

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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AN OLD LEGEND, TODAY

In the *zócalo*
the untuned violin screeches
under the horse-hair bow,
a drummer in a straw hat
beats a leather skin drum,
the toots of the hornblower echo
against the church walls.

A young boy is dressed up as a deer
pretending to eat grass on the dirt road.
Suddenly, stirring up the dust,
a fierce tiger pounces on the deer!
the antlers search the sky!
blood drips from his wounds!
and the tiger finally dances with victory.
but a hunter appears
with a wooden *machete* in his hand.
the drum beats follow his footsteps,
he is Tezcatlipoca
resurrected from his grave in Teotihuacan.
he is fearless and indomitable:
he slays the orange and black striped animal
with one quick blow.

But it is time for the Quetzal dancers
with their circular headdresses
to sway and bounce;
the street crowds
move over to watch them,
and only the porters are left
to guide the actors back
to their royal tombs.

Bjarne Tokerud

HEART OF STONE

In May, the pressure on
the temples, toes: I keep
my hat on at work, in shops, at bars;
my shoes come loose and shuffle.
June: I drop disguises in
the sun, horns and hooves agleam,
kicking sand.

On an azure coast,
browning like good French bread,
we pick up pebbles on the beach.
She bends, showing white skin under
her bikini: my goat blood races.
"Look!"

It's special: red, a heart
so perfect she's sure it's carved.
Carved? By whom? And is it an old
stone, I wonder. "All stones are old,"
she murmurs in the naked wisdom
of nymphs: "It's a message."

I feel the menace tingling
in my horns.

Snorting in midnight lechery,
I fall away from the moment:
who carved the thing, red, perfect?
Some other split-hooved creature, in last
summer's sun? — the sea
has smoothed at it much longer. A monk,
then, in the dark time, praising
his long frustration to heaven? Or
maybe some passionate Goth, bleeding
guilt for a past in ruins?

This is graveyard soil — below
our seesaw bed the rocks
of Roman walls are still
intact — “All stones are old.”
Well, Roman, then, my lusty
nymph? — the heart of a
centurion, a slave . . .
I wrench at time, and cherish
skin to skin. We sleep.

In the milky light I am
already wide-eyed, wondering:
perhaps — perhaps
some tanned old Greek, tired
of getting and spending — a token for
his charming native boy? Or —
my rough hair bristles like a dog’s —
Cro-Magnon himself (all stones are old)
carving his red delight
in the misty morning of man-hood?

Stop! My horns ache
with reflection — our breed is not
accustomed . . . I feel itching
in my hooves, glance at her browning
skin, stirring with easy
breathing, feel my roots
atingle, nearly reach out
to her white breast — but
think. Think. *Think* again —
and steal off, click-click of hooves
on tile — to stand on pebbles,
wondering: who sent
this memory to fog
the sunny morning?

Philip Appleman

SERGEANT BRANDON JUST, U.S.M.C.

He was alive with death:
Her name was Sung
and she was six years old.
By slightest mistake of degrees
on an artillery azimuth
he had called for rockets and napalm.
Their wild wizardry of firepower
expired her mistake of a village,
killing everyone except her,
and napalm made her look
like she was dead among the dead,
she alone alive among their upturned corpses
burning towards the sky.
He and the platoon
got to them too late,
removing only her
to a hospital inside of his base, Da Nang.
In the months that followed him,
when he could make it back from the boonies,
he always went to visit Sung.
Finally he was ordered to a desk job at the base.
He visited her every day,
though he accused himself of being alive
and would stand in a slump,
breathing his despair,
before entering the childrens' ward.
But he would enter.
Sung, knowing it was him,
would turn towards the sound of his feet,
her own, seared beyond being feet,
crisply trying to stand on shadows,
cool but unseen.

And as he could come in,
Sung would hobble up to him
in her therapeutic cart,
smiling even when she did not smile, lipless,
her chin melted to her chest
that would never become breasts.
He would stand
and wait for her touch upon his hand
with her burn-splayed fingers
that came to lay a fire upon his flesh.
Sung was alive
and would live on despite life,
but even now her skull
seemed to be working its way through
the thin, fragile solids of wasted, waxen skin.
Her head was as bald as a bomb
whose paint had peeled.
She had no nose
and her ears were gone.
Her eyes had been removed,
and because they were not there,
they were there
invisibly looking him through.
Sung was child-happy
that he came and cared,
and when he would start to leave,
she would agonize her words
out of the hollow that was her mouth.
Her tongue, bitten in two while she had burned,
strafing his ears,
saying, without mercy,
I love you.

Bryan Alec Floyd

RED BONE HOUND

She heard the howl
travel the ground
fast as running fear
of a one-eyed fox
bitten by a rabid squirrel.
It grabbed her hands
on the sweet potato hoe
like God blowing
on a wooden whistle.

Old Roland crawled
out of the pines,
his back flapped raw,
tooth-marked, and clawed,
from the pitted temper
of the mother bear.

She stood brown
as a weathered barn,
poached the orchard
of Sheepnose and Baldwin apples
to feed two yearling cubs.
Her scavenger nails
left gashes in the bark,
deep as a pig's trough.

Auntie Kate poured
honeyed licker down Roland's throat
and a sip to steady her hands.
Sewed the skinned pieces together
like the pattern of a Drunken Path quilt.
Auntie Kate soothed the mending
with a fat layer of bear's grease
from last year's hunt.

Betty Healy

THREE POEMS**On Writing Captions for a Collection of
80 Photographs of Famous Mechanics Scientists**

I take the word of this book over that
As someone chose these eighty over those
Uncountable souls that gravity has pulled
Into the sphere of matter over mind.

Translations of their lives by mechanists
Who know no languages or history
Repeat apocrypha. Historians
Who know no science write of their youth.

Who is not here? Evolvers of the wheel
Of consciousness of change of heaven's things,
Inventors of pleasures and violence
And all perpetual motion machines.

The squarers of circles, the spherers of cubes
And aether breathers have no pictures here.
This gallery has no room for the birds,
The fishes, or the kings whose feet were feet.

Heavenly music, mathematics was
The poetry of taut trajectories
Of masses in imaginary nets
Of forces and fields, of spaces and times,

For these whose faces face us and for these
Who face their spirits centuries away.
I try to write biographical notes
For too small a space, in too short a time.

I try to distinguish father from son,
As one source failed to do. I try to check
The stories of discoveries and catch
The myths amid a paucity of truth.

But Newton's apple, Galileo's stones,
And Franklin's kite appear too often not
To make me reconsider everything
And question whether any book is true.

Imagining all the inconsistencies,
I still write up the shingles that will hang
Beneath the names in narrow corridors
Whose walls not one in twenty students see.

I emphasize mechanics but write down
That Hamilton wrote verses all his life,
Von Mises edited young Rilke's works,
And Einstein relaxed with the violin.

The Line

You tell me there is a line, and the wall
Was on the other side. Thus this rubble is
A neighbor's to retrieve to build again

The side we see. I want to move the stones
And pile them silently on soft cement
Behind the neighbor's wall. But you say "no"

And tell me that men with a transit saw
The straightest line between two rusty nails
They tied with yellow scarves. You say you saw

The line yourself before the scarves were lost
To sparrows' nests, before the nails were lost
To eager spring. You say the line exists

Between coordinates in survey books,
On plats the county clerk can reproduce
For lawyers and the law, and on the land

The neighbor's family knows. You say the wall
Must touch the line again, so you must tell
The neighbor, since I cannot see the line.

Some Architects

“The auditorium wants to be a violin.”
—some architect

Ersatz Wallace Stevenses, some architects
With sketches of philosophies construct
Aesthetic theoretic sentences
With daring cantilevered predicates
Most engineers could never diagram.

The word is stone. The paper tuckpoint white
Is mortar. The paragraph is a wall
With doors and windows, space connecting space.
The book is volume, and volume is tome
Against tome juxtaposed against a wall.

Some architects are like librarians
Who do not read. They use their books to build
Bookshelves for newer books, circular stairs
For older books. These architects' facades
Explode in motion when there should be peace.

Assume there were no gravity. Assume
The earth relaxed and equilibrium
Diffused. Imagine then a library
Of single words aspiring to be—
And the breeze of a single page turning.

Henry Petroski

IN THE BEST OF HANDS

When I awoke, you were standing over me, ready to bathe my corpse. You had oil and vinegar in the last silver cup I had won in tennis. I tried to see the inscription on the cup. When and where had I won it? "Your eyes are open," you said accusingly. I shut them. Funeral music came from the cellar. Last winter you had taken me there and shown me where I would lie.

I heard you put the cup on the bedside table.

"When did it happen?" I asked.

"It hasn't happened yet," you said,

"I'm trying to make it happen now."

"I've helped all I can," I said.

"You're not helping now," you said.

I tried to think what day it was, and how you would get me to the cellar. Should I offer to walk? Or should I wait, as I had waited before? I decided you would let me know, if you wanted me to know. I tried to remember how long we had been together. I remembered sitting with you on a frozen river bank somewhere and wondering, as I watched the ice, who you were and why I could not leave. Finally I had asked you, and you had said I was only real when you were there,
and as long as you wished.

"Are you still awake?" you asked.

"I guess so," I said. "Does it matter?"

"Of course it matters," you said:

"If you were alive it would be different."

But I was alive, I told myself.
How could I be awake if I were not alive?
I sat up and opened my eyes again
as the music grew louder.
You were gone.
I went to the cellar to look for you.
You were sitting by the record player,
nodding at the music. You smiled at me.
“Are you feeling better?” you asked.
“I don’t know,” I said.
“Another dream?”
“It was . . . yes.”
“Do you want me to rub your neck?”
“All right.”

Your hands were cold.
“I’m sorry you had another dream,” you said.
“They seem so real,” I said.
“I’m sure you’ll be better soon.”
“I don’t know.”
“I do. It won’t last much longer.” Your hands
were colder. “It could,” I said.
“It won’t,” you said
softly, “it
won’t.”

William Sayres

FOUR POEMS

Schoolhouse Bell

She stood on the cropped hill, wind
flattening skirt against pelvis, tassels
or corn breaking around her shoulders
like firecrackers.

She scraped the bell against the tough
gingham of her thigh, waiting.
She rubbed her hard thumb on the swollen
handle, soft wood of her dreams,
trunks that open like legs haired
with corn-silk. Clapper's bold tongue
up the bronze skirt. Her eyes scan
the hill sloping like a bell, chopped
by molars and matted by hooves. The school
crowns the top like a nipple. The school
marm ticks like a time bomb.

Children sidle from a thicket like Indians.
The bell hangs in her hand, heavy
as a hatchet. They angle up the homespun hill,
boys with hair amber as squash-blossom
jelly, boys with muscle fine
as string, boys with history pressing them
into the moon's soft dust.

Pressing her back against the wall
of corn beside the door, and sun
flowers spitting their teeth, her spine
kernel for kernel fitting the golden frame.

The last child ascends past
her sharp stare like a woodpecker's drill
with a light behind it; the last shoe

clips the hollow sill, seats
fill like a quilt's pattern behind
her sprigged back.
It is then her boots,
laced like an insect's abdomen,
straddle a space not large enough
for a man, not small enough for a hand,
but implying a whole time to come,
and she swings her bell in the yellow place,
shaking it like a cat for all the nights,
rattling it like a coffin for all the days,
ramming it up like a bronze nail
into God's dead skirt, inserting it
like a long oar into the river of corn,
to get out, to change, to move, to risk anything
for a different world.

The air is broken like brittle by her vibrations,
the hill cracks. No chemical
up her nose, and no bayonet
up her ass, our sister rings
the twentieth century
in.

Gotham Book Mart

The poet with
the thick black eyebrows
opens her letter
at the cash register.

Pause.

Puts it away
with a shrug (or raised
thick black eyebrows):
"A fan letter."

Outside
the bus full
of Hasidic Jews
starts up.
All day, they've been cutting diamonds
snip snip
shearing them like cloth
with bright circumcised shears cut
to the very edge of the red line.

The white crystal of identity
rubs off its ice points,
rubs gabardine shoulders with those
others strung like rosary beads
along the whore street painted
in red neon like lips.

With curls like 1850 dance hall
girls, and caps like a shiny black
moon, these jewel slicers are safe
behind leaded panes, like a barred
prison bus, yellow as an arm
band. Oh their lips are pink as the poet's
nipple, and their white cheeks
pale as her breast. Their dark garb
black as her eyebrows heavy with doom.

But the fan letter was not from them.
Nor does she glance at them as she whirls
in camel cape back to the poetry
section. For poets
only. For fans
only. For women
only. For Jews
not to touch the wheel, they're borne
off on soft rubber with their fine
fingers remembering blinding steel
as sharp as the poet's eye.

The Mystery of Women's Beauty

My body is made of bone, her body
is made of mystery.
There it is,
in the dressing room
in a French lace bra,
the thighs no less
like good yeast dough than my own, the belly
wrinkled after her baby.
But the skin is soft as chamois, pale
brown as chamois, the hair light,
the light around the body pink
as the glow from a Holy Mary candle.
The hot space around her body
holds it, protects it, shields it from
my eyes made of bone.

My body made of directions of bone,
energy, force, focus, flow.
It fits in the envelope of air
like a long letter
to a close friend
who is far away. The space stands
exact to it, tight, without leaning.
There is no aura. There is no giving
way of the area. There is no
smoke of mystery clinging to my body
like Isadora Duncan's long
gauze veil to eternity.

I watch the women move in red
velvet, in blue feathers, in yolk-
yellow lace. I move only
in black and white
like silent film.
I move in pearls and death, I move

in soaking trees up to the waist
in snow, I move with the bone moon
across the mica pond.
I am the letter jet on the paper
and the white space around. I am
the time it takes for black to come
and make a quick stroke on the page.

I tore out of the caul of color,
ripped the seraglio mesh of burnt
sienna, puce, dangling gold,
and lifted my wet
head out.

I thought no one could get out
of the execution hood of beauty
without leaving her color behind.
Scraped off
like blood by the clinging
nylon mask. But now I see women
moving through beauty like water, slowly.

I see them veiled in privacy,
shrouded in privacy, deep, deep
in silent communion with the self
in her soft nets like a sunset's passage.
Perhaps
not
strangled by beauty,
the tongue not
popped out blue
by the pressure of passive beauty on the throat.
Perhaps moving on slippered paths
unknown to my bone feet.

For I
am the black mole herself and the white
hole of light at the end of the passage.
I am the white velvet face

of the clock, and the dark, rigid hands
held up to cover the face. I am
a living journey away from beauty.
I head for saying everything.

Transcendental Snow

The book lifts her cream page
like a child's cheek for a kiss.
The snow offers herself as a breast
to tiny prints of hands. I am looking.
I am looking for my feeling in the membrane black
river. I am looking for the palm to hold
my feeling, in the slick dead
shine of the lights along the river.
Looking for a mirror in the yellow-grey
smoke over the city, looking
for a hand to hold in the cold slippery
leaves that print their woodcuts on the wall.

But the flowerpot tawny as Indian cheek
is ice against my face. The grand
ballroom scene of the clouds bounces
popcorn back at me off the screen.
The cold white view hangs
like a veil before my window, a water
fall before the mouth of a cave.
Inside, there are bears who either
lie with you in honey fur
or rip off your face
with one swipe.

Sharon Olds

TWO POEMS**Reina Del Mar III**

Across in Carrick
fergus the gray day
is placed like porridge
on a hob
to boil. Where she is,
by us, the air
with a willow broom
attached streaks her breast
and belly. The spittle
of light ferments,
 oh lovely,
oh her nipples, the brown dust
raises up a rubber
yeast.

 Across in Carrick
fergus the women work
the tealeaves from their sink,
sit down to situations like small
windows made invisible by a quick
and repetitious wipe,
or a potential merman made invisible
by staring at (or watch him now, a genius,
administer no presence). Where she is,
by us, subaqueous
to view, our thoughts barnacle
and bubble round her pubis.
Already, the cusps of her rib-box
catamaran
in line with thigh and hip.
Already, everything about her, is
out of sight, and we, alas,
are left, fermenting
in her wake.

At Home**1.**

Observe

a slit and peek-a-boo

for notes, tiered green and brown, how

the sum in sheer black sizzles at the bottom —

£31 - 12 - 6 -

spelled out like lace.

Her pay packet

saunters in, the same brown yet

with aerated top, no dilemma nurtures

in the pocket.

The shillings fix him up with fags,

sixpence posts a short reminder

to an emigrated son, the remainder

she ratifies herself before he blinks out

by the fire, before the pages of a cowboy book

peel back in tandem with the tiers of flame —

its core, a desert sun laid bare

far from dreary sea

and dreary city

a cowboy planes across the dune

his saddle bags and scrotum

stuffed with gold,

but even there his heart

shells out too soon.

Fuck us, Sunbeam,

calls the Moon.

2.

The radio is coughing up the six o'clock news,

and in that tiny hall the pages of a paper sneeze

at every gust of wind. In a sideboard brown

cardboard boxes hug the boots that belonged

to little Alex, fifteen years ago.

Two early boozers

shunt each other down the street
 as she claps his face with the double
 membranes of a kiss. She picks
 up the money and counts herself

lucky

not so much in her brother who scowls
 deep in her scullery, nibbling at a bannock
 bun afore he goes out
 out to catch and castigate
 a queue at the Classic
 cinema,

not letting them bury
 their two and six in petty
 lechery. God be my jury

and Michael Mc Fury.

Finger

he will the couples
 and engageds, until their rings
 rev up, indignant and fiery fanged
 as stars in their rhinestone
 settings

or his sister

who badgers him about his neatness
 and salvation while she dunks
 a kidney in vinegar, while the suet
 whets the pan and cooking is too eloquent
 he goes.

Not so much in him then
 but her man. He flocks a comment at his b-in-
 law that lands hard as a penny
 in the cloth of his collection
 cap.

Foretell, but not forestall
 John, the Bootleg Baptist, can

dictate against mandibular
and glandular, and yet tonight they'll rub
together on the bed. Wide acres
of sea arise in him

and her,

the nerves

separating, or they turn an unexpected
side and streak like steel
ribbons

of herring fry
to the touch and touch again
of those fingers jabbing
in,

mackerel snouts that herd
the harlot feelings shoaled away
in unexpected folds of skin.

Or dolphin

they hug and hump
all in one piece.

3.

But not yet the clear sky. The day and darklight
wriggling in her groin takes equal pleasure in
trams and tweed caps, a seven o'clock shift
moving en carafe as her brother passes toward
a stop marked Shankill Road,

Ballygomartin,

Ligoniel.

Trams groan at Castle Junction.

The inspectorate jump to. Trams ramping
like harmonicas. Forty workers
scaling in their dungarees;
never mind the stair, across all rail
and reason; forty workers
bracketing their bellies. Head up

or down, every one
 a hoop, a whoop of tweed,
 an oily peak
 they swipe with.
 Twenty tweed caps, now
 twenty tambourines
 as off jump inspectorate
 and gulder at the junction.

4.

All of these she greets in the snug at the Glue
 Pot, caulker, welder,
 bolter on. Menace smeared like an
 extra layer
 of grime across their faces.
 She bends one on her bosom
 with one arm while her free hand
 grapples for a pint or a word
 to empty in his ear,
 softening the native bedrock
 of his brain.

 The face
 nods, bellbuoyed as high as the wave
 in her chest; a face
 washed from the inside with the vision
 and the blood.

 He remembers
 a forgotten tide, the broken crates
 on the beach, bad
 bananas, oranges . . .
 the flavour fouling up
 the foam at her lips'
 edge, which he wipes off
 with a cuff.
 Outside the night

threads like licorice
 through the honeycombed
 streets. It is the month of March
 when the year is on the march. The doors open
 and the kids
 zing through, bawling
 "Boozer, boozer
 where's yer trousers!
 Kick the Pope!

Like all good protestants, she protests all
 churches. For her
 the children
 are prayers
 warmer than pennies in the palm
 on Sunday.
 Her kiss dips
 to the one she catches, junctured
 with a sigh of shame
 and she's putting on the tea again
 in the scullery, he
 waking to a late edition of the *Tele*.

5.

They comment on events since he fell asleep,
 or looking through the window and its deep
 well of delight, they tale the tale of Tillie tortured
 by the moon until she gathered up her spoons
 put them in her shopping bag and took them
 out of to'un

By starlight
 in a pigpen
 buried them
 no madder than her brother
 his words beneath the Classic
 steps. Their two hearts burglarized
 by love.

John, the Bootleg Baptist, whose bride
is canopied by water,
went down in 57

channel ship

Victoria.

He storms against the root
of storms, an excess weather
in the blood.

Poor John:

All his talk is of salvation
all his customers
in hell.

6.

And should a crash occur
on that corner where the queue
curls, which is better
he will say, should a crash
occur, sending the night in chrome and black
enamel
shards into the gutter, which is better — to bury
your bristles in another pint of porter — the
very cause
and prime creator of the great eclat, or beat out
then rub some red lead on the dent.
You must whip
strip, whipstrip-
licate the stormy devil from inside. He will
say, Jesus makes
and remakes. Jesus takes
those orthodoxers by their testicles
and drags them through their vestibules, trying
to find
the word
calm and small.

But the word of God
 is never spoken indoors.
 It is out in the open,
 in the fields, dozing like strawberries
 all winter under straw, at Annalong
 where he and Jenny were to live,
 or asleep in washing, bleached
 by sunlight on a hedge.
 Yet he cannot hope for them these fields,
 condemned them all
 to hell, he cannot hop
 on their salvation from the smoky canopy
 of air
 for fear
 it contradict his great despair.

7.

Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Cannot.
 Cannot, Cannot, Cannot:
 Ventricles and Aortas.
 The Four Precincts of disorder.

Cannot contradict the heat of her men;
 Cannot stop the big athletic waters
 flexing beneath the horizon of their skin
 as they tramp home, loving the shape
 of their boots and the holes
 they punch out of the air. The dray
 horses at the Queen's Bridge
 are broken from their traces.
 Harnessed in their muscles, the soul's
 tide turns for home, their inner
 light like the chimes at twelve
 at the apex of their weariness
 breaks free into all that lies around them:
 lintels, lanterns, lady's lingerie
 iron gateways

near the bus stop
where the men watch a slight rain
woven through the gutter flat,
a herring bone track
of frail tweed. The drops
like tambourines — the scallop
caps inside, jangling their threads
around the preacher.

8.

Scallop moon
and stars that grin like thorns
in the desert night where brother spirals
from the saddle, air plucking up
momentum in its thirst across the hills.
It chops
down against the grain of water,
plays land to sea,
sea to land. The hand's serrated
wing across the ebb tide
in her belly.

Moving for the po his brother
in law picks some hard skin from his toe.

Before he shuts the door, my love,
we're done,

and in that corner can you hear it
Jenny's heartbeat or the damp like a furry
bell,

ringing.

George McWhirter

TWO POEMS

For The Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Mary in your garden
mother-to-be and
frightened to find a
stranger with his wand
who kneels when
you were only there
to read a while
I love you

in all your trans-
formations

 Umbrian
landscapes or trees
no one can believe in
or the much too rich
brocade and silks
you are
beneath such praise
as naked as
I see you

perennial as a
sonnet

 where you
hold the fruit
of holy plucking
a breast released
the babe sometimes
an old man in his face

or fat or playing with
a bird
 but always
I know you
for the face
you wear is
the face we dream
to quiet us from
the worst of nightmares
or the touch of hand
that wakes us
from our sweaty sheets
in dark rooms
 to turn
away the blank gaze of
the hawk-faced god
I need you
do not shrink so
your slim hips
bowing away from
the angel's touch
 your
one hand held
as if his wand could
burn
 no matter how
you did conceive
I take you
Mary your bare breasts
firm as apples
no driven rending
in your rites

I will
be gentle in my
love and send you
now this touch
that grows white wings
throat downy with
white

my dove
that flies to you
and nestles in
your thighs

whose gift
of love will follow on
a winter's night.

The Brothers

I How could I take her
 this woman I married
 in spite of the lush black
 of her eyes
 the way on the night
of our wedding she stood
before the window fully opened
in her silk
 the one
her brothers gave her
and hanging crescent
of her breasts the lithe
fall to her hips and
tuft of hair shown
as if edged in fire

how
 could I take her when
 she turned from that light
 and came to lie with
 weeping in my bed?
 How many days I'd stood
 on corners watching her
 in the blue smock come
 to pick out fruit for
 some harsh woman
 weigh it
 into the bag
 or
 walked along to see her go
 tossing her black hair
 when she passed the dolts
 who eyed her and she stepped on
 as proudly as I
 followed her home to watch
 the small glance she
 would give as the door
 shut
 like the Father's
 slot in the booth
 upon my words
 when I would ask
 forgiveness for my need
 and she
 would be held in my head
 as I lay chasing sleep
 while sisters chattered
 through the night and cars
 spun into silence
 of the hours where only
 she and I were waiting
 for the dawn.

II And so she stood
for weeks and burned
a naked imprint of
her self on glass
and sometimes when she came
to lie unyielding
 legs firm or
her back turned like
a spilled cup
I would plead
or touch but know
the marble as if
the moon had come
too close
 and yet I thought
that kisses we had left
upon each other
on some Sunday afternoons
were signs of where
we meant to go
 and that
the ribald dancing of
her brothers drunk
to the blind accordian player's
whirl was what
we spun to also
up the shattered
stairs and peeling walls
of our town's only hotel
and then home
 where
sisters held still to hear
what we had learned
in two nights on our own
but did not know

her choked words
 and my hands that
 could not catch
 the fire or lift me
 to the place we longed
 to go.

III So they took me
 the brothers
 coming Sunday as I walked
 home from Mass
 their suits
 awry and harsh things
 in their eyes
 but
 saying nothing put me
 in the car and on the way
 to town the eldest
 head turned to the window said
 'we're going to know'
 and I
 'know what?'
 'you know'
 someone from behind
 struck my ear 'know if
 you are a man'
 and the one
 who drove laughed as if
 he'd beat the horn
 swept out to pass a truck
 and on we drove in silence
 past the swift bends
 where the olives blew
 to silver in the wind
 over the tracks and out
 toward the city rose
 with haze

'just him'
the bottle struck me
in the rib her eyes
went hard on me as if
I were the first man
and the last and all
had to be known
before the choice
 they
took her price
 we walked
back from the flames
while I was held between
the other two my arm
swung up behind
within the eldest's fist as if
he'd put my hand
upon my nape
 and when
we reached the ruins
she turned
 'what's this?'
I meant for him'
'we've come to watch
we need to know'
already dropping her clothes
elastic slapping
at her knees
 'it will
cost you more'
he grunted then unbuckled me
pulled down the layers
one by one until
the cold was mine

skin

to skin as once
 when I was twelve and
 leapt at midnight into
 the green pool by
 my uncle's farm
 to shatter the moon
 and shivering run
 blindly to my bed
 burning and stiff.

- V She made them stand away
 and when she placed her cold
 hips up to mine I
 felt her bristled hairs
 a thigh and belly's plush
 her hard mouth nibbling
 at my cheeks and then
 she stooped as if
 to drag me down
 'get on with it'
- the voice
- above us said
- and I went
- groveling down
- his foot
- against my butt
 'what is it what'
 she said and I buried
 my face in her hair of sage
 looked only once to see
 the black walls riddled
 by their gaps and bound
 in vines the moon sprung
 up beyond the arch

and then

I let her face become
 not just the one she had
 or any face I'd known
 but took it close enough
 to see the eyes
 as glistening pools
 the lips as dark ways
 into the touch of tongue
 and when she groaned I heard
 the trampling of their feet
 saw even their legs
 stamp restlessly nearby
 and whinnies as I thrust until
 my own voice joined
 theirs

 raucous
 as a crow.

VI We drank three bottles
 coming home and sang
 as if the thievery they'd done
 in taking her

 each one
 for the price of me
 was brave and bold
 and when we drove up
 to the square already the sun
 was turning things to heft
 the water from the fountain
 liquid steel 'go on'

 the eldest
 slapped my back 'just
 take her where she
 lies and have ten sons'
 and as I staggered
 through the door

the stairs
above a sudden reel
toward the walls
and heard
the choking car spit off
my heart and boots a thumping
on each floor

I knew
my body always followed where
they went and stumbled
underneath some bridge
or bench to lie
like trolls until the sun
cried out

but she
was waiting by the window
naked clear as
the coldest spring in rock
and when I'd shucked
my clothes to pull her
down she watched me
like the mirror on
the wall.

VII And if I broke
that glass into ten
pieces and years cannot
regather her resistance
still I burn her image
to the ground

and rise
to feel her turn soft
as the clay.

T. Alan Broughton

TWO POEMS**To Diana**

Into the horizon's slow wave the huge, red sun
is sinking.
Soon the leaves are falling like a dark snow
around us
and the wind lies along the beach pressing
against a swollen tide.
We sit together high on the throne of an ancient
feeling.
At the rim of our hearing, Leonidas' body falls
at Thermopylae.
Archimedes opens his mouth to shout,
a breeze rustles the sails off Aulis, and always
the great barrier reef is rising, pushing the
ocean aside.
A fire-fly in the distance, Krakatoa opens a
red eye.
Over broken Sausalito the waters close easily.
Frozen among the ascending air bubbles
numberless as prayers or dreams,
San Francisco's blinded streetlamps hang like
pearls.
It is a very quiet moment.
All the silly kings that ever live
will mean to say what I will say to you.

The Grandfather Clock

The damned thing would not budge for love or money.

"God," I prayed, "Make room for me among these men,"

and Uncle Jack and Buck and I leaned into it, rocked it back and forth, and began to walk it like a baby towards the stair.

Then step by step spiraling down between the wall and the smooth, unyielding bannister,

we labored the dead weight over the crying oak floor boards,

leaned back and eased it foot first through the door-frame,

up the ramp and into the truck where we tied blankets around it and roped it secure.

The red mark was growing where the mahogany body

had caught my hand against the door-jamb and the bruise would darken, but I had not called out.

The wind arose and whirled a few brown leaves across the lawn

touching down the twister three separate times, Grandma shivered and turned towards the house, Uncle Jack bent over and put his arm around her shoulders,

Buck said it was a miracle the glass cabinet hadn't cracked

and he didn't see how the hell anyone had got it up there in

the first place. He whispered there would be a cool one for my thirst.

That evening, I guess Buck and I talked about
everything
in the world, how the old man's liver-spotted
fingers polished
the brass numbers and affixed them to the
clock's blank face
at perfect intervals, how he would read his books
till Grandma went to bed without him Saturday
and snore in church, but wanted me to be a
preacher,
on and on, so it was nearly midnight when I
felt the cold grass
reach between my toes and saw for the first
time the gnarled roots
of the old man's favorite elm still struggling to
hold firm
in the earth where Grandpa used to stand and
point
to the distant stars whose names he knew, then
recite to me
the story of each god and hero in the
constellations
cradled by the slim, bare branches above us
black in outline
against the heavens like rich veins of anthracite
deep in the most dim and difficult of mines,
dreams of fire and diamonds burning in the
darkness.

Jonathan Katz

GREEN

El barco sobre la mar
y el caballo en la montaña.
—Lorca

I could fall in love again like a woodchuck
with the girl belted closely with shadow.
She lies like rain on sumac.

The animals have come awake in the meadows,
there are no angels but the wind
and I have died into my body again.

The green lady flits into my tree.
We are fitted
in a hundred seasonal rings,
know nothing
for centuries yet.

I would be green, a stalk between forest and
meadow.

I would be a man again

David Lyon

Owl

Owl the third night
I hear you
your womanly voice
 I realize
how well I could
imitate you
 how strangely
natural
it is for me to sound
like you My eyes
closed Your voice seems
infinitely yielding
 I who have no
talent
 for rendering
any voices
 bird or human
living or
dead
 I who have never
been so tempted. Womanly and/
or foreign
I do not know what I sound like,
Owl it is then that you sound lost
and I wish
one of us
would stop

Wong May

FIELD IN VERMONT

I'm lucky with Vermont
long lovely state where I live
four months each year

The house is wood half old half added on
the kitchen pointing south and east to
dawn to droll pink fawns And once
a young coyote racing the forest
where Veerys sing after dark

From windows in the big room
daylilies sprawl waving like
young girls orange with love
When night blacks the windows
I'm uneasy till I press my nose
to the pane find the shape of
clouds constellations and
one more mean light in the valley

The bedroom looks west to
sunset and other miracles:
two apple trees a mountain ash

At 3 a.m. cows' sad eyes
stare through the toilet window
scaring me dry "Go 'way!" Their
great sweet heads turn and return to
hear me shout at them again
Hooves plow into the lawn

In August after black flies and early rains
after comings and goings of too many friends
I seek a sorrel pad in the field and
hide myself in the open

Estelle Leontief