

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
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THE TABLECLOTH

The tablecloth

Covers not only the table.

It covers the legs of the table,

It covers the floor under the legs,

It covers the ground under the floor,

Its bits of ground glass,

It covers the rats under the ground

It covers the sewer under the rats,

It covers the bedrock under the sewer,

The red lava under the bedrock,

It covers the axis, the point on which it all turns,

It covers the square little plot in China,

It covers the little yellow feet, the bound feet

Of the Chinese delicate women,

The small square of sky over the small heads

Of the men, black or white,

As the day may be,

It covers the white eyes of the stars

Checking the sky for its crimes

It covers the little square blank

Where God lives

With angels lighting the streets

It covers the great emptiness behind God

Filled with a kind of a laughter

At the earth which is far away,

Folded up, like a table,

It covers the great empty space behind the space

Filled with laughter, completely empty

And grey as a tipped cup,

It covers, behind this empty space, another,
Still emptier,
Where I am completely spilled and empty
And odorless and drifting
A knife and fork in each ear

Trying to say
This is what it covers,
This is what it must cover.

Susan Fromberg Schaeffer

FLYING HOME FROM DENVER ON VALENTINE'S DAY

1.

Above Colorado, clouds drift toward us
But their shadows lie still,
Lakes pressed in the brown land.
Soon the clouds must reel in
Line and draw the shadows
After them. But for the moment
They float westward, neglecting
The heavy water.

2.

I hiked a mesa this morning, with friends,
Checking a ponderosa pine to see
If the red tails had returned. We found
Petritified wood, pebbles of lava in the sandstone,
A cow's pelvis, white, in a shallow cave.
Lunch on a flat rock, and sun.
I supposed what was dazzling
Had to be brief. But those mountains!

3.

Nebraska. Sea horses
Rear out of white coral,
Whorls and loops of the ocean
Floor. Further east, clouds
Flatten. Here and there
A mound rises pinkish above
Drifts of old snow.

Iowa. Tumbled grey, the open
Dome of a brain. I imagine
A long electrode probing,
Probing for the pleasure
Center lost somewhere
In that dark cauliflower.

4.

On the prairie, a coyote cries once
Far off and drops into the wide, dry bed
Of a river; a magpie snatches away a dead
Sparrow. Compulsions keep their distance.

My toe pressed a pane of ice
This morning in a hollow rock,
Water curling up from the edge to lick
The sun. I was almost weightless

Lifted by the balloon of my own
Breath. That is a country of eyes
And imagination. A cloud lies
Down with a mountain, mocking his humped stone.

But touch hung empty at my side.
My hands remembered the curved bark
Of another landscape. Now I wish
This plane down into the close salt and seaweed;
I speed the earth's turning, hurrying dark.

5.

The Mississippi curls her
 Deep body around Burlington.
 A splotch of lights
 Shows through the clouds—
 An even purple now, edged
 With a pale orange line.

6.

Come love, fish in this lake
 Of your own making, the dark
 Water of my body.

I am short of breath
 From the altitude, coming
 Near you, dropping into O'Hare
 Field, 17 degrees and snowing.

Conrad Hilberry

THREE WINTER VEGETABLES

Green at Christmas, still green,
 green through summer, fall,
 several frosts, and rain, rain
 that rots leaves and, cold,
 stuns the grass, slows it—
 these greens are growing, the
 carrots and turnips in rows,
 the parsley a patch or green
 dome. And below, out of
 sight, except for tops
 washed clear and turnip
 backs heaved out

of the dirt, a swelling,
storing, coloring going on.

Carrot

The tops are useless, useless
even as ropes to pull out
the root. They pale, rot,
and snap, and make me
dig into the mud to get
the big ones. Some come
with legs like props,
some with beards that I
can wipe off with my hands,
hair roots on the
hard master root. They
have been growing for
years, old Chinamen
digging for home. Then
others pregnant as
votive Venuses with
stump legs and swollen belly.
Or thin ones, coming up clean
like trout. Or reluctant ones
the lovers wound together
in love in the ground.
My hand washes them
under the cold water
of a cold-hardened
hose. My thumb rubs
over them, as if they were
coins with no faces.
The meat of one split
and dirt filled, blued
at the nob by frost,
can be tender and sweet.

Parsley

The green dome of
multiple stems
and full, frilled leaves
could be a city
or forest providing
recesses for private
meetings, burials,
treasure hoards, poems.
I can't see
where the parsley
comes from, the stems
curve down and
out of sight among
other stems. I
taste first the rain
caught on the frond.
I feel the rough
edges of the leaf.
I bite and my teeth
grind the spice
pumped up to
me here above
the parsley.

Turnip

The gross one, a factory,
storehouse, morgue of
worms, flophouse for
slugs under the weather.
There are trails on the under-
side of lopsided globes
that were eaten by worms
since dead, a brown track

that from the air, here,
looks like Arabic writing.
All those dead worms
worked across a globe
to say by their trails
that we should all
despair, the world is
vain, the world is
a turnip, gross
storehouse of sweet
spice-water, banks
of white flesh and
a purple skin, bright
as a tumor, rotten
with growth. When
I pull the turnip
by the hair, I hold
a swinging head. I
knock off slugs and snap
the tendon tap root. The
earth is emptier, the
earth collapses around
the hole made by this death.

Erik Muller

THE DEEPS

"Do you live on the surface, Aunt Matty?" asked Aubrey.

"No dear. I? No, I am a person who lives rather in the deeps, I am afraid."

—Ivy Compton-Burnett

I, too, my dears. So many fathoms down
and deep deep deep but never deep enough
to pop a lung and make an end of it.
Think of an ocean bottom ripe with toys
and pearls and fruit and motherlove, and you
withheld above it on a rope of breath
one gasp away. Here in the deeps, my dears,
the muse delivers in a foreign tongue
you never learned at school. A priestly rite
ends as you reach the gate. A peacock fan
unfolds an inch beyond your vision like
the twenty-twenty line you couldn't answer
for the ophthalmologist. Love's mermaid sits
inside the bubble of a sonic boom
and sings the song you never hear her singing.
I see my book. It's open to the page
of truth. It lies among the bones. My mind
is catapulting toward it but the fish
have intercepted swift on silver fins
and not a word will go uneaten by them.
I do not curse the fish. I curse my soul,
the limit of its leash, no freer than
a pet chameleon pinned to a boy's lapel.

"Don't float away," his mother said.
That Willie. What a scamp. He did.

He went on waterwings away
with such outlandish buoyancy
that all the mothers in the surf
could not prevent his floating off.

Outlandish boy. He rode the sea
the way a seraph rides the sky
as if he'd learned *in utero*
that floating free is good to do.

And floated free. And kept his drift
between the flotsam and the fish
across the ocean free and clear
until he reached its navel, where
a dragonfly on dainty fangs
alight and pricked his waterwings.

Then willy nil a bag of bone
unwaterwinged he drifted down
past sharks and squids and submarines
past frogmen and leviathans
to where I waited in the gloom,
my pockets full of bubblegum.

How did I love him? More than life.
I meant to keep him dear and safe
but when I tried to warm his blood
his body broke like moistened bread.

Barbara L. Greenberg

THREE POEMS FROM "THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE"**Meeting Needs**

The mail is pouring in so we know
That there's a problem. A section
Of the statutes is archaic—our laws
Forbidding fornication and the rest.
Editorials abound. The staff decides
To solve the problem. A Special Ad
Hoc Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee

On Sexuality will be formed. It will be
Balanced as to interest, race, religion.
All must be included—sadists, sodomists,
Simple Perverts—provided they are active
In our party. The Chair will be a liberal
Black transvestite from the rural areas
Of our state—to whom we owe a favor.

Priorities

The shades are drawn. The Governor leans
Forward: "Gentlemen, this legislation
Must be passed as a favor to a friend
Of a dearest friend who helped us when
We had to move that bill requested
By an influential party leader whose
Support meant all the difference in

Carrying our disadvantaged brothers by
Ten thousand votes despite a biased press
Who twisted out of context that casual
But ill-timed comment by my cousin,
Our candidate for sheriff, who referred
To unfair questions on his funding sources as
Nothing more than niggers in the woodpile.”

Looking Backwards

Yesterday the landslide vote of confidence
Returning us to office confirmed our strong
Belief that in the long annals of progressive
Government this administration was unique.
As our campaign folders said, we really
Got things done. We skillfully prevented
A gross misuse of state investment funds

From breaking in the news and undermining
Public faith in the democratic system. We
Kept riots in the cities from destroying us
For another year or two. We studied every
Problem and hiked the pay of every high
Official. Now, far from being satisfied, we have
A mandate to repeat the triumphs of the past.

James F. Doyle

NOTE

The Beloit Poetry Journal has no formal connection with Beloit College, but most of the editors teach there. Recently the college has seemed to have a remarkable number of serious poets, many of them doing very exciting work. To test our impression, we put out a notice inviting student submission to a possible special section for the Spring issue, stating that the Editorial Board would consider student poems along with those regularly submitted. We received about 250 poems from 35 students. Out of these we have selected 19 poems by 10 poets. We feel lucky to have students like this, and perhaps some others even better, and we would be happy to think it a sign of an unprecedented flowering of poetry in this country.

SANDWOMAN'S DREAM

In the outstretched sand, cold, starred,
 In the sand that has become my body
 In the sand that has become the body of my dream
 Conch-eared, slit-eyed, I fit
 Into the space that flies up from sleep.

Deep over an endless view: sand, wide, hard,
 Perhaps of a dust-cloud
 Or a pearl-lit star,
 Sand that curdles the desert
 Never leads to ocean. I cannot see.

In the hazy sand of this dream garden
Wherever it outlines my movement
And movement of all sandwomen
A rose grows.

Thornless, perfect, red.
I fondle it, licking its clean stem,
Placing a single petal on my tongue,
Curling it, drowning it
In all sandwomen,
To celebrate breath and rose.

Trembling in a spinning space
I pluck it from the sand,
Pull it from my body in the blood-burst
Of a single artery. Lust. Thirst
After redness, after the thornless stem.

But it bloomed in the whitelight of fire
That danced in my outstretched palm, burned
From one end of body to the other, leaving me
With footprints of ash, flames licking air.

I turned inward, thinned, dried,
Towards myself; head of sand
Full of dreams, yet roseless.
Now I breathe under breast-dunes,
Now I curve into stomachs of sand.

I see three buddhas on a hill
Before I wake back to bone,
One wooden god,
One jade and sand,
One woman carved from stone.
I cannot see them well, my eyes
Open into red morning light.

Kate Stearns

TWO POEMS**Singing for Troutfish**

flat gray stream stones
 deep in the water
 under white water
 wave on the streambed
 lolling like branches
 waved by the night wind
 curling through young trees
 night wind The Panther
 slinking through trees.

slick scaley troutfish
 still in the water
 deep in white water
 tail like waved trees.
 bone hook in water
 tied to the gutline
 heavy with red worm
 smeared with warm birdfat
 deep in white water
 lolling like branches
 slim lissome branches
 on the night trees.

come to me troutfish
 i am The Panther
 tooth-eyed in night trees
 hungry for rabbit
 bolting through scrubwoods.
 come to me troutfish
 close round the bone hook
 red worms on bone hook
 sway like blown trees.

A Fable for Kate

And the mole's eye turned below the fine roots of the
potato plant
which are like ageless hair,
fragile as a child's,
pale as a crone's ashy locks.
His head was cupped in the bowl shape
formed by the plant's root net, his slitted eye
pitching light upon the root net, bright
as a pea-bulb lit beneath the moon-toned ribs
of a bumbershoot.

At the center of the root-net hung
the swollen storage belly of the plant,
the bursting brown potato.
Here the mole burrowed upward,
and pierced the skin with his pinbright teeth.
He sucked the white flesh
until its skin flopped limp,
a wet gutted fleshsack:
the spent wrinkled center of the root net.

And he scooped out a labyrinth
with his hunger under the loamy earth,
beneath the plant's jade dewy leaves,
and he chewed away the fine roots
which are like ageless hair.
There the light-eyed mole slept curled,
with his fattening tail
stuck in his pink slack mouth.

The white pearly petals of the potato plant
thirsted in the sun's strong heat,
sucked dry air, and folded on themselves
like crossed hands in a casket.

Joseph Helguera

BRISS

We came from the grey gritty dust of the city,
from the dead lodged inside us, the stale crumbs and
broken bottles
of a thinning existence, braving rain, thick-browed
Uncles,
braving blushing memories rushing youth back into
our pale faces.
We came, hesitant, from the city's grey safety, its
help,
to see that raw red skin, weaker than we, that new
idea—Life.

How Maddy and Harold clucked and strutted when
this wailing life,
this pink bundle of puttied electricity
stepped from behind two missed carriages (with help)
kicking feet first into a sterile world of styrene
bottles,
Pamper diapers, black nurses in sharp white
uniforms, smiling fishes' faces
dangling over the crib, and Uncles
with Panatella steam breath, bushy-eyed Uncles
dangling over the sunrise-pink fat in the crib to see
Life,
not Mark Jason, under the layers of flowered cotton.
"His face is
like Harold's, no?" "No, Maddy's." "A city
is no place to raise any child." Then back downstairs
to the bottles
of gin to wash down the flavor of age, to help
drown the years and the creases, and help
the frowning brothers, now Uncles,

be able to babble with friendship, not scorn. Those
bottles:

more pungent than the oniony wince of life,
clearer than the murky steel of the city
that chills their spines, and more aged than their
faces.

And now the hot sweat of the gin turns their faces
Life color pink, turns their hurt into help,
turns into smooth country what was angular city
and makes sad brothers-by-birth great Uncles,
by choice. And upstairs the baby, the Life,
whines at his loss—one foreskin—whines at his
gain—the bottle.

For the *Mohel* calmed Mark with a sip from a bottle
of sweet Catskill wine, deeper red than the torn face
of Mark's little manhood. "He will pass through life
a man, proud and shorn like a man, needing help
from no man be he father, brother, uncle,
or son, for Usher ben Mordecai is now a member of
God's great City.

Amen."

And after a toast (two or three) from the vein
purple bottle,
after a tear for the red, flush faced Uncles, after a
short warm squeeze of the Life,
we went, helpless, back to the cool grey of the city.

Martin Rothenberg

THREE POEMS

18

Emily Dickinson's Book of Manners

Not meaning to start out by going uptown
or downtime on you

it must be understood

YOU HAVE TO BE
NICE TO CRAZY
PEOPLE

THIS MEans no repeat no freelance
pall-bearers, like forget it

this means no more lectures on the
importance of being HEMINGWAY

NO more goddam articles on what color the whale was in
MOBY DICK

&

call your mother Ishmael

JON TOWER

IMEAN I AM SICK TO DEATH of shriving to announcements like
this one

a new an important magazine
BLUE HEAVEN

my brain has been smushed silly by fire-devils asking
if DOCTOR GONZO treated me?

jesus, yes, to the meat-loaf dinner

how much can one tolerate of understanding tortured
goddam
geniuses

THAT IS SUPPOSING that twisted wrenching inside
might just as well be satisfied
by a good trip to MacDONALD'S,

wouldn't you feel sillier

... that is ...

perhaps the squares are right

**The Many Perspectives of Time:
A Quick Snack in American History**

Walking into Walgreen's
With a determined stride,
The freshly shaved & talcumed
Richard M. Nixon
Made his way to the luncheon counter.
He ordered the Thursday Special,
A Hollywood Ten with Fries & slaw.

. . .

Richard M. Nixon and his wife
Stood in silent solitude
Over one of the many graves
In the Kennel in the Sky pet cemetery;
As they left, Mr. Nixon said to his wife:
"Well, you won't have Checkers to kick
Around any more."

. . .

For a treat the French chef made
The Nixons a Vietnamese dinner,
Served in the television room so
Mr. Nixon wouldn't miss the Skins-Packers
Game. But the food just tasted like cardboard
For Mr. Nixon was preoccupied, should he
Bring Brezhnev a Cadillac or a Lincoln?

. . .

Mr. Nixon said goodnight to his wife.
His exact words were: "Good-night Pat."
Later as he lay in bed Mr. Nixon thought
Did I make myself perfectly clear?

. . .

Is this man one of the one in
Seventy who has to shave
Twice a day?

Is a Hollywood Ten kosher?

Does Mr. Nixon like fresh scapegoat
better?

Is there a difference?

Was President Eisenhower really
allergic to dogs?

Does Mrs. Nixon make her own
clothes?

The Nixons enjoy a dish called My Lai,
have you ever had it, would you like
to?

Isn't an automobile an expensive present?

Does Mr. Nixon like Russian people
better than Chinese people?

Is this clear to you?

Go back & find the errors in
this decade.

Hot Dogs

Electrostatic shoeprints, for instance could give some hint of the size and sex of a culprit, reveal how many people were involved in a caper and even allow police to trace their movements.

TIME, November 20, 1972

Authorities gave little thought
to the new shoeprint process
for some months . . .
But when Fleisher, the notorious
scissors butcher of North Eppingham
was brought to bay as his Scotch-
grain brogues had left
tell-tale 11-D prints across
the carpet of his latest
(and last) victim,
even Scotland Yard
sat up and took notice.

Still, things were yet in
the embryonic stage
for quite some time.
Until Robert Adams, then
president of Thom McCann
decided to cast a vote
for law & order by
requiring anyone who
came in to purchase
a pair of shoes
should have his
shoeprints taken.
Soon the rest
of the shoe manufacturers

fell into line, as did
the sneaker and boot makers
not long after.

Before long it was a
federal law: everyone's
footwear prints were
on record.

A furor erupted, as
splinter groups like
The Sandal Grail Society
retired to the mountains.
And of course the criminal
element wasn't taking this
sitting down either.

Soon an unprinted pair
of loafers was going
for eighty dollars on
the Black Market,
and illicit shoe factories
worked twenty-four hours
a day in Macao and Rio.

The culmination of it all
came on the notorious
Cordovan Thursday, when
young men all over
the country burnt their
shoes to protest massive
government repression.
Combat-booted troopers
were sent out but
could not stop the bare-
foot masses . . .

(So if your toes are cold
my son, do not complain to me.

You should be able
to keep them warm
with the thought
that they are free.)

Jon Tower

THE RAILROAD POEM

Running to sun's end along silver rails—
Six inches of steel narrowly split by a well oiled
Wooden ladder bedded uneasily in gravel pit remains
Carelessly placed by some forgotten foreman
Maybe working yet in the haze beyond
Eyelight's edge, where the bridge—car travelled
But shrouded in a cornfield mist
Of shadow stalks; marching columns slipping
Through smokey barb-wired lines, unnoticed
By silvery crows poaching on unknown lands—
Autumn furrowed and forgotten as lonely
Sentinel crossing warnings; red lights
Flashed, but seldom for earth rumble freight
Pulling the wind from the North; straining,
Out of breath, out of time—gone whistles
The Great Western Zephyr of San Francisco or
Missouri, bank robber posse's riding sweaty
showdown
Hard down the necks of tombstone ghosts in a
Sea of wild flowers where a nomad buffalo is
Swimming downstream—August high enough for
Turtle-heads among the reeds and pages thumbed
Telegraph yellow by late night sweaty-palmed
Dreams running together on forgotten back-roads
And this one.

Tom Judge

TWO POEMS

Meditations in an Antibes Watercloset

Tilted,
But balanced
On a vector of trust
In wobbly knee and prayer,
I place my hands with extra care
On the pale-green mortar walls
Of this fortified toilet stall.

Snug as a clam in my bomb-proof
Bunker of musk, I shrink down.
Buttressed and braced like a church,
Withstanding sin, fall, lurch
And cataclysm, I avoid unholy baptism.
Firm as the faithful, but above it all,
I begin the exorcism.

But past possibilities appear instead.
The abandoned futures gleam, starry
And far as the famous dead, and I
Am an old photo of myself,
Hungry, cold, strung
Out of cigarettes with a stopped-up head
Of what once could be but never was.

Slim-wifed and busy, father
To a clean, well-trained son of twenty,
With three chubby nephews, a shy niece
And a Buick, I could do, I might do.
With soap and wax and a bit of glue,
A plug of grease at the bolt and screw,
I could be proper, I could be new.

Tilted,
But balanced,
Mouldy old boulder,
Doddering squatter,
I forego repair.
Unchosen chances I'll construe
By mixing flatus with the air.

Gastronome

The wide world learnt with intrepid tongue,
Countries traversed with fork and knife:
Can there be another life?

What rich liaison can the mouth aspire
With fatted cattle and blazing fire?
Such hecatombs for pure desire!

Enslaved by cravings insatiate
My silver utensils hover and hum
Above the landscape of my plate.

Lone pariah from a sea of peas,
One lost pea lies split
Beneath my steaming steak.

Cordoned by the larkspur edge,
My steak sauce forms a sluggish pool,
Exudes a hot miasma.

My mashed potatoes loom;
A livid lunar mountain range
Lies leveled by my spoon.

O undulation! Rippling peristalsis!
Gurgle and drip of peptic secretion!
I flow in the fleeting bliss of eating.

Incisors incisive, slicing, meeting
Naked edge to edge through thick meat;
May nothing tear me from my seat!

And may I, when I finish, rise
And rest awhile, or sleep;
Then wear again with honest pride

That priestly habit, starched and stiff.
About my neck well-tucked or tied
May my napkin lie immaculate.

Roy Freirich

TWO POEMS

Bartok

Bartok's body swelled with music when he slept.
It skittered through his skull like sparrows through
a blue domed room of fog, or ruled him like
a huge despotic bull that terrified
its quiet pen. His sleep was deafening.

He pleaded to the hissing sheets for silence;
slabs of yellow sun on brick red walls,
or snowfields, still as ice beneath mum stars.
One night he dreamt his music was the sky,
a symphony to blossom as the dawn

and end as dusk. He dreamt of first light—strings,
then sun, a single flute of saffron themes among
deep sleeping blues of sullen basses.
He raised then reddish oboes from the trees
and swelled the dawn with woodwinds, coolish, young.

Each windswept violin awoke slight stirs
between the furrowed summer fields,
as bright birds sang melodious omens
to the sun in twittered piccolo.
The morning cleared and shimmered like a bell.

New daylight ripened into mellow cool
of cellos, midday tenor of the sky,
and bassoon blue of storm clouds mumbled
on the west horizon, serious, unseen.
The air lay smeared with cirrus tones of trumpets.

He then dreamt of a noontide movement—slow
crescendo, low notes climbing from the skinny
brass, impatient woodwinds, roiling up
through octaves like a thunder head of sound,
a music billowed madly from the sober
songs of daylight—mumbling blossom, bulging
in the ear. The clouds drummed signals through
themselves
for rain to start in tight strung sheets of strings.
It fell through gusts of cello, sobbing reeds,
the whirl of music, sweeping sky sounds clean.

When wind released the leaves like clarinets,
they tumbled into cooling register
out of the swollen noted storm to sift
wet post rain trickles from the violins.
Red evening died among the fading thunder drums,

And that dream darkness shook him up. He'd wake
and finger sun rise silence through his hands,
and shake his head, and yawn a song into the air.

The Find

His toenails click across the kitchen tile.
Beneath a table, spread out on the cool linoleum,
he hears their soft feet pad along the upstairs floors.
Straight above him father speaks in slow round tones
of praise.

In echo, each sheet speaks with dim white whispers
to the others, cotton conversation slowly stilled.

A night smell, massing on the porch,
flows up across the screendoor's bottom board
and finds him, dozing. One cocked eyebrow climbs
with interest. Lying in the middle of the
night house rhythm; loudly ticking clocks,
refrigerators, water faucets, something holds
him by the nostrils; grip of bitch dog, cat, raccoon,
and unknown ghost scent, fertile ripening of air.

He rises given up to impulse. With one nudge
he stands beyond the flat slap of the screendoor.
Father stirs until the sound slips into dream.
Out on the grass, paw deep in dew,
he listens to a squirrel's claws grate across
the treelimits. Sniffing for the special night smell,
he stands still until it slides up from the grass
below him. Satisfied, jaw dropping to a doggy grin,
he eagerly lopes from the home lawn,
through a junk lot's green and rusted smells
into the brush, its crackling leaf floor ruffled.

The strange scent rises into cancerous proportion.
Others simply wriggle into wisps, just strong enough
to make their shrunken meanings clear
beneath its smothering growth.
The darkness clings to him like briars

he moves through, all direction aimed into
 a black olfactory origin. Padding past the weeds,
 all sense is permeated by the rotting wind.

At last; the nostrils meet the paw. Through moonless
 dark,
 he steps against the smell. He hears the panicked
 scattering of myriad ant feet like a live mist
 clearing from the ravaged entrails. Guard hairs
 on his muzzle locate holes ripped in the fur.
 He doesn't understand, inspects it slowly, fascinated
 by the life in death's remains, the ultimate of fecund
 odors, sprung out of bacteria and mold.
 Live death. Dead life. The smell is frank and luscious.
 With one flop he rolls across the ribs, writhes
 sinuously,
 till the unseen body's scattered through the brush.
 He wallows into dawn, hearing sunlight through the
 leaves,
 and later, the first call of a hunting voice.

David Lanham

TWO POEMS

Nightcrawlers: Nickel a Dozen

Set up by the rail a spike in spite
 It hooks, it's hungry, the worms are a nickel
 A nickel a dozen to hook for food
 Five hearts per worm per hook are spiked
 And if lost in the weeds we'll cut the line
 In spite. And he's an earnest worm
 And earnest is the halo of men, the core

Corona of halo'd men who eat and shit
 And shiver when they piss in the cold
 And decompose when thrown out the window
 Like an apple core, and why don't graveyards
 Sport a sign to reassure their loving dears
 That they too recycle, "People here—
 Chopped and recycled." And maybe too
 We'll get a deposit when our brothers go down
 Like a worm on a spike. And the shining corona
 Smiles and frowns at five spiked hearts

one

Heart: the wind that strangles cities in my ears
 and, after all, just won't blow my way

two

Heart: that translates a bastardized apogee
 at the height of its pulse and

three

Heart: that centers, the core, the decomposed
 middle that sits under a light on
 my old man's bureau and smiles

four

Heart: that jerks a sonnet to a Sargasso
 myth with lines like strands of seaweed
 unintelligible to any save another
 strand or another heart and

five

Heart: that rhymes with itself and so
 is beautiful because it alone will
 put up with a pulse that never stops

And the smiling corona crowns its frown
 And hides the hand, injured and hungry,
 That wants the deposit a nickel
 A nickel for all five hearts, and if still alive
 A rusty spike by the rail, to decompose together.

Baking Bread

Cat claw smothering, people hovering
Breathless covering (close your eyes)
And let me rise, and punch me down
Then touch me and I'll rise again
To the oven's heat that kills
The life you gave, it kills, the yeast
My youth is risen, the yeast, it kills
My breath it stills, it stills . . .
And myself a waybread (I see)
Stillborn, my batter in heat will rise
Till, keen and finching, utter those words,
Those holy final breaths, oppressed,
These ovens of people that rise
(And still . . .) are still.

Steve Weinrebe

THREE POEMS**Temple**

Let me find your innocence
In the innocence of night,
The resurrection of the sun
In the moon's reflected light,
And let me be reborn again
In your soft and saving sight.

Return to me my child eyes
Lost long in the carnal churn,
The thwarted mind of the shrieking throng
Where prayers and visions burn.
The altar made of flesh and love
Is the only place to turn.

In pale pools of cold concrete,
Where the fools and drunkards dance,
Both dawn and dream are swept away
Before the hand of Chance.
The inner light turned blinding blight
Is the essence of all trance.

Tear me from this torpid thrall,
The insensate thrill of shock:
My eyes transfixed where the fires fume
To forge the final lock.
The living-dead should stand in dread
Of the mysteries they mock.

Claim me with the purity,
Which possessed us long ago.
Take the cross from between your breasts,
Cast off the veil below,
Then kneel and fill my empty arms
To convert the world we know.

Wrapped in the sacred silence
Of the deep and brave embrace,
Surrender merged with swift release
Is all we know of Grace.
The night-stars fill with light the tears
On your tired and gentle face.

Written in Retreat (Madison, Thaw, '72)

In the cutting cool dark evening
Of the vision-dimming day
In the prison that my wrongs had built around me
When they found me
With nowhere left to stay

With my hellsharp eyes turned skyward
In a vicious praying glance
Killing with caresses the feeling friends that fed me
Then misled me
And flung my fate to chance

For the pointless endless moment
I wait for my self to die
And trade all my pain for a promise they told me
Would unfold me
The mourning-glory sky

To a Suicide

I ask no right to question:
We lacked the stronger ties,
When you severed all the cords
With your decision
To force the act of empty fascination . . .

And yet,
Last night,
I saw your wife
With never on her lips,
Her red hair soft against the dark,
Your child in her arms.

A drained Madonna: aimless eyes,
A frameless face of slack
That did not see, no longer heard
The swift sharp shot that swept away
And left no echo in the night.

Michael Shea Millea

TWO POEMS

The Sight of Sleep, The Sleep of Sight*I The Dream of Night*

I leave the valley
for the pine forest
that reaches its roots
between the boulders
in the sand hill dunes.

Wah wah Wail wah Wah
they shriek in the riverbed caves,
'you will find no food on the moon-lit dunes.'

Wah wah Wah wail Wah wail
they cry in the riverbed caves,
'it is barren and cold among the old pines,
Wah Wah Maneek, so young and brave.'

Two days ago I leave
around the rocks and pines
leaping the sand mountains,

Deer.

Notch and shaft and string,
slower.

Slow,

fffffffffffffffffffft.

Tomorrow I don the skin of doe.

II Of Day

These thoughts are thick
with a rapid rush

through the courtyards of Versailles

and fiddlers in breechcoats

playing Mozart quickly in time

and rooms dressed

with clavichords tiny clocks candelabra

and swirling painted ceilings

under a spinning minuet

through the hallway courtyards

step run step in the labyrinth gardens

awake now

breathe.

III Now We Leave the Dawn of Flight

Armstrong on the moon

(Wait, a child is born)

'One small step for man,'

(Wait!) another child

'A giant leap for mankind,'

(a)nother child another more

fight to grow, expand fight

some child may sometime go

fasterthanthespedofligh

NAPOLEON IN EGYPT
(Upon Being Informed that Three Thousand Turks
Were Captured Outside Jaffa)

38

I can do nothing,
lesser men would consult the manual for an answer.
But the manual was written by men with powdered wigs and silk stockings,
who took snuff in Paris salons.
They read Caesar's journals and thought they knew of war.

I cannot feed them as prisoners when my own men go hungry.
I cannot release them if they will be tomorrow's enemy.
I cannot arm them if they will not fight for France.

I can do nothing,
lesser men would consult a council of war to decide.
But councils are attended by men who bicker,
aware of their particular paragraphs in history.

I have heard the English gunboats
firing
from Aboukir Bay.

PHIL BURNHAM

I have seen the young faces of my grenadiers
sliced
by the short sabres of the Mameluke cavalry.

I have visited my soldiers in the hospitals of Jaffa,
and they sweat,
dying of cholera.

I can do nothing.
I cannot send the Turks to France
when my ships have been destroyed.

2.

“The prisoners are marched down to the sea
and slaughtered.
Subsequent military critics,
especially
the Germans
have agreed that there was no choice.”¹

¹Emil Ludwig, *Napoleon*, p. 132.