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*Cover:* Georges Rouault, "We Are Mad," intaglio, from the Beloit College Permanent Collection, Theodore Lyman Wright Fine Arts Center.

**VIEW FROM HOME**

A hill is for throwing things  
down apple cores wishing  
through woods The marrow  
bone bombs what unknown colony  
of ants? Startles what squirrel?  
And after the woodchuck carcass  
is tossed the beagle brings it  
dutifully back up.

I dream of pulling out the  
plants with just enough dirt  
on the roots to make them sail  
a volley of limp arrows bearing  
fuzzballs of sky to the low road.

First time it rains I fully  
intend to get behind this house  
and push until the clay lets go  
the joists spit out nails  
windows crack along old visions.

The downslide is all mudsucking  
ease to the hard bottom But  
what if I should mourn too soon  
the heft out of my hand  
start running alongside like  
a late and sorry commuter  
grab a bannister or post  
vault to the porch in time  
to level trees ride screaming  
and clinging all the way down?

**Sharon Sheeche Stark**

**A MEDITATION IN PERTSHIRE, SCOTLAND**

Through my sleeping bag I hear cows  
tear grass, grind teeth,  
blow pollen out their noses.  
They leave me alone. Six miles from here,  
three hundred and thirty years ago,  
an ancestor of mine was born  
to the third short marriage of a woman  
who owned nothing but a farm.  
Last century an anthropologist  
bribed a hundred of her people  
to let him measure their skulls,  
bone-lengths, dark hair, all unchanged  
since they were subjects of Canatulachma  
eighteen centuries ago.  
They still loved poetry and their land,  
suspected the anthropologist  
of unnatural motives. These  
were people hunted with dogs.  
Six of their heads bought pardon for a crime.  
Their names were changed  
by law. They fell, slowly,  
for a hundred and fifty years  
into the fogs of Rannoch, Trossachs, America.

I come out of my sleeping bag. The cows  
startle back to the fence.  
No, I'm neither dark nor small.  
I have no friends named Bliesblituth.  
I see the way a stone lies  
on the dirt or on the grass: how nearly  
I didn't exist. I see it this way:  
sleds of flowers  
are delivered to the houses of survivors. A bible  
was written in London the same year  
those women who weren't my mother  
were delivered by Caesarean, by sword,  
from their mothers into the literal snow.

The cows have never seen a human bed before.  
Grass hangs mixed with spit from their lips  
as I brush my hair. Yesterday  
I toured a castle  
whose stone looked soft as skin. Inside  
the document of genocide was displayed  
as an artifact  
by the small, dark descendant of the sword.  
His arm, thank God,  
isn't strong enough to swing it. His people too  
still love poetry and land. Those sleds of flowers—  
I mean it. Yesterday  
I paid admission to a castle  
to see my name changed: Diteadh gu bas—  
“condemned to death.” Today  
I'll walk six miles to a farm yard,  
accept lemonade  
from a woman half my size.  
The men will mow. We'll rest our backs  
against the fence and watch  
the flashing blades, the larks  
that flush up from the hay.

Susan Tichy

**TWO POEMS****Cleaning The Storm Windows**

They look like idiots,  
or the meeting of space aliens,  
gesturing in palm-out circles  
flat on the air between them.  
They crouch, bend nearer, squint,  
pointing, directing each other,  
“There, no—over there—a smear.”  
“No, that’s on your side.”  
All but nose-to-nose, they never touch.  
She grimaces, rubs. “Sorry,  
but I can see that it’s on your side,  
Honey.”  
He brings a work-lamp nearer.  
They look and wince.  
“It’s a mess all over.  
We’ll have to start again.”  
In the bright light they  
squirt and rub, stand and squat  
like off-beat mirror twins  
or actors botching a bit of mime.

“Jesus, let’s quit,” she says.  
He says he guesses it’ll do.  
They maneuver the empty square  
out of the garage, ludicrous  
and careful as a vaudeville skit.  
She says, “Mr. Bones, it ’pears to me  
that your side still could use some work.”

### How They Sleep

He: carefully.  
Aping the state of death,  
laid straight, hands on chest.  
Rigid, wary,  
he resists sleep’s prying.

She: plunges in.  
Wallows, frolics in sleep  
like chocolate. She snorts  
and chortles, dives  
deep, porpoise-cavorting.

But she floats into dreams  
where pleasure is shaped like him.  
Sparse, pure angles.  
Parsimony. Deserts.  
Freedom of flat horizons,  
space, and a calm  
clear light.

Morning. She stirs,  
surfaces, turns to him.  
He’s undone—sprawling  
in fat Sleep’s lap,  
drowned in frou-frou, breathing

Her candy breath.  
Daylight can't break his dreams  
of lacy mazes,  
velvet, ice cream,  
petalling, rosy flesh.

She wants him to wake up,  
be square again, so she can  
tease his neatness.  
She fidgets. She waits for  
the alarm to police him.  
He sleeps deeply,  
smiling.

Sarah Getty

## TWO POEMS

### A Year Later

A year later you wonder how you ever loved him.  
After all, you tell yourself, he was never more  
than a frog, not even pretending to be a prince.  
Even then, you think, even in those convulsions of love,  
you saw the telltale warts,  
the leaflick spots, the cloak of slime:

he was silent because he couldn't speak,  
motionless because he couldn't walk.  
And yes, you knew it! Yes!  
You only loved your own love, only  
feasted on your own heart, only cherished  
your own fondness for frogs!

But even as you rock and reprimand,  
rock and groan, eyes shut in shame,  
you remember the forest clearing,  
the mossy lip of the well, the way the black water  
fell to the center of the stone world,  
a shaft of ice that split the grass,

and then there were ripples, circles,  
animal honkings—*rivet, rivet*—  
and your frog leaped out of silence.  
As you sprawled on the lumpy ground, your own  
reflection grew in the pool  
where he rode like a toy boat.

You bent to kiss the water near him,  
wanting to enter his cold glisten,  
wanting to seize and wear him like a brooch,  
wanting to swallow him as if he were a measure  
of some bitter alien liqueur.

Down and down you bent,

toward the green skin, the golden eyes,  
closer than ever before  
to your own wavering face.



### The Brussels Sprouts

splotch the hillside like dried  
sea vegetables, green and yellow, stinking  
of winter, smugglers of brine.

All night

they tiptoed inland, up from the dim  
beach, past the hairy cliffedge, over  
the black toe of the mountain  
to this field. Here

they must make their stand, here  
hundreds of sprouts must swell  
along hundreds of stiff  
necks of silence.

I wander mystified among them.  
They're going to seed,  
my friend the gardener says.  
Their heads are opening!

Opening, seeding:  
the hillside is quiet as rocks.  
A mile away the sea yearns inward,  
plunges, sucks.

The sprouts yawn like arctic  
cabbages, a damp tongue of salt  
flickering  
in the pit of each green throat.

Sandra M. Gilbert

**SCUBA: SELF-CONTAINED UNDERWATER  
BREATHING APPARATUS**

Consciousness has the quality of air:  
It filters light. Water refracts light. There-

Fore, sleep has the property of water:  
A surface glass plumbed by a skin-diver

As night breaks overhead. His quick descent  
Through darker depths discovers worlds so dense

And mute that words succumb to the pressure;  
They must be lip-read to be heard. The stir

Of undercurrents brings to attention  
Strange caricatures held in suspension.

Schools of images parade like a stream  
Of waving pennants. Nightmare's submarine

Paroles, discerned by the cut of its fin.  
Time's replenished like plankton. This ocean

Of the unconscious is collective: Jung  
Said that. It breathes through a different lung.

(That's mine.) Air fulfills its limited space;  
Water's malleable: it borrows shape—

But it can be boiled into air. Thus  
The unconscious is refined to conscious—

Ness. Night's garglings clear day's monologue.  
And every morning we wake waterlogged.

John Delaney

## OCHRE

*for Frances Bendix*

This room of mine where I make my pots  
the walls are rouged with terra cotta dried rouge  
on the face of a dowager a dowager who watches me watch  
my clay become pots and cups and things like that  
which will hold things like silk daffodils or roses or  
peonies, peonies I feel the clay it is different at  
different times it is different I feel the earth  
I wet my hands and slide my fingers over the clay  
my fingers slither like an eel an eel spawning.

That dowager, the dowager she watches me quietly  
she watches me  
and I am quieted through her white thoughts Through  
her white  
thoughts they tell me to think of youth and spring  
earth fertile  
and bisque, yes, bisque fragile bisque for special times  
I thought I'd make a cup with white bisque so my  
eel fingers  
shaped it, shaped it and I added brown earth, heavy  
brown earth so my eel fingers shaped it bisque and  
brown earth  
Strong brown earth and bisque fragile I shaped them  
together to shape a cup from which to drink from which  
to drink  
white wine my cup would be brown earth and white bisque  
the two together.

and I worked and I worked for hours to bear a cup worthy  
of fine white wine a wine a wine goblet I tried to  
make while  
the dowager looked on and the large black-numbered  
clock watched  
too, two hours, two days, two weeks, what seemed  
like weeks  
I tried to decide what form my goblet would take.  
and in my denim apron I worked wiping wiping my  
moist hands  
from time to time on my soiled apron I worked and thought  
of the shape the goblet would take and then I thought  
the goblet  
should take the shape the shape of a woman a woman  
with fine  
subtle curves subtle curves but angled angled constructed  
sturdily constructed to hold to hold the fullness of  
white wine  
the cup to be held merrily by a man to be held sadly by  
a man  
to be held by a man any way he chose without the content  
without the content of my cup in danger the danger  
to spill  
forth upset to spill forth to unwillingly spill forth.  
That dowager, that wizened dowager that dowager  
looked worried  
and I was disquieted through her thoughts through  
her thoughts  
I was disquieted but worked on worked on until the sun  
of one day  
set the sun of one day set and I let my goblet sit  
alone alone  
on the wooden bench in the corner of the room and  
I looked  
at it and I looked at it and felt the dowager's uneasy stare  
her stare her troubled stare.

I dreamed I dreamed I dreamed that night of white bisque  
and sturdy brown earth and a cup filled with white wine  
and I dreamed I put that goblet that goblet into fire into  
fire to harden to harden to ready to be ready for the  
    large hand  
of any man. And I waited and I waited for the process for  
the process of strength the creation of strength for  
    the clays  
to fuse to fuse.

I dreamed I dreamed Then I dreamed the process complete  
and out of the kiln came my goblet my precious goblet  
my precious goblet.

My precious goblet was flawed it was flawed and could  
    only hold  
could only hold was able to hold only one tear drop.

And then my dowager she spoke she spoke to me kindly  
    and she told me  
she told me brown earth and bisque cannot be mixed  
    cannot be fused  
easily fused. She spoke she spoke to me about possibility  
about possibility and she touched my back softly softly a  
    kind specter  
she touched me and told me to try to keep trying to try

**Anita Mirenberg**

**TWO POEMS**

**The Chopping Block**

In its center, a stain,  
the dark core of maple—  
a knot of dried blood,  
a little twist of pain.

Here, the emperor laid his head,  
loosened his linen collar.  
Twiddling through centuries,  
the chopped thumbs of thieves.

On this bull's eye  
I put a log to split, heft  
the bright blade, hear  
the fat hen squawk.

In my darkest dreams I climb  
the hill with my son. His curls  
spill on the block. Knife raised,  
I wait in vain for God to speak.

This block is so old  
moss grows on its side.  
Look into this compass, sailor.  
Weep, for you are lost.

### The Coop

For years I couldn't eat chicken  
or eggs  
and grew sick at the thought  
of which came first.  
I knew.  
In the coop  
the red hens kicked and squawked,  
beat the low roof  
as I grabbed for their legs  
on the roost.  
I was nine,  
man enough  
to carry the chickens out,  
to lay them on the block  
for my father's ax,  
the wind of their wings  
against my legs,  
eyes like beads of blood.  
We were saving money,  
my father said,  
at his old man's farm every summer  
bringing home chickens for the freezer.  
And save we did  
since I wouldn't eat:  
the wet stench of feathers  
in the steaming buckets;  
yellow spots of fat  
on the bumped flesh;  
and in my hand  
from reaching in  
one plucked hen  
where my mother would stuff  
onions and crusts  
for Sunday dinner,

a half-formed egg.  
No shell,  
just a soft, damp sack,  
like what I felt between  
my boy's legs,  
and as warm.

Bruce Guernsey

## TWO POEMS

### How Poets Would Have Us Know Them

As we read calligraphy,  
where pressure, angle, and nib  
free beauty from sense.

As we shiver  
to the voice of a certain singer,  
always wanting more,  
nevermind the words.

As we rise  
to a lover's hand as it nears,  
though we do not know  
what the stroke this time will be—  
though the lover may be gone,  
the hand in our dreams alone.



**Sandlappers**

*“. . . were the poor farmers of the Sand Hills section of South Carolina. The name comes from the farmers' fondness for clay-rich sands which they licked to add starch to their diets.”*

Cool evenings we go in families  
to lick the earth.  
Along the beach in the dim light,  
dark clumps of kneelers,  
each group carefully apart.  
The children balk, but learn.

Once you know the hard-packed places  
safe from normal tides,  
less grit fills your mouth  
than you'd expect. You find a way  
to go on. Whenever I bow  
I think of my wife's body  
in the first years,  
how my lips and tongue lifted  
all the right tastes from her skin  
as if it were hairless and smooth.  
I never ask others their thoughts.  
One woman always cries.

Back from the shore,  
across the dunes and through the scrub,  
corn tassels flip in the wind  
while tubers swell slowly beneath.  
But in this leached state  
what the ground gives is not enough—  
we must have the ground itself, or starve.

Stephen Corey

**WHERE THE FISHERMEN STOOD IN WINTER**

Dawn back of fog and the big crewman  
reached down to sweep me up off the dock  
and wrap me in his yellow slick coat.  
The wood was thick with night rain  
and everything smelled of fish and blood.  
My dad sang with his youth  
in the deep voice of the mudbottom bay,  
in the chuff of the old boat's engine,  
in the muscles of mackerels big as sharks  
that jumped onto our triple hooks.  
We were fishing like men among men,  
with beer and Coke below deck,  
and we caught a hundred or more.

Coming home over the chop I tried  
to sleep on papers in the greasy cabin,  
but I heard them telling stories  
and laughing so loud  
the mackerel and flounder leaped  
in the bags under my bunk  
and I thought of their lidless eyes  
sick with longing for the air in the sea.

That was a warm winter, then, but the ice  
is everywhere now, curled over the road,  
broken tree limbs frozen to the ground.

Con Squires

## THE SCHOOLTEACHER THINKS OF MOVING

*It don't pay to move.*

—*Albert Harder, farmer*

What would *you* do if a revolver diced  
your wife's car window last May, so fast  
you thought it was a string of firecrackers?  
It was a man who didn't care  
if kids fell into his open cesspool,  
saying he didn't want any do-gooders  
calling the damned health department.  
Would *you* move away from the corner  
where every hot night kids holler like chained  
dogs? Their yowling won't let you sleep,  
and the neighbors never wake. This Pennsylvania  
border-town has played possum on itself  
since Booth killed Lincoln, so would *you* crawl out  
of bed, pull on pants, and march into the dark?  
The kids have nothing but dope—no teeth,  
some guns, no fathers. The mothers say,  
“Maybe the law can make him mind. I hope  
he goes to jail.” Did you know there are no  
police in towns this small? Would *you* stay?  
This is the little town we wanted  
to marry. Would *you* move away?

We have beanpoles eight feet high and three feet  
in the ground, five rows of strawberries,  
a hundred feet of raspberries, and eight  
apple trees. I've built half the house  
and rebuilt the rest. In the new bedroom  
we've laid a floor from spruce boards Amos King  
had drying in his barn for nine years. The rough  
pine siding came from a woods near Reading.  
We dried it six months. Only two boards cracked.

Our Peach Bottom slates stayed nailed to cedar  
shakes for a hundred years before we pulled them  
up and hammered them down on good wood.  
This house was caving in like a sick lung  
when we came ten years ago. The wasps  
and grackles dodged in and out like germs.

We've built fires in this house  
for fifteen hundred days. Refinished it,  
repainted it, renamed it—Old House, Old Place  
Farm House, Tenant House, the Brother's House, House-  
Across-From-the-Green-Trailer, House in Lincolnville.  
So tell us how to move. Get a Mayflower  
van and lug out the guts? Beds, books, rugs, pictures,  
wheelbarrows, hoes—out, off, and back to Massachusetts?  
What would you say to the slates you handled  
like china on a day too hot to work?  
What would your wife say to a spruce floor  
she finished nailing down just in time  
to have her second child? What would you say  
to the bean rows? No beans this year?  
We're giving up the garden and the house.  
How do we say, we're giving up the garden.  
We're giving up the house.

**Hilary Russell**

## **JULIA, FORT LAUDERDALE, EARLY**

The imaginary woman in these poems is inspired by oral histories and other documents about the real Julia Stranahan who came to Fort Lauderdale at about the turn of the century to be the town's first schoolteacher. The dates following the poems are fictional; the first refers to the time of the event, and the second to the date when she was interviewed, reflecting her memory. A single date indicates an event recorded when it occurred.

### **Thoughts While Teaching Grammar**

Coming to school this morning along the hoed path,  
holding my skirts above the green-slicked water,  
something unusual, an omen. A fat-ruffed turkey  
gobbled in my way, not crossing but standing,  
shaking his fanned tail for a mate.

When I tried to pass, he hurried ahead  
displaying again, insisting. His urgent feathers  
rattled, leading all other sound.

I stepped forward then  
and answered him, fanning my skirt fast, wrists  
vibrating like wing-stubs. His claw feet  
stepped back. He spread and shook. I ran at him,  
waving wild skirts. He broke away into palmettos.

The children are staring. I am repeating a lesson  
they had word-perfect long ago. They do not understand.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1900)

**At the Post Office**

Frank's eyes shine behind the bars. Along the fingers  
that slide my letter through, black hairs curl.  
I think of Jane's small hand, raised high and quivering  
to say  $2 + 3$  are five, now and always, of her little  
brother's fingers gripping a rebellious pencil.  
A sharp bright pain enters my chest and vanishes,  
like a fish swimming into weeds, instantly seen,  
instantly gone.

"We're glad you came," Frank says.  
"We needed you." Outside, he slings the mail off the stage  
before the horses quite stop. The driver goes in.  
I tell Frank, "Thank you," which tightens my throat  
as I meet his stare.

Nights I cannot sleep  
I walk out by the garden. Sometimes I cannot see  
where to step, so I feel each place carefully  
with my toe before I allow my foot to rest.  
Sometimes a milk moon cleans the path  
white as a bride's veil, and I set my foot  
never looking down. But then I remember  
Mary Stokes, whose John was killed  
when I was twelve. And I remember how she looked  
the morning I called unexpected at her place,  
how she ran distracted to the door,  
her long brown hair pulled from her bun.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1900)

**Imagined Family Photograph:Double Exposure**

He will stand by me, his hand resting like a bird  
on my shoulder. I will be wearing my best poplin,  
which the camera will alter from blue to black.  
The children will be there too, the girls  
in their white frocks sitting, the boys standing.  
It will be difficult to say how many children,  
because at the moment the picture happens  
they will move, dissolved at some joke  
which Frank and I either have not heard  
or must ignore. This is years from now.  
Or: Frank sits, I stand.  
There is only one child, a thin-faced girl.  
The ghosts of her brothers and sisters  
are looking over her shoulder. She  
does not see them but I do. Stop, ghosts,  
I am telling them. But they titter and  
push to get into the picture. Frank is wax.  
His image and the child's are sharp.  
Mine is blurred. Behind me white curtains blow,  
though afterwards we said we could not remember  
a day so still. Tornado weather we said,  
but no tornado came.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1900)

**The Phonograph Arrives, 1904**

Frank's Pride we called it when it came,  
lashed beside the driver on the early stage.  
We lifted it from its splintered seat  
and placed it in the best corner of the post.

Then, we unpacked the wax cylinders, set in  
tissue paper, like eggs, by careful fingers  
in New York, and we read their legends:  
The Stars and Stripes Forever, Dora, My Wild  
Irish Rose.

(Later we named it Devon, for the boy  
we didn't have, imagining its songs his voice,  
calling to the parakeets in the thickets, and  
the parakeets answering.)

But before we could  
finish, Billy Tommy came to trade, brought otter,  
egret feathers, and eleven fine alligator hides,  
ten cents the inch. Calico he wanted, by the book,  
and salt, and grits, and a shiny new pot for the  
food his woman tended. While he chose, she wandered,  
fingering cheesecloth, pouring beads from hand to hand,  
two children clinging to her ribboned skirt  
puckered on each side by their dark fingers.  
"Oh Frank," I said. "Play one now. Billy won't mind."  
So Frank looked up from the red and yellow bolt,  
his yardstick in his hand, and then he played  
our first new song, the first record in Fort Lauderdale,  
and it was The Stars and Stripes Forever.

There were  
hides everywhere. Feathers floated like sneezes as  
Billy's children ran for the door. As he herded the  
last child out, Billy stopped. "Canned man," he said.  
"Me no like canned man." And the grand march played on,  
and we never laughed at Billy, not even when  
his dugout was long gone around the farthest bend.  
We had our particular music in those days, and  
we wore it as I wore my long skirts, even in the heat,  
and my high-necked blouses buttoned to my throat.

(Gainesville 1968/Fort Lauderdale 1904)



There will be no more crossings today.  
Those who came late are waiting for morning  
in Frank's tents. There are only a few,  
but the breath of their fires in our field  
invades the air, and I can say to Frank  
only public words. He is watching me,  
and his shoe brushes my skirt under  
the maple table he brought from Boston.  
If this keeps up, he says, meaning  
the business, we'll have to build on  
another room or two. His look says  
the other thing. I blush. His boot toe  
slides like an animal up my leg.  
Have you finished now, I say. He gets up.  
When he tries to come around behind me,  
I slide away with plates.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1906)

### The Visitor: An Interlude

i  
Her brown eyes would flash at my window  
sudden then gone  
like a shiver on a hot day.

*I see you  
white-skin.  
Lay your shell-fingers  
over your face.  
Take them away.  
I am still here.*

If I leaned outside  
her bright skirt would vanish,  
the air always shimmering around it  
so that I could never tell  
if she moved, or was still.

*This is fun.  
I can climb your cup-tree.  
You can think of me  
but you cannot make me  
come down.*

We had wanted a child so long.

ii

I laid my yellow dress across the arms  
of the porch swing,  
set at its feet a pair of shoes.  
Behind, on the rail, I placed  
my Sunday hat,  
the one with feathers.

*What is this new thing all alone?  
Would my feet like these?  
How would my waist dance in yellow color?  
How would my head sing in such new top?*

When the laughter stopped, I went out.  
Dress, hat and shoes lay scattered.

*Such kisses! Throw them!  
Let them land like no-boned birds.  
Catch them. Yellow skirt settles,  
if it falls, like water about stone.  
Shoes drop quick. Hat floats.*

In this way, it began.

## iii

Her real name no white person could pronounce.  
It would fall from a white mouth  
like lemon flowers,  
like a young bird from its shaken tree.

## iv

Hope would not sleep in a bed but would lie by ours.  
We had to remember she was there  
when we got up dark mornings.  
Nor would she wear the clothes I stitched her  
but would skip about the post  
in Indian skirts. Nor could we ever  
make her Christian, though every day  
she knelt between Frank and me.  
We knew her there by the feel of the air  
between his left side and my right.  
One morning she was gone.  
We buried her shawl and bonnet  
under the lemon tree, and we raised our prices,  
and we raised them again.

*Dream-that-Steps-Lightly*  
*never comes back.*  
*White lady wears dark dress*  
*like bird at night.*

(Gainesville 1968/Fort Lauderdale 1910)

The white curtains blow like ghosts.  
For a moment the wind holds its breath and then  
hard rain nails pelt the tin.  
By the dimpling river, Frank is tying  
his raft to a tree. Twice he wraps the rope  
(he has lost rafts before)  
and again. Then one slow knot  
and then he turns.  
I see him starting up the slope.  
I hold the door open,  
but the leaves rise up and throw themselves  
at him. His knife drives down  
like a scream. I run. "Get the hoe, woman!"  
He is rubbing his leg with both thick hands.  
By his foot a snub head  
writhes against the knife.  
Frank chops at it. It severs.  
Released, the body twists once,  
like an impossible arm.  
Frank's shirt sleeves stream. He leans on me.  
Like a courting couple we walk together  
towards the house. The screen door bangs  
again and again like someone who cannot stop talking  
because there is nothing he can say.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1913)

He is having a fever dream,  
writhes on his wet bed as though he cannot  
bear what he sees.  
His breath moans in the air he  
cannot keep it down.  
I watch the river, where it runs  
through cypress knees and see  
how it breathes past the edge  
and smooths and widens.  
The sheet heaves like water.  
I dampen the mud on the sucked cut.  
Underneath the covers, his leg  
is swelling to the groin. "Lie still.  
The doctor said, lie still."  
But "Oh honey," he says, and his breath  
rattles in his throat. "Come over here.  
That's such a pretty blue dress."  
His fingers grope like blind worms at my skirt.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1913)

Nightly he pumps at my dry well like a desperate  
man who knows the water witch lied  
but drills and drills because he paid.  
Since his leg healed and he knew  
he would not die, he has blamed me.  
Each sullen forkful thrust in this mouth  
says: Where is the child.  
And every month my blood betrays me again  
with its red slap. At the post I take  
their money, the money of women  
with babies on their hips.  
They do not even count their change.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1914)

**Teaching the Mikasukee: Later**

*As a historian, you will know that as recently as 1917, Seminole tribal law prescribed that any member of the tribe who learned to read and write would have his ears cropped.*

The Medicine Man at Big Cypress hates me.  
He has sliced Annie's ears.  
Others come now, but the children of Big Cypress  
look down when they see me at the post.  
With his potion of nettle and bitter oak  
the Medicine Man has shriveled  
the child I would have grown.  
In dreams he tells me what he has done.

The Medicine Man at Big Cypress  
buys nothing here.  
Others come, with their pigs and their dogs  
and their chickens with muddy feathers.  
The Medicine Man stays in his chickee,  
built with none of our nails,  
sharpening his knives for little ears.  
They cannot keep the knowledge from him.  
Let an ibis cross the swamp  
five miles away, ten miles,  
and he knows.

(Fort Lauderdale 1916, note added 1968)

**On Their Opposition to Education**

*“When an Indian learns to read and write,  
he learns to lie.”*

*Water Turkey*

I have told you about the children, how I tried  
to shape their mouths, how I carried to them  
in my two hands, my God. But He spilled  
through my fingers and one day they said,  
“Lady, you bring us nothing.” And it was true.  
Two learned to write their names, and one  
to read the paper he’d filled with the one word.  
But the names they wrote  
were not the ones they owned.  
And the saints I taught them,  
those men turned pale at the root  
from too much washing, these too failed.  
It is as if I am crouching outside the circle  
of the fire at their camp up the slough,  
insect wings brushing my bitten face.  
The children I saw today  
have different names tonight.  
And the babies lie in their mothers’ laps  
with tiny flames in their eyes,  
while their brothers and sisters speak,  
on and on in the language I never learned.  
Then the frogs and cicadas grow suddenly loud,  
like a speeding heart,  
and they all turn towards me.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1968)

### A Periodic Event

In the early days, once or twice a year  
moccasins by the hundreds would come floating  
past us down the New, in some trance. Large numbers  
would wash ashore below our post, and Frank  
and the village men would kill them,  
smashing snake heads with oars until the river  
ran with poison. I have imagined, only since  
my own veins have filled with widow's blood  
how it must have been for him:

The river blackens with snakes  
drifting, their poison  
asleep in their mouths.  
Hundreds wash ashore by the raft landing.  
Hundreds go on. The finished ones clutter  
the beach, black whips dreaming what dreams  
as we rush towards them, oars in our hands.  
We crush their heads, knowing we are right,  
but for days our fingers stink past any soap,  
and we do not touch our wives' faces,  
nor slide against them when we sleep.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1969)



Sometimes I think that Hope is here, humming  
her tiny song inside a wall, in a high  
corner, under the bed.  
At night sometimes I hear her,  
and in the morning I wake with small swellings  
under my skin, which all day tempt my fingers  
as though once there was something  
I wanted, more than any store,  
and if my nails dig deep enough,  
they will show me what it was.  
Sometimes I think that my womb opened,  
wide as an eye,  
and a child fell out without my knowing.  
All these years she's been growing up  
with no mother to rock her.  
Instead, my splotched hands roll the day's  
pennies, hard inside their wrappers.  
And I roll the quarters, the dimes,  
shiny with young liberty, the thick nickels,  
more rolls every day, so many now  
that my hair's turned white with money.  
And there are times I do not lie.  
There are times I know that Hope never lived here,  
and in the mirror two faded eyes say to mine:  
Look, woman.  
Your skull is empty.

(Fort Lauderdale, 1970)

Lola Haskins

## THE GREAT PLATEAU

1

He reached the point  
and the great plateau.  
Something spoke to  
him in a gray voice.

When the cold rain  
began, he turned his  
collar above his ears.

There was no path  
through the level woods.  
There was no light,  
only the low voice  
in the winter trees.

I know what I am  
leaving, he thought.  
I know the warm fires.

When night came he  
sat inside a hollow  
tree. There were no  
bird sounds in the  
forest. No mouths  
against the sky,  
only the gray voice  
speaking low and near.

The next day he  
remembered everyone  
he had ever known,  
everything he had  
ever seen. He

remembered a boy and  
a dog. He remembered  
a plow and open ring.

Suddenly his mouth  
dropped. No, he  
said. He zigzagged  
between the trees of  
the great plateau.  
He tore off his coat.

It was too late.  
The voice had its  
teeth at his throat.

2

A half mile below  
the point, a barn.  
A woman is feeding  
her stock. Children  
are throwing hay  
down from the mow.

Sometimes they stop  
to stare at a gray  
voice they cannot  
rock from the rafters.  
No matter the dark  
stones they throw,  
it is always there.  
Sitting. Waiting.

Trent Busch

## TWO POEMS

*“And behind it your face pressed against a window pane  
in the light rain of tears  
like the image of a woman showing her breasts  
to the man about to leave her.”*

*Karl Krowlow*

\*

Each raindrop, from behind  
hauling away a window :a rudder  
pulled loose—I’m still reeling.

Leave! You will smell these breasts  
each time you move your lips  
to say goodbye  
to anyone  
to the tiny bells  
women always wear at night.

Leave me. I don’t know how to howl  
or come in from the rain  
—my blouse cast overboard  
to save something drowned, something  
that lost its hold, something  
only these cold drops  
only my breast can describe  
—these raindrops  
that still go house to house  
though no door will open.

No, by myself! When I do  
I will wear spring :dresses  
flowing green and flowers  
hills in constant bloom  
—gowns! whose nodding, sweet buds  
will slip into all this water and drink

as you once drank.  
How slippery your lips were  
—that faint swish  
still gashing each buoy and stars.  
Go. I have nothing to say.

\*

This hinge each night louder  
looks for the other  
fastened to the ground  
—some spider opening its body  
bandaged this rusting hinge  
hung with a long coat in the doorway  
a night that will not rot.

I reach along the fine thin grass  
to nail this door  
open, closed :a breathing  
that fills the shed with smoke  
with love—one hinge  
trying to sing its ache away.

How do I tell a door  
nothing will come back, that one  
in every pair sometimes  
as a shadow clasps the ground.

Dear hinge, I am not so brave  
to hunt in the dark.  
I'll sing to you.

Simon Perchik

**RETROSPECTIVE:  
An SS Photo of a Man  
About to be Shot**

See him kneeling at the pit's edge,  
above the morning's mound of bodies,  
overcoat in lap, hands at sides,  
eyes peering up and to his right  
as if to spot the bullet's pounce  
from the pistol poised behind his skull.  
See the disciples, who watch and wait,  
arms folded or hand on hip,  
serious but casual from seeing  
history's open door diminished  
by the world's easy consent and corpses  
that flop in a sleepy-eyed sprawl,  
kicking, often like mere cattle.  
And see how the spectacled young killer  
stands as is prescribed: sideways,  
erect, feet well spread, gun arm  
relaxed but fully extended;  
he too waits on the disappointing pop  
and the flip of empty cartridge case.

This is your cue to leap into the picture,  
declare the game has gone too far,  
send men and brats back to Bavaria  
to compose apologies, learn a trade,  
petition to save the greater auk.  
Tell them they'll thank you years from now,  
when little Hans and Fritz ask questions.  
And, if common sense won't take,  
show them you have other ways:  
extract a fingernail or two,  
see how they like the lead-filled billy,  
the old hot and cold water trick.

If stubbornness persists, pick teams  
and make the shirts eat the skins;  
then line the cannibals against a wall,  
lace their guts with hollow-points,  
and pitch the pieces down a privy.

Are you ready to drop the act now,  
that dull-eyed look of innocence?  
Don't expect us—anyone—to believe  
that you simply can't remember,  
even after all these years in Dubuque:  
back before the Fuhrer's call,  
your mother's stifled shriek  
when she found your blood-stained shirts?  
the pleas of that poor young thing  
you left with your avid friends?  
the idiot son mewing syllables  
at night beneath your window?  
and then your public days with Himmler:  
the youths, some pictured here before you,  
trained to run like Alsatian hounds,  
the child who died snarling your name,  
half an acre of fresh-dug sod  
shifting as decay assembled and dispersed.  
No. No one sane forgets such things,  
and our staff has papers to prove  
that your mind is all too sound  
and that your fingerprints match our files,  
despite those expensive operations,  
which no doubt you will say,  
looking at the check stubs, you forgot.  
Better to claim it was all an accident,  
was started by an unsnuffed butt  
after a bit of fun in the park.  
Better yet, stand up and admit it now:  
that shadow in the foreground slants from you.

**William Trowbridge**

**SCHOOL FIRE KILLS 91, SIX NUNS**

*Our Lady of the Angels  
Chicago, December 1, 1958*

The brass doorknob could still sear his skin  
When the fireman plunged his fireax through the lock  
To see two dozen children, books  
And lunchpails balanced by their feet, hands  
Folded, heads down, as if the principal  
Had rustled in to bless them. The whole school  
Had bowed for the day's last prayer when the fire  
Climbed stairs, burst from the windows with a shout  
Before anyone could say Amen, or Fire, or Run.  
On the playground, mothers waited for the bell;  
Gulls, which some children thought were angels,  
Fled, mewling, to the frozen lake, blinded  
By smoke, frightened by sirens and by the father  
Who swung thirty children from the second floor  
Into his neighbor's arms and found his daughter,  
Crawling for her pencils and her red shoe.  
In the crowd, wimples rose and bent like gulls;  
Upstairs, a sister led her class in prayer,  
Soothed them like a mother and they fell  
Asleep while pure heat, stripped of its light,  
Knocked her into the white chalk wings  
Of the Holy Ghost, brooding on the blackboard.  
Her black wool sleeve blurred the day's  
Prayer: *Hodie Christus Natus Est.*  
Her starched guimpe crackled as the smoke pulled  
Her down and breathed into her mouth. If angels  
Wept around her puckering scalp, shorn

Under her stiff cap and veil, the children  
Could not hear them. They slumped, mouths stopped  
In the shape of cries; flames blotched their folded  
Hands like the wings of four and twenty blackbirds.  
They could not see the fire undress her, slowly,  
Layers of wool and linen, this Bride of Christ,  
Who fell asleep knowing that fire was her true  
Spouse, that angels are the soft bursts of ash  
Balanced on her lashes. She lay with them,  
Quiet as soot, finding in that sleep  
A first consummation.

Deborah Burnham

**NOTE:**

Founding Editor Chad Walsh has a new volume of poems: *Hang Me Up My Begging Bowl*, An Associated Writing Program Award Book, Swallow Press (Ohio University Press, hard-bound \$11.95, paper, \$6.95).