

*THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL*

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*Cover Design by I. K. Anderson*

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## **HOPE OF SLEEP**

At first I feel my arms  
go off to rest.  
They loop off the bed's end  
and crawl away, loud  
with relief. The legs  
go next  
and always hunt in pairs.

Only the brain  
is left, tiny  
in the vast bed.

Outside, the elms lean  
into clumps, gossiping  
of violence.  
Somewhere blood leaks out  
from its shocked skin.

Now there's no hope of sleep.  
Under the sheets  
my absent body tingles  
like an amputated toe.

**Larry S. Chengges**

**TWO POEMS****Our Lady of Bedlam**

She is the center of the stage,  
Eve wrapped in pale leaves,  
stained with cherries,  
Madame du Barry, I dare presume,  
Ligeia, Lady Anne or Sylvia,  
gathering bouquets  
of mercury stems  
for an invisible audience,  
delicate as a morning lily,  
her mouth opening,  
a fresh flower,  
yes, a full rose  
wet with icy dew,  
soundless in its blood  
echo, like an old shell  
I used to fondle  
when first learning  
the lies of cold speech,  
wider, much wider,  
in a velvet chasm  
of night, beckoning seeds,  
but the thorns,  
but the sperms,  
the flames in her dry throat  
bite all her songs  
into cauliflower shreds,  
hanging them  
from the hooks  
of her empty mouth  
like dead faggots.

Slips of sail  
in wine-dark bowels,  
    I would mount  
    her and wake  
to Sappho's rocky isle  
    as she pirouettes  
    and sinks in unseen pools,  
crumbling like a hacked  
    weed under me,  
    roots up-ended  
in the sun-blasted sky,  
dirt-clogged and wrecked,  
    she lays under me,  
and I bring black  
soil for her wound,  
    to bury her,  
    to bury her  
in a corner jar,  
    out of sight,  
but the ocean has roared,  
risen from her drooling  
    thighs, yellow  
    as the moon scream,  
and we drown together,  
    are taken down  
    to where the rose's  
burning lips and her  
lily heart are wrapped  
    in coral shrouds.

**By Land and Sea**

Fleshed-in with squarish, bird-grimed stones,  
a man-made parody of a man's blunt finger is  
jammed deep down into the sea's foamy vulva

as I casually, then cautiously move onto a final  
flat rock where the abandoned iron tower stands  
its lonely guard and could, at last, begin

to lose the gray blanket of my flesh in the fog,  
becoming a petrified star tossed in an artificial  
tidal pool, then a squawking mother gull dropping

baby oysters against the mountainous fangs  
until they crack and their own pallid fetuses  
dribble out in broken yolks like broken moons.

I am a rock among rocks, tumbling in the ceaseless  
breakers, in winds of water, but I have already  
learned the rock-rooted value of a stoic

drunkenness and let myself flow in time's flow  
until a sudden lull allows me to scurry away,  
to seek out the selfless cellar of a stone,

though I must protest, and do, a proud armored  
fist shaken in excited defiance. Someday, if human  
hands do not rip me untimely from my second womb,

I will grow huge, survive to swim back to the sea,  
a monster among monsters, slashing at the awesome  
knowledge of some deeper, darker destiny.

The sun burns through the mist and lays a thick  
golden carpet across the massive, moss-green waves  
for me, especially for me, my airy feet,

and I will myself to walk into the rolling heart  
of a distant blizzard, captured by its antique  
world of sculptured ivory maidens flinging their  
cameo forms into the earth's vast cauldron,  
light as lint, frail as moths, white as gulls,  
diving, unseen, into that miracle of breasts.

Sky, sea, the dawn's harsh reef, suddenly all  
reek of sour eternity, the tyranny of mortal scales  
and brittle shells, blood-warm toes gasping for gills.

In all the years since time began to count,  
which I cannot really count, hordes of human  
organisms flourished, faded like matches in the night.

Nameless, faceless, evaporated souls, they drift  
into me across the sea's dying breath like  
tattered infant ghosts, whispers of sails.

As the snails cling to the still rocks below,  
so they cling to me, these barnacles of my mind,  
each time I think of walking water to the sun.

**Edward Butscher**

**HOMAGE TO POINT REYES**

*to Cliff and Effie, who discovered  
this land and brought us here*

down  
down through shafts of sunlight  
plunging wings tucked  
skimming the treetops  
diving toward  
the valley floor

pebbles swell  
into cows

the upcoming fields  
spread

this trim bird the sparrow hawk  
sacred to ancient peoples  
not only has he worsted  
the hostile darkness  
he renews himself daily

the bottomland  
aglow  
the village  
aglow in fog  
the post office  
in a golden light

this is my home this peninsula  
here on the ridge my bed  
my mate  
I am withdrawn  
I say nothing throughout the meal

a glass of water from the tap

this

this peninsula, gentlemen,  
once an island  
seems another world  
in space and time lying  
on the San Andreas Fault  
it has moved northward  
up the coast from Mexico  
since Paleocene times hundreds  
hundreds of miles

the fault is

a fault is an enormous fracture  
The San Andreas Fault is visible  
for seven hundred miles Professor Friskie  
has discovered a rift  
that runs one and one half times  
around the globe mostly under the seas  
deep incredibly deep it  
responsible for the drift of continents  
and of continents this fault

most find this

a goodly countrie  
with fruitful soyle  
stored with many blessings  
for the use of man

the sparrow hawk

alights in the pine  
a miniature falcon  
fierce yet strangely sweet  
he has worsted the hostile darkness  
it's all right now



I am pulling loose  
 night is over  
 the fog burning off

cows thick  
 on the valley floor

it's milking time  
 a boy gallops  
 bareback out of the barn  
 plunging headlong  
 down through alfalfa  
 the rushing stalks

I am coming apart

in 1579 Francis Drake  
 medium build Christian skin white  
 armd and considerd dangerous  
 saild up this coast  
 pillaging towns and looting ships he  
 sought a Baye faire and good  
 in which to repair his vessel this  
 Pirate was wary of the Indians  
 watching him from the cliff he  
 orderd his band to erect  
 a fortress of stone however  
 and subsequently  
 the Indians enterd the fort  
 with gifts with feathers and beads the  
 chief gave Drake a jerkin  
 of soft leather the English  
 were amazed these Indians  
 were the Coast Miwok Indians  
 of the California coast  
 who lived without a Pattern of Warfare

in Harmonie with the surrounding nations  
and owning with them the land  
in common in the stone edifice they  
sang songs and danced physically  
powerful men the Indians the English  
were awed by their ability  
to run long distances at high speeds  
and to spear fish with great accuracy  
The ship physician observed that as they  
broyled these Fish over the Flame  
they took good heed that they  
bee not burnt the women  
wore a skirt of bulrushes  
covering that which nature  
teaches should be hidden  
smiling the chief settled  
a crown of feathers and shells  
upon the head of Francis Drake this  
act was interpreted  
by Drake as yielding up  
the right and title  
of the land to him

sunlight pours into the valley  
as from a pitcher spout  
a flock of doves  
wheels round the pine  
the settled doves bob violently  
as the newcomer alights  
and makes the branchtip  
thrash

it was  
some years back  
an October day

a young man and woman  
 newcomers to town on foot  
 the lame dog  
 her pet since childhood  
 did not go the distance  
 was too great he she  
 their arms laden with groceries  
 returnd along the estuary  
 among blackberry bushes heavily bearing  
 the amazing flowers swayd  
 shoulderhigh and tingled  
 with the musick of the harpsicord  
 they passt a man out there who

after the meal  
 I go to the other room  
 and shut the door  
 I lie face down  
 I am trying to crawl  
 out of my body

the pain the bewilderment  
 I need a doctor

In 1595  
 hardbitten Captain Cermeño crew  
 near mutiny wreckd and  
 abandoning his oriental cargo  
 the sailors close to starvation  
 ate the dog would have  
 eaten each other had not a  
 thereafter the Indians  
 these were the Coast Miwok Indians  
 who lived without pattern  
 thereafter slept on silk  
 and ate their acorn meal  
 from Ming porcelain

Point Reyes

Point of the Kings

so named by S. Vizcaino who  
white Christian heavy build  
sighted who in 1603  
sighted this point on the day  
of the three kings of the nativity

this discourse gentlemen  
recedes quickly into the past  
return it to the shelf  
among the outdated manuals  
for steam locomotives  
surveying  
the repair of electric cars

despite the wildflowers  
singing along the estuary that day  
the youth was disappointed  
there had been no mail

Mexico, sir, began colonizing California  
in 1767 the priests founded  
missions throughout the  
and Father Peseta converted  
one hundred and fifty-seven  
Coast Miwok Indians in  
later virtually all the  
unfortunately the Mission System  
was a complete failure save  
in the accumulation of Wealth when  
the missions closed  
a few Miwoks returned to  
but most were rounded up by ranchers  
for slave labor those  
who did not die of starvation  
died of disease

in the old photo  
he stands pepper-eyed and keen  
firelock crookt in his elbow this  
is Zack Taylor  
old "Rough and Ready" himself  
recently acclaimd  
for pacifying the Seminoles  
and the bloodthirsty Black Hawks  
to him personally  
did the savage chief  
Black Sparrow Hawk surrender  
within a month Taylor  
led the U.S. Marines into Mexico  
to take Texas and California  
for the United States

in 48 rolling on axles  
into the West  
free money!  
it's just laying there  
all you can take, man  
all you can take

we was a rough bunch of boys  
up in the Mother Lode  
you *hadta* be armed, believe me  
on Sundays these shows  
over in Whiskeytown bulldogs  
sicking a chained bear

the craze for gold  
the grizzled miner  
the grim miner who killd his comrade  
he had to!  
the thirstcrazed miner  
crawling on hands and knees  
kickd in the face!

Sundays bunch of the fellas  
 usta take their rifles  
 go out huntin' Indians  
 for sport

I am trying to leave  
 the post office  
 of Final Defeat, U.S.A.

in the pine  
 an eagle  
 big as a man! alive!  
 he grips with his talons  
 he looks straight *this way*  
 eyes fierce  
 like burning out of a magazine plate  
 or a dollar bill  
 only not *just pretend*  
     real!  
     on the branch!  
     right now!

the deeds of this valley  
 go back to the original Mexican grants  
 one James Berry, in recognition of service  
 as Colonel in the Mexican Army  
 then Snook a sea captain  
 traded with Osio  
 who sold to Doctor Andrew Randall a  
 heavy soul heavy investor  
 keenly interested in real estate  
 acquired all of Point Reyes but  
     the banking panic of 55  
     business depression  
     depletion of gold  
 Hetherington, Randall's creditor  
 appears in the old photograph

as a bewhiskered man  
of challenging eye  
he engaged in a gun fight  
over the possession of a piece of property  
later Hetherington  
accosted Randall in the lobby  
of the Christian Arms Hotel  
both drew the Doctor fell heavily  
to the oriental rug  
a bullet had entered his brain  
Hetherington himself  
was hangd within a month

trying  
trying to leave  
the postoffice box where  
I am desperate  
    for letters of acceptance  
    of admiration contracts  
    checks, invitations to speak  
trying to crawl out of Box 73  
out of my education  
out of my twenties

doctors know  
the two colors that say it all  
are silver and black

subsequent purchasers  
were the Schafter brothers  
San Francisco lawyers who  
leased land to ranchers  
soon the whole area was devoted  
to dairying  
Schafter Schafter Schafter  
subdivided the holdings into nine ranches

sold to    parceled off  
then a prominent businessman  
sold off    subdivided

today the real estate office  
stands at the crossroads  
here one may find  
the old deeds

so much care to raising a son  
to feed him    clothe him  
have his teeth straightened  
develop his self-reliance  
teach him Donne and Hume  
so much effort and expense  
to reach this impression  
that nothing  
that nothing  
matters

I am trying to crawl  
out of my name

in the cocoon  
the caterpillar *decomposes*  
he is but goo and slime  
unfit for friendship  
unfit for love

they passt a man out there  
surveying the land  
hello    'lo  
in boots    lumberman's jacket  
Surveyor squints into Transit  
Assistant faraway responds  
to Handsignals    these men  
are here to survey parts



of Old Mexico they  
are measuring territory once  
held in common by the Miwoks  
and the neighboring Indian nations  
today, gentlemen, these shrinking fields  
are fields of sorrow and love

in the earthquake of 1906  
this lovely hotel was thrown  
into the bay see the pictures upstairs  
Francis Drake John Schafter  
here's a scene from 1910  
an outing Anne  
in lace puffy sleeves  
she leans at the rail  
listening to Skipper Jack  
and his discourse on Point Reyes  
with pipe stem he points  
to a hawk working the shore  
this present instrument  
is the transcript of what he said  
nearby is Anne's brother Stephen  
soft leather jacket  
trousers flared at the cuff  
he reads from a little book  
that I will write one day

a ribbon marks the page

dust on the road  
Constable Can-do  
slung with desperate weaponry  
motors forth  
in his electric car  
he is the scourge of rumrunners  
dopesters and others

with no place  
in this disquisition  
youth is no match for  
known to reach speeds  
upwards of 18 miles per hour  
he we  
dauntless with his megaphone  
and string

this restlessness  
as of branchtips thrashing

Point Reyes population 350  
sea level 30 today  
a village divided

here live the settled Catholic families  
a hardworking group  
acquiring acquiring  
tools antlers homes  
they drive the pickup trucks  
rifles slung inside and  
patriotic stickers on the bumpah  
many are wealthy  
control the local boards  
these good people active in trade  
chief occupation— ranching

here too the newcomers their dress  
harks back nonetheless to the days  
of the early settlers  
hair of Ben Franklin headbands  
of Black Sparrow Hawk  
no religion as such  
they drive wrecks bright  
with the bird and flower  
active in sunshine

chief occupation—amazement

the settled doves bob violently  
as the newcomer alights  
and makes the branchtip  
thrash

I have thrust myself  
through my twenties  
as a driver whipping  
and cursing his mules  
mile after mile  
to the Great Divide

the effort  
and now this impression  
that nothing matters

this loneliness  
alone or in the presence  
of love

the deeds  
the old deeds read  
    in consideration of the sum  
    of Eight Hundred Silver Dollars (\$800)  
    lawful money of the United States of America  
    paid into the hand of John Schafter, seller

in the print of the old deeds  
bronze faces appear  
and flicker

this, gentlemen, was the great era  
of railroads town fathers opening  
the line from San Francisco  
to Point Reyes

and here  
Bear Valley Road

so named for the bears who preyd  
on the cattle in these fields in  
1961 the last bear in the region  
a tame animal was felld  
by a hunter while crossing this road  
to the Smith home  
for his daily ration of honey

I am crawling out of my poems  
that thump like boxcars over switches

as I crawl head down  
this impression of birds  
on the wing in my body  
formations of duck  
geese and the air  
thronging with elk  
and fish migrating south  
to Mexico

few  
get the thrill of poetry  
the amazement  
the taste of an ultimate reckoning

doctors know  
the flavors of fatal delight

here are the young newcomers  
bright of eye  
who live with children  
in shacks up on the ridge  
they read the old National Geographics  
exclaim pointing  
to this and that in pictures  
amazed amazed  
as Skipper Jack goes on

at night they light candles  
and dance in their homes

or laughing so hard  
it hurts holding their sides  
gasping tears in their eyes  
groaning weak at the start  
of a fresh burst

speaking before the board  
Professor Friskie expresst horror  
that local land developers  
were building houses that  
straddle the 1906 break

the tubby woman  
in the store  
has not smiled since Paleocene times  
she follows Stephen  
up and down the aisles  
his dress harks back  
protruding from his pocket  
is a book of no concern to me  
a ribbon  
he she watches  
his hands near the nailbin  
follows his eyes that roam  
smiling over pictures  
and displays rarely  
does he buy the merchandise who  
can blame her for denying him  
her hairy lip  
and her roofing nails  
or the many other blessings  
of a goodly countrie  
once the home of Indians  
the Coast Miwoks who

opposite Grandi's Hardware  
the Silver Dollar Saloon

right, the hunting season  
was over but old Guido here  
he ain't one to let something like that  
so coming up Bear Valley  
in his quarter ton and this buck  
three forks 20 inches across  
he pulled over got him his gun  
but it was three weeks before he  
then

at any time  
the old dog is game  
for a walk and a visit  
to friendly shacks she  
flops along the road  
on her three sounde legges  
seeing but dimly  
our scent equally strong  
in both directions  
often getting confused in the dark  
turnd around she  
bobs away from us  
further and further away

the chain is down the lock  
open the cut-rate priests are home!  
heavy souls heavy investors  
they they maiming  
the neighbors' trees  
to widen their view  
Sunday when they drive  
to their cathedral their outdoor phone  
will ring ring ring

feel strongly  
we because  
then too therefore

within the print  
flicker the bronze faces

here the veins  
of gold lay in a southward slant  
thinning out  
to disappear from sight

this, old buddy  
is the Silver Dollar Saloon  
it's like the old days a rough bunch  
we shot first asked questions after

at the bar sits a woman alone  
pretty thirtyish she makes  
the men uneasy rumors  
yeah she's retarded has slipped  
her guardians taken their car  
the men leave her alone  
at closing time she leaves alone  
too drunk too drunk  
crushes a fender on Bear Valley Road  
at 18 miles per hour a body  
has a thrust of eighty pounds  
weeping quietly she  
staggers up and down the road  
where the old dog

see the school  
this is the class of problem children  
Tom is shouting "Fuck!"  
look at Teacher scratch her head  
Teacher writes the word

on the board she tells us  
what it means

look at the faces of the schoolboard  
see them sign the paper  
sending her away

school the board to school  
or board the school

the board heard  
this broad was wife  
to a black stud well hung  
who fucks her in bed  
at night Teacher squeals  
with delight

on this sunpoured day  
an outing with kites  
homemade bread a driftwood fire  
of whisky cases washd in  
from a ship unloaded at sea a  
wreckd rumrunner lies on the beach  
Skipper Jack is passing around  
the pleasure pipe he  
continues this disquisition  
Anne listens charmd in lace  
and puffy sleeves today  
Stephen is turning the pages  
of an old magazine

Far away  
hidden in sunpoured dunes  
reclines an Aztec god  
he is young  
immense  
of the beach itself  
bronze on copper sand



he she in beads  
a crown of shells  
is a tender princess  
never so sweet  
her lips at his golden tusk  
never so soft  
her tongue  
impossibly gentle  
the maiden  
evoking  
his fatal delight

the San Andreas Fault  
slants south through California  
into Mexico  
where it sinks from sight

In the U.S. post office  
a single bulb  
reveals the official photograph  
Teddy Roosevelt squinting from the wall  
pepper-eyed bewhiskerd  
his face a contentious pucker  
this light will expose  
the Thieffe  
rifling letters of acceptance  
for my railroad poems  
Stephen will stop at nothing  
for an invitation to speak  
to a local board he  
would steal nails  
were it not for a bulb  
burning cautiously over the bins  
to frustrate foul play  
a desk lamp shines  
in the real estate office  
lest a body break in

to ponder the instruments by flashlight  
one without Rightfull Businesse  
among the deeds our old deeds  
then too faces  
are known to flicker there

the Constable too is abroad  
in the hostile darkness his  
bicycle-size tires  
make no noise his  
armature and brushes  
propel him in the silence  
of the hornd owl  
slung and desperate  
he is eager to fling his string

few  
sense the sanity  
of nonsense  
a mad recipe  
    one cup—pain  
    one cup—hilarity  
for poppyseed cakes  
of amazement

in the National Geographic  
three Black Hawks are ambushing  
their pursuers this brave  
crawling into the brush  
has received a shot  
in the groin

men of distinction  
shaped the history of Point Reyes:  
Sir Francis Drake, favorite of Queen Elizabeth  
Zachary Taylor, twelfth President of the United  
States  
John Schafter, Supreme Court Justice of this State

doctors know  
the fatal flavors

a wreck! Bear Valley  
Saturday night after the Silver Dollar closed  
three men in a pickup truck  
forced an old heap  
off the road  
at 50 miles per hour a body  
has an impact of fifteen hundred pounds

the village glowing at dawn  
the village aglow in golden light

out of the wreck  
the survivor crawls  
on hands and knees

in 1963, despite firm opposition from  
despite resistance  
the U.S. Government purchased  
23,000 acres of in  
for the Point Reyes National Seashore

the apprentice barber  
runs the clippers too far too far  
into the grey hair he  
dissolves in helpless laughter  
levity Mr. Jones, himself helpless  
in sheet and tissue collar  
cannot share

here are the old the dim of eye  
who live with hairless pooches  
in shacks up on the ridge  
they wait

on dirt roads  
at gates  
by blackberry bushes heavily bearing

to speak to you  
to say to you their fathers once own'd acres  
hundreds of own'd own'd  
land once the home of Indians  
now becoming fields  
of sorrow and love

in the grainy photograph  
I am standing deeply recess'd  
at a gate on a dirt road  
my arm is around my mate  
from a pocket protrudes  
this present instrument roll'd  
tied with a ribbon

roll'd over the edge  
a heavy burlap sack  
all but the hooves and antlers

Stephen's hour has come  
apprehended hitchhiking  
on a Darke Waie  
he dashes to a tree  
to conceal his Presence  
the horn barks  
the string is flung  
torn from his jerkin  
his flared trousers  
his reading matter removed  
he is thrust into prison stripes  
propelled to the dock  
the charge "assault"  
Anne arrives with bail  
she cooes and soothes him  
across the rail an arm  
pulls her away a stern voice  
prohibits Communication

with Prisoners  
from a distance she continues  
to console him  
through Handsignals seized  
arrested shorn of her lace  
and puffy sleeves thrust  
into prison stripes  
propelled to the dock  
she faces the judge  
at Stephen's side

the suppressst hilarity  
the struggle to keep a straight face

the sparrow hawk  
sacred to ancient peoples  
his wings do not pound  
like axles over switches  
yesterday he did not anguish  
for his fitness for today  
he has natural business  
in the pourd valley  
in the thick  
the now  
renewing himself daily  
his moulting feathers  
fall away in flight

the young man  
and his friend, the widower  
walk arm in arm  
along the road  
they pause at the gate  
to wait for the old dog they  
talk quietly  
this is his father-in-law  
the lucid the beloved

himself in the album  
in the chest  
a young man smiling  
at outings in a wide-brimmd hat  
guitar in hand and  
thumb hookt through his belt

the Surveyor  
ponders an instrument  
with the Real Estate Man  
this is the office  
built like a rustic cabin  
at the crossroads  
the old deeds are here  
likewise the Rod and Transit  
money accrues as the two the two  
subdivide love  
into fourths  
and eighths

the young are perplext  
they cannot buy  
a single sorry nail  
amazement does not beget  
money money money  
money money  
does not yield itself up  
from laughter it  
does not issue from sunlight  
no the money  
she don't just won't accrue

to roll on axles  
into the west

to turn away  
and slant toward the south

on July Fourth  
the main street  
aflo with cattle  
noses bobbing  
horns rippling    lowing  
their hooves drum up  
an ancient sorrow  
their knobby knees  
stir in me  
a southward throb

knees plunging    raising  
the golden dust

I turn my head  
I renounce the archaic struggle  
migrating patterns flicker  
in these words  
this instrument takes us south  
to Mexico    the sorrows  
of beaten brass  
to gold by firelight  
the sensual craving satisfied  
love delicious  
in soft leather    beads  
these are the bronze andirons  
wrought as the sparrow hawk  
ruby eyes    wings folded  
the plunging  
down down  
into the glow  
to the cities in the embers  
the ancient cities  
the ancient peoples  
glowing down  
from gold to red  
to disappear from sight

I have sought a father's love  
in a man unable to love

the toddling boy  
crawls from his sire  
as from an ambush  
or a highway wreck

following me  
on hands and knees  
dwarfs in diapers  
each with my face  
grim as miners  
desperate as miners  
crazed with thirst

the struggle to crawl free  
to raise my head  
to rise  
to rise to my feet

you will forgive me  
these sorrows  
for I am slow  
no fit companion  
yet my head is up  
I am trying to  
I my body  
to raise my  
trying  
to rise  
to my feet  
to you

William Whitman



**LEAVING, THE SEPULCHRE CITY**

The place was empty.  
We entered the room  
where the heads lay  
upon the table,  
formaldehyde, wrinkled.  
The door closed behind us.

**1.**

What happened when the lieutenant  
came over to you?

He asked me why  
I hadn't killed the people yet.  
I said, 'Sir, I didn't know  
we were suppose to.'

What happened then?

Well, the lieutenant pulled  
his automatic to his shoulder  
and started shooting.

What did you do ?

I started shooting too.

How did you feel about shooting  
all those people ?

You get kind of used to it, sir,  
used to the killing, that is.

But some of the men say you  
were crying as you fired. Were you ?

I don't know.

Alot of things were going on  
around me—alot of people  
running around and alot  
of noise all over the village.  
I don't remember crying.

But you do remember  
the people you shot, don't you ?

Yes sir.

Would you say  
most of those you shot  
were adult men ?

Some were.

Then the others were women  
and children.

Yes.

How old were the children ?

All ages, sir. Some  
were, maybe, ten, eleven.

Some were in the arms  
of their mothers.

Did you shoot them too?

Yes I did.

Did you think  
that the children  
were going to harm you?

No sir. But they  
might have had a grenade planted  
on them. You really  
can't trust anyone, sir,  
not anyone.

*We have placed the people  
in the corner, we have gone  
around the bush to the other  
steeple hidden by rocks and danced  
upon the cave. We took off  
our shirts and we took off our pants  
and sat them by our feet. The brook  
ran through the fire  
but we knew it was good  
and laid down with the girls.  
We had no desire.*

**2.**

Deep, in the earth,  
it was broken  
and we were men  
painting buffaloes  
on the slate rivers.

The women and children  
slept near the fires.  
The one behind me,  
the one who walks  
in the valley  
beneath the shadow  
of the big, yellow fire,  
wraps our people  
in dried skins.  
We do not like  
the air we cannot see  
for it eats our people.  
We do not like our blood  
that shakes our bodies  
over the animals  
on the stones  
for the elephant  
chases us when he is hidden  
and the small deer  
who feeds us no longer  
drink from our lands.  
We are empty  
with bark, root, and berry.

## 3.

How many hours  
is it? In the darkened hole  
of the tavern, the men  
sat on stools or stood  
by the bar. The Budweiser  
horses revolved around a table,  
neighed once or twice,

then dragged their old cart  
back home to the stable.  
The women's band, just  
finishing the last round  
of drink was standing  
by the wall, wailing  
to the one, asleep,  
laid, her back half bent  
across the floor. The two men,  
the two men close  
to the window, kissed  
each other's ear. The one  
with two fingers opened  
the other's graying shirt  
and felt his breast, then,  
seeing us outside staring in,  
sensed the fear of the rising  
wind, the last slow circuit  
of the clicking of tin,  
the last clicking of tin.

*We were riding  
in the city then, along  
the lake, just before  
sunset. By the beach,  
we dug into the sands  
with our bones way  
past midnight.*

*I came from the old buildings,  
she said, and remembered them  
along the drive. They are not  
the same, no they are not, he said.*

*Now the city condemns them,  
even drops the people's furniture  
from the twelfth floor,  
she said. They did that to me  
without one thought for my dress  
nor how well I could speak,  
she said. Yes, I suspect  
it is true, he said. People are  
so cruel these days, so cruel.  
The kids, they junk the new cars  
along the streets, she said,  
and throw rocks at your windows.  
It is a shame it has come  
to this, she said.  
I have no home now, he said,  
not since the war.  
My parents think  
I am dead, he said, yes, dead  
because I deserted. That  
can't be true, she said. No,  
it isn't but I love you.  
Do you believe that, he said.  
Yes I do. Will you let me,  
he said. Yes, I want it.  
Do you want me now,  
he said. Yes, now, I need  
you now, she said.*

What happened when  
you entered the car?

We talked about the weather.  
It had been sleeting all day.

Did he touch you?

Yes, you could say that.

Where?

On the leg. He reached  
over as though he  
were fixing the tape deck  
and bumped my knee.

What did you do then?

I tried to ignore him.

Did you?

Not really, I mean, he did it  
again, this time more frantic  
than before, putting his hand  
on my calf and then, quickly  
working it up a little  
past the knee.

Did you like it?

What? I'm not sure  
what you mean.

You understand what I mean.

Well, I was a little  
scared. My stop was soon  
and, when I went to get out,  
he tried it again.

What happened then?

I got out.

I was pretty shook, then,  
and just wanted to get away.  
Even so, maybe out of habit,  
I said, 'thank you'.

4.

She has tight,  
protruding eyes. She is behind  
the counter, holding  
the ketchup bottle  
near her hand. When we leave,  
she follows us to the theater  
where she plays a waitress  
going out and going out  
with a tray over her head.  
You call out to her  
but she is speaking  
to her grandchildren,  
at 29, the only performer  
left alive.

**Virginia Gilbert**