the shore for centuries. If we  
rest there,  
will they hold us and draw in our heat and like the  
sun  
setting behind the clouds, turn to bright red, glowing  
jewels?

**Reginald Gibbons**

**TODAY**

together  
we shoveled out  
our 40 feet of driveway  
under

a foot of snow.

We loved the little  
crisis of it

loved

& let it show.

Tonight

we sat & read.

You're

still sitting on the couch

with Creeley's

ISLAND.

It will  
hurt where I wd never  
have you hurt.  
I read

Williams:

ASPHODEL, THAT GREENY FLOWER

& it hurt too  
because it didn't  
come from me

for you.

I almost think to  
type it out  
& call it mine.

But no.

They say  
it is supposed to snow.

**MY ROOSEVELT COUPÉ**

Coax it, clutch it, kick it  
in the gas was every dawn's  
scenario.

Then off it bucked,  
backfiring down the block to show  
it minded.

Each fender gleamed  
a different hue of blue.  
Each hubcap chose  
its hill to spin freewheeling  
into traffic.

I fretted like a spouse  
through chills and overboiling,  
jacked my weekly flats  
and stuffed the spavined seats  
with rags.

Leaking, the radiator  
healed with swigs of Rinso,  
brake fluid and rainwater.

Simonized,  
the hood stuck out like a tramp  
in a tux.

All trips were dares.  
Journeys were sagas.

From Norfolk  
to New York and back,  
I burned eleven quarts  
of oil, seven fuses  
and the horn.

One headlight  
dimmed with cataracts.

The other  
funneled me one-eyed  
through darker darks than darkness . . .  
O my Roosevelt coupé, my first,  
my Chevrolet of many scars  
and heart attacks, where are you  
now?

Manhandled, you'd refuse  
to budge.

Stickshifted  
into low, you'd enigmatically  
reverse.

Sold finally  
for scrap, you waited on your treads  
while I pocketed thirty  
pieces of unsilver and slunk  
away—Wild Buck Hazo  
abandoning his first and favorite  
mount, unwilling to malingering  
long enough to hear  
the bullet he could never fire.

Samuel Hazo



**WHY DIDN'T ANYONE TELL  
HESTER PRYNNE?**

Pity him up to his waist in middle age,  
neither celibate nor pervert in ceramics, only ultimate  
with a finger caught in the clay cookie jar.

Leading her under the slatted moonlight  
of palm trees, opening, shutting,  
like a nervous venetian blind —  
he said shyly,

“Have you ever done this before?”

She said, “No,”  
curling her toes expectantly into the sand.  
God sighed relief through his grey beard.

I don't know what happened to him. But she went  
home,  
a smug pendulum of skirts, to inform her husband,  
who had angelic nightmares ever after,  
“Gabriel told me to.”

**Karen Swenson**

**OBSERVATION REPORT**

On the morning of November 20, 1957,  
Clara Connelley, passenger in an automobile  
driven by \_\_\_\_\_, was fatally injured  
in a one-car accident on Highway 13 fifteen  
miles south of Waukon.

That's Highway 76 now.  
And it's not all that's changed.

Sugar beets are white!  
It came as something of a surprise.  
Artichokes as common as cabbages.

There lay Clara very white and still.

The ancient Egyptians painted prisoners  
Yellow. Birds were blue and green.  
Water was blue. Men and women were painted red.  
Men redder than women.

Munkacsy was, as a boy, dissatisfied  
With the representations of Christ  
That he saw. They seemed:  
"Effeminate personifications  
of too much humility."

He wished to paint:

“Such a man as could be  
severe to the wrong-doer  
even while he was forgiving  
and tender to the repentant.”

*Verdad no pintura*

So why does his Christ before Pilate stand  
Like a sugar beet on an oriental carpet  
common as an artichoke?

The Pharaoh's artist would have made  
Christ yellow surrounded by red women  
and redder men.

So Clara does not lie white and still  
like a cauliflower.

She lies like Clara white and still.

*Verdad no pintura*

Face-down in a ditch by the side of the road  
She should have floated face-up in a sea  
Of dusty grass and gravel. Borne by the mists  
That sweep the morning to the island shelves  
High above the Mississippi— there, white as  
A beet, to stand among the red pine and the  
redder sumach.

Grotesque. Ghostly.  
Like Christ before Pilate.

She should have.

But when I thought about the whiteness  
of the Sugar Beets

I couldn't allow that.

**Richard Steele**