

CONTENTS

1	Hunt Hawkins	<i>Jean-Paul Sartre in the Bathtub</i>
2	Sally McCluskey	<i>The Curious Cognizant Fish</i>
3	Leo Romero	<i>Two Poems</i>
6	Shaun Farragher	<i>Narratives of New Netherland</i>
14	Paula Rankin	<i>Two Poems</i>
16	Alan Perlis	<i>Alabama is a State of Mind</i>
17	Christopher Clausen	<i>Transformations</i>
20	Aileen Grumbach	<i>Dolphins at the Toll</i>
22	Suzanne Gross	<i>Two Poems</i>
28	Philip Pierson	<i>Getting the Goat Fixed</i>
29	David Graham	<i>Census</i>
30	Sydney Lea	<i>Two Poems</i>
33	Robert Litz	<i>The UUA Minister of Leominster</i>
34	Ronald Wallace	<i>Two Poems</i>
36		<i>Books in Brief</i>

Cover Design: Leo Romero

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE IN THE BATHTUB

"I took this bath consciously,
excluding all alternatives,
and knowing full well
that no one else
could take it for me."

Sartre turns the spigot for more hot water.

"The tub, though, does not care
who uses it. It was made
for anyone."

Sartre reaches for the soap.

"Even so, I do not become related
with the others who might have
used it. The tub denies
my individuality without
putting me in community."

Sartre washes his legs.

"The act of bathing, however,
is my own. Therefore I regain
myself in an indifferent tub."

Sartre gets out of the tub and
dries himself, happy for being
Sartre again after
a difficult bath.

Hunt Hawkins

THE CURIOUS COGNIZANT FISH

knew what his own cold skin
and colder hunger told him.

Patterns of sunlight
fell to his target eyes;
focussed bugs to his mouth.

Air was a dry ceiling
you could punch
and fly through, coming home
with meat in your mouth.

Earth was the floor
and fouled the river at flood time,
sending him to sulks
half as deep as death
and almost as blind.

Still, it was a soft floor
for belly resting, and hid
tidbits for him.

Floor and ceiling, fine
but you lived
in the room between,
which fit you like skin,
only swifter.

Fire, he could not imagine.

But the idea of God
the day a hook hauled
him up by his lip
toward burning,
struck him
swift as an arrow.

TWO POEMS

End of the Columbus Day Weekend

It began in the mountains
coming down a winding
canyon road, ten miles
at a snail's pace, elk hunters
in front of me and behind me
everyone wanting to pass
and dusk growing thicker
Two hundred and fifty miles
to reach home and work
the next morning, and two
hundred of those miles
across the darkening plains
Traveling nonstop
until Santa Rosa, getting nothing
on the radio but Christian stations
and static, and cussing people
who won't dim their lights
And it all seems so unreal
Lights seen far ahead
rising and disappearing
growing brighter, like balls
of fire, a dance of witches
And I drive carefully
wary of what the car lights
may suddenly reveal, that creature
half man half coyote
causing cars to swerve
off the road without warning
And all the darkness of the plains
makes me think of death and love
And I think I sense a little

of the fear my grandmother
must have felt when she died
Letting go, and drifting in the dark
and yet it's as if she were calling
No, no, calling to me, no
not this way, and she is talking to me
communicating her fear which
she must share with someone
and these two months since she died
and never really was dead,
because I didn't share it with her
didn't die a little with her
And when she was dying
they had to tie her to the hospital bed
because she kept wanting to leave it
And when she was dying
she kept saying in Spanish
get these witches from me
Tonight is as unreal as her death
A bright light in the rear view mirror
tries to hypnotize me
and a police car without lights
glides by my side and disappears
unconcerned that I am doing eighty
And the restaurant where
I stop to eat in Santa Rosa
is nothing but a fake front
And the waitress who takes my order
doesn't return, and the gas station
where I stop at the end of town
is attended by a young girl
watching television,
indifferent to me or my money
And all the way to Clovis
I count the dark spots on the highway
that once were rabbits
And I think of love, how frightening,
like the death of all these rabbits

I think of the dark side of love
and how its pain can seem
as endless as the darkness of the plains
And how terrible it is to be caught
by love, a love like the one
these rabbits knew, a love
that demands everything, a quick
burst of light and a speeding wheel,
how terrible is the darkest side
of love, that will not let you go

A Broken Turtle

Slower than anything
is the turtle, or so
you are tempted to think
seeing it march ludicrously
and suicidally across the highway
when it has miles upon miles
of plains over which to wander
You grow to recognize it quickly
a lump on the road ahead
like a stone or a clod of mud
and you try not to run over it
remembering others on their backs
or with shell broken
and a liquid staining the asphalt
They don't scream, turtles
or leastways we have never heard them
Some of them die slowly, surely
Draw their heads into their shells
and wait, while high overhead
the huge birds of the vast plains
gather, and the traffic never slackens

Leo Romero

**NARRATIVES OF NEW NETHERLAND—
FROM THE JOURNALS OF JOHN COLMAN,
MATE ON THE DUTCH SHIP, LITTLE FOX,
MURDERED BY HIS CREW IN 1611**

1611

We sailed from Amsterdam in April
climbed out from the weather,
hung skulls from the yardarm,
dragged witches to starmaps under keel

SHIP LOG, December 6, 1611

John Colman with four men sent to sound the river four leagues from us. The night came on and it began to snow. It grew so dark that those sent out to search the shallow shore could not find the ship that night. They labored with their oares and as they came back they were set upon by two canoes, the one having twelve, the other fourteen men. One man, John Colman, slain, with an arrow in his throat.

JOHN COLMAN'S JOURNAL: 1611-1620

December 1611

The flood came.

We entered the North river channel in morning,
rode still. The snow full. We hugged to the rocks,
and the bared cliffs in half-sun shone silver green

I was shot
when I stood at the cliff
overhung with oak,
a second of laughter.
I was left for dead,
dropping with round shot in my thigh
between the cliff and the river

I woke in the snow,
my leg bent under my back,
my fall broken by oak.
I froze, washed with blood.
Brown leaves in mottled ice
shuffled under thighs,
snow mist in light,
I felt murder

Pulled into grey-red rocks,
inside the ragged cliffs,
faces in a portrait

I ran in dream with wife in Leyden

My child nine,
punches dirt with sword like sticks,
squats in the mud
pulls pebbles from sea shells,
lifts them gently to the decks of leaf boats,
plunging into gutter seas

THE SECOND DAY

The savages told how I lunged at their hearts.
My face puffed red, lips blue.
Like a mad dog I was rolled on a litter,
bound with hide, lifted to the cliff face above

My boots struck the rock
I spun like glass stuck in the sun

I was left by my crew.
My fall broken.
Brown eyed savage held me like a lover:
his eyes left me feared and broken

At their camp
I was given a woman to watch my heart.
She fed me meat chewed soft,
placed inside my mouth in a kiss.
Her string black hair, well oiled
the perfume of bear's fat.
Her milk fingers wet my lips
I drank from her breast.
My teeth scratched her nipple,
until her mouth opened
not breathing till I sucked.
Her soft belly held me till I slept

WINTER 1613

For three winters I have watched
for ships to shake out of the rain,
to clip waves like brown stumps.
I lift the sky, pull death
from the red cliff eye

Oared boats spill on ice
Holes boots cut in mud dry into lace like snow.
My blood eye follows sails raised,
and the ship I lift like a bird has fled

SUMMER 1615

This winter I am wed to Ska Nee,
these years I have learned from her tongue,
my name, he who is three legged wolf

I am frozen in circles of brown skulls,
given the long pipe.
I drop cured eel in corn earth,
I shake at the yellow circle of the dead moon
In the round hoop my ship curls in and out at the
flood

SPRING 1616, ON THE WALLS OF THE CAVE

Each spring I speak my legend with long pipes,
brown girls beat my wounds to sting the vision deeper

I saw it first in the lines of fire on the cave,
in the spread coals, in cylinders of red and silver.
I mark it in an invisible hand,
in the haze from another sun,
I hold it with the cracked spy glass to the planets,
I ride the sun's skin in sparks
My skull inside is a city,
some living metal—
It runs as fast as light bent to elm.
The coal crack of burnt stone,
acid yellow smoke inside a musket.
I walk on iron walls,
smoldering boxes,
wagons which move without ox or horse.

Rectangular roots,
thousands of windows,
shining slippery eyes that glitter red.
I am not able to keep this phantom in the fire.
It curls in and out at the sinking edge of water.
I cannot drown the city.

I cut the drogue line tied to the helm,
 break the fingers of a red giant star
 that dangles from blue eyed sails.
 All this web is spat from the sermon
 writ on gold, stuffed inside jeweled skulls

I am shot.
 I hold the keel of their ships
 as they pass into my skin.
 I seize the ship master's sword
 and like a warlock
 I hurl down at top of oaks,
 slip my tongue backward,
 I hold tight to her whom I call, *Brown Owl*, Ska Nee,
 to a fire spread into cylinders of red and silver

Spent I dig at white water river
 cruise the tall stones,
 scream at wagon lights in a curdling blood-eye sunrise.
 I slip into death's waxen chrysalis,
 in the glass coffins with the red stained windows.
 My ship with furled sails runs still at the flood.

SUMMER, 1620

Nine winters,
 Ska Nee with fourth child—
 I am hunter our people call *Three Legged Wolf*
 I have tracked my white skin
 in the deer bleeding from its nose

In the hunt
 my blood eye
 sees the hammer,
 the snake,
 the shot
 clap,
 and the metal
 grabs in bone . . .

The deer falls
and the arrow
I let from the bow breaks

How the shot strikes
I feel like the heron smacked by wave curl—
a one legged pigeon in the crease of snow

I sleep in the lap of the oak
a shadow with the drifting curl of the sun through
seasons

And the dead deer,
feet high
curves along my back

My ship passes into my skull
I do not curse the murder

Winter has left its skin open—
green windows drawn in brown ice

FROM THE DAILY LOG, FORT ORANGE

September 12, 1621, Thursday

The morning is misty until sunrise, fair and stinging hot. Four men including Simon Nooms and Jonas Witsen were set upon by savages three leagues from the Fort. The savages dropped from a cliff killing Simon Nooms with a knife in his heart. Jonas Witsen, Master of the yacht Restless, was also slain. Six savages were killed with muskets and four were taken captive. The rest fled deep into the woods.

It is hard to write that one of the captured savages wounded by H. Christensen is an Englishman, John Colman, lost in these parts. Mr. Colman is sorely wounded. We darstnot expect him to live. Taken with John Colman, a boy about seven years who claims this white man as his own, and a native woman with child who claims John Colman like the boy. She is most comely, dressed loosely in skins, tall with soft eyes.

September 13, 1621, Friday

John Colman was taken in the night by savages and brought God knows where to his death.

FROM JOHN COLMAN'S JOURNAL:

Late Summer, 1621

Soldiers in ships with grey sails
 feed their life to the beach
 Muskets chatter in blood on the water's skin.
 I hold my eye to the moon fed knife,
 lunge from the lip of the cliff,
 cut the gob's neck,
 plunged in blood I am shot blind.

I remember how naked I ran last summer
 with child and Ska Nee,
 how rubbed with bear's grease
 I swam in the river to the next one
 where Ska Nee was taken in heat
 when her thighs tremble

I did not wait for the Little Fox death,
 I was left by my crew.
 I shut my eyes hard, reach the curl in the light
 from where I rise in Little Fox sails,

leave the river,
wedged between the spars,
I watch the yellow smoke,
rectangular blocked wilderness

Little Fox, Dutch ship,
through a glass
brushed on the tangled line
hangs still

I am lifted by Ska Nee and her brother,
told I am sacred,
I spin like glass stuck in the sun.
I am fed meat chewed soft,
placed inside my mouth in a kiss

I am healed after killing the red eye gob

Again I watch for the last time my death leave
I feel the stone shot cut into bone

My ship's sails raised over blood
I pull from a vision
like a blinded bird followed home in spring.

Shaun Farragher

TWO POEMS

Foundry Poem: For All Children Burned Alive

It is Friday, the day for fish
and mold-pouring: I can still see the men
peeling waxed paper from trout, unrolling
tin from sardines, waiting for ovens
to finish their work
so that something might come
of melted iron: wheels, anvils,
spikes for keeping trains
forever on their tracks.

My grandfather once turned his smoked face
to me and explained smelting, how all boiled down
to ore and slag, how sand learned
not to shift when pressed far from wind into casts.
He did not say how he used the same process
for raising his children, their skins on fire
not for his Lord but from their own core.
The furnace was no metaphor, but the backslider's real
foundry, its latch loose enough for a child to open,
loose enough to open on its own
the way it opens on me
again and again without warning.

I stand in my grandfather's abandoned ironworks,
pretending I can question his hard, fixed visions
of evil and good, his dark saints coagulating
in molds men crush their bones on.
I stand here unable to swallow
slag eating the roof off my mouth,
fearing I might prove the body's flexibility,
its knack for being melted and reshaped
into ash, bone chips, cables of my brain
where despite all I can do
I feel arteries hardening
like iron coming into its own.

Two Poems for the Blood

All night the corpuscles hum to each other

Remember, as a child, the circle
of bones, vital organs, primeval caves
you sat in with a needle poised
chanting rhythmically the rites of passage
for pricking blood from the finger,
from body to body, each cell an aria
feeding the need for closest kin —
attempting harmony, low notes flushed with descant.

Where are they now, those other faces

All night the corpuscles hum to each other
serious with allegiances sworn till doomsday,
of bones, vital organs, primeval caves,
gone off to trace their own pulse:
chanting rhythmically the rites of passage
does a molecule of yours still travel with them
from body to body, each cell an aria
passing down to their children, a minute's mingling
attempting harmony, low notes flushed with descant —
of blood taking hold like a spot on the lung,

All night the corpuscles hum to each other
showing up only in an X-ray of memory,
of bones, vital organs, primeval caves
vials on hospital shelves,
chanting rhythmically the rites of passage
eyes burning from dark sockets with recognition
from body to body, each cell an aria
attempting harmony, low notes flushed with descant.

Paula Rankin

ALABAMA IS A STATE OF MIND

It's man against the ants:
the fattest termites north of Nogales,
oily and stuffed as bulls,
gobbing tunnels in the piling of our houses
intricate as veins and spacious as a Roman bath.
Listen in the warm night
when the honeysuckle throbs its scent away!
You can hear Alabama boring and chewing
in thoracic monotone
across the Appalachians.
And when the luna moths,
teased by false light,
beat their viola wings
insanely on our windows,
lovers and fanatics leap from cliffs;
cars, their radios seeping o promise me
into the night
plunge headlong together,
fireball down Red Mountain gap.

At 1:00 a.m. a phone rings;
a light sprays through the woods;
a voice whines its irrelevant confessions
through a torpid room:
"I only wanted to hear another voice,"
it says. "Speak to me. Invent a dream."
The line clicks shut;
the light pinpoints away;
junebugs fall from the windows
whir their life away upon their backs.

Alabama is a crosseyed child
mooning in upon itself,
growing slowly mad on its own fecundity.
Wisteria grows so thick on trees
it chokes them, then it burns away itself

to tissue skeletons in raw May sun;
fire ants pare carcasses to bone,
then flute the bones
and spool a sinister chorus all night long.
Everyone dreams of falling off the world,
falling away, wriggling from her mandible grip
to sleep, simply to sleep.

Alan Perlis

TRANSFORMATIONS

For Quentin Gehle

In the book I am reading myself to sleep with,
an earnest child is looking at a picture
from an old issue of *Life* magazine.
In the picture (or is it at this stage
an *eigenlicht*?) a woman is eating a boiled egg.
Seated at the dining table of her tiny white house
(the roof is barely above her head),
she wears a long faded dress.
It is summer; her legs (I can see them
under the long loose skirt) are bare, her feet
rest half out of house-slippers worn through at the heels.
She yawns.

Outside, ammunition trucks rumble by
endlessly, as if a war were about to take place.
Personnel carriers, jeeps, tanks, half-tracks
pass before the door day and night without cease.
The woman removes bits of shell from her egg
and yawns again.

The General passes in his golden
staff car, a gift of the grateful nation;
white-uniformed, he stands behind the front seats
(the rear seat having been removed) and waves rigidly.
No one is looking—no one is there at all, in fact;
all the vehicles seem to be driving themselves.
By the road there are deep gullies full of rubbish
where soapy water stands; the weak sun catches
drops of oil in it and makes them glitter
like the body of a dead snake. The fat General
removes his white cap, revealing
false yellow hair (a gift from his dead
mistress) that threatens to fly away
in the wind, and stiffly
bows to the shining debris.

The woman finishes her egg
and, tired of the rumbling traffic,
takes a book from the stack in the living room (the house
is so small she can almost reach it without standing up)
and withdraws to the back steps.
Here, spreading her legs wide, she sits and reads
of a young poet living in a garret high above London.
Beer wagons thunder over the cobblestones below;
he does not hear them, he is writing
ballads and elegies in an archaic language.
Alas, thin silent creditors
are climbing up on narrow webs from the street below,
ascending to the garret. They find the poet in satin
breeches
spread out upon the bed below his garret window,
the early sun shining upon him, dead and beautiful.
They rub their hands in distress and have nothing to say.
The woman is so absorbed as she turns the pages,
she no longer hears the traffic before her house.

The child turns a page and the woman's picture is gone, is replaced by one of President Eisenhower in a rowboat and an ad for a cereal. The child, who has forgotten for the moment what time of day it is, suddenly feels hungry. He (or perhaps she; the story does not say) tiptoes down the stairs until he sees light from the windows and remembers that his parents have gone to lay flowers on the grave of his mother's brother. It is Memorial Day. The house is utterly still, the long suburban street empty of life. He lays the magazine on top of a stack behind the record player, goes into the kitchen, and after short hesitation solemnly fixes himself an egg.

I turn a page, and the child is gone; only an after-image lingers a moment on the eyelids and is gone. I yawn; the book is falling from my hand. Only the sound of trucks on a distant highway disturbs the night emptiness. The book is falling from my hands. With difficulty I place it on a stack beside the bed lamp. My uniforms hang in the closet unseen; absence seeps down from the ceiling like drops from a leaky faucet.

I reach to turn the light out and suddenly my arm ceases to exist. My legs too have gone, the shell of the room, my eyes themselves; it is darker than I can ever remember it being. Outside, someone finishes reading and prepares to turn a page.

Christopher Clausen

DOLPHINS AT THE TOLL

I surface alone, push out
the vent for a gulp
of the wrong night air
on the dark side
of the tunnel.

Where are my points
of navigation? Gravestones
hide in reefs
along the midnight-blue
road. Cemetary winds
break over the back
of the fat toll taker,
drift in ashes to his mouth.
He sweats alone in there
says thank you too loud
touches my hand too long
giving me change.

“Mister,” I want to tell him,
“I hear the high distress
whistle of shoal water dolphins
coming up the Carolina coast
into the harbor
along the shallows
of this river.
The tunnel is shaking
with sound, dolphins calling,
and they always come
to hold the sick ones up
for surface breath.
You don’t have to die
tossed up on this dry shingle.

Give off the faintest signal
and they'll pick it up
along the river edge
then come floating past
to keep you company
each one moist
against your hand
rubbing against your hand
for pleasure. You'll let them
through free and say "Thank you,
thank you, thank you."

Riding away on the night
tide, I see him still,
as the graves move
to the road
in waves dense with bone
and ocean fossil:
anemone, the cartilage
of fish. We are beached
together, he and I,
on the soft shoulder
of the road, and we live
gingerly, in hope
of a rescue by sea.

Aileen Grumbach

TWO POEMS

Crows

Little gray water,
the little green water,
the barm of the summer foams over it;
hickory-whiskered rocky round hills,
pied cows in the velvet,
and crows at the cornfields
bright by the green clashing of blades,
crying a slow and a long battle
evening and morning over my head:
weren't they ever calling me
before I knew their name,
or the name of the water itself.

Amn't I hearing the clans of them talk
in the graveyards till dark,
with the sun going down and the little new moon
healing the wounds of the sky,
pine-trees and pin-oaks shaken with crows,
and they telling the stories
they have after Gormflaith and Grainne,
King Harold, King Brian,
and Sigurd and Suibhne and people like them.
and women that made me,
isn't there crows in it.

Haven't I seen them footing the trees
at the killing-ground over the road,
hunching their backs up and creaking,
sticking their necks out and waiting
for women and waiting for men to pass by.
Haven't they learned how to live
on a corpse of a cat

or a porridge of breadcrust and squirrels,
and they knowing a sword from a shotgun.
Isn't the Morigu ever a one of them,
the way she's turned into myself,
and she's the man for me.

Don't the cheeky flat know-it-all
faces of owls drive them crazy,
for the knowing that seems
and the knowing that is,
aren't they ever at war in a man
or a woman, at war in the heart of the woods,
isn't there ever the worm
going in at the core of the world.

Don't they ever cry out
with the worst of the weather,
bending the bows of their wings
to shoot themselves into it;
or a crow of them tilt
with a hand opened up to the sky
and a hand opened up to the ground,
the wild dark twist of him
spinning easy down the air,
the way he'd uncork all the wine in the wind.

Little green water,
the little gray water
of Canada, heron, and hawk—
brown-eye owl in winter's mist—
king's swan flying wild down the snow—
lady of the northern isles
sewing up the bird to be
the battle-banner Storm-Crow
the way he'd be taking the kingdoms
into his foot and the black beak of him,
crows are the man for me.

Amn't I seeing them ever
open the bones of them over the wind,
making tunes with it under their arms,
giving it shapes of their hands,
the beady bright eyes to them
breaking out brass from the sun.
Don't they lie down on it belly and breast
like a boy on a bride or a boat on the sea,
and let it ever take them
away where they're caring to go.

Corgenn's Song Over Aedh

Myself the great man of the west
am at dying this day
for the wound that I gave you, young Aedh,
for I'm finding the stone
that'll cover you up
from your heel to the crown of your hair,
and it's broken my heart
to be making this hole
at the hip of the hill for you, Aedh,
and laying this stone
like the hearth of your hall on you, Aedh,
the way I won't live after this.

Would you ever get up
and come fighting me, man,
the way I would love you
or kill you forever,
that's carried you over

this stone-growing land
from the shores of the river there
north to the banks of the sea;
but you're lying down under your stone
with the smirking of death
on your mouth and the mock
of your eyes going in at me still.

Who's kings or who's gods
that they're keeping their blond bloody hands
clean of my killing till this,
and I cutting ever a son of them off
by the high hand I had to me then.
Isn't it them ever doing me favors
that's letting the lonely red life out of me.

For the way of it is I could live
till I'd put you away.
I'd steal as I never could hunt,
and begging beneath me as low as I was,
and it's better they'd fear me
or hate me than laugh.
I'd fight them that came at us off
with my cunning and curse,
and I swinging the cloak
of your body around me:
I could live,
and it bleeding the man from me
only to hold you.
The way of it is I could live,
though I went as a cripple,
and you were the hunch on my back.

Well, and it's well with me, Aedh,
for I couldn't go back,
with king god and the lot of them

glad to grin down on me
out of their stiff yellow beards;
nor I couldn't go on,
with your teeth to my neck
and your arms hanging down by my side
and the heart in you still at my back.
It's the long, long walk we've gone, Aedh,
and I'm used to the weight of you, Aedh,
the way I would never walk straight after this,
were you over my back
like a stag bleeding over a horse,
nor now that you're into the ground.

For it's long I've lain down with you
over my breast like a stone,
and forgotten the woman,
my wife that I killed you about.
It's long I've gone waking the nights
with you in the two of my arms,
with your feet at my feet
and your hair growing over my skull,
the way I won't ever
get over the shape and the smell
and the touch of you still
in my fingers and face.
And it's long since I've looked in the sky
as I rested or trudged
with you saddled onto my back,
long that your eyes
haven't glared between me and the moon.

If I've been the death of you, Aedh,
it's you've been the death of me too.
If ever I've killed you,
you went with a shout
in the wink of a spear;
but it's long I've slogged over this world

with your death and you into my arms,
 till I'd find you a stone
 that's as great as yourself,
 to be shutting you down in your grave,
 till I'd put your two eyes
 and your mouth from my sight.

Nor there's none to sing over you, Aedh, but myself,
 nor there's no-one will sing over me
 but the crows to come stand on my throat
 and the beaks to them tear at my brain.
 They'll be getting their fill of me, Aedh,
 that can't touch a curl of your head.
 For ever I'm finding it, Aedh,
 the stone to fit over your face,
 a slab on your hips and your knees
 to be keeping your beautiful shins
 and the feet of you off,
 the long lovely hands to you
 off me forever.
 I've shut up the door
 I broke in to your heart
 the way that it's broken mine,
 and I thought I was stronger than this.

Suzanne Gross

Corrgenn didn't like the way Aedh looked at his wife one time at a feast the Dagda was giving, so he threw a spear through Aedh while he was sitting there. The Dagda decided maybe there would have been something in it at that, so he didn't kill Corrgenn nor let him be killed, but he laid it on him that he take up Aedh's body and not let it down till he should find a stone what would just cover it longways and broadways, and when he found it, he could bury Aedh and put the stone on him and be quit. Corrgenn started out from Brug na Boinne where the feast was and found the stone by Loch Foibheal where he buried Aedh. It's the thing to be making a speech or a song over a person's body if you feel strongly about it, no matter if you've killed him yourself. Burying Aedh killed Corrgenn of course.

S.G.

GETTING THE GOAT FIXED

By the time the pickup rattles back down the dirt lane it is still, somehow, dusk, though we remember distinctly you leaving at dusk, & we dress in a hurry now to meet you outside before the dust settles. First thing off you tell Helen the vet was too busy to make the slit—the son of a bitch had somebody's cow on the lamb.

Already Helen is lifting the little boy out of the cab & she spits on her fingers to mash the windy cowlick down.

I keep my eye on the moon over your half-raised barn dull as an Indianhead nickel with the letters worn off, propped just where you've nailed in a V two yellow two by fours to hold the roof off. My shoes are unlaced, shirt buttoned up wrong. But already you unbolt the tailgate, set the buck down on his legs, & as if housetrained or just in preference of natural drainage it begins to pee a stream so thick & necessary it focuses the last amber glint of sunlight—& your boy before Helen can stop him has his fly down in sympathy, member

out, & now he's peeing too. Finally as if to signify to the world

how tired you get of that trip to Holbrook & a generator on the blink half the time & a stuffed-ass vet

you pitch in too: all three of you in that last light building a dark puddle that will soak into this worked-out white-clay dirt of yours, totally, by morning.

Maybe later by dark we'll head for a film at the Century
while the buck scrambles up & down the mound over your
new septic tank, too young to want to, too old for a
chance,

& the boy sleeps in your dusty lap, dreaming of sunshine.

Philip Pierson

CENSUS

Smalltown evenings
of darkened leathermills
and glove shops.
The jackhammers are still.
Along the old train bed
boys gather at dusk
to throw gravel
at each other. No backhoes
carve holes in vacant lots.
They rise coolly into the air;
a cat in the weeds
may sniff gently
at a tire tread.
Along the shaded sidewalks
at midnight a lone couple moves
arm in arm, neither old
nor young.

David Graham

TWO POEMS**The Flowering of the Farmer's Widow**

All sag and ache and fourscore years
of second-guessing, the widow plucks
the last gold gamecock.

His horse nods under sun and pollen,
blown from the shad trees.

At least the blackflies don't come in
the house. At night, it shines with rot.

It is not emptiness she feels. It's not
as if, right off, she'll forget his teeth,
boozy on morning bacon, or the howls
and headstrength of his dogs, now gone.

And at least she need no longer chase,
or plead with, or pen, the horse.
Bobbling near, he vaguely shies
as she snaps her pot-rag.

The bugs have gnawed a welt, coin-dollar-
size. It shows the rust of autumn
oak against the bony withers ...

One saving grace the old man had,
his eye for color. In fact,
that forenoon he mumbled some drunk thing
about the eyes of rats and wrens.
Then the wind dropped down that punky elm
on him.

The sexton took two days to find
a plot among the ledges,
granite flying off his mallet,
glinting like frost.
And they buried him with his diamond pin.

But loss comes never absolute
or pure: she'll sell the corpse
of the horse for glue. To hell with him!
In mind, the hammer falls,
and she sees a flare of blood in gutters
in her mind that blooms, at eighty.

Band Concert, 1976

The bus, like a dozing monster, nods
yellow in high summer's grass
by the monument. We read its legend:
McCutcheon's Student Band.

All unchanged, they do the standards,
"Semper Fidelis," "A Grand Old Flag,"
assorted Sousas; the saxes crack
a note behind. McCutcheon beams.

The grocer dances to "Don't Fence Me In"
with a farmer's daughter. Two grim
Mormons stray among the pick-up trucks,
black volumes in their hands;

townsmen palm their beers and blush
their choked-down laughter.
Now the marching: vague hints of footwork.
And what if one day we do go under?

The kids whirl, frantic, on the seeding green.
The same plump blonde dips her baton
in kerosene. The finale flames
when she sparks her lighter.

The distant ocean blows thickly in-
to night that lies down soft on the crowd.
Moths and car-horns swim the air.
July the Fourth, and more than ever

the old folks stiffen to "The Star-spangled Banner."
Then everyone sings, "Let the Rest of the World
Go By." And rapt, at the edge of things,
McCutcheon glows in a flick of thunder.

Sydney Lea

**THE UUA MINISTER OF LEOMINSTER,
HIS VACATION JOURNAL**

July 5. Passing through Nebraska.
I have seasoned in New England much too long.
I expect the steeples of every church I pass
to be as fresh and white and stiff
as collars buttoned up to God.
But out here in the middle border
starch has muddled into sweat,
clapboards crinkle chip and old paint
blisters from the prematurely mortgaged steeples.
Bellless towers haunt these pastors
who preach as if they needed magic
to entice a maker out of such an awful sky.
(Precious bits of village green spill out
between the palisade of stores and stations
into brown and dusty-open prairie.) And the people
keep Him entertained with plain-song
before he slips back out of town like a devil
made of dust dervishing in the wake
of rigs already turned around and heading east.
I have seasoned too long in New England
and like a puritan presume that God the Father
never leaves my parish except when I do
for a summer month or two at Wellfleet
on the water or in a winnebago beating west.

Robert Litz

TWO POEMS**Moving into the Basement**

My lovely upstairs study fades
like a wildflower I didn't deserve.
The baby's got it, clutched in his small fist.
I move into the basement,
settle in the old oak chair.
Damp. The water heater hisses
its rusty warnings; the furnace sighs
and clears its throat, cuts off;
small bugs crawl slowly along the wall.
I start to write. The dark
words twist and wriggle
into what might be
cellar spiders, dung beetles, silverfish.
My hand in the shadow
of the sixty watt bulb grows dark,
furry, scurries across the page.
It's getting better now, the damp,
the dark, these lovely sandstone walls,
this cool, smooth concrete floor.
I slip off my chair, crawl over into the corner.
Somewhere above me I hear the baby's laughter
blossoming thinly through the vents.
Slowly, I make my way up the heat duct
toward it and his bed.

Fat

One fine day you wake up
too fat to walk. You can only
lie there listening to your stomach
make sounds like a zoo.
For awhile you amuse yourself
identifying animals: there's
the hippopotamus, the rhino, a pregnant
yak, a babboon, a warthog, a gnu.
Pretty soon, people start to point,
and children to laugh. You know
what you must do. You refuse
to eat. You turn your back
as they toss you their marshmallows,
popcorn, candy wrappers, peanuts.
Now, they grow angry, tear down
the fence of your belt,
and begin to eat you!
Suddenly you feel like smiling.
It serves them right, you think,
snuggling up inside them, their new
fat growing around you.

Ronald Wallace

BOOKS IN BRIEF

It's time for some statement about our reviewing policy. If there are issues without reviews, it's because poems come first, and if it means rejecting poems we care about, we sacrifice reviews. But because poetry books are reviewed so rarely and so arbitrarily, and because a poet with a new book out may prefer a review of that book to further publication, we feel a responsibility to review books by and about poets as often as we can.

One poet protests, gently: "One might ask for both more length and less rhapsodizing in the reviews." Good points, and they deserve answers. As for length, three answers: as long as the editors have full-time jobs in addition to editing the magazine, we don't have time for long reviews. Two: We have heard from publishers and poets alike that, given the problems of getting any reviews at all, they'd prefer more short reviews to fewer longer ones. And finally, we prefer to give as much space as possible to poems, our main reason for publishing.

Rhapsodizing. Yes. We do tend to rave about the poems we admire. Why not? The review copies pile in: three or four a day. We unzip them and line them up—yards and yards of them. And we read them all, eventually, even the vanity press books, on the chance that a) there may be an *Ommateum* among them, and b) we'd be sharp enough to spot it. It's rather like screening each day's pile of submissions—always looking out for the new, distinctive voice, the significant development in a familiar poet, the powerful vision. When we think we've found it, we set that volume aside against the day when we have time to write reviews.

Whom do we write the reviews for? For the poets themselves, to let them know we heard them and responded gratefully. For librarians, eager for suggestions about how best to spend their dwindling funds. For publishers, to encourage them to continue to support poets, even at a financial loss. For subscribers and purchasers and borrowers who respect our opinion and will search out the books we recommend. We know we could do more and better, but when a poet tells us that his book went into a second printing on the strength of our review, we feel that it's worth while to do even this little.

Now I have before me a pile of survivors: volumes that have increased in value with re-reading. All I am going to do is mention them briefly, rhapsodizing perhaps, but urging you to buy them, ask your library to buy them, and, if you find them good, pass the word along.

The strong books of poetry come as often from the small private presses as from the commercial houses. For example:

Linda Pastan, *On the Way to the Zoo*, Dryad Press (P.O. Box 1656, Washington, D.C. 20013), 1975, \$4.00. Hand-printed and thread-stitched, sixteen little poems, an exquisite bestiary, linking, poem by poem, the thoughtfully-observed life of the animal subjects to the inner reality of the poet. Quality is the word: quality of craftsmanship; and integrity, integrity of imagination.

Edward McCrorie, *After a Cremation*, Thorp Springs Press (2311-C Woolsey Street, Berkeley, CA 94705), 1974, \$3.00. Another small volume, but it refuses to accept the limitations of modest production. It is erupting with energy. Asian and classical powers rumble and vibrate in these volcanic poems, transforming their cool New England settings as they have since Thoreau's day. Words like *impaction*, *instars*, *bluets and blackwings*, *gaggles of slaps and slugs*, *drenching*, and *swarming* suggest the concentration of cosmic energy into stinger and plunger in these excellent poems.

Jean Pedrick, *Pride & Splendor [Stolz and Pracht]*, Alice James Books (138 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138), 1976, \$3.50. This series of interrelated poems about the poet's grandmother takes hold of the reader's imagination and engages it irreversibly. It is a documentary, dense in detail. It is a snapshot album, each poem a verbal photograph by a Tom Marotta. All together, they add up to more: to a warm portrait of the poet herself, the medium of this message, herself transformed by recording the life of a splendid woman.

Jerald Bullis, *Orion: A Poem*, The Jackpine Press (3381 Timberlake Lane, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27106), 1976, \$3.00 paper, \$5.00 cloth. The first line: "I am sitting here trying to write a book on deer hunting." The speaker is "Orion." The second line: "when I think I would rather be trying to write an excellent poem." Bullis, hunter and poet, tells truth about both arts, sharing with the reader the processes of his

imagination while he, as the poem emerges, succeeds at both. The language of this poem is less "poetic" than in earlier Bullis, and much stronger in the taut colloquial syntax that helps us to feel we have entered an interesting mind, thinking. Bullis is an important poet, and this volume is a firm step forward for him. And the Jackpine Press (A.R. Ammons, general editor) creates beautiful books, each one uniquely designed for its poems.

Among the poems from the university and commercial presses, there are some that deserve special mention.

Seamus Heaney, *North*, Oxford University Press, 1976. \$5.95. Antaeus is a dominant persona in these poems. The earth from which he draws his formidable strength is Irish earth, as deep and fertile as Irish time. The poems that penetrate the reality of the ancient bodies exhumed from the bogs draw time together into a hard knot, putting the entranced reader into contact with the rich soil that nourishes the imagination. Strong explicit work, a source of power.

Alvin Greenberg, *Metaform*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1975. \$7.00. Heaney's poems tunnel into time. Greenberg is a poet of space. In his poems, as in the best of his fiction, he creates a landscape of streets, lakes, and houses whose lives are projections of the lives of their inhabitants. The lake boils; a chef has moved into the neighborhood. "We are elephants in the country of habit." And in a marvelous poem, "Wind Songs," the whole process reverses, and the poet "swallows the wind" to legislate his own ordered universe. Although each of the poems in this volume has its own integrity and unique authority, the greatest delight for the reader is to experience the interlocking images that transform the whole into a complex orb-spider web.

Denise Levertov, *The Freeing of the Dust*, New Directions, 1975. \$2.25 paper. I found myself reading this collection over and over. If one book stands at the heart of our time, this is it. There are poems of intense personal observation and affection ("An Ancient Tree," "What She Could Not Tell Him."). There are the poems, such as "The Way It Is," of painful awareness, polemical perhaps, forcing the reader as the poet forces herself to an awareness of the injustices and atrocities we are partner to in our silences. This is poetry close

to Shelley's point, that we lack the power to imagine what we know. The most powerful poems, for me, are those in which the beloved landscape is impregnated with the guilty consciousness of the observer, so that the whole universe seems to demand that we sharpen our human senses and responsibilities.

N. Scott Momaday, *The Gourd Dancer*, Harper & Row, 1976, \$2.95 paper, \$6.95 cloth. We usually think of the poetry of our day as polarized between the incantatory music of native American and other ancient oral traditions (made accessible through Jerome Rothenberg's anthologies and a swarm of imitations) and at the other extreme the sophisticated artistry of the formal English lyric (rewarding the critic with his colored pencils and new-critical techniques). Could one possibly excell in both? Improbable as it might seem, Scott Momaday does. "The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee" and "Plainview 2" come straight up out of the oldest language of the continent. And in other poems, such as "Rainy Mountain Cemetery" and "North Dakota, North Light," we recognize the heir to the language of Keats and Hopkins and Williams. Scott Momaday is an artist at home in the world: the world of Georgia O'Keefe and Ahkmanova and Hokusai and Bo-talee. He has the vision; he has the language.

Of the great deluge of anthologies of women poets, one stands out above all the rest: *The Other Voice: Twentieth-Century Women's Poetry in Translation*, edited by Joanna Bankier, Carol Cosman, Doris Earnshaw, Joan Keefe, Dierdre Lashgari, and Kathleen Weaver, with a foreword by Adrienne Rich (of course). Norton, 1976, \$3.95 paper, \$10.00 cloth. Seventy women from 37 countries are here, including anonymous works from Chippewa, Eskimo, Boikin and other cultures. Gabriela Mistral is here, and Nellie Sachs. But most of the poets are new to me, and the poems are gloriously good. I cannot judge the translations for their accuracy, but I can judge them as poems in English. The translators (and the poets who have revised the translations) have given us poems that are a delight to read aloud: eloquent, fresh poems, piling revelation upon revelation.

Admirers of the poems of Karen Snow will want to read her first novel, *Willow*, from Street Fiction Press, 201 East Liberty, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108.